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Decolonization of South Asia in Perspective

Rehnuma Sazzad



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Professor Patrick Williams, Professor of Literary and Cultural Studies
Nottingham Trent University
And
Poet Sazidur Rahman, My Great-Uncle
In earnest gratitude

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To my grandparents: immensely grateful for your blessings. To my husband, Dr Taufiq Rahman: *thank you so much for contributing the maps and your constant support that goes beyond words*. To my son, Tauseef Rahman: I earnestly hope that you will grow up to be a torchbearer of a humane world.

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Praise for *Dynamics among Mother Language, Motherland, and Liberation Struggle*

Drawing on what are apparently distinct case studies, Rehnuma Sazzad tells a compelling, comparative story of the language movements in Bengal and Sri Lanka. Countering the hegemonic force of postcolonial nationalisms, language as a weapon of conflict can serve progressive and reactionary forces, often within the same polity! A truly pioneering monograph that enhances studies of nationalist movements in South Asia.

—Professor Virinder S. Kalra, *Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, UK*

Language has always been at the heart of politics and culture across the span of South Asia. For the region, the border between public and private space in language is non-existent. Rehnuma Sazzad immensely adds to our knowledge of the critical place of language in South Asian studies by enriching our understanding with cases and subjects too seldom examined or compared. These engaging perspectives are invaluable and this book makes a deep and original contribution to South Asian language and politics, which will continue to impress.

—Dr. H. Kumarasingham, *Reader in Politics and History, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, UK*

Rehnuma Sazzad offers a complex and thoughtful analysis of the relationship between linguistic nationalism, armed struggle, and gender politics in this book. Focusing on the Sinhala-Tamil politics in Sri Lanka and the Bengali-Urdu struggles in Bangladesh, Sazzad frames the discussion through the theories of Edward Said, Benedict Anderson, and Gayatri Spivak. Historically informed and well-researched, this book provides scholars with a comparative exploration of two of the most significant and challenging moments in contemporary South Asian history where language played a key role in the articulation of national identity. This book will be valuable for scholars working on the politics of language in South Asia.

—Professor Nalini Iyer, *Department of English, Seattle University, USA*

"A thoughtful and expansive engagement with decolonization in South Asia through the lens of linguistic nationalism. Sazzad offers a comparative examination of the Tamil and Bengali movements in Sri Lanka and undivided Pakistan to make an impassioned case for a pluralist, humanist and feminist national freedom against the grain of statist narratives."

—Professor Priyamvada Gopal, *Faculty of English, University of Cambridge, UK*.

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1. Introduction: Language Movements and Struggles for Emancipation in South Asia

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Citing Article 13 of the United Nations Charter, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) points out that its signatories agreed to advance human beings' fundamental honour and freedom without compromising the principles on some of the primary bases of identity: '*race, sex, language, or religion'*, even though 'language gets much poorer treatment in human rights instruments' (ibid., p. 204, emphasis in original) than the other three elements. However, language processes the other three concepts, and serves as an all-encompassing aspect of social life, which has the capacity to both unite and divide people. Naturally, people's right to uphold their mother language has to be secured in order to turn their linguistic reserve into an enabling asset for them. This is why all language communities should be given access to all the necessary

resources to guarantee that their language is part of the levels of education, socio-political affairs, and religious participation they aspire for within their country. If state authorities force people to relinquish their aspiration by prioritizing the need for survival, they not only violate the citizens' economic and linguistic rights but also impoverish our planet's linguistic and cultural diversity. Language loss also affects the continuation of traditional knowledge, either in the form of various types of lexicon or time-honoured stories (see ibid., p. 189) restored in the mother tongue. Despite this, ensuring fair conditions for all languages still remains an unachievable ideal for most states in the world, since establishing the prominence of a common language is more compelling for nation-building purposes than providing linguistic security for the minorities and the marginalized. At the same time, granting linguistic and cultural rights to less powerful ethnic groups is seen as an encouragement for their desire for autonomy and independence (Phillipson et al., 1994, pp. 4–6).

The fact that the political and ethnic boundaries generally converge in modern states suggests that a blanket sense of cultural bond not only confers legitimacy on the entities but also creates a common identity for the members (Gat, 2013; Guibernau, 1996; Harris, 2016). Since ethnicity evolves over time and ethnic loyalties and antagonisms are shaped by political entities, the process of forming national solidarity on the basis of ethnicity is neither smooth nor unambiguous (Brass, 1991; Eriksen, 1993; Knott, 2017). However, the construction of a national identity precludes the possibility of a dynamic culture that successfully accommodates varied intra-ethnic differences with a situated understanding of cultural claims, which may lead to diverge lenses of interpreting a nationalist discourse (Kaufmann, 2008; May et al., 2004; Spencer, 2008).

Indeed, modern nations require the mandate of the people, which is why the nation-state cannot be organized by ignoring the varied languages spoken by its population. This further implies that the desire to increase group influence results in the domination of its language. Therefore, balancing multivocal meanings of nationalism with the

demands of the politico-economic system continues to be debated (Kaufmann, 2017; König, 1999; Millar, 2005). Even though celebrating linguistic pluralism cannot automatically generate the exploration of common ground in society, thwarting the pluralism produces counterproductive consequences (Blattberg, 2006; Pickel, 2013; Rubio-Marín, 2003). Simultaneously, we take into account the affirmation of historians, sociologists, and political scientists for considering national language as the primary means of a narrative concerning a nation's cultural specificity and autonomous nature. However, linguistic historians show that national languages are themselves constructed as part of the ideological framework of the narrative. This requires us to look at the complex negotiation underlying the language and nationalism connection (Heller, 2008; Joseph, 2004; Leerssen, 2006).

Since the complexity of nationalism, language, and identity dynamics involves the contested political articulation of individual and group-based rights, the incommensurable discourses of rights need to be directed towards an evolved viewpoint. Especially as the debates are deeply connected with people's livelihood, the uncritical handling of language rights may lead to the path of conflict (May, 2008; Tønnesson, 2016). Globalization challenges Europe-inspired nation-state model not only by providing a bigger platform for pluralistic readings of a territory but also by creating competitions among national spheres. Likewise, postcolonial nation-states struggle with the demands of global and local forces to produce cultural narratives that reflect the uniqueness of the societies (Chríost, 2003; Smith, 1996). The European mode of identifying a nation with a single community appears to be problematic for the postcolonial world because of the conflictual politics resulting from its complex demographic and emotional structures (Coulmas, 1988; Young, 2016).

Unsurprisingly, conflict between religion and language has considerably affected South Asia's nation-building processes. Michael Brown and Šumit Ganguly (2003) explain that language is one of the most unsettled questions in a South Asian context, since it determines not only the inter-ethnic groups' identitarian boundaries but also their

economic successes and cultural statuses. Therefore, the national language issue is neither to be overstated nor to be understated. It is particularly because South Asian state authorities demonstrate how the heavy-handed handling of ethno-linguistic disputes worsens the construction of a common ground in a multipolar context. On the one hand, preventing fragmentation poses significant policy challenges to the state authorities. On the other hand, minorities fear political weakening and cultural extinction in their homelands due to the policy-induced threats to their mother languages. In the face of the uncertainty, what the state authorities require most is strategic thinking, which sets them free from being obsessed with the crisis *du jour* and enables them to develop long-term visions for accommodating the non-privileged groups. However, since the long-term policy requires cumulative progress, the state authorities prefer short-term gains, which unfortunately generate systematic lapses.

Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal (2004) emphasize that a less than a hundred-year-old decolonization process cannot thwart five millennia-spanning continuities and connections among the separated territories in South Asia through nationalist imaginations. Nevertheless, post-independence history of the Indian sub-continent has been shaped by '[t] he overlapping dialectics of centralism and regionalism as well as nationalism and religious assertion' (ibid., p. 167), which roused both communal and sectarian sentiments. The greater sensitivity towards divergence and distinctiveness of belonging resulted in the prevalent intellectual attention towards the chasms provided by the intermeshing of national, regional, and communitarian beliefs rather than the coalescence brought about by the phenomenon. Indeed, post-independence sub-continent illustrates both circumstances in equal measure. India survived the trauma of partition in 1947 by adopting federalism to manage the mammoth diversity provided by at least fourteen major linguistic groups and 1652 mother languages. The military-bureaucratic dominance in Pakistan, however, led to frictions against provincial autonomy from the very beginning. The imposition of Urdu as the official language was a clear manifestation of the centre's

unreserved dominance over the provinces. Similarly, independent Sri Lanka's centralism promoted by the Sinhalese majority circumvented the Tamil minority, which led to their uproar for sovereign nationhood in the northern and the eastern parts of the island. The central authorities' impatience, dogmatism, and non-negotiation regarding the marginalized in both the countries led to potent cultural movements that sought to redress the inequalities based on region, community, and class.

The emergence of independent states in South Asia is thus marked by the conflict between the lived experience of cultural tolerance and the deployment of culture for reifying identities (Visweswaran, 2011). Swarna Rajagopalan (2001) argues that decolonization not only transformed the ancient realms of the Indian sub-continent into modern nation-states but also posed the question of creating political communities in the variegated spheres. The three major states, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, were envisioned as communities of citizens based on modern rights and equality. However, in Pakistan, the vision did not inform the country's constitutional design, whereas in Sri Lanka, the divergence from the original idea began with the disenfranchisement of the plantation workers of foreign descent. As a result, Pakistan became officially Urdu-speaking with rights promised for non-Urdu speakers, which applied mainly to Muslims. Likewise, Sri Lanka rooted the state identity in the Buddhist tradition, despite taking up a hesitant bilingual policy that showed the mandate it defended. India exercised noteworthy flexibility in entering into negotiations with its plethora of polities. In the other two cases, however, many visions of the state based on language, land, and religion became difficult to harmonize. Integration processes in the countries failed to reconcile state and group self-visions due to the authorities' faulty quest for absolute narratives without creating any mechanisms for accommodating changes. Put differently, the shared notion of democracy in Sri Lanka and Pakistan frayed for the authorities' lack of conciliatory stance on ethnic claims for inclusion in the decision-making process.

In effect, the state authorities' single-minded pursuit of discovering threads of homogeneity in order to form cohesive political communities was wrong-headed. The leaders of the decolonization struggle were inspired by the European form of homogeneous cultural groups emerging as independent states in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, even though the spatio-temporal contexts were different in the two parts of the globe (Upreti, 2006). The main aim of the decolonized nation-state was the achievement of self-reliance through the proper cultivation of economic resources. Therefore, nationalism in Sri Lanka and united Pakistan should have been the means of creating a platform for binding people together irrespective of their caste, creed, ethnicity, and language. For this, South Asia's long tradition of tolerance of different faiths, beliefs, and practices should have been utilized. Instead, the question of a predominant identity led to the majority-minority conflicts, which have played a destabilizing role in the countries. Particularly, the crude reality of imposing cultural cohesion on the British-approved territoriality robbed the process of the lyrical connectivity to the homeland commanded by the South Asian heritage (Kaviraj, 2014). Why the deep-rooted ethos of lyricism, hospitality, and coexistence did not feature greatly in the national politics of the sub-continent is because providing people with a sense of dignity and community was secondary to the political and economic competitions among ethnic groups, which was ironically generated by the thrust of modernization. How to employ ascriptive categories like religion and language to preserve traditions highlighting humanist ethic has naturally remained a real challenge in the region after decolonization. Despite the fact that the common interest of the sub-continental communities lies in developing the resources of their states for the enhancement of democracy, competition as opposed to cooperation for retaining control over social prestige, occupations, material goods, and moral customs historically thwarted secular and liberal ideals and bolstered ethnic violence in the geographical location (Chadda, 2007).

It is understandable why language movements in South Asia are emblematic phenomena revealing the language-centred aspirations of non-privileged groups. In other words, every language choice leads to the protection of its speakers' life opportunities. From this perspective, language movements not only represent the passion and commitment of the speakers and their self-assurance in the world of information and knowledge exchange but also act as vehicles for promoting their socio-economic and political preferences (Brass, 2004). Thus, the language question is directly connected to the ownership of resources. Since the South Asian nations aim for gaining the capability of the West in their public institutions while maintaining their individual marks through art, literature, and music, language has to function as a means of utilizing their resources for achieving both the purposes. However, national language choice can obstruct the accomplishments, if the nation-building process loses sight of the main goals (Brown, 1958). For example, the Muslim minority in India did not claim a separate state solely to preserve their religious rights. A large number of the group broke away from India in order to determine their economic, political, and educational future. However, the definition of Pakistan through Urdu highlighted the uniqueness of the separatist Muslims as opposed to their urgent need of appropriating the newly obtained country's natural and cultural resources through prudent and pragmatic measures.

Undoubtedly, language has been instrumental in advancing nationalistic predilections in modern South Asia by showing the inhabitants' willingness both to invalidate and harmonize socio-cultural differences, depending on the cultural nationalists' articulation of the emancipatory proclamation and the scope of democratic negotiation within the decolonized state (Mitra, 1995; Simpson, 2007). Andrew Simpson (2007) continues that particularly in Sri Lanka and Pakistan, the state authorities' antagonistic stance towards the minoritized and marginalized languages, and the short-sighted obliteration of Tamil and Bengali from being recognized as components of the new nations eventually formed the core of great civil unrests and extensive

resistance movements. In fact, the procrastinated recognition of Tamil and Bengali as official state languages (Tamil in 1978, Bengali in 1954/1956) aggravated the initial issues of discontent, and proved to be inadequate for repairing the damaged trust among the ethnicities.

Reflecting on the non-recognition from the opposite end, Eric Hobsbawm (1996) argues that human beings are not one-dimensional entities. Their mental faculties are neither essence-bound nor singularly regulated at a given point of time. Therefore, projecting a national culture through a native language, like Urdu in Pakistan and Sinhala in Sri Lanka, is a dangerously delusional policy, which can lead to either apartheid or genocide in multilingual settings. The latter being true for the two countries makes us wonder with the historian whether the incomplete Tower of Babel symbolizes that the human species is eternally condemned to irresolvable conflicts related to languages. Following Tanweer Fazal (2012), however, we can realize that comparison between Sri Lanka and undivided Pakistan in terms of languages does not leave us with the Tower of Babel kind of uncertainty. Rather, the exercise reveals that the Bengalis of East Pakistan model the only marginalized group in South Asia, whose insurgency against cultural annihilation led to the successful achievement of a separate homeland. Therefore, the armed struggle of both the Bengalis and the Tamils require further investigation in order to achieve a more nuanced understanding of the liberation of a minority and/or a marginalized community.

Sumit Ganguly (2007) explains that Pakistan's predicament was threefold after one of the most blood-soaked partitions of the twentieth century: it was divided by a thousand miles of Indian Territory; it had to produce a deft national identity in order to transcend its reality as a fragment of the British Empire as well as a secessionist entity; it had to face vast differences of language, region, and class among the members of the polity. By seeking to forge a distinctive nationalist identity, though, the state authorities slackened their commitment on secular and democratic principles, which is the root cause of the ethno-religious conflict in the polyethnic place. The short history of undivided

Pakistan thus illustrates the futility of an extreme insistence on a single-threaded nationalism. This caused unprecedented turmoil among the Bengali-speaking inhabitants of the country, who found the imposition of Urdu as the national language of Pakistan to be a completely alienating experience, which threw a direct challenge not only to their linguistic identity but also to their cultural inheritance.

In decolonized Sri Lanka, nevertheless, the Sinhalese people constituted a majority community that was socioeconomically backward than the minority Tamil community because of the latter's prominent position in government and professional services through their adeptness in English, which bore the mark of high culture. However, Sinhala was the language of classical literature with an ancient literary history that suffered profusely due to colonial deprivation. The revivalist attempts starting in the late nineteenth century, which brought to light the rich heritage in order to create a heightened feeling of belonging among the varied religious groups inside the community, as well as differentiate the members from 'outsider' groups like the Europeans and the Tamils. Tamil concentration in the northern part neighbouring southern India as well as the east coast of the island created hefty challenges for the Sinhalese group's enjoyment of unperturbed demographic dividends, since the Tamils were strengthened by a strong communal presence in the adjacent country.

More importantly, the Sinhala-oriented idea of belonging needed to be stressed in order to create a dissimilar entity from India, since the island was so closely allied with the '"Big Brother"' during the sub-continent-wide movement for liberation from the British rule that 'even a federated merger' (Dharmadasa, 1992, pp. 281–282) with the country right next door was thought to be possible. Thus, a unique community of Sinhala speakers, who were native inhabitants only in the small island country on the surface of the earth, found them living in relative obscurity to their mighty neighbour. The insecurity let them vacillate between granting the parity of status to both Sinhala and Tamil languages (amended Official Language Resolution of 1943), and

retaining the supremacy of status for Sinhala language (the Official Language Act of 1956). This acted as a reminder to the Tamils that they are foreign elements in the *Sinhaladvipa*, the land of the Sinhalese people. The branding of the Tamils as the fifth column initiated an ever-widening crisis between the ethnic groups, which has not yet achieved a satisfactory resolution.

As we have seen so far, the race for securing the status, power, and relevance of dominant social groups in decolonized South Asia created a narrowly focused ethnic politics that eventually resulted in the proliferation of intense feelings and uncontrollable violence among the opposite groups. The policy of asymmetrical incorporation of disprivileged groups within the larger community was pursued to curb their socio-political, educational, and professional rights, which fuelled their negative sentiments. However, this was projected as an affirmative step in establishing the demographic strength of the majority group, even though it clearly subordinated previously uncategorized and even equal groups, who possessed considerable skills and cultural capitals to contribute to the newly formed state. The fact that such downgrading of capable citizens invites counteractions was not paid heed to, as I have been demonstrating that accruing the material and societal benefits of modernization appeared more important as soon as home rule was obtained from the British. As Stanley Tambiah (1989) explains that the deprived groups do not accept the subordination unquestioningly, and their fight for inclusion within the greater social arena on an equal basis gradually gravitates towards the demands for self-determination, and even secession. This book, therefore, examines if the short-term benefits of ethnic competition obfuscate the dangers of wars and destructions it ultimately creates. Simultaneously, I will ask if the alternative option of ethnic cooperation appears lacklustre due to its long-term and unmanifested prospects.

My book places the issues of language rights and ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka and undivided Pakistan in a contextual analysis. I contend that mother languages play a strong emotive role by remarkably reflecting the structure of these societies, where the zeal for rapid

modernization directed the policy makers towards an insensitive management of the potent linguistic force. The inconsiderate disruption of the traditional system of belonging led to political violence of a kind that makes us question why few issues have generated so much turbulence as the question of a national language in the past nearly three quarters of a century, ever since these two countries attained independence. Why did the potential of languages remain under utilized? Why could the linguistic resources not be put to good use so as to turn them into vehicles for positive changes within the societies? Adopting Urdu and Sinhala as national languages in the face of two Language Movements demanding the same status for Bengali and Tamil reveals that the cultural policy of the respective governments eludes the prospect of proper economic development in their deliberate attempts to turn the majority Bengalis into the minority and the minority Tamils into the marginalized group. The unreasonable phenomena produce a further set of questions, which will guide my investigation in the book: *How is ethnic disparity produced by national narratives and diffused by national language policies? What are the discursive approaches and mechanisms for the production and dissemination of the disparity within varied national communities? How are the counter-narratives of ethnically marginalized people created? What makes the counter-narratives successful in offering alternatives to ethnic competitiveness underlying linguistic streamlining? What are the challenges towards achieving a progressive narrative of a decolonized nation?*

Language Movements in Undivided Pakistan and Sri Lanka

In response to a question regarding the relevance of studying history, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2012) explains that it is incumbent on us to do so, if we have to overcome the shortcomings of the access to the simulacrum of simultaneity provided to us by the Information Age. Human knowledge of an intending subject cannot be confined to its

programming devised form. Individuals' sociological, historical, and psychological dimensions are equally important to be unearthed. Against this backdrop, historical study becomes grounded on specific human errors in order to transcend the mere empiricism of our postmodern time. As I have discussed above, the historical errors of defining a dominant language-based nationality in Sri Lanka and undivided Pakistan delineate the still prevalent socio-cultural irregularities of not only the two countries but also the entire South Asian region. The cultural movements led by the minorities and the marginalized group of the two countries during the first half of the twentieth century challenged the errors in order to protest against a discouraging present and pave the way for a more worthwhile future. Arguably, the movements sketched below are the disadvantaged groups' determined efforts towards maintaining their ethnic boundaries and reclaiming these for retaining their sociological, historical, and psychological certainties.

Neil DeVotta (2001) suggests that inter-ethnic instability has fuelled the Sinhalese–Tamil embroilment till today, just as intra-religious unsettlement between the Bengalis of East Pakistan and the West Pakistani authorities led to the armed conflict in the undivided country. As opposed to DeVotta, though, I will show that Sri Lanka's singular status proclaimed through the mythical notions of *Sihadipa* (island of Sinhala people) and *Dhammadipa* (island of Buddha) intensified linguistic consciousness among the Tamils as well, which is not analogous to the Bengalis' struggle for gaining national status for their mother tongue on a par with Urdu. It is because the imposition of Urdu on the Bengalis was designed to create a mythomoteur for Muslim majority Pakistan, which makes the Sinhala speakers' religio-linguistic consciousness much more aligned with the West Pakistani projection of nationhood. I suggest that it is not the Bengalis' protean identity that led them to assert their linguistic nationalism once the religious one failed them. Like the Tamils, their linguistic grievances were connected to their lack of opportunity for peace, progress, and development. However, the Bengalis' endeavour to keep alive their linguistic heritage

is not synonymous with the Tamils' language-based promulgation of a pure classical age either. In accordance with S. M. Shamsul Alam (1991), I will read the Bengali Language Movement of 1952 as a secular movement of the ordinary people, who created an appropriate counterforce to the West Pakistani authorities that attempted to maintain an all-pervasive dominance over the Eastern wing. Thus, the language movement concretized the foundation on which the future struggles for autonomy were built, which culminated in the Liberation War in 1971.

By comparing the 1930s' *Swabasha* (vernacular) Movement in Sri Lanka and *Bhasha Andolon* (Language Movement, 1952) in East Pakistan, which are related to decolonization efforts in the countries, I will illuminate the crucial connection between language rights and the ethnic peoples' socio-cultural expectations after decolonization. I will examine if the failure of the *Swabasha* Movement is the root cause of the gradual worsening of the political stability in the Indian Ocean Island, which was considered to be an exemplary entity that entered the enclave of independence quite peacefully in 1948. Likewise, I will investigate if the Bengalis' pledge during the *Bhasha Andolon* that they will never allow the martyrs' blood to go in vain is the fundamental point of departure from their fascination with the dream of a Muslim majority nation.

During the 1930s, *Swabasha* (vernacular) Movement was initiated to replace English with hitherto marginalized vernacular languages, which was triggered by both Sinhalese (74% of the population) and Tamil (25% of the islanders) speakers. The movement confronted the phenomenon that the domination of English in the country's educational and professional sectors was de facto marginalizing the booming middle class that knew only the vernaculars. Consequently, a State Council resolution in 1932 suggested that the legislature should accommodate the vernaculars in the interest of the majority of the countrymen. In 1936, another resolution demanded that the justice system should also depend on the vernaculars for the day-to-day dealings. The Council was sympathetic to the proposal of making the

vernaculars compulsory subjects in the educational system of the entire island. However, the reversal of English being the higher medium of socio-political and economic activities through the vision of an integrated Ceylonese identity soon became to be eroded as *swabasha* started to imply Sinhala-only. As Robert Kearney (1978, p. 528) explains that the vernaculars being the means of ipseity for both the communities, the Sinhala-only demand reflected the majority's aspirations to reassert their cultural heritage, 'which they felt was endangered by the incursions of the West', whereas the minority thought that the decision 'could lead to the undermining of Tamil language and culture in Lanka and the eventual extermination of the Ceylon Tamil community as a distinctive and unique ethnic entity'.

Sinhala is an Indo-Aryan language originating from the north of India, whereas Tamil is a Dravidian language traversing southern India. Both have deep-rooted historico-cultural claims on the island. Sri Lankan revivalist movements from the eighteenth century onward brought Buddhism to the fore by emphasizing its connection with *Pali*, an artificially created language for the benefit of the communication of monks from different parts of India. Since *Pali* is the language of the Buddhist scriptures, which came to be written in Sinhalese in Sri Lanka as opposed to being an original Indian script, the revivalists imagined the region as *Dhammadipa*. This view was challenged by a time-honoured tradition of Tamil writings. It is claimed that the poets utilized the script for creating classical literature almost two thousand years ago. While the continuation of the tradition is not fully visible, Tamil literary history can be traced back to the fifteenth century, which has been enhanced by the contributions of mostly Hindu but considerable proportions of Christian and Muslim writers as well. The Tamil literary tradition views the island as a teardrop in the Indian Ocean by advancing the notion of Sri Lanka as a heterogeneous place. With the spread of English education, however, local gentries found westernization with or without conversion to Christianity to be the surest way of achieving upward mobility. Thus, the consequences of British modernization of the island were twofold: it unsettled the

traditional way of life, as well as highlighted religion as a prominent marker of identity through the Buddhist monks, who formed the fight for an authentic Sinhalese tradition.

The chronicles circulated by the monks stressed the destiny of the Sinhalese as the protectors of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, which had flourished there over centuries. This further incorporated the stories of Sinhalese survival in the land, despite difficulties produced for them by the Tamil-Hindu groups. Eventually, a mass level perception of the Tamils was developed, which blamed them for ancient animosities towards the Sinhalese. With the granting of a universal franchise to the people of Sri Lanka, the political leaders banked on this perception, as they became active in winning public support through campaigning for issues like the expansion of vernacular language usage. Soon enough, powerful blocs within the Sinhalese began to demand a higher status for Sinhala alone, which resulted into a division between the ethnic communities that grew increasingly wider after decolonization. The 1956 general election marked a watershed moment in the *Swabasha* Movement, the unity of which was replaced by communalism. As Neil DeVotta (2004, p. 67) puts it, '(t)he 1956 election was the first to indicate that the country lacked strong norms that could withstand political opportunism, and the ethnic outbidding' practised by the two major political parties. The Sinhalese realized the cogent force of language as a mobilizing agent across classes and religious groups, which profusely helped their number game of democracy. Consequently, the Official Language Act of 1956 placed Sinhala above Tamil and English for use in state matters. As I pointed out earlier, the Tamils reacted to the linguistic domination with massive protests, though the Sinhalese-led government found it still plausible to exclude the minority from nation-building endeavours. Notably, 1956 marked the 2500th birth anniversary of Buddha, which appeared to be a pertinent moment for not only dismantling the colonizer's language but also putting the Tamils on the back foot, since they had been the prime beneficiary of English learning in the island. The barbed decision led to

violent ethnic conflicts that have continued since the 1960s by generating a Civil War in the 1980s.

The comparable event I present is the Language Movement of 1952 in East Pakistan. When the new Pakistani elite based in West Pakistan assumed the power to represent the identity of a united Muslim nation, they adopted the single-language policy for making various ethnic groups assimilate into the state. This emulates modern Europe, where most languages are written in Latin or Roman script. In fact, the script separation of Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian language after the dissolution of Yugoslavia is an exception to the mainly monoscriptal condition in contemporary Europe. In contrast, there is hardly any South Asian region where scriptural differences do not constitute the grounds for separation among language communities, who were historically governed by rulers coming from various parts of the world. After the Mughal conquest of India, the rulers did not impose Turkic, their mother language, on the native population. Instead, they chose the prevalent Persian language as the administrative vehicle of the Empire. Thus, Persian became the language of the elites, which did not spread vastly outside the courtly atmosphere. However, the Muslims needed a *lingua franca*, which they created out of the admixture of Persian and standardized Hindustani languages. This is how Urdu came to be related to the Muslims in South Asia, which is why it was selected as the national language of Pakistan, even though languages like Sindhi, Pashto, and Siraiki were spoken by millions more in the state. Notably, Bengali started to be a recognized language of the people living in the northeast of India from the seventeenth century onward. The language gained high acclaim not only through an increasingly prominent literary tradition but also due to the Bengal delta's salient position on the commercial map of the sub-continent. The Bengali-speaking East Pakistan's self-assertion, therefore, challenged the idea of Pakistan as a community of coreligionists. Furthermore, the claim of a unifying language hid the fact that Urdu represented the culture of North Indian Muslims, who formed the support base for the ruling Muslim League party, and had migrated to the newly formed country in order to secure

their socio-cultural identity from the dominance of Hindi-based culture in India. Understandably, the single-language policy was a conscious decision by the North Indian Muslim Leaguers and the Punjabi civil servants of the British Raj to centralize power by establishing their superiority over the rest of the territorial inhabitants.

Predictably, the official discourse of the West Pakistani authorities claimed that the Bengali identity of the Muslims living in the East and their Hindu-religion influenced language and culture will be great obstacles towards forming a concordant existence inside the newly decolonized country. Alyssa Ayres (2009, p. 44) elaborates:

> If the idea was that Urdu was somehow primordially intertwined with Muslim consciousness, the converse seemed to be the case for Bengali, at least as far as West Pakistan was concerned: that it was, by virtue of its script and vocabulary, inherently un-Islamic. Bengali does not use a modified Arabic script; it is written from the left to the right, and its very appearance was visibly "Indic" rather than "Persianate."

Thus, Bengali was projected to be the biggest problematic block for Urdu to become the most befitting means of colliding language, religion, and nation into one integrated whole. However, the Bengali population viewed the domination of Urdu as a direct attack on their literature and culture, which would wither away in want of proper practice. The survival of Bengali language was essential to reduce its speakers' apprehension about the loss of rights and privileges as free citizens, though the dynamism and equality desired by the claimants of Bengali as a simultaneous state language were totally lost on the rulers. A civil servant of undivided Pakistan, Hasan Zaheer (1995, p. 24), regrets that the uncompromising enforcement of Urdu reveals the vulnerability of the West Pakistani rulers in the face of Bengal's Indic heritage: 'The protagonists of Urdu, however, proceeded with the task of Islamizing the Bengali language with evangelical fervour. If it was not possible to

replace it by Urdu, the next desirable solution was to change its script from Devnagri to Persian or Arabic'.

The visionary of the place, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was inevitably unsympathetic towards the demand for Bengali. He visited the province seven months after independence only to disappoint his audience by stating point blank that the people's concern about safeguarding their mother tongue was disruptive for the state. Obviously, the hegemony of Urdu stood opposed to the democratic aspiration of the people of the region. Thus, the structure of inequality between East and West Pakistan was put in place from the inception of the decolonized state. On the 27th of January 1952, the Prime Minister of Pakistan Khawaja Nazimuddin reasserted at a mass gathering in Dhaka (the capital city of East Pakistan) that only Urdu would be the state language of Pakistan. In order to challenge the decision, the students decided to observe a general strike in all the educational institutions across Dhaka. The Dhaka University Struggle Committee was formed, which brought out a procession on the 4th of February, which was enthusiastically greeted by the ordinary people lined up on the two sides of the streets the students walked down. The committee decided to bring out a much bigger procession on the 21st of February, when all students from various institutions in Dhaka would gather on the premises of the University. The processions were to unite in front of Dhaka Medical College Hospital and then head towards the East Pakistan Assembly Hall in order to request the members for a legislative motion supporting the public demand of recognizing Bengali as another state language of Pakistan.

On the 20th of February, the provincial authorities enforced an order under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code that prohibited all processions and meetings in Dhaka city. Despite the injunction, around twenty-two thousand students gathered next day in the University premises chanting, 'We demand *Bangla* (Bengali) as a State Language!' To disperse the demonstrators, the police first threw tear gas at them, and then carried out a baton charge. When the students still managed to reach near the Medical College, they opened

fire on the protesters, which instantly killed five of them. A monument was built later on to commemorate the martyrs and their resistance, which was turned into a mass struggle throughout the Eastern province. The structure of the monument represents the dignified mother in the middle surrounded by her determined sons and daughters, which highlights the martyred students' ultimate sacrifice for upholding their people's fundamental rights. Thus, the monument embodies the main message of the Bengali Language Movement, which is the dream of emancipation that decolonization had not guaranteed for the people of East Bengal. In 2000, the UNESCO (2013, p. 516) declared 21 February as the International Mother Language Day in pursuance of 'the development of fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world' as well as 'solidarity based on understanding, tolerance, and dialogue'.

Therefore, the rationale behind the book is to determine the effective role of cultural creations in enhancing peace in conflict ridden South Asia. I propose a tripartite dialogue among contemporary literary and cultural creations mostly in Bengali and Tamil languages (the latter mainly in translation) with the socio-political and historical treatises on linguistic nationalism in modern South Asia, as well as cultural theories of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Benedict Anderson. The purpose of my intervention is to create a cultural shift so that the ethnic competition can be transformed into ethnic accommodation. As Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore (2010, p. 69) succinctly posits, this has to be achieved through a transcendental view of human civilization:

> The most important fact of the present age is that all the different races of men have come close together. And again we are confronted with two alternatives. The problem is whether the different groups of peoples shall go on fighting with one another or find out some true basis of reconciliation and mutual help; whether it will be interminable competition or co-operation.

The lesson of civilization is that human beings have to win a strong moral position through cultivating the faculties of mutual assessment and affability. Otherwise, constant infighting will propel them towards a state of degradation. Cooperation among rival social groups is, therefore, not a utopian act. Instead, this is an effective means of preventing decolonized nation-states' from regressing on indicators of success that include ethnic tolerance, democracy, and good governance.

Nevertheless, the peoples of Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh too have failed to walk towards fulfilling their potential due to majoritarian, ethnocentric, and retributive preferences. Advertently or inadvertently, the peoples fuelled the cycle of affliction in the name of decolonization, which represents not only the shift of power from Europe to its former colonies, but also a utopian aspiration for establishing justice and equality both within the new nations and in the world. Following Darren Zook (1999), therefore, I will query if the single-language-oriented definition of the decolonized nations in South Asia shows a short-sighted emulation of the European nation-state, which switched on the unending *samsara*, or, the wheel of violence in the region by making its entirety full of unrest. I will examine if Bangladesh opted out of the cycle by following a more humane approach to nationalism, whereby every inhabitant of the homeland deserves equal respect, honor, and security. I will also scrutinize the foundational narrative of Bangladesh in terms of women's freedom and rights, which will be contrasted with the Tamil tale. The intervention is intrinsically significant, since by revealing the direct connection between language and war in South Asia, I attempt to demonstrate that the triumph of narrow nationalist ideologies exacts a heavy price in the form of a total breakdown of progress and freedom. Finally, by presenting the comparative and connective histories of the region, my study aims to bid the unreasonable nationalist defensiveness an overdue adieu. Thus, I hope that the discussions that follow will enhance historico-political understanding of postcolonial South Asia by lifting the discourse out of religious majoritarianism, ethnocentric debacles, and a hyperrealist shadow of Europe.

Bhasha Andolon and *Swabasha* Movement: Comparing Linguistic Nationalisms Originating from the Movements

As I outlined above, this book is rooted in comparison between the linguistic nationalisms born out of two pivotal language movements in South Asia: the Bengali *Bhasha Andolon* (Language Movement) of 1952 in East Pakistan and the *Swabasha* (vernacular) Movement of 1930s Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The book presents a comprehensive comparative study that examines their origins, trajectories, ideological foundations, and divergent outcomes, which are elaborated across the seven chapters. I will focus on the nature of the movements by illustrating that the Bengali movement was fundamentally secular and mass-based. It represented ordinary people's resistance against West Pakistani dominance; though Dhaka University students formed the vanguard, the cross-class participation remained key, since the entire social strata from intellectuals to rural peasants participated in it. *Bhasha Andolon* defended Bengali literary heritage by distinguishing religious faith from linguistic-cultural identity. The movement transformed linguistic grievance into broader demands for autonomy. On the other hand, *Swabasha* Movement initially embodied pluralistic aspirations, which gradually fragmented. The initial phase established the movement as a joint Sinhalese-Tamil demand for vernacular rights but divergence from this path occurred, which inevitably implied Tamil apprehensions about cultural survival.

I will reveal the ideological frameworks of the movements, demonstrating how Bengali intellectuals developed a critical stance towards Pakistan's religion-based nationalism: they asserted a critical voice against both colonial and postcolonial orthodoxies, challenged the equation of Muslim identity with Urdu language, recognizing that the Urdu-based identity from West Pakistan demanded obedience without political representation. The Bengali movement increased possibility for positive social transformation by connecting linguistic rights to

economic justice and political participation. However, *Swabasha* Movement took a sectarian turn due to the following aspects: the Tamils hardened mother language-based identity for political ends, obscuring internal caste and class divisions, and Tamil nationalism mirrored Sinhalese exclusivism rather than transcending it. This explains the ethnic group's shift from linguistic rights to territorial separatism.

This book employs Anderson's three models to analyse the movements: Pakistan's Official Nationalism depends on the imposition of Urdu to consolidate ruling elite power, which incorporated Russification-style policy demanding cultural assimilation. Sri Lanka's Popular Nationalism initiated vernacular-based nationalism with both spontaneous and rigid elements, which enabled Sinhala-Buddhist revivalism through print capitalism and the deployment of mytho-history to claim exclusive indigeneity. Nevertheless, mother-tongue-based nationalism explains why Tamil and Bengali nationalism depends on mother language as a decolonial asset. Said's Frameworks show that the Bengali movement represents a nationalism that introduced opposition to forced unity, diminutive view of history, and racial singularity. On the other hand, Tamil nationalism struggled to develop a coherent national consciousness through culture, enlightened masses, and collective historical agency. Similarly, Said enables us to view Orientalist Self/Other binary through the West Pakistani construction of Bengalis as inferior 'Other' and Sinhalese construction of Tamils as perennial 'Other' both of which led to armed conflict: Liberation War (1971) and Civil War (1983–2009). Spivak's feminist framework brings out Bengali Movement's progressive gender politics by unveiling that it encouraged women's public role, and built on Bengal's egalitarian tradition, which led to constitutional guarantees for gender equality. However, Tamil movement's traditionalist limitations are visible, as women are celebrated as supernatural symbols and motherhood became a metaphor for land/language without economic or political agency.

More importantly, the comparison reveals why *Bhasha Andolon* succeeded, whereas *Swabasha* failed. Analysing the factors working behind the movements, we realize that the former presented a unitary linguistic nationalism, whereas the latter became divided by majority/minority dynamics. In terms of ideological clarity, the humanist approach of the former created mass-appeal as opposed to the increasingly sectarian attitude on both sides of *Swabasha* Movement. Intellectuals and a charismatic politician like *Bangabandhu* [Friend of Bengal] Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who articulated his people's aspirations, whereas *Swabasha* was thwarted by elite fragmentation, constituted the leadership of Bengali nationalism spearheaded by *Bhasha Andolon*. The cultural resources that take centre stage due to the two movements demonstrate that the difference lies in a widely shared rich Bengali literary tradition, and separate literary canons for Sinhala and Tamil languages. As stressed above, the gender politics introduced by the two movements also differed, since *Bhasha Andolon* gave birth to progressive roles for women, whereas *Swabasha* showed signs of traditionalism. It is not surprising that *Bhasha Andolon* led to successful liberation of a nation, whereas *Swabasha* implies an ongoing struggle. Thus, the legacy of the movements is divergent as well: the former created a foundational narrative of an independent nation, whereas the latter foregrounds an unresolved conflict in a decolonized state.

Thus, the comparative model demonstrates the central argument of my book: mother language serves as a dual, critical function in postcolonial societies; it is not merely a cultural marker; it acts as a core organizing force for politics, shaping how power is structured, contested, and exercised in nations that have gained independence from colonial rule. The Bengali movement demonstrates how linguistic nationalism, when grounded in humanist values, can lead to political freedom. The Tamil movement shows how even justified linguistic grievances, when channelled through sectarian frameworks, can perpetuate cycles of violence without achieving emancipation. Therefore, the implications of this study for decolonized nations are the

following: (1) language rights are inseparable from economic justice; (2) mother-tongue-based nationalism must be distinguished from official or popular nationalism; (3) secular consciousness prevents linguistic movements from becoming sectarian; (4) women's emancipation must be integral, not symbolic, to nationalist narratives; and the Self/Other binary should be overcome through the comprehension that tolerance is not weakness—it actually strengthens both the decolonized individual's own standing and the community s/he's responsible for. The combination of i**nner conviction**—the speaker of a mother language is secure and unshaken in his/her own beliefs, and o**uter tolerance**—s/he is accepting of others' differing views—offers a pathway beyond the linguistic conflicts that have plagued decolonized South Asia.

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2. Dominations of Urdu and Sinhala Languages: Projected Majority and Professed Ethnicity

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Eminent French-African writer Albert Memmi (2004) posits his utopian thoughts by asking both the erstwhile decolonized people as well as the previous colonizers whether their bitterness and ambition will permit history to go past human beings one more time due to their non-transcendence of the debilitating sentiments, which prevents them from playing an active role rather than depending on inert hope for fulfilling their shared destiny on planet earth. Memmi champions Western civilization by asserting that decolonial moment can be the occasion for universalizing its values as opposed to declaring their end just because they originated in a location of domination. For him, it is

equivalent to rejecting algebra or printing due to their respective roots in Arab and Chinese spheres. Therefore, the advancement of values like individual freedom, equal opportunity, and coexistence among cultural groups is absolutely crucial for the success of decolonization. I agree with Memmi that if decolonized nations discard these values for their predominantly Western appearance, national independence will only produce 'shriveled crops' in the place of the 'bitter fruit' (ibid., p. 21) yielded by colonization. My contention, though, is that decolonized countries have not found their feet among the fully emerged nations of the world sometimes even after seventy years of independence not because of the lack of strength for embracing Western values. In fact, their old civilizations undoubtedly are reservoirs of comparable humanistic and progressive ideas. More often than not, however, the heritages are presented as the source of pride rather than principles for the aspiring nations.

Memmi interprets decolonized nations' dependence on vernacular languages as a sign of reviving old cultural pride, even though these languages are not always fit for the purposes of the communities' communicational and technological requirements. They might contain the spiritual core of these nations but Memmi believes that their lack of evolution through the speakers' years of dedicated production of knowledge prolongs these peoples' unrelenting reliance on the languages of their previous colonizers. For the decolonized, then, 'it has been more convenient, until now, to speak English or French, than Arabic or Hindi' (ibid., p. 43). Here again I have to disagree with Memmi, for he pinpoints the reason behind cultural bondages—even though they appear as refuges from the miseries of day-to-day existence—to be the safety valves and social bonds provided by the belongings. Memmi believes that this does not justify the decolonized peoples' excessive glorification of their past civilizational achievements but misleadingly builds up the picture of a mythical golden age and a gratifying future by ignoring and eventually wrecking the present. Significantly, Memmi recognizes that such construction suggests the overgrowth of 'pseudoculture' (ibid.) that the ruling elites often resort

to for thwarting people's liberty and enrichment. This is why I believe that the guarantee that Memmi urgently requires regarding decolonized peoples' obligatory efforts for shaping the new world lies in his disapproval of the elites' propulsion of mythical pasts, rather than the ordinary peoples' revival of a true cultural heritage.

Indeed, if the decolonized states attempt to obtain respectable places among the established nations, the only way forward is to create an effective vision through the proper utilization of their cultural wealth in order to enable the peoples for employing their energies for reaping the harvests of freedom. Otherwise, Memmi's warning rings true: national projects of decolonized countries will seem impoverished even before they are properly launched by exposing a historical impediment of arriving too late on the world stage. One way or another, the decolonized nations cannot afford to be run by unrealizable plans. Following James Blaut (1987), though, I will add that pursuing self-determination and renouncing impracticable ideas are integral to autochthonous people's nationalism. There are no foreseeable reasons why distinct cultures, communities, and kindred folks should initiate movements for achieving homelands of their own by denouncing memberships of multi-ethnic states, unless their rights and dignities are not denigrated there in deliberate ways, as I noted in the introductory chapter. This is how Blaut differentiates between nationalist missions and national liberation movements without denying the existence of narrow or atavistic nationalism. Once we register that nationalist struggles are varied in nature, which usually fall into the progressive and regressive categories, we cannot dismiss national entities out of hand by declaring them dated. I strongly believe that like Blaut, our task is to help the former win because national liberation struggles are by default movements for social justice in the decolonized parts of the globe.

Even though decolonization is no elixir through which formerly colonized locales liberate them from colonial custody and gain ranks with evolved modern nations, their continued economic and political dependencies on the metropoles do not make them irrelevant in the

context of the current stage of capitalism. Following Blaut, I argue instead that it appears as though the unhindered flow of capital has outdated the nationalist states by presenting 'the geography of the entire world as, in essence, a uniform surface, not really divided up into discrete political spaces', which further suggests that 'there is now a world space in which economic distance alone governs the relationship between the centres of advanced capitalism and the peripheral regions' (ibid., p. 42). Political boundaries do not seem to be holding up in the face of the flow of multinational capital. However, this picture aggrandizes the scale of capitalist advances by ignoring the sheer fact of economic processes because of which neither capitalism nor multinational companies can function without depending on the corresponding state machinery. Therefore, I will not depict decolonization either as an end of European control over offshore territories, or, as a start of nationalist leaders' speech making, handshaking, and flag hoisting phenomenon, which the media footages and photos presented to us as 'a series of carefully choreographed independence ceremonies over several decades after World War II' (Kennedy, 2016, p. 2).

The newfound sovereignty of the states was not about the apparently amicable transfer of power; it was arguably about the translation of the formerly colonized people's political imagination into a sustained vision of socio-economic advancement. The waves of decolonization that swept through the Global South spanning nearly the last three centuries, therefore, bore tidings of great reforms towards the socio-political upliftment of the region's millions of inhabitants. The question remained whether the projected nationalist resolution spoke of the opportunity or not. Following Partha Chatterjee (1993), I argue that the erasure of the social justice and civilizational progress-oriented vision from the nationalist scheme not only leads to the rise of xenophobia, jingoism, and authoritarianism inside the states but also thwarts the prodigious promise of decolonization movements for upholding the values of autonomy, national distinctness, and unique contribution towards common humanity in the respective societies.

Since the main drive of decolonization is a universal move towards freedom from foreign controls, nationalist idealism assigns the growth of the nation to the vitality of the state by stressing people's choice for unperturbed freedom and unhindered modernization. Chatterjee is, however, uncomfortable with the zeal for modernization, since it becomes a double-bind for decolonization through being a shared ground between colonial domination and nationalist discourse.

Rightfully enough, Chatterjee's concern is the lack of creativity, which forestalls the initiation of new institutional frameworks that embody the zeitgeist of today's nation-states: progress and modernity. This will ensure that the colonial state neither supports imperial interests nor repeats its role. Ideally speaking, then, national sovereignty has to be utilized for safeguarding the idea that the state operates above the narrow group interests by creating a system, which ensures an equal distribution of wealth and fair access to justice for all. From this perspective, he finds Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* to be commendable for its highly unconventional approach to the question of nationality. For Chatterjee, Anderson's originality lies in approaching the question by moving beyond the set of extrinsic and abstruse criteria. Thus, he crucially challenges the determinism associated with the national community by showing how it is not automatically produced by the assemblage of certain concrete social elements; rather, the entity has to be created with a common view of the territorial inhabitants' togetherness. By emphasizing the freedom of the people to envision the ground of their unity in their chosen manner, Anderson finally opens up the horizon to manifest the nation through thinking.

Without further engaging with the full impact of this proposition, however, which can offer the possibility of addressing the questions of justice, progress, and modernity in an innovative way, Chatterjee investigates the Andersonian mechanism that allows language communities to solidify their unique visions. It is true that Anderson unearths that the mechanism of the comingling of the capitalist system of production, print technology, and the catastrophic linguistic varieties

played a major role in designing nationalist consciousness mostly in the Northern Hemisphere that the decolonized world eventually pursued. However, I disagree that Anderson discovers the varied and even contradictory forms of nationalism inherent in the formation of language communities by ignoring the possibilities that the variety brings. As opposed to ascribing 'unmitigated political pessimism' (ibid., p. 22) to Anderson, I would like to emphasize that his models of nationalism do not completely flatten the obliqueness, repressed reality, and unsettled condition of nationalist imagination, as Chatterjee believes it to be the case. In fact, Chatterjee finds Anderson's formulae of official and popular forms of nationalism to be very convenient for repeating in the alleged Third World. He believes that by assigning the twentieth century decolonized states with the modular nature, Anderson fails to see beyond the nation-building process in the decolonized world as 'a matter of a vanguard intelligentsia coming to state power by "mobilizing" popular nationalism and using the "machiavellian" (sic) instruments of official nationalism. Like religion and kinship, nationalism is an anthropological fact, and there is nothing else to it (ibid.)'. My point is that along with the mobilizational and Machiavellian formulations of nationalism, Anderson offers us the possibility of moving beyond mere functionalism by viewing the mother tongue as a natural source of fellowship in anticolonial homelands.

Anderson (2006) begins his seminal work by acknowledging that despite the fact that the quality of nation-state has become the predominant political value of the twentieth-century world order, it is outrageously difficult to define both the quality and the entity. Therefore, to understand the phenomenon, scrupulous examination has to be undertaken regarding three aspects: the historicity of nation-states, the evolution of interpretations regarding the entities, and the reason behind the profundity of emotion attached to the 'cultural artefacts' (ibid., p. 4). As I have been arguing, the new world nation-states falter in achieving their decolonizing goals, if they are given over to the isms they depend on for solidifying their existence. Therefore,

Anderson is astonishingly correct when he reminds us that the political efficacy of nationalism has remained decrepit for the lack of philosophical grounding. Following Anderson, I argue that 'Nationalism-with-a-big-N' (ibid., p. 5) is emblematic of the difficulty in revealing the nation-state's emancipatory potential, since the ideologies related to the concept—whether they be conservatism, authoritarianism, or, primordialism—overshadow the fact that it can strengthen the kinship ties inside the geographical boundary through providing the inhabitants with a common vision. Hence comes the illustrious definition of nation provided by the writer: 'it is an imagined political community— and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (ibid., p. 6).

As Anderson explains, the national community is imagined not because it is forged in a certain fashion, but because the members of the group generally share a fellowship through believing in a common image of the entity. Thus, they actively contribute to the building up of the image through their mental faculties. In truth, 'Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (ibid.). By emphasizing the 'style' of nation formation, Anderson beautifully manifests both the pattern and the spirit of the togetherness. Furthermore, the nation is restricted by a geographical radius, for not even the most devoted nationalist contributes to a specific model of the nation by dreaming of universal participation in it. In other words, nations are shaped not to be dissolved into the greater humanity, but to emerge as distinguished communities among the cultural groups of the planet. Significantly, the distinctive groups imagine their homeland to be free of foreign control. The autonomy they search for reflects the Enlightenment and revolutionary views of the new world order, which increasingly diminished the hierarchical realm of dynasties, divine rights of rulers, and even theocracies. Since the latter was particularly challenged by the discrepancies between religious institutions' metaphysical claims and the pluralities of the corresponding cultures in different territorial settings, people desired for their sovereign nation-states to be

emblematic of their aspiration for freedom. Given the cerebral and psychological nature of involvement in the creation and the sustenance of the image, the distinctiveness, and the yearning regarding nation-states, it is no wonder that the fraternity the entities promise generates feelings of such passionate intensity that countless masses over the past few centuries have been prepared to lay down their lives in order to protect the sovereignty of their territories.

The significance of safeguarding the sovereignty is particularly comprehensible when we look into the context of the arrival of nationalist imagination in the political arena of the world. As Anderson notes, through the failure of three predominant methods of ascribing meaning to and offering redemption from the everyday deprivations and deteriorations of human life, namely, the sacred language-based access to communities, the organization of hierarchical and centralizing forces of power through dynasties, and the belief in the simultaneity of cosmic and historical times through Divine Providence, humanity were in search of a novel means of connecting fraternity, political system, and the passage of time during the sixteenth century. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the integration of people through these previous forms became even more challenged due to the increasing manifestation of the divine through the mundanity, the fragmentariness, and the multiplicity of human affairs. The condition facilitated human abilities to form unconventional collectivities, which Holland et al. (1998, p. 49) term to be '"as if" realms' for the creation of which people employ their capabilities 'dialectically and dialogically', since they naturally feel geared towards producing their own socio-cultural system of identity. Therefore, through the people's efforts, writings, enactments, and creativities, they build 'a frame of meaning, a virtual world, a world that has been figured' (ibid., p. 51).

The question is whether the figured world of a nation can creditably focus on anything other than universal human values. To reiterate through Helen Ting (2008), then, the virtual reality of nationhood is concretized through social practice. Therefore, if a nation-state reifies ethnicity instead of assuaging ethnic-oriented unfairness, the

establishment not only undermines justice and equity but also renders it vulnerable to cultural conflicts. This is why I believe that the incongruity between the ideological framework and the actual political formation of the nation-state has to be marked out in order to comprehend the dynamics between the construction and the operation of 'nation-ness', which Anderson (2006, p. 3) rightly highlights to be 'the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time'. Unlike Chatterjee (1993), therefore, I believe that the two predominant modes of sharing the same territory that Anderson explains are not simply modular, since official and popular nationalisms give us strong insights into the unease between the constructive and the operational aspects of nation-states. On the one hand, the official approach affirms a nation's identity through a language, which is not necessarily a vernacular, but serves the interests of the dominant group. On the other hand, the populist path organizes communities according to vernacular languages. From this perspective, Anderson's method transcends being solely modular, since it reveals that both his proposed forms of nation formation leave room for re-imagining the nation-state because they produce the lack of attachment to the imagined space for the native speakers, whose mother tongues are not automatically factored into the figuration.

Interestingly, the writer's use of the term does not suggest that he solely depends on the first meaning of the term, which signifies the standardized arrangement of an object. Instead, by putting '"modular"' under inverted commas, when Anderson (2006, p. 4) proclaims nation-states to be 'the spontaneous distillation of a complex "crossing" of discrete historical forces', it can be argued that he stresses the second sense of the term, which means relating to a modulus. What is the constant factor here? It appears that the writer pinpoints this to be the common aspiration for the state, status, and condition of a nation. He argues that without aspiring to the condition, if European precedence of creating nation-states by replacing the old world order of dynasties and theological communities is followed, the result is not only unexpected piracy but oftentimes substandard copies. Notably, he

compares the movement of nationalist consciousness from Europe to other places of the earth with transplantation process, which underlines that the entity can be given a new life by being rooted in new soils through which it becomes 'merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations' (ibid.). Thus, the writer focuses on rerouting rather than replicating European nationalism outside its terrain. By further demonstrating the nation-state to be 'an invention on which it was impossible to secure a patent', the writer refrains from supporting the 'widely different' (ibid., p. 67) forms the uninspired reproduction of the European formulae brought forward.

The point is that the absence of intellectual rights protection makes the European example to be followed in a flexible way. Anderson reiterates that as batches of national entities appeared in the Western Hemisphere from late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, their 'basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation' (ibid., p. 46). Likewise, the revolutionary waves that shook France between 1787 and 1799 reverberated throughout the world by reducing the distance between the Global North and the Global South in terms of establishing the political power of the bourgeoisie that shifted the ground beneath feudalism. Thus, the heightening of national consciousness was the exemplary precedence for worldwide cultural communities to follow in order to accelerate political changes in their societies. Since nationalism could not be patented, three approaches to the concept were possible: a) emulating the condition evoked by the nineteenth-century Europe, b) surpassing its exemplarity by aspiring to the ideals of the French Revolution through upholding the supremacy of people's rule, and c) depending on replication to create state sovereignty in an unsatisfactory manner. Evidently, the Andersonian patterns of achieving the status of the nation have a broad scope, which makes us realize that by modular existence of the entities, the writer does not straightforwardly imply blind copies of European nation-states. On the contrary, his use of the term suggests that he views the non-European nations as standard outcomes of nationalist aspirations. Nevertheless,

where the ambition for nationalist consciousness leads specific communities to is completely dependent on their capabilities and concerns.

In terms of utilizing Anderson in the South Asian context, we can think of South Asianist like Robert King (2008, p. 315), who reminds us that nationalism developed later in the Indian sub-continent compared to Europe, only emerging in the 1880s. The Sepoy Mutiny (1857), a violent uprising against the British rule in India, as well as the emergence of the Indian National Congress (1885) helped spread national consciousness and the need for mass communication in local languages. While local patriotism already existed, it grew stronger as regional identities became tied to nationalist movements. Language-based ethnic groups like Bengalis, Marathis, and Tamils gained political awareness through events such as the 1905 Partition of Bengal. King outlines how nationalist aspiration takes its shape in the Indian sub-continent, as he records:

> This heady mixture of language and nationalism and freedom and self-determination came to British India as the twentieth century dawned. The Indian freedom movement was almost from its beginnings concerned about language… One issue was the national language—what the national language of India (meaning today's India plus Pakistan and Bangladesh) should be once the British were gone. (Ibid., p. 316)

This confirms that language was a medium through which a non-European nation like India tried to experiment with its idealistic configuration. The types of configurations eventually materialized in decolonized South Asia, therefore, need to be evaluated, which Anderson makes possible for us to do through his theorization of different forms of nationalism. Braj B. Kachru (2008, p. 1) categorically mentions that South Asia as a region 'has been characterized, in great exasperation, as a linguistic "problem area," a proverbial Tower of Babel', which makes it even more pressing for us to look at the patterns

of nation formation in the area, where absorbing and adapting European modernity, while ensuring true cultural and spiritual revival, became overwhelmingly challenging due to the undecidability of creating a structure out of the linguistic varieties.

If we look at the formation of India and Pakistan when the British left the sub-continent in 1947, we also realize that language did not play exactly an unemotional role in this. Hindi was claimed to have succeeded English as a common language of India. This was an attempt to portray India as a Hindi-speaking nation, despite the fact that 'India has a total of 121 languages and 270 mother tongues' (Blog, 2023). In a land of diverse linguistic groups, where Hindi-speaking states cannot exercise a clear-cut dominance over the rest of the non-Hindi-speaking states of the Union, Francesca Orsini (2009) explains that the decision to adopt Hindi as a state language reflects the British influence on educated Indians. They also wanted to view the national community as homogenous and culturally distinguished: 'From the First half of the nineteenth century, under the influence of British ideas and institutions, many educated Indians started evolving codes, institutions and a language to express the need for new concepts like "unity", "progress", and a "common cultural heritage"' (ibid., p. 1). Indian intellectuals started to develop strategies from early nineteenth century onward to forge national unity through a common cultural endowment by relying on people in the social space as a unified cultural community, despite the fragmented reality of the time. In order to achieve the 'One country, one language' goal, Hindi literary associations and activists played a key role. By interconnecting the language issue with greater purposes like education, language was deployed in community service and turned into a tool of creating a novel history of an independent community. Orsini observes that '"Pure Hindi" mirrored, and brought into being every time it was used, an (ideal) community of serious, equal, educated, and public-minded Indian citizens, *without any visible marker* apart from education and familiarity with the cultural tradition: differences of caste and status were thus pushed outside (written) language' (ibid., p. 12; emphasis in the original). Indeed, the nineteenth-

century process of language standardization in India reveals a key paradox: while British officials sought to identify a single vernacular per province for administrative use, Indian elites were actively reshaping their own languages into standardized forms. This created a new link between language and community identity, where distinct scripts (Persian for Urdu, Devanagari for Hindi) reinforced separate cultural and religious traditions. As a result, both languages became 'public languages' (ibid., p. 23)—standardized, printed, and used in government institutions, public forums, and even religious preaching across North India.

However, as Andrew Simpson (2007, pp. 7–8) points out in the treasure trove he edited, *Language & National Identity in Asia*:

> Hindi' as justified as the natural choice for a national language in fact included many language varieties that locally went by other names, such as Rajasthani, Maithili, Braj, and Awadhi, but differences between these varieties and standard Hindi were classed as being merely dialectal variation rather than indicative of independent language status.

Understandably, when people are informed by the authorities that their vernacular is in fact a regional dialect, they tend to be protective of the heritage. As the authorities' verdict subsequently comes to be trusted due to their higher levels of education and cognition, the end result becomes the creation of linguistic identities, which are sought for negotiating suitable cultural formulations within the nation-state. This is further demonstrated through a reverse process of clustering languages under a single label. Through this process, Hindi and Urdu languages emerge as two different entities, despite sharing the same form, Hindustani being the common, spoken mother language from which modern, standardized Hindi and Urdu emerged as distinct, formalized registers. The foundation is Khariboli, the dialect of Delhi and its surrounding Western Uttar Pradesh region. Its prestige grew because Delhi was a major political and commercial centre, and during

the Mughal period (sixteenth–nineteenth centuries), the everyday speech of the bazaars and army camps came into extensive contact with the court language, Persian. Thus, Urdu developed in the Muslim courts and camps, cultivating a more Persianized and Arabized vocabulary, especially for formal and literary purposes. Hindi, on the other hand, returned to the indigenous Devanagari script (the script used for Sanskrit) and, as a counter to Urdu's Persianization, it began to Sanskritize its vocabulary, drawing on its ancient Indo-Aryan heritage for formal terms. During the nationalist struggle

> The growing support for Hindi, and its politicization in the 1920s on the wave of Gandhi's nationalism, changed the context of the language issue quite dramatically: suddenly the question of a national language (*rāṣṭrabhāṣā*) appeared plausible, even urgent. What had been thus far a provincial contest between scholars of Hindi and Urdu now became a matter of national politics. (p. 125)

Tracing how Hindi rose from the provincial to the national level in order to contribute to the nationalist discourse, Orsini critiques the ideological campaign to establish Hindi as India's national language. She argues that this push was built on a nationalist narrative that framed Hindi not just as a practical necessity for unifying a multilingual nation, but as a sacred, almost mystical force. By linking it to religious traditions, proponents presented Hindi as a spiritual path, open to all, which would create an all-encompassing national community and foster a sense of unity. Thus, Hindi became part of a nationalist strategy, presenting widespread consensus on the mystical unity as already achieved, thereby dismissing any potential opposition as the work of a few unreasonable dissenters.

The constructed nature of nationalist discourse is further illustrated in Preetha Mani and Jennifer Dubrow's (2025) discussion of languages, modernism, and postcolonial moment in South Asia. They argue that postcolonial modernists use language abstractly to move beyond its

limits, seeking relief from linguistic conflicts. However, this abstraction remains tied to the specific, troubling languages that shape their experience. As Mani and Dubrow exemplify the fraught context inherited by South Asian writers, who could turn 'to Hindi, English, Urdu, regional language, dialect, or some combination of these' only to discover that 'the languages on which they settled were always one or few among many languages in relation to which their choices functioned as cautious interlocutor, intimate fellow, or antagonistic contender (or sometimes all of these at once!)' (ibid., p. 401). This makes us realize that defining South Asian modernisms strictly by national, regional, or linguistic boundaries remains volatile. Instead, the writers suggest that we have to be aware how these conventional borders have been challenged by employing open and non-specialist translation practices that go far beyond simple textual conversion between languages. The question remains whether no nationalist model is stable and satisfactory in taking forward these peoples' modernist, cultural, as well as historical aspirations.

This brings us back to Anderson. As I mentioned earlier, the writer expounds that the modern need for newer forms of unification for politico-cultural communities was expressed both through official and popular nationalisms. By depending on these concepts and their workings in the nationalist imaginations of (undivided) Pakistan and Sri Lanka, this chapter aims to investigate two subjects: the barely hidden dynastic ambition of official nationalism that drives a wedge between the spheres of nationality and democratic polity, which is why Anderson calls the suzerain vision to be an invitation to 'a Barmecide feast' (ibid., p. 111); and secondly, the actual process of popular nationalism the efficacy of which depends on the infrastructure like 'elections, party organizations, and cultural celebrations' (ibid., p. 135) so that the most salient societal force can be channelized in support of oligarchs. Therefore, I will examine how Pakistan becomes a disappointing experience, as the reason behind the unity of its irreconcilable parts on paper, namely, religion, transpires to be the source of its impairment in reality. Similarly, I will evaluate if Sri

Lanka's popular nationalism proves how the paraphernalia of nationalism is no guarantee for the coexistence of the people's rudimentary dreams. Finally, I will investigate how important it is for the decolonized nations to recognize that the eternally existent community they aspire for can be sustained by mother-language ties that create unisonous people believing in the same ethos, which is lodged in history. Anderson asserts that mother-tongue-based states can demonstrate that 'from the start the nation was conceived in language, not in blood, and that one could be "invited into" the imagined community' (ibid., p. 145). Therefore, my questions are under what circumstances anticolonial movements disregard the invitations and at what cost.

Undivided Pakistan's Official Nationalism

The connection between nationalism and religion is one of the central tenets of Anderson's argument. He suggests that religion's efficacy in assuaging the overpowering burdens of suffering in human life has not been superseded by nationalism. Instead, nationalism came into being by defeating the fatalities and contingencies that religions provided acceptance for through realigning them with historical destinies and uplifting eternities. If nationalism does not ultimately produce answers to puzzling existential questions like why humans are here and what purpose they are serving, it seems even more confounding that numerous modern nationalist systems have incorporated religion in the schemes. As an inheritor of Irish nationalist history through his ancestors' contribution to the Irish Rebellion of 1798 against the British Rule, I think Anderson unsurprisingly searches for the root cause of the worldwide surge of nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, though he cannot wish away the tangled connection between Irish nationalism and Catholicism.

For Anderson (1999), nationalism and religion diverge on the question of taking the right path: whereas a country can choose a wrong direction, a religion stays quintessentially opposed to this

approach. Citing the nineteenth-century German sociologist Max Weber, the writer claims that philistinism of the masses drives a country towards a wrong direction, which is why the thinkers of nations have to come up with ideals that the unborn citizens will be proud of embracing as their heritages. The obligation of basing nationhood on something powerful makes the nationalist visionary emulate religiosity in order to kindle the 'messianic hope that the future will recognize "in our [the posterity's] nature the nature of its own ancestors"' (ibid., p. 199). Anderson goes so far as to assert that nationalism even borrows religious elements, for its imaginers aim for achieving goals and generating solidarity, which serve them in their modern day contexts. Whether or not nationalism imbues religious sensibility, it is understandable from the writer that in order to ensure selfless support of their fellow nationals, the founders of nations must project the core objectives of the entities as matters that generate common good.

How do national imaginations accomplish this position? Interestingly, Anderson (2001) strongly suggests that the nationalisms of East and West are neither divided nor will be so in the future on the question of their patterns. He exemplifies that 'Meiji nationalism has obvious similarities to the late nineteenth-century official nationalisms we find in Ottoman Turkey, Tsarist Russia and Imperial Great Britain' (ibid., p. 32), which suggests that nationalist consciousness does not follow East/West dichotomy. Anderson believes that maintaining the unqualified dichotomy in today's globalized context is even more difficult due to the fact that the particular forms of imagination utilized by elites to produce befitting connections between place and community do not ultimately depend on Asianness and Europeanness, for example. Instead, they rely on the historical conditions of geographies that necessitate the rulers' particular approach in forging the connections. Thus, official nationalism is a form that arises from the need for the state to prioritize the territorial control, not its people's emancipatory goals. This is why I will look into the particular historico-

political conditions that made possible official nationalism to be associated with both Europe and Asia.

Ranajit Guha ([1985] 2007), however, attacked the concept of official nationalism as tautological, since considering a national community as a society subscribing to the common belief is non-directional. Worse still, Guha thinks that the concept is colonial in nature. He explains that official nationalism reduces an anticolonial nationalism like the one propounded by India into a product of the native elites' allegiance to Western liberal values as well as competition against the British colonial regime for securing control over the bureaucratic institutions. For him, the crucial domains for nationalism are differently permuted through the autonomy and interdependence of the elite and the subaltern groups. Therefore, Guha argues that official nationalism might be able to saturate the first domain, but by no means the entirety of the nation-building processes. By citing other European examples where the peasantry was the mainstay of the nationalist struggle, Guha adds that 'the peasantry of Bangladesh whose want of familiarity with Bengali in its graphic form did not prevent them from fighting for its recognition as a central issue in their twenty-year long struggle for independence' (ibid., p. 106). In my view, Guha's argument regarding the struggle for Bangladesh's independence as a peasant-dominated one is misleading, since it was a mass-driven phenomenon against Pakistan's official nationalism. Anderson describes this as an ethno-linguistic struggle: 'Old Pakistan broke into two separate nations partly because of Karachi's suppression of the Bengali language, which then became the motor for a linguistic nationalism in Bangladesh' (p. 41), the definite grounds for which I examine below.

In order to illustrate the way official nationalism is reflected in the nationalist imagination of undivided Pakistan, I have to explain how Anderson defined the term. The writer views this concept of nation as an anticipatory programme that attempts to combine the process of granting nationality with the retention of power by the dominant group that feels threatened with marginalization and exclusion by another

powerful cultural group. This is why the threatened group desires to consolidate power by stretching a limited idea of nation based on its preferred language over a vast body of its polyglot territories. The group appears dynastic in trying to retain the imperialistic mode of ruling in an age of awakened nationalist awareness. Hence, their conception of nation is dated and enforced, rather than modernized and inspirational. The ruling dynasties of Europe during the nineteenth century had to initiate this brand of nationalism, since their non-national standing in relation to their multilingual subjects in gigantic provinces created politico-cultural difficulties for the validity of their regimes. As Anderson (2006, p. 83) adds: 'Romanovs ruled over Tatars and Letts, Germans and Armenians, Russians and Finns. Habsburgs were perched high over Magyars and Croats, Slovaks and Italians, Ukrainians and Austro-Germans'. In order to administer the conglomerate subjects effectively, the ruling groups chose to implement their acquired or convenient print-vernaculars as languages of their states.

By citing the example of the late eighteenth-century Austro-Hungarian sovereign Joseph II (1764–1790), Anderson shows that his policy of changing the state language from Latin to German was a way of transforming a medieval and nobility-oriented administration into a compelling and mass-based one. As an enlightened ruler of the Austrian Habsburg dominions, his goal was to introduce varied politico-cultural reforms for which German was a suitable vehicle due to the language's literary and cultural strength as well as its value as a marker of minority group identity in all parts of the dominions. However, not all Habsburgs spoke German; their state policy was a measured step towards the greater unification of the vast and varied lands they ruled, which were becoming uncontrollably larger. However, the more the dynasty highlighted German the surer they sidelined the non-German speakers of their land. Nevertheless, the mid-nineteenth-century trend of selecting some effective languages as state languages inspired Euro-Mediterranean dynasties to follow the norm. 'Romanovs discovered they were Great Russians, Hanoverians that they were English,

Hohenzollerns that they were Germans—and with rather more difficulty their cousins turned Romanian, Greek, and so forth' (ibid., p. 85), quips Anderson rather pithily. Obviously, official nationalism facilitated the transformation through the represented potency of carefully chosen print languages to produce uniformity between the rulers and the ruled.

In effect, the concept fortifies civilian politics so that its practitioners can act in the name of their nations, rather than presenting their visions in building their national communities. The Russification policy adopted by Alexander III (1881–1894) in order to unify his heterogeneous subjects like the Ukrainian, Finnish, and Lett proves this point. The Russifying measures demanding cultural assimilation from these people, despite the development of their distinct national awareness, ensured that their adoption of Russian language would work as a catalyst for cementing the rulers' powerbase. Indeed, the late nineteenth-century Czardom projected themselves as cultural conquerors through a print-vernacular, which was neither the court language (eighteenth-century St. Petersburg spoke in French), nor the chosen medium of communication for the provincial German nobility. In fact, it badly affected one of the most loyal communities to Czardom, Baltic Germans, some of whose distinguished higher education institutions ceased to exist due to German being the medium of instructions there.

In his characteristically chucklesome way, Anderson suggests that Alexander III's contemporary sovereign Victoria von Saxe-Coburg-Gotha's London-centred version of official nationalism shares the same objective. Twenty years after Victoria's accession to the throne, London's acquisition of India was nationalized, and the educational system of the overseas territory came to be governed by English language. As the president of the Committee of Public Instruction initiated in Bengal in 1834, Thomas Babington Macaulay, explains that the thoroughly Anglicized educational system will introduce a combined nationality of Indian Britishness, which will in the long run complete the cultural subjugation of the colonized people. Despite

Anderson's sarcasm of the amalgamation of the two nationalities as imperialism's 'enormous progress in daintiness' (ibid., p. 91), he clarifies that both Russification and Anglicization opened doors of great opportunities, especially for multitude of middle-class professionals, like government employees, school teachers, entrepreneurs, and businessmen, to spread out in the luminous realms created by the officially endorsed languages.

Even though linguistic kinship created by Russification was much stronger than that offered by Anglicization due to the fact that only a minority of the British subjects had any durable socio-political connections with the colonial metropolis of London, both the processes depended on successful propagandas that the rulers introducing them represented the most authentic forms of the nations. Anderson shows how the official model of nation formation in twentieth-century Asia, Japan, and Thailand in particular, spread the dominant groups' anticipatory strategies against cultural depreciation through state-controlled education, re-writing of history, and even militarism. The propaganda conducted through print and school mediums, for example, was very effective in projecting Japan's conservative coterie as the authentic manifestation of the nation, where memberships were bestowed on the people through the self-affirming power of the state's conquering nature, rather than its acceptance of being conquered. Thus, official nationalism is, in Anderson's view, an acrobatic feat displayed by the ruling classes, who turn a dynastic imagination into a nationalistic one. The purposeful merger of the old and the new through welding together imperial and national imaginings is a deliberate Machiavellianism, which establishes the political strength of the ruling elites. In his review of *Imagined Communities,* Mark Hamilton (2006, p. 81) ascertains that this is one of the ways of recognizing 'how national imaginings are drawn upon and mobilised by particular actors and "brokers" to accomplish their political and economic goals' (Illustration 2.1).



Illustration 2.1 Partition of the Indian sub-continent

Through Anderson, we realize that nationalist thinkers utilize religion in order to augment group solidarity as well as persuade the fellow nationals that religion gives them pride of place among other communities. Rather than being a practice principle, religion is thus

introduced as a formidable marker of cultural identity. Arguably, the idea of a Muslim majority Pakistan developed from this seeding ground of group cohesion and cultural distinctness. Interestingly, it drew strength from the Muslim population's pride of being a precolonial ruling group. Prominent Pakistani historian K. K. Aziz (1967) analyses the historical cause of the creation of the country in terms of Mughal Sultanate so as to portray the moment of decolonization as an event for recovering the culture of the lost Empire. Indeed, the writer champions the rulers of the Empire as the heroes of the Muslim majority nation: 'Babur the lion-hearted, Humayun the wanderer, Akbar the great, Jahangir the just, Shah Jahan the magnificent, Aurangzeb the puritan — the world has nothing to match Babur and his five lineal descendants who gave India peace and glory and fame for nearly two centuries' (ibid., p. 17). Understandably, the dream here is to create a nation-state that is inspired by the Muslim rulers' religious authority, political acumen of keeping a foreign territory under peaceful control, and cultural strength of initiating the glorious tradition of Indo-Islamic art, which also reflects their personal excellence. Religion is thus viewed as an effective means of gaining gallant support from the fellow Pakistani nationals, who are persuaded to believe that the core objectives of the religion-based state will generate common good in a Moghul style. This explains why Urdu became such an integral part of the neo-imperial imagination, as it were. The language was identified as the most suitable vehicle for conveying to the Pakistani nationals how Muslim culture made its mark in an unknown land for the Mughal sovereigns by transforming Persian for forming the essence of the *lingua franca*. The acquired language thus fuelled the official nationalism of the decolonized state for its effective rule over the conglomerate subjects like the Punjabis, Sindhis, Saraikis, Pashtuns, and Balochis.

Aziz expands on this idea through the nineteenth-century reformist Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898), who foresaw the urgency of solidarity among the Muslims in India, whose minoritarian condition, politically vanquished status after the unsuccessful rebellion against the British in 1857, and educational and economic bankruptcies made

them vulnerable in a democratic and progressive environment, where the majority Hindus enjoyed a pioneering role set up by their English-educated strata. Khan's educational, intellectual, and cultural reforms for the Muslims through which he attempted to introduce them to European modernity, were duly advanced by his colleagues at Aligarh. This gave birth to the Aligarh Movement (1858–1906), which made Urdu accessible to the Indian Muslims in order to facilitate their familiarity with liberal worldviews. In this way, Urdu became pivotal in constituting a sense of solidarity, a consciousness of community, and a culture of spiritual bonding among the fellow believers. Urdu, which was neither the sole language of the Indian Muslims nor that of the greater Muslim world, became the conveniently chosen print language in order to sustain the secure sense of belonging of the visionaries of Pakistan.

Following M. L. Ferrar (1932, p. 182), we realize that Urdu fulfilled the requirement of official nationalism in producing uniformity between the rulers and the ruled due to the fact that it was the native language of the Northern Indian Muslims, whose vigorous contributions to 'all religious, educational and social progress' of the time made them the natural leader for the rest of the group. Ironically, the nineteenth-century movement that aimed at introducing the Indian Muslims to improved worldviews ended up creating a passionate notion of a community that preferred to follow the group's cultural leadership unquestioningly. The Muslims' limitations of being a minority in India were thus hoped to be overcome through a distinct sense of nationhood and destiny, even though the historico-cultural contingencies of such proposition remained mostly unexamined. Patenting the idea of nationhood on the culture of the United Provinces (now *Uttar Pradesh*) where Aligarh was situated, the pioneers of Muslim separatism refrained from addressing the fundamental problematique of millions of Muslims' preference for the Indian Union as a homeland. The religion-based idea of a nation became even more contradictory during the early days of Pakistan, which was dominated by two major cultural groups: the *Mohajirs* (the Migrants), one million

of whom were Urdu-speaking inhabitants of places like *Uttar Pradesh,* Bombay, and Hyderabad, and the Punjabis, who were the dominant segment of the army and the administration. Even though, both the groups advocated the cause of Urdu, the *Mohajirs*' emphasis on Muslim culture made them influence the bureaucracy and the political decision-makers with a secularized view of Islam, whereas the increasingly more dominant Punjabis continued 'to propagate a more conservative social and religious ethos' (Jaffrelot, 2002, p. 17). They set the precedence for rejecting the traditions of regional cultures, if they did not appear Islamic. The truncated Western Punjab that joined Pakistan became synonymous with both Greater Punjab and Pakistan for the sojourners from Eastern Punjab through their repeated insistence on speaking, reading, and writing Urdu. The reason behind the transformation is that the spoken Punjabi is the closest to Urdu among the Indo-Aryan languages prevalent in Pakistan.

Predictably, Urdu as a symbol of Islamic solidarity and a powerful force against regional languages follows the Andersononian pattern of official nationalism, which shows how elite imagination produces connections between place and community in order to ensure the group's territorial control, not the inhabitants' goals for liberation. Therefore, the narrative that Indian Muslims required a separate homeland for the protection of their socio-cultural rights requires proper scrutiny. It is one thing to aspire towards the material and religious progresses of India's Islamic period, quite another to expect that the idea of Pakistan will shape the state of Pakistan for recreating the age. Interestingly, the idea was first generated in the 1930s by an Indian Muslim, Choudhary Rahmat Ali, who along with a group of fellow Indian students at the University of Cambridge, England, came up with the plan for a political entity comprising letters from the Muslim majority provinces of South Asia: Punjab, Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Baluchistan. In other words, Pakistan was a textual construct from the very beginning. The name in Persian means a pure land, which was 'an implicit gibe at the ritually "pure" high-caste Hindus who dominated the Indian National Congress' (Cohen, 2004, p. 26). It is no mystery,

then, why the Westernized elites, who decided to rule the country by maintaining their distance from the general population, took up the concept during Lahore Resolution in 1940, which narrowed the scope of debate around the real meaning of the 'pure' land. Urdu was established as the reservoir of the 'pure' Muslim nation after independence, and its status is intimately connected to the 'two-nation' theory, which stipulates Hindus and Muslims as separate communities. Unsurprisingly, the theory implied Punjab and Bengal's severance of their non-Muslim areas. Nevertheless, the baffle that Urdu, which was the native language of less than five per cent of the population, should be the conveyor of the 'pure' Muslim homeland remained unaddressed during the time of the Resolution.

Pakistan's *Quaid-i-Azam* (Great Leader) Mohammed Ali Jinnah explained at a mass meeting in Lahore on 23 March 1940 his 'two-nation' theory in terms of two types of purity that divided the two religious communities, namely, Muslims and Hindus. Even though he clothed the concept in civilizational terms, Jinnah (1992, p. 494) emphatically underlined the two sources of viewing right and wrong by the two communities: 'Their aspects on life and of life are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Musalmans derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, their heroes are different, and they have different episodes'. Religion thus became a mode of determining the contours of community life so that an effective political mobilization can be staged. The educated and Westernized leadership of the movement believed that religion would be a catalyst in creating a demarcation between two major religious communities in British India so that South Asia could be benefitted from a liberal Muslim state alongside a democratic Indian Union, which should not only lessen the risk of internal conflict but also enable the region to forestall outside challenges. However, the leadership did not predict the contradiction in their own claims, since their preference was not for sharing the religious bond with a vast number of poor and downtrodden countrymen, but for overcoming the marginalization and exclusion by their powerful cultural rivals in India. Therefore, religion

was advanced as a radical hypothesis regarding 'the informal social contract between widely different regional, sectarian and linguistic groups' (Devji, 2013, p. 47) so that a people emerge as a nation by forming highly emotive notions both of territoriality and collective existence.

Uniformity and durability are reasons why the question of language gathered urgency. It is hardly surprising that in an emotive nation, the military-bureaucratic elites mentioned above chose state language as a potent nationalist symbol with the hope of superseding their enforced imagination that connected the people and the vaguely constructed religion-based geography. 'In fact, in South Asia local loyalties and kinship lineages (*biradris* [fraternities], clans) determined identity until modern conditions created competition for jobs and the possibility of imagining a large linguistic community through communication' (Rahman, 1995, p. 1007). Since competitive modernity was a colonially inherited reality, setting up the communitarian boundary became essential after decolonization in order to define the legitimate members of the newly created national ambience so that it was convenient to decide which social group would have access to rewards like comparatively privileged positions and lucrative employments at provincial and national levels. The awareness of belonging to one politically defined collective identity expedited the creation of the monolithic bloc of the Muslims so that the commonality of culture leads to the commonality of politics. The adoption of Urdu was thus viewed as a perfect catalyst for cementing the rulers' powerbase by bringing together individuals, tribes, and groups into one recognizable national unit.

The speakers of Bengali, Baluchi, Punjabi, Sindhi, and the likes were asked to embrace the complexity of Pakistan as a multi-language state, which needed to forge a political unity by creating a cultural identity that assimilated the old into the new. This explains the connection between religion and language 'as a neatly logical proposition: [If Muslim *then* language = Urdu]. The logical contrapositive, [If language ≠ Urdu, *then* **not** Muslim] would structure the politics of language and

culture in Pakistan over the subsequent decades' (Ayres, 2009, p. 27; emphases in the original). Thus, the Pakistani nationhood was appropriated by the ruling elites, the urban Punjabis in particular, who achieved land grants in the British period, became over-represented among the educated professionals during independence, and believed in safeguarding the interests of the landlords after independence. The Urdufication of Pakistani nationalism corresponds to the Russifying measures Anderson describes above, which demand cultural assimilation from the fellow citizens, despite the development of their distinct national awareness. Through maintaining the contradiction between the ideological and geographical dimensions of Pakistan in this way, the members of the regions, which are away from the centre of power, were asked to play second fiddle in political negotiations.

This is how Pakistan became a unified nation by reflecting what Anderson calls, official nationalism, which is a definition not spontaneously originated from below, but imposed from above by those residing at the heart of the power structure of the state. Anderson provides further explanations regarding the effectiveness of the nationalist ideology through Russification and Anglicization, which facilitated great opportunities of socio-economic success particularly for middle-class professionals. Similarly, Urdu became the cornerstone of the hegemonic centre in Pakistan by dint of being associated with the job security of the middle, lower middle, and working classes. Hamza Alavi (1989) explains that the centre is governed by the urban middle class belonging to the civil bureaucracy and the military, who he terms as 'the *salariat*' (ibid., p. 1527). This class enjoyed a particular eminence in postcolonial states, where the incomplete status of the First Industrial Revolution meant that the rural societies looked up to the oligarchy's management of the state apparatus. The landowners and rich peasants aspired for their sons to give up their traditional occupations and win the *salariat* positions through higher education. Since Urdu was preferred by the *salariat*, it soon became the vehicle of advancement for the wider sections of the society. In order to move into the urban professional class adorned by lawyers, judges, doctors,

teachers, and businessmen, who were leading not only the intellectual but also the political sphere of the newly created state, the newly decolonized people had to make peace with the Urdu-based cultural subjugation. Thus, Urdu helped the ruling clique to ethnically divide people in order to retain their greater share in the professional sectors by filling in the limited spaces at the higher education institutions.

The dependence on Urdu spread widely in undivided Pakistan not only because of its pivotal role among the *salariat* and their followers, but also due to its propagandist utilization in inter-provincial dealings, publishing industry, and the media and entertainment sector. Radio Pakistan broadcasts, for example, frequently proclaimed how the foundations of Pakistan were established with the arrival of the first Muslim in the sub-continent in the seventh century. Urdu newspapers used incendiary language to reach not only their usual readers but a much broader audience, who the writings were recited to. Similarly, the educational field, for example, the textbooks on history and social studies, became the medium for strengthening the emotive links among Islam, Pakistani nationalism, and its militaristic goals. Even, the civil and military officials from West Pakistan stationed in East Pakistan participated in the propaganda by holding the Bengali Muslims inferior due to their preference for their mother language, Bengali, which was a sign of their conversion to Islam from lower caste Hindus, according to the officialdom. Thus, support for the Muslim majority nation was galvanized through bringing together all sections of the society starting from the landowners and professionals through to the artisans, merchants, and students with the alluring idea that the citizens of Pakistan no longer needed to suffer from the encumbrances of a minority. As Anderson shows above that official nationalism in twentieth-century Asia was defended through the dominant groups' anticipatory strategies against cultural depreciation through state-controlled education and militarism, the Pakistan campaign during decolonization and after independence achieved emotional ferocity through similar schemes.

Indeed, Anderson's official nationalism is strongly reflected in the selection of Urdu, which was the medium of multiple functions in British India as the instrument of poetry of wide appeal, Islamic teaching, and Muslim distinctness. The dominant members of the decolonized territory upheld the dream of an imperial past, which not only consolidated their politically fortified effort for creating a befitting phantasmagoria, but also set the cultural moorings of the nation on the nostalgia for a precolonial atmosphere, where Urdu became the symbolic tie between the Persian speaking elites and inhabitants of cities like Lahore and Delhi, where the cultural institutions of the sub-continental Islam became most prominent. Thus, what according to Anderson is the acrobatic feat of the ruling classes, which turns a dynastic imagination into a nationalistic one, gained ground due to the fact that the linguistic unification of the Muslims of the sub-continent was shown to be intrinsic to their comprehensive coalition. Just like the paradox of selecting a language that mainly took shape in the military marketplace for reviving imperialistic political aims, bringing the markedly religious context in the sphere of nationalist politics heavily undercut the historical developments of the sub-continental Muslims by turning them into abstractions. Consequently, the introduction of individual representation in a democratic system of British India was explained not only as a threat to the minoritarian position of the Muslims, but also as a danger to their exclusive community interests. The emphasis on Muslim exclusiveness thus undermined the importance of individual rights, which implied that the normative contextual framework of Islam could be utilized for what Anderson (2006, p. 86) termed, 'a selfconscious Machiavellism (sic)'.

Sri Lanka's Popular Nationalism

The truth is that the construction of similarity and difference is not value-free, since it has consequences both in the everyday world and in the socio-historical reality of human collectivities. The kernel of the construction remains the work of human imagination, which suggests

that it is based on neither illusion nor fantasy. The imaginary nature of the axis of identity, though, reveals two aspects of its significance, which incorporate both the psychosocial and the exterior matters. This further suggests the need for selectivity regarding the matters in order to fulfil the purpose of cultural models to be more than transient. As I have been discussing above, some cultural elements have more potency in this regard. Shared language, tradition, religion, territory, and history have been proven to be more amenable to the production of national imagination, even though commonality alone cannot be the guarantor of the enterprise. If anything, territoriality can very much be an occasion for ethnic competition. This makes us comprehend better the imagined but non-imaginary nature of modern narratives of nationhood. Despite the claim of primordialness, narratives of nationalism reveal their contemporaneity through their duality in being instrumental for justifying ethnic domination as well as inspiring liberation. This is why it is important to understand the terms of creation of the narrative so that the processes of national identification are detected for their kaleidoscopic function as well as their contrariness.

The processes of national formation make it difficult for us to accept Radhika Desai's criticism of Anderson's modular concept of nationalism. Desai (2008, p. 196) argues that Third World replication of the concept does not take into account the 'the structural similarities in material circumstances and possibilities' of East and West. As a result, Desai believes that Anderson's modular argument falls short of establishing the axis on which the nationalist imagination takes flight in the Third World, which in turn does not mirror the fact that the nationalists of that part of the globe concentrate on the question of resource allocation before examining the structural harmony of their society with its Western counterpart. Similarly, Desai views that the modular formula misses the point of the Third World nationalists' preference for effective modes of building their nations' politico-economic futures. Consequently, she contends that the downgrading of Third World nationalisms as Western projects prevents our neo-liberal

age from confronting a powerful challenge in the form of progressive nationalist uprising. However, as I argued above that the fluidity along with the inflexibility of nationalist narratives should be recognized, Desai's argument regarding Anderson's omission of the socio-political realities of the Third World becomes far-fetched. The fluidity of nationalist narratives prepares us for their suitability for emulation, whereas their inflexibility makes us realize that their adaptation in dissimilar social structures results from their unexamined role in introducing specific systems of language, authority, and identity. The function and failure of the systems in distinct historical contexts depend on their enforcers' power to think through their imagined but non-imaginary nature. Put differently, it is not the nationalist model's duty to announce its appropriateness for a particular context; it is the responsibility of the nationalist leaders to examine the consequences of borrowing the concept. If the nationalist leaders prefer readymade emulation to the enhancement of liberation through the production of their own progressive visions, Anderson's analytical lenses cannot lend them the glory.

I think that Anderson's modular argument proves its illuminating power through making us see the specific processes of developing nationalist consciousness, which signify its core elements that are repeatable in societies far removed from its point of origin due to the similarity of human aspirations regarding cultural identity. Notably, Anderson's explanation regarding the rise of vernacular languages in the nineteenth-century Europe reveals their potency through delineating the general human inclination for consolidating the distinct cultural group that the expansion of education, industry, business, communication, and state apparatus brought into focus. Even though Latin remained the state language in Austro-Hungary up until the early 1840s, it increasingly proved its lack of suitability to act as a language of business, knowledge production, literary activities, and mass communication. Since vernacular languages assumed greater importance as a means of communication for the majority of the local populations, mid-century Europe started to view a new constellation

regarding the convergence of state language and language of the population. Interestingly, it is the landed aristocracy that became the torchbearer of the vernacular languages. Anderson (2006, p. 79) notes that 'the parapets of print-Hungarian were defended against the German tide by segments of the petty nobility and an impoverished landed gentry. Much the same could be said of Polish readers'. In other words, the official nationalism introduced by Joseph II's policy of replacing Latin with German created an undertow of popular nationalism by dint of an even more felt connection between a people's language and their nation-state. Remarkably, gentries along with educators, professionals, businessmen, and littérateurs put their weight behind the vernacular languages in order to heighten the sense of glory among the ordinary people regarding their spoken languages' elevation to the print status.

Two questions become prominent regarding the popular nationalism of the nineteenth century, where the middle-class professionals played a key role. How did the intellectual leaders ascertain that they had to convince the masses to be part of history through evoking their connection with their spoken languages? And why were the intelligentsia along with the other stakeholders able to utilize the trope of popular nationalism? The answer that Anderson provides puts the French Revolution on centre stage. The massive historical event was turned into an amorphous concept through countless writings about its nature from both sides of its divides, which eventually transformed it into a model of an independent nation. Europe's vernacular-oriented alliance was pioneer in borrowing this enthusiasm for independence. This further shows that Desai's analysis regarding Anderson's idea of the adoption of Western model in the supposed Third World is not entirely correct, since the emulation started in Europe through the ambition for the French achievement. Indeed, Anderson meticulously shows that the vernacular-based nationalist model was both spontaneous and rigid, since the winning of popular support through the narrative did not permit too many modifications:

> Even backward and reactionary Hungarian and Polish gentries were hard put to it not to make a show of "inviting in" (if only to the pantry) their oppressed compatriots… If "Hungarians" deserved a national state, then that meant Hungarians, all of them; it meant a state in which the ultimate locus of sovereignty had to be the collectivity of Hungarian-speakers and readers; and, in due course… the promotion of popular education, the expansion of the suffrage, and so on. (ibid., pp. 81–82)

Clearly, the fluidity of the model lies in its inviting nature, which aims for as widespread a fellowship as possible through the common language, though the class difference is not completely eradicable. However, the entrenched nature is that of an exclusionary system, which guarantees the lucrative benefits of membership like education and enfranchisement only to the deserving ones that are able to be part of the linguistic locus. Thus, the populist model proposes a collectivity that works for the select few.

The fervent populism of Hungarian nationalism symbolized by historical figure like Lajos Kossuth (1802–1894), who rose to glory during the Revolution of 1848, is flanked by deliberate policies of exclusion. Kossuth's oratory and writing skills expedited the nationalist struggle against the Austrian authorities, as he emboldened his people for liberty. Kossuth's revolutionary regime returned power to people not only by overthrowing the imperial governors appointed by Vienna, but also through abolishing feudalism and privileges like tax exemption and entailment of estates, as well as announcing reforms for ending peasants' debt-bondage. The reformist politics coupled with the cultural breakthrough of equalizing Magyar (Hungarians' name for their vernacular) speakers with ordinary Hungarian citizens, the national narrative proclaimed its fluidity as a non-privilege-oriented concept. And yet, the liberalism shown to the peasantry was absent for non-Magyar minorities, who were deemed to be lacking in historical distinctness, which disqualified them for forming their own national identities. Anderson in his characteristic chucklesome way reminds his

readers that one of the radical nationalists of 1848, Sandor Petofi (1823–1849), apparently undermined his poetic sensibility to stress that the minorities were ulcerous for the torso of the motherland. In 1868, Vienna was forced to reach a compromise with the 'liberal-minded high Magyar aristocrats and educated professionals' (ibid., p. 104), which granted minorities the rights to assert their claims without turning Hungary into a federal state. Through the next regime change, however, power sharing was favourably turned towards the reactionary gentry, who did not have to uphold the liberal values. Thus, popular nationalism has failed to guarantee minority rights ever since its inception.

Another dual characteristic of popular nationalism is that despite its dissimilar origins (the liberal professional-educated alliance that advanced the vernacular-based narrative of Hungarian nationalism perceived the community completely differently from that of the Austro-Hungarian imperial rulers, who preferred German), some of the processes of spreading this view are 'systematic, even Machiavellian' (ibid., p. 114) that evoke official nationalism. When the post-World War II new states started to borrow the popular model of nation formation, despite their own historico-political attributes, they attached the power of people's genuine enthusiasm for building a national community through linguistic affinity to a systematic programme of instilling nationalist beliefs through the media, the educational institutions, and governmental regulations, and so on. The inclusion of the particular strategy from official nationalism did not appear contradictory presumably because both spontaneity and stringency prove nationalism's exclusionary nature. However, Anderson presciently points out that popular nationalism's dependence on the Russifying policies of official nationalism is resultant from European colonization, which created 'the well-known arbitrariness of frontiers, and bilingual intelligentsias poised precariously over diverse monoglot populations' (ibid.). The bilingualism of the intelligentsia was the product of the easier availability of modern education, which colonization made possible mainly for administrative reasons. As I have been emphasizing,

the intelligentsia generally played the role of a catalyst for the independence of the colonized land, since European national framework became familiar to them through their study rooms. However, the transfer of nationalist consciousness was not smooth enough to demystify facts like this: the nobility that introduced the thirteenth-century Magna Carta, the early form of England's constitution, never spoke English, though they were defined in the country's classrooms as exemplary English nationals during the First World War (1915). This made the core demand of popular nationalism for isomorphism between the territorial boundary of state language and that of the citizens' abode extremely difficult to be fulfilled in the decolonized world.

And yet, the concept of popular nationalism seems to be created for performing an uplifting role in the life of decolonized nations in particular. Anderson illuminates this transformative role through citing the complex case of Indonesia. By being scattered around three thousand islands, the state's humungous population possessed diverse linguistic ethnicities and practised a wide range of religions from Buddhist to animist denomination even during the colonial rule. The people lived in the place with a 'pseudo-Hellenic name' (ibid., p. 120) that up until the inclusion of East Timor in 1975 corresponded to the boundary of the early twentieth-century Dutch colonial expansion in the archipelago, not any precolonial borders. In order to define the vehemently scattered people, the Dutch came up with a formula that contained the gist of popular nationalism. They proposed that despite the dissimilarities of the people's ethno-linguistic and class designations, 'they were irremediably *inlanders*, a word which, like the English "natives" and the French "*indigenes*," always carried an unintentionally paradoxical semantic load' (ibid., p. 122; emphasis in the original) in the sense that being autochthonous to a place referred to an ineradicable inferiority compared to the colonizers, who never belonged to the archipelago. In addition, the colonial narrative denoted the Chinese, Arabs, and Japanese ethnicities of the archipelago to be superiors to the indigenous people due to their foreigner status. Due to

the Meiji oligarchs' economic sinew too, the Holland-originated colonizers had to see the Japanese as titular Europeans. Anderson observes: 'From all this, by a sort of sedimentation, *inlander*—excluding whites, Dutchmen, Chinese, Arabs, Japanese, "natives," *indigenes*, and *indios*—grew ever more specific in content; until, like a ripe larva, it was suddenly transmogrified into the spectacular butterfly called "Indonesian"' (ibid., p. 123; emphasis in the original). The magic of popular nationalism, thus, lies in transfiguring the territorial identity from its paradoxically negative image into an enhanced form of positive connection of the inhabitants to the immutable habitat.

The language-of-state played a not-so-undramatic role either in congealing the overpowering sense of connection. Instead of Dutch language, the inlanders historically depended on a lingua franca named '*dienstmaleisch* (perhaps "service-Malay" or "administrative-Malay")' (ibid., pp. 132–133; emphasis in the original), which interestingly originated from the multilingual soldiers' quarters of the Habsburg Monarchy. With the advent of print capitalism, the administrative function of the language was replaced by its supposed Riau Islands heritage. Through the further framing efforts of at least two generations of urban intellectuals and readers, the language became adoptable by the early twentieth-century young leaders as the standard language of the archipelago, '*bahasa Indonesia*. Since then, it has never looked back' (ibid., p. 133; emphasis in the original). Thus, Anderson shows the instrumentality of vernaculars in creating popular solidarities among national communities. There is no guarantee that if Holland had been as powerful as a colonizing group as the English, for example, Dutch could not have been the national language of the archipelago. Anderson's point is that imperial languages are vernaculars nonetheless and depend on the way they are utilized in the nation-making process. English being the state language instead of Ashanti, Ghanaian nationalism does not become inferior to the Indonesian one, or for that matter any other nationalisms. Similarly, the fact remains that before the early twentieth century, the inhabitants of Indonesian islands spoke their ethnic languages; and nowadays,

millions of them, particularly the youth, have accepted *bahasa Indonesia* as their vernacular. Thus, popular nationalism highlights the discursive form of homogenization for nation formation.

Popular nationalism also allows us to comprehend that establishing belonging to the national circumference requires generating ubiquitous and abiding ideas. Without the pervasive acceptance of *bahasa Indonesia*, for example, there will be persistent contestation regarding the national membership and resultant volatility in the national sphere, which I will discuss in the next section. For the moment, I will emphasize the nature and dimension of this vernacular-based model, which is both spontaneous and rigid. I believe that popular nationalism is an apt instrument for demonstrating the duality of nationalist narratives through igniting aspiration for freedom as well as justifying ethnic domination. As José Itzigsohn and Matthias vom Hau (2006, p. 196) remind us, nationalist ideology has two objectives: one is to 'legitimate authority, mobilize political support, and achieve social control', and the other is to provide ordinary people with 'a cultural script' based on which they can 'construct solidarity in their daily habits and routines'. My evaluation of popular nationalism in Sri Lanka that follows is directed towards deciphering the fluidity and inflexibility of the concept in a decolonized context.

In order to endow the colonially subjugated, economically deprived due to prevalent inequalities, and educationally backward Sinhala-speaking Buddhist masses with self-consciousness in the early twentieth century, the writers and educators of the majority group discovered that two incendiary issues would help them to achieve their befitting place in the island: elevated status for Sinhala, and Buddhist historicity as a distinct feature of the territory. Therefore, the convergence of state language and language of the population required for popular nationalism was professed from before the birth of the nation on the grounds of the majority's historic prominence. The claim that the island belonged to Sinhala-speaking Buddhists was strengthened by synonymising nation understood as an abode of the religiously leading group, race conveyed by the majority's language, and

people defined by the historically dominant ethnicity. The nationalist belief that Buddha designated Ceylon as the repository of Theravada Buddhism (the closest doctrine to Buddha's teachings) was inspired by the ethno-religious past. This was brought into focus by the late nineteenth-century archaeological and epigraphical work related to the greatly sophisticated art and architecture of the fifth-century BCE capital called, Anuradhapura, and eleventh-century northern central province called, Polonnaruva. The historic aura of the places not only reminded the Buddhist revivalists of the everlasting cultural achievements of the linguistic group, but also urged them to resist their degraded socio-economic condition due to colonization. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, then, the *pirivena* (a monastic institution of learning) scholars played a crucial role in promoting Pali and Sanskrit along with classical literatures written in them, since they considered them to be the main liturgical languages of Buddhism from which Sinhala was derived. By taking advantage of the printing presses, the *privenas* turned the classical manuscripts into texts, which popularized the inheritors of the Aryan languages as the ennobled Aryan race. With the heightened sense of glory among the ordinary people regarding their spoken languages' print status, a strong belief in the racial uniqueness of the Sinhala-speaking people was also secured.

The unique claim on the littoral homeland through the vernacular-based popular nationalist model is also established by taking recourse to mytho-history. The Sinhalese depend on demonstrating their justification of how the state belongs to its foremost language speakers, who have historically been its authentic inhabitants. In other words, the language ties them to their homeland in a way that does not apply to its other residents. The argument advances by identifying the speakers of the non-prominent language, Tamil, as not worthy of being considered as the 'sons of the soil', despite the fact that they have also lived on the land perennially. This was further whetted by the proof of the Western scholars like Sir William Jones, who was the founding member of the Royal Asiatic Society (Bengal) in 1784, and the German Indologist Wilhelm Geiger, who visited Ceylon in 1895, that Sinhala was an Indo-

Aryan language (see de Silva Wijeyeratne, 2014, pp. 212–214). This allowed the Buddhist revivalists to conclude that their Aryan race was distinctly different from the Dravidian Tamils. Consequently, the reformers were inspired to read back a glorified view of Sinhala identity into the ancient chronicles. The Sinhalese derived this certainty about their distinct connection with their homeland through documents such as the *Mahavamsa* (the sixth-century history of Ceylon), *Dipavamsa* (the fourth-century ecclesiastical record of the island), and *Culavamsa* (the history of the island from about the fourth to the sixteenth centuries). Aided by these prehistorical records, the Sinhalese were able to claim that they have traced their origin in the island with the arrival of Vijaya, the progenitor of the race, whose advent coincided with Buddha's *parinibbana* (last days). A definitive connection is drawn between Buddha's last sermon and the arrival of Vijaya with his seven hundred followers, who were bequeathed with the duty to protect both the religion and the land, which the chronicles marked as the unifying grounds for the uniquely chosen Sinhala speakers. Thus, Sinhala becomes indicative of religion, land, language, and people.

As expected in popular nationalism, gentries along with writers, educators, and littérateurs were not just supportive of the historical prospect of the vernacular language speakers to rule the island, but also building the politico-culturally unified Sinhalese community with their writings. The populist thinking regarding the Sinhalese self-assertion can be exemplified by the English-educated revivalist leaders like Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933). Dharmapala was born Don David Hevavitarana into a wealthy trading Buddhist family, who adopted his surname under the theosophical influence of Ceylon-based Russian spiritualist Helena Blavatsky, in order to attain the meaning of the 'guardian of the *dhamma* (Buddha's teachings)'. His adopted first name implying 'homeless' in Pali is utilized to stress his embeddedness in the wider world, unlike a monk's isolated existence in a monastery. He introduced a portentous narrative regarding the dangers of hybridity for the Sinhala speakers, due to the Dutch, Tamil, Malay, Moor, and

English cultural influences by almost displacing their quintessential values, which required urgent restoration. This is why language as the conveyor of ethnic authenticity as well as a symbol of nature's gift of inheritance needed to be emphasized, especially by preserving the features of Sinhala language that separate it from the parent languages, namely Pali and Sanskrit. 'Just so, Dharmapala's promotion of the Buddhist revival aims also at bringing about a new sense of ethnic and national solidarity, bent on purifying the tribe and getting rid of the hated colonizers', elucidates Patrick Grant (2009, p. 78). In effect, the Sinhala linguistic nationalism Dharmapala espoused is driven by the idea of these people standing up for themselves as financially adept, transparent, energetic, and enterprising beings. Thus, the purity derived from the vernacular language will be transferred to all spheres of Sinhalese life, which will finally make them worthy of being sovereign through achieving self-mastery.

If Dharmapala's turgid style and scolding prose were aimed at forcing the Sinhalese to reform themselves after the attenuation of their strength due to four hundred fifty years of colonization, Walpola Rahula (1907–1997), the eminent Sinhalese scholar-monk and activist, writes in a vigorous way to make the *bhikkhus* wake up in resistance against the colonial power, since they are not only the rightful protectors of the nation's soul, but also the preservers of its connection with the greater world. In doing so, Rahula was imperious in highlighting the universal aspects of Buddha's teachings as well as passionate in his advocacy for violence in order to defend the Sinhala heritage. His belonging to the Sinhala urbanity facilitated his activism both for reforms and innovations inside Sinhala-Buddhist culture in order to rescue it from the prevalent cryptic tradition as well as transform it into a massively accepted worldview. Whereas violence makes his advocacy questionable, his emphasis on innovation supports the fundamental transformation of Theravada Buddhism into 'Protestant Buddhism', which is a composition out of the native responses to the Protestant Christian missionary work carried out in the country as an accessory to the British colonization. Thus, the mainstream trajectory of Sinhala

nationalism has been a vernacular elite-led pathway of nationalist drift. Therefore, despite Rahula's formidable stance on popularizing the notion of fellowship among the Sinhala community through uniting them under the umbrella of religio-linguisitic tradition formed by organizations like the *Eksath Bhikkhu Peramuna* (United Buddhist Front), his writings could not overcome the elite-mass divisions. Therefore, a *Sangha* (order of monks) was able to act as a catalyst for uniting Sinhala-language youth, teachers, educators, visionaries, and writers through the fluidity of popular nationalism latent in its inviting nature, though the caste lines inside the organization were not completely eradicable. Ironically, Rahula's 'lack of sympathy for popular tradition suggests something of his own inability to imagine the needs of ordinary people and how the Buddha's teachings might be communicated to the richly diverse society that Rahula wished to reform' (ibid., p. 82). Consequently, he exemplifies Buddha's own teaching against the tyranny of idealism, if it is not communicated discerningly.

The context in which Rahula struggled to rescue the essence of the Sinhala culture by excluding the complex workaday lives of actual people has to be delineated. Though the British authorities were convinced that the Buddhist clergy were influential in educating the lower classes while establishing their connections with the elites, their revivalist endeavours did not pervade all socio-economic classes. Originating from the coastal petty bourgeoisie, Rahula realized that the Sinhalese ruling class operated in an atmosphere determined by the English-language-oriented Western culture, whereas 'Protestant Buddhism' thrived among the ordinary people, where the need for the compound advancement of nation, religion, and culture—all driven by Sinhala language—was being increasingly felt. As Shyamika Jayasundara-Smits (2011) explains, though, the postcolonial ruling class was internally divided between the colonial bourgeois, who were the direct beneficiaries of the capitalist economy introduced by the British colonizers, and the upcountry bourgeois. Originating from the coastal regions, which were the primary centres for spreading the

colonial cultures, the colonial bourgeois upturned their traditionally held secondary position in the island's hierarchical system. After decolonization, however, the traditional landowning, upper caste, and upcountry originated bourgeois, who considered themselves the authentic representatives of Sinhala culture, wanted to regain their precolonial socio-economic dominance. This is why they actively revamped their network of sponsorship among the rural and coastal petty bourgeoisie on the basis of the country's autochthonous culture. This inevitably meant that the lucrative benefits of belonging to the cultural group went to the vast local electoral base of the traditional bourgeois; for example, the vernacular-educated rural youth, in the form of their rapid mobilization during the 1960s and the 1970s through granting them their highly desired employment in the state sector.

Whether or not Rahula was aware of the cyclical movements of the popular nationalism on the elite-mass and the upcountry-petty bourgeois axes that he helped to introduce by highlighting the inviting quality of the nationalist discourse, through which the middle and the lower middle classes were allowed to be part of the decolonized political history, its entrenched nature is that of an exclusionary system. The *Sangha* was central in consolidating the inviting role of the vernacular because in villages the *bhikkhus* had the exclusive access to religious, literary, and dispute settlement knowledge. From the 1950s onward, therefore, both the laymen and the *bhikkhus*, who were adept at Sinhalese, started to raise the demand for the vernacular to be made the 'official language' of the state. In effect, this was not only a programme for the ambitious young people from the Sinhalese to be leading government administration, business, and higher education but also a process for their becoming Arcadian, authentic Buddhist, and wholly rooted to their culture so that they can transcend their non-English oriented backwardness. This demand for exclusivity gradually threatened the Ceylonese identity. 'The leaders of the Eksath Bhikkhu Peramuna tended to identify themselves with "the people" and any action which displeased the E.B.P. was action taken against "the

people"', explains William Wriggins (1960, p. 206). Inevitably, the synonomization of the majority with the entire population created an irreparable rift among the Sinhalese and Tamil elites, who had united under the banner of the Ceylon National Congress (1919) for the peaceful achievement of freedom from the British Raj. Constitutional reforms between 1920 and 1948 regarding political representation of the communities and the introduction of adult franchise intensified competition among the dominant classes. This led the Sinhalese faction to emphasize their distinctive linguistic heritage to differentiate themselves from the British as well as the Tamil community.

Nevertheless, the monodominant assertion of the Sinhalese rights serves the need to delegitimize the Tamil connection to the island. As the Sinhala elites started to distance themselves from their Tamil counterparts, *Mahavamsa* was being utilized to nullify the latter as foreigners and invaders. The Dutthagamini (161–137 BCE) epic tells us that the Tamil kings occupied Anuradhapura at the beginning of the second century BCE. The best known of them was Elara, whose forty-four year rule was ended by Dutthagamini, who also defeated thirty-two other Tamil monarchs with the aim of unifying the country. Dutthagamini's successful journey from the margins of the island to its sacred centre underscored two issues: first, only Buddhism cemented the governmental and law enforcing structures of the polity, and secondly, the present-day Tamil communities are descendents of the foreign-born population that never formed their attachment to the historical core of the Sinhala-speaking nation. Thus, the populist model of nationalism generates a collectivity that works for the select few. Even though the Ceylonese minorities were not exactly depicted to be ulcerous for the nation, the Vienna-style overthrow of the elites' liberal mindedness is evident in the nonchalance regarding minority rights. The popular nationalism was exacerbated by depicting the Tamil-speaking people as subordinates through evoking the 'systematic, even Machiavellian' technique of official nationalism. Hence, the mass media originally set up by the missionaries to spread Christianity were turned into an effective Sinhala-propaganda machine. The systematic

programme of instilling the linguistic nationalism is described by Charles Hoole (1991a, p. 98) as follows: 'Careful studies of school textbooks and the press, conducted by Reggie Siriwardena and his colleagues have shown how Sinhalese history, traditions, and situations of other communities (Tamils, Moors, Burghers, Malays, etc.) have been falsified for many years by those who control the press and prescribe textbooks'.

Despite the all-pervading nature of circulating the predominant tropes of popular nationalism—race, ancient scripts, sacred cities, land, language, and religion—through powerful organizations, newspapers, bulletins, political proclamations, and scholarly publications, the transfer of nationalist consciousness was not smooth enough to demystify Sinhalization on the basis of the *Asokan Persona.* Just like the fact that the Magna Carta nobility never spoke English, though they were defined as exemplary English nationals seven hundred years later, the Sinhala speakers' righteous claim to the island based on the symbiotic aspect of the *Asokan Persona* by implying the Sinhalese Buddhist politicians' ontological dependence on the monks belies the truth that the ideal rule of Emperor Asoka in the third century BCE never aimed 'to articulate a proto-Sinhalese consciousness' (de Silva Wijeyeratne, 2007, p. 164). Unlike the sixth-century *Mahavamsa* that develops the anti-Tamil themes and motifs, the Asokan Empire followed a holistic approach by bringing its remote corners within the influential sphere of its eastern Indian capital *Pataliputra*. Buddhism worked as a common reference point, since Asoka appointed special envoys to explain the religion to the wide-ranging population, despite their political differences, other religious sectarian divides, and less prominent principalities. Thus, the *Asokan Persona* symbolizes a Kingship that sustains the cosmological order by organizing the religion in the worldly context. On the contrary, the dominant class of independent Sri Lanka viewed the *Persona* as a hierarchical relation between foremost citizens and subordinates, between religious doctrines and kingship, and between kingship and the laypeople. The fragmentariness induced totalization is why the Tamil-speaking sphere

in the periphery was described as a potential threat to the cosmic order, which needed to be subjugated under the hierarchical centre of the state. Nevertheless, the major problem in returning to the pre-European period lied in the fact that unlike the spiritual journey initiated by the universal Kingship, the Sinhalese Buddhist politicians had to follow the materialistic path of relying on the potentially unsettled electorates, as determined by the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission of the 1830s. Therefore, the political programme of majoritarian domination sat uncomfortably with the core demand of popular nationalism for isomorphism between the territorial boundary of state language and that of the citizens' abode.

As Anderson explains above, the territoriality is an essential aspect popular nationalism, which transforms the colonially designated backwardness of indigeneity or nativeness into a positive history of cultural prominence. The despondently inlander position is a direct result of hundreds of years of European colonization of Asian countries. In the case of Indonesian people, the negative connotation of French '*indigenes*' was overcome by their strong connection with their immutable habitat through *bahasa Indonesia*. In Sri Lanka, the *non-inlander* condition of the foreign rulers like the Portuguese and Dutch colonizers was established by their indirect command over indigenous financial, civil, and military administrations. By dint of the treaty of 1815, which promised to protect the laws of the Kandyan Kings and retain their privileges, the British brought the entire island under their control. However, their colonial mechanism operated on a distinctive division between their 'civilized' ways and the natives' 'non-modern' customs (see Wickramasinghe, 2014, pp. 16–36). The English-speaking Burgher community, for example, saw themselves to be aligned with the Europeans and referred to the Sinhalese as the 'natives'. Therefore, the decolonized Sri Lankans had to heavily depend on a cultural viewpoint in order to rescue them from the ineradicable inferiority attached to their autochthonous status. As we have seen so far, Sinhala Buddhists have been able to maintain that their language and religion have a righteous claim to indigeneity, and that the state must reflect their

cultural primacy on the grounds of majoritarianism. J. R. Jayewardene, the first elected president of the country in 1978, explains that the long-standing European colonization produced a cultural stupor for his people, which can only be broken through their endeavour to awaken their national consciousness by seeking an effective means of self-expression derived from the indigenous Sinhalese tradition. As Patrick Grant (2009, p. 108) puts it: 'Predictably, this awakening is closely bound up with religion and language'. Thus, the magic of popular nationalism enabled the Sinhalese to arrive at a popular consensus through grappling with their historic inadequacy to delineate their ethnicity and employing their language to reinvent the emblematic value of territory as homeland.

The popular consensus through which the Sinhalese nationalists interpreted history to be their ally in confirming their community as their spacing in time has been strengthened by the 'people of the lion's' cultured existence. In fact, the Sinhala speakers claim to be 'the first "civilized" people of Sri Lanka (the original being the Veddah)' (Soherwordi, 2010, p. 31), whose Buddhist compassion allowed them to be accommodative of other incoming ethnicities. Even though R. A. Gunawardana (1990, p. 52) defines the 'people of the lion' as a term associated with the tenth-century Anuradhapura King Mahinda IV's strengthening of Sinhala lineage, he records how it came to be suggestive of the people as the slayers of lion, rather than its progeny. One way or another, the autochthonous identity became a cultural ideology for the Sinhalese to fulfil their socio-economic aspirations. This helped the Sinhala- educated intelligentsia to represent millions of indigenous voices like those of the Ayurvedic physicians, vernacular school teachers, and rural noblemen to create the hegemony regarding the declining condition of the Sinhalese due to the second-rate status of Sinhala. The hegemony was then amplified by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's *Mahajana Eksath Peramuna* (People's United Front), a political alliance of the country's socialist parties, which secured his premiership in 1956 on the basis of the 'Sinhala-only' language policy.

It is discernible from the above discussion that popular nationalism is an apt instrument for demonstrating the duality of nationalist narratives through enkindling inspiration for freedom as well as entrenching ethnic domination. As we have seen so far, the chronicles helped Sinhala nationalism to depict Sri Lanka as the unique homeland for its speakers. The selected myths and symbols, however, yield the greater presence of popular nationalism, which the gentries, educators, and littérateurs proliferated through their propagandist strategies. Since the professional elites are normally in control of the communication system of a society, their narrative obtains the hegemonic status quite smoothly. This explains why the wide-ranging appeal of the nationalist ideology starts to shrink by excluding people on the basis of caste, class, and minoritarian positions. Naturally, the question arises whether the magic of popular nationalism, which transfigures the territorial identity into an enhanced form of belonging, loses its spell over the speakers of non-dominant languages. Ironically, the decolonizing potential of the ideology becomes heavily compromised due to its continuation of colonial approach to its own 'others'. Radhika Coomaraswamy (1986, p. 24) explains the flexibility and the rigidity of popular nationalism in a revealing way:

> Benedict Anderson researching forms of nationalism throughout the world comes to the conclusion that [it] is the ideology of the elites educated in the vernacular, harbouring tremendous resentment against races and classes which have prevented their upward social mobility. This class is radical with regard to imperialism and international capitalism but conservative with regard to its own nationalism and ethnic pride.

This induces that we should enquire if Anderson's seminal book offers us a mode of nationalism, which is beyond popular nationalism's selective radicalism and conservatism as well as official nationalism's dynastic vision.

Mother-Tongue-Based Nationalism: The Natural Ties of the Tamils and Bengalis to Their Lands

The two modular forms discussed above do not reveal the fact that Anderson never stopped believing in the positive, exciting, and utopian aspects of nationalism. Throughout *Imagined Communities*, Anderson demonstrates that languages are crucial for forming nationalist narratives, though only mother-language-based ties are able to create a harmonious community. Unlike the conveniently chosen print language or the vernacular, mother language delineates the national community in terms of the naturalness of 'kinship (motherland, *Vaterland*, *patria*) or that of home (*heimat* or *tanah air* [earth and water, the phrase for the Indonesians' native archipelago])' (Anderson, 2006, p. 143; emphasis in the original). Nothing of this kinship or belonging is selected, conscious, and interest-driven, or, as Anderson explained before, Machiavellian. What is the worth of the 'interestless' (ibid., p. 144) national community? Anderson suggests two ways of measuring the aura of the national bonding. First of all, the difficulty of determining the genealogy of languages, in particular mother languages, paradoxically makes them ideal modes of rooting a community to its primordial history. The affective connection to one's present and past members also ensures the eternity of national bond through invoking a solemnity that will remain unchanged in the future as well. Hence, the English-speakers' unperturbed connection to their ancestors is discernible through the movement of Englishness across the linear passage of time, which expressions like '"Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust"' (ibid., p. 145) keep alive. Thus, mother languages help to create a unique feeling of unity, which guarantees the unending existence of national communities, despite its members' transitory life. Along with the imperishability of a nation, a mother language creates its contemporaneity through the indigenous music and poetry that provide all the fellow citizens with intense moments of

unison. Therefore, Anderson argues that even an uninspired national anthem is able to create a deep echo of simultaneous allegiance to a community the ethos of which materializes through the concerted utterance.

If nothing connects the national community like the unique sound of the anthem, mother languages play an exclusive role in shaping and sustaining the splendorous bond. To reiterate, mother languages connect the glories of the present to the last traceable historical point in such a way that stirs untranslatable emotions in all the speakers of the languages. Anderson exemplifies how English physician and writer Thomas Browne (1927, p. 73) brings Egyptian, Grecian, and Judaic traditions home through his distinctive prose style that unifies them with the Roman Empire by evoking an unearthly magnificence contained in expressions like 'to live within two Methusela's of Hector'. The desire not simply to exist in history but to heroically surpass its constraints like Hector's fame outlasting two lives of the biblical patriarch Methusela, who existed for nearly a millennium, and the challenges involved in the mission pervading vast differences of time and place 'can bring goose-flesh to the napes only of English-readers' (Anderson, 2006, p. 147) because Browne's oratory belongs to their mother language. The same point can be made from the reverse perspective. Human mortality makes it impossible for the species to acquire every language around, which underlines the seclusion of the entity. This makes mother languages great decolonial assets, since their incomprehensibility prevents their usurpation. The Franco-American allegation against the unintelligibility of Vietnam's mother tongue may have been narrativized as the reason for the imperialists' massacre of the native people; '[b]ut whatever else they made off with, the Vietnamese language stayed put' (ibid., p. 148). Therefore, mother languages are unbeatable in conveying decolonized nation's historical fate.

However, the ancient ideas of power and privilege displayed by official nationalism, particularly by its Russifying policies, which enabled native bourgeoisie to represent what Anderson terms a 'grimly

amusing *tableau vivant*' (ibid., p. 148) through their picturesque life style and capitalism-induced feudal-aristocratic standing, contradicted the main spirit of decolonization. If decolonization ushered in a moment of celebration of the previously subjugated people's dignity, equality, and free spirit, the mother language exalted them to be able to finally assert these, despite their class-based, educational, and representational differences. Anderson reaffirms that the pronouncement is sourced by one's attachment to one's motherland. Nevertheless, he believes that whether it is 'Mother Russia, or the *tanah air*', the object of the attachment remains imagined, which does not impact on the depth of devotion he denotes, '*amor patriae*' (ibid., p. 154; emphasis in the original). He exemplifies that imagining the Hanging Gardens of Babylon is about attaining a dreamy place of not just flowers and plants, but also architectural and sculptural excellence. Similarly, the historical inheritance of a mother tongue allows the native people to transport the fondness associated with it to the national realm of timeless loyalty. Anderson categorically declares: 'Through that language, encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed' (ibid.). Thus, the writer proposes a non-modular form of nationalism that not only guarantees the decolonized country's imperishability and contemporaneity but also ensures the sustainability of the members' deeply held belief of togetherness.

Unlike official nationalism, the mother-language-based nationalism is averse to serving state interests, since it does not emanate from the structure. At the same time, this nationalism is free from popular nationalism's mobilizational and self-defensive measures instilled through diverse media, educational systems, and administrative procedures. If colonial cartographic legacy meant that the decolonized states appeared like separate pieces of a giant jigsaw, which can rise above the longitudinal and latitudinal differences through readily recognizable logo-maps, it seems convenient that even the remotest corners of the country should be unified by popular nationalism. However, I believe that Anderson allows us to see beyond the

decolonized states' dependence on 'a totalizing classificatory grid' in order to establish control over matters like languages, religions, and mausoleums by determining their positions on the governing system, as well as 'the assumption that the world was made up of replicable plurals' (ibid., p. 184), which is why language and religion became interchangeable after decolonization in the countries under discussion here. Thus, Anderson explains the context-defying imagination of history and power sharing as a sign of the capitalist age's need for mechanical replication. I believe that the writer's attempt at finding an alternative to the mechanical process is comprehensible through his emphasis on the mother tongue-based national community.

This is why I disagree with Marc Redfield (1999, p. 67), who thinks that through the Russifying policy, which causes culture to be manifested 'as canonical texts, symbols, and touchstones' so that it becomes 'once again, "language," language as a naturalized technics (sic), humanized and homogenized as voice', Anderson perforce removes the gap between his two modular systems. Notwithstanding the two models' shared technique of Russificaiton, Redfield himself suggests that one remains affective and the other one associated with state apparatuses. Therefore, I contend that the humanization of culture is naturally achieved through the mother-tongue-based nationalism, where the homogenization of the national voice is not forced, imposed, or manipulated. If the other two models suggest that languages are instrumental in creating nation-states, the mother-tongue-based nationalism generates real agency for the natives to restore glorious histories, maintain genuine fellowships, and envisage fruitful futures, as Anderson claimed above. Therefore, the creation of such a community involves responsibilities and positive action to direct the course of history towards a meaningful path.

This is why I also disagree with Anne Emmanuelle Berger's (2012, p. 20) view that Anderson predominantly presents nationalism as an 'affirmation of idiomatic uniqueness within a self-enclosing and defensive autology', for this is achieved through the modular versions of the concept. Berger does note that Anderson contrasts the contingent

and historically constrained print languages with the prehistoric nature of the mother languages, though she finds his promotion of the affective quality of the latter to the eternal binding factor 'between citizen-patriot and nation-mother' (ibid., p. 22) to be rhetorically governed. Instead, she hopes for all the tongues to 'become "motherly", giving love for languages, for others, and for the languages of others' (ibid., p. 24), as opposed to reinforce divisiveness. Remarkably, Anderson (2006, p. 196) echoes her hope by highlighting that 'few things seem as historically deep-rooted as languages', which is why a mother language appears to be a secure and nourishing force of national identity. In what follows, I will draw how Tamil and Bengali nationalism delineated the elements of mother-language-based nationalism, which are: contemporaneity and imperishability, capability of being a decolonial asset, showing timeless loyalty, non-emanation from the structure, endowing the natives with agency, and acting as a nourishing force of national identity, as I have discussed so far (Illustration 2.2).

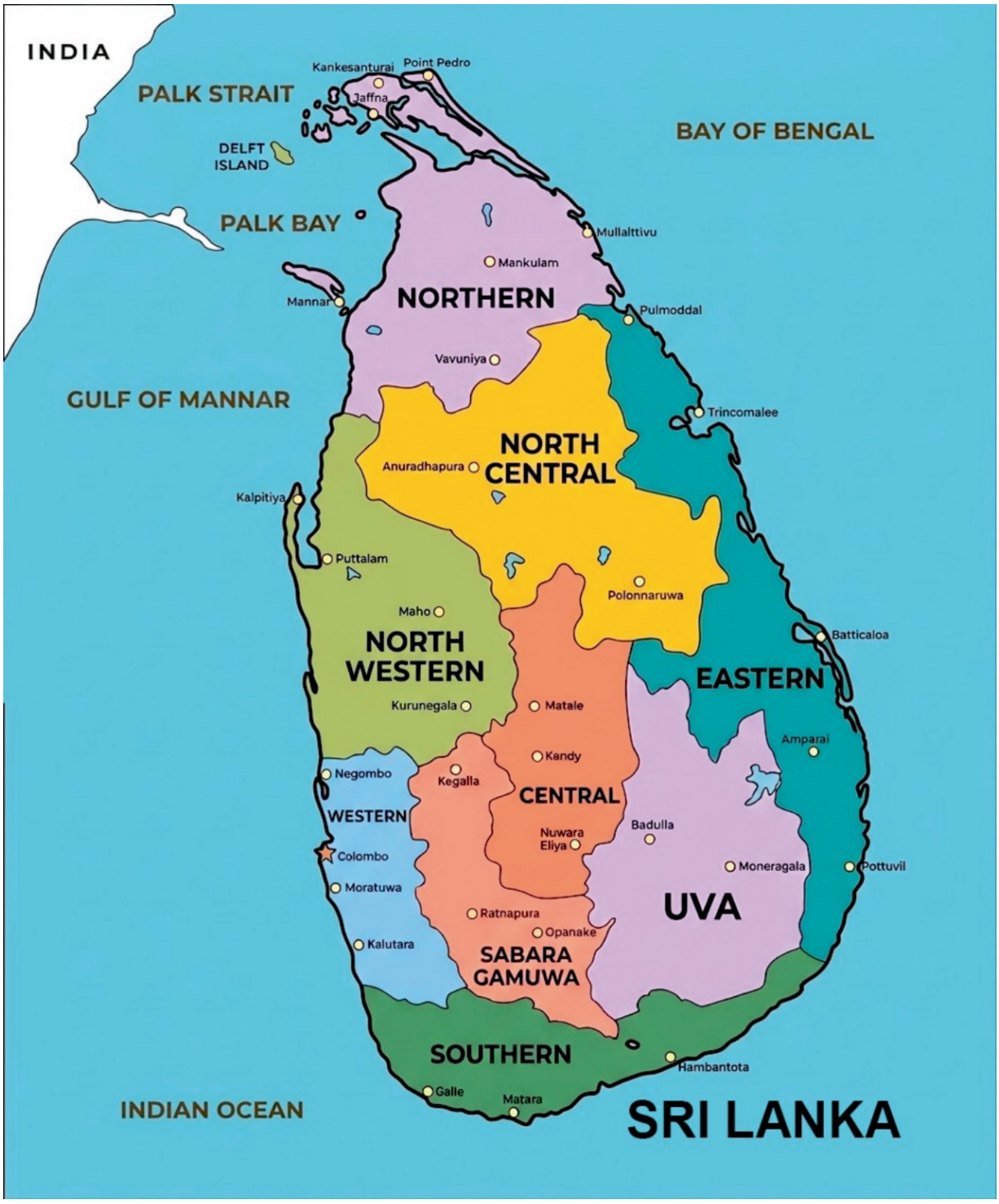


Illustration 2.2 Sri Lanka

The Tamils needed a nationalist narrative in order to assert that their struggle is not for separatism—far from it—their mission is to materialize the creation of a Tamilian country, which already exists in

people's minds. Sri Lankan Tamils are of Dravidian origin, the vast numbers of whom migrated from southern India to settle in the northern and eastern provinces, though a considerable number of them are Colombo-bound. Therefore, their nationalist narrative is emphatic about their ancient claim on Ceylon as their legitimate home. Instead of supporting the view that Tamil culture is secure in the land they deserted in the olden days, the Tamils demonstrate their contemporaneity with Sinhalese establishment in Sri Lanka through mythical history, which I will discuss below. They also prove the imperishability of their heritage in the country by transforming their mother language from a harvest of their socio-historical cultivation into an apparatus for changing their inherited social order. This is particularly poignant, given the fact that Tamil grievances gathered force in the country after the 'Sinhala-Only' Act had taken effect. The spoken Tamil in Sri Lanka became the cornerstone of Tamil identity in order to distinguish the Sri Lankan Tamil from their counterparts in India's Tamil Nadu. Therefore, the Tamil mother tongue became the bedrock for achieving homeland status for the Tamilian region by creating the feeling of contemporaneity among the bearers of the linguistic heritage, be they the native inhabitants of northeastern Sri Lanka, part of the diaspora, English-culture-oriented, and of Muslim and Christian denominations.

Indeed, the Tamil pride in their ancient mother tongue makes it an apt decolonial asset, for it elicits timeless loyalty from the people due to its sacredness as one of the world's oldest languages. This language contains the sublimated wisdom of the *Kural* (see Coomaraswamy, 1986, p. 24), a celebrated book of 1330 couplets by the greatest poet of classical Tamil literature Tiruvalluvar, who lived and completed the collection presumably between the second century BCE and the eighth century CE, in order to both entertain his readers and make them worldly-wise. Therefore, the Tamils were pummelled by the 'Sinhala-Only' legislation, which was nothing less than political oppression to them. Having been constantly subjected to the Sinhalese version of the Aryan myth, the Tamils increasingly realized their Dravidian language-

based dissimilarity with the former. Thus, the image of 'Dravidian Tamils' and 'Aryan Sinhalese' as opposing races started to appear in the public sphere from the 1930s onward. During the State Council debates in 1934, prominent parliamentarian and lawyer R. Sri Pathmanathan stated that the Dravidian history travels back to *Mohenjodaro*, the largest city of the Indus civilization, which enjoyed its heyday from about 2500 to 1900 BCE (see Coperahewa, 2009, p. 69). Since the residues of the majestic civilization are claimed to be found only in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka after the ancient place's destruction by the Aryan tribes, the Sri Lankan Tamils are urged to comprehend the significance of their efforts to keep alive the Dravidian heritage. Despite the fact that 'Dravidian is a linguistic category, not a racial one' (Coomaraswamy, 1986, p. 23), the myth plays a major role for enabling the Tamils to perceive their patriotic duty to prevent the decolonial process from hampering their timeless loyalty to their civilizational inheritances.

Nonetheless, the European colonization did not leave the Tamil cultural sphere unawakened at all. The linguistic and religious revival among the Tamils in the northern district of Jaffna was largely due to the decisive efforts of Arumuga Navalar (1822–1879) in the nineteenth century to rescue Tamil language from its precarious condition. For this, he 'undertook three major publication projects: the reprinting of classical literature; publishing commentaries; and new literary works' (Gunasingam, 1999, p. 142). He discovered that the classics of *Saiva Siddhanta* (medieval theologies recorded in Sanskrit and Tamil, and centred around Siva, one of the major deities of Hinduism) were accessible only to the pundits, since the *ola* (palm leaf) manuscripts were confined in monasteries; and realized that these were instrumental in instilling into the Tamils a deep sense of national bond. He painstakingly copied the crumbling manuscripts and got them printed on a large scale as authentic books, which one of his fellow littérateurs C. S. Thamotharam Pillai describes as rescuing the Tamil mother from her wasteful death (see ibid., p. 143). Indeed, the meticulous copying of the manuscripts, the immense dedication of

collecting them, and the vast initiatives to widely disseminate the ancient knowledge within the community explain why the process served to strengthen the people's consciousness as an illustrious group. Since the objective of the endeavour was not to make the mother language emanate from the existing political structure by primarily transforming it into the medium of government and education, Navalar's legacy endowed the fellow Tamilians with the agency to preserve them as a distinct people through reconnecting with their rich culture.

Even though this shifted the identitarian focus from religion to language, Navalar emphasized that, 'since Tamil is the language of *Saiva Siddhanta*, it was to be held sacred and as a mother, as the language through which Siva revealed himself to the poets and saints' (see Hoole, 1991b, p. 93). In other words, the Tamil revivalist attempt through the mother tongue was primarily concerned with communicating to the people a 'deeper understanding of their current [colonized] status', and enlightening them about the values of their beliefs and traditions so that the nourishing force of national identity became 'infused into their minds and souls' (Gunasingam, 1999, p. 146). In a similar vein, Bengali language became the mainstay of maintaining the distinct cultural identity of the people in decolonized Pakistan. Having been caught in the middle of the continuous dilemma of regional versus national loyalty, the Bengalis were forced to accept two discomforting realities of undivided Pakistan: the socio-cultural discrepancy and inequity between the West Pakistanis and the East Bengalis were so glaring that they could not increase these any more by sacrificing their mother-tongue-based and territorially bound consciousness to assuage their counterparts' ascription of alienness to their politico-cultural awareness; they also had to resist the diminishing effect of the nourishing force of their national culture in order to be like the Baloch, Sindhi, and Pashtun people, who were not viewed by the West Pakistanis to be as alien and as unequal as the Bengalis.

Richard Lambert (1959, p. 55) points out that the discord over language between the Eastern and the Western parts of Pakistan is not

merely symbolic, for this one is attached to the 'deep-seated values which can bring emotional response from all levels of Bengal society'. The inevitable question is the quizzical need for making the supposedly alien culture the major aspect of the Bengalis' existence within a communal system. From the mid-nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, Bengali Muslim writers and thinkers wanted to reconcile the dual loyalties to religion and language by accepting Bengali as a mother tongue, while continuing with the cultivation of Arabic and Urdu languages, whereas some other members of the group preferred to include a plentiful amount of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu words in Bengali language. And still others were in favour of excluding Hindu mythology and diction related to Hinduism in order to appear less alien in the eyes of the advocates of Pakistan. However, by following Rabindranath Tagore, the liberal Muslim thinkers soon started to realize that the mother language becomes enriched through the natural incorporation of locution from unexplored cultures, whether they take the form of Arabic, Persian, or Hindu influences. Naturally, eminent linguist and philologist Muhammad Shahidullah pioneered the idea that the Muslims could not remain oblivious to the Hindu culture in the interest of creating a fervent togetherness between the Bengali-speaking communities (see Rafique, 2006, pp. 24–25). Thus, the Bengali Muslims woke up to the reality that being disinterested in the advancement of their mother tongue would be one of the main sources of their downfall. They were finally able to work out that if they could not dissociate themselves from the allure of alchemically turning Urdu into their main language, they would become a defeated people with an abstruse fantasy. Being deprived of the nourishing force of national identity, they would be like a fallen people with an impossible inclination of aligning themselves with the natives of Bagdad, Bihar, or, Kabul, where their predecessors might have come from, as essayist Hamed Ali warned them (see ibid., p. 25).

The sudden attraction to the supposed predecessors of the Bengali Muslims is a sign that the early part of the twentieth century not only dramatically introduced the demand for a separate Muslim homeland

in the sub-continent, but also damagingly stressed the religious aspect of the Bengali identity at the cost of their historical pluralism. The trumping of the religious identity over the cultural one emanated from a political structure that nearly severed the direct connection of the native East Bengalis to their inhabited land, which depleted their agency. Sociologist Habibul Khondker (2006, p. 98) adds that '[t]he hyphenated new category, Bengali-Muslim, was a response to the expressions of the new political demands made by the sections of the politicians'. Thus, the anticolonial quest of the Hindu and Muslim communities for a free homeland ended with an ironic cultural division particularly among their *Bhadraloks* (members of the educated and affluent class), who were 'awed and impressed by the education and civilization of the British' (ibid., p. 99), but firmly refused to acknowledge their suzerainty. In other words, the structural problem of decolonization through the imposition of Urdu on the Bengalis hit hard the limited number of their educated Muslims and their innumerable lower class kinfolk differently. For the former, Urdu hindered their literary and professional improvements, whereas for the latter, it was a plain problem of maintaining the only tongue they had mastered. Faced with the inorganic connection with Urdu, even the Bengali Muslim Leaguers like Abul Manser Ahmed reminded the party in his 1944 Presidential address that religion can exceed the geographical boundary but culture cannot, which explains the reason for the religious structure's failure to guarantee instant brotherhood among the inhabitants of the two parts of Pakistan (see Talbot, 2010, p. 34). Therefore, despite the monetary, classist, and status-based influences from the *Ashraf* (upper class) Muslims, the vast numbers of Bengalis realized that they have to reconnect with the popular mindscape and the earthbound reality through the mother tongue in order to obtain true agency and a non-structural emanation of nationhood.

Geeti Sen (1997, p. 12) adds that '[t]he ideology of countries in our subcontinent is grounded on language. National identity is derived from language'. The weight of languages as decolonial assets is understandable from Sen's comment. However, the question arises as to

the efficacy of a language for forming a decolonized national identity that does not lend itself to the production of 'shriveled crops', as Memmi mentioned above. The anecdote Sen includes in her article sheds some light on this issue. She discovered on her visit to Pakistan fifty years after independence that her fellow Punjabi-speakers of the higher echelon in the country were willingly giving up on their loyalty to their mother language in order to buy into the dream of Pakistan. Therefore, English and occasional Urdu remained the chief means of their communications, while they consciously kept their children away from Punjabi. In contrast, Sen remembers that from the fifties onward, the Bengalis' timeless loyalty to their mother language 'erupted like molten lava in new writings' (ibid., p. 14), presumably because they had discerned the potential of the tongue with a rich literary heritage to be a decolonial asset that would help them to resist the production of 'shriveled crops'.

By emboldening the cultural group's distinctness, then, the mother language became a subterranean force for creating a contemporaneity among the Bengalis, which manifested through the inauguration of associations like the *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* (Muslim Literary Association) in 1926 by some of the academics at the University of Dhaka in order to represent 'a critical stirring, and a craving for a richer intellectual and emotional life, among a significant section of educated Muslims' (Murshid, 1991, p. 152). Indeed, they attempted to spread the message of the urgent 'need for commonsense, reason, and tolerance in the community's approach to life and society' (ibid., p. 153) through highlighting the imperishability of the mother tongue's sustenance of all human endeavours so that the feeling of contemporaneity among the East Bengalis became synonymous with their promise for eradicating the 'material and spiritual poverty of Muslim society' (ibid., p. 152). This proves that the Bengalis' plea for the state-level recognition of their mother language was not part of their provincialism, or, their 'stubborn refusal to understand the meaning of Pakistan' (Oldenburg, 1985, p. 725), but their keenest desire to direct the solidarity of the inhabitants of the newly decolonized state towards

achieving greater goals in terms of their socio-economic and politico-cultural conditions.

Thus, following Anderson, we are able to comprehend the socio-cultural and historical manifestations of national identity, which I have brought into context with the decolonizing goals in undivided Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The discursive approaches of the first two models reveal the paradoxical claims of nationalism in maintaining its modernity and antiquity, universal appeal and particular process, as well as political dominance and philosophical intractability. I have elaborated how the official and popular models of nationalism gather power, despite their opaqueness and conceptual underdevelopment, which cause ethnic disparity. As Anderson emphasizes, like religious imagination, the nationalist one works its magic by appearing to be lessening the overwhelming burden of human difficulties. However, we have also observed that the nationalist strategies concentrate on conveying homogeneity at the risk of downplaying their alleviating role. Despite this, I disagree with Lewis Wurgaft (1995, p. 78) that Anderson is apt at depicting 'the constructed or manipulated aspects of cultural or national forms of cohesion or integration', for the mother-language-based nationalism is not a mere cultural formula. Indeed, Anderson argues that in the post-Enlightenment period, people ironically require a talisman that can still weave a sense of security, continuity, and systematicity. I have tried to show that Anderson's (2006, p. 11) mother-tongue-based delineation is the real contender for a satisfactory combination of newness and historicity by offering its inimitable 'secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning'. In the next chapter, I will illustrate how Tamil and Bengali nationalism utilize the secularism embedded in the mother-language-oriented idea of a decolonized nation.

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3. Secular Versus Sectarian Ethos of the Bengali and Tamil Struggles

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Keywords Edward Said – Secular consciousness – Filiation and affiliation – Language movements – Decolonial dissent – Tamil Ethnic Nationalism (Sri Lanka) – Urdu-oriented Religious Nationalism (Undivided Pakistan) – Religiosity vs. Secularism – Sectarianism – Ethnic Competition vs. Egalitarianism – Bengali Intellectuals (Pre-independence Bangladesh) – Homegrown secularism – Separatism

In this chapter, I examine the concept of secularism as *not* non-belonging, but critical belonging to culture and system, as it is expounded by the great critic of politico-literary systems of the world, Edward W. Said, who relied on an array of intellectuals for developing his idea. I also analyse how Said defeated sectarianism by following his own 'secular consciousness'. Said (1984) defines culture as a vast field incorporating social, political, and historical frameworks, which simultaneously makes it a place of belonging and an asset extraordinaire to possess. This necessitates not only the demarcation between culture's external and internal elements but also their compelling interplay within its circumference. Thus, culture becomes a

‘possessing possession’ (ibid., p. 9), which men must struggle for acquiring, since this implies being part of a process that can ascertain and classify authenticity, as well as inhibit and subdue alterity. Said depends on Victorian poet and literary critic, Matthew Arnold (2006), through utilizing his famous series of essays, which were first published in book form in 1869, to delineate the dynamics between culture and society. Arnold sets the highly cultured men apart by assigning almost the evangelical duty to them for enchanting society with the best possible ideas in their most humanized form in order to generate ample ‘sweetness and light’ (ibid., p. 53) in the milieu by broadening the basis of vitality and discernment there. Simply put, the apostles of culture should plainly point out the practical ways of improving society. Since Arnold was concerned that his contemporary society lacked proper order and security, he wanted culture to act as a counterforce to the situation. Said explains that this means that culture as a medium of forming right judgement and refined sensibilities can only prevail by defeating competing and presumably less worthy values, ideologies, and notions.

If a specific set of ideas and momentums can be determined as ‘culture’ of a certain place, it becomes understandable that the venture is for identifying that place with the ‘culture’. Where is this place? Following Arnold, we realize that the cultural system that triumphs in society gets to define the collective spirit of the State, which in turn is entrusted with strict power for controlling individual inclinations in order to ensure the wider interests of the society. This is why Arnold is wary of the representatives of trade, protest, peerage, and mass mind, who question the state authority that is greater than their small collective environments. This is also why Arnold viewed the lack of government action against the civil disobedience of Hyde Park in 1866 demanding fundamental changes to the voting rights of working class people as a mark of the administrators’ absence of confidence in embodying the collective character of the nation. In fact, Arnold categorically opposed popular strikes and demonstrations against the State as ‘anarchy’, however noble the cause may be, since they

undermine its moral, political, and aesthetic authorities. Thus, Arnold envisages the modern welfare State in an unlimited cultural role the structure of which not only functions as a shelter of the citizens' best self, but also acts as the guarantor of their 'best self's powerful, beneficent, and sacred expression' (ibid., p. 150) in future, the great hope of which has to be constantly nourished.

'The interdependence in Arnold's mind between culture, the sustained suzerainty of culture over society (anything precious and lasting), and the framework and quasi-theological exterior order of the State is perfectly clear', adds Said (1984, p. 11). Evidently, Said interprets the Arnoldian design of retaining the best version of society as a power-generating cultural scheme because supporting the established 'culture' amounts to being loyal to the State in a compulsive way. By attaching culture to the State-framework, the benefits of belonging to a community, like security, certainties, and generality of beliefs, are given the power to fortify insiderness. Outside this circuit of familiarity, appreciation, and loyalty, remains the Arnoldian 'anarchy', which Said believes to be the sign of exclusion, homelessness, and alterity, for whatever 'culture' does not seem to be positively evaluating becomes 'not best' (ibid., p. 12), and hence eligible to be embargoed. Nevertheless, resistance to the religious, political, and social reasons for the conformity is also prevalent. Said asserts that individuals from the customary scapegoat to the utopian artist have been the originators of the resistance.

Following the twentieth-century French novelist and philosopher Julien Benda (2014), Said reiterates that it has historically been the intellectuals, who have opposed the nation-state's imposition of a predominant culture on the ordinary people of society. Benda stresses that 'for more than two thousand years until modern times, I see an uninterrupted series of philosophers, men of religion, men of literature, artists, men of learning (one might say almost all during this period), whose influence, whose life, were in direct opposition to the realism of the multitudes' (ibid., p. 27). However, Benda has certain reservations in his delineations: (a) rather than focusing on each intellectual from a

certain time within the historical framework, Benda concentrates on the chief characteristics of his/her group during that period; (b) Benda is also looking at the dominant picture emerging out of the intellectual's oeuvre, and not the contradictory ones within it; (c) Instead of the polemist aspects, Benda searches for the historical truth in the writings; and (d) Benda's ultimate consideration lies in the intellectual's public condemnation of power's excesses. Benda has called such learned and committed men, 'clerks', who he believes to be above political fervour, which leads to the hatred of different races and opposite factions. Benda suggests that the 'clerks' will be able to critically assess their political views, as opposed to espousing them as passions, even though he realizes how nationalist fervour has its sway over the European thinkers he idealizes from Alphonse de Lamartine and Victor Hugo through to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Ernest Renan. Despite this, Said (1984) believes that Benda provides the clerks' individualistic and corrective voice with undue privilege over the collective political actions of the day. This is because Benda himself believes in the intellectuals' preeminent usefulness in making cultural hegemony work in the name of nationalist politics, which for him is 'the *trahison des clercs* in its essence' (ibid., p. 15; emphasis in the original), and creates a negative impact on the clerks' individual will.

Thus, Said (1984) postulates that individual cognizance can explore the potentiality of cultural forces as well as struggle against cultural systems, for the Arnoldian notion of cultivating the best self of the individual and the Bendaesque belief in the agency of the learned self prove that the individual mind is situated at a centring point of culture's component parts. This suggests that the individual mind is aware of the collective cultural context s/he finds her/him in, which also implies that the mind is able to formulate a keen response to mainstream culture. Said reaffirms that 'the individual consciousness is not naturally and easily a mere child of the culture, but a historical and social actor in it' (ibid., p. 15). Historical knowledge, understanding regarding the importance of social reality, and the ability to draw distinctions enable the individual mind to decipher how culture

remains hegemonically concealed, when we consider it to be the given benchmark. I agree with Darwin Tsen and Charlie Wesley (2015, p. 104) that this is why 'we read Said's understanding of filiation and affiliation as neither a rejection nor an all-encompassing embrace of culture or system'. Said defines filiation as ties connecting members of the same family spanning generations. As opposed to the biological ties, organizations, guilds, and federations provide individuals with social bonds and political viewpoints, which Said calls affiliation. The filiative bond demands obedience, respect, and fear from individuals for its natural authority, whereas the affiliative bond demands consensus, conformity, and collaboration from individuals for its socio-cultural authority. In order to prevent the systems of authorities encroaching upon the individual, Said asks for a 'secular consciousness' that is critical of both filiation and affiliation, but not necessarily adversarial to them.

Drawing from the high-modernist enclave, Said suggests that the challenges of filiation like foundlings, barren couples, and unremitting monks faced by certain high performing members of the field put pressure on social alliances formed through institutions and communities to produce more durable ties that connect people across generations. Said (1984) exemplifies this through T. S. Eliot's loss of faith in family life under an arid modernity, which made him horizontally transfer his allegiance from the traditional paternal authority to the command of a novel national culture wielded by the English Church. His revolting 'credo of royalism, classicism, and [anglo]catholicism' declares the achievement of a system of affiliation that stood 'outside the filial (republican, romantic, protestant) pattern' (ibid., p. 18) he inherited through his descent from a distinguished family in America's New England. Similarly, W. B. Yeats' departure from filiation to affiliation is discernible from his movement from the 'blandishments of "the honey of generation" to the Presences who are "self-born mockers of man's enterprise"' (ibid., p. 19), which he presents in his late poems like 'Among School Children'. In this phase, Yeats explains how worshipping earthly or heavenly form of perfection

leads to the understanding of human limitation. Therefore, in another late poem called, 'A Vision', which encapsulates how human life is inherently subjective, despite moving through phases of subjectivity and objectivity, Yeats offers us a non-divisive view of life, or, an affiliative system for himself that highlights the importance of self-expression and tolerance for others' values. In other words, affiliation gives us a picture of the-world-within-the-world that individuals wish to inhabit. Interestingly, this results in the restoration of the filiative order within the new system of affiliation by shadowing a cultural order. This is how affiliation loses its potency, and 'reimprisons what it had once liberated' by proving its authority to be 'the return of repressed religiosity' (Hart, 2004, p. 10). Thus, Said (1984, p. 20) believes that the human subject, who created the order, becomes less important than the 'transhuman rules' emanating from the subject's guild or community. Ultimately, '[t]he process of representation, by which filiation is reproduced in the affiliative structure and made to stand for what belongs to us (as we in turn belong to the family of our languages and traditions), reinforces the known at the expense of the knowable' (ibid., pp. 22–23).

Therefore, Said's 'secular consciousness' puts together a rational framework of understanding the socio-cultural and political systems of human beings as their own creations, though the challenge lies in recognizing that these formations 'continually elude that understanding, whether they are the heroic products of artistic volition or alienated structures such as the unconscious, colonialism, or capital' (Mitchell, 2005, p. 471). Put differently, once the artistic creations or external structures become autonomous, people belonging to the systems start to lose touch with the heterogeneous society that laid the groundwork. If the affiliative 'network of relationships which human beings make consciously and deliberately for themselves' (McCarthy, 2010, p. 100) becomes imposing, the corrective measure is to widen the culture to the dynamic fabric of socio-political and economic realities from which it derives its strength. Thus, Said's 'secular consciousness' demands a particular form of critical awareness that reads the world as

a network of socio-political values, which are transmitted through historically embedded texts. The concreteness of these texts can be established, if the engaged intellectuals remain capable of asserting their freedom from dogmas, orthodoxies, and predictable practices. Rather than reiterating the classical theme of secularism as the separation of religion and state, Said (1984, p. 26) utilizes the term to connect intellectual practice with the worldly context, which he defines as 'the "always-already" begun realm of continuously human effort'.

Since 'secular consciousness' enhances the ideas of operating in the world as well as creating successful self-positioning in it, the phenomenon advances an oppositional consciousness, which differentiates it from other cultural methods. As a result, Said's utilization of secularism denotes an active awareness about the negative effects exerted by totalizing theories, reified articles, exclusive interests, interest groups, reactionary habits, and imposing fiefdoms, for these are dissimilarly constructed events, situations, and beliefs, though they are equally coercive. The unquestioning faith in these aspects is what Said defines as 'religious' because 'the moment anything acquires the status of a cultural idol or a commodity, it ceases to be interesting' (ibid., p. 30). For expanding this idea, Said depends on Raymond Williams' proposition of the integral interrelation between individuals' qualities and social realities the division of which leads to the disruption in the psychological and the sociological novels he discusses in his *The Long Revolution* (1965) and *The English Novel* (1970). Asked to elaborate on his view on the abstract quality of humans that defeats the social system, Williams (2015, p. 246) explains in an interview that 'the indissoluble unity of individual and social experience' fails to reveal the metaphysical deeds involved in the dynamics that cannot be assessed in a worldly way. Against this backdrop, Williams suggests that even an extremely dominant social system cannot be beyond limitation, and therefore, deserving of being put on a pedestal because it cannot humanly exhaust all possible empiricism. Therefore, there is always scope for a social change to be advanced on the basis of a secular worldview. Put differently, a

dominant cultural ideology cannot be the be-all and end-all in a society so that no alternative experiences from the past can resurface, or, no oppositional systems can arise in order to challenge the belief. Instead, ideas emanating from beyond 'the known calculus of forces' (ibid., p. 248) have the potential to be an effective source of influence against the familiar construct.

Said's 'secular consciousness' is about keeping hope alive for the awakening of challenging thoughts the espousal of which successfully works against the utilization of religion for arousing group feeling and collective emotion. Thus, religiosity has a particular meaning in Said's oeuvre, which is synonymous with an essential sense of belonging. Mathieu Courville (2010, p. 72) explains that Said's displeasure with the religious way of belonging to a cultural system is intensified by the religion-based rivalries in the Middle East, which are still tearing the region apart, not because of the peoples' 'inherently religious differences', but due to the fact that their religiosities 'are construed in mutually destructive terms'. Rather than religion being a faith, how it is interpreted is a key point in Said's mapping of his 'secular consciousness'. This becomes crystal clear when Said (1997) explains that he is not loyal to any religious groups, though he understands why one needs to create a clear declaration of his or her allegiance to a particular faith group. The problem arises when one wants to discuss the faith in order to *interpret* how its presence is manifested through humans' historical records and their activities in society. I agree with Said when he further explains the underlying reason for the secular nature of the religious realm:

> Each of us lives in a world actually made by human beings, in which such things as "the nation" or "Christianity" or "Islam" are the result of agreed-upon convention, of historical processes, and, above all, of willed human labor expended to give those things an identity we can recognize. Not that truth and reality do not in fact exist. They do, as we know when we see the trees and the houses in our neighborhoods, or break a bone, or feel the

> anguish of a loved one's death. But on the whole, we tend to disregard or minimize the extent to which we depend for our sense of reality not just on the interpretations and meanings we form individually for ourselves but also on those we *receive*. (ibid., pp. 45–46; Emphasis in the original)

Understandably, reaching reality directly seems impossible today, given the discursive organization of the world, where human beings are compelled to choose their conventions, histories, and even forms of identities to be belaboured. Critically assessing individually created or collectively received interpretations is essential for determining the world image they represent. Therefore, Said's secularism is a means of proving that our thoughts can be more than a mere aide to maintain the 'identities that are grafted onto us by accident of birth, or that we graft onto ourselves or have grafted upon us, motivated oftentimes by petty cultural and religious politics' (Courville, 2010, p. 76).

Evidently, Said stands against the political use of religion, as opposed to religion itself because he believes that religious identity can be utilized as a cloak to hide values convenient for power politics. What he defines as 'Religious Criticism' (Said, 1984, p. 290) is not confined to the literary arena, since the breadth of the concept connects back to the current world condition. To exemplify this, Said utilizes one of his much cogitated concept called, 'Orientalism', which depends on the idea of the 'Orient'. Said argues that the Orientalist discourse works like a religious discourse in thwarting investigations and facilitating deferential efforts. Said concludes: 'Like culture, religion therefore furnishes us with systems of authority and with canons of order whose regular effect is either to compel subservience or to gain adherents' (ibid.). Comprehensibly, Said is not interested in the religious trappings either. He is examining cultural discourse's 'affiliations with the political world it serves' (ibid., p. 292), as it provides the arena with beliefs and systems that guarantee the prized uncritical (read, religious) conformity. By ignoring the nuances in Said's explanation of religious system, though, William Hart (2004) detects severe anti-religious

feeling in the writer's work. Hart believes that Said suggests the confinement of religion 'to private places' because of its harmful effects, which secularism has to correct through advancing 'public suspicion, exclusion, and trivialization of religious matters' (ibid., p. 13). Following Said (1984, pp. 24, 130), we can argue that religion's 'worldliness', a term that he defines as a 'set of contingent and worldly circumstances or conditions' against which ideas operate, is subsumed in Hart (2004) under the numinosity of religion. It becomes even clearer when he concludes the following: 'Those things that we criticize as religious are simply human-all-too-human. Thus our susceptibility to dogmatism, mystification, and violent forms of solidarity is a mark of our finitude and fallibility, of our status as homo sapiens, not *Homo religiosi*' (ibid., p. 165; emphasis in the original). While Said highlights the unknowability of *Homo religiosi* in a human-all-too-human world, Hart intermixes and parallels the phenomena to argue that both religion and secularism can be critiqued in an imprecise way.

This confusion can be removed by realizing that Said's 'secular consciousness' is heavily influenced by Giambattista Vico's *New Science,* originally published in 1725 and a major source of his modern and contemporary fame in the social sciences. The classic text analyses the nature of human society in a dualistic manner, as Vico (1948, pp. 4, 32) contrasts the enterprising, phantasmagoric, passionate, and multifarious world of 'gentile antiquity' with that of 'the sacred history' of Judeo-Christian spiritual development. For Vico, the sacred world is potent in the sense that knowledge about it was securely guarded by the priests, whereas the ideas, traditions, and accomplishment in the gentile nations were accessible enough for him to create his scientific study out of these materials. Vico clarifies that even though antiquity seems unreachable to us through its unfathomable myths, one aspect of 'the world of civil society' remains constant, which is the fact that it is a product of 'the modifications of our own human mind' (ibid., p. 85). It baffles Vico that the disparate directions of the gentile world and its various pinnacles and debacles are not adequately examined by relevant scholars:

> Whoever reflects on this cannot but marvel that the philosophers should have bent all their energies to the study of the world of nature, which, since God made it, He alone knows; and that they should have neglected the study of the world of nations or civil world, which, since men had made it, men could hope to know. (ibid.)

Following Vico, we can detect some irregularity in humans' preference for knowing the worlds they have not inaugurated—be they natural or divine—which is a mark of their fragility, since their bodily eyes roam around all objects outside their bodies, whereas they require mirrors to look at the eyes themselves.

However, Vico does not see eye to eye with Said regarding the division between the socio-historical and sacred worlds. Said (1984) is absolutely right when he asserts that Vico views knowledge as a medium through which human beings give shape to their secular ambience. However, his next assertion that Vico did not cut off the sacred or religious world from his book due to the fact that 'in a priest-ridden age such as his, God had to be respected and loudly celebrated' (ibid., p. 291) does not seem credible. Despite maintaining his distance from the sacred world, Vico (1948, p. 302) does repetitively stress in his book that he borrows the wisdom of 'the theological poets' of the gentiles, who succeeded in countervailing the raw emotions of early humans, since 'religion is the only means powerful enough to restrain the fierceness of peoples', whereas the fact remains 'that religions prosper when those who preside over them are themselves inwardly reverent'. As I view it, the statement is astonishingly modern in suggesting that religion should be considered as individuals' inner faith, rather than an element of state policy. One of Vico's objectives is to decipher how human society can be better-preserved by dint of what Said (1976, p. 826) describes as 'an act of inspired divination' through the decoding properties of which 'intellectual and aesthetic powers are gained'. Instead of delineating the divination, though, Vico focuses on the civil matters of first histories of human beings, which they

cultivated as their common attributes, despite remaining unfamiliar to each other. Vico (1948, p. 382) reaffirms: 'That which did all this was mind, for men did it with intelligence; it was not fate, for they did it by choice; not chance', which inspires Said to realign himself with Vico for emphasizing that the result of humans' 'secular consciousness' has perpetually guaranteed the preservation of the species on the face of the earth.

The preservation is possible, because the secular outlook is about rising above collective passions like sectarianism, cultural inferiority, and national honour, for these are part of the status quo, which can only be stressed by preferring expediency over informed judgement on issues of belonging. In fact, Said (1996, p. 6) borrows the concept of 'the organization of collective passions', from Benda in his Reith Lectures turned into a book, which he exemplifies 'as sectarianism, mass sentiment, nationalist belligerence, class interests'. This is why Said's engagement with the Palestinian cause did not deprive him of the historical perspective against which the people's sufferings began. His understanding of the unjust dispossession of the people did not rob him of the depth of perception regarding the reason for Jewish population's reconnection with the Holy Land and their sufferings for Arab-Israeli conflicts too. His focus was always on the rights of the Palestinian people for self-determination. Christopher Hitchens (2003) writes to celebrate Said's aesthetic sensibilities, which prevented him from essentializing cultural groups and justifying their ressentiment:

> He took an almost aesthetic interest in the details and the eccentricities and the welfare of his own particular confession— the Anglican Christians of Jerusalem and especially St George's school in the eastern part of the city— but it's hard, if not impossible, to imagine anyone with less sectarian commitment. When talking to him about the various types of sacred rage that poison the region, one gained the impression of someone to whom this sort of fanaticism was, in every declension of the word, quite foreign.

Said's interest in Anglicanism in Jerusalem and its eastern part develops from his emphasis on the place's history, its multi-religious heritages and interfaith dialogues, for his secular mission is to challenge the politically motivated interpretations of history and memory. Therefore, the whole point of his secular criticism was to withdraw from hasty and exclusive compartmentalizations of cultural groups, particularly the ones opposed to each other. For Said, this is not only an intellectual but also an imaginative failure of humanity.

How is Said befitting for studying cultural conflicts in decolonized South Asia? Said is extremely relevant to a decolonized space like South Asia, where debates on imperial power in the twenty-first century, equality and social justice, and South-South cooperation became prevalent in order, not only to transcend colonial legacies, but also to obtain effective socio-cultural systems. Interestingly, Ali Raza (2023), a contemporary South Asianist, asserts that culture as a means of progressive society was quite prominent in 1950s' Pakistan. Relaying the voice of the radical thinkers in the country during that time, Raza declares: 'Substantive freedom from the conjoined domination of imperialism, capitalism, and racism was impossible to conceive of and achieve unless it was accompanied by cultural freedom and a cultural renaissance in the decolonized and decolonizing world' (ibid., p. 250). As I have explained, Said's 'secular consciousness' is about securing this freedom through critical thinking about the formation of cultural groups. The question is why this critical approach to cultural belonging failed to become the trademark of decolonized Pakistan or Sri Lanka for that matter. Raza provides us with an answer in the form of the absence of a firm direction about cultural belonging and freedom, for he identifies a crucial lack of imagination in this regard. As he elaborates:

> In the case of Pakistan, the uncertainty of what freedom would mean was even greater given that its creation was largely an unexpected event, even for its most ardent supporters. This uncertainty triggered unprecedented communal conflict, but it also gave rise to a political and intellectual ferment about what

> ‘Pakistan’ would look like. For that reason, countless visions of ‘Pakistan’ were proffered, both within and extending beyond the politically prominent Muslim League. (ibid., pp. 253–254)

Understandably, Raza is referring to the Indian Partition (1947), which generated an unmatched ethnic violence but his more crucial point is that there was a lack of realization regarding the concrete form of freedom the country was seeking after Partition. It is not difficult to understand that this type of fuzziness only propelled hurried categorizations of cultural groups in the polity that Said discourages. With the professed *raison d’être* of presumed civilizational difference between Hindus and Muslims of Indian sub-continent, therefore, the country chose to pursue an unreflecting reclamation of culture and history. Unsurprisingly, progressive ideas of cultural freedom ‘may have been situated in Pakistan, but they were ultimately untethered and unbound to it’ (p. 263).

Deepika Bahri (1996) adds a different dimension to the debate regarding the lack of embeddedness of progressive ideas in postcolonial societies. For this, Bahri defines the nature of the field first, arguing that contemporary critical theory often uses sociology, history, and politics, but postcolonial discourse is especially interdisciplinary. This is because it originated from specific historical events and has been reinforced by its links to poststructuralism and postmodernism. Additionally, economic and political factors have helped make ‘“postcolonial”’ (ibid., p. 147) the preferred term over other options. Therefore, the problematic role of postcolonial and multicultural literature in educational settings develops from the fact that they are often assigned a restrictive function: minority authors are expected to represent their communities primarily as victims, and their works are used to inform students about suffering and difference. Ultimately, the text is co-opted by a local agenda that celebrates diversity superficially rather than engaging with its deeper political challenges. Thus, postcolonial studies suffer from the oscillation between appearing to be politically correct about issues reflecting cultural diversity, for example,

and responding to the deeper political contests associated with these matters. In this respect, the field echoes the social context it represents, a milieu marked simultaneously by colonial legacies, ethnic diversity, and an acute need for creating a compass to manage the complex socio-economic dynamics. One way or another, both postcolonial studies and the social contexts it deals with can be benefitted from Said's 'secular consciousness' for developing their navigational capacity in an exacting era. Citing Gauri Viswanathan, Bahri reaffirms the need for an improved awareness regarding cultural groups and their dynamics:

> The quest for 'sameness,' in fact, might offer surprisingly rich yields. For instance, Viswanathan recommends applying a 'postcolonial' method of reading to canonical texts 'so that what appear to be concerns exclusive to the postcolonial situation—fundamentalism, sectarianism, and so on—could be read in relation to nineteenth-century novels [such as] *Barnaby Rudge*.' This could make us 'rethink the problems of the Third World and consider that these difficulties have become part of an international, global history'… I close with what remain abiding and still useful questions: What is the impact, in popular and populist as well as material terms, of generating academic formations that rely on static binaries? How can we activate the continuum rather than the polarities between binaries? (Ibid., pp. 157–158)

Like Said, Bahri is concerned with retaining postcolonialism's worldly connections and launching more grounded knowledge about cultural exclusivism and its repercussions. While debates over terminology and theory can feel like trivial, self-indulgent pursuits, they do not have to be, for Bahri insists that we can discuss real-world marginalization and oppression without forcing these complex human experiences into rigid, oversimplified, and ultimately misleading categories.

From this perspective, rebellious poet Chandidas, who flourished in fifteenth-century Bengal, becomes synchronous with Said and Bahri. Before elaborating Chandidas' earthly philosophy, I have to point out that '[t]he question fails to be determined whether there was only one Chandidas who deliberately used the terms, "Borhu", "Dwija", and "Din" etc. before his name or there were many such poets who mentioned their names accordingly' (Chakrabortty, 1984, p. 90). Despite the mystery attached to the bard's existence, his lyrics remain devotional and yet extraordinarily earthbound. Chandidas exists as an unsolvable riddle in Bengali literary history, who asserts that '"Love is God"', while maintaining a close connection with '"elemental things of life"', which demonstrates the appeal of simple things for the poet that 'finds expression through the senses' (ibid., pp. 91, 94). In order to grasp Chandidas' emphasis on sanctity of all living beings, we have to delve into his lyrics, '[f]or more than 500 years, the love poetry ascribed to Chandidas has captivated the hearts of the Bengali people' (Chaudhuri, 2022, p. 336). This has happened because of three major features: (1) Core Legacy: he is celebrated in popular legends as a champion of humane values; (2) Life's Mission: he fought against various forms of discrimination; and (3) Key Beliefs: he advocated for the freedom of personal choice, the fundamental right to love, and the right to worship. More importantly, he practised his own preaching. Despite belonging to an upper-caste priestly class, he left home and lived like a wandering troubadour. The poetic tradition born out of this unconventional life inspired the ordinary people of Bengal because he placed human beings and their experience at the centre of his world.

As his most famous verse goes:
Dedicate your soul
to the service of loving.
Love was born
to Rādhā.
as one by one,
her eight friends helped.

If your senses and the mind
can grasp the essence,
Krishna is reached.

Says Chandidās:
Listen, O, brother man, Man is the greatest Truth
Of all,
Nothing beyond.

(Chandidas, 1967, p. 167)

Even if Chandidas mentions Hindu god and goddess, Radha and Krishna, his devotion transcends the religious boundary, since he asks his audience to 'grasp the essence', which he defines as the knowledge that if one wants to find God, or truth, or meaning, one does not have to search the sky, know the rituals, and/or memorize ancient texts alone. One has to look at the person standing next to oneself, serve them, and try to understand them. Knowing what constitutes the nucleus of humanity is the highest spiritual practice. Chandidas convinces his listeners to travel down this path by calling them 'brother', which immediately establishes equality. He is speaking as one human being to another, emphasizing a shared bond. Thus, the bard defies the conventions of his time, when the dominant truth was often seen as the scriptures, or the afterlife. The physical world and the human body were often considered illusions or obstacles to spiritual truth. Chandidas' revolutionary statement puts the human experience—with its capacity for joy and sorrow—in the centre by highlighting that it is not something to be surpassed; it is the very place where the divine or the ultimate meaning of life is found. His emphasis on 'Nothing beyond' is particularly striking, as it deconstructs the hierarchies that separate people (like caste, class, or religion) by stating that the human being is the ultimate measure of all things. In other words, Chandidas proclaims that truth is not found by escaping the world, but by fully embracing humanity, and exalting the human soul.

It has to be stressed here Chandidas is not a sole figure in Bengal's time-hallowed secular humanist tradition. Bengal's secular tradition does not undermine religious beliefs. Instead, it represents an organic cultural ethos that prioritizes human compassion, syncretic spiritualism, and social unity over sectarian religious dogmas. In his long introduction to *Chandidas' Lyric Poems,* Bimanbihari Majumdar (1960, p. 20) explains how this tradition underscores meditating on the 'natural constitution' of human beings, which can only be comprehended if one achieves the benevolence of a 'true teacher'. For this reason, the 'muttering of prayers' is regarded as secondary to the imposition of 'stillness on one's mind' (ibid.) in order to find the divine in human beings. It is beyond the purview of this chapter, or, for that matter the book, to scrutinize this spiritual quest. Suffice it to say, secular humanist ideas are not Western-derived in Bengal. In fact, secularism in South Asia has been locally based indicating the coexistence of all religious groups, unlike the Western utilization of the concept through the separation of church and state, the government's impartial stance towards all religions, and the policy that public institutions should not be controlled by religious doctrines. As Neeti Nair (2023) explains: 'An explicit definition of South Asian secularism as respect for all religions does not necessitate a separation of matters of religion from the state. Instead, it stems from South Asia's own history of battling communal demons… To be secular *is* to belong fearlessly' (pp. 249–250; emphasis in the original). The fearless belonging can only ensue if the mind is sharpened by critical thinking. Therefore, bringing Said into dialogue with the decolonized South Asia is of paramount importance.

In what follows, I will analyse Said's 'secular consciousness' and its dynamics with religion and sectarianism in two sub-sections. The first sub-section will look into the following aspects of the Saidian term: (a) through the Arnoldian and Bendaesque beliefs in the agency of the cultivated self, the individual appears as a crucial player in the cultural arena by dint of his/her historical and social actions; (b) through the reproduction of filiation in the affiliative structure, religiosity returns in

the form of the reassertion of the known aspects of belonging; and (c) through transcending faith in the limiting capacity of interest groups, reactionary habits, and imposing fiefdoms, the scope for social change is broadened. Therefore, I will argue if *Bhasha Andolon*/the Language Movement (1952) created an upheaval in the Bengali mind to take note of the people's several thousand years of harmonious coexistence with members of varied religions, and whether this inspired their pre-independence thinkers to construct a secular vision of society that I will interpret with the help of the tripartite lens provided by Said. I will attempt to gauge if the secular aspiration of the Bengalis formed an oppositional stance to the dominant religion-based cultural ideology, and whether this increased the tension between the communal basis of Pakistan and the linguistic heritage of the Bengalis that they started to project through spotlighting the symbols of their cultural origin (for instance, Bengali New Year and Spring Festival) more and more confidently.

The second sub-section will look into the following facets of Saidian secularism, or lack thereof: (a) since religiosity implies an essential sense of belonging, it is manifested when we harden cultural identities produced out of political motivations; (b) since the secular outlook is about rising above collective passions, preferring expediency over informed judgement on issues of belonging becomes sectarian; and (c) since knowledge is the medium through which human beings give shape to their ambience, generating hasty and exclusive compartmentalizations of opposing cultural groups becomes wrongly directed for the purpose of liberation. Therefore, I will investigate whether the Tamils' entrance to the competition with the Sinhalese to establish themselves as the race most affiliated with the nation gave the debate of Sri Lanka versus Mother Lanka a dangerously sectarian colour after the failure of the 1930s' *Swabasha* (vernacular) Movement. By ascertaining the presence of what Said views as sectarian outlook above in Sri Lankan Tamils' endeavour to advance their mother-language-based claim on the island, I will query if they demonstrated disproportionate allegiance to their cultural particularity. Similarly, I

will scrutinize if this exercise hampered their nationalist claims by becoming a mark of their religious adherence to their cultural ideology in a Saidian sense. In the end, I will conclude whether without connecting to egalitarianism, narratives of liberation can fully succeed in decolonized nations.

Secular Consciousness of Pre-independence Bengali Thinkers

Vali Nasr (2003) writes about the apparent conflict of secularism in the Muslim world due to the concept's colonial genealogy as well as its suitability for postcolonial state's ideological domination. Nevertheless, the more the state's ideological foundation became challenged, and the more its machineries alienated social influences, the surer secularism was disfavoured compared to the mores and social organizations deemed to be visibly tied to Islam. This is why Nasr prefers native models of secularism the ideals of which are not Western-derived and able to curtail the fundamentalist power within the state. In this section, I aim to delineate how the Language Movement (1952) inspired the then-Bengali intellectuals to create such a homegrown model of secularism, which was their primary means of dissent against the Urdu-oriented religious nationalism of undivided Pakistan. Rather than elaborating on the divine aspect of religion, they protested against the politicization of Islam by showing the three crucial aspects of Said's secularism mentioned above, which can be briefly reiterated as follows: (a) exerting individuals' agency; (b) questioning affiliative structures; and (c) increasing the possibility for positive social change. Put simply, the Bengali intellectuals' worldview shared Said's idea of religiosity as an uncritical acceptance of dominant ideologies of the state. Far from being anachronistic, I am utilizing the Saidian lens here to plumb the depth of the dissent demonstrated by the pre-independence intellectuals of today's Bangladesh. Similarly, I briefly explain the Bengalis' celebrations of their cultural roots during Pakistan period as their mother-language-based aspiration for belonging to a progressive

world. Thus, both the efforts of the Bengali intellectuals and citizens placed 'dissent in a much more complex, adversarial relation not only to religious orthodoxy but also to state hegemony' (Viswanathan, 1997, p. 153).

First and foremost, the Arnoldian and Bendaesque beliefs in the agency of the cultivated self I explained above are reflected in the writings of Bengali intellectuals of the late British period. The creative individuals of this time not only recorded their speculations regarding the nationalistic mission, but also formulated their ideas about the dominant picture of the nation's life, which was viewed as a collective of liberal individuals, who were able to enrich the public sphere of the Bengali-speaking people through their aesthetic and social endowments. An advanced stage of print culture 'made possible by books, journals, newspapers, literary societies, clubs and libraries' (Mitra, 2020, p. 2) nurtured a reading public whose understanding of modern principles of cooperation became the indicator of a fruitful national life. Just as Arnold urged the apostles of culture to employ their best ideas and humanistic concerns to illustrate the practical ways of improving society, the progressive section of the Bengali intelligentsia started to work towards mitigating the religion-based differences and conflicts of the community during the late British period so that a new social order was set up that valued ordinary people's self-understanding. This was based on a common literary heritage that held the power to cure the lack of proper order and security in society through violence erupting from caste and communalism-based exertions. Thus, the individual was deemed to be a crucial player in the cultural arena by dint of his/her historical and social actions against religious contrasts and unfair practices in order to prevent the speculated national life from becoming an illusory and unattainable project. In an Arnoldian way, therefore, the triumphant cultural system defining the collective spirit of the envisaged postcolonial state became associated with a vernacular language and the aesthetic repertory connected to the language, as opposed to customary ties built around religion and/or ethnicity. Thus, '[a] modern

literary culture in Bengali came to be perceived as a natural bond, one that united all who shared the same linguistic origin' (ibid., p. 5).

However, disparate motions of the formation of India as a decolonized nation and the national life envisaged by the Bengali cultural hub meant that the 'Arnoldian quest for perfection' (ibid., p. 9) expounded by the latter could not materialize. On the one hand, the cultural arena was inundated by responses to the literary readers' politico-economic concerns regarding the prospect of decolonization, the nature of self-governance, the rationale behind separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims, communal riots, and various crises during the Second World War. On the other hand, the newly educated and budding middle-class Muslim section of the Bengalis could not be fully aligned with the colonial literary sphere due to its exclusionist appearance, having been led by the socially far advanced Hindu intelligentsia. Even a progressive Muslim like Sheikh Wajed Ali (1890–1951), who received his Bar at Law from Cambridge University in 1915, got appointed a Magistrate of Calcutta Presidency in 1923, and remained a prominent essayist, story-teller, and travelogue writer, found the Bengali literary sphere alienating. I will soon look into his classic text on secularism, *The Bengalis of the Future* (1943), though right now I would like to comment on his accord with Said regarding the limitation of the Arnoldian scheme. Just as Said explains Arnoldian 'anarchy' to be the sign of exclusion, Ali observed during his Presidential address at the fifth annual meeting of the Bengal Muslim Literary Association in 1925 that the parallel literary wing needed to be established in 1918 not for disrupting the environment, but to remedy the fact that Bengali language and literature appeared unfit for the Muslims through fortifying insiderness for the dominant Hindu society (see Mitra, 2020, p. 191). Therefore, Ali's resistance to the status quo of the literary enclave of colonial Bengal echoes Said's secular consciousness by proving that an awakened individual is able to explore the potentiality of a new cultural force as well as struggle against the dominant cultural system.

I would argue that Ali's resistance is Bendaesque too, for he rises above political fervour in pointing out the gap in the dominant discursive field of modern Bengali literature. Rather than intensifying the political antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims, which was quite rife during the late colonial period, Ali acted as a learned and committed clerk, who critically assessed the views that fuelled the negative passions of the conflicting groups. Attempting to investigate the reasons behind the prevalent rivalry, Ali (1943, pp. 45–46), identifies the lack of socio-cultural understanding to be the fundamental cause, which makes an appearance in the following way:

> (1) the existing method of teaching historical lessons, (2) the religious leaders' superfluous influence, (3) the effect of communally inclined literature, (4) the economic competition among the salaried middle class, (5) the domination of this salaried middle class in the current political atmosphere, (6) the inordinate hope and nightmarish dream of bringing back the communal state of the past, (7) various lifestyles, (8) deficiency of combined programs and institutions, (9) the absence of clearer and wider cooperative principles regarding the future, (10) excessive influence of the non-Bengalis in the present life of the Bengalis.

The considerable list demonstrates how strong Ali's writing sounds in his sincere effort to find common grounds between the two prominent religious groups of the Bengali-speaking people. How can we reconcile such earnestness with his forceful effort towards making the Muslim voice more discernible within the Bengali literary field, as we saw above? Benda provides us with an answer. If we view the latter as Ali's clerical stance against making cultural hegemony work in the name of nationalist politics, which he also explains above as the 'nightmarish dream' that presumably did not spare the literary arena, though he refers to a communal hegemony here, we realize how the

writer overcomes what Benda calls the *trahison des clercs* by forming his discursive interventions as a proof of his individual will.

As I discussed earlier, this assertion of individual will is part of Said's secular consciousness, since he emphasizes the human mind's capacity to keenly respond to the dominant culture as a socio-historical participant of the discursive arena. This provides us with a deeper lens to view the turmoil that the Bengalis of East Bengal (later East Pakistan) were going through during the late colonial period in order to come up with a suitable definition of their group identity that takes into account their socio-historical reality. On the one hand, there was the pervasive non-literacy within the community shared by the Hindus and the Muslims of this territory, where most of the population consisted of the rural impoverished, small traders, and lower-echelon employees of the British Raj. On the other hand, the challenge of reconciling Muslim identity with Bengali identity led to the experimentation of infusing Bengali with increasingly more Arabic, Persian, and Urdu words, which the elite Muslim Bengalis preferred. And yet, an impressive number of Bengali Muslim thinkers vehemently opposed the supposed Islamization of Bengali in order to differentiate them from the north-Indian Muslims. Ali intervened into the debates by drawing an imagined picture of Bengalis living in the delta after the Second World War, a hundred years later than the writer's time of composition. The writer starts with emphasizing on cultural, linguistic, advantageous, and ideational unity among the deltaic inhabitants. According to Ali, the delta is distinctively different from the rest of the Indian sub-continent not only due to its linguistic unity, but also for the fact that the Bengali-speaking people share an ancestral bond, which makes it difficult for them to be divided according to their physique, unlike the very discernible divide between the Bengalis and the non-Bengalis of the region (see ibid., p. 12) (Fig. 3.1).



Fig. 3.1 British Bengal

Ali goes so far as to assert that modern Bengali nation is recognized through its imagination, which takes shape through the people's music,

literature, and arts that act as a natural anecdote to religious chauvinism. The question is if Ali contradicts himself by suggesting that a spontaneous and innate bond exists between the main religious rival groups in British Bengal. The perplexity lessens when we think about Ali's satisfaction in the fact that the Hindus and the Muslims of the region are almost equal in number and in power and pelf. However, his hopefulness for the continuation of the coexistence of these groups lies in the fact that having remained in close contact with Europe for a long period, the linguistic group created a forward-looking culture that continued to drive towards 'global humanism' (ibid., p. 14). Indeed, he envisages a future Bengali nation that rises above its parochial boundaries maintained by the Hindus and the Muslims by completely shunning the dream of a religious state (see ibid., p. 33). The emphasis on the unsuitability of a religious state for the zeitgeist suggests that East rather than West Bengal was dominant in his thoughts, since Pakistan dream was swaying the place. Therefore, his advice sounds more appropriate for the Eastern part of Bengal, as he asserts that without the unity of language and literature, the 'profound affection' required for a 'coherent' (ibid., p. 63) nation will never materialize as a result of which the social life will move backwards towards the Middle Ages. Therefore, Ali echoes Said's secular consciousness by reiterating that 'the destiny and responsibility' of the deltaic inhabitants as its socio-historical actors lie in creating a unified nation of Hindus and Muslims with the help of Bengali language, without which the Bengali Muslims cannot transcend their 'stratum of immovability' (ibid., pp. 64, 81).

Nevertheless, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000, p. 176) explains Ali's nationalism as a reflection of Rabindranath Tagore's Europeanized influence in 'transcending the historical' for viewing the homeland to be 'worthy of adoration'. Adoring the motherland does not have to happen through withdrawal from history, though, as the partitioned Bengal demonstrated, despite being christened as East Pakistan in 1947. Bearing the traces of Emperor Ashoka's third century BCE Buddhist stronghold, Turkish-Afghan kings' base from the fourteenth to

the sixteenth centuries, as well as the Mughals' rebellious province from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the region greatly required to find a vision to come to terms with its post-British socio-political realities. Secularism based on Bengali language rather than the fraternity provided by the sub-continental Islamic identity appeared to be befitting for raising the demands of cultural equality, economic advancement, and political freedom as the majority population in Pakistan. Eminent litterateur and politician Abul Mansur Ahmad (1898–1979) writes that '[i]t does not take a genius to figure out that in a democratic country, the spoken language of the masses will be the state language', which the writer laments that the powers that be (like the Bengali Prime Minister of Pakistan, Khawaja Nazimuddin) refused to open their eyes to by 'carrying the bitterness of the community to extremes' (Ahmad, 2013, pp. 249, 250), before finally announcing the general election in 1954. Ahmad further records that neither a seasoned eyewitness like him nor the prominent Muslim League leaders fathomed that the 'double march of Urdu by neglecting Bengali, the language of the majority in Pakistan' (ibid., p. 249), led to the public revulsion in East Pakistan. This inevitably makes us question anew the idea of religious affiliation between East and West that created Pakistan by demanding that the citizens of the state must view them as Muslims, as opposed to being attached to their Bengali, Sindhi, Pashtun, and other roots.

As I will explain below, the religious affiliation based on which Pakistan was launched came to be jolted as soon as Mohammad Ali Jinnah arrived in East Pakistan in 1948, having been invited by the province's government to resolve the growing political unrest surrounding the issue of Bengali as a state language. On March 21, Jinnah defined the matter to be plain and simple provincialism while addressing a vast assemblage of Dhaka residents through his first major speech for them. By emphasizing the importance of consolidation in a religiously affiliated nation, Jinnah (2000, pp. 148–150) revealed the lack of filiation for the Bengali Muslims of the land:

> If I may point out, you are all outsiders here. Who were the original inhabitants of Bengal — not those who are now living [in it]… You belong to a Nation now; you have now carved out a territory, vast territory… ultimately, it is for you, the people of this Province, to decide what shall be the language of your Province. But let me make it very clear to you that the State Language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language.

Thus, Jinnah denies the undeniable biological ties between the original inhabitants of Bengal and its decolonized dwellers on the grounds that the latter converted to a religion after it had arrived from the Middle East. Following this argument, the Muslims in Bengal had to prioritize their religious identity in order to instantly connect to the nation with a capital N, which was the fifth-most populous country in the world. As Said explains above, we can consider this sense of belonging as a clear restoration of the filiative order within the new system of affiliation by highlighting the socio-cultural aspects of religion to be the major determinants of the Muslim subjects of Pakistan. In other words, the affiliative structure of Pakistan determined that Urdu language belonged to the Bengalis, as they in turn belonged to the Muslim identity provided by the linguistic tradition. Therefore, the vehement Bengali supporters of Pakistan Movement during the first half of the twentieth century became less important than the transhuman Urdu-based rules emanating from their religious community.

The fact that the Bengalis found the transformation of their religious affiliation into a coercively filiative one, which demanded obedience, respect, and fear from them for its natural authority, proved to be alarming when Jinnah delivered his Convocation speech in Curzon Hall at the University of Dhaka on March 24. The moment Jinnah reaffirmed that a lingua franca was required for inter-provincial communication for which Urdu was the most obvious choice, some students roared: ‘No, No’, following which he thundered that only Urdu would be recognized as the State Language, for it represented the best

version of Muslim tradition and culture (see Dil & Dil, 2000, p. 155). How Urdu can replace Arabic in embodying the best form of the culture remains a great mystery. Therefore, the spontaneous protest that shocked Jinnah into silence for a while implies the presence of Said's secular consciousness among the university students through the manifestation of their willpower. Once again, I am not suggesting that the Bengali Muslims followed Said, which is plainly anachronistic, to say the least. My contention is that despite contributing significantly to the creation of Pakistan, the educated Bengali Muslims did not lose their secular consciousness that made them recognize the loss of potency for their affiliation with Islamic *Tamaddun,* which translates from Urdu as civilization. As opposed to religion-centred civilization, the educated strata of the Bengalis comprehended that they were compelled to accept what West Pakistan regarded to be the familiar cultural inheritance. This is what Said calls above reinforcing 'the known at the expense of the knowable'. Thus, the religious affiliation reinforced filiation by curtailing the Bengalis' humane aspiration for civilizational revival.

Indeed, the history-oriented secular consciousness of the Bengalis was awakened by the Language Movement of 1952, which demonstrated that the socio-cultural and political systems of human beings are their own creations. The sacrifice of the martyrs immediately transmitted the fact that the end result of Pakistan Movement was going to be smoldering dislike of the reactionary rulers for the secular-minded Bengalis of East Pakistan. Therefore, notwithstanding the evidence that the Language Movement had been initiated by Dhaka University students and the educated Middle Class of the town, the blood of the martyrs spread its secular message around the notion of belonging to the autochthonous language and culture to the remotest corner of the province. In fact, the people in the remotest villages understood the justness of the secular message in the plainest terms: the meaning of depriving a group of people of their mother tongue is to carry out an act of treason against them. In other words, the choice of state language was a man-made matter to them. One of the

most renowned modern Bengali authors, Syed Mujtaba Ali (1904–1974), analysed the situation calmly, though his conclusion was jarring in the context of the time. In a long essay entitled, 'The State Language of East-Pakistan', the writer explains that the down-and-out villagers fought for Pakistan while speaking in their supposedly unholy vernacular, who cannot become the state's enemy by losing their Islamic zeal immediately after turning Bengali into a state language. Ali categorically concludes that the imposition of Urdu will lead to a public revolt that will finally free East Pakistan from the Western part. His prescience is remarkable: 'Just as the nobility of race can be the reason for oppression, the nobility of language too can broaden the path of exploitation' (Ali, 1958, p. 211). I will expand the notion of racial supremacy in the final chapter. For the moment, it is event that the Bengali Language Movement transformed into a mass upheaval due to the fact that the leading intellectuals were able to communicate a secular message to the masses that the socio-cultural composition of Pakistan is not divine; it is their own creation. Deductively speaking, in an Eliotesque way described above, the people should decide the credo of their unity with the nation. Put differently, Saidian secularism allows us to see that the cultural distinctness of the East and the West was asked to be pulverized for a unity that was not inspired by the ideals of a republic that prioritized changing the plight of its destitute: to change the penury-pounded ones into the free-from-hardship members of society, in Ali's terms (see Ali, 1958, p. 212).

In fact, the Dhaka University-based incomparable struggle and sacrifice of the students in order to retain the honour and rights of the mother tongue aroused the multitude of East Pakistan in such a manner that they did not hesitate before relinquishing their life and property for the success of the Language Movement in 1952. After 21st February, people from all walks of life and all generations donned black badges and ribbons for spontaneously participating in strikes, processions, and meetings taking place from Dhaka to the remotest corners of the province. The unknown numbers of martyred and missing students along with the one whose skull blasted off due to police shooting, as

well as the two hundred and fifty injured people, and the five hundred arrested students on 21st February revived the public memory of Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (1919), which occurred in colonial India (see Rafique, 2006, pp. 163, 166, 186). The British troops shot down about ten thousand unarmed protesters against the Raj in Amritsar's open space, which resulted in the killing of several hundred people. On 22 February 1952, thousands after thousands took part in the funeral prayers for the martyrs. For the next few days, the martyrs' blood on the highroads of Dhaka, the dreadful police raids in the students' halls of residence, the police's opening fire again on processions, the deadening sound of random gunshots at the Medical College hostels, and the smoke-enveloped Dhaka University and its adjacent areas due to tear gas, as well as the deployment of the Armed Forces made it absolutely clear to the people that the religiosity attached to Pakistan was *never* to be probed. Due to the unambiguous support for the state authorities from the Urdu-speaking Bengali elites, who were scanty in number but powerful in terms of realpolitik, it also became apparent that in East Pakistan the question of the mother tongue would always be juxtaposed against the supposed religious standing of the locale. Therefore, any forms of violence would be justified by the defenders of Urdu against the vast numbers of ordinary Bengali-speaking people, who did not view their secular demand to be conflicting with their religious belief. For them, religion was a moral code, as opposed to a simplistic identitarian feature they affiliated with. Therefore, in a Yeatsian manner explained above, the Bengalis could not view Pakistan to be a perfection never to be questioned, for it would lead to the understanding of their own human limitation. Abdul Matin and Ahmad Rafique (2005, p. 152) add: 'The rank and file had taken it for granted that the government possessed no moral rights to exercise their tyranny over the rightful demand of the Language Movement and for the unjust high-handedness, they had also lost the legitimacy of directing the functions of the government'.

Once again the Bengali intellectuals of the era have to be recognized for ensuring the clarity among people regarding the distinction

between their religious and cultural loyalties through widening the existing definition of Muslim culture to the dynamic fabric of socio-political and economic realities from which it derives its strength, which I explained above as a Saidian demonstration of secular consciousness. A renowned scholar called, Muhammad Shahidullah (1885–1969), whose writings not only contributed to his own field of Indo-Aryan philology, but also enriched the history of Bengali literature and culture, remained one of the luminary intellectuals behind the secular Bengali philosophy, which is the upshot of the Language Movement of 1952. In a striking address of the Bengali Muslim Literary Convention (1917), the philologist laments that a particular group of people among the dwellers of (East) Bengal forcefully closes their mind to Bengali being their language of communication, emotion, and imagination, despite explanations from writers like him regarding the matter, which is 'as straightforward as axiomatic geometry' (Shahidullah, 1970, p. 191). He further argues that they have to know their motherland first in order to connect to the greater world, which is why their religious identity does not need to browbeat them for establishing its invincible power over them. Just like politics, languages also follow the aristocratic and democratic bends, which is reflected in the fact that when the sages used to depend on Vedic languages, the ordinary Aryans utilized a demotic language as their vernacular. Despite 'the thousands of appeals from the saints, the Vedic language could not survive against the demotic one, except for worshipping the gods and paying homage to them' (ibid., p. 199). Shahidullah describes this as the defeat of aristocracy to democracy. After Buddhist reign, Bengali prevailed upon Prakrits, a group of vernacular languages of the Indian sub-continent from around the third century BCE to the eighth century CE, despite being classified as one of the corrupt forms. Thus, history suggests that the democratic spirit contained in Bengali will win through the 'self-actualization' (ibid., p. 200) of its allegedly inferior form upheld by the masses over the threat of its Sanskritized version advocated by the pundits.

If we replace the Vedic language with Urdu, however, we realize why the latter's proclaimed Islamic nature had to be contested with the supposed Hindu inclination of Bengali by Islamizing this language through infusing it with Arabic. The Vedic precedence suggests that this will create a Bengali that is only fit for limited religious purposes. Shahidullah himself took part in the experimentation of producing an Arabic-based script for Bengali only to conclude the impossibility of the project. The paradoxical exercise took place probably because he was inspired by the adaptation of numerous 'Arabic-Persian-Turkic' (ibid., p. 201) words in Bengali. Nevertheless, Federico Salvaggio (2020, p. 158) explains that

> As an academic scholar, who had also an interest in Islamic studies, Shahidullah expresses concern for the destiny of the innumerable Bengali literary productions (of Hindu and Muslim Bengali authors) that "will never be possible to transliterate in Arabic"… and also for all the historical, administrative and juridical documents from different eras of the history of Bengal (including the Muslim rule) whose knowledge would be irremediably lost without the preservation of the Bengali script.

Clearly, Bengali literature flourished during the Muslim rule spanning centuries, where the rulers encouraged not only the universal use of Bengali but also the creativity of both Hindu and Muslim writers without obviously viewing the language and/or its practitioners to be deficient (see Eaton, 1993, p. 66). The economic vibrancy of Bengal enabled the cultural growth, which proves again that Muslim culture has been historically connected to a robustly secular context that did not require the ordinary people to be overtly religious. Such strong secular consciousness is why questioning Pakistan's affiliative structure was feasible for the speakers of Bengali.

Arguably, the claim of saving Pakistan versus the public support for the Language Movement reveals another vista of Saidian secular consciousness among the Bengalis: increasing the possibility for

positive social change. The first step towards the social change was creating successful self-positioning in the world though an oppositional consciousness that hypothesized looking inward for a forward-looking identity. Consequently, a vast and vigorous cultivation of the Bengalis' mother tongue was a conscious aim of the people, as more and more of them were becoming socially advanced through higher education. The absence of egalitarian goals among the West Pakistani regimes was the primary obstacle for the cultural progress the Bengalis hoped for. Therefore, the regional and linguistic aspirations were underlined to point out the widening gap between the inhabitants of the two parts of Pakistan. On 7 February 1956, the Father of the Nation, Bangladesh, *Bangabandhu* (Friend of Bengal) Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920–1975), took part in a discussion of the Draft Constitution of Pakistan at the Constituent Assembly in order to explain an amendment related to a clause on national language. *Bangabandhu* addressed three aspects of the clause: '"State," "official" and "nation"' in order to suggest that the first two terms are synonymous, which highlights two issues: (1) the demand of Bengali not to be an official or national language but to be a State language along with Urdu has to be granted, since it is 'the mother tongue of the majority of population' and (2) the possibility of non-existence of the clause emphasizing 'the development and growth' of the nation's language(s) has to be nullified due to the fact that 'everybody in East Pakistan' from all segments of the society has turned the question of the advancement of Bengali literature and culture into 'the demand of the people' (Rahman, 2011, pp. 63–65). Thus, the language-based discrimination in Pakistan was vehemently opposed through *Bangabandhu's* democratic and pluralistic spirit embodying the secular consciousness of positive change in order not to be pushed into oblivion inside the dichotomous state.

As Kabiruddin Ahmad (1968, p. 256) writes about the martyrs of 21st February: '[e]ach of the valiant martyrs is a pillar of memory in every human being's mind. This pillar of memory itself will destroy all the walls of obstruction for generating indomitable inspiration for [the people of East Pakistan] in their struggle to establish a new pattern of

life'. Indeed, the memory was the bulwark against the Bengali Muslims' deep-rooted indecisiveness regarding their religious and cultural identities. Before the Language Movement, they were the only community in Pakistan who could not assert their cultural identity developed from their lived life in the Bengal delta for several centuries and the traditions born out of the experience. While asserting the cultural anchorage, they had to face the severe obstruction of risking their religious authenticity. Because of this reactionary habit, which is opposed to Said's secular consciousness, they were not being able to cultivate the full rewards of literary, cultural, and politico-economic fields.

In this connection, an episode from *Bangabandhu's* journal regarding the Bengalis' yearning for not losing their cultural mooring is pertinent here. As early as 1949, the East Pakistan dwellers discovered that the authorities were particularly averse to meetings and processions against some of the government decisions considered discriminatory by the university and college students, who *Bangabandhu* had been trying to organize as a progressive voice of the province. In order to obtain public support for their activities and raise funds for the expansion of education in the province, cultural programmes used to be organized. In one such programme, thousands had gathered to listen to the most eminent folk singer of the time, Abbasuddin Ahmed (1901–1959). After the programme, *Bangabandhu* recalls how his heart was filled to the brim with the spontaneous outpouring of songs by Ahmed and his companions on the boat taking them to the nearest rail station for getting a connection to Dhaka. In his own words:

> [Abbasuddin] told me at one point, 'Mujib, there is a conspiracy afoot against the Bengali language. If Bengali isn't made a state language, Bengal's culture and civilization will be under threat. The songs that you have appreciated so much today will lose all their charm and melody. Whatever happens, Bengali must be made the state language.' (Rahman, 2012, p. 119)

Abbasuddin's tremendous trust in *Bangabandhu* for making the impossible possible by earning the State language recognition for Bengali foretells that he would become the centre of political strife of the land for throwing away the shackles of regression. *Bangabandhu* kept his promise to the singer he adored. Despite having been imprisoned for twenty-six months for various political involvements including supporting the demands of the Dhaka University bottom-rung employees around the time of the Language Movement, he played the role of a catalyst for the historic event on 21st February by instructing the student leaders sneaking into his hospital cabin, where he had been treated under the police guard, on how to convene a non-violent programme for pushing forward the demand of Bengali as a State language, and to increase public awareness regarding the Bengalis' deprivation in the vital fields of business, commerce, trade, and civil service (see ibid., pp. 195–197). Indeed, the understanding that linguistic disparity would turn into permanent enslavement for the people had been gaining ground, despite some religious leaders' 'decrees against Bengali' (ibid., p. 209). Thus, the cause of the yet unborn nation became decisively secular, as *Bangabandhu* started to drive the Bengalis out of the West Pakistani fiefdom their confusion regarding their religious and cultural loyalties confined them to. Through the Saidian lens, then, we realize that *Bangabandhu's* secular consciousness transformed the Bengalis from being a conflicted group to the one capable of envisioning positive social changes for peace and prosperity by withdrawing their unquestioning faith in the imposing fiefdom.

Indeed, Said's secular consciousness makes us realize through Raymond Williams that even an extremely dominant social system cannot be put on a pedestal, for it cannot humanly exhaust all possible scopes for a social change. In this light, Dhirendranath Dutta's (1886–1971) ardent defence of Bengali language in the Constituent Assembly remains a time-honoured example of an alternative experience from the past resurfacing as a challenge to the dominant belief. In an era when Dutta's religious identity readily turned him into an alien force

against the dominant ideology of *Ummah* (global community of Muslims), he became the historic voice to raise the first official demand for Bengali to be recognized as one of the state languages of Pakistan. On 25 February 1948 he fearlessly addressed Jinnah, the then President of the Constituent Assembly, asked for an amendment of Rule 29, which determined that the proceedings of the Assembly were to be conducted in Urdu or English, and made a case for Bengali to be granted equality with both the former languages based on the latter's standing as the spoken language of the majority. How he advanced Bengali's claim is particularly significant in terms of the supposed clash against the *Ummah*, for his approach was far removed from any such phenomenon. If we examine his reasoning, we realize that he struggled for saving Bengali from the cultural aggression the dominance of Urdu would have inevitably generated. In fact, his participation on the parliamentary debate regarding the linguistic identity of Pakistan is a clear depiction of ordinary Bengali life as an alternative experience to the dominant concept of the state being essentially Urdu-based in order to fulfil the dream of the Muslims of the sub-continent to visibly belong to the *Ummah.* As opposed to driving a wedge between the two parts of Pakistan, Dutta urges the Assembly to realize that the omission of Bengali in East Pakistan means the annihilation of a distinct community:

> I want to let the house know the feelings of the vastest millions of our State. Say for example when a Bengali speaking Muslim here goes to a post office and wants to have a money order form, he finds it printed in Urdu and is at a loss to understand what he must do… Then again when a poor cultivator buys or sells a certain plot of land he is often cheated by the stamp vendor. He can never be sure whether he has received or given the right value for the plot of land sold or purchased. This is because the value of the stamp, Sir, is written not in Bengali but in Urdu. (see Ahmed, 2012, p. 203)

Should the Bengalis have been non-existent as a cultural group for the sake of the *Ummah*, then? *Ummah* is supposed to strengthen the Islamic principles of equality, fraternity, and community; it is not about antagonizing two distinctly different Muslim cultures so that they cannot come under the same religious umbrella. This idea of the *Ummah* prevailed among the Bengali Muslims when they rationalized their need for inclusion in the greater Islamic community of the sub-continent around the period of the partition of India. Therefore, I disagree with Zillur Khan (1985, p. 843) that in the post-partition context, '*ummah* became subsumed by the regional and linguistic nationalism of Bengali Muslims', due to the increasingly shrinking scope for the Bengalis to take part in the decision-making process of the state. More than the structural inequalities, Urdu-based programme to boost the sense of *Ummah* was not grounded enough either to make the Bengalis feel part of *this* particular form of globality, or, to galvanize them for their socio-economic upliftment, which their mother language accomplished by connecting them to their geographical, historical, and cultural environments. Instead of secularist undercutting of the unifying potential of the *Ummah*, then, the Language Movement (1952) brought forward an ethos that negotiated the logic of Muslim fraternity and the idea of the national kinship from the viewpoint of cultural pluralism. If the *Ummah* suggests a framework for creating a worldwide Muslim network, it should be invariably reflective of the geographical, economic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of the believers. This is why I also disagree with Maidul Islam (2017, p. 36) that Pakistan can be viewed as a befitting example of 'the unity of the Muslim umma on shared belonging of religion', for this is still a *local* rather than a global dimension of the faith community because of which Bangladesh's emergence cannot also be regarded as equivalent to smashing 'such a political project of the unity of the *umma*'.

Viewing Pakistan as an essential form of *Ummah* for the sub-continental Muslims suggests not only a faulty imagination but also the readymade submission to the dominant ideology, which works against Said's secular consciousness. Motaher Hossain Chowdhury (1903–

1956), an eminent educator and writer, writes against the restricting role of ideologies by contrasting them with culturalist views. Following Chowdhury (2015, p. 26), we can assert that people, who aspire for culture's talismanic power, believe that the 'emancipation of the world cannot be achieved, unless the flows of wealth confined at the highest peaks of the Himalayas are brought down to the plain of the Bhagirathi [a headstream of the Ganges River] for public consumption' because they know the poverty of the homophonic life. In effect, Chowdhury expounds that culture itself suggests human ability not only to treasure the diversified forms of human society and its myriad literary riches, but also to relish the abundance of variegated nature and its ennobling gifts all of which are the bases of the constant evolution of human civilization contained in history. However, the ideologues cannot dig deep into the innumerable resources of life, which is why they can destroy cultural values through their homophony. In effect, Chowdhury warns that when *overt* religiosity takes control of the prevalent ideology, the latter can 'embroil humanness' (ibid., p. 25). Not only is Chowdhury's view of religiosity Saidian here, for he uses the term to indicate 'all its faultiness' (ibid.), but his stance is also reflective of Said's secular consciousness, since he opposes the domination of one-track mind by promoting the eternal Bengali agricultural work as a metaphor for its heterogeneous cultivations. This surely asserts the pre-independence Bengali efforts for social change by moving beyond the known combination of forces.

It is no wonder that the Language Movement (1952) created a seismic shift in the pre-independence Bengali society by enabling the people to rethink their several thousand years of harmonious coexistence with members of varied religions. For example, the fourth-century Gupta rule was conducted by a dynasty of the Vaishya caste that empowered Bengal to emerge as a distinctive political unit, and promoted their religion of Hinduism but the rulers also supported Buddhism and Jainism (see Pal, 2008, pp. 79–83). I mentioned above the strong Buddhist presence in Bengal through Emperor Ashoka during the third century BCE, whose interpretation of religion as ethical

practice has been hailed worldwide, and the Muslim rulers' championing of Bengal's pluralist culture, which Richard Eaton (1993, p. 69) describes as the place's 'modus vivendi'. Through the historical continuation, which Pakistan Movement curtailed, the dubiously decolonized Bengali intellectuals, politicians, and people realized the importance of joining their voices for forming an oppositional stance to the dominant religion-based cultural ideology. This increased the tension between the communal basis of Pakistan and the linguistic heritage of the Bengalis, which they started to project through observing events like Bengali New Year and Spring Festival more and more zealously. Rafiuddin Ahmed (2001, p. 17) explains that a whole series of observances, ceremonies, and celebrations persisted because it was not entirely possible for Bengali Muslims to deny the 'socio-territorial reality of their life'. Interestingly, in programmes like the Autumn Festival, and the welcoming of the monsoons, Tagore's songs were sung as a form of resistance against the dominant ideology of discrediting the supposedly Hindu poet in a Muslim majority country. Indeed, commemorating 21st February, celebrating Tagore's birthday, and writing billboards and street signs in Bengali became conscious acts of resistance against the West Pakistani regimes. In light of the above discussion regarding the brave and determined efforts by pre-independence Bengali thinkers from various fields, it is comprehensible that their Saidian form of secular consciousness became completely triumphant in creating a widespread oppositional consciousness against the Urdu-based obstruction of perennial Bengali language and culture. Therefore, Said's tripartite lens helps us to fathom the reasons behind the vast success.

Sectarian Aspects of Tamil Nationalism

If we inspect the Bengali thinkers' approach towards achieving the well-deserved State language status of their mother tongue, they did not introduce the concept of Bengali nationalism immediately after the Language Movement (1952). Instead they created the secular basis for

the concept, which was the first step towards their discovery of an appropriate nationalist ethos. However, for the Sri Lankan Tamils, the claim for a competing nationalism against the dominant Sinhala nationalism was floated with aplomb after the failure of the 1930s' *Swabasha* (vernacular) Movement during the 1950s. The riot of 1958, for example, which initiated violence against the Tamils living in the areas dominated by the Sinhalese, tore apart communal harmony between the two linguistic groups (see Ismail, 2005, p. 144). Increasingly, the Tamils started to realize that the majoritarian state was going to not only marginalize them, but also politicize the state institutions in such a way that there would be little legal safeguard for them against the gamut of injustices brought upon them. It is not to suggest that they did not explore the avenues of reconciliation and/or re-negotiation with the dominant Sinhalese. However, their distinctive language, culture, and even socio-geographical characteristics accelerated their national consciousness, which is also a historical inheritance. This is because the Tamils had been governed by an independent kingdom for centuries before the arrival of European colonizers, be they the Portuguese, the Dutch, or the British, though the latter transformed the island into a single administrative unit. Therefore, the Tamils were prepared to coexist in decolonized Sri Lanka with the Sinhalese only on an equal basis, which was perpetually denied. Since the Tamils could not obtain the constitutional guarantee of non-discrimination against them, the lack of historical precedence of the two ethnic groups' power sharing in the island led to the Tamils' disillusionment with the idea of a shared state. Inevitably, Tamil assertion of nationality started with their articulation of their non-minority status due to their linguistic and historic strengths, which can be viewed as sectarian, rather than secular, if we apply the Saidian lens to the phenomenon.

As I explained earlier, I will examine if the Sri Lankan Tamils' self-assertion is a depiction of sectarianism due to the following facts: (a) essentializing cultural identity due to political motivation; (b) collective passion leading to expediency rather than informed judgement on

belonging; and (c) compartmentalizing opposing cultural groups by undermining the purpose of liberation. Therefore, I will investigate whether the Tamils' competition with the Sinhalese for establishing themselves as one of the most deserving, if not the most deserving, inhabitants of Sri Lanka, which they also demand to be a 'Secular State' that protects minority rights, took a dangerously sectarian turn. By ascertaining the presence of what Said views as sectarianism in Sri Lankan Tamils' endeavour to protect their interests in the Sinhala-Buddhist society through amplifying that the linguistic heritages of the Sinhalese and the Tamils are completely dissimilar, and asserting that the historic homeland of the Tamils constitutes over one-third territory of the island, I will query if they put passion above reason regarding their cultural particularity. Similarly, I will scrutinize if the Tamil resistance against the majority linguistic group led to the depiction of the latter as the obliterator of Tamil letters from Ceylon and the slayer of the former's equal rights. Thus, my analysis below aims at deciphering whether the Tamils' parallel nationalism was ultimately catastrophic for them by making them underestimate their dependence on the majority community's politicians, which could be interpreted as their religious adherence to their cultural belonging in a Saidian sense.

As I discussed above, Said defines religiosity as an essential sense of belonging, which encamps people in a sectarian way. This becomes perceivable when Said explains that allegiance to a particular faith is a personal choice. The problem arises when one wants to be in oblivion regarding the historical nature of one's faith community. In other words, the failure of critically assessing the collectively received interpretations of one's belonging leads to the acceptance of the 'petty cultural and religious politics' underlying the collective identity. Thus, Said reveals how cultural discourse serves the purpose of the political world by ensuring that the people belonging to the arena will unquestioningly adhere to the authorities and orders emerging from the cultural source. Unlike Hart, who I explained above, Said is not after religious matters; his aim is to challenge religion's 'worldliness', which becomes apparent through the worldly contexts against which

conformity to religion operates. Thus, how one becomes part of a sect has to be thoroughly examined; otherwise, the Middle East serves as a potent example of religion-based sectarian rivalries. Arguably, the sectarian tendency is visible in the conflict between the speakers of Sinhala and Tamil languages too. Indeed, Bryan Pfaffenberger (1990, p. 80) terms the Tamil sectarianism as 'defensive ethnic nationalism', which they utilized to strengthen the ethnic bond among the people so as to achieve two goals: to control divisive caste-based confrontations, which were fragmenting the community, and to unite them against the Colombo-based government in order to achieve various concessions from the authorities. My contention is that the Tamils' unexamined support for the 'defensive' form of unity resulted in a foundation for their liberation that was motivated in a sectarian way, and hence remained secularly deficient.

Said's secular consciousness suggests that the ethnic solidarity should have united the Tamil speakers irrespective of their caste conditions. The perception of their comradeship must have arisen from their linguistic heritage, even though caste represented an organic model of hierarchizing rituals and social interactions. However, Pfaffenberger shows that mother language on its own cannot propel ethno-nationalism, if the socio-cultural differences within the community remain irreconcilable. The writer explains how the 1968 crisis in Jaffna regarding the untouchable castes' right to enter the famous Maviddapuram temple revealed a fractured Tamil society in Sri Lanka. Despite being the centre of Tamil culture and heritage, sleepy Jaffna convulsed due to the fact that the supposedly untouchable castes of the peninsula started a non-violent demonstration in front of the famous temple for gaining admittance into it, which eventually turned violent as the agricultural caste called the Vellalars chose to beat the protestors mercilessly. Interestingly enough, Jaffna Brahmins, who are the priestly and highest-ranked Hindu caste, happened to be employed by the Vellalars, who dominated the economic, administrative, and political spheres. During the Dutch rule in the late eighteenth century, for example, the Vellalars displayed extraordinary prowess in tobacco

production, which is why the authorities allowed them to keep the Nalavars and Pallars as slaves, who were the steady source of agricultural labour for the dominant group (see ibid., p. 81). When these castes sought to be associated with the historic temple, the Vellalars became determined to protect the Maviddapuram's Brahmin-centric tradition of keeping it closed for them and depriving them of high-caste social norms like maintaining seclusion for their womenfolk, attending schools, and registering their names for obtaining social benefits. It is because Maviddapuram marked the beginning of civilization in the peninsula before which the place was like a wilderness that echoes the Vijayan myth (see Wilson & Chandrakanthan, 2000, p. 14). Thus, the Tamils prove that they are the historical contemporaries of the Sinhalese in terms of inhabiting the island. This explains why the growing belief from the 1960 onward in the potency of Tamil language in forming a powerful Tamil identity was forcefully mixed up with the lack of solidarity among the stratified castes.

Arguably, the ethnic competition with the Sinhalese in terms of claiming the status of an ancient occupier of the island led to the strategic utilization of the Tamil language, which undermined its secular potential of creating a community that advances a sense of belonging without resorting to religio-cultural politics underlying the conformity. To elaborate, during the early Victorian period (1837–1851), the British officials initiated a modernization process in Sri Lanka that aimed to abolish the archaic systems of caste, serfhood, and slavery, which meant that the conservatives of Jaffna had to be embittered by the social mobilization of the lower castes that the changes had implemented. Nevertheless, the Vellalars soon learnt to adjust to the new system by moving away from agriculture and embracing English education. They succeeded in fields like mathematics and medicine and became vastly employable in public administration and liberal arts, which was threatening for the Sinhalese, since they saw this as the Tamils' unfair share in the fields. Then again, the expansion of the service sector through the lower caste

Tamils' participation in it could not prevent the caste-based violence in Jaffna, which necessitated the Buddhist monks' intervention in inter-caste settlement. The Vellalars' way of resisting Colombo's mediations regarding the matters of caste and temple rites was to insist on its political leaders to turn the Sinhalese attempts against caste discrimination, like the Prevention of Social Disabilities Act (1957) for ensuring the lower castes' basic rights, into an invalid means of justifying their refusal of granting regional autonomy to the Tamils. Against this backdrop, the Maviddapuram strife presented the leading Tamil political front at the time, the Federal Party (FP), with a real opportunity 'to direct attention away from the Jaffna Peninsula and toward issues around which all Tamils could be politically united' (Pfaffenberger, 1990, p. 80). The Maviddapuram conflict ended inconclusively through persuading other large temples to open their gates to the so-called untouchables, as the Tamil language-based ethnic nationalism was utilized as a last resort to unite a community that would otherwise disintegrate due to searing class and caste-based animosities. Thus, the imposition of the Sinhala language in government matters worked as a paradoxical facilitator of avoiding fixing divisive inter-caste problems by proving religion's 'worldliness'.

Evidently, a spontaneous attachment and a natural tie to the mother tongue took a back seat, while the political motivation for highlighting the language-centred identity came to the fore. I am not suggesting that the Tamils did not prevent their assimilation into Sinhala-dominated society, or, maintain a national awareness on the basis of their distinct language, culture, territory, civilization, and history. Far from it, the common culture acted as common blood for the intricately divided people. To illustrate my previous point, however, the common ground among the influential Colombo Tamils, who are expected to pressurize the government for Tamil demands, and the Jaffna Tamils, who launched the call for regional autonomy, and the Batticaloa Tamils of the Eastern Province, who led the separatist activities, is not smoothly achievable. Unlike the Jaffna Tamils, the Batticaloa Tamils could not upgrade themselves through English education, though this did not

deter the entire community from becoming anglicized through higher education. This fraction of the community did not welcome internal competition with their rural kinfolk in the broader battle for Tamil emancipation, which brought all the Tamil communities under one umbrella through the Federal Party's efforts, since the party had become the 'vanguard in the struggle to protect Tamils' rights as equal citizens of Sri Lanka' (Sivakumar, 1989, p. 124). This secular approach meant that equal rights should have been sought for the various sections of the Tamils as well. As we can conjecture from the discussion above, Jaffna town had become the centre of Sri Lankan Tamils' politico-cultural systems. Consequently, the perceived danger from the Sinhalese stopped the Tamils, who are internally divided in manifold ways, from revolting against their non-egalitarian social system. As A. J. Wilson and A. V. Chandrakanthan (2000, p. 23) put it: 'Thus a people, highly splintered for reasons of caste, region, religion (Hindus versus Christians), politics and class, closed ranks when faced with the threat of the Sinhala Only movement'. Following the Saidian sense of religiosity, though, we can assert that an essential sense of belonging has been manifested through the Tamil endeavour to harden the mother-language-based cultural identity into a politically motivated phenomenon.

Following Vico, Said clarifies that the civic world has been a product of human thought, creativity, and adaptability. However, Vico expresses his bafflement that the human beings are not interested in adequately studying the zenith and the nadir of the world that is the product of their intelligence and imagination. The world they inhabit is not a serendipitous creation, but a direct result of their secular inclination. Said joins his voice with Vico in asserting that the secular consciousness has abidingly preserved human species on earth by enabling them to rise above collective passions like cultural inferiority and national honour. In other words, forgetting that these are part of the status quo leads to sectarianism, which makes cultural groups not to obtain informed judgement on issues of belonging by preferring expediency regarding the matters. As we shall see below, Sri Lankan

Tamils' ethnic insecurity due to higher status and greater political validity of the Sinhalese in the country made them fight against their lower political influence by turning the issues of language, culture, and religion into highly inflammable materials. In other words, the Sinhala-only policy not only transformed the Sinhalese into masters, but also pressurized the minority Tamils for revolting against their subject status by passionately advancing their linguistic nationalism, without necessarily studying the nature of its composition.

This is not to make light of the Tamil sufferings induced by the Sinhala-only policy. Even though Sinhala was declared to be the sole official language in the island, Tamil was allowed to be chosen by the local authorities of the Northern and Eastern provinces for administrative purposes. Realizing that the Sinhala-only legislation could not be thwarted, the Federal Party (FP) raised the demand of a federal state, which the non-FP Tamil politicians thought to be unpragmatic, since this would affect the Tamils working in Sinhalese-dominant areas. The animus between the two groups did not prevent their occasional unity. Though the non-Federalist Tamil elites like G. G. Ponnambalam would have been desperate to disapprove of the Federalists, the founder of FP, S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, agreed with him on two grounds: (1) the protestations against the Sinhala-only bill would be formed by boycotting Sinhala language in government, education, and work sectors and (2) the absence of linguistic parity might lead to 'a self-determination movement, which most Sinhalese construed to mean separatist movement' (DeVotta, 2004, p. 81). Instead of separatism, though, the FP launched what they called *satyagraha* (Sanskrit meaning, 'holding onto truth', a concept through which Mahatma Gandhi initiated his movement against British imperialism), which incorporated a peaceful sit-in outside the parliament while fasting all day to protest the introduction of the Sinhala-only legislation inside the House of Representatives. Nevertheless, the protest ended in violence, as the *satyagrahis* (the principled ones) were beaten, stone-pelted, and even thrown into the nearby lake. The Sinhalese mob continued their riots against the Colombo Tamils and Gal Oya

hydroelectric-power development project in the Tamil-speaking East, while the Tamil politicians were encouraged in the parliament by some of their discerning Sinhalese colleagues to passionately argue against the futility of imposing one cultural group's language upon another. Similarly, their foot march from various Tamil-speaking townships towards Trincomalee, which FP had declared to be the capital of free Tamil homeland, and their campaigns through the press and pamphlets after the passing of the Sinhala-only act did not bear fruit, though the opposition 'was becoming increasingly dangerous as it began to envelop the whole island' (Wilson & Chandrakanthan, 2000, p. 88).

The problem is that the politics of language revealed two passionately argued forms of Tamil resistance that cancelled each other out, namely, the demand for linguistic parity through parliamentarianism and a free homeland through separatism. The parliamentary intervention against Sinhala-only bill has a well-thought-out approach with a few distinctive concerns, which include the following: constitutionality, employment opportunity, cultural assimilation, master-slave binary, and worsening inter-ethnic relations. Once the bill was presented to House of Representatives in the then bicameral parliament, Ponnambalam immediately pointed out that the legislation violated Article 29 of the Soulbury Commission recommended constitution in 1944, which initiated Ceylon's self-government measures. Clause 29, which could not be amended without changing the Soulbury Constitution, not only protected the minorities against discriminatory legislations, but also enabled FP to move an amendment effectuating that all laws should be delivered in Sinhala and Tamil languages (see De Silva, 1972, pp. 246–247). Similarly, the parliamentary resistance to Sinhala domination incorporated the explanation regarding the negative impact of the Sinhala-only policy on the prospect of employment for non-Sinhalese. The Tamils had every reason to fear that almost all state sector opportunities, all decision-making jobs, and all preferential treatments for filling in vacancies, which the Buddhist monks had lobbied for, were going to the Sinhala speakers. They feared the danger of cultural assimilation even more.

The Sinhala domination reminded them that many lower caste Tamils, who were scattered in the littoral zone, ultimately assimilated into the Sinhalese community. Therefore, the Tamil elites maintained that Sinhala-only equated to a Sinhalese ethnocracy, since this would homogenize the entire population into a Sinhalese-speaking one (see DeVotta, 2004, p. 87). Evidently, the Tamil approach showed the signs of sectarianism, as their efforts circled around cultural inferiority and national honour.

If the passion behind the parliamentarian approach is not completely discernible from the above apprehensions, one of the major agitations was caused by the master-slave binary introduced through the Sinhala-only bill, which threatened to sever the Tamils' civilizational connection with their mother language. On 4 February 1956, Sri Lanka's independence day, when Tamils in the Northern and Eastern regions denounced state celebrations, Ponnambalam explained his people's sense of betrayal to his fellow parliamentarians by passionately arguing that both the Sinhalese and the Tamils fought against British imperialism, though the latter had ironically acquired the former as an indigenous class of masters as a result. He further argued that

> I look upon the denial of equality of status to one's language as almost a challenge to one's history, to one's past, to one's culture and to one's civilization. Language itself is a spiritual matrix in which one's culture lives and moves and has its being. Deprived of that matrix there can be no progress, either spiritual or otherwise. (Hansard HR Deb., 5 June 1956)

This illustrates how a singular legislation dramatically changed the harmonious coexistence between two ethnic groups. Before the Sinhala-only act was introduced, the Tamils willingly learnt Sinhalese in order to improve the fraternal bonding between the groups. However, the moment Sinhala-only policy degraded Tamil language, the ethnic group interpreted this as a question of national honour to oppose the

destruction of their mother tongue. The fact that the resistance was being ruled by passion was not addressed in a wholesome manner. Undoubtedly, Ponnambalam was right in asserting above that Tamil language acted as a reservoir of the civilization. Nevertheless, the parliamentary opposition did not make this the cornerstone of their defensive position. Instead, defying the Sinhalese people's superiority became the main motto. Naturally, the slight on Tamil language followed by racial riots and animosity made it glaringly clear that the inter-ethnic relations were going to take an ever-worsening turn. As the Senate passed the Sinhala-only Act, Tamil academic and politician C. Suntharalingam tersely summed up the bitterness between the two groups: 'You are hoping for a united Ceylon. It is a simple matter, Mr. Prime Minister. Do not fear, I assure you will have a divided Ceylon' (Hansard HR Deb., 6 July 1956). Clearly, sectarianism took over the Tamil resistance and the people's opportunity to win the state recognition for their mother tongue seemed lost, since the leaders had not made a studied decision to turn this into their focal point in negotiation with the Sinhalese. This shows that there was a lack of informed view on the linguistic nationalism they put forward.

In my view, the overriding passion, which is visible even in the rational parliamentarian efforts to prevent Sinhalese supremacy, promptly altered the righteous claim of linguistic parity into the basis of a political demand of separatism. As Sankaran Krishna (1999, p. 71) explains that the demand for a separate Tamil majority zone was never a straightforward one, since the FP leaders 'were openly secessionist' as early as the 1950s, when they addressed their people in their mother tongue but in reverse, 'when they spoke in English in Parliament for example, they stayed clear of such secessionist talk'. This shows that the demands for equal status and regional autonomy went hand in hand in order to fend off what E. V. Daniel (1996, p. 69) calls, 'the anxiety of recognition', which makes it compulsory for ethnicities living in a competitive environment to comprehend that the other is 'equally and genuinely free' but this is far from the Sri Lankan reality, 'where violence is neither controlled by ritual nor contained by

theory/theater'. What Daniel is arguing here is that no theoretical or artistic interventions have yet stirred the 'fundamental humanity that needs to be disturbed' (ibid., p. 70) for the country's reality to be free from the constant mythologization of history, which unmoors the real sense of being in the world. In other words, the ethnic rivalry between the speakers of Sinhalese and Tamil languages undermines a Saidian secular consciousness to mediate the worldly matters of disquietude by rising above collective passions.

The lack of secularism led to the radical change regarding the issues of language, culture, and religion, which became highly inflammable materials that galvanized the demand of a free homeland through separatism. Even though the Tamils living in the Sinhalese-dominated South Sri Lanka disfavoured separatism as a viable solution to the language problem, the vast majority of Tamils sympathized with the idea of a separate state for opposing what they considered to be their double colonization by the Sinhalese after the British colonial withdrawal in 1948. Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's concessions in 1957 regarding the Tamil rights to be educated in and examined for public services, to carry out correspondences with state institutions, and to have the empowered local authorities to transact businesses with the central government by dint of their mother language were not seized upon in an un-statesman like way (see DeVotta, 2004, pp. 98–99). Fuelled by the notion of Tamil language to be in the danger of demolition due to the deemed absence of proper recognition, sectarianism became the convenient means of challenging the perceived Sinhalese colonialism. How the Tamils could wrest the right of their mother language became secondary to finding an expedient means of demarcating the people's separate existence based on their distinctive language, culture, and religion. As Neil DeVotta elaborates:

> Ultimately, the quandary for the Tamils was that their most eloquent and prominent leaders were fractionalized, with Ponnambalam denouncing Chelvanayakam for demanding

> federalism, Suntharalingam vilifying Chelvanayakam in particular for not demanding secession, and Chelvanayakam chastising both Ponnambalam and Suntharalingam for not realizing that with secession hardly an option, and a legislature dominated by Sinhalese, who were in no way dependent on Tamils for getting elected, Tamils could only accomplish self-determination within a federal structure. (ibid., p. 100)

Clearly, the collective passion for self-rule led to expediency in terms of political positions, rather than informed judgement on belonging because none of the leaders were addressing why self-determination was the sole option for obtaining linguistic parity, though this rightly put forward the demand for equality of status within the country (Fig. 3.2).

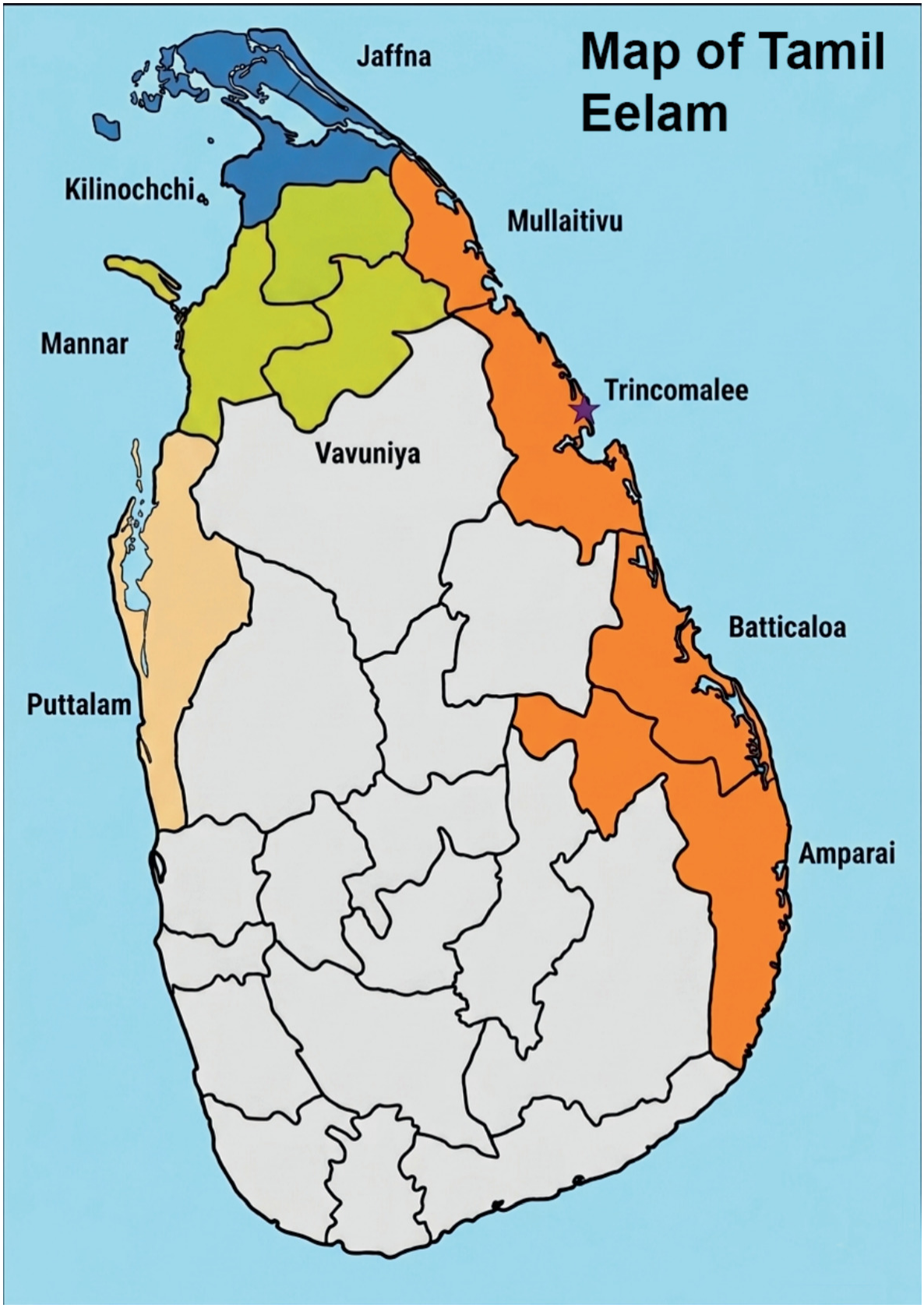

Map of Tamil Eelam
Jaffna
Kilinochchi
Mullaitivu
Mannar
Trincomalee
Vavuniya
Batticaloa
Puttalam
Amparai

Fig. 3.2 Envisaged Tamil Eelam

What I mean by the lack of informed judgement on the Tamil efforts to become part of pluralistic Ceylon is that the linguistic group posed the demand for self-determination in the garb of nationalism. It was stirred by the idea that the Tamil-speaking minorities formed a recognizable people, despite their caste, class, and religion-oriented differences, due to the fact that they could lay claim to a historic homeland comprising the Northern and Eastern regions of Sri Lanka. The territoriality explains why the self-determination inevitably meant federalism. However, the claim did not incorporate a strong explanation for convincing the Sinhala-dominated governments of Sri Lanka to entertain, or, even invite the idea of a parallel narrative of nationalism. Inhabiting an Aryan frontier in the Indian Ocean lying almost at a rowboat distance from the southeast point of India, the Sinhalese of the island nation feared that the inauguration of a federal state would encourage the Tamils in Sri Lanka to defy their disjunction created by the Palk Strait from the Tamil Nadu state of India for creating a Dravidian enclave. 'In addition, many Sinhalese have felt that the creation of separate units of government structured around ethnic or linguistic lines would lead to more communalism that will not be beneficial to a presumably secular state' (Oberst, 1988, p. 189). In other words, division along these lines would mean a fragmented nation, rather than an unwalled and stable one much required for economic progress. Nevertheless, the Tamils seemed to be incognizant of the fact that a decolonized political structure could not allow a parallel nationalism to function without any repercussions from the dominant group. Therefore, transforming their demand for linguistic parity immediately into the nationalist narrative was not a well-informed strategy in Sri Lankan context. Indeed, in a decolonized setting, '[p]eople's sovereignty was supreme, even though little attention was given to the ambiguities surrounding the concept of a "people" in a pluralistic society' (Senaratne, 2021, p. 168). Evidently, the Tamils failed to categorically define who they were as a community inside independent Sri Lanka. Following Said's appropriation of Vico, we can

assert that this is because they did not address what constituted them as part of the pluralist ambience. As a result, the sectarian rather than secular spirit dominated the Tamils' opposition to Sinhala-oriented subordination.

The final aspect of the sectarianism of Tamil resistance to Sinhala-centric subjugation has to be understood through Said's Vico-oriented interpretation of the socio-historical world as a knowledge-derived entity. If knowledge is the medium through which human beings give shape to their secular ambience, Said proposes an 'inspired divination' through the deployment of which 'intellectual and aesthetic powers' are secured, as I explained earlier. These powers prevent the self-determination movements from compartmentalizing opposing cultural groups through denigrating the relevant historical contexts, which ultimately undermines the purpose of liberation. The scholarly and aesthetics powers enabled Said to take into account the Jewish narrative of historical suffering due to the Holocaust, while reinstating the tangible reality to Palestinian suffering due to dispossession in 1948 so that a truly liberationist future can be affirmed for the people. With an unceasing focus on Palestinian dignity, Hitchens writes above that Said was able to transcend 'various types of sacred rage' that destabilize his native region. Therefore, Said's secular mission was to challenge the politically infused interpretations of history and memory of the Holy Land by completely withdrawing from hasty and exclusive divisions of cultural groups involved in the interpretational conflict. Matthew Abraham (2014, p. 102) clarifies: 'As a critic, Said seemed to be continually balancing the demands of orthodoxy, authority, and dogma against his humanistic commitment to preserving the conditions of possibility for human expressions of resistance, dignity, and defiance in the face of injustice'. My contention is that the absence of the balance impairs the Tamils' positive self-affirmation that delineates what they want to achieve in decolonized Sri Lanka.

When *satyagraha* became the first large-scale protest movement after independence that threatened the unity of the country, Bandaranaike signed a pact with Chelvanayakam in 1957 the

concessions of which I mentioned above. To add more details, the pact recognized Tamil as the mother language of a minority and a dual language of authorities in the Northern and Eastern provinces, where regional councils with defined powers over administration—including education and land allocation—would be established. Under the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam (B-C) Pact of July 1957, the Tamils obtained the golden opportunities for not only the peaceful coexistence in the island, but also the power of influencing the seven Sinhalese provinces, where the reasonable use of Tamil mother tongue was stipulated. Tamil demands for autonomy were also granted as the regional councils in the two Tamil provinces were entrusted with adequate decentralized power to oversee education, agriculture, and Sinhalese settlements. The B-C Pact produced a real opportunity for the Tamil leaders to demonstrate their vision of a decolonized country by taking it as a first step towards a pluralist society. In other words, by honouring the pact, they could have proved their commitment to rebuilding the country's institutional structures in order to accrue concrete socio-political and economic benefits. Instead of summoning the courage to accept the noble compromise, the Tamil leaders wanted to downplay what they thought to be their capitulation on the language issue as a gateway to Tamil homeland. On the other hand, the Buddhist think tank saw the pact as a facilitator of the Tamil Raj, despite the fact that the regional councils were going to be put under parliamentary control (see DeVotta, 2004, p. 103). Understandably, the difficulty in reaching an agreement regarding the administrative structure of the decolonized country involved two factors: the impassioned Tamil leaders' lack of insight into the price of restoring ethnic peace lost to sectarianism, and the subsequent lack of caution regarding driving the Tamil resistance towards bitter dissension. As a result, Suntharalingam viewed the B-C Pact as a butchering agreement for which 'he vilified both the FP and the prime minister [Bandaranaike]' as well as made sure that '[h]is vitriol was on full display in parliament' (ibid., p. 105), which ironically meant that he agreed with the Tamils' negative

rhetoric and the Sinhalese's jingoism that the treaty had betrayed the respective peoples.

I think the underlying reason behind this is the fact that the mythical past projected by the Tamil nationalists was not only feudal but also supremacist in nature. This means that safeguarding the mother language was not only reminiscent of the Tamil kings' reigning South Indian Chola empire of unknown antiquity that predates the two-thousand-year-old *Sangam* (loosely translated as 'academy of scholars') poems, but also assertive of the people's high cultural gifts and intellectual inclination. Therefore, the Tamils became able to claim that they were educationally, culturally, and intellectually superior to the Sinhalese (see Hensman, 2015, p. 283). This compartmentalization of the two communities into unequal categories led to the definition of a state, where ethnic competition was the norm. This is evident from the explosive environment created out of the appearance of Sinhala language's 'Sri' letter on the number plates of forty buses pertaining to the national transport, which the senior Sinhalese officers transferred to the Tamil areas in March 1958. Given the fact that the Tamil population was fuming with discontent due to the imposition of the Sinhala-only act on them, retaliation was the only expected outcome. Unsurprisingly, '[t]he protestors would paint over the Sinhala letter Sri with tar and replace it with the Tamil letter. Retaliatory attacks in the south took the form of tarring any and all signage containing Tamil lettering causing substantial damage to businesses' (De Silva et al., 2019, p. 642). Even more damagingly, after the second anti-Sri protest campaign in April 1958, the Buddhist monks demanded the revoking of the B-C Pact and anti-Tamil riots spread throughout the island. Bandaranaike relented and invalidated the Pact, even though he could not prevent the dawning Tamil vision for a separate homeland, which the sectarianism of the Tamil resistance turned into an inevitable outcome through the ineradicable anxiety between the minority and majority groups. Bandaranaike's assassination in September 1959 is a further proof that the compartmentalization of opposing cultural groups even by the aggrieved members undermines the purpose of

liberation. Thus, Said's secular consciousness shows that replacing the liberationist approach with sectarianism results into generating hasty and exclusive divisions of adversarial cultural groups, which is an intellectual and imaginative failure of the resisting group.

Thus, the Saidian lens allows us to comprehend that the Tamils' demand for self-determination demonstrated sectarianism due to essentializing their cultural identity, preferring expediency on belonging, and compartmentalizing opposing cultural groups, which foregrounds the fact that their parallel nationalism did not take their reality in the island into account. Their defensive nationalism brushed over the caste and class problems among the community; their federalist claim ignored the geographical complexities; and their culturally supremacist belief depreciated the plain truth that the politicians of the majority community did not urgently require to create patron-client relationship with the Tamil voters, because Sri Lanka is a representative democracy. Therefore, the Tamils' linguistic nationalism, which incorporated the elements of the various forms of nationalism mentioned above, became a means of appealing for a mirror image of the Sinhalese nationalism in terms of pursuing exclusivist and authentic cultural policies, which Said regards as religious. As Nira Wickramasinghe (2006, p. 121) explains that the focus on Tamil culture derived from the richness of its linguistic heritage brought forward the important question of devolution by obscuring the task 'that aims at radically transforming the existing state to ensure that common values of equity and justice for all its citizens are respected, and even more importantly, to nurture pride in cultural mélange and hybridism rather than in purity and authenticity of cultures'. Given the historical, geographic, and even cultural ties of the Tamils with the Sinhalese, which the *Swabasha* (vernacular) Movement could have led to fruition, I agree that a radical transformation of the existing state through a secular consciousness to ensure equality, plurality, and justice for all its citizens seems to be the well-informed way forward. As the above discussion proves, however, the values of equality and plurality are

both blocked by sectarianism, which Said views as the failure of humanity.

Egalitarianism as a Way Forward

In light of the above discussions, some significant differences are discernible between the secular and sectarian resistances of the Bengalis of East Pakistan and the Tamils of Sri Lanka. Unlike the 1930s' *Swabasha* (vernacular) Movement in Sri Lanka, *Bhasha Andolon* (Language Movement, 1952) in East Pakistan remained the constant subterranean force for creating the foundation for a new social order that valued ordinary people's liberation based on their self-understanding. On the contrary, the integrated Ceylonese identity promised by the *Swabasha* Movement started to collapse under the weight of the Sinhala-only initiative.

More importantly, the first resistance was a joint movement for restoring the rights of both the vernaculars concerned, whereas the second one was initiated for gaining the righteous recognition of the language of the majority.

Consequently, the Tamils can still revive the pluralist spirit of the Ceylonese identity, which is how the decolonized Sri Lanka was envisaged at the very beginning for achieving cultural and socio-economic progress. It is a befitting decolonizing goal for both the ethnic groups, since they have historically always lived at close quarters. In fact, the mythical originator of the Sinhalese, Prince Vijaya (543 BCE), was succeeded by his nephew, who *Dipavamsa* records to be married to a Sakya princess, who arrived to the island with a large retinue of immigrants from northeastern India and eventually became the chief queen of the Prince's nephew (see Kshatriya, 1995, p. 847). More than the blood ties, the cultural ties through the considerable Dravidian influence on Sinhalese language prove that the overlapping connections between the two groups and perennial impacts on the Sinhalese in the matter of South Indian 'religion, caste system, language, folk culture, fine arts, architecture of cave temples' (ibid., pp. 847–848) and so on

are undeniable historical facts. The two ethnic groups' historical, linguistic, and geographical ties pose the crucial question whether they should utilize the ancient heritage as the true basis of amity, or, prefer to be involved in interminable distrust, competition, and one-upmanship.

To reiterate, the Tamils and the Sinhalese have a shared history, however much they insist on separating them as ethnic groups. On the other hand, the Bengalis maintained a distinct identity since the fourth-century Gupta rule. As I demonstrated above, Pakistan was an aberration in their long historical trajectory. Indeed, the Language Movement of 1952 suggests that there never was a concrete picture of decolonized Pakistan, which the Bengalis could have worked for. The Language Movement proved that no such picture could be conjured, since the common religion did not find a common 'worldliness' to subscribe to. Put differently, from the very beginning, the Bengalis suffered from a lack of template that would determine how the Eastern and the Western inhabitants of Pakistan could recognize each other's fraternal bond in the worldly context, since they shared neither territoriality nor historical continuity. The cultural difference between the groups needs no emphasis.

To make matters worse, the absence of egalitarian goals among the West Pakistani regimes was the primary obstacle for the cultural progress the Bengalis had yearned for. Against this backdrop, the success of East Bengal's secularism points towards two issues: the intellectuals were able to highlight the historical *modus vivendi* of the place, and there was a far-sighted leader like *Bangabandhu*, who was not only attuned to the zeitgeist, but also fully committed to lead the spirit to its natural fruition. The Tamil leaders neither had a clear vision of the road ahead, which is visible from their conflicts and disagreements, nor were they able to commit to a clearly defined cause, as their swift demand for self-determination proves that they did not know the shape they should have given to their movement. As opposed to this, the people of East Pakistan were able to rise above nationalist zeal, since the intellectual and political efforts made them realize that

the socio-cultural composition of decolonized Pakistan is a human creation. This explains why secularism in independent Bangladesh was crystallized through the following credo: *To each his/her own religion, the country belongs to one and all.*

Both the histories of faulty decolonization processes in South Asia demonstrate that cooperation among rival social groups is not a utopian act. Instead, this is an effective means of preventing decolonized nation-states from falling behind on the indicators of stability like cultural equality, economic advancement, and political freedom. In the name of civilization, though, the peoples fuelled the cycle of affliction in order to assert that decolonization represents the withdrawal of Europe from the territories, and the beginning of new cultural definitions for the former colonies. We have seen above that this made the Sinhalese utilize the Tamils as a whetstone for sharpening their sense of belonging to the island, whereas the Tamils became aware of their minority status, which they found extremely unfavourable, to say the least, for the majoritarian nation-building project that they could not overpower. This is why I would like to reaffirm through Clive Bell (1938, p. 208) that civilization means more aspiration for egalitarianism, not less:

> Civilization cannot be imposed by force. If it consisted in holding certain opinions it might indeed be rammed down unwilling throats; but since it consists in an attitude to life, in ways of thinking and feeling, it must be disseminated. He who would civilize his fellows must allow them to discover for themselves that he has got hold of a better way of life: thus have superior civilizations been transmitted almost always.

In the next chapter, I will look into the application of civilizational goals in terms of women's status in an egalitarian society.

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4. The Impact of Linguistic Struggles in the Emancipation of Bengali and Tamil Women

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Keywords Irreconcilability of nationalism & women's emancipation – Itara (Derrida's term for the site of disappearance) – Imbrications of historical and patriarchal ideologies – Mother language/Cultural origin – Masculinist centre/Patriarchal ideology – Humanist core – Women's education – Dhaka University – Political and economic enfranchisement of women – Sinhala-only act – State oppression – *Thamil Thai* (Tamil as mother) – *Satyagraha* (civil resistance) – Traditionalism – LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam)

This chapter looks into the irreconcilability between Urdu-and-Sinhalese-dominated nationalisms and women's emancipation. I analyse how Bengali-and-Tamil-dominated counter-nationalisms challenged this. For this, I first analyse how nationalism and feminism are at loggerheads in the non-Western world. Querying about the reasons behind the structural exclusion of women in the construction of nations and states, Joane Nagel (1998) infers that the feminists took

longer than convenient to realize that these projects had become inextricably identified with masculinity. The twentieth-century socio-cultural structures centralized the role of the menfolk to defend and build their homeland due to the fact that their physical, cerebral, and spiritual qualities came to be known as the normative guarantors of the nationalist principles like liberty, equality, and fraternity, which the nineteenth-century French Revolution immortalized. Following the European examples of nationhood, the decolonized world aspired to achieve the distinctive statehood and the collective existence it generates through entrenching male privileges in the name of advancing emancipation for both men and women. Once the indigenous culture replaces the colonial one, however, the masculine practices of the opposing ideologies change hands in an unhindered way because the womenfolk generally lack public duties that can earn them the roles of equal nation builders, who are capable of guiding the newly decolonized countries towards true egalitarianism. This is why Nagel believes that 'the intimate link between masculinity and nationalism, like all hegemonic structures, shapes not only the feelings and thinking of men, it has left its stamp on the hearts and minds of women as well' (ibid., p. 261). In other words, women's role in the liberation movement may be encouraged but they are not given the opportunity to raise the demand for equality in the independent country, since the gendered tradition dictates that the womenfolk should take up the responsibility of being supportive to their heroic men. Obviously, this meant that the womenfolk started to drift apart from the nation-building process in the non-Western world.

This is not to suggest that women have an ideal connection with nationalism in the Western world. Instead, the exclusive focus on the non-Western world is derived from the fact I am not investigating the Western sphere in terms of the masculine nature of nationalism practised there, since my idea is to reveal the challenges of decolonization in South Asia. This is why this chapter concentrates on outlining the ideologies working behind the symbolic sculpting of women as the representation of what the anticolonial movement stands

for in the region. Arguably, if women's stories are not included to show how the nation became colonized and how the people fought against the physical, psychological, and social shackles of colonialism, the status quo regarding the non-freedom of women continues by limiting their socio-political contribution that makes hopes and dreams possible for both men and women. The problem is that nationalism's core interest is in forging a cohesive past and a shared future the control of which lies in the hands of the nationalist regimes that happen to harbour male chauvinist views as a sign of their colonial hangover. To exemplify, the British rule of India operated on the basis of a paradoxical credo that depicted colonized men to be incapable of governing their land due to their inability to safeguard and honour the women members of the society, whereas the colonial laws carried on with the high-handed Victorian values of unquestioning subservience of the wives of the British officials to their demands (see Enloe, 2014, p. 100). The same fallacy is continued in various parts of the decolonized regions, where the women members are regarded as 'the principal *vehicles* for transmitting the whole nation's values from one generation to the next' (ibid., p. 108; emphasis in the original), even though they are straightforwardly denied an active participation in the nation's newly assured politics.

Clearly, combining feminism with nationalism is a not only a difficult but also a demanding task in today's decolonized world. Cynthia Enloe elaborates that the more powerful the threat posed by a foreign group or local government authorities is, the more probable it is for the community leaders, who succeed in invalidating the threat, to urge the women members to absorb their grievances and quell their concerns (see ibid., p. 111). It is because they have an instrumental role to play in the nationalist narrative. One of the foremost literary theorists and feminist critics of our time, Gayatri C. Spivak (2013, p. 288), explains how women have always been the primitive source of endowing the nation's participants with a specific identity by demonstrating 'the possibility of timing', since human beings are confined by the time they are born in. In other words, only the mothers

have the capacity to temporalize the citizens by defining them in terms of their cultural origin at a particular moment in time, which also suggests that the former is the guarantor of the future of the nation through the power of her womb. The ineffability related to cultural origin is similarly projected by the mother language, since human beings are also born into it, which 'has a before us, [and] we take from its already- thereness' (ibid.). Due to cultural nationalism's disguising the state machineries, however, Spivak broaches the unpopular topic of 'taking the "nation" out of nation-state' (ibid., p. 291), which implies the failure of the nationalist feeling for guaranteeing the state's efforts towards social justice. From this perspective, Spivak becomes crucial for my analysis of the scope of women's emancipation within nationalist struggles in decolonized South Asia, particularly because the postcolonial thinker declares her decisive goal of 'questioning the seemingly inevitable coupling of nation and state, and thinking of a continuing reinvention of the state as what it always is supposed to be — the mechanics of redistribution' (ibid., p. 299).

Since Spivak is commonly known as 'a feminist Marxist deconstructivist' (MacCabe, 1987, p. ix), I will utilize the three lenses to query the combination of nation and state for masculine glory. In particular, I will depend on the following essays in Spivak's *In Other Worlds* (1987) for explaining how the mechanism of redistribution has been imagined by the author in terms of gender justice that she makes a strong case for incorporating in the nationalist project: 'Feminism and Critical Theory', 'Explanation and Culture: Marginalia', and 'The Politics of Interpretations'. My aim is to delineate how women's emancipation, linguistic consciousness, and nationalist aspiration are reframed by Spivak so as to make us see the cost of excluding the female question from the identitarian quest. This is how we allow masculinist ideologies to move around social structures under the guise of culture. Therefore, in the first essay, Spivak argues that the discursive interpretation of the human world has to deal with three aspects: 'language, world, and consciousness' (ibid., p. 77). For the theorist, there can be no recognizable world for the human beings beyond language, which is

why the categorization of human world and consciousness is done through suitable language, even if the language happens to be shaped by them. Obviously, this means that the production of language in the writing form, which is developed into text, has to be examined in order to determine the human control behind this. One such text is that of Karl Marx, which advances the idea of alienation without adequate evidence, argues Spivak, since the writing proves particular facts about the world by focusing on man's universe. In Marxist thought, alienation can be considered as the paucity of self-realization. If people have the dissatisfaction regarding their scope of self-realization in a society, initiatives could be taken to change the situation. However, if people are oblivious to the need of self-realization, it is difficult to make them aware of the alternative world with the possibility of attaining the goal. Thinking about the annulled fulfilment of human creativity, ability, and spirit in a capitalist society, Marx suggests that the worker's cultivation of his full potential is ultimately crushed by the tyranny of mechanical production, which implies an inseparable distance between man's labour and his existence. 'Therefore the greater this product [of his labour], the less is he himself' (Marx, 1988, p. 72).

Spivak revisits Marx's terms of use value, exchange value, and surplus value in order to delineate whose alienation of productive abilities is highlighted in his writings. Marx's use value refers to the usefulness of a product, which is why the physical attributes of a commodity like iron, wheat, or a diamond can only be 'realized [verwirklicht] in use or in consumption' (Marx, 1990, p. 126). The exchange value of a commodity is not related to its direct consumption. Rather, this value is assessed through the basis on which the commodity can be exchanged for labour or money. Marks illuminates that 'it is only with the emergence of capitalist production that use-value is universally mediated by exchange-value' (ibid., p. 951). Therefore, maximizing the exaction of surplus value from the workers takes place when the buyer of the labourer's work makes him/her work much longer hours than those required for achieving subsistence wages. 'The rate of surplus-value is therefore an exact expression for

the degree of exploitation of labour-power by capital, or of the worker by the capitalist' (ibid., p. 326). Put differently, capital becomes the tangible force of crippling the worker's energy and natural talents. Spivak applies the triad of values to women's situation in a traditional social setting by arguing that a woman from that background always produces more than what she needs, which is why she becomes a constant and apparently legitimate source of surplus for the men around her. However, this is a paradoxical explanation, since her entrance into the capitalist system is blocked in this case. Therefore, even if we read the contemporary women's demand of the financial recognition for their housework as 'the abstraction of use-value into exchange-value', we have to take into consideration the fact that 'the domestic work-place is not one of "pure exchange"' (Spivak, 1987, p. 79). Since the use value of unwaged women's work in the household is undetermined, the female alienation in the capitalist system is not even reflected by Marx's ethical axis around the fractured relationship among humans, their beings, and their labour.

Similarly, Spivak argues that the ethical thrust of the Marxian exigency regarding human labour, production, and property is incomplete without analysing the presence of a child, which indicates 'the physical, emotional, legal, custodial, and sentimental situation of the woman's product' (ibid.) by turning the womb into a plausible site of production. Nevertheless, human societies, whether they are matrilineal or patrilineal in nature, seem to offer the legal possession of the child to the father, which reveals how the man possesses the required rights over what the woman ultimately produces. The problematic emphasis of custodial discourse on women's nurturing quality is in operation here. Whereas Marxist feminism circles around the ideas of use value, exchange value, and surplus value distributions, 'Marx's own writings on women and children seek to alleviate their condition in terms of a desexualized labor force' (ibid., p. 80). Indeed, the thinker compares the deteriorating health situation of men and women in adverse working conditions in mid-nineteenth-century England, which underlines the more acute vulnerability of women

workers (see Marx, 1991, p. 186). However, Marx does not turn the categories of gender into ahistorical abstractions, since the reproductive roles are not solely dependent on intersubjectivity in capitalist societies; where men and women have to form their relations mediated by their reliance on the material conditions of production and reproduction (see Gimenez, 2005, p. 18). Therefore, Spivak does not propose to revise Marx by inserting the questions related to childbirth and parenting of children in his theory for highlighting the lack of feminist commitment there. Her whole point is to show that classic texts like Marx's oeuvre that formulate our consciousness of the world, society, and self can be based on examples that exclude vital information regarding women's lived reality. In order to remedy the male dominant views of the texts, the feminist critic asks women for providing their own evidences of contributing to human endeavours so that the politics behind them does not remain essentially patriarchal (see Spivak, 1987, p. 81). By asserting women's proof of belonging to the traditionally male-dominated ideologies like 'nation-states, nationalism, national liberation, ethnicity, and religion' (ibid., p. 92), Spivak infers that the new minting of common social concepts will begin.

In the second essay entitled, 'Explanation and Culture: Marginalia', Spivak concentrates on the structure of producing cultural explanations regarding our self and our actions in society. If culture explains the reason behind the actions of a particular group of people at a certain time, every explanation regarding culture indicates a specific mode of existence, which can be viewed as the people's chosen politics. Spivak relies on Jacques Derrida to argue that all cultural explanations assume a centrality by dint of an excluded but irreducible margin that allows the central affirmation to quietly take place. To be more precise, Spivak's essay investigates the politics that makes the marginality possible. Her Derrida-inspired analysis is particularly applicable to nationalist politics that requires the people to determine their position in terms of cultural allegiances. However, this requires us to take a closer look at Derrida, who paradoxically demonstrates how cultural

systems are brought into existence through the structures they aim to exclude. Spivak provides an example of Derrida's deconstruction in *Speech and Phenomena*, where he examines Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1900) in order to query the process of meaning production. Derrida (1973, p. 92) looks into the production of perception by studying the expression, '"I see a particular person by the window"', whereby the content of the speaker's view is conveyed to the person sitting next to him/her or in infinite distance from him/her. This results into a specific structuring of the act of the speaker while perceiving the situation but the structure does not have the means to convey the speaker's intuition as well. Thus, the absence of the speaker's intuition is integral to the speech creation, which suggests that 'the total absence of the subject and object of a statement —the death of the writer and/or the disappearance of the objects he was able to describe—does not prevent a text from "meaning" something' (ibid., p. 93). In other words, the speaker's non-intuition makes possible an expression to be received and understood. Thus, the excluded margin of non-intuition enables the unperturbed performance of the speaker to go ahead.

Similarly, Derrida examines the potential of writing to present ideal expressions, despite being a non-ideal medium. For this, he scrutinizes subject pronoun 'I' because of its ability to create unified meaning by orienting actual significance to the relevant event. It can be distinguished from a word like 'rule' that carries the dual meaning of a wooden gadget and a recommendation, as well as from an objective expression like a Mathematical one, where a speaking subject does not alloy its explicit meaning. Derrida goes on to show that an expression with the subject pronoun cannot be replaced by an objective representation without deforming the statement:

> If, for example, I tried to substitute, for the word *I* as it appears in a statement, what I take to be its objective conceptual content ("whatever speaker is designating himself"), I would end up in absurdities. Instead of "I am pleased," I would have "Whatever

> speaker is now designating himself is pleased." (ibid., p. 94; emphasis in the original)

In order to avoid distorting the statement, demonstrative or qualifying indications like here, now, tomorrow, and so on are utilized to designate the subject's situation. Disagreeing with Husserl, though, who accepts the massive role of indication on the grounds that meaning for the subject is realized in connection with the object, Derrida argues that even a solitary expression like '"I am"' addressed to the speaker him/herself has an intelligible presence, only if there is an absence of a connecting object, which in this case is the intuitive self of the speaker: 'myself' (ibid., p. 95). Irrespective of the presence of one's intuitive self, 'I' asserts some meaning. Even if the speaker is not alive, 'I am' suggests some meaning. Once again, this indicates that the margin between reality and its representation is unstable. Thus, the speech and the ideal meaning unsuccessfully exclude the plausibility of the '"ever altering"' (ibid.) nature of meaning.

Because Derrida's deconstruction investigates the limits of conceptual structures, it becomes 'an open-sesame formula to Spivak's work' (Sakhkhane, 2012, p. 28), by dint of which the feminist critic asserts the power of the margin to break into the centre. Therefore, deconstruction has a political force for enabling the custodians of culture to query the official ideologies they produce in order to 'police the entire society, emphasizing a continuity or a discontinuity with past explanations' (Spivak, 1987, p. 108), and be policed by them in turn. As I mentioned earlier, nationalism is one such ideology that stresses discontinuity with the past explanation of cultural belonging. Following Spivak, then, our task is to examine how nationalism's masculine centre presupposes a feminist margin the intervening force of which reveals the explanatory structure defending the patriarchal ideology that ultimately decentres the womenfolk of the nation. As Spivak tersely puts it: 'We are a part of the records we keep' (ibid.). Indeed, Spivak asks for a greater responsibility from the feminists to utilize the 'intricate and interanimating' (ibid., p. 109) or indeed, 'ever altering'

dynamics between the centre and the margin in order to produce cultural explanations that do not underrate the politico-economic elements of the structure propagating masculinist views in the name of civilization. This becomes even clearer when Spivak concludes the essay with the stated aim of probing 'privileged explanations even as explanations are generated' (ibid., p. 117).

Like the structural critique of ideology in the essay discussed above, the next critical piece entitled, 'The Politics of Interpretations', analyses how patriarchal ideology maintains its continuation. First of all, Spivak suggests that ideology constitutes a cultural group in a distinct way, which defies the impact of the deposits of history in the formulation of the picture of the group. This is why it is not possible to be part of the group without being in agreement with its ideology. Interestingly, however, ideologically divided fields of thought can share philosophical terrains. By analysing Ronald Dworkin (1982), for example, who likens statutes of law to literary creations because literary interpretation is also about discovering the sense in which the author utilized particular diction, Spivak (1987) argues that his insistence on the requirement of art creator(s) to have some ideational command over the whole field, notwithstanding their probable premonition about the value of their productions, is implausible. It is not simply a question of the excellence of theory, since the entire field will remain out of reach for them because 'the *entire* idea is spread like a map across the text of ideology' (ibid., p. 120; emphasis in the original). Dworkin (1982, p. 199) asserts that 'rival schools of literary interpretation are more political than argumentative', though Spivak is dissatisfied that he remains fixed to the cause and effect paradigm by suggesting that literature's revelation of politico-economic system only pinpoints the cause of the spurring of the various interpretational approaches. Inevitably, Spivak (1987, p. 120) concludes that Dworkin's tracing of liberalism back in to a distinct epistemological foundation for attaining an aesthetic theory that will lead to an interpretive style enhancing the self-discovery of the relevant people, ultimately forgoes that 'such items are related as the interanimating complicity of the shifting components of an ideological

system'. Thus, the borderlines among art, law, and politics are maintained by a composite structure like the state that is itself governed by disparate ideologies. In other words, different socio-political group formation within the state goes uninterrupted without the realization that these bodies are more often than not moved and stirred by each other's ideological universes.

This leads Spivak to suggest that we cannot move out of ideology but can well-recognize its functionality, and even change its course through our necessarily circumscribed interpretation, as I have explained above. Spivak relies on Derrida again to establish 'the force of language rather than its signification alone' (ibid., p. 123). The writer refers to Derrida's essay entitled, 'Signature Event Context', where the philosopher offers some significant observations regarding the operation of ideologies. His writing starts by challenging the idea that communication can be assumed a priori to be the conveyance of meaning, '[f]or one characteristic of the semantic field of the word *communication* is that it designates nonsemantic movements as well' (Derrida, 1988, p. 1; emphasis in the original). Even through ordinary language, one can reproduce trembling, shock, and energy shifting. Therefore, it is pertinent to believe that the ambiguities related to communication can be substantially curtailed through limiting the relevant contexts. However, one has to decide if the requisites of a context are absolutely definable. Derrida argues that this definition can never achieve structural saturation, due to two facts: (1) theoretical lack of the existing concept of context and (2) the requirement of the semantic transmission to appear 'as effects that are particular, secondary, inscribed, and supplementary' (ibid., p. 3) in order to allow writing to continue in its known form. As a result, human beings write to represent their thoughts in a specific manner, which is comparable to painting. Derrida reaffirms: 'Representation, of course, will become more complex, will develop supplementary ramifications and degrees… but the representative structure which marks the first degree of expressive communication, the relation idea/sign, will never be either annulled or transformed' (ibid., p. 5).

Since the signs carrying our ideas are sourced by our imagination and consciousness, our current needs will determine the objects that our writing retraces. The process of retracing also reveals how the present consciousness connects back to the complex structure of representation with its own reasoning. The force of language is thus ideological, which Derrida illustrates to comprise both the dogmatic and scientific aspects of the phenomenon (see ibid., p. 6) that presumably derives from the human propensity to draw their ideas both from their consciousness and the representational loop. Since the sign/idea remains 'readable even if the moment of its production is irrevocably lost' and despite the fact that the reader does not realize 'what its alleged author-scriptor consciously intended to say at the moment he wrote it' (ibid., p. 9), the written syntagmatic element can both be detached from its representational chain and inserted into other chains different from its originally intended one. Derrida reiterates: 'No context can entirely enclose it. Nor any code, the code here being both the possibility and impossibility of writing, of its essential iterability (repetition/alterity)' (ibid.). This is why Spivak emphasized above 'the shifting components of an ideological system', which result in the overlapping of disparate ideologies in human thoughts from time to time. Particularly, the idea that iterability incorporates similarity and difference makes it impossible for ideological totalities to continue unchallenged. Since iterability originates from the Sanskrit *itara*, meaning other, similarity is always tied to difference in writing, which shifts the presence of something initially invisible to the one that can possibly be visible. Derrida ends his essay with a triple signature 'in script, in type, with initials' (Naas, 2021, p. 40), which is unconventional, though it fulfilled the requirement of the colloquium for which the writing was originally prepared. The enactment proves that writing cannot retrace its origin in the sender whose physical presence it postpones, which proves anew that '[w]riting communicates but it does not exist, *perhaps*, because it is not *present* in the sense that philosophy has understood presence' (ibid., p. 39; emphasis in the original). By relying on Derrida's critique

of the Western metaphysics' positivist approach to presence, Spivak is able to illustrate that reading a text is not about encountering familiarity but non-conformist ideology, which is not structured by sheer possibility.

The two principles explained above, namely, the overlapping of disparate ideologies in expressed thoughts and the discovery of non-conformist ideology by inserting what writing makes invisible due to its own absent nature, are successfully applied by Spivak in her analysis of Hayden White (1982). White's essay demonstrates how hidden ideologies are at work in interpreting subjects like histories, which seem far removed from direct political interests. Despite the fact that the interpreters of history appear to be obliged to truth, it is unprecedented that a completely disinterested investigation of anything is possible. White is aware that history is no part of physical sciences, where methodological uniformity can be applied, due to the power of its object of study, past events, to influence society and culture. Therefore, the way historical knowledge serves a particular politics becomes the main concern, especially in the context of today's bourgeois nation-state. The more critical issue, then, is whether political partisanship will mislead historians to compromise on the truth claims, which is why imagination needs to be regulated in the field. Despite the fact that imagination is required for a historian to explore the mindscapes of long gone people and their surroundings, it remains perilous 'because *he* cannot know that what *he* has imagined was actually the case, that it is not a product of *his* "imagination" in the sense in which that term is used to characterize the activity of the poet or writer of fiction' (ibid., p. 123; emphases added). Spivak finds that the male historical agent benignly put forward by White shows how his own interpretation is ideologically imbricated; for the historian is visibly attempting to separate history from fictional 'meaninglessness' in order to prevent historical qualities like objectivity from becoming a formidable barrier for the 'subordinant, emergent, or resisting social groups' to overcome so that they can break free from the 'fear it induces' (ibid., pp. 128,137), even though his entire essay remains

patriarchally dominant. Thus, Spivak (1987, p. 130) raises an objection to the historian's 'masculist' views, which work 'against the very grain of [his] prose' that rightly aims to emphasize the voicelessness of some of the discriminated groups.

Spivak further demonstrates the non-conformist ideological outcome of making visible what White's patriarchal writing renders invisible. His ingenuous choice of the male agent for historical change ironically highlights that it is not a natural phenomenon, for this is also the production of representation, if we are to follow the rules of deconstruction here. Obviously, this makes the female 'the ideologically excluded other' (ibid., p. 129). If we want to undo the exclusion by rendering the female presence visible, White's argument will have to substantially change, since the female historical agent will bring different experience of discrimination than that suffered by their male counterparts. Indeed, woman's position 'as subject of history is *different* from man's all along the race-class spectrum', which significantly means that 'a woman's right to "imagine" history is fraught with perils of a different *kind*' (ibid., p. 130; emphases in the original) because this will inevitably incorporate male domination. Clearly, the danger is posed by the fact that the female experience will warrant a history, which has to be entirely re-written by incorporating their untold stories. This will produce the demand for emancipation from a completely different perspective than the hitherto dominant one. Inevitably, this form of nationalist representation will aspire to break through the 'enclosure of masculist knowledge-production' (ibid.) by revealing the fundamental problem of ideological production, which is its lack of any viable models for this kind of radicalism. The structural arrangement of advancing a historical subject that is constructed only according to patriarchal preferences is dominant in the nationalist narrative, since Spivak insists 'that the word "patria" is not merely masculine in gender but names the father as the source of legitimate identity' (ibid.), which makes the exclusion of the female subject in the nationalist setting even more warranted. Spivak's proposition is not a complete structural overhaul to undo the deep-seated patriarchal bias,

though. The writer aims to establish in a different piece of writing that a national identity should not be about securing an indestructible sameness; it must focus on the expression of the people's emotions, attitudes, and reasoning. As Spivak (1992, p. 774) cautions, 'we protect ourselves in the name of a specific national identity; we do not want to know it, we dis-pose of it rather than pro-pose it'.

We are predisposed towards an inscrutable sameness when it comes to a nationalist narrative, given that elite, urban, educated men, who practiced selective outrage, primarily led nationalist movements in the decolonized world. For women to intervene into established nationalist narratives means to tussle against established patriarchal norms. Panchali Ray (2020) explains why the uphill battle takes place. Citing Judith Butler's (1992) theorization regarding political, discursive, and performative practices, which constitute the subject position, Ray elaborates that socially sanctioned norms are the unwritten rules, behaviours, and values that a society collectively enforces through acceptance or rejection. Adhering to these norms guarantees an individual's 'social existence' (Ray, 2020, p. 10)—meaning their recognition, belonging, and ability to function as a legitimate member of the community. Conversely, violating these norms threatens to revoke that existence, resulting in social exclusion, invisibility, or expulsion. Essentially, to be seen, validated, and treated as 'real' by others, an individual must conform to the group's established standards. Following Ray, we realize that this structural constraint makes Spivak enduringly important in the context of decolonized South Asia, where nationalism and women's agency do not always form solidarity. As Ray expresses this: 'Women enter the political landscape of Hindu nationalism as passive symbols encoded and embedded in a number of myths. As women's bodies emerge as political signs, their own identities are subsumed in the process of nation building' (ibid., p. 11). In order to fight against this process, Ray suggests that we have to revisit Spivak (2013b), who shows us that the postcolonial intellectual's primary task is not to find a way to make the subaltern woman speak, but to critically undo the privileges that allow the intellectual to speak

about her in the first place. Only through this painful, ongoing process of self-implication can a genuine relationship of speaking to 'the historically muted subject' (ibid., p. 91) begin. Ray's edited collection forms part of this endeavour to acknowledge that while the idea of an unfiltered voice is attractive, she does not claim to offer an authentic or unmediated space. Her edited volume recognizes that the women discussed—who are marginalized, excluded from power, and lack resources—cannot simply speak without mediation.

Tracing the legacy of nationalist evolution in the Indian sub-continent, Ian Talbot (2010) provides us with further insights about the required mediation for enabling women's voices to be heard. Exemplifying Mahatma Gandhi's (1869–1948), political strategy, Talbot shows how his policies played the mediating role for enhancing women's participation in the Indian freedom struggle. As Talbot summarizes this: 'Gandhi also appealed for female support as he believed that women naturally possessed the ability to suffer and the moral strength required in non-violent struggle' (ibid., p. 31). Indeed, Gandhi posited that qualities traditionally coded as feminine—patience, self-sacrifice, endurance, and non-violence—were morally superior to the masculine qualities of brute force, aggression, and domination. He argued that because women had been socialized to bear suffering—whether in childbirth, managing households, or enduring societal constraints—they were the natural practitioners of *Satyagraha* (holding onto truth through peaceful methods like civil disobedience to resist oppression). As Gandhi (1997, p. 175) elucidates:

> In a plan of life based on non-violence, woman has as much right to shape her own destiny as man has to shape his. But as every right in a non-violent society proceeds from the previous performance of a duty, it follows that rules of social conduct must be framed by mutual co-operation and consultation. They can never be imposed from outside.

Unlike Western revolutionary models that sought to inflict violence on the oppressor, Gandhi believed that winning moral victory came from willingly accepting suffering. He saw women's alleged capacity for endurance not as a sign of weakness, but as their greatest spiritual and political asset, which was not imposed on them. A woman facing police brutality or picketing silently was, in his view, exercising a more potent force than a man wielding a gun does. By inviting women into the public sphere, Gandhi orchestrated a radical, if culturally mediated, transformation of the nationalist movement. When women began picketing foreign cloth shops and marching in processions, they were not just protesting British rule; they were shattering traditional boundaries of public and private space under the banner of sacred duty. Thus, Gandhi provided a bridge that allowed women to participate without completely alienating conservative society. While Gandhi's appeal was revolutionary in its outcome, it was built on a foundation of conservative essentialism that had lasting complexities. Gandhi's vision for women was not one of modern feminist liberation; his empowerment was a spiritual one, aimed at making women the custodians of a non-violent social order, not necessarily competitors in a male-dominated political structure. As Talbot (2010, p. 39) notes: 'Contemporary Indian feminists… point out that female participation was linked with the traditional role models such as Sita [a central goddess in an ancient Indian epic] and with women's sense of devotion and duty, which was extended from the family to the nation'. This further informs us why women in the Indian sub-continent cannot still speak without mediation. Post-independence citizens realized that the political space for women that Gandhi had helped open did not fully sustain itself, for the institutional politics of nationalism reverted largely to male-dominated structures.

Little wonder, then, that the decolonized sphere continues to grapple with the question of whether empowerment through traditional virtue is a real path to liberation. This makes Spivak all the more significant to reflect on the question of women's role in a nationalist setting in today's South Asia. In a revealing way, both

women's voices and linguistic diversity suggest the challenge of accommodation in a nationalist setting. Sujit Choudhry (2009) points out the structural constraint underlying the challenge. Citing Ron Suny's '"sleeping beauty"' theory of nationalism (ibid., p. 583), which explains the unpredictable awakening of a nationalist feeling, Choudhry explains that state consolidation does not create new national ties but awakens existing primordial ones. Conflicts arise when these revived primordial loyalties clash with civic attachments, because they offer competing definitions of the nation and its boundaries, challenging state sovereignty and territorial integrity. In other words, definitions of nations work as the entity's structure or civic design. If patriarchy is in control of this definition, the structural accommodation of women's voices becomes uncertain, since it clashes with the civic design of the nation. Similarly, linguistic varieties need constitutional management; otherwise, the diversity challenges the established definition of the nation, which eventually affects its civic landscape. As Choudhry exemplifies, at the start of the twenty-first century, India stands out as a South Asian success story for managing linguistic conflict through constitutional design, while neighbouring states face severe instability. Sri Lanka endured a prolonged civil war over linguistic policies, and Pakistan experienced internal conflict leading to secession, which are the focus of this book. Choudhry continues that unlike its neighbours, India has consolidated democratically and used strategies like linguistic federalism to prevent civil war and maintain territorial integrity, despite ongoing challenges in governance and secularism. Choudhry stresses, '[a]s Pratap Mehta wrote on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the report of the States Reorganization Commission, linguistic federalism in particular spared India from "civil war"' (ibid., p. 616). This proves that both the limits and possibilities of accommodating diverse languages and women's experiences have to be taken into account when considering South Asian efforts for nation building in the decolonized context. Needless to reiterate, Spivak compels us to look into the complexities involved in both cases.

Comprehensively, Spivak is crucial in determining how the mother-language-based national identity plays out in decolonized East Pakistan (Bengal) and Sri Lanka through the inclination of gender equality, or rather, the lack of it. In the following two sections, therefore, I will examine if the Spivakian framework allows us to perceive the dynamics between the mother-language-based national identity and gender equity in the South Asian context. Following Spivak's first formula through the re-reading of Marx, I will illustrate how the Bengalis fought against nationalist alienation in Pakistan by including the question of women's emancipation, which was not part of the majoritarian narrative of the decolonized nation. In this connection, I will investigate if the Language Movement encouraged women's participation in social space through the concept of a balanced social order. In contrast, I will study if the Tamils did not bring up evidence for supporting the question of women's freedom, despite idolizing the mother figure in their mother-tongue-based narrative of national identity, and whether this led to the lack of new coinage for them. By following Spivak's second formula based on Derrida, I will look into the Bengalis' struggle against Pakistani cultural explanation that assumed a patriarchal centrality by dint of an excluded but irreducible margin of the female figure. In the same vein, I will analyse if the Language Movement enabled the Bengalis to intervene into the dominant cultural explanation for producing a nationalist narrative of their own that did not propagate masculinist views in the name of civilization. As opposed to this, I will scrutinize if the Tamils did not focus on the exclusion of the female figure from the central position in the dominant narrative produced by the Sinhalese, and as a result, could not come up with a progressive nationalism of their own that never continued with the existing dynamics between the patriarchal centre and margin. By relying on Spivak's third formula based on Derrida again, I will study if the Bengalis overcame the overlapping of historical and patriarchal ideologies in their expressed patriotism, and how far their progressive nationalism based on the Language Movement was able to make visible the ideologically invisible female figure in the prevalent nationalist

narrative of Pakistan. Unlike the Bengalis, I will query if the Tamils kept intact the imbrications of historical and patriarchal ideologies in their patriotism, as they did not build up a truly progressive nationalism by overturning the invisibility of the female-centric questions in the Sinhalese narrative. Thus, my analysis aims to prove if the womenfolk must remain secondary figures in the nation-building process of the non-Western world.

The Bengali Intervention into Dominant Nationalism for a Progressive Alternative

Why the perpetual sameness and the specific way of belonging required by Pakistan's Urdu-dominated nationalism called for the Bengali intervention in order to create a progressive pathway for the women of East Pakistan is going to be my focus in this section. In other words, my analysis circles around the issue of Muslim majority being a hindrance for the emancipation of women in East Pakistan. Izzud-Din Pal (1990) argues that the question of women's rights in Pakistan is inseparably connected to the political process of the country. For example, the much discussed issue of veiling (*Purdah*) does not always incorporate the socio-historical context of the Quranic instructions. The verses cited in support of the practise usually highlight the believers' modesty, propriety, and control of the gaze. Following this, the modernists suggest that no particular dress code is derived from the verses for the women believers of early Islam, who are guided regarding pre-Islamic practices. Not only was the crucial fact that the Islamic jurisprudence developed by reflecting medieval values regarding gender roles overlooked, but the tradition of the Indian sub-continent enforcing segregation and *Purdah* for upper class women was utilized for generating 'the Islamic culture of Pakistan' that worked for augmenting values like 'obedience for women' (ibid., p. 451). Thus, the supposedly religion-based culture has an ulterior motive, which is to train the female citizens for recognizing their station in life that requires subjugation to the men in the family, to begin with. Why the

traditionalist interpretation of Islam was put forward for the legitimacy of the Muslim majority nation was implied by Pal through explaining the entente between the military rulers and the orthodox religious leaders of the country. The question is why Pakistan's Urdu-oriented nationalism made possible the entente that kept women in a constant state of submission.

Sana Khan (2013) identifies a few significant reasons for the gender-based hierarchy. After independence, Pakistan's scanty resources came under the control of totally traditional, feudal, and patriarchal forces. This is why women's education and self-fulfilment suffered heavily and they became the 'markers of national identity' by symbolizing the conservative standing of the state, which led to 'the erosion of their political rights' (ibid., p. 726). Secondly, the idea of Muslim nation bore different meanings to different segments of society and 'the feudal and obscurantist forces' appropriated state power to ensure that the meaning of the polity was going to be determined by the religious membership rather than the religious faith so that 'gender inequities and the denial of rights to women' (ibid.) became the order of the day, since the political system was dominated by the thought police themselves. To reiterate, women's emancipation was granted the peripheral status from the very beginning due to 'an obvious attempt to placate the feudal elements' (ibid., p. 730), which the progressive forces like Z.A. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) could not reverse later on, despite the weight of expectations behind the organization. It is no exaggeration to claim, then, that the Urdu-dominated definition of the Muslim majority nation found it natural to seek to 'appropriate women's bodies, imposing restrictions on their attire and their presence in the public spaces' (ibid., p. 731). How the dissenting voices of East Pakistan became determined to challenge the eroding condition of women's fundamental right to equality and justice as a result of the Language Movement is going to be elaborated here.

In this section, therefore, I will distinguish the part of the Spivakian framework applicable to the Bengali endeavour for securing women's rights, and illustrate how the theoretical structure helps us to perceive

the significance of the efforts. As I mentioned above, following Spivak's first formula through the re-reading of Marx, I will depict how the Bengalis questioned the nationalist alienation in Pakistan by making present the absented question of women's equal participation in society, which the Language Movement encouraged. By following Spivak's second formula based on Derrida, I will look into the Bengalis' struggle against Pakistani cultural explanation that excluded the female figure, which the Language Movement rescued from the margin to challenge the dominant views. By relying on Spivak's third formula based on Derrida again, I will study if the Bengalis resisted the overlapping of historical and patriarchal ideologies in their delineation of patriotism, which the Language Movement made visible to them.

As I explained above, Marx defines alienation as the lack of the worker's cultivation of his full potential, since capital becomes the concrete force of debilitating his/her energy, acumen, and aspirations. Spivak applies Marx's terms of use value, exchange value, and surplus value to women's situation in a traditional social setting by arguing that a woman is a constant source of surplus value for the men around her, though her entrance into the capitalist system is ironically barred. Due to the fact that the use value of unwaged women's work in the household is not economically determined, the female alienation in the capitalist system is not even taken into consideration by Marx. Similarly, I will argue that the subservient condition of women in Urdu-dominated Pakistani society increases their alienation, since the cultivation of their full potential is neglected by asking them to deploy all their energies, talents, and hopes at the homestead. The fact that the womenfolk are alienated from the nationalist imagination is not even registered by the nationalist politicians and policy makers due to relegating the question of women's rights to a peripheral condition. Is there a one-to-one connection between Urdu and Muslim women, then? Christina Oesterheld (2004) suggests that Urdu entered into this equation with Muslim women of the Indian sub-continent during the late nineteenth century by being the means of their education and upliftment as well as their social reform. Interestingly enough, until the

early twentieth century the textual resources for this purpose were created by men. The reform for women also stressed the upper class Muslim women's separation from the lower strata of society. These anomalies explain why, despite the assertiveness of the new-age Muslim women in Urdu poetry, Pakistan's gender disparity remains the highest in South Asia in all educational aspects. This cannot be dissociated from the fact that till today Urdu is not the mother tongue of most Pakistanis, though it is the first acquired language for them. Indeed, Oesterheld's question, '*Urdu Education—Empowering or Enslaving Women?*', is answered mostly in the negative by her, since she explains how the language becomes 'the vehicle to inculcate a conservative, patriarchal ideology with regard to the position of women in society' (ibid., pp. 236, 237; emphasis in the original) so much so that even entertainment magazines fall into the same discursive arena.

Why Urdu became an alienating tool for women, whose subservience was paramount in the so-called Islamic country, was minutely explained by renowned Pakistani-American historian Ayesha Jalal (1991). Primarily, Jalal wants us to keep in mind that Pakistani women are not indistinguishable. Along with the rural–urban dissimilarity, socio-economic, religious, and regional disparities play important roles in determining the degree of alienation they suffer from the national imagination. A great number of middle and upper class, and even lower middle-class women support the state's Urdu-based policies of denying them the right to self-fulfilment. They are least likely to resist the capitalist-nationalist-Islamist restrictions on them, as they are not aware how the retrogressive injunctions affect their lives. In other words, as Marx's alienation theory suggests, it is difficult to make both the lettered and unlettered women of Pakistan aspire for self-realization, which inevitably generates opposition to the status quo. In fact, Jalal argues that the insecurities of the supposedly religious-majority-based community led to its womenfolk being turned into the source of its stability, which is why the social control over them symbolized the entity's differentiated existence in the Indian sub-continent. By fiercely following the orthodox interpretation of Islam

particularly in terms of the women's lives, the upper class Muslims were able to overcome the fear of their losing religious mooring in the sea of non-Islamic-believers. The British Rule further fortified the need for maintaining conservatism in the domestic circle. Despite Jinnah's modernism, which allowed upper class Muslim women to resist polygamy, *Purdah*, and the denial of *Shari'ah*-based inheritance propositions, 'the legitimacy of the new state rested in large part on avoiding policies that gave women rights above and beyond those granted to them by Pakistan's regionally diverse social orders' (ibid., p. 86). In other words, if Islamic *Shari'ah* (legal system) contains more progressive ideas than the local customs, the latter shall prevail. Thus, the recognition of Muslim women 'as independent legal entities' (ibid., p. 87) has been historically thwarted in decolonized Pakistan, since the social structure could not bear the burden of the consequence of this recognition.

The structural alienation of the women was not even registered at the policy level, since '[a] state still in the process of assembling its central apparatus was in no position to alienate the dominant social classes on the question of gender' (ibid.). Therefore, Punjab's provincial custom in denying all rights of inheritance to women favouring its landed gentries remained the prevalent interpretation of the law, despite its clash against the *Shari'ah* ordinance, which was there 'to supplement rather than supplant existing customary laws' (ibid.). Thus, women's issues became 'stray instances' (ibid.) for the nation builders, who appeared to be well-protected by the call of duty to maintain a prolonged interest in the far from ideal situation of the female citizens of the country, especially the ones belonging to the poorer classes. Thus, the Urdu-oriented nationalism of the country alienated women by being unable to support their becoming full-fledged citizens, who were circumscribed by the value system overseen not only by the orthodox proponents of faith, but also state apparatus like the media. Put differently, the Urdu-based definition of the nation translated into the cultural domination of the male over the female members in order to be the main harvesters of decolonization.

If the alienated women's 'accommodations with existing social norms amount to abject physical and mental subservience' (ibid., p. 108), how did the status quo affect the Bengalis of East Pakistan? Restoring gender balance in the province was part of the idealism during the Pakistan era, which Salma Sobhan (1994) writes was obstructed by the Pakistani obscurantism that alienated its female citizens. By the time Pakistan was established, the Bengali women had already experienced remarkable efforts for their emancipation, unlike their West Pakistani counterparts. The pioneering work of Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880–1932) in the early twentieth century not only rescued Bengali women from the coercion of excessive *Purdah,* but also made the impossible task of spreading education for them possible. Begum Rokeya remained a pious Muslim all through her life; 'never "came out" of purdah' but wrote extensively to make her fellow women realize that religion had been historically utilized as a tool of male domination, which is why they had to learn how to aspire for freedom only 'coming the way of men' (Sobhan, 1994, p. 68). Thus, the Bengali Muslim women had already been trained for self-fulfilment. Therefore, when the Urdu-based nationalism arrived in East Bengal after the partition of the Indian sub-continent, the 'cultural confusion' that ensued was not simply ethno-linguistic, but also worldview-oriented since 'the West Pakistanis had more in common with the Middle East, with Iran and Afghanistan… than they had with East Pakistanis' (ibid., p. 69, 70). In other words, a clash was inevitable between West Pakistan's offer of limiting life experiences for the female citizens and the East Pakistan's preference for an uninhibited cultural life for the Bengali women.

The Pakistani denunciation of the Sanskrit-stemmed script for Bengali undeniably meant that the Bengali women's comportment was going to be the most dissimilar cultural ground between the two wings of the country. For example, Sobhan explains that wearing a red spot called, *teep*, on the forehead is an Indian tradition that symbolizes the lingering practices of demonstrating caste status of women. But in East Bengal during the 1950s, it was an indigenous custom of women's

adornment, which the settlers in the land from outside usually avoided. However, Pakistan's feudal and most of the time tribal traditions saw this as a form of religious transgression. Indeed, 'Bengali women, with their hair loose around their shoulders, red-tikkaed [red-spotted], who decorated the thresholds of their houses with *alpanas,* geometric and floral designs, to mark auspicious occasions, were looked at askance [sic] by their compatriots from the west wing' (ibid., p. 71; emphasis in the original). Clearly, the Bengali women were allowed opportunities for self-expression and not put in strict *Purdah*, which along with educational opportunities, however limited, encouraged them for cultivating their own voice regarding issues that mattered to them. For example, they followed the tradition of someone like Faizunnesa Choudhurani (1834–1903), who became proficient in the then-forbidden language for upper class Muslim women, Bengali, not only to advocate female education, but also to patronize publications like *The Sudhakar* (1889–1910) that highlighted socio-historical heritages of the locale. For her activism, the British Government awarded her the title of '*Nawab*' in 1889 by making her the first Bengali woman to be distinguished in this way (see Chakraborty, 2021). Unsurprisingly, the 1950s was a time when it was traditional for middle-class Muslim girls to learn how to sing and practice classical dancing both of which suggest that their subservience was not part of the agenda of the Bengali-oriented male leaders. However, these sent a wrong message to the West Pakistani rulers, who interpreted the lack of alienation of the Bengali women through their mother-tongue-based culture as a proof that the people were, '*au fond*, non-Muslim' (Sobhan, 1994, p. 71; emphasis in the original).

The Bengalis realized how this interpretation alienates them from Pakistan's nationalist sphere the *raison d'être* of which is the Muslim identity. This is why I compare the Bengali endeavour to remedy the absence of women's voice in the nationalist narrative of the Muslim majority nation with Spivak's attempt to expand, not revise Marx. As I explained above, Spivak does not recommend changing Marx's theory by adding questions related to childbirth and parenting of children to

his oeuvre. Likewise, the Bengalis did not want to revise Pakistan's majoritarian nationalism; they intervened into the narrative with women's voices for a progressive alternative to this, which did not create an unthinking clash between religion and culture. Needless to reiterate, Language Movement provided them with new concepts to advance this worldview. Bina D'Costa (2011) identifies the Language Movement as the high-water mark point in history when the two wings of Pakistan realized that the religious tie had failed to override the hierarchical relation of a colonizer and a colonized between them. This truth became evident through the substantial lack of Bengali participation in the nation-building process. In other words, the decision-making processes of Pakistan did not exhibit a vision that included the Bengalis, particularly the womenfolk. Just as '[t]he daily tokens of national identity – coins, currency notes, postage stamps – of the new Pakistan excluded Bengali as a language' (ibid., p. 86), so too the Bengali women were specifically branded as the bearers of culture and tradition that did not match the expectations of a Muslim majority nation, as we saw above.

Obviously, the Bengalis fought against this branding aimed at their alienation at the national level by including the question of women's emancipation in their narrative of counter-nationalism. It is worth quoting D'Costa in detail here:

> The secular Bengali identity, which celebrated religious diversities, also encouraged and applauded women's participation in the cultural and social space. As such, the Language Movement contributed to gender sensitivity in the national movement during the 1960s, and many cultural activists who protested the repressive steps of the central government were women. Begum Sufia Kamal, Sanjeeda Khatun and Nilima Ibrahim are well known for their activism, along with their colleagues in the Awami League, Amena Begum, Ashalota Sen, Motia Chowdhury and Sajeda Chowdhury. (ibid., p. 88)

I have to add that Kamal was an eminent poet and feminist, Khatun an illustrious musicologist, and Ibrahim a distinguished educationist and littérateur, whereas the latter four were noted members of the political party that led the Liberation War of Bangladesh (1971). The point I am making here is that the progressive Bengali nationalism ushered in a time of social participation for women, whose independence of mind was duly celebrated in the atmosphere of hope and a balanced social order facilitated by the secular spirit. Kamal (2002, p. 49) writes about the 'wonder' that the Language Movement created on earth through demonstrating to the West Pakistani rulers not only the 'valour' and 'self-abnegation' of the Bengalis, but also the fact that their 'daughters mothers wives are not simply overwhelmed with sorrow. They are brave;' for the poet herself joined one of the numerous 'mourning processions' barefoot on the 21st February (8th Spring in Bengali calendar) by ignoring the police attack, while holding the hand of her 'young child'. Naturally, when the West Pakistani authorities prohibited the women's wearing of *saris* and *teep* in the public space and most definitely on state occasions for the supposedly shocking violation of *Purdah*, the university and college going women made it a point to don them both as a protest against state-sponsored propaganda about their supposed un-Islamic disposition.

Indeed, the protest against curtailing women's emancipation, which took the shape of a general attack on Bengali linguistic-cultural heritage, was launched through new symbols and slogans created by the Language Movement. Since the Nobel Laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore was forbidden from the government-controlled media, singing his songs became a decisive mark of opposition. This was particularly significant because his songs empowered women, which allowed them to combine nationalism and feminism in a liberating way. So was the formal observance of the 21st of February as Martyrs' Day. As women wearing white *saris* (symbolizing the colour of mourning both in Hindu and Muslim traditions in Bengal) joined the early morning processions that started with the song, 'My brother's blood imbued 21st February/Can I afford to forget the day?', and ended in laying wreaths

at the martyrs' monument, the phenomenon became an annual declaration of men and women's Bengali identity. In fact, (East) Bengal had a historical tradition of women's participation in political resistance starting from the *Tebagha* (two-thirds of the crops) Movement during the1940s that was a revolt against the British Raj for the peasants' fair share of the harvest (see Kabeer, 1988, p. 108). It is no wonder that the general students decided to defy Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code on 21 February 1952 after the convener of the Dhaka University Language Committee, Abdul Matin, had asked them whether they were ready to accept the debasement of the mother figure, which signified both the motherland and mother language (see Rahman, 2008, p. 36). To reaffirm, the Language Movement connected the inhabitants of East Pakistan to their cultural roots through reinvigorating Bengal's distinctiveness for its rich riverine landscape, which is compared with the womenfolk for the shared mothering qualities of the entities, and vibrant literature and music sourced by the mother tongue. The emancipation of women thus became the symbol of a progressive nationalist identity for the people of the land, who found it to be the continuation of history that the women were at the forefront along with their male counterparts in resisting the repressive West Pakistani regimes.

I have to add that the slogan called, '*Joy Bangla*' or 'Victory to Bengal [where Bengali is revered]' became the mainstay of Bangladesh's liberation struggle. The slogan urges all the children of mother Bengal to rise to the challenge and earn the nation's freedom. As the posters below suggest, the Bengali nationalist movement saw the females to be no less capable than their male counterparts in being completely dedicated for the cause of freedom. The first poster designed by Pranesh Kumar Mondal shows a *sari*-clad woman to be holding a bayonet to combat for the motherland, which states: 'The mothers and daughters of Bengal are all freedom fighters'. By maintaining the same colour scheme and style, Nitun Kundu's poster displays a male warrior holding a bayonet proclaiming, 'The freedom fighters of Bengal are ever awake'. I agree with Siddikur Rahman (2008) that these posters,

especially the first one, introduced the world to a freedom-loving people, who wholeheartedly wanted political, economic, and cultural autonomy from the West Pakistanis. This is why their mother-language-based nationalism inspired their womenfolk for enormous contributions in the Liberation War. Not only did some of the women combatants directly participate in the War, but they also endangered their life in order to help the male freedom fighters in all sorts of ways (for example, by taking care of them if they were injured, hiding their weapons, and Refusing to divulge information about them even in the teeth of torture and abuse by the West Pakistani occupation forces). The effective resistance of the ordinary women was possible, since Bengali nationalism did not obliterate them from the narrative. As Rahman indicates, the woman on the poster has eyes that suggest unbreakable determination to defeat the armed occupation forces (see ibid., p. 101). In addition, the phrase, 'mothers and daughters of Bengal', is written in white to represent their eternally peaceful and sustaining existence, as opposed to the white in the male poster, which implies the group as a force of goodness. Rahman is right that the phrase 'all freedom fighters' is written in reddish hue to represent the women's indomitable spirit of resistance (see ibid., p. 102). Undoubtedly, the birth of the spirit has to be sourced back to the Language Movement. Thus, the movement envisaged a social order, where men and women can march ahead unimpeded.



১৯৭১ সালের মুক্তিযুদ্ধকালীন পোস্টার

বাংলাদেশ সরকারের তথ্য ও প্রচার দফতরের পক্ষ থেকে মুদ্রিত ও প্রকাশিত

শিল্পী : প্রাণেশ কুমার মন্ডল

মুক্তিযুদ্ধ জাদুঘর কর্তৃক পুনর্মুদ্রিত

Artist of the Poster: Pranesh Kumar Mondal. Courtesy: ***Liberation War Museum, Bangladesh***



১৯৭১ সালের মুক্তিযুদ্ধকালীন পোস্টার

বাংলাদেশ সরকারের তথ্য ও প্রচার দফতরের পক্ষ থেকে মুদ্রিত ও প্রকাশিত

শিল্পী : নিতন কন্ড

মুক্তিযুদ্ধ জাদুঘর কর্তৃক পুনর্মুদ্রিত

Artist of the Poster: Nitun Kundu. Courtesy: ***Liberation War Museum, Bangladesh***

During the protest movements in the 1970s, when millions of the people united to win their right of self-determination, one of the most prominent slogans was, 'Arise, Bengalis, Arise' (see ibid., p. 49), which further reflects how the linguistic-cultural identity fuelled the demand for autonomy of both men and women. By following Spivak's second formula based on Derrida, therefore, I will look into the Bengalis' struggle against Pakistani cultural explanation that denied autonomy to women by turning them into marginal figures; and query if the Language Movement enabled the Bengalis not to equate masculinist views with civilizational values. As I explained above, Derrida demonstrates how the absence of the speaker's intuition is essential for the phenomenon of speech that creates some 'meaning'. Thus, the excluded margin of non-intuition enables the unhindered performance of the speaker at the centre. This is why Spivak asks us to examine the 'intricate and interanimating' dynamics between the centre and the margin in order to produce cultural explanations that do not downplay the politico-economic elements propagating patriarchy in a structural way. As I have been arguing, the structure underlying Pakistan's majoritarianism gave a central position to 'a Punjabi military élite claiming to act as the arm of Islamic orthodoxy' for which the excluded margin in the narrative automatically became the cultured Bengalis, whose decolonization from the Pakistani coterie firstly required the recognition of their status of being the country's 'second-class citizens' (Lawrence, 1994, p. 164). As I also have been explaining, the Bengali women became the most emblematic sign of that marginal status because the womenfolk represented 'the cultural norms shared by men and women alike throughout Muslim South Asia' (ibid., p. 165). Thus, they literally became the boundary on which the difference between the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent and the other religio-cultural communities was drawn. Naturally, the Bengalis' resistance to the 'Pakistani disdain for their culture' (ibid., p. 174) involved challenging the boundary drawn on their women. However, the superciliousness could go on unabated, since '[t]he high profile of Pakistan in

international politics has deflected attention from its structural deficiencies' (ibid., p. 176).

This is why during the first stage of independence it did not become immediately clear that especially poor and unlettered women in remote areas like East Pakistan remained subjected to patriarchal norms, which the *Shari'ah* courts could not mitigate. In other words, the state did not develop judicial and/or representational structures to support these women. This was not the case after Bangladesh's independence, where the marginal women obtained support 'from left-wing parties or grass roots organizations' (ibid.), even if the judiciary failed them. This is not to suggest that the military regimes in Pakistan took no measures to protect the rights of its citizens. Pakistan's second president Field Marshal Ayub Khan introduced the Family Law Ordinance of 1961 to reduce polygamy and enhance women's voices regarding family matters (for example, the bill raised the legal age of marriage for females to 16 and males to 21). The Ordinance came under attack by the religious and political radicals as they saw it as an interference with Muslim laws, which is why bureaucratic barriers were created to thwart the full-fledged imposition of the Ordinance. As a result, substantial social change regarding the equality of women in family law was not achieved. In addition, the feminist movement in Pakistan has always been heavily class-biased, since the multifaceted groups that challenge socio-political issues remain conditioned by their urban settings. Even if these groups succeeded in protesting against the not-so-masked authoritarian society, the worse-than-second-class-citizens, the Bengali women, could not be benefited from the activism, which further entrenched their marginality in the prevalent structure, where only the upper-class Urdu-speaking women occupied a near-central position, which allowed them to agitate sometimes in a militant way for autonomy.

While it is true that neither Pakistan nor Bangladesh has demonstrated successful examples of *Ijtihad* (effort in Arabic, which in Islamic law means the rational interpretation of problems not exactly covered by the Quran and *Hadith*, teachings on the basis of Prophet

Muhammad's life and instructions), the counter-narrative of Bengali nationalism shows that it accommodated the rationalist voices into its circumference as a result of which institutional measures impacting the status of women seem to have been more egalitarian than the Pakistani ones. Put differently, the *foundational narrative* of Bangladesh did not have any central positions to preserve. This is why the cultural thinking did not necessarily have to marginalize the women. It is true that '[j]ustice through litigation has become the expectation for a mere handful of Bangladeshis, while the continuing co-option of the federal courts by the executive branch signals just how difficult it has become, and will remain, for Bangladeshi women to counter fundamentalist or other state-directed ideologies' (ibid., p 183). And yet, there is arguably hope for the female citizens of Bangladesh to be treated as equal as their male counterparts. Habibur Rahman (1928–2014), the chief justice of the Bangladesh Supreme Court in 1995 and an activist of the Language Movement, emphasizes that Bangladesh plays a leading role in the Muslim world for reducing the inequality between men and women, which is a reflection of its founding principle of non-discrimination among human beings due to their socio-economic differences. Indeed, one of the core rules of state governance in Bangladesh is to incorporate women in all spheres of the national life.

In effect, the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh upholds the egalitarian spirit that enabled the Bengalis to struggle against Pakistani cultural tradition that denied autonomy to women by marginalizing them. The Constitution puts them back in the centre through the Third Part containing the following instructions:

(a) Section 27 proclaims that all citizens of the country are equal in the eyes of the law, and have the right to receive equal protection under the law.
(b) Section 28 determines that due to state, religion, ethnicity, race, and male–female-based disparities or for the reason of birthplace, no citizens will be compelled to encounter any impediments, obligations or conditions for entering any recreation or resting areas of the common people, or for admissions into any

areas of the common people, or, for admissions into any educational institutions. Simultaneously, the state will be able to take special initiatives for the development of the women, children, and citizens of any neglected areas.

(c) Section 29 dictates that every citizen will enjoy equal opportunities for being employed in public sector services, and no citizen will be deemed ineligible for being employed in state jobs or obtaining any jobs, or, no discriminations will be shown to the person simply because of his/her religion, ethnicity, race, male-female-based disparities, or, for the reason of birthplace. (See Rahman, 2016, p. 176)

Clearly, no centre-margin division is created between men and women, urban-remote areas, and public-private sector occupations. In other words, the *foundational narrative* of Bangladesh introduces a non-conical notion of all the citizens by opposing the pyramidal structure of the Pakistani nationalism so that the gendered identity cannot be in the way of men and/or women's self-fulfilment.

Does this mean that gender equality is an accomplished phenomenon in Bangladesh? Habibur Rahman explains that despite the founding aspirations, women in Bangladesh submit to men due to political, social, cultural, and religious reasons. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs attempt to address these issues through specifically targeted activities to provide women with significant support regarding legal, professional, health, training, and violence preventing matters. The fact still remains that for the want of education and the presence of social restrictions, most of the women cannot properly utilize their individual talent and professional and business opportunities. Rahman's own egalitarian spirit derived obviously from his participation in the Language Movement makes him ask: 'how can men have the face to demand one-step-ahead authority in the current world when women can carry out their responsibilities with as much dexterity as men do by means of state-of-the-art technologies?' (ibid., p. 186). The writer takes us back to antiquity for

an answer for the crucial question. He shows how the Bengali society displays two contradictory heritages. Due to the matriarchal influence of the ancient time, women have always retained their presence in agriculture, horticulture, and the production of handloom fabrics. At the same time, traditions like child marriage, good lineage, polygyny, and lack of inheritance have perennially worsened the security of women in society. Unsurprisingly, the Bengali women have been subjected to two contradictory value systems, which depict them as the gates of hell, while denoting them as the source of Primordial Energy (see ibid., p. 69).

How can the marginalization of the Bengali women be thwarted, then? Rahman opines that the collective spirit of the people holds the key for this. Despite the fact that the collective consciousness of the society has been historically the source of constraints and repressions affecting individuals' freedom, it always exists as the sole shelter for the people during catastrophes like civil war, famine, and pandemic. Therefore, the Bengali fondness for the mother tongue generated a collective knowledge that connects them back to their ancient achievements (for example, the archaeological remnants in places like *Paharpur* and *Mainamati* remind the Bengalis of the robustness of the collective spirit that inspired the vast Buddhist civilization from the seventh to the twelfth centuries CE). The magnitude of the past tells the Bengalis again and again that they are a nation of creators of glorious cultural legacies, where men and women spontaneously contribute (*Mainamati* itself alludes to the name of the legendary Chandra queen mentioned in antique ballads and folk-songs). Despite the rueful condition of ordinary women in present-day Bangladesh due to numerous and incessant forms of torture and persecution, the dream of cultural excellence through men and women's participation remains unextinguished. Rahman stresses that the Bengalis' egalitarian, caste-destabilizing, and deeply pluralistic culture is 'a relative of Phoenix', which is why the small country achieved independence by defying its natural, political, and economic disasters through 'a thin gold streak' (ibid., p. 82) symbolizing the people's nearly unquenchable thirst for

knowledge, literary creations, and societal evolution. This makes Rahman wonder whether the age of history is really coming to an end.

I will answer this in the negative by illustrating that the Language Movement represented the thirst through enabling the Bengalis not to equate masculinist views with civilizational values. As Sufia Uddin (2006, p. 125) argues, the commemoration of the Language Movement day, 'more commonly known as *Ekushey* (Twenty-first)' (emphasis added), shows why it is impossible to propagate masculinist views through this cultural practice. Since the event represents the Bengalis' struggle for cultural existence, the observation of *Ekushey* from 1953 marked the beginning of the people's resistance against their politico-economic marginalization, which united all spheres of people in East Pakistan. In other words, every *Ekushey* strengthened the bond between the motherland and her children, which obliterated the class, caste, and gender-based differences among them. Indeed, the martyrs of *Ekushey* included 'an employee of Dhaka High Court, the son of a mason, and the son of a farmer' (ibid., p. 127), to name but a few. Naturally, *Ekushey* started to be commemorated throughout February after Bangladesh's independence. 'Days before *Ekushey*, the *shaheed minar* [Martyrs' Monument] area is cleaned, and women gather to create *ālpanās* (paintings, typically made of rice paste, on floor or wall surfaces) at the site… By morning, the *shaheed minar* typically is blanketed with colorful marigolds, dahlias, and roses' (ibid., pp. 127–8; emphasis added and in the original) placed there by men, women, and children of all walks of life. In addition, the commemoration includes a month-long book fair organized by the *Bangla* Academy in Dhaka, which was established in 1955 to enhance research and publication regarding Bengali heritages. The civilizational values fostered by the Bengali nationalism are naturally oriented towards enlightenment, acculturation, and men and women's capabilities for materializing societal evolution.

By relying on Spivak's third formula based on Derrida again, I will now investigate if the Bengalis overcame the overlapping of historical and patriarchal ideologies in their counter-nationalism. As I explained

above, Derrida illustrates that humans draw their ideas both from their consciousness and the representational reservoir. Since the ideas remain meaningful, even if the moment of their production disappears, the written elements can be detached from their representational chains and added to other chains that are quite different from the originally intended ones. Hence, Spivak emphasizes that the overlapping of disparate ideologies in human thoughts from time to time is an expected phenomenon. As I described above, Spivak exemplifies how White as a historian presents ideologically imbricated interpretations, for his polemic for strengthening the subordinate social groups to present their voices becomes overshadowed by his patriarchally dominant writing. The question is how the Bengalis managed to keep the historical and patriarchal ideologies separate when they formulated their counter-nationalism.

Elora Shehabuddin (2008, p. 33), provides us with a significant context to the creation of Bengali nationalism: 'Over the last two hundred years, the region that is today Bangladesh has been transformed from a prosperous land that once attracted numerous foreign travelers, adventurers, and entrepreneurs to what Henry Kissinger notoriously described as an international basketcase'. In other words, the long history of severe economic deprivation of (East)Bengal meant that their dream of bringing back their bygone prosperous days cannot be attained, if they intermix history with patriarchy. However, Shehabuddin shows that through nullifying Bangladesh's constitutional ideals of nationalism, secularism, and socialism, leaning towards the idea of Muslim Bengal, and yet seeking support from Western and Gulf Arab states' donors for improving the plight of women, and encouraging 'both NGOs and government agencies to undertake programs targeting women' (ibid., p. 72), the post-Liberation Bangladesh nearly dropped out of its foundational orbit. As a result, the constitutional guarantee for 'the full participation of women in society, politics, and the economy' could not be effectively implemented, and the rural women in particular had to take the matter of their economic freedom 'into their own hands by building on and

moving beyond what they receive from elites, the state, and foreign donors' (ibid., p. 71, 74). Clearly, the intermingling of historical and patriarchal ideologies could not be thwarted, despite the fact that the state came into existence with the promise of fulfilling every community's economic rights, which is a near impossible task.

An esteemed public intellectual of Bangladesh, Ahmed Sofa (1943–2001), writes that the Bengalis created not one, but two decolonized states to achieve the seemingly improbable goal. Sofa (2011, p. 262) explains that the achievement of the state of Bangladesh will never be complete and fruitful without the realization of its policy makers that they need to think beyond the 'bombastic outburst' they showed after attaining both 'the language-based nation state of the Bengalis and the state created out of religious zeal' in order to go beyond their literal definitions. In fact, he believes that the fellow Bengalis will be able to discern why the first one was more meaningful and historically unprecedented for them. 'The seed that sprouted with leaves from the blood of the martyrs on the 21st of February, is the very shoot that has emerged as the massive tree through the war of 1971' (ibid., p. 258). It was only possible because the fighting spirit of *Ekushey* united all the Bengalis through their collective aspiration for freedom from 'religious bigotry, social inertia, tortoise-like placidity, narrow-mindedness, economic backwardness, cultural regression and so on' (ibid., p. 72), which only lead to a society devoid of élan vital. This explains why the Language Movement enabled the Bengalis to keep the historical and patriarchal ideologies separate at the *nascent stage* of their counter-nationalism.

As I explained through Derrida above, iterability originates from Sanskrit *itara*, meaning other, which further suggests that similarity and difference are interconnected in writing. Since this makes the invisible possibly visible, Spivak exemplifies through White how the representational scheme renders the female 'the ideologically excluded other' in his writing. In order to make the female presence discernible, though, Spivak argues that narratives like the nationalist history have to be re-examined for their capacity to incorporate the different-to-men's

stories of women. This framework allows us to see the Language Movement as the struggle for visibility. As Afroza Anwary (2011, p. 173) affirms that the Movement constituted a 'political struggle for space, a space which was colonized by a neocolonial group of Pakistan after the British left'. This is why the Bengalis felt that if they could not assert their cultural identity, they would be wiped away from modern history by another form of colonialism. From this thinking, a young Professor of Physics at the University of Dhaka, Abul Kashem, launched a 'cultural society' (Dil & Dil, 2000, p. 133), *Tamaddun Majlis* (Civilization Committee) in September 1947, which massively fuelled the Language Movement. Along with a Professor of Statistics, Qazi Motahar Hussain, Kashem published a booklet entitled, *The State Language of Pakistan, Bengali or Urdu,* with some extraordinary resolutions, which included the statement that '"all the people of East Pakistan will have to learn"' (see ibid.) the first language of the province that was Bengali. The egalitarian spirit of the organization soon inspired the female students to join its activities for carving out a Bengali national consciousness that enhanced the culture and heritage of the province. I have to note here that the radical shift of women's social participation was taking place at a time when East Pakistan was broadly cultivating its so-called Muslim tradition that aligned the province well with Pakistan's majoritarianism. As a result, women normally did not enjoy the freedom of movement and their families were keen to teach them Urdu, Arabic, and Persian languages. Through the spread of progressive thoughts pioneered by Dhaka University, though, parents understood the value of higher education for their daughters. The increasing number of female students at the institution started to come under the umbrellas like *Tamaddun Majlish.* Thus, the female students turned into Derrida's *itara*, which meant that they became the literal site on which Pakistan' invisibility for them was disappearing. One of the female activists of the *Majlish*, Cheman Ara (2020), aptly reminisces: 'The Language Movement reached its peak between 1947 and 1951 when the number of female students at DU

was around 80. These girls played a glorious role in the movement by joining shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts'.

Even though the female students were not aware that they were re-writing Pakistan's nationalist history, they were the first to defy curfew, break through barricades to facilitate protests, and to demand legal justice for the martyrs of *Ekushey* at the East Bengal Legislative Assembly. In fact, 'Begum Sufia Kamal and Nurjahan Murshid [one of the first female lawmakers in Pakistan] led a rally protesting the brutality of February 21' (ibid.). This was not astonishing when we realize that mother language was the means through which the Bengali educated women's sense of identity and understanding of rights started to take root. As Sofa described above, the politico-cultural awakening of men and women culminated into the Liberation War of 1971. By dint of the Spivakian lens readjusted through Marx and Derrida, we comprehend that the Bengali intervention into dominant Pakistani nationalism gave birth to a progressive counter-nationalism that could have worked wonders in South Asia, if it had been nurtured after Bangladesh's independence. I agree with Naila Kabeer (1988) that the four founding principles of Bangladesh, namely, Bengali nationalism, secularism, socialism, and democracy, should have been the protective talismans for the country's women citizens. However, these ideals have never been thoroughly implemented for this purpose. As a result, vast numbers of women have always remained subservient to the patriarchal system. Despite this, '[t]he optimistic message from Bangladesh is that, thanks to the active pressure of women's organizations in the country, the struggle for democratic rights' creates the constant reminder for the greater society that 'the political and economic enfranchisement of women must constitute one of its central planks' (ibid., p. 121).

The Tamil Creation of a Nationalist Narrative by Retaining Traditionalism

Tamil nationalist narrative started with the aim of securing their language, territory, equal citizenship, economic growth, employment prospects, and educational opportunities from being wrested by their Sinhalese counterparts, who they viewed as their neo-colonial masters. Eventually, the demands developed into the dream of constituting a Tamil *Eelam* (an independent state in the north and east of Sri Lanka) in order to safeguard the above interests that are deemed to restore the separate nationhood of the Tamils inside decolonized Sri Lanka. Thus, the Tamils' mother-language-based demand of a distinct cultural existence in a country they depicted as self-destructive through the annihilation of the majority's rival cultural claimants became transformed into the simultaneous struggle for self-determination and political independence. Unsurprisingly, the Federal Party (FP) merged with All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) in order to establish the Tamil United Front (TUF) on 14 May 1972 for representing the politico-cultural aspirations of all the Tamil-speaking people. Interestingly, the nationalist struggle also started to be more political-power-oriented rather than being centred on reviving Tamil cultural heritage and ethnic awareness. This strategic change in the nationalist struggle was visible when the Tamils on the peninsula joined forces with those in the strategically crucial diaspora. Therefore, unlike ACTC leaders like G. G. Ponnambalam, who 'presented themselves as cultural and spiritual leaders of Tamil society', militant separatist groups like The Liberation Tigers of Tamil *Eelam* (LTTE) became more active towards securing 'the objective of Tamil political autonomy' (Rasaratnam, 2009, p. 252). Ironically though, the earlier political leaders 'saw caste and gender hierarchies as a natural and valuable part of Tamil society', whereas the later leaders 'from the mid twentieth century onwards have come to see caste and gender exclusions as impediments to the progress and development' (ibid.) their nationalist endeavour hopes to achieve. Unbeknown to the latter group, then, the rift between the mother-language-based cultural nationalism and political goal-oriented separatist nationalism became the grounds on which Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism was imprisoned by traditionalism. The fact that the Tamils'

collective goal of social progress and economic development will be thwarted without a strong cultural base evaded the contemporary leaders. By being loosely rooted in mother-tongue-based nationalism, then, the Tamil movement for autonomy and independence became derailed from its progressive potentials. As a result, the question of women's emancipation could not remain an integral part of the nationalist movement.

It has to be emphasized that the Tamils have tried to establish their socio-cultural and political-legal claims on Ceylon through historical justifications, as we observed in the previous chapters. Despite this, Tamil nationalism is a modern phenomenon, which includes not only the grievances regarding the lack of parity between Sinhala and Tamil languages, but also the demands for collective and personal protection against state discrimination, political representation, passage to state resources, and the termination of state-aided colonization in Tamil-speaking lands. Clearly, the emancipation of women did not feature broadly in the Tamil counter-narrative of nationalism challenging the Sinhalese domination that started with the making of Sinhala the only official language in 1956 and the full enforcement of the Language Act during the 1960s by the Sirimavo Bandaranaike government. Colonial-style usurpation of what the Tamils considered their traditional homelands also started by the 1960s. Therefore, safeguarding the legal-political rights became paramount for the Tamils, which did not remain organically connected to the claim of linguistic parity in the country. In other words, the mother-language rights became one of the most important rallying points in the Tamil nationalist resistance, rather than the resuscitating one for the rest of the claims. Despite the *satyagraha* efforts during the late 1950s and early 1960s, which I explained in the previous chapter, the cessation of the 1930s' *Swabasha* Movement meant that the Tamil parliamentary politics and youth activism from the 60 s to the 80 s could somehow retain *Tamilpattru* (devotion to Tamil) as the keystone of the nationalist endeavour. However, '[w]ith the growth of militancy, the importance of the Tamil language as a basis of both rights claims as well as political

mobilisation receded, with territorial and self-determination claims taking precedence' (Satkunanathan, 2012, p. 620). As a result, Tamil nationalist vision did not necessitate the reformation of traditional society for achieving progressive ends. This inevitably meant that the nationalist movement provided the womenfolk with some progressive episodes, though it restricted women's participation in the public space. In fact, the protective attitude towards women activists demarcating their area of activities within the controlled boundary of the Federal Party (FP) ironically 'illustrates the invisibility of women within Tamil party politics even when they are in public' (ibid., p. 628).

In this section, I interpret the invisibility through the Spivakian lens. As I explained earlier, I will follow Spivak's first formula through the re-reading of Marx to study if the Tamils refrained from adding evidence for supporting women's freedom, despite apotheosizing the mother figure in their mother-tongue-based nationalism, and whether this resulted in the absence of new coining of words for the ideology. By following Spivak's second formula based on Derrida, I will scrutinize if the Tamils did not point out the marginalization of the female figure in the Sinhalese nationalist narrative, and as a result, could not come up with a progressive vision that challenged the existing dynamics between the patriarchally designed centre and margin. By relying on Spivak's third formula based on Derrida again, I will query if the Tamils retained the imbrications of historical and patriarchal ideologies in their nationalism, as they did not develop a truly progressive alternative that questioned the invisibility of women's issues in the Sinhalese narrative.

I will study if the Tamils' mother-tongue-oriented nationalist narrative does not include grounds for supporting women's emancipation, despite idolizing the mother figure, who is expected to play a greater role in changing the people's historically disadvantaged position through nurturing heroic sons, and inculcating culture and courage in them. Why the women cannot fight simultaneously for the liberation of their ethnic community as well as their freedom from the subservient position in it remains the main question. As Spivak argues

above, the effect of the Marxian thinking regarding human labour, production, and property is incomplete without incorporating two issues: the presence of a child as the proof of affective, juridical, and corporeal nature of woman's product, and the womb as the site of production. However, Spivak makes us realize that neither the legal possession nor the economic credit of the child is offered to the woman. Marx himself discusses the vulnerability of women workers in adverse industrial working conditions without addressing the complex dimensions of their productive power. Thus, the women's custodial role is kept intact. Likewise, traditional Tamil society depicts women essentially as mothers without denoting this as an economic role through which the women can contribute to its advancement. In other words, tradition dictates that the women cannot appear as individual contributors to the society; they have to earn their glory through the valour of their sons. Although Marxist thinking determines that men and women have to form their relations through the mediation of the conditions of their production and reproduction, the Tamil context illustrates that

> attempts to invest the maternal body— as if it is one universal body with one meaning—with "truths" about the meaning of women's existence have been fairly constant in the Tamil cultural ethics and practices and have proved to be a fertile ground for the flourishing of a certain kind of politics. (Lakshmi, 1990, p. 72)

Needless to reiterate, the politics did not guarantee women's emancipation through their self-realizations. Even though C. S. Lakshmi explains the women's traditional place in India's Tamil Nadu, her exemplification of classical Tamil literature's transformation of motherhood into goddesshood (see ibid.) shows that the ideology is a shared one in Tamil societies. Unsurprisingly, Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism did not focus on women's emancipation because if mother's body becomes equivalent to 'a metaphor for anything

considered sacred and pure like land or language' (ibid., p. 73), Tamil men automatically resume the responsibility of shielding the divinity of all of these entities.

Radhika Coomaraswamy and Nimanthi Perera-Rajasingham (2009) reaffirm that the Sri Lankan Tamils were indeed inspired by the South Indian Tamils' movement highlighting the mantra of *Thamil Thai* (the contemplation of Tamil language as a mother), which was imbibed by the Federal Party during the 1960s. This did bring about some positive changes in the public sphere in terms of women's participation in civil disobedience protests against the Sinhala-only act and state oppression, which created sudden ruptures on the women's traditional role in the decolonized Jaffna Tamil community, where the women were viewed as the custodian of Tamil culture by keeping alive home rituals, music, and dance. However, it was tacitly understood that the women could participate in the public protests, speak against Sinhala domination, and even face police arrest during *satyagraha* as long as their duties in the inner domain remained unperturbed. As a result, 'neither social reform in terms of women's empowerment nor the women's question became part of this movement' (ibid., p. 119). Despite the traditionalist approach, bourgeois nature, high-caste thinking, and expatriate finances underlying the Tamil struggle, though, it managed to challenge conventional societal structure including that involving gender. As a result, several women's bodies ended up contributing to the growth of the struggle through their culture-oriented activism. Sumathy Sivamohan (2004, p. 127) meticulously records that

> The Women's Study Circle, comprising women in and around Jaffna University, was one with an academic setting. There was also the more popular Mothers' Front of the mid-1980s, which served as a model for the Mothers' Front of southern Sri Lanka in 1989-90 during the suppression of the youth upheaval in the south led by the Sinhala-dominant People's Liberation Front (JVP). The Front consisted of all classes of women as reported in

> the now classic document on the growth and crisis of Tamil nationalism, *The Broken Palmyrah*, where accounts of women's responses and varied forms of resistance to militarism are recorded.

Despite this, there is no direction towards incorporating women's voices in the nationalist narrative of the Sri Lankan Tamils. In other words, why women's emancipation was an integral part of the narrative was not elaborated.

We have to return to Radhika Coomaraswamy and Nimanthi Perera-Rajasingham (2009) for an explanation of this aberration. Following their argument, it is comprehensible that the Tamils could not incorporate enough evidence to support women's liberation through their nationalist thinking due to the fact that offering equality and freedom to all categories of citizens requires extraordinary amount of commitment to the principle, awareness about the value of the objective, and existence of the cultural environment to support the progressive vision. However, the thrust of the standard nationalist project is such that it negates heterogeneity and minimizes the scope for dissent because the continuation of the unified national character has to be stressed, shown, and maintained as a constant value. As Spivak argues above, the lack of discussion in Marx regarding childbirth and parenting of children suggests that classic texts that construct our worldviews can be based on examples that exclude critical information regarding women's life. Similarly, providing sufficient evidence for Tamil women's liberation means exposing 'the inner fissures and splits within the nation' (Coomaraswamy & Perera-Rajasingham, 2009, p. 135) because women's resistant voices and practices will readily imply a clear break with the woman/mother/land/language construct through articulating the concept of struggle from outside the linearity.

In order to remedy the nationalist constriction, Spivak asks women for providing their own evidences of contributing to the ideological project so that patriarchal politics stops being dominant in the sphere. This is also supposed to lead to the new stamping of social concepts

that incorporate men and women's experiences and rights. Arguably though, Tamil nationalism did not produce neologisms to support women's emancipation due to the fact that the 1930s' *Swabasha* (vernacular) Movement finished up excluding the Tamil speakers. As I discussed in the previous chapters, the politicians who came to power after the British departure deeply believed in the British values of democracy, religious freedom, and equality before the law due to their studies in England, which is why they wanted to promote the idea that the Buddhist path of spirituality can never be in need of state support. Therefore, they aimed to uphold the parity of status between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority by replacing English with both their spoken languages in order not to feel alienated in the newly decolonized country by giving precedence to a colonial language. Nevertheless, the Tamils have had to deal with the hidden Sinhala aspiration of the movement ever since the Sinhala-Only Act was passed in 1956. Simply put, there was never an exclusively Tamil language movement for gaining equal rights for the Sri Lankan Tamils, which is why the dominant ideology of Tamil nationalism became embroiled in the fact that

> in Ceylon the problems concerning effective and democratic administering of provinces and the linguistic competence and skills that would be required of administrative personnel were not treated as a practical organizational issue, but transformed into the explosive political issue of cultural equality and 'national' pride of the two communities concerned. (Tambiah, 1967, p. 230)

Since the nationalist programmes became the battleground between the prides of the majority and the minority, the Tamil resistance could not take into account the structural debacles like the lack of linguistic acumen among the state personnel, which required proper fixing for transforming the heavily traditionalist society, be it of Sinhalese or Tamil variety, into a modernist one, where the supportive environment

for political power sharing could be created. This inevitably meant that women's cultures, even in those circumstances where the female members teetered on the verge of personal freedom, remained submerged under the patriarchal form of Tamil nationalism.

Thus, Tamil nationalism failed to create concepts for accelerating women's freedom. As Kumari Jayawardena (1994) argues, Sri Lankan myths highlight the crucial role of women in creating substantial religio-political changes during the pre-Buddhist time. Despite the fact that legendary leaders like Kuveni, who was a monster-queen more than 2500 years ago, and heroic queen like Anula Devi, who demonstrated exceptional strength in battles to defend her kingdom, the prevalent condition of women in ancient Sri Lankan society proves to be a subservient one. Buddhism did shake up severely patriarchal Brahminism (the domination of the priestly caste of Hindu society). Since women from all strata of society obtained the opportunity to enter the Buddhist nunnery, the practices of *sati* (wife immolation on the husband's funeral pyre) and the prohibition against widow re-marriage started to lessen. Following the long tradition of women asserting their voice for social reforms due also to the empowerment brought about by colonial education, Sri Lanka became 'one of the first countries of Asia and Africa to achieve women's suffrage, this right being accorded to all women of over 21 years of age by the Donoughmore Constitutional Reforms of 1931' (ibid., p. 128). With the granting of franchise, several women's organizations cropped up demanding the end of their marginalized status both in society and politics. And yet, there was no coinage of new images, trends, slogans, songs, and litanies to propel the socio-political movements towards women's self-realization. It is because the 1930s' activists like Maheswari Navaratnam, who had studied in Rabindranath Tagore's *Shantiniketan* (The Abode of Peace, seeking a common bond between the cultures of East and West), edited publications like *Tamil Mahal* (Tamil Woman) that demonstrated clear influence of the institution through the advocacy of the improvement of women's consciousness regarding the constraints of their conventional role in society (see ibid.,

p. 129), and yet fell short of creating an effective cultural rejuvenation for this. Since Sri Lankan society as a whole remained passive regarding the imperative for developing 'a movement for women's emancipation that went beyond the existing social parameters' (ibid., p. 136), the Tamils also left this space blank by not inventing revolutionary ideas that incorporate men and women's experiences.

By following Spivak's second formula based on Derrida, I will scrutinize if the Tamils did not reveal the exclusion of the female figure in the Sinhalese narrative due to not examining the volatile margin between reality and its representation. As I explained above, Derrida demonstrates how a solitary expression like 'I am' is intelligible through the absence of a connecting object, which in this instance is the intuitive self of the speaker: 'myself'. The absence not only makes the meaning possible, but also suggests the independence of 'I' from the speaker in asserting some meaning, which increases the instability of meaning. I contend that Tamil nationalism did not create a viable alternative to the embedded socio-cultural hierarchies of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism that came to be the order of the day after the decolonization of Sri Lanka due to the former nationalists' oversight of the instability of the structure of representation. Therefore, if Sinhala nationalists diminished the plural character of the northeast by attempting to incorporate the area into the nascent state so that even the Tamil-speaking minorities would have no proper civil and political rights there, Tamil nationalists also ruled out democratic and egalitarian values by harking back to the glories of the Chola Empire, as I described in the previous chapter. In other words, Sinhala nationalism's politics of exclusion is repeated by Tamil nationalism through its construction of an internally uniform identity. The question is why this imperils the gender equity in the nation-state. Undoubtedly, the search for the fictional uniformity is counterproductive, since it reinforces the patriarchal elements in a society. How Sinhala nationalism exemplifies this may not be immediately discernible, since decolonization widened educational opportunity and the scope of participation in the urban economy for women. Simultaneously, the

national and international initiations of women's movements and the increasing involvement of the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in advancing a supportive environment for women to appear as a positive workforce and to raise their voice regarding issues concerning their life and work guaranteed greater freedom for them. Nevertheless, the continuation of the bitter battle regarding the idea of what it meant to be a true Sri Lankan suggests that the Buddhist clergy's demand for the primacy of the race met with the Tamils' mobilization of their claim for equal status based on the ancientness of their language and culture. Thus, the battle continually forced the citizens to be moulded by increasingly narrower ideologies, which meant that women's freedom for finding a suitable lifestyle and obtaining the ways of self-realization became more and more curtailed, since these wishes created suspicion regarding their loyalties to the homogenous ideas of nationhood. Obviously, these ideas centralized their male counterparts by asking them to accept their marginalization.

To reiterate, Sinhala nationalism centralizes the function of the patriarchal subject that is intelligible through the absence of its female object. Peter Schalk (2009, p. 134) elaborates on what Sinhalization truly involves by illustrating how the diversity of the nation is made ambiguous by a concept called, '*sinhalatva*, "Sinhalaness"' that situates Sinhala language/religion at a paramount position through the following process: 'The Lankan Constitution thinks monocentrically, we (=the Buddhists) and they (=the Non-Buddhists)' (emphasis in the original). The blatant intermixture of religion and politics turns the state promotion of language into that of religion. This is not done to fend off pluralism but to establish predominant control on the territory. This is directly linked to gender issues, which are turned around to define the previously British administered territory into a native governed one through rules and regulations reflecting the supposed superiority of the latter. It is no wonder that Dharmapala as a central figure of national freedom, who I discussed in the first chapter, exhorts the Sinhala women to shun European ways by aspiring for 'the purported ideals of Aryan womanhood', which are believed to pave the

way for their 'true liberation' (Marecek, 2002, p. 143), despite ensuring their subordination to their male guardians. Thus, the claims about the cultural ascendancy of the Sinhala people, as well as their natural right to political ownership of the monocentric nation are asserted by the authenticity of the way of life and a homegrown feminine consciousness predetermined for their female inhabitants. Naturally, women activists who challenge the traditional gender norms are labelled as outcasts, whose 'ideas are discredited as borrowings from the "outside" (specifically from the "degenerate" West), not as *bona fide* expressions of dissent from within' (ibid., p. 157; emphasis in the original). Put differently, the alleged inability of Sinhala women to represent themselves is the absented object, which guarantees the function of the patriarchal subject as the only legitimate speaker for the homogenized, religio-culturally unified, and territorially secure nation.

Spivak rightly reaffirms that our records tell us who we are, since the social structure determines the ideology that governs our life. However, the Tamils did not produce a progressive nationalism that challenged the dominant social structure in order to outplay the existing dynamics between the patriarchal centre and margin. Instead, Tamil nationalists became oblivious to the peripheral status of the female figure in the Sinhalese narrative due to their inconsistent strategy of coming up with a nationalist worldview that shadows the exclusionary nature of the Sinhalese nationalism. Rohini Hensman (1992) compares the Sinhalese and Tamil nationalist visions, which are not only ethnic, but also totalitarian in nature, due to the non-egalitarian approach to the rival communities. The nationalists are accommodative of neither the civilian critics nor the minorities within. Hensman cites the example of a murdered Tamil activist named Rajani Thiranagama, who was an avid supporter of Tamil nation, until it became clear to her that it also repeats traditionalism by retaining the central position of valorous men. This Thiranagama believes requires the female members to question the '"inner core"' of the nationalist struggle, which remains '"aggressive"' (see ibid., p. 503) towards them. By following Thiranagama, we realize that Tamil nationalist failure to

question men's romanticized role lies in the fact that the society in general '"is hierarchically organised and steeped in the ideology of male dominance"', which echoes the Spivakian view of the androcentric structure of society, where every aspect of woman's life—be it her individual, economic, professional, or socio-cultural predilection—is inevitably shaped '"by a girdle of patriarchy"' (see ibid., p. 502) that tightens her marginal position. Hensman further records that it is not the human rights activists like Thiranagama alone, who resist the armed struggle developed out of the linguistic-cultural turmoil, the internally displaced Tamil women also censure the riving of the multi-ethnic communities. Living in miserable conditions in refugee camps, they astonishingly view the identitarian conflict in a clear-eyed manner. When the writer interviews some of the Muslim women in the camps, who are the minority among the minority Tamils, with whom they manage to live peacefully, they frankly tell her that whether the LTTE achieve the *Eelam* or not, 'they will treat us like slaves or second-class citizens' (see ibid., p. 505), which makes them prefer a single state, where egalitarian values are well-established.

Understandably, Tamil nationalists' claim for their privileged status for forming an *Eelam* stresses their ethnocentric and androcentric inclinations. I connect this contradiction consisted of anticolonial and anti-democratic elements within Tamil nationalism to the ultimate failure of the *Swabasha* Movement, which enabled both the Sinhalese and the Tamils to pursue idealistic goals for self-determination. As I have been arguing, the failure led to the increasing presence of *sinhalatva* on the one hand, but on the other hand *Thamil Thai* started to be a slogan that was utilized more and more for ensuring the territorial control of the nationalists, rather than obstructing the chauvinistic practices of the land. Thus, both the nationalist struggles seem to centralize what Spivak believes to police the greater society: the cultural, socio-political, and economic rights of the male members of the decolonized nation-state. Consequently, the Tamil setback in producing a progressive nationalist vision challenging the centre/margin dynamics ignited the following thought: 'the danger that

the new state will be no better than the old one, and possibly even worse' (ibid., p. 508).

By relying on Spivak's third formula based on Derrida again, I will further query if the Tamils could not overcome the imbrications of historical and patriarchal ideologies in their nationalist narrative due to traditionalism. As I discussed above, Spivak illustrates that we cannot be ideology-neutral but can well-recognize its operative process, which we can change as well through our delimited interpretation. In order to locate the ideological agendas of the discursive networks, Spivak relies on Derrida, who considers writing's relatability to context by focusing on the term's ultimate undefinability. Consequently, human beings write to represent their thoughts in a manner that is comparable to painting, which is sourced by their imagination and consciousness. Since consciousness borrows from the complex representational structure through its own reasoning, Spivak suggests that the shifting nature of the composed ideas leads to the overlapping of disparate ideologies in human thoughts every so often. Spivak exemplifies how historical and patriarchal ideologies got overlaid in White, who tried to rescue history from fictional 'meaninglessness' through a male historical agent. The question is whether the Tamil nationalist narrative could not separate the people's objective view of history from their preference for the patriarchal dogma.

Why did the imbrications take place? Arguably, the reason behind the amalgamation of the historical and patriarchal viewpoints in the Tamil narrative is the major failure of the decolonized elites to develop a pan-ethnic nationalism. Madurika Rasaratnam (2016) argues that the multi-ethnic polity of colonial Sri Lanka could not develop a pan-ethnic consciousness for its decolonized entity due to several factors. As I implied above, Sri Lanka's independence was not earned through nationalist struggles mainly for the fact that its founding father D. S. Senanayake was considered to be a thoroughly reliable person for the British to transfer power over owing to his Anglican education and political eminence. However, the absence of the nationalist movement also meant that a solid plan was lacking to systematize the island's

multi-ethnic condition within a nationalist framework that requires perceptive unity. The gradual ascendance of the Sinhala-Buddhist ideology, therefore, did not hinge upon the pursuit of structural reform of the society, as it prioritized the welding of national identity, futurity, and majoritarian prerogative. Rasaratnam elaborates that

> The social and economic context of Buddhist revivalism—and thereby emergent Sinhala nationalism—was the rapid growth and commercialisation of the economy associated with the opening up of the Kandyan areas to plantation agriculture and the incorporation of the island into British-centred global flows of finance and trade. This produced a new commercial elite formed by low country Sinhala caste groups—the Karavas, Salagamas and Duravas (KSD)—who had formerly been associated with the relatively low-status occupations of fishing, cinnamon peeling and toddy tapping respectively. (ibid., p. 86)

From the nineteenth century onward, KSD's social power through the newly acquired wealth fuelled the revivalism by turning Buddhist nationalism the concept for the rest of the Sinhalese to be milling around. As opposed to this, Tamil revivalism initially produced a multi-ethnic view of belonging to the island through the activities of organization like the Jaffna Youth Congress (JYC) formed in 1924, which suggested that their Tamil opponents were '"communalists"' (ibid., p. 101). Nevertheless, the Tamil political vision focused on challenging Sinhala majoritarianism, rather than implementing major social reforms for facilitating the pan-ethnic political process. Despite JYC's cultivation of the mother-language-based culture through replacing Western performing arts in the curricula of Jaffna educational institutions with *Bharathanatyam* and Carnatic music—south Indian forms of dance and music—its defeat in the electoral process during the 1930s meant that a rare opportunity of connecting the *Swabasha* objectives with real social reform became lost.

Due to the absence of reformist activities, the Tamils' historical imagination through *Bharathanatyam* and Carnatic music further deteriorated into a patriarchally dominant ideology by borrowing from the complex representational structure that did not centralize welfare-oriented concerns for their women in a war-torn country. Without highlighting how the Tamil women are maintaining their self-perception and functioning within the politics of place, tradition, and control, Tamil nationalism emerging as a consequence of the resentment of the paucity of political settlement in the island ironically meant that the narrative also did not operate from a broader, egalitarian, and process-oriented perspective that could bring in qualitative changes in the women's lives. Joke Schrijvers (2011) explains that the long-standing civil war in Sri Lanka has not only upended the traditional roles of Tamil women, but also increased the conservatism regarding their social responsibilities. The contradiction is illustrated by the fact that '[a]t the one extreme there is the LTTE propaganda of "Tamil liberation" by the representation and actual practice of young women as militant fighters. At the other extreme, a most conservative discourse has emerged about the complete collapse of '"family values"' (ibid., p. 525) in the refugee camps as well as in the wider society. Both these pictures have been challenged by the Tamil feminists, who point out that the phenomena reduce women's agency. First of all, Tamil women's emancipation cannot solely depend on being the gun wielder for the LTTE because the prevalent discourse of the organization changed the notion of the Tamil women's life-affirming role as the custodian of the historic heritages to that of their being the embodiments of austerity and death. Secondly, Schrijvers records that the internally uprooted women rise above their victimization, as 'they create spaces even in situations that from the outside do not seem to provide any scope for exerting influence at all' (ibid.). Thirdly, the war has exiled the extended family members of some Tamil women, which paradoxically guarantees greater choice over their life decisions, as they do not have to repeatedly surrender to the social regulation for the sake of 'family values'. Despite all this, the LTTE narrative does not utilize the

women's capacity to survive the armed conflict and rebuild their life, understandably because this is not part of the representational structure of traditional Tamilness. Understandably, the historical imagination of cultural identity, which is devoid of fictional 'meaninglessness', and representational consciousness of women's supportive role merged to generate the patriarchally privileged narrative of Tamil nationalism. Therefore, the adoption of the new constitution in 1972 that entrenched the Sinhala-oriented order culminated in Tamil separatism, since 'impassioned demands for swift and drastic action grew among youths' (Kearney, 2011, p. 498), which left little room for the older generation nationalists to manoeuvre the dialogue for gender parity within the aggrieved community.

This leads us to our final point on the Tamil nationalist narrative's limitation in reversing the invisibility of women-centric viewpoints in the Sinhalese vision. The narrative lacks befitting progressive elements to challenge the indestructible sameness the Sinhalese nationalism firmly subscribes to. As I displayed above, Derrida critiques the Western metaphysics' positivist approach to presence by showing that writing cannot be backtracked to its sender, whose physical presence it disallows. This makes Spivak advocate for inserting what writing makes invisible due to its own absent nature. As she demonstrates how White's hidden masculinist views collide with his non-discriminatory ideals, she underlines the impossibility of a complete redesign of the patriarchal structure supporting this ideological admixture. Therefore, her idea is to uncover the deeply buried patriarchal bias in powerful discourses like nationalism to make them more valid, distinct, and diversified.

When the founder of the most internationally recognized NGO of Sri Lanka, A. T. Ariyaratne (2011, p. 379), who is popularly known as the 'Gandhi of the Nation', writes about the Buddhist philosophy behind his organization called, *Sarvodaya* (Awakening of All), in terms of 'man-centered' development, one does not become oblivious to the movement's contributions to women empowerment. Even so, one cannot detect a female-oriented awakening in Ariyaratne's programme

of ensuring 'a spirituo-cultural and socio-economic' progress for all 'the individuals living in [his native] society' because the emancipation of the individual the Movement attempts to accelerate has to remain 'within *his* cultural milieu' (ibid.; emphasis added). It is no exaggeration, then, to suggest that the wholesome development the humanitarian seeks does not aim to challenge his society's patriarchal foundation. Indeed, Sitralega Maunaguru (2009) argues that the Tamil nationalist project constructed the image of ideal womanhood through reworking some glorified myths, legends, and classics. Maunaguru exemplifies that.

> One character based on the *Puranaanuru*, an anthology of Tamil heroic poems from the first century A. D., idealizes mothers who had sent their sons to the battlefield with pride in their heart. Another character was *Kannaki* the main character of the seventh century epic *Silapathikaram* who challenges a king who wrongly ordered the killing of her husband. (ibid., p. 160; emphasis in the original)

Both the figures were later utilized by the Federal Party for encouraging the Tamil women in the 1960s to allow their sons to wage a new war on the internal enemies. Like *Kannkai*, who burnt *Madurai* where her husband was murdered, the Tamil women were encouraged to resist the injustices of the decolonized state. Therefore, history was utilized to enlist support from women for a nationalist order that did not transcend the image of the 'supernatural Tamil woman', who does not forget her socially assigned role even after joining the LTTE, as she 'holds an automatic rifle in one hand and a child in another' (ibid., p. 162). This is to be questioned not for undermining her motherly duty, but for stressing the indestructible presence of the patriarchal structure. Clearly, Tamil nationalism *could not affirm* a fully emancipated woman as a symbol of their liberation struggle, which is why overturning the invisibility of the female-centric concerns in the Sinhalese narrative became impossible for the traditionalist worldview.

Obviously, this is not achievable until there is a real awakening inside the Tamil enclave regarding the 'cultural traditions as reproductive sites' for patriarchy, as well as the multivalent responses to the phenomenon as the 'field of inequality' (ibid., p. 164, 171), for the presence of which the nationalist experience and voice remain less distinct and diversified. Thus, Spivak makes us comprehend why national liberation cannot automatically guarantee women's emancipation. As I have been arguing, this will remain the reality unless and until there are vehement debates inside the nationalist frontiers regarding the patriarchal ideology of the prevalent socio-cultural structures, and clear spelling out of the programmes to reform these for improving women's life and social position.

The Question of Women's Emancipation Through Nationalism

From the above discussion, it should be evident that the Bengali counter-nationalism could incorporate the question of women's emancipation mainly because there was a successful mother-language movement in East Bengal; there was none in Ceylon that could unite the ethnic communities. Indeed, the failure of the *Swabasha* Movement weakened the Tamil nationalist vision, which could not produce a radical programme for women's freedom. It should be also comprehensible from the above discussion that women's self-realization was not an alien concept for the Bengalis for which Begum Rokeya's pioneering works are rightly acknowledged. Even so, I would like to emphasize that *Tamaddun Majlish* could champion women's participation in the Language Movement because of an established understanding of equality in British Bengal. One of the greatest poets in Bengali literature, Kazi Nazrul Islam (2011), emphatically urged the colonized women to break all sorts of shackles preventing them from realizing their full potential. Bangladesh's National Poet was guided in his revolt against the repressive customs of his native society by his

firmest belief in egalitarianism, as he declares in his classic poem, 'Woman', which was originally published in 1925, that

> I sing the song of parity—
> In my eyes there exists no male-female division.
> Whatever the world affirms to be the noble creation eternal-celebration
> Half of it is done by men, the other half by women.
> …
> Today is the time of discomfort, time of humans, time of equalizing,
> No one will remain the prisoner of any other, proclaims the drumbeating.
> …
> Listen creatures of the world!
> However much you torment others, you become that amount of emasculated!
> (ibid., pp. 89-90; ellipses added)

Needless to reiterate, this idealism is structurally challenging to achieve, as Spivak demonstrates through her Marx and Derrida-based theorizations. Nonetheless, the Bengalis showed the radical spirit in delineating an uninhibited woman as the appropriate symbol of their progressive nationalism. As we saw above, the Tamils could not be that fearless. I think this is also because of *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (2011), who incorporated Nazrul's revolutionary spirit in his politics. In his speech at the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on the 28th of February, 1956, he resoundingly argued in favour of retaining 20 reserved seats for women; 'because they are our sisters and they have got equal rights' (ibid., p. 116). More importantly, he was absolutely clear regarding the socio-economic impact of expediting the self-realization of the womenfolk, as he added that if 'men and women can work together for the emancipation of the country' (ibid., p. 117), better results for national developments are only to be expected. This

explains why the rights-based claims born out of the Language Movement are embedded in Bangladesh's Constitution.

Surely, the Bengalis of East Pakistan fought for upholding the idealism, though the progressive identity resultant of this struggle was sidelined soon after the independence, particularly after *Bangabandhu*'s tragic death. Contradictorily, the Tamils moved away from the question of equal rights of women in search of autonomy. For this reason, Tamil traditionalism becomes a textbook example of nationalism's drawbacks in being more solid, distinct, and credible the way Spivak recommends the narrative to be. I certainly do not want to suggest that the Tamil portrayal of the *Eelam* as an all-embracing mother figure propelling the sons to appear as her protectors should be censured for its lack of feminist commitment. Instead, the challenges faced by East Pakistan (Bangladesh from 1971) and *Eelam* make us conclude that a nationalist narrative must nurture a humanist core, if it aims to propel a genuinely liberatory movement. The humanism is what I discuss in the next chapter.

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5. Identity Politics Versus Bengali and Tamil Literary and Cultural Creations

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Keywords Foundational narrative – Nationalitarian politics – Decolonial movements – National consciousness vs. socio-political consciousness – Exclusivist/triumphalist nationalism – Rabindranath Tagore – Frantz Fanon – Shamsur Rahman – Commemoration as political defiance – Tamiltay (mother language/land) – Sinhala-Only legislation – Sinhalese domination – Post-war future vs. immediacy of Civil War – Unresolved nationhood

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> Identity, always identity, over and above knowing about others.
> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*

In this chapter, I create a framework of analysing national identity through what can be termed as Said's ideas of 'Narrow Nationalism' versus the 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism', which he mainly developed in his profoundly influential book, *Culture and Imperialism*. As we know, teleological narratives of the nation emerged in the wake of the Second World War by focusing largely on anticolonial struggles within the circumference of newly identified territories. Said was one of

the pioneers of putting this phenomenon into perspective, since he realized that the rise of nation-states inevitably meant that the classical colonial ventures of discovering empty lands, expansive frontiers, and endless possibilities of establishing settlements more or less came to a halt. The historic change created enormous global challenges due to its unprecedented power to fuel division and disorder, which led Said (1994, p. 20) to assert that even if one has an unclear idea of the planetary milieu, one should be alarmed at the fact that any 'narrow interests—patriotism, chauvinism, ethnic, religious, and racial hatreds—can in fact lead to mass destructiveness'. This is why a novel approach to nationalism was required, which Said advocated because of being deeply influenced by two thinkers: Rabindranath Tagore and Frantz Fanon. As we shall see, both the Bengali polymath and the Martiniquan theorist encouraged Said to move away from any exclusivist and triumphalist views of nationalism towards exploring the concept's liberationist potentials. This explains Said's refusal to maintain an anti-nationalist proclivity, be it in the form of antagonism to the concept of nationhood, or to the institutional structure of the nation-state. On the contrary, Said's writings prove that he constantly fought for endowing nationalism with humane values.

Said's approach to nationalism derives from the fact that more than an ideology, he views nationalism as a cultural experience. Since he analyses the divergent cultures brought about by nationalism, his assessment of the twentieth century's most prominent phenomenon becomes bidirectional. Said clarifies why his nationalism is dichotomic, rather than simplistic and/or paradoxical:

> I do not want to be misunderstood as advocating a simple anti-nationalist position. It is historical fact that nationalism—restoration of community, assertion of identity, emergence of new cultural practices—as a mobilized political force instigated and then advanced the struggle against Western domination everywhere in the non-European world… Certainly it was the

> case that these groupings were at times fiercely exclusivist, as many historians of nationalism have shown. (ibid., p. 218)

From the Philippines to Africa, from the Indian sub-continent to the Arab world, and from the Caribbean to Latin America, nationalism was an effective means of forming a sense of identity that validated ethnic or religious communities. Obviously, the cohesion and unity as a native group forestalled Western invasion. Said does not question the axiomatic account of nationalism as an effective resisting force against European colonization that became the unstoppable current in the last century. However, Said vigorously dissociated himself from the established course of opposing 'the old orthodoxies and injustices' when the society it conceptualized took the 'fiercely exclusivist' (ibid.) turn. Put differently, Said clearly acknowledges the restorative function of nationalism, as it breathes new life into national heritages, myths, customs, tales, and legends, since '[l]ocal slave narratives, spiritual autobiographies, prison memoirs form a counterpoint to the Western powers' monumental histories, official discourses, and panoptic quasi-scientific viewpoint' (ibid., p. 215). However, the end result of the exercise is most often narrow nationalism, since it generates 'a politics of identity' that is fertile only on the grounds of 'Egypt for the Egyptians, Africa for the Africans, India for the Indians, and so on' (ibid., p. 267).

Seamus Deane (1940–2021), a literary and intellectual historian, who was inspired by Said and wrote against the revisionist attempt to de-emphasize the impact of British colonialism on every aspect of Irish advancement, explains why nationalism has to be rejected if it simply reverses colonial ideology. Deane (1990, p. 8) identifies the metaphysical reason for which nationalism turns colonialism inside out. Since all nationalist narratives are 'driven by an ambition to realize their intrinsic essence in some specific and tangible form', the self-image they conjure up becomes non-negotiable. The problem with the strict requirement of conformity to the image is that the inherent essence the nationalist self-conception wants to retain in order to

reinvigorate the past subdued by colonialism has a counterproductive effect. Indeed, the 'metaphysical essentialism' (ibid., p. 9) defines nationalism and depicts its irony. It is because 'insurgent nationalisms' (ibid.) remain as dependent on a monolithic interpretation of the past as the colonial and imperial narratives are, which the former ironically tries to supplant. While it is nonsensical to suggest that nationalism should promote cosmopolitan worldviews, Said reminds us that the dangers of monolithic thinking are not trivial. One of the main issues with monolithic structure is that this requires absolutism to become crucial. Because monolithic thinking is tightly bound to the nationalist essence, it becomes difficult to recognize individual components of the nation separately. This can impede the emergence of a dynamic national entity. The bottleneck created by narrow nationalism is denounced by Said (2001, p. 421), since the essentialist trend seemingly beneficially produces patriotic loyalty on every occasion but it also pumps up 'the tendency to fabricate excuses and conditions for suddenly turning general liberal principles into a species of irrelevant and jejune footnote'. Put simply, the absolutism about nationalist essence culminates in a claustrophobic atmosphere for liberal values like civil rights, rule of law, freedom of speech, and even democracy.

John Randolph LeBlanc and Carolyn M. Jones Medine (2012) analyse how postcolonial nationalisms create the expressions of essences based on which new communities take shape, where no distinctly defined groups existed before the advent of colonialism. In other words, the 'us' and 'them' divide introduced by nationalism has undeniable political charge, which is why the nationalist demand for autonomous statehood can be thought of as the reassertion of colonialist thinking in terms of an authoritarian structure but the significance of the achievement always remains multifaceted. LeBlanc and Medine list this as follows:

> (1) the emphasis on the nation-state as the most legitimate form of political community, the one most likely to receive international recognition and protection, and (2) the need for an

> asserted identity to justify sovereignty over territories enclosed by borders drawn or erased by the colonial powers. (ibid., p. 51)

Read this way, the nationalist impulse to name itself does not appear straightforwardly dangerous. Instead, the emergence of postcolonial nationalism can be justifiably viewed as the political analogy of 'writing back' to colonialist ideologies. The question is why Said still argues against the nationalist claims of racial, religious, and ideological purity. Undoubtedly, these claims propel postcolonial nations towards recognition, protection, and even territorial security. Nevertheless, the temptation to purity can easily make postcolonial peoples forget not only the constructed nature of their distinct identities, but also the fact that maintaining the circulation of socio-cultural particularities within the newly drawn borders is an exacting task. Indeed, the undue preference for essence has led many nationalist domains including the Arab world to justify the national security state and its repressive apparatuses to guarantee that all aspects of its socio-political life are dominated from the perspective of national defence. This is how the nationalist identity that a particular group creates for itself changes into the reason for fearing the nationalist impulse. LeBlanc and Medine are unequivocal that '(t)his is a negative form of identity-construction, now properly feared in the West and elsewhere, that generates exclusivist needs that it cannot meet and corresponding methodologies of desperation' (ibid., p. 53).

Understandably, the exclusivist inclination gives nationalism its dual nature. On the one hand, the oneness of culture gives nationalism a coherent structure. On the other hand, the totality of the structure suggests it incompleteness, since the acquired homogeneity never evinces the structure's comprehensiveness. Said (2001) underlines the inherent duality of nationalism as its Achilles' heel by depending on Matthew Arnold and Ernest Gellner. As I explained in Chapter 2, Arnold (2006) indicates how culture mediates between nationalist ideology and state policies. In fact, he attaches a sacrosanct quality to both culture and state, since state is the order through which individuals'

cultured self is cultivated, which in turn ensures lasting peace and stability for the nation. Thus, Arnold reinforces nationalism's role in disseminating a purified form of identity for the individuals inhabiting the state. Gellner (1983), on the other hand, postulates that a high culture is imposed on society in the name of a distilled identity. For him, nationalism is a process of binding together essentialized individuals 'by a shared culture' that invigorates the oneness of feeling about the nation 'in place of a previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves' (ibid., p. 57). The pulverization of locally distinguished cultures for creating a uniquely codified population is what nationalism achieves. For Said (2001), the single-mindedness ultimately renders nationalism narrow and triumphalist. Since the higher echelon of a society decides the culture that should act as a common ground for all the members, it is highly unlikely that the consideration of the concerns of the low-context people is taken into account. Said declares:

> To launder the cultural past and repaint it in garish nationalist colors that irradiate the whole society is now so much a fact of contemporary life as to be considered natural. For, as Ernest Gellner shrewdly observes in his book on nationalism, Arnold's vision of a culture coming to dominate the state is based on the homogenization of intellectual space, which, in turn, requires "a high culture [to] pervade the whole of society, define it, and needs to be sustained by the polity. *That* is the secret of nationalism." (ibid., pp. 423–424; emphasis in the original)

Perceivably, Said does not decry nationalism, *tout court*. He is up against what passes for nationalism in the aftermath of the Second World War. In Said's experience, high culture is not utilized for cultivating the liberating potential of nationalism. Instead, it is mostly employed for entrenching ethnic, religious, and ideological groups that

more often than not support the ruthless institutionality of corrupt regimes.

Jeanne Morefield (2022) elaborates on Said's opposition to narrow nationalism by citing Mahatma Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*, which was originally published in 1909, introducing a new civilizational mission for nations struggling to be free from imperial loyalty. Morefield is convinced that Said views the conventional characteristics of nationalism as a continuing legacy of imperialism. She explains Said's reservation against nationalism's propensity for repeating the imperial dependence on hegemonic culture, for example, through Gandhi's defence of Indian nationalism as anything but an '"English rule without the Englishman" or "the tiger's nature, but not the tiger"' (see Morefield, 2022, p. 79). In all fairness, anticolonial nationalism relies on Western framework of the concept, though it polemically challenges the epistemic domination. It is also comprehensible that Indian Union worked effectively after independence, since it benefitted from inheriting the British administrative structure. Nevertheless, Gandhi (2009, p. 48) combats the idea that the dominion is based on the conventional requirement of nationalism, which Gellner identifies above as the imposition of a shared culture in order to secure a hegemonic control of the wielders of high culture: 'We were one nation before [the English] came to India. One thought inspired us. Our mode of life was the same. It was because we were one nation that they were able to establish one kingdom'. Gandhi is incontestable: *the nationalist spirit he believes in is neither borrowed nor constructed from above*. Quite the opposite, the strength of the spirit propelled him towards reclaiming his colonized homeland in its entirety. This is how the reclamation of a new geography because of ancient solidarity takes place. This is obviously a decolonial reading of nationalism that resonated worldwide.

This explains why Said became a staunch believer in the decolonial paradigm created by nationalist thinkers like W. B. Yeats, Aimé Cesairé, '[Pablo] Neruda, or Tagore in India… which was an international culture. They knew about each other, and worked from similar

premises in local situations that differed widely' (Said & Rée, 1993, p. 189). Despite the fact that Said saw essentialist notions like Arabism or negritude, a term that Cesairé co-created in the 1930s to resist the legacy of racism lodged in the European colonization of Africa, the critic highlighted that the thinkers did not fall into the nationalist appeal of authenticity or purity. In other words, their nationalist mission was not clamorous for racial or ethnic Othering. Instead, these thinkers seem to be wary of the nativist turn that nationalism was going to inevitably take, though it was not apparent to most nationalists during the heyday of decolonial movements. The praxis they created suggested a strong consciousness defying the narrow nationalist agenda to define the objects of vilification, fear, and admonishment against whom the nation proclaims itself. For their writings, it became comprehensible that nationalism at its core is a longing for sovereignty, self-determination, and an apprehension of an equitable world order—those who are outside the discursive boundary are presented as *personae non gratae* to whom the nation wishes no harmful conduct. To add to this, Said (2001, p. 426) exemplifies the 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' through Tagore and Fanon:

> Thus, to cite a small number of examples: Tagore, very much the national poet and intellectual leader of early twentieth-century Indian resistance to the British, condemns nationalism, in his 1917 lectures on the subject, for its state worship, its triumphalism, its militancy. Yet he also remains a nationalist… And who can miss in Fanon the intensity of his attack on "*mésaventures de la conscience nationale*," its febrile mimicry of colonial thought and practices, its imprisoning ethic, its brutalizing usurpations? (Emphasis in the original)

As opposed to nationalism of *ressentiment*, Said advocates for a collective existence that enhances human creativity and human freedom. This will begin from a dominated people's awareness of their subjugated condition, and lead to struggles for numerous political

groups, as well as platforms for ensuring the rights of the minority and marginalized sections, and anti-chauvinism-and-parochialism. Thus, nationalism projects its best form when William Shakespeare's enslaved character 'Caliban sees his own history as an aspect of the history of *all* subjugated men and women, and comprehends the complex truth of his own social and historical situation' (Said, 1994, p. 214; emphasis in the original).

Tagore's 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' makes it discernible to his readers that only political freedom cannot be the all-important element for decolonial movements. As Said explains above, the colonized people have to be able to historicize their subjection as an example of the human bondage like the Caribbean experience of slavery from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century and/or the European custom of serfdom during the medieval period that other people have to live through in other parts of the world. This will allow them to realize that real emancipation will only be obtained through comprehending the urgency of uplifting their socio-historical surroundings from the enfeebled condition. Surely, the dispossessed country can be awakened through the endeavour of knowledgeable minds. These minds will be able to envisage how the country can be rescued from its afflicted condition of captivity through well-honed formula of reforms. As I see it, Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson (1995) write in an astute way that Tagore fought for removing the greatest affliction from his homeland, which he viewed as the ill-disposed existence of the Hindus and the Muslims as parallel species. The writers record how the polymath-zamindar could not define nationalism without the removal of the deep-seated antipathy: 'On his estates, he recalled, in the early days of his management, he used to find part of the floor covering in the estate office rolled up by the tenants—to clear a space for the more respectable Muslims' (ibid., p. 274). Despite the segregation, the Hindus and the Muslims were asked in the 1930s to stand shoulder to shoulder in order to accelerate the decolonial movement. Tagore was not surprised that they faced irremovable obstacles in performing their duties. Indeed, Tagore

considered the obstacles to be the distance between the carpet-covered and the carpet-uncovered parts of his estate office. Clearly, Tagore's nationalism was against the imposition of unity forced on the majority and the minority or the marginalized for the sake of a public performance alone.

When Tagore (2010, p. 80) opposes the coercion in his famous 1917 lectures, he remains clear-sighted about India's loosely held diversity: 'For India has all along been trying experiments in evolving a social unity within which all the different peoples could be held together, while fully enjoying the freedom of maintaining their own differences'. Tagore suggests that the Indian sub-continent could not be straitjacketed by the narrow nationalist requirement of viewing human beings' religio-cultural differences as motionless barriers of mountains. Therefore, Mother India for Tagore was a symbol of fluidity that accommodates the possibility of the shifting shapes of socio-cultural patterns of belonging. In other words, Tagore struggled for expanding the horizon of nationalism for preserving India's unique spirit of tolerance. The expansion was plausible for him, because his worldview was inspired by the teachings of *The Upanishads*, the orally composed spiritual insights by the Indian sages of the ninth century BCE, which proclaim the oneness of the entire cosmos. This implies that the liberationist spirit of the Indian sub-continent does not lie in the colossal and repetitive fights for kingdoms, but it is contained by the people's 'social life and attainment of spiritual ideals' (ibid., p. 36). This tells Tagore that human history moves between expansion and diminution. Tagore also saw the diminution as part of the zeitgeist, since nationalism was a response to British imperialism. As he put it: 'Our only intimate experience of the Nation is with the British Nation, and as far as the government by the Nation goes there are reasons to believe that it is one of the best' (ibid., pp. 42–43). In other words, it was extremely difficult to think of a national structure that could be established as a viable alternative to the British Rule. More crucially for Tagore, he saw the nineteenth-century British model as a Western example of nation formation based on racial singularity, which

contradicts India's expansive spirit of racial heterogeneity. He clearly explains that

> we have to recognize that the history of India does not belong to one particular race but to a process of creation to which various races of the world contributed—the Dravidians and the Aryans, the ancient Greeks and the Persians, the Mohammedans of the West and those of central Asia. (ibid., p. 43)

Indian sub-continent's adoptive and adaptive powers of learning from all the civilizations that visited the place are the reasons why it has to abandon racially supremacist views. Indeed, the historic region imagined by Tagore symbolizes the emancipatory possibility of nationalism. As opposed to the diminutive insistence on conformity, Indian sub-continent's offer to the world is 'not a competing nationalism, but a creative solution to the divisiveness produced by racial consciousness' (Said, 1994, p. 215).

The oppositional stance on the forced unity between the majority and the marginalized, diminutive view of history, and assimilation to racial singularity forms the shape of 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' that constitutes Tagore's unambiguous but overwhelmingly ambitious contributions towards directing nationalism to a more ennobling path. Comparing nationalism to a state of the art technology, Tagore (2010, p. 84) asserts the gigantic responsibility that the nationalists have to shoulder: 'An automobile does not create freedom of movement, because it is a mere machine. When I myself am free I can use the automobile for the purpose of my freedom'. I have to point out here that Tagore's nationalist politics has not created a successful legacy, apart from its reflection in the foundational narrative of Bangladesh, which still remains aspirational. I will feature in the first section of this chapter how the foundational narrative originated from the Bengali Language Movement (1952) heavily depended on Tagore's enabling vision. I also have to pinpoint that the lack of adaptation of Tagore's philosophy does not mean that it is obsolete. Michael Collins

(2012, p. 160) refuses to nullify the philosophy, since in the context of advanced capitalism and Identitarianism defending ethnic purity, 'Tagore's marginalised legacy, both in terms of his thinking about identity and in terms of what I ultimately see as the failure of his "politics", seems more relevant today than ever before'. Said, of course, never ceases to uphold the philosophy, as we have seen above. Arguably, his reliance on Fanon for exemplifying 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' further asserts the relevance of a nationalist philosophy that concentrates on magnifying human freedom.

It is also comprehensible from the above discussion that nationalist movements emphasize their distinct cultural groupings, since colonialism is by definition an ideology of denial regarding the civilizational claims of the colonized. Ironically, this also turns nationalism into an ideology of counter-denial of the colonialist deprecation. The question is whether nationalism can remain simply a doctrine of negation. If it does not become a discourse of assertion by demonstrating a mode of knowledge created out of the lived experiences of the previously colonized group, nationalism will not be able to free the people from their dependence on the colonial system. As Neil Lazarus (1993, p. 90) affirms, Said remains an ardent advocate of the liberationist anticolonial movement, which transforms him into a Fanonian intellectual, who commits 'to a nationalitarian politics—that is, to a discourse of representation predicated upon the assumption that it is indeed possible for a movement or alliance or party to "speak for the nation"'. In order to represent the nation, the leadership needs to create a radical new definition of the decolonized community based on the national culture. Fanon exemplifies this through his evaluation of Algerian leadership, who expedited the revolution against the French Rule during the 1950s by spreading the unified voice of the nation in the ether. Indeed, establishing the Algerian national radio attained a mythical status according to Fanon (2013), who believes that 'the *Mujahideen radio*' guaranteed the nationalist movement's 'maximum existence' (emphasis in the original). Said otherwise, the radio captured the national culture as it was being created through the broadcasts.

Nevertheless, Fanon's championing of national culture as a radically new creation undercuts the aspects of the African people's heritage that survived the colonial repression and formed part of modern age production. Jane Hiddleston (2014, p. 133) discerns the lack of attention to the concrete reality by depicting Fanon's repeated calls for the discovery of a liberated society as 'excessively optimistic', since 'even at the time of writing, his demand for a collective ethos masked real divisions between the different parties and groups fighting for independence'. I disagree that Fanon fetishized nation. Instead, his writing emphasized the massive spread of national culture because this entity has the potential to drive the newly independent people towards a greater vision of liberation that incorporates specific actions, pathways, and reinstitutions, rather than the search for homogeneity. Put differently, national culture is the unending means of recreating national consciousness without subjecting it to abstraction and oversimplification.

As Fanon (2004, p. 161) views national culture, it is the means through which the decolonized intellectual 'must press on until he reaches that place of bubbling trepidation from which knowledge will emerge'. The knowledge is about the consciousness that made the previously colonized people survive their non-freedom and inspired them for dreaming for a dignified life. As Fanon clarifies: 'National culture is the collective thought process of a people to describe, justify, and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remained strong' (ibid., p. 168). The consciousness of the source of their strength and resilience has to be made part of their self-awareness. Fanon urges the intellectuals of the decolonized nation to ensure that the national culture is connected with the self-awareness of the masses. It is because the intellectuals are capable of creating in the masses real esteem for their ideas. In fact, Fanon was apprehensive that if the national consciousness is not deepened into a socio-political consciousness, which makes the masses realize that the nation's future depends upon them, the nation can be divided into ethnic, geographic, and racial axes refashioned or reinforced during colonial rule. Therefore, '[t]he masses

must be able to meet, discuss, put forward suggestions and receive instructions. Citizens must have the opportunity to speak, to express themselves and innovate… It is a privileged opportunity for the individual to listen and speak' (ibid., p. 136). Without sustaining the national consciousness of the masses, they cannot be transformed into the effective members of the polity for driving it towards meaningful liberation. Fanon likens nation to a bridge by stressing that if it does not strengthen the awareness of those who construct it, it should not be built (see ibid., p. 141). Thus, Fanon creates a prescient warning that if the nationalist struggle is not lifted to a new level of combat for liberation at the moment of its success, the future will prove to be another form of regressive power politics. This is why Said (1994, p. 268) proclaims that '[i]f I have so often cited Fanon, it is because more dramatically and decisively than anyone, I believe, he expresses the immense cultural shift from the terrain of nationalist independence to the theoretical domain of liberation'.

What does the arena of liberation incorporate? From the above discussion, it is understandable that the arena reflects the ability of the decolonized people 'to sustain a purely political-affirmative conception of the nation' (Neocosmos, 2011, p. 188). Since Fanon was a direct participant in the Algerian struggle for freedom, where he contributed on personal, intellectual and political levels, he comprehended how people form a nation by constituting themselves as a people, not a colonial state. As Michael Neocosmos explains, however, the state-building preference of the decolonized countries suggests that '[e]mancipatory politics and hence the nation, therefore, can be understood only "in excess" of state politics' (ibid., p. 198). It is because shortly after independence, politics becomes related to social network through a party or a movement, and hence state-focused, rather than oriented towards greater goals of achieving enduring socio-political advancements. Fanon (2004) registers that the nationalist bourgeoisie is not interested in examining the difference between state-building and nation-building procedures, because they are obsessed with immediate gains, which are mostly capitalist. In comparison, promoting

the dignity of the people, showing its intrinsic connection to the homeland, and elevating the minds of the masses so that they can be transformed into the new souls of the nation seem profitless. This is also because it is not immediately clear after independence the regression that the state has to experience, if decolonization is hampered 'by an untutored national consciousness' (Said, 1994, p. 307). Indeed, Fanon (2004, p. 144) is emphatic about tutoring decolonized societies that

> The living expression of the nation is the collective consciousness in motion of the entire people. It is the enlightened and coherent praxis of the men and women. The collective forging of a destiny implies undertaking responsibility on a truly historical scale.

Therefore, through Fanon, we obtain three main aspects of Said's 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism': a coherent national consciousness through the national culture; an enlightened consciousness of the masses as the socio-political actors; and a collective consciousness of the people as the constructors of history.

Said (1994, p. 274) reaffirms that Fanon produces 'enough poetic and visionary suggestions to make the case for liberation as a *process* and not as a goal contained automatically by the newly independent nations' (emphasis in the original). In the second section of this chapter, then, I will explain the challenges of creating what Lazarus terms, a 'nationalitarian politics' due to the termination of the 1930s' *Swabasha* (vernacular) Movement. I will particularly investigate why the three aspects of Fanonian liberation process mentioned above could not materialize in decolonized Sri Lanka. Delineating the combined form of Tagorite philosophy and Fanonian politics as 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism', I will demonstrate Said's adaptation of these thoughts for advocating a nationalism that does not work as a vehicle for mere 'identity-enforcement' (Said, 1988, p. 58). Indeed, Said discerns that despite nationalism's association with intensifying identity politics, it

will be an ill-judged approach not to utilize its unique potential for realizing the goals of 'statehood, cultural independence, self-expression' (ibid., p. 59) of the decolonized nations. In the next two sections, I will illustrate how 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' as an alternative to narrow nationalism augments the goals as well as displays the difficulties involved in this noble approach.

One more word. The deeply entrenched views of secular (in the sense of modern/European national structure), and religious (in the sense of an institutional practice) do not sustain critical enquiry, particularly in a South Asian context, since there has been a constant tussle between these ideologies in the region. As Peter Gottschalk (2007) explains, during the Protestant Reformation and subsequent wars of religion, Europe experienced brutal conflicts fuelled by religious fervour, but driven by political and economic motives. This period, coinciding with the rise of rationalism, led to the development of the secular state—separate from religious institutions—and a secular public sphere based on rational thought. This model became central to nationalism, shifting loyalty away from divinely ordained rulers. This explains the nation-building hurdle in South Asia, where the separation between the European ideas of secularism and religious affiliation is not always neat. Understandably, South Asian traditions and cultures have been reshaped by the end of European colonialism, the rise of postcolonial nation-states, and ethno-religious conflicts within and across borders. Indeed, South Asian traditions are frequently instrumentalized in political conflicts, serving as a key driver in sectarian divisions, nationalist movements, and warfare, as I have been arguing. My point is that learning about Said's 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' in this context enables us to comprehend how the demands of modern nationalism can be negotiated in the ancient landscape. Said's expansive idea of nationalism aligns with the perennial existence of religious tolerance in the region, which the postcolonial challenges of nation formation made harder to uphold. Gottschalk puts this into perspective by arguing against the notion of South Asians as 'a people "not yet ready" for self-determination' (ibid.,

p. 187). For Gottschalk, the scholarship that finds continuities in communal relations from the pre-British to British periods does not address the complexities involved, since this corroborates the 'imperial portrayal of an inherently divided people in need of Western secular models to accomplish national unity' (ibid.). Gottschalk neither supports imperial narratives about South Asia's inherent divisions nor relies on static, essentialist views of the culture. Citing Cynthia Talbot and Phillip Wagoner, he contends that religious identity in precolonial South Asia was context-dependent and fluid, operating within frameworks that demanded 'conformity to protocol while accepting religious diversity' (ibid.). Similarly, Said's 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' tells us how to be rooted in traditions for enhancing the demand of self-determination of an oppressed people, while maintaining accommodative principles on their part towards diverse cultural influences, for example.

Richard King (2007) deepens this analysis by specifying two crucial aspects related to the question of nationalism, arguing that the Westphalian model, which birthed the modern nation-state by separating religion into the private sphere, has produced two problematic consequences. These are as follows: (1) instead of seeing religious discourse as constitutive of social identity, Western observers tend to dismiss it as manipulative ideology or mass indoctrination and (2) the modern nationalist framework reflects an inability to recognize that secular states were themselves forged through violence, which has been conceptually displaced onto the religious as modernity's dark side. To reiterate, the formation of European nation-states was fundamentally driven by violence, involving internal power consolidation, aggressive external conflicts, and the forced unification of diverse populations. For example, Charles Tilly (1992, p. 67) formulates the connection between modern state and violence as 'How War Made States, and Vice Versa'. This is why King (2007, p. 236) stresses:

> I think it behoves us as human beings to acknowledge that open-ended, tolerant and critical thinking of the kind valued by Lincoln and others (including myself), is *not* solely the provenance of the secular humanists of the European Enlightenment, and that a critique of absolutist claims to truth can be grounded in intellectual traditions other than the secularist hermeneutic of suspicion initiated by Marx, Freud and Nietzsche. To suggest otherwise is to do no less than assert the inherent superiority of modern Western civilization.

King's emphasis on non-Western philosophy of nationalism encourages us to look into Said's conceptualizing of the term through depending on Tagore and Fanon. This is particularly because King clarifies that critiquing the European framework of nation does not constitute a wholesale rejection of Enlightenment values.

Following Rajat Ganguly (2003), we realize that postcolonial nation-building work in South Asia has been thwarted not for rejecting Enlightenment values, but for following the modernization zeal brought about by the European ideals. This approach, shaped by the modernist view that multi-ethnic states are inherently unstable, sought to achieve a uniform national identity that aligned with artificial state borders—often ignoring actual ethnic divisions on the ground. This bears witness to the worldwide conflicts at the same time. Despite the end of the Cold War, the 1990s were globally marked by extreme violence and mass atrocities, after all. Most analysts identified the rise of violent nationalist and ethnic conflicts as the greatest threat to global and national stability during that period. From this angle, the entrenchment of insurgency in South Asia becomes 'a function of post-colonial nation-building strategies which eventually brought about and legitimised the over-centralisation of state power' (ibid., p. 16). Arguably, the strategies were wrong-headed because the idea of modernist nationalism was not properly investigated for its implementation in the region. As Ganguly observes, the circularity involved in the process implies that

> in the immediate aftermath of independence, the political elite in South and Southeast Asia wholeheartedly accepted the basic tenets of the Modernisation perspective that rapid socio-economic growth and development required the creation of stable and functioning political institutions, an effective bureaucracy, and a uniform sense of national identity… However, the attempt to forge a uniform national identity in the space occupied by numerous and distinct ethnic identities generated an 'ethnic backlash,' which in turn posed legitimate security risks for the state. (ibid., p. 17)

This suggests why Said's differentiation between 'Narrow Nationalism' and 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' remains highly pertinent to our understanding of nationalist endeavours in the ethnically heterogeneous place. Said makes us grasp whether nationalist aspiration can be meaningful in decolonized South Asia, despite overwhelming odds threatening the long-desired 'uniform sense of' belonging.

The Reflection of Tagore's Philosophy in the Nationalist Vision of Bangladesh

In this section, I analyse Said's adaptation of Tagore's philosophy in order to demonstrate that 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' incorporates an oppositional stance on the forced unity between the majority and the marginalized, diminutive view of history, and assimilation to racial singularity. The contour of Tagore's philosophy certainly proves that he endeavours to direct nationalism towards a broader vision of human freedom and dignity. Indeed, Tagore urges for a quest that 'takes us out of our narrow beings and enlarges our vision, transporting us from microcosm to macrocosm, from the finite to the infinite, from the immediate to the entire' (Chakraborty, 2020, p. 395). Since narrow nationalism attempts for the opposite of all these, Tagore's philosophy warns his readers against the unrestrained pursuit

of finite and microcosmic targets. This is because human beings are by definition entities that must move beyond confined consciousness, absorption in immediate interests, and hasty actions. Rahul Rao (2010) puts the philosophy into the perspective of decolonized South Asia. Citing how Gandhi understood his and his followers' spinning cotton cloth on a charkha as an egalitarian initiative symbolizing Self-Rule, which Tagore disapproved of because of its promotion of unstimulating uniformity, Rao emphasizes that rather than political freedom, Tagore worked towards ensuring social freedom as a foundation on which 'emancipatory political systems could be constructed' (ibid., p. 124). In other words, imperialism was symptomatic of prior social weaknesses to Tagore, rather than the other way round. Tagore passionately worked for the Bengalis' cultural advancement through which they were believed to regain their lost glory on the world stage. Therefore, Rao concludes that

> Tagore was not a political nationalist. But we might justifiably read him as making the case for cultural nationalism as a necessary, but necessarily temporary, stage through which subaltern cultures must pass before they could interact on equal terms with other cultures on the world stage. (ibid., p. 126)

Consequently, Tagore was crucial for the Bengalis of East Pakistan to realize that without social freedom and cultural progress, political freedom will have no meaning for them. Arguably, the Bengali Language Movement (1952) awakened them to the fact that the absence of the emancipatory vision will turn them into a wrecked entity.

Eminent historian and a National Professor of Bangladesh, A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed (1924–2014) looks at the national consciousness of the Bengalis of East Pakistan through no rose-tinted glasses. Ahmed (2000) writes that the people's self-awareness was influenced by contradictory legends during most of the twentieth century. He records that

> we see that two parallel streams of social thought, one conservative and the other humanist, have nurtured the Bengali Muslim psyche in our time. The co-existence of these two diverse elements has contributed in no small measure to the richness and variety of the cultural heritage of Bangladesh. (ibid., p. 51)

After the Bengali Language Movement (1952), Tagore became the ground on which the battle between the two cultural camps was fought. The reasons for this will become clear in the discussion that follows. However, it is comprehensible that Tagore helped the humanist strand to create a clarified self-image through their language, literature, and culture, which reached the world stage through his Nobel Prize in literature in 1913. This worked as a clear sign for this social group that their ancient literary and humanistic heritages not only root them in their homeland, but also earn them recognition as a distinguishable cultural group. Understandably, the conservative group dreamed of recovering the reigning days of Muslims in Bengal lasting from the thirteenth to the mid-eighteenth century whereas the cultural group aimed for clarity regarding their ethnicity. Tagore was the means through which the latter struggled to enter into modernity, which the former either downplayed or misinterpreted as a by-product of British colonial education. One of Bangladesh's foremost intellectuals, Anisuzzaman (1937–2020), writes in his memoir how he, along with a few promising academics at the University of Dhaka, courageously came together to observe Tagore's birth-centenary in 1961. Expectedly, the conservative camp opposed the initiative by labelling Tagore as 'a Muslim-abominator, an envoy of Hindu ideology, and an inadmissible presence in Pakistan's cultural field' (Anisuzzaman, 2003, p. 336). The centenary celebration became widespread at any rate. One of the essays published by Syed Sajjad Husain (1920–1995), a Professor of English at the University of Dhaka, became famous for the following declaration:

> We must not forget the fact that the Bengali language we take pride in is immensely indebted to Rabindranath. Through his own efforts, he enabled Bengali language to reach the twentieth-century stage from that of the medieval period, which is why Bengali has found its place in the midst of modern literature. (Quoted in ibid., p. 340)

Therefore, I analyse some major creations of Bengali culture from both the decolonized and independent periods in order to project how Tagore's expansive vision of humanity inspired the creators to reflect what Said terms, 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism'. As we shall see, the Bengali Language Movement (1952) propelled the Bengali nationalist vanguard comprising intellectuals predominantly based in the public universities of the then East Pakistan, university students, participants in the Liberation War (1971) from all occupations named 'Freedom Fighters', and the believers in the freedom struggle towards the ambitious notion of nationalism. Nevertheless, I rely on Willem van Schendel (2001) to record two contradictory facts. I note that (a) the rise of Bengali nationalism in East Pakistan culminated in obtaining massive international support because it surmounted the late colonial legacy of communalism and (b) in the apparent absence of a universal unifier to bind together all the sections of people, namely, Muslims versus non-Muslims, and Bengalis versus non-Bengalis, post-nationalist thinking exerted its influence in the delta (see ibid., pp. 108, 134). Despite the conflicting nature of nationalism in the area, Bangladesh's search for 'new, more pluralistic, inclusive and democratic notions of' (ibid., p. 134) twenty-first-century citizenship can be benefitted through the knowledge that the country's foundational aspiration has to be termed as Said's 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism'. This is *not* because the precursors of Bengali nationalism worked towards the term, which is a historical impossibility but because their imbibing of Tagore's philosophy ties in with Said's nationalist mission. To reiterate, Tagore's unique nationalist approach enabled the Bengali nationalists

to achieve victory in the Liberation War. In what follows, I describe why and how this came about.

By analysing whether the secession of East Pakistan leading to the birth of Bangladesh was a historical inevitability, Tinaz Pavri (2008, p. 110) argues that the increasingly inevitable disconnection of the East from the West was occurring due to latter's reviling of the former's 'language, shared history, ethnicity, culture, traditions, and land', which suggested that 'a separate nation already existed'. Nevertheless, Ranabir Samaddar (2002) questions the seamlessness of the genesis story of Bangladesh by showing that the exaltation of harmony in the foundational narrative became challenged after independence, when Islam as a structural identity marker was galvanized, obviously due to the place still being a Muslim dominant territory. I maintain that the questioning is prudent but excessive, for the Indian scholar records 'the ethical backdrop' of Bengali nationalism in the following way:

> First, as the accounts of the movement for cultural autonomy of fifties suggest, the Bengali nation is constructed as the ethical community with its suitable protocol and rites. Thus, Maulana Bhasani [(1880-1976) famed for his leadership in the political struggle for securing the rights of the peasantry and working classes] bids farewell to the occupant power with the legendary words, *assalam-o-alaikum* [a euphemism for good riddance]. Mourners go barefoot to the memorial site [*Shaheed Minar*: Martyrs' Monument built to commemorate the martyrs of 21st February] each 21st February. Bengali nationalism is asserted increasingly in terms of "natural rights" similar to the concept of "natural rights" emanating from Christian thought of the early middle ages. (ibid., p. 19; emphasis in the original)

Whether or not the naturalness of the claim for a Bengali nation lodged in the people's cultural richness resembled the Christian tradition, it will be perceivable through the discussion that follows that the truest aspiration of the deltaic people lies in their dream of a

pluralist and equitable society. It is unarguable that after independence, they were not determined about the dream instilled in them by the Language Movement. Nevertheless, the literary and artistic creations emanating from the land bear witness to the core pursuit of a people, which is the achievement of a modern, cultural, and social justice-oriented society. Even Samaddar admits that the Bengalis' mother-language-inspired modernism was going to 'respond to the needs of anti-colonialism, anti-feudalism, and spiritual demands of the people' (ibid., p. 37).

To begin with, I will elaborate on the first aspect of Tagore's philosophy that Said adopts for his 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism', which is an oppositional stance on the forced unity between the majority and the marginalized. As I have been arguing, the united Pakistani state did not attach importance to the sense of belonging that had branded the Bengalis as part of the federation. Bengali Language Movement revealed to the people the ontological price they were paying for obtaining the Muslim majority branding. Tazeen Murshid (2001, p. 98) singles out the fact by underscoring that 'after the 1952 gunning down by police of students protesting against the policy to introduce Urdu as the only state language of Pakistan', the costly ontological compromise became clear to the Bengalis, since they realized that '"They [West Pakistanis] want to take away my words"'. This eventually challenged the legitimacy of the two-winged state. As Tagore explained above that the carpet-covered and the carpet-uncovered parts of his estate office represented a forced unity between the majority and the minority or the marginalized, the Bengalis discerned that a similar coercion came upon them for the sake of performing the Pakistani branded citizenship. Despite forming a clear majority in a Muslim majority state, the Bengalis could not assert their socio-political aspirations, since they were marginalized by the domination of Urdu language. Therefore, the West Pakistanis formed the actual majority, arranging that the marginalized Bengalis' self-assertion should have no place in the majoritarian nation. Must their aspirations be extinct became the question. This fact is evident from the

first poem written on *Ekushey* (the Bengali term marking the tragic event on 21st February). Mahbub Ul Alam Chowdhury (1952) writes that the students had to die in defiance of what according to Said is Pakistan's narrow nationalism so that the Bengalis' 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' lived on. Chowdhury preserves the purity of the first awakening of Bengali nationalism during *Ekushey*, which made the people realize why the phenomenon had become the epicentre of their existence. Chowdhury was the convener of the All Party State Language Struggle Committee in Chittagong, a large port city in Bangladesh. Due to the strain of the work, he had fallen ill prior to *Ekushey*. When the news reached him that forty or more students had been killed, he felt distressed that he could not fulfil his duty in the struggle. Therefore, he poured out his lamentations in a poem that left no room for doubt about the reasons for constructing a new nationalist vision for the Bengalis, which the Language Movement inculcated in them. Here are the title and the first part of the historic verse:

Not Here to Weep—
Here to Demand Capital Punishment

They are forty in number or exceeding that
Those who sacrificed their lives there—under the sun-soaked Royal Poinciana trees of Ramna

For their language, for their mother language—for Bangla.
Those who sacrificed their lives there
For the dignity of a country's grand culture
For the lore of Alaol
For Kaykobad, Rabindranath and Nazrul's
Literature and poetry—
Those who sacrificed their lives there
For Maqbul Ahmed of Palashpur's
Puthi Literature—
For the ballad of Ramesh Shil,
For the 'Sojan the Gypsy's Wharf' of Jasimuddin.

Those who sacrificed their lives
For Bhatiali, Baul, Kirtan, Ghazal songs
For Nazrul's 'The soil of my homeland is purer
Than the purest gold.'
For these two lines
For the soil of the motherland. (ibid., p. 45)

The igniting poem was printed as a tiny booklet by defeating a police raid and the threat of imprisonment. More importantly, we have to decipher all the allusions above to understand why this was menacing for the depicted unity between the majority and the marginalized in Pakistan. Revolutionary though it may sound, Chowdhury's title is unambiguous: he figuratively demands that that the majoritarian state faces its death, and then pens his passionate cogitation for this. At the outset, Ramna is home to colonial buildings of the University of Dhaka, which contextualizes the Bengali nation's repeated struggle for decolonization. When it is demanded of the people to fit into the Urdu-based Muslim majority image, they cannot but comprehend the indignity of their majestic culture. The nobleness is constituted of stalwarts like the most prolific medieval writer Alaol (1607–1680), who was renowned for interconnecting emotion and intellect. While Kaykobad (1857–1951) is an epic poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899–1976) remains a poet, musician, and philosopher, who is popularly known as the Rebel Poet, whose works powerfully resist inequalities of all types, as we observed in the previous chapter. Chowdhury mentions Puthi Literature, which was prevalent during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, being written on parchment, leaves, and other materials. Senior literate members recited the moralistic tales, while others would listen intently. Ramesh Shil (1877–1967) was part of the bards, who improvised their songs in poetic contests. Shil reintroduced the genre as an instrument of transforming society. Jasimuddin (1903–1976) was a poet and littérateur, who added a new dimension to art's social responsibility by representing rural Bengal. His classic epic 'Sojan the Gypsy's Wharf' relates the tragic tale

of Sojan, son of a Muslim farmer, and Dulali, daughter of a lower caste Hindu headman.

If the literary allusions do not prove Bengal's pluralist, humanist, and emancipation-seeking culture, Chowdhury does not forget to display the treasure trove of music. Bhatiali is a type of folk music that gives life to the rivers and the riverine communities. Whereas the mystics compose Baul songs, Kirtans are songs of praise for the divine. Ghazals are commonly understood as songs of longing. If the Bengalis surrendered to the West Pakistani demand for Urdu-based nationalism, the perennial tradition of creativity would eventually be lost. They also had to consider the ecology centring the native land, which was remarkable for its fertility. If they neglected Bengali language, they would be alienated from the soil of the homeland through which the mother tongue reverberated. Therefore, the coercion of Pakistan's narrow nationalism was a mortal blow for them.

As opposed to coercive unity, Tagore proposed above that real emancipation will not arrive until the socio-historical surroundings of decolonized nations are liberated from the enfeebled condition. Tagore's point was that the Hindus and Muslims in colonial India would not successfully perform the nationalist unity, until the former stopped treating the latter as subordinate, which is rendered comprehensible through the metaphor of un-carpeting the estate office. From this perspective, I argue that a mythomoteur imposed from above to create obligatory unity between Urdu and Bengali speakers could not be effective, until the former stopped viewing the latter as religio-culturally inferior. John Armstrong (1982) utilizes the concept to indicate the pivotal role myths and symbols play in demarcating the discursive boundary of a nation. As the writer explains, 'a well-developed cultural tradition' does guarantee the effectiveness of a nation, which is why 'the prestige of Greek language and culture' (ibid., p. 198) was utilized in early Byzantium to seal up the classical identity. The difficulty in Pakistani context arose from the fact that the Bengali speakers were practically asked to stand aside from the myth-making process. Thus, the mythomoteur advanced around the Urdu-based

notion of Muslim majority became synonymous with cultural absolutism for the Bengalis. Following Tagore, then, the greatest affliction for the people was to submit to the circulated myth of unity unquestioningly. Therefore, the writers of East Pakistan could not define nationalism without addressing their second-fiddle condition. This can be illustrated by a major Bengali text called *Kabar* (*The Grave*), a one-act play composed during the writer Munier Chowdhury's imprisonment for participating in the Language Movement. Chowdhury was an eminent Professor of English and Bengali Literatures at Dhaka University, playwright, and literary critic. 14 December 1971 is the date when Chowdhury and most of the foremost Bengali intellectuals were abducted by the local collaborators of the Pakistani army occupying East Pakistan, and later tortured and killed by them. They were on the death list of the Army for being part of an endeavour that Syed Jamil Ahmed (2014, p. 136) calls, '*the* defining moment in the narration of the nation' (emphasis in the original), which is striking given the fact that the drama was first secretly performed in February1953 inside Dhaka Central Jail by the prisoners. For Ahmed, the counter-narrative to the mythomoteur was achieved as '*Kabar* attempts to make sense of the disharmony and crisis of 21st February by deploying the "imaginary" in a graveyard' (ibid.; emphasis in the original).

Through a surrealist representation of the martyrs of 21st February as the undying phantoms, the play illustrates why the Bengalis cannot maintain the required mythomoteur of authenticity in the Urdu-dominated state. I disagree with Ahmed, though, who concludes that the martyrs' aspiration ends in indeterminacy, since their uprising is presented as a nightmare (see ibid., p. 137). In fact, the cultural belonging of the phantoms the play promotes becomes the mainstay of Bengali nationalism. Hence, the nightmare could be read instead as a premonition of the instability of Pakistan. This is understandable from the fact that the play begins with a meticulous instruction of splitting the stage into two parallel parts with a four feet high thick black curtain (see Chowdhury, 2013, p. 47). The centre stage is a graveyard, where a precarious and eerie environment governs over the alive and the dead.

Since this is evocative of East Pakistan after the students' mortal clash with the police on the 21st February, the black curtain becomes an ominous sign of the heightening of cultural border between the two parts of Pakistan. Interestingly, the subterranean passage connecting the martyrs' burial place with the actual stage is a figurative subversion of the West's cultural absolutism. The conversations of a cheerful fat political leader who was overseeing the burial with an extremely loyalist government officer delineate these. The Bengali officer, Inspector Hafiz, explains that his definition of Pakistan, for which the petty officers like him fought earnestly, now must include not only an absence of politics but also an absolute obedience to the existing regime. As he puts it, 'I obey the orders of whichever party is at the helm of the country' (ibid., p. 51). Clearly, the West Pakistan's expectation of the Bengalis is to obey the mythomoteur, be it in the form of culture or administration. There was no reason for the West Pakistani authorities to believe that the economically devastated Bengalis would be able to challenge the status quo. But challenge they did. This is symbolized by Hafiz's admission that he was obstructed in his mission to bury all the disfigured bodies of the martyred students in one grave by a deranged man called, Fakir, who had lost his entire family in the famine of 1943 under the British Rule, and chosen to reside in the graveyard. The tragedy implies Bengal's prolonged struggle for decolonization. Fakir declared: 'They will never enter into the graves. They will never be buried in their graves. They will resurface' (ibid., p. 55). This indicates that the resistance to the cultural absolutism will never die down.

Why was it indispensable for the ordinary Bengalis to risk their lives and livelihoods in order not to submit to the Pakistani mythomoteur? The conversation between the political leader and the phantoms sheds light on this. The regular outburst of fear shown by the political leader, who cannot even tolerate the sound of Hafiz's appearance, suggests that the bullets they ordered have perforated their own hermetic system. The only constant wish he demonstrates is an impatient desire to entomb everyone including the sycophant officer

in order to retain his paramount control over the country's political system. Therefore, the leader accuses the martyrs of destabilizing the systems of here and hereafter due to their anarchist tendencies. The students of course vehemently denounce the accusations by asserting that they want to nurture their free spirit by walking on rain soaked grass, or, swimming in silvery water. Part of the conversation they have with the leader is as follows:

Leader: … I entreat you in the name of the nation, in the name of the *Quam* [Muslim community], in the name of the [Islamic] *Deen* [religion], in the name of those—who haven't died yet—please go away, go away, go away!

Phantom: I want to live.

Leader: … (the phantom shakes his head)… I will erect a monument in your name. I will make [Pakistan's National] Assembly approve your demand. I will circulate your demand throughout the nation… Please die, please leave, please be invisible. (ibid., p. 60; emphasis added)

The phantoms know that the leader wants to politicize the Quam, not to be governed by the divine rule. For the Bengalis, it clearly implies a life-in-death situation. Hence, they challenge the mythomoteur of the nascent nation-state represented by its faithful followers including the politician, who only know unthinking subservience to the myth of the state suggested by the allusions to Quam and Deen, and its accompanying system. Once again, Tagore makes us realize how the conflict between Said's narrow nationalism and 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' played out in this context.

As I explained above, Tagore advocated an evolved social unity, which enabled different cultural groups to be under one umbrella while enjoying their different practices and beliefs. This is why the polymath opposed the narrow nationalist requirement of viewing human beings' religio-cultural differences as irremovable barriers. Counter to the spirit of accommodation, the undermining of the expansive view of history leads to the lack of imagination for creating a meaningful

national entity. Just as the imperial and largely monoracial Britain during the early years of decolonization was thought to be the best nationalist model to emulate, so the Bengalis were not even allowed to present their alternative model of a multilingual nation by querying the Urdu-based zeitgeist. This went directly against the Bengalis' perpetual way of accommodating different cultures. Sharif Uddin Ahmed (2002) explains the constant Bengali tradition of embracing influences from all corners of the world. As he proclaims in all seriousness:

> It goes without saying that the culture of Bengal and Bangladesh is antediluvian. The prime elements of this culture are climate and life of this land on the one hand, and different lifestyles of a vast amount of people entering the land from outside nations and countries, on the other. For this reason, the core mantra for the expansion of our culture was to synchronize all patterns of thoughts and practices. (ibid., p. 17)

Nevertheless, Pakistan's mythomoteur was a direct order for assimilation. This means that the Bengalis were coerced to sacrifice their expansive perception of history. Adapting to the diminutive view of history through unimaginative assimilation did not affect the people's everlasting culture alone. To cite Ahmed again, 'the nouveau colonialists [of West Pakistan] understood it correctly that if they were able to demolish our time-honoured culture, it will be largely convenient for them to rule and oppress us' (ibid., pp. 19–20). Therefore, the Language Movement revealed to the people that their economic backwardness had catapulted them into a condition forcing them to buy into Pakistan's mythomoteur from which they were compelled to unshackle themselves. For all that, their expansive view of history teaches them that the people of this land have time-immemorially preserved their distinctive existence, despite accommodating other cultures, which implies that they never accepted the absolute domination of outside powers. In view of this, Bishwajit Ghosh (2002, p. 232) explains that '*Ekush* [21st February] becomes

synonymous with insurgence, *Ekush's* meaning translates into not-lowering-our-heads [in reverence to unjust power], *Ekush* transforms into the symbol of dream and attainability'.

I analyse how the expansive view of history through the imperishable spirit of *Ekushey* is reflected in a classic novella written in 1969, *Another Spring*, by an internationally recognized filmmaker, Zahir Raihan (1933–1972). Raihan's (2021) documentary originally created in 1971, *Stop Genocide*, preserved on celluloid the massacre committed by the Pakistani army and the occupied people's unconquered hope for freedom. John Hutnyk (2018, p. 197) writes: 'Never before had a twenty-minute film found such unlikely international backing' perceivably for building the global awareness about the price the people were ready to pay for their aspiration of secession from Pakistan in 1971. As many believe, contribution like this to the independence of Bangladesh was the primary reason why Raihan had to meet an untimely and treacherous death immediately after independence. As for the fictional narrative, *Another Spring*, it illustrates how the historical memory of the Language Movement (8th Spring 1358 in Bengali calendar) is rekindled in 1955 through a three-day remembrance programme by student bodies of Dhaka. Raihan's historic fiction shows that the commemoration of *Ekushey* became a form of rebellion against the West Pakistani decree for diminutive history three years later, since the authorities prohibited all types of slogans, demonstrations, and mourning on 21st February in 1955. Despite this, it is a watershed moment in Bengali nationalism, since the foundation stone of the Martyr's Monument was established this year to announce the preference of the Bengalis for the expansive view of history.

The entire plan was executed though the leadership of a group of students of Dhaka University, who were suddenly detected on various roads of the city to be walking barefoot by disregarding the unusual winter season that produced sweltering heat on the day and biting cold at night. The readers of today immediately recognize the tradition of marching towards the Martyr's Monument on the eve of 8 Spring, which ends in placing wreaths there, where people from all walks of life join

not only to honour the martyrs, but also to renew their pledge for remembering that the highroads of Dhaka were blood-splattered on that day for keeping alive Bengal's symbiotic culture. This tradition of heartfelt commemoration did not exist before 1955, which is why the novella is significant for recording how the historic practice was created through the earnest efforts of a group of young men and women. In accordance with Lotte Hoek (2022, p. 191), I emphasize that Raihan was part of the intellectual vanguard that transformed Bengali culture into a vehicle for resistance against the diminutive view of history propagated by the nationalist bourgeoisie of West Pakistan, since 'the calls for radical transformation resounded in their work'. Raihan raises the call for radical change by illustrating how the student community of Dhaka opposed the rulers that turned crimson with fury at the mention of 21st February, the police that jumped into supporting them with a war cry, and the leading politicians of East Pakistan who were still in the thrall of a Muslim majority nation. However, the elevated, expanded, and equipped mind is demonstrated by the big dreamers of Dhaka, who courageously refused to bury the memory of their historical ascent on 21st February as a people that saw their inalienable linguistic and cultural rights as the key to driving their collective consciousness towards achieving the 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' they cherish. Raihan (1988) depicts this beautifully by validating that the expansive view of history not only unites the youth but also instills enormous courage in them. When ten barefoot wanderers meet at a part of the city called Gulistan, one of them asks all to disperse to avoid legal difficulties. Another one named Asad breaks the silence to affirm: 'You know what? When I was alone, I really felt very scared. Now I'm no longer afraid' (ibid., p. 179). Yet another fellow walker supported him. Quite the contrary, when student leader Munim meets his father's cleric friend in front of the Medical College, he approaches him to ask whisperingly, 'Will you be completely silent this time? Won't you do anything at all?' (ibid., p. 203). Obviously, he does not even dare to utter what he means by silence and/or action because

the zeitgeist asks the East Pakistanis to quietly conform to the diminutive view of history.

Expectedly, the students were searching for a way to break the cycle of blind conformity. Not only did the young people write red-lettered wall magazines, and distribute leaflets containing what Hoek terms, 'the calls for radical transformation', wear black saris, if they were females, as black badges were banned, as well as observe fasts irrespective of their religions so that they can avoid imprisonment, but they also decided to observe 21st February in a resounding way. In the face of the government injunctions, the students deliberately risked their security in order to mourn the martyrs, some of whom were their bosom friends. Thousands of male and female students occupied the rooftops of the dormitories of Dhaka University and other educational institutions in Dhaka on the chilly night of 20th February to utter in a seismic manner: 'We won't forget the blood of the martyrs… Let the memory of the martyrs be immortal' (Raihan, 1988, pp. 224–225). The novelist adds that the earth-shattering utterance assured the Dhaka dwellers that the extremely well-synchronized voices of the students created a lasting echo by announcing their responsibility towards safeguarding their expansive history. Furthermore, the protagonist Alim's plan to set up the first martyr's monument right at the place, where the shot skull of the 21st February martyr Rafique descended after spinning round like a wheel, went ahead on the night. When morning arrived, hundreds got arrested, and the nascent monument was destroyed by the police, who had besieged the entire campuses of Dhaka University and Medical College.

However, the novelist does not allow us to forget that the revolt takes place during Spring in Dhaka. It is the season when the abundance of the flowers called, Butea Monosperma (Flame of the Forest), adorns Dhaka City, which makes its dwellers remember the blood of the martyrs of 21st February on the roads. Thus, the symbolic flame contained both in the flower and in the historical memory renews the emancipatory spirit of the Language Movement every spring. The Spring of 1955 ensured that this remembrance will

continue forever. The ending of the story is particularly significant from this viewpoint. As the novelist displays, all the arrested students are gathered in front of the jail:

> The Deputy Jailer, Esq., became exhausted after calling out names after names. He complained in an irritating tone, Uh, where will I put all these young boys? The prison is already fully packed.
>
> Having heard him, poet Rasul roared, expand the prison estate, Sir. Such a small jail won't do.
>
> Another one joined in, have you been alarmed by this? In the next spring, we're going to double the size for sure. (ibid., p. 258)

The pledge that the protestors will be doubled in the next spring perfectly sketches how the Bengalis challenged their own diminutive understanding of history in 1947, when they decided to become the second wing of Pakistan. Following another illustrious poet, Hasan Hafizur Rahman (1932–1983), we can realize that the Bengalis' aspiration for 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' triumphed on 21st February, since the martyrs' blood burnt the mortification of the diminutive history. Rahman (1985, p. 23) picturizes in his poem, 'A Face in the Procession', how the martyrs' blood reignites the new history of expanding human minds by emphasizing their celestial connection:

The chilling noise of the bullet
Hides itself in the air
Ashamed of its own vicious act.
Millions of eyes mirror the sky
Ablaze with a thousand flames.
No voice but blood,
Man's holy blood,
Pours out words in thunderous silence.

Following Tagore, 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' is further challenged by narrow nationalism's requisition for racial singularity. Racially supremacist views not only hamper civilizational exchanges, but also install divisiveness as a major policy of the state. This makes the entity aggressive and uncreative. In comparison to this supremacist system, I illustrate how the humanist philosophy of Shamsur Rahman (1929–2006), who William Radice (2006) introduces as a '[v]isionary poet of Bangladesh's freedom struggle, without vanity or affectation', asserts a creative form of nationalist belonging through inviting people from diverse milieus to conjoin for a unique cultural experience. Regarded as the unofficial poet laureate of Bangladesh, the new dimension he adds to modernist Bengali poetry ushers a deeply felt need to draw a bona fide picture of the nation's distinctive sacrifices and urges. In a poem, 'For You O Liberty', he sketches how liberation came to Bangladesh, since the entire populace was ready to pay the extreme price for attaining the longed-for goal:

To win you, O Liberty,
how often must we bathe in a sea of blood?
How often must we pass through hell-fire?

Because you were coming, O Liberty,
all joy went out of *Sakina Bibi's* life,
and *Haridasi* became a destitute hopeless widow.

Because you were coming, O Liberty,
olive coloured tanks
roared along city streets,
roared like ugly ogres,
and wiped out workers' slums
and students' hostels.
Because you were coming, a dog standing on the ruins
of his master's ancestral home
in a devastated zone
howled long and disconsolately.

And because you were coming, O Liberty,
an innocent child crawled
over the dead bodies of his parents.
To win you, O Liberty,
how often must we bathe in a sea of blood?
How often must we pass through hell-fire?

(see Cour & Bhan, 2003, p. 113; emphasis added)

What is noticeable here is Rahman's lack of focus on the higher echelons. Instead, he tells the tale of commonest villagers like Sakina Bibi and Haridasi, whose lives were equally affected irrespective of their Muslim and Hindu identities. Similarly, the innocent child crawling over the dead bodies of his parents can be from any segments of the population. Significantly, the dog's disconsolate howling representing his master's devastated ancestral home proves that the singularity that binds the people of Bangladesh is not their racial identity, but their enormous endurance for liberation.

Nevertheless, Radice (2006) rightfully reminds us that political freedom 'meant no respite in Bangladesh from the struggle for democracy, secularism and the rule of law, and Rahman never ceased to take part, supporting it with a stream of uncompromising poems'. If we look at one of those poems, 'Good Morning [transliterated in Bengali] Bangladesh', we realize once again that Rahman (2009) represents a country, where natural and cultural diversity are major assets. However, it is a zigzag poem, since the author interchanges the appraisal of diversity with sarcasm for the country's under-utilization of her cultural strength:

Good morning [transliterated in Bengali] Bangladesh, good morning,
How do you do [transliterated in Bengali]?
Good morning *Satrawja*, *Mahuttuli*, *Nababpur*
Bangabandhu Avenue, Old *Paltan*,
Good morning *Bagerhat*, *Mahasthangarh*, *Mainamati*
Good morning *Palashtali*, *Pahartali*,

Good morning Cox's Bazar, *Himchari*,
Good morning canal of *Adiabad*, Palm, Persimmon, Marshy Date trees,
Fishing net of fisherman *Nitai*, boat of boatman *Kashem*
…
Bangladesh, those who pinch your culture's backside.
Rub well Hemlock there,
May God grant them a long life.
(ibid., p. 74; emphases added)

If Palm and Persimmon represent fruit, flower, and haven from scorching heat, Marshy Date is a threatened species due to rapidly diminishing mangrove forest. It is no wonder that Rahman's poem presents an urgency to preserve the flora and fauna of the country. In fact, the poet suggests that independence has transformed Bangladesh into a unique poem, where each component play its part. Rahman's rich imagery, then, delivers a powerful political message by implying that if a component is not there, the entity will become unpoetic.

Therefore, *Himchari* representing the indigenous groups of Bangladesh, who are mainly concentrated in Chittagong Hill Tracts, is as much part of the entity, as Dhaka's historic *Mahuttuli* is, which contains the history of Mughal heritage of training elephants. Old *Paltan* was a military camp of the British East India Company. It is also part of the greater Ramna area that hosts the Racecourse ground, where, at a gathering of millions on 7 March 1971, *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered his historic speech that worked as a *Deus ex machina* for the people seeking directions for the Liberation War. Dating back to at least the fourth century BCE, Mahasthangarh is the earliest urban archaeological site containing a Buddhist sanctuary. However, Fisherman *Nitai* and boatman *Kashem* can be camped as Hindu and Muslim but they are indivisible part of the environment. Thus, Rahman suggests that racial singularity is a myth for Bangladesh's nationalism, since cultural, historical, and environmental factuality contradicts this. Even so, the rich diversity is regularly threatened by the fundamentalist fraction that Rahman regards to be a

Hemlock-like presence. His prayer for their long life is euphemism for his desire for the end of their ideology. The fundamentalist fraction is one of the main reasons why Bangladesh traverses a zigzag path, which makes the poet sarcastically address his homeland in English: 'How do you do?' Obviously, their insistence on the racial singularity of the people opposes Said's 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' the significance of which Tagore makes us comprehend.

I have to highlight that the aspiration for Said's 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' remains a dream in today's Bangladesh, though the fight for achieving the dream continues. As Shantanu Kaisar (2010, p. 97) asserts:

> Shamsur Rahman too by degrees and step by step realizes that poetry is a combination of intellect and emotion… And politics occupies a large part of that "intellect"… In order to even intercept harmful and erroneous politics, wholesome and rightful politics is required.

Internationally acclaimed filmmakers, Tareque and Catherine Masud, join the struggle to increase the politics of diversity by reaffirming the sacrifices of the indigenous people during Bangladesh's Liberation War. In their documentary film, *Words of Freedom* (1999), they highlight the non-racial-singularity-based aspect of 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism'. The film records how a group of young activists during the late nineties encountered villagers, who need no lectures regarding the spirit of the war, unlike some of their urban counterparts. Though history has written them off, they describe their horrendous memories of the war to these sympathetic listeners. Remarkably, the activists visit a village of the Garo, one of the indigenous groups in Bangladesh originally migrated from Tibet, where they get to know these people's sacrifices and their gallantry during the Liberation War. One of the Garo Freedom Fighters, who is also a Christian, states: 'In'71 the Pak [Pakistani] Army attacked us along with the Bengalis… During the war, there was no consideration of ethnicity,

religion, or race among the warriors. We, thousands of brothers, shared the same food from the same pot, and fought together' (see Tareque Masud Memorial Trust, 2016). Thus, the humanistic spirit of the Language Movement created a fraternity of sufferers through Bengali nationalism, which is by definition non-dependent on racial singularity.

I have to conclude with a memoir, *Of Blood and Fire: The Untold Story of Bangladesh's War of Independence*, which Philip Hensher (2013) rightly marks as 'a book to found a nation on'. Jahanara Imam (1989), an eminent educator and littérateur, writes a personal account of the nine-month struggle for freedom in which she lost her elder son, Shafi Imam Rumi, who was preparing to start his engineering degree at the Illinois Institute of Technology, USA, but decided to turn a Freedom Fighter instead. Her civil engineer husband, Sharif Imam, met an early death because of military interrogation. Through her family's overwhelming sacrifices during the struggle, she proves that the repression of Bengali language and culture led to the armed conflict that was an inevitable means for achieving a homeland where human freedom is upheld. The writer mentions her frequently tuning into *Swadhin Bangla Betar* (Radio of Independent Bangladesh), which initially transmitted programmes from Chittagong, the coastal city mentioned earlier, and the broadcasting was managed by the Bangladesh Government in exile through artists, who acted as the Liberation War activists. Two most popular programmes of the radio were '*Charampatra*' ('The Ultimatum') and '*Jallader Darbar*' ('The Executioner's Court'). Being presented by a charismatic speaker, M. R. Akhter Mukul, millions of dwellers of the occupied country used to be mesmerized by his ten-minute monologue in *Charampatra*, where he gradually switched from standard Bengali 'to colloquial Bengalee— the dialect used by the original inhabitants of Dhaka' (ibid., p. 94) that summarized the heroic operations of the Freedom Fighters. Kalyan Mitra wrote *Jallader Darbar* as a satire of General Yahya Khan, who was administering the military attacks in East Pakistan because, as Rumi puts it: '"They think we are not Muslims though we are better Muslims than they are"' (ibid., p 76). The programmes crystalized the promise of

independent Bangladesh, which was to countermand the chauvinism by identifying individuals as citizens, not as any ethnic or religious group members. Befittingly, Imam notes that the Radio broadcasts began and ended with a prominent song, '"Victory to Bengal"' (ibid., p. 63), which settled the fact that the Eastern part of Bengal delta will be defined as a homeland for the crores of humans, irrespective of their colour, creed, or caste.

As I have traced three aspects of Said's 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' through his adaptation of Tagore's denunciation of coerced unity, diminutive history, and racial singularity for producing a nationalist mythomoteur, the thoroughly idealistic nature of the advocacy is undeniable. And yet, Said (1994, p. 234) is unrelenting, for he believes that liberation is a far nobler goal than mere 'reactive native defensiveness, whose main problem (as [Wole] Soyinka analyzed it) is that it implicitly accepts, and does not go beyond, the basic European [self] versus non-European [other] oppositions'. This is why Said further adapts Fanon, who creates a discourse dealing with the responsibilities of decolonized nations that mark the *possibility* of leading the entities towards the real triumph of togetherness.

The Challenges of Forming a Nationalitarian Politics Through National Culture

In this section, I explicate that the Fanonian elaboration of 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' reveals three major qualities, as I mentioned earlier: a coherent national consciousness through the national culture, enlightened consciousness of the masses as the socio-political actors, and their collective consciousness as the constructors of history. What Fanon envisages through his opposition to narrow nationalism is that it is part of an anticolonial struggle to transform a colonial state into a nation-state. Even at the dawn of decolonization, the social philosopher championed that anticolonial struggle must be nationalitarian for bringing liberationist ideas into existence. Alain Dieckhoff (2017, p. xiii) defines the term as a movement that demands 'political autonomy or

even independence, in the name of a human group described as a "nation" and sharing certain specific characteristics, such as history, culture, language, shared past, or territory'. The shared aspects can be seen as technicalities of a nationalitarian movement. Naturally, Fanon submits that the movement transcends the technicality of decolonization by becoming instrumental for advancing fundamental social transformation so that the colonially influenced existing system can be restructured. I agree with Lazarus (2005, p. 189) that the restructuring is for promoting a '*genuinely* postcolonial strategy', which will be 'predicated upon a formal repudiation of the degraded European form, and borne embryonically in the national liberation movement' (emphasis in the original), since the deterioration took place through colonial dismissal of the masses that narrow nationalism ironically continued. Fanon's mission is to reverse the process so that the previously colonized people can enter into history by undoing the Manichaeism through exiting dramatic mythomoteurs and assuming their humane responsibilities as citizens of nation-states. This is why I further agree with Rao (2010, p. 132), who pinpoints why Said relies so heavily on Fanon for advancing his 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism:' 'Said achieves greater clarity… when he turns to Frantz Fanon… Resistance, for Fanon, is a bifocal enterprise in which the people must pass "from total, undiscriminating nationalism to social and economic awareness"'. In what follows, I illustrate how this transition takes place.

As we investigate Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism, we realize that a strong presence of all three forms of Fanonian consciousness is not visible in the ideological sphere. As I discussed in the previous chapters, Tamil demand for a mother-language-based state called, '*Thamil Arasu*', within a Federal Union was championed by the Federal Party under the leadership of S.J. V. Chelvanayakam. The party went beyond the demands of the devolution of the Northern and Eastern provinces after the enactment of the Sinhala-Only legislation (1956). This cannot be seen as an administrative objective alone, since the dream of establishing the Tamil language as the medium of government communications lasted over three centuries during which Sri Lanka

underwent British, Dutch, and Portuguese rules. This meant that the languages of the colonizers alienated them from their traditional homeland. Therefore, when Sinhala was declared to be the only official language of independent Sri Lanka, the Tamils continued to feel unfree, as we have seen in the previous chapters. This shows that achieving a coherent national consciousness through the Tamil national culture was an aspiration that became thwarted again and again. By the mid-1970s, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) spearheaded the rights-based claim for nationhood. As the TULF election manifesto in 1976 ratiocinated:

> Where else is an alternative to the Tamil nation that gropes in the dark for its identity and finds itself driven to the brink of devastation? There is only one alternative and that is to proclaim with the stamp of finality and fortitude that we alone shall rule over our land our forefathers ruled (quoted in Manogaran, 1987, p. 156)

TULF had no illusion that the dream of self-rule for the cultural nation would materialize through long-drawn-out struggles. However, there is no clear indication as to how the national culture can be utilized for this purpose. Understandably, there is an absence of a language movement interlinking the nationalist consciousness with the national culture. Part of the reason is that *Swabasha* (vernacular) Movement incorporated both Sinhalese and Tamil, and it naturally could not be the interlocutor for Tamil national literature, culture, and consciousness.

Nevertheless, it is true that different stages of Tamil nationalist mobilization against the Sri Lankan state stimulated the growth of a Tamil national consciousness, the notion of a collective identity through the indestructible connection to the land. The vision of a liberated Eelam was most vigorously established by The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who realized that it required cohesion through driving the sharp divisions within the Tamil national composition

towards a consolidated position for a sovereign republic. However, the consolidation should come from an assiduously built consciousness of the masses through interconnecting this with the national culture. It becomes evident from the statement of someone like Lawrence Thilagar, LTTE's Central Committee member and the organization's official representative in Paris, that more emphasis was given to Tamil grievances than the role the people play in sustaining the 'deep-rooted political consciousness of our national identity' (quoted in Bose, 1994, p. 128). It is because the identity was stressed by showing that ironically Sinhalese oppression resulted into the oneness of the Tamils. Sumantra Bose cautions that 'the "reality" of a national consciousness is not something static and unchanging. It cannot be taken for granted, even in the presence of overwhelming state repression of the national identity' (ibid., p. 129). In order to intensify the national bond, memories of collective suffering could be powerful elements. In the discussion that follows, though, we will discover how far the level of solidarity has been solidified by contemporary literature, which is crucial for asserting the Tamil claim for sovereignty.

Chelva Kanaganayakam (2009), who was a Professor of English at the University of Toronto, has some significant ideas regarding the shortcomings of the Tamilian collective consciousness as the protectors of national culture. This is by no means to deny that three generations of Tamil littérateurs have contributed to the configuration of Tamil nationalist consciousness. If the dynamics between Tamil nationalism and Tamil literature is a symbiotic one, the question arises as to what extent contemporary writings have carved out their space within the discourses of nationalism and decolonization. It is because once Tamil nationalism became centred in Sri Lanka, having shifted from India's Tamil Nadu, it was the duty of the littérateurs to delineate the nature of the Tamilian connection to their culture. In other words, the writings had to determine the texture of the nationalist world they aimed to imagine into being. As Kanaganayakam explains, though:

> There was no consensus about how territory was to be mapped or how that was to merge with political aspirations, but land was important. All aspects of culture—customs, rituals, social relations, and so on—were seen in relation to land and landscape. (ibid., p. 85)

Clearly, there is no visualization of the constructive role of the Tamilians in connecting land, landscape, and their socio-cultural realities. It is small wonder that the nationalist solidarity encounters the challenge of accommodating diverse impulses coming out of various contingents. Indeed, '[d]ifferent factions have very different notions of how nationalist aspirations are to be achieved, and the events of 2004, which involved division within the LTTE, demonstrated that even within individual groups, consensus is not always possible to achieve' (ibid., p. 86). As a result, the nationalist literature contains heterogeneity at the expense of resoluteness regarding the Tamil role for achieving a historical outcome about forming the sovereign nation. One of the pressing questions still appears to be the transcendence of ethnicity in terms of cultivating a shared sense of loss with the fellow Sinhalese, since the abrupt termination of *Swabasha* Movement also meant that there is an acute loss of common principles of Ceylonese nationalism that included all the ethno-linguistic groups of the country. Therefore, it is comprehensible that the local, national, and transnational voices in contemporary Tamil literature suggest that Tamil nationalism shows the ultimate outcome of not reflecting Said's 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' through the Fanonian principles.

As I explained above, the first aspect of the Fanonian significance in Said's 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' is the deepening of a coherent national consciousness through the spread of national culture. Fanon (2004) is unequivocal that the struggle for national liberation is inextricably interlinked with the combat for establishing the nation's own culture. He is emphatic that '[n]ational culture is no folklore where an abstract populism is convinced it has uncovered the popular truth' (ibid., p. 168). National culture cannot be part of popular gestures alone

because it is connected with the existential reality of the people. Since Fanon advocates that this must be made integral to the nationalist self-awareness, we realize the difficulties related to the nationalitarian movement through the Tamil struggle for formulating a befitting cultural nationalism that asserts the people's right of their mother language. First of all, Joya Chatterji (2023) reminds us that the mother-tongue-based identity formation has a colonial legacy. The first colonial census in the Indian sub-continent took place in 1881, where mother tongue appeared as a sub-category to identify people's preference for a single language. Of course, this did not reflect their proficiency in other languages. Chatterji forcefully argues that this exercise attributed great value to single-language orientation by defining the preference as a connection to a specific group's mother tongue. This process further implied that mother tongue 'was learned at the mother's breast', which soon transformed mother-language-based identity into a symbolic matter of 'statuary and iconography', and gave rise to concepts like 'Tamiltay, the goddess of Tamil' (ibid., p. 133). In order to transform Tamiltay into the basis of Tamil nationalitarian movement in Sri Lanka, the littérateurs needed to weave together Tamil language, national culture, and national consciousness as an indivisible entity. This is not to deny that contemporary Tamil literature in Sri Lanka did not make the linguistic nationalism the major issue of rendition. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, hundreds of Tamil poems highlighted the people's devotion to the mother language, their outcry against Sinhala domination, as well as their strong hope for victory through their defiance of the Sinhala-Only legislation. As a Tamil scholar, critic, and translator, M. A. Nuhman, (2012) clarifies:

> To many of the poets, the denial of their language rights was equal to the denial of their very existence and it was their duty to fight unto death for them… The poets created an imaginary warfare, and aroused the people using highly sensitive and emotive language and rhythmic verses to induce them to involve themselves in the battle.

Nevertheless, this spirit was not easily sustained as a source of a unified and undying nationalist consciousness, as will be evident from the discussion below.

In 1990, Ilavalai Wijayendran writes a poem, 'To Those Who Come with Sticks', which is about cultural awakening and strengthening national consciousness through greater belief in the power of Tamiltay. The nationalist poet is celebrated for his lucidity and ability to express a deep sense of injustice in an unembellished way. The free verse translated by Rebecca Whittington is genuinely important, since the post-Civil War (1983–2009) starkness surrounded the Tamils during the era. The poem symbolizes how Tamiltay still filled them with hope that the horrors of the war could be resisted through the nationalitarian movement that depended on the unbreakable resolve of the war-beaten people:

my
words alone have strength
not my body.

to scare the people
bring your concoctions of borrowed words
and pile them up.

shattering them
my words
stand upright

when you've lost to words
and come with sticks
to show your strength
what can I say?

(Wijayendran, 2014, p. 77)

The quiet resolve that the military might of the Sinhalese can be successfully challenged through the unwavering Tamil belief that their

opponent's 'concoctions of borrowed words' supporting their subjugation of the northeastern parts of the country cannot stand up to the Tamils' righteous claim on the region, which they consider to be their cultural abode. The poet's claim here is that Tamiltay combining the land and language only assures the Tamils that the Sinhalese want to militarily coerce them, since culturally they are not well equipped to bring down the time-honoured Tamil 'words'.

The question remains if the Tamil words contain the collective expression of the people in the post-Civil War context. Novelist and anti-caste activist Mu. Thalaiyasingam (2014) pens a tribute to the nineteenth-century champion of Tamil religion, culture, and language I mentioned in the first chapter, Arumuga Navalar, once he came to know about the upcoming centenary of the guru. The tribute is translated by D. Senthil Babu, which expresses Thalaiyasingam's profound anguish about the continuation of Tamiltay. Nevertheless, following the Jaffna tradition of deifying the Father of Tamil prose, Thalaiyasingam earnestly salutes him for his revivalist scholarship. He puts forth the reasons for the veneration: 'It astonishes me how you were able to utilize whatever you needed to fulfil your objectives in those days. The printing press, magazines, schools, the publishing of books, prayers, sermons—they all flourished when touched by your hands' (ibid., p. 13). Clearly, the central importance of national culture to crystalize a cohesive consciousness regarding the distinctive Tamil existence in Sri Lanka has always been felt across generations of Tamil writers. And yet, it remains catastrophic that the cohesion did not become widespread to represent a collective expression of the entire Tamilians of the region. As Thalaiyasingam argues, Navalar's revivalist efforts concentrated on the Saivite group relating to one of the major strands of modern Hinduism, which is devoted to the worship of the cosmic dancer deity, Shiva. Thalaiyasingam continues: 'You constricted the boundaries of art, Father. And that is why now, in this land where you tried to nurture Tamil and Saivism, instead of the arts it is only dreams that flourish' (ibid., p. 15). Evidently, achieving a collective consciousness of the people living in the Tamil homeland through combining all their words,

arts, and songs that will lead to the independence of the northeast of Sri Lanka still remains a dream. Through utilizing the humanist appeal of national culture, the hope is to bring all the Hindu sects, castes, and the followers of other religions under one umbrella of Tamiltay. Thalaiyasingam is inspired by Navalar's unparalleled dedication, as he announces: 'That is next on our agenda, which we lay out in your august presence' (ibid., p. 16).

In the meantime, obstacles mount against achieving the goal of the nationalitarian movement. Short story writer and memoirist Iravi Arunasalam (2014) skilfully portrays the challenge of actualizing the cohesive nationalist consciousness. A short story suggestive of his memoirist acumen translated by D. Senthil Babu reflects this. The story relates how Sinhalese violence marred the World Tamil Research Conference, which took place in Jaffna from 3rd to 9th of January 1974 and was restricted to a selected audience, who were perceivably culturally inclined. Arunasalam's short story presents the police violence unleashed on the attendees on the 10th of January through the helplessness of a young girl, Raasa, and her father, who had to run helter-skelter for safety. However, Raasa begins with the joyousness of cultural celebration that was in the air before the beginning of the auspicious month for the Shiva worshippers called, '*Thai*' (tenth month of Tamil Calendar, which is mid-January to mid-February in Gregorian calendar). Torrential rain reflected the hearts overflowing with the pride and joy of being the inheritors of the rich Tamil tradition that never becomes obscure. The girl derives her ecstasy from words like these:

Our Tamil will never grow dim!
If anything comes to threaten it
Destruction is certain so
Sound the conch!
Hold your head high, and
Call yourself a Tamil, man! (ibid., p. 146; emphasis in the original)

The words of tremendous belief in the Tamilian culture combined with the monsoon, the auspicious month, and the season of ripened buds of jujube trees, which are connected to Hindu deity Vishnu assure Raasa that Tamil is never just a language. The celebratory environment told her that '[i]t became our consciousness, and mixed, as one, with our lives' (ibid., p. 147). The challenge for sustaining the consciousness was to be known further.

The anti-climax appeared as the bombs exploded and the gunshots sounded. Naturally, father and daughter had to find their way around through burning eyes. As a result, they fell into a ditch and the monsoon mud was all over them. Soon there was a group of people waiting in the dark, since the electricity had gone out. When the dawn arrived and they managed to climb out the ditch, they realized that they had to walk ten miles to reach home. When they landed on their doorstep, Raasa's mother 'shrieked' (ibid., p. 150) at her apparition. Raasa realizes that the humiliation of their small family encompasses the ultimate disgrace of the Tamil national consciousness based on the people's noble culture, as she pronounces: 'That was the day our whole town, our whole nation, began to shriek' (ibid.). This makes us clearly see why Fanon unambiguously argues that nationalitarian movement is inseparable from the fight for establishing the dignity of national culture. As Arunasalam's potent short story makes us perceive, it is backbreaking to keep the fight alive for retaining the dignity of one's mother-language-based culture in a problematically decolonized setting.

Fanon adds more insights into the challenges of decolonial nation formation. He foresees that if the national consciousness is not transformed into a socio-political consciousness, which makes the masses determine the nation's future, the nation will not function as a successful unit. The socio-political consciousness of the people will be palpable through their discussions, judgements, communications, and innovations, which will delineate the polity they want to build as the fruits of political freedom. As we shall see, Tamil national consciousness recognizably lacks this stage of transformation. This is not to denounce

the nationalitarian politics involved in this context. We have to weigh up the historical, geographical, and cultural contexts in which the nationalitarian politics has to be developed. This will make us realize that the politics becomes confrontational due to the contested nature of the notions of belonging in decolonized Sri Lanka. In other words, the nationalitarian politics has to operate within the competing Sinhalese and Tamil discourses of the nationalist space. Thus, the Tamil Eelam politics has to address the indictment of destroying the territorial integrity of the island. As Minoli Salgado (2007, p. 16) explains, Eelam veers towards 'a separatist logic that embraces irredentism, with its call for political autonomy in a region considered by Tamil nationalists to constitute a former independent Tamil kingdom—one unconquered by any colonial power apart from the Portuguese'. This obviously suggests that Tamil national consciousness becomes embroiled in spatially configuring their envisaged landscape, where their linguistic heritage can be safeguarded. Thus, Tamil nationalism is less concerned about its transformation into a socio-political consciousness that contains people's true voices regarding the emancipation they seek. It can be certainly argued that once political freedom is achieved, the Tamilians can concentrate on building their socio-political consciousness about being free citizens. The question remains as to why the existing political freedom of Sri Lanka cannot be utilized for a Tamil-based socio-political consciousness. Put another way, Tamil literature does not magnify the socio-political consciousness of the people, since the narrative is not unitary regarding the need for territorial separation. As contemporary Tamil literature demonstrates, Tamil-based socio-political consciousness is projected both within the existing territorial integrity of the Sri Lankan state and in direct contradiction to the concept.

It will be pertinent to cite Kapila Gamage (2023), a pioneer of community radio and a Sinhalese writer, who is born of Tamil and Sinhala parentage, to emphasize the gravity of a sustainable national consciousness. His poem, 'Teriyum Kokila', which is translated from Sinhalese by Chamini Kulathunga, pays tribute to a dark-skinned physician, Kokila, meaning Nightingale, whose dream was to attend to

‘her sick folks’ (ibid., p. 118) at Jaffna hospital. The dream is as white as Jasmine, suggesting the desperate need for new beginnings in the conflicted land, which only reveals the pervasive devastation of the war, since she has to smile by ‘[l]eaning on a crutch’ (ibid., 119). The source of the conflict is the indecisiveness of the ethnic groups regarding the socio-political consciousness they aim to achieve by utilizing the decolonized status. The poet symbolizes the destructive dilemma through his own experience of belonging to the warfront:

My mother speaks Tamil
like flowing water
to me Tamil is konjum teriyum
how embarrassing is it, Kokila?

My child hates Tamil
how it angers me
and I can’t forget how you lost
your foot once graced with marathondi. (ibid., p. 119)

Just like the crutch-leaning Nightingale, Tamil is ‘konjum teriyum’, meaning the consciousness of cooing, which heightens and yet, questions his secure sense of belonging. Ironically, his child’s hatred of Tamil only bolsters the impossibility of a sustainable socio-political consciousness that inevitably leads to the absence of the Nightingale’s ‘marathondi’ (Henna)-adorned foot, which ultimately symbolizes the Fanonian advocacy regarding nationalist catastrophe.

Tamil poet, artist, and political analyst Nillanthan (2023) demonstrates the catastrophe as a witness to the end of the Civil War. His lyrics gaze at the horrors of the war through the lens of the ordinary. In his poem, ‘The Mother of Two Martyrs’ translated by Geetha Sukumaran and Shash Trevett, the poet describes the hellish life of the mother in the security zone in coastal areas created by dint of the government’s emergency regulation. The zone operates based on restricted access. The poet records:

In that particular hell
she kept her eldest child hidden
in the dark space beneath the cooking fire.
Yet, the motherland enticed this child away
until she was left with nothing
but a photograph. Her middle child,
while buying a candle of remembrance,
was then conscripted by the motherland.
On the day she escaped to that lagoon
with her youngest child,
was this mother shot in the face
or in the back? (ibid., p. 242)

Clearly, the motherland entices, conscripts, and destroys her sons and daughters. Even so, the poet does not address that neither the motherland's geographical boundary nor the nationalitarian politics concerning her historical backdrop is a resolved matter. Therefore, the motherland has to keep snatching away her children. Unlike Gamage, Nillanthan seems to be engulfed by the immediacy of the war, rather than the urgency of a post-war future the contour of which all the affected children of Sri Lanka have to compose. This is obviously not achievable by maintaining the existing disconnect between the Tamil national consciousness and the socio-political consciousness, which delineates a forceful aim leading to Tamils' unthreatened existence in the region.

Tamil academic, filmmaker, poet, translator, actress, and activist, Sumathy Sivamohan (2023), captures the gap in a dramatic way. In a poem written in English, which records her revelations regarding the disconnection, having read a novel, *Hmm* (2017), by Shobha Shakti, who is a former LTTE child soldier currently living as a refugee in Paris. Sivamohan's experimental poem translates the title of the novel as 'mm', and connects this with the 'mumbling' dream of the Eelam only to intensify the inadequacy of language to illustrate the concept that she sarcastically calls, 'thamil_an@yalpaaaaanam.ohm' (ibid., p. 345).

Yalpanam is the Tamil name for Jaffna, which is considered to be the epicentre of Tamil tradition in Sri Lanka. By dragging the pronunciation of Yalpanam and connecting it with 'ohm', the standard unit of electrical resistance, Sivamohan underlines the directionlessness of the nationalitarian politics. This is clearer when her poem ends with the inclusion of her translated version of Shakti's dedication of the novel by obtaining his permission:

my people, this story is for you,
who, after,
listening, listening,
to all the long tales and short ones
the stories and the epics,
told and retold, again and again:
a war of thirty years,
a cruel war,
a hundred thousand persons killed,
fifty thousand persons maimed,
twenty thousand widows
…
massive displacements from homes, lands,
(liberation) movements, great hero-oes
the proscription of thamil eelam;
the prison camps of thamil eelam,
…
pongu thamil or thamil overflowing,
and so many, so many others,
(merely) say, again and again:

mm. (ibid., p. 346)

Thus, Sivamohan portrays how a former LTTE soldier mocks the 'hero-oes' and shows what all the repetitions of Tamiltay amounts to: 'mm'. The Eelam certainly advocates a Tamil territorial separation from Sri Lanka, but the speaker asks why this creates the politics of

'proscription'. This is a scathing criticism of the detachment of the nationalitarian politics from a socio-political consciousness that can prevent this ultimate disaster of immovability expressed by a dialogic marker, 'mm', which shows that the speaker has not got much energy or enthusiasm left for the tales of bravery, sacrifice and mother language worship. Thus, the speaker represents a generation that requires a clearer socio-political goal to be achieved after the humongous human costs. Sivamohan strengthens the voice of the generation, which reconfirms why Fanon compares the nation to a bridge that should not be built, if it does not increase the self-awareness of the people who construct it.

Fanon's third point about the challenge of decolonial nation formation is the distinction between state-building and nation-building processes. For the latter, deepening the dignity of the people, their intrinsic connection to the homeland, and their focused thinking are the priorities so that they can be regenerated into the new souls of the nation in order to perform their historic duty of elevating the entity as 'the enlightened and coherent praxis of the men and women'. This aspect of Said's 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' through Fanon highlighting the people's collective consciousness as the constructors of history is also not clearly visible in the Tamilian nationalitarian politics. Madurika Rasaratnam (2016) provides us with the insights to understand the lacuna. The core demand of the politics is the recognition of the people's national status and their self-rule in the northeast. Over the decades, organizations like the Federal Party, Tamil United Front (TUF), and the LTTE have represented the demands. The end of the Civil War, however, brought the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) to the limelight. As Rasaratnam elaborates:

> In their parliamentary speeches and English-language statements, the TNA set out an alternative political position: denouncing the LTTE, rejecting independence and seeking a solution based on a 'united, undivided country'. But the TNA's electorate remains wedded to the core principles of Tamil

> nationhood, homeland and self-determination, and this necessitated a countervailing set of practices in which Tamil nationalist principles, and even the LTTE's legacy of struggle, are invoked. (ibid., pp. 226–227)

Due to the persistent dilemma of the nationalitarian politics between independence and self-determination, it becomes increasingly difficult for the Tamils in Sri Lanka to decide how their dignity, connectivity to the homeland, and focused thinking should be enhanced for the contradictory purposes. How can they create history, if there is no 'coherent praxis of the men and women' to be responsible for?

In the literary writings as well, we discover that the Tamils' dream to be regenerated into the new souls of the nation is intact but they have to know first if this has to be accomplished by creating the history of an independent nation or a devolved territory, where their self-determination is guaranteed. In a short story translated by A. J. Canagaratna, 'The Dispossessed', by the author under pen name, Kunthavai (2016), we encounter such a new soul, Sivaranjini, who is fleeing the war on a boat with her husband, Mahendran, and little son, Amuthan. When a loudspeaker announced the approach of the army by asking the villagers to evacuate, inertia and indignation took over her. Sivaranjini tells her husband about her resolve not to leave her place. "'How many times must we run like this? I'm not going. I'll wait here for a bomb to kill me. You take the child and go," she had said haughtily' (ibid., p. 157). They knew that whichever part of Jaffna they moved to the 'war was sure to dog their footsteps' (ibid., p. 159), but for keeping Amuthan safe, they had to cross Jaffna Lagoon, which meant they ran out of most of the foodstuff. The unbearable challenges of crossing muddy areas and finding a shelter even under a tree made her weep. Sivaranjini recovered her strength when Amuthan woke up and asked for food. She only had some stale bread in her shoulder bag. She was astonished that the fussy child was eager to eat the insipid piece of food. Sivaranjini discovered another little boy staring at the piece of bread, who took half of it and another piece. When she brought out yet

another piece, ‘she felt a pricking at the back of her head’ (ibid., p. 162). The sensitive mother had to turn into a bearer of silence, as she encountered that ‘the chid of the family sheltering under the next tree, was peeping over his mother’s back, looking intently at the piece of bread in her hand’ (ibid.). Evidently, the nationalitarian politics demands more resilience and humane qualities from the Tamilians. The unuttered ending of the short story asks how long they should stretch their humanity.

In a beautifully written short story that includes self-reflexive and postmodernist modes of narration, the author under pen name, Siddhartha ‘Che’ Guevara (2016), portrays the challenges of acting as a constructor of contemporary Tamil historical agent, when there is no ‘coherent praxis of the men and women’ to represent. Govardhanan Ramachandran translates the short story, ‘Kamikaze’, indicating Japan’s bombing tactic during World War II, symbolizing preference over death rather than capture and defeat. The conflicting choices of survival is, therefore, ingrained in the story. Like the author, the narrator is born in Trincomalee, a port city on the northeast coast, which remains under de facto control of the LTTE. Following a trajectory of higher education that navigates Singapore to St Louis, Missouri, the narrator named Sugunan Chellathurai makes us realize why the Tamil short story writer, who is an academic specializing in Environmental Engineering based in Ohio, prefers a pen name starting with Buddha’s given name, Siddhartha, which in Sanskrit means ‘he who achieves his aim’. As the narrator elaborates his witnessing of contemporary history as a Sri Lankan citizen, who is caught between a Civil War and a desperate attempt to live in Canada, it becomes understandable that both Sugunan and the author are searching for Siddhartha’s accomplishment of his mission. Unlike Siddhartha, however, they cannot decide what constitutes their historic mission, which is expressed by Sugunan’s admission of his own inconsistency, as he crosses the Canadian frontier

> arguing that all pieces of the so-called literature of the Tamil diaspora are nothing but loads of gripes, yet considering a jump

> into the fray myself so that others can have a chance to grind my head; and adoring Gautam Buddha and Ernesto 'Che' Guevara as the only human beings to have ever graced this earth. (ibid., p. 177)

This shows that the Tamils have to transcend the culture of grievance generated through their lack of independence. However, the indecisive nature of the nationalitarian politics between independence and self-determination means that the author has to join the cause. Similarly, his admiration for the Buddha representing the Sri Lankan ethos contradicts his aspiration for revolution symbolized by the Argentine-Cuban resistance fighter.

On a lighter note, Sugunan flies Singapore Airlines and United Airlines to prevent the Sri Lankan government from receiving the revenue by travelling through their airlines. And yet, Sri Lankan Lipton is his only choice for his tea. At the same time, his glass cloth has his name and Eelam written on it. He keeps remembering Raghunathan Master, who was a school teacher during the late seventies, though he traded tobacco and onions most of the time. When a Sinhalese administrator suspended him, he asked the people to think of him as a victim of racism and became secretary of the local Tamil political party. Realizing that the amalgamation of such contradictory micro-narratives may turn Sugunan 'a Tamil traitor', he promises to work on his 'craft' (ibid., p. 186) to deliver a better diasporic tale. We can clearly see that how the nationalitarian politics makes it extremely challenging for the contemporary Tamilians to transform into new souls for performing their historic duty of elevating the nation into its enlightened version, which is also echoed by the author's name, Siddhartha.

As I have illustrated the Fanonian emphasis on a national, socio-political, and historical consciousness for advancing an effective nationalitarian politics, Said's adaptation of the theory for elaborating his idea of 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' becomes newly significant. Fanon's conceptualization of decolonial nation formation patently makes us perceive that only the assertion of a distinctive

linguistic particularity is not enough for this purpose. Despite the challenges of transforming the nationalitarian politics into an enlightened national consciousness, Said (1994, p. 219) encourages us to see the grounds for hope underlying the decolonial moment, since 'far from being at the end of history, we are in a position to do something about our own present and future history', which leads us towards greater emancipatory missions.

Humanity Instead of Identity Should Be the Nationalist Aim

At the very least, decolonization is an arduous process, which demands exceptional dedication, sacrifices, and endurance, as we have seen so far. Nationalism certainly is a time-tested method for this purpose. Since nationalist struggle involves a duality, as Said delineates above, it is crucial to determine the contours of nationalism that decolonized polities are going to make detectable. Said's adaptation of Tagore and Fanon is of utmost importance from this standpoint. If nationalism has to be prevented from becoming a marker of identity alone, we need to know the pathways for this. Tagore is unequivocal that anything less than a humanist aim will not do justice to the enormous efforts of decolonization. If nationalism cannot deepen its humanist appeal, it will not be the means of emancipation because it will bring back ethnic rivalries rather than cooperation among social groups. Fanon further warns us that nationalism cannot be the ultimate goal of the gigantic decolonial struggle, even though it is really difficult for the decolonized societies to be prepared after the prolonged combat for what he considers to be real battle: to create new souls for new socio-economic history and systems that will eventually lead to emancipation.

If we compare the two nationalist struggles discussed above, it is comprehensible that the main strength of the foundational narrative of Bangladesh lies in its humanist promise. The Language Movement filled the people with the courage to dream of exploring their potentials as human beings, rather than submitting to the order of a nation-state that

prescribes limited visions for them to operate as citizens. This dream rescued the Bengalis from any vacillation regarding the power of their culture as well as prepared them to pay even the extreme price for attaining their coveted political freedom. On the other hand, the post-independence history of Sri Lanka proves that the competing nationalisms of the Sinhalese and the Tamils annulled their *Swabasha* (vernacular) Movement. The Tamils' counter-narrative rightly asserted their nationalist aspirations but the lack of a clearly defined socio-political and historical role factionalized the deprived group. As a result, the people could not be resolutely united through their national culture. The writers utilized their grievances by showing the strength of their creativity, though the nationalitarian politics did not completely set the precedent for them to speak for the nation in an effectively revolutionary way.

In order to highlight the revolutionary spirit of the Bengali writers and filmmakers, I mostly relied on the creative pieces from the pre-independence period. I depended on the contemporary Tamil writers for the same purpose, since their nationalist resistance is still ongoing. As Said (1994, p. 223) reiterates, nationalism cannot lose its significance, since 'it serves me quite adequately to identify the mobilizing force that coalesced into resistance against an alien and occupying empire on the part of peoples possessing a common history, religion, and language'. In the next chapter, we will discover how the call for self-determination coalesces into a massive movement for national liberation. For now, I conclude by emphasizing that the Bengali spirit of resistance was epitomized by *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (2013, pp. 215–218) during his historic 7th March speech, where he poetically defined 'Liberation-Enhancing Nationalism' for his people by asserting that their struggle is for finally declaring themselves to be free human beings. In his own words, which the translation referred to here renders as: 'Ours has been a history of continual lamentation, repeated bloodshed and innocent tears…. So, the struggle this time is our struggle for emancipation! This time the struggle is for our freedom!'.

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6. Language Movements and the Armed Struggles of the Bengalis and Tamils

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Keywords Edward Said's *Orientalism* – Self/Other binary – Otherizatio /Othering – Colonial system of knowledge production – Cultural conflict – Political subordination – Hegemonic politics – Mytho-history – Hostility and aggression – Liberation War (Bangladesh/East Pakistan) – Civil War (Sri Lanka) – One Unit policy (West Pakistan) – Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement (ISLA) – Mohammad Ayub Khan – S,W.R.D. Bandaranaike – Militancy (of linguistic groups) – Tolerance (as antidote) – Political realism (Ashoka)

In this chapter, I demonstrate how the Otherization of the Bengalis and Tamils led to their armed struggles for liberation. This implies that Edward Said's *Orientalism* is a key text for forming the framework of this chapter that illustrates how the Self/Other divide between the West Pakistanis/East Pakistanis (Bengalis) and Sinhalese/Tamils aggravated the cultural conflict and catapulted this into a Liberation War and Civil War, respectively. It is true that that Said's *Orientalism* has generated lasting debates regarding the Self/Other divide but it remains a seminal book regarding the entrenchment of cultural

difference in a structure of cultural superiority/inferiority, which arguably leads to military conflicts. Lata Mani and Ruth Frankenberg (1985, p. 177) assert that 'the book is most fruitfully regarded as a focussed study of Orientalism in West Asia set in context of an Orientalism that is geographically and culturally much broader in scope'. Therefore, I interpret Said's notion of Orientalist construction of Self/Other binary in the aforementioned contexts. Said (2003, p. xiv) explains the source of binary not through the articulation of an original Orient, for he has 'no "real" Orient to argue for' but through the theorization about the Western discursive tradition that produced an inbuilt logic and regularity about the inferiority of the Eastern Other. Naturally, '[o]ne does not look to Orientalism to learn about the Orient any more than one looks to discourses of racism to learn about peoples of colour' (Mani and Frankenberg, 1985, p.186). Thus, *Orientalism* becomes a formative book in making us realize that Self/Other binaries are made and remade by human beings with various inconsistencies and omissions in order to impose particular ideologies on the dominated cultural groups.

Said exemplifies how the colonial control over the Eastern world was established by defining the civilizations and languages of Europe (or the West) in contraposition to those of the Orient (or the East). The narrative was that the natives speak a dissimilar language, and cultivate different expectations than those of their ruler, which is why the European authorities had the power to decide what was good for the supposedly backward people. This is evident from Said's display of colonial power producing general historical observations regarding the Orientals, which interlink their cultural distance from the West with their supposed cultural inferiority. For example, Said presents the positional superiority of Arthur James Balfour (1848–1930), who was more interested in music, poetry, and philosophy than politics at the beginning of his career, but became a Conservative Party parliamentarian, and more importantly, justified the British occupation of Egypt in his speech for the House of Commons on 13 June 1910. Said (2003, pp. 34–35) reads this speech as a clear contribution to the

Orientalist discourse by delineating how the Oriental is rendered as the Other:

> As a rhetorical performance Balfour's speech is significant for the way in which he plays the part of, and represents, a variety of characters. There are of course "the English," for whom the pro-noun "we" is used with the full weight of a distinguished, powerful man who feels himself to be representative of all that is best in his nation's history… If he does not speak directly for the Orientals, it is because they after all speak another language; yet he knows how they feel since he knows their history, their reliance upon such as he, and their expectations… Their great moments were in the past; they are useful in the modern world only because the powerful and up-to-date empires have effectively brought them out of the wretchedness of their decline and turned them into rehabilitated residents of productive colonies.

Clearly, the supremacy of the Self here is associated with Western knowledge of Egypt and not principally with Egyptians' own cultural aspirations, which they are not allowed to represent, since they do not speak the rulers' language. This is how Said analyses the power of Western cultural representation of the East, which is not singularly related to the way of organizing the West/East dynamics discussed so far. There are political implications of this formulation. As Said emphasizes, his aim 'is to illustrate the formidable structure of cultural domination and, specifically for formerly colonized peoples, the dangers and temptations of employing this structure upon themselves or upon others' (ibid., p. 25). Consequently, my chapter relies on Said's formulation of the Self/Other binary, which is not restricted to European/non-European contexts. Following Said's prescient proclamation about the dangers of Otherization, I contend that the same structure can be imposed by one group of Easterners on another for asserting similar cultural knowledge resulting in the exercise of the corrosive political domination.

We cannot disregard that the Otherization takes place within the framework of a specific set of unequal socio-economic correlations between the West and East due to which Western descriptions of the East as the inferior Other are produced. As I have been emphasizing, the West does not necessarily have to be European. Within the Eastern geography as well, the West/East binary plays out with equal dexterity, since the structure of Otherization determines that the two cultural groups in question cannot be on a par with each other. What is concerning here is a deep discrepancy between diverse identities and their definitions in a postcolonial setting. If colonialism prevented the postcolonial societies' potential to create themselves in a meaningful way, they cannot repeat this system of downplaying or screening off cultural reality in a context where homogeneity is not easily achievable. This means that '[w]e end up with still a totality but one conceived, like postcolonial subjects themselves, in extremely volatile and voluntaristic ways' (O'Hanlon and Washbrook, 1992, p. 164). Unlike colonial times, postcolonial societies are allowed to restructure their foundational narratives for creating their distinct positions in global political contexts. However, if their stories of homogenization become synonymous with the unscrutinized Western narratives regarding Self/Other, privileged categories will continue to obstruct histories that cannot be accommodated in the dominant narratives. The main argument of Orientalism stands against this process of formulating abstract totalities and systematizing access to knowledge. Said (2003, p. 43) emphasizes that 'Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them")'. Perceivably, the political division between the supposedly familiar and strange cultures demonstrates the interpretation of history not for achieving any admirable purposes. Thus, the repetition of Self/Other divide bears a problematic resemblance to colonial system of knowledge production without favouring a dialogue between the cultural groups involved in this categorization. Indeed, the absence of a constructive dialogue between the projected collectivities that cannot

be synchronized suggests that there is no procedure in place 'to return control over knowledge to its indigenous sources, to represent adequately the authority of informants, and to open real textual spaces for a multitude of indigenous voices whose perspectives and agendas are not imposed on them from outside' (O'Hanlon and Washbrook, 1992, p. 160).

In fact, the politics of Orientalism is about the imposition of 'perspectives and agendas' on the Otherized indigenous community from outside, which is represented as the 'Self', the established authority that promotes the dichotomized images as natural rather than manufactured. Said (2003, p. 96) reveals the politics underlying the Self/Other composition:

> The closeness between politics and Orientalism, or to put it more circumspectly, the great likelihood that ideas about the Orient drawn from Orientalism can be put to political use, is an important yet extremely sensitive truth… It necessarily provokes unrest in one's conscience about cultural, racial, or historical generalizations, their uses, value, degree of objectivity, and fundamental intent. More than anything else, the political and cultural circumstances in which Western Orientalism has flourished draw attention to the debased position of the Orient or Oriental as an object of study.

Clearly, the Orientalist framework establishes a triumphal act on the part of the ruler to objectify the ruled in order to produce 'cultural, racial, or historical generalizations' about them justifying their subordinate condition. As Ali Behdad (1994, p.7) identifies, the complexity of Orientalist representation lies in the capacity of the discourse to generate the subordinate condition in different contexts through advancing a 'regime of truth that has produced and sustained such binaries as self/other, colonizer/colonized, civilized/savage, and so on'. What the powerful mode of knowledge production further

suggests is the neo-colonialist strategy of controlling objectified cultural groups.

Explaining the strategy of objectifying the Other, Said (2003, p. 3) explains his reliance on 'Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish,* to identify Orientalism' as a construct of Western history and culture. This enables Said to reveal the complex processes by which the West grants the colonized people a self-image, and explains their culture to them in a way that justifies the new interpretations of the Other's traditions, systems, and beliefs for (re)producing the colonized subject as the Western object of study. Said elaborates on the representation of the Oriental for the purposes of the Western Self's ability to speak on the Eastern Other's behalf:

> There were—and are—cultures and nations whose location is in the East, and their lives, histories, and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West. About that fact this study of Orientalism has very little to contribute, except to acknowledge it tacitly. But the phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient (the East as career) despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a 'real' Orient. (Ibid., p. 5)

Evidently, Foucault is instrumental in the development of Said's argument regarding 'the internal consistency of Orientalism' as a regularized body of assembling ideas regarding the Oriental Other that does not reflect the reality of his/her existence. I have to note here that Said's Foucauldian reading of Orientalism has been heavily criticized on various grounds: whether the reality of the Orient can be represented, given the unavoidable tension between the available resources for the purpose, and the shifting nature of the activities associated with it; whether the colonizing impulse behind the representation cannot be

challenged by real Orientals, who are not mere semiotic figures; and whether Foucault's anti-humanist idea of a hermetic discursivity allows the postcolonial intellectual to maintain his/her humanist distance from the official version of the Other so as to insert the real story of the entity in the system. However, Rashmi Bhatnagar (1986, p. 13) emphasizes that 'Said's debt to Foucault lies in learning a way of looking at language which discloses how language permits, legislates and perpetuates discriminations of otherness and sameness'.

This is precisely why it is crucial to recognize the employment of the Orientalist strategies of identity creation and meaning production in non-Western spaces as well, for the power/knowledge structure informs and governs such practices. Recognizing the operation of the Foucauldian structure in the non-Western context, Nevzat Soguk (1993) compellingly intervenes into the discursive generation of sameness and otherness. Soguk is emphatic that the practitioner of the Orientalizing custom, who applies the method to fields like art, mythology, media, history, education, and so on, does not have to be confined in the West; they can reside in the East as well. It is because the 'processes of the Orientalizing mentality reified in the practices of nation-state, modernization, and progress still reign supreme in much of the so-called non-Western spaces' (ibid., p. 364). Why should the end of empire not empower the members of the new nation-states to speak their own languages and write their own stories without being influenced by the West? The answer seems to be the allure of the oppressive power relation established by Orientalism. Soguk continues that 'Third World (non-Western) subjects, insofar as they adopt such strategies of fashioning "self" and "other" (thus, actively invoking the truth statements of the discourse), could not be seen as post-Oriental subjects who are intent on building resilient lives through resistance' (ibid., p. 371). Despite the non-Western subjects' modern myth-making efforts in postcolonial countries, they cannot *all* be deemed to be truly resisting figures, who combat imperial strategies and impulses because their repetition of the Orientalist power game proves that for them, 'the "West" is always more intelligible and fulfilling, and thus more

attractive than the East' (ibid., p. 363). Lisa Lau (2009) writes about the irony of this postcolonial situation, when the non-Western subjects have got the opportunity to move way from Orientalist representation, and yet chosen to prove Said's theorization regarding the socio-historical and political contestations over identity construction to be true, given the fluidity of the process. Lau's context is South Asian writings and the generalizing, totalizing, and truth-claim-oriented trends in some of these initiatives illustrating their Orientalist framework, though this leads her to assert that '[c]ulturally and socially speaking, the problem of representation has always been one which has plagued this region, from the regional scale to the local' (ibid., p. 574). Therefore, South Asian region is an effective example for demonstrating that Orientalism is no longer the exclusive nexus of domination of the Orientals by the Occidentals, since distinct groups of Orientals in positions of power also seize this role, particularly when designing a downgraded image of the dominated group is required for advancing socio-political goals.

Said (2003, p. 5) underscores the urgency for recognizing the political goal behind the Orientalist image construction: 'To believe that the Orient was created—or, as I call it, "Orientalized"—and to believe that such things happen simply as a necessity of the imagination, is to be disingenuous'. Clearly, Said urges his readers for not being oblivious to the cultural politics of Orientalism aiming to fix meaning at the linguistic level. He is against the linguistic overturning of human existence through finding an opportunity in the cultural context for categorization of diverse groups. He is unwilling to grant unstoppable power to the micropolitics of discourses, because the ideological baton this creates comes from the fact that the Self controlled not only the Other's land but also the dissemination of information regarding the individual. To quote Said again:

> There is nothing mysterious or natural about authority. It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value;

> it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces. Above all, authority can, indeed must, be analyzed. (Ibid., pp. 19–20)

What Said's analysis reveals is the superior standing of the authority that sanctions the colonial Self to dominate the colonized Other. Given that the authority is supported by the 'extraordinary European ascendancy from the late Renaissance to the present' (ibid., p. 7), this controlling mechanism seemed natural. What appeared to be anti-Foucauldian in Said's position is his direct opposition to the seeming naturalness of the man-made power approving Orientalist 'taste and value'. This dictates that the Orientalist authority has to be venerated, since this power reportedly helped the colonized people to shun their declining past and embrace modernism in order to be relevant.

Said's explanation of Orientalism as an expression of Western strength over assumed Eastern weakness and the resultant tension between the entities is the reason why Timothy Brennan (2000, p. 582) posits that 'Said is grounded in the position of appalled witness of applied terror, an embodied rather than a disembodied "power"'. Since Said does not limit himself to the systemic quality of Orientalism and adopts an adversarial role against the images, patterns, and propensities it generates, Brennan concludes that the thinker's resistance 'certainly distinguished well between the European and the foreign, the imperialist and the counterhegemonic, and that ability can only be maintained by local acts of historicizing' (ibid., p. 583). This implies that we have to view Orientalist practices in an appropriate spatio-temporal context. The contextualization is significant for another reason, which is Orientalism's geographical dimension, without which it does not seem plausible for the Self/Other division to work. Said specifies that Western commentators of oriental civilizations did not study a factual Orient; they were able to objectify people existing 'out there' since the region happens to lie east of the Bosporus.

Said (2003, p. 54; emphasis in the original) continues about the politics of space:

> A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call 'the land of the barbarians.' In other words, this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs' is a way of making geographical distinctions that *can be* entirely arbitrary… Yet often the sense in which someone feels himself to be not-foreign is based on a very unrigorous idea of what is 'out there,' beyond one's own territory.

The unfamiliarity of space defined by its geographical distance from the native region is utilized to draw conclusions regarding the unknown people's culture, which are understandably neither favourable nor wholesome. Thus, geographical difference becomes the means through which remote locales and their practices are exoticized, which only highlights 'unrigorous' ideas of belonging.

The rigour that Said stresses for comprehending the arbitrary nature related to the politics of space is vital for various reasons. First, understanding unexplored cultures is impossible without cultivating a shared sense of humanity, despite the inevitable differences of religion, language, ethnicity, and so on. Furthermore, denying universal values of humanity means that cultural differences can be turned into the grounds of hostility among diverse groups for whom the Other is a figure to be resented. However, William Sax (1998) strongly argues that illuminating cultural differences is itself a universal human value, since the mirroring of disparate cultures enhances knowledge about greater humanity. As he explains the supposedly hostility-free division:

> We cannot help noticing that other people speak different languages, observe different customs, and are, well, *different*: Other. Yet these differences, though they are believed to be

> essential, are largely matters of perspective… the situation is always much more complex than Said implies, with selfhood and otherness, virtue and vice, subject to ceaseless negotiation and reinterpretation… In this hall of mirrors, the Self and the Other cannot be neatly distinguished. (Ibid., p. 299; emphasis in the original)

Arguably, Said's point is precisely this: neatly distinguishing Self and Other is ingenuine and it leads to horrific consequences because the fixity diminishes the hermeneutical scope for the dissimilar entities. Catherine Martin (1990, p. 521) addresses the issue from a different perspective. Martin believes that the Western projection of the Other as a barbarian cannot simply be a question of hegemony, since the mirroring effect can also result in an 'illusory double' for the former. Once again, Said (2003, p. 46) maintains that the polysemic nature of Orientalist discourse is lost, when it accrues 'the status of scientific truth'. In other words, the mirroring effect concerning the Self and Other dynamics ceases to exist through the pseudo-scientific branding of Orientalism.

Wael Hallaq (2018) examines this presumed scientificality of Orientalism by expanding the historical context, namely European modernity, within which the discourse developed. Hallaq re-evaluates the modernist project to show that Orientalism was not a standalone phenomenon regarding the Self's domination over the Other. Instead, he affirms that scholarly fields such as sciences, social sciences, and humanities operated within the modernist structure of fusing knowledge into power. As Hallaq explains the modernist system, its effectiveness lies in shifting the value of humans from being, 'the creation of a higher deity' to be the end point of a process, which ensures that 'the more naked [as labouring and mortal parts of nature] they are, the lower their value is in the chain of being' (ibid., p. 222). This is what Hallaq calls the 'the Distinction' (ibid.) in the value of human beings that drove all modernist endeavours by turning them into mere instruments of development and progress, which have turned

out be vague notions of civilization in the twenty-first century, particularly given the ecological and environmental crises. Nevertheless, the history of modernization continues to be so dominant that 'the totalizing act of decimating "traditional" cultures comes to be regarded as a "natural" development' (ibid., p. 232). Therefore, re-thinking the Self/Other dynamics, which was promoted by Said's Orientalism, should involve an effort through which

> we might see colonialism as a modern project of total transformation, one that *perpetually* aims at reengineering the subject as nature. This, not territory, is the ultimate desideratum and *terminus ad quem* of colonialism, in its settler form or not, in its Orientalism, secularism, or economics. (Ibid., p. 233; emphasis in the original)

The continuation of the strategy of viewing the subject of modern states as natural entities sans their divine dimension even after the end of colonization remains part of the same narrative of development and progress, despite its limiting nature. Thus, Hallaq's longer historical lens makes us aware that the 'Distinction itself as a structure of thought became the engine driving the vehicle of the modern state in conducting [its] major forces' (ibid., p. 223). We can clearly see why the foundational politics of postcolonial nation-states could not escape the Self/Other divide designed by Orientalist politics due to their desire of participating in the modernizing process.

To mark the 30th anniversary of *Orientalism*, Ella Shohat (2009) does not take us back to the source of modernism. By contrast, Shohat reminds us that the book itself worked as a root of 'what came to be the burgeoning fields of multicultural and postcolonial studies' (ibid., p. 19). Indeed, the cultural studies scholar emphasizes the transportable quality of the book by exemplifying how 'Brazilian political scientist João Feres Jr., deploys Said's anti-Orientalist grid to anatomize the writings of Samuel Huntington and Seymour Martin Lipset, which represent Latin Americans as irrational, passion-driven, pathological,

unproductive, and condemned to historical immobility' (ibid., p. 20). Thus, the Saidian lens does not lose its applicability even more than four decades after its publication, since it enables us to question the axial aspect of West-East and North-South, which cannot be monolithic geographies. Undoubtedly, 'the ideological-political debate' constitutes the core of Orientalist discourse analysis by encouraging us to offer 'new angles on the ongoing critique of the essentialist fixity of East-versus-West' (ibid., p. 23, 24). Said (2003, p. 325) is unequivocal about the 'hostility and aggression' that the essentialized Other fuels. His adversarial role against the devastating aftermath of the process remains clearly pronounced:

> My aim, as I said earlier, was not so much to dissipate difference itself—for who can deny the constitutive role of national as well as cultural differences in the relations between human beings—but to challenge the notion that difference implies hostility, a frozen reified set of opposed essences, and a whole adversarial knowledge built out of those things. What I called for in *Orientalism* was a new way of conceiving the separations and conflicts that had stimulated generations of hostility, war, and imperial control. (Ibid., p. 352)

Evidently, *Orientalism* is the most suitable framework for analysing why the 'East' cannot be considered inert, primitive, and incapable of resistance.

This leads me to assert that I will depend on the axiality of East-West advanced by the Orientalist discourse to offer a new angle on it by showing its application in decolonized South Asia. Geographically speaking, the East-West axis is applicable to not only East Pakistan-West Pakistan context, but also Sinhalese-Tamil territories from a broad perspective. The essentialist understanding of geographies, cultures, and the preposterous consequences it generates are the focal points in the next two sub-sections of my chapter. How decolonized South Asia repeated the Self/Other divide popularized by Orientalism is going to

be elaborated in the following sections. As I outlined above, I will delineate how the formulation of the Self/Other binary; politics underlying the composition; Western Self's ability to speak on Eastern Other's behalf; the exoticized condition of the Other's culture; and the horrific consequences of these processes are going to be illustrated through 'the ideological-political debate' in undivided Pakistan and Sri Lanka. To be more specific, I will look into the question of Urdu/Bengali divide denoting purity/impurity as a Muslim in the West Pakistani rulers' eyes, and the resultant killing of the unarmed Bengalis on the night of 25 March 1971, which initiated the Liberation War of Bangladesh. Similarly, I will inspect whether the racial denigration of the Tamil-speaking people is the reason behind the Sinhalese's denial of democratic rights to them, which led to the Civil War in the 1980s. In this way, this chapter demonstrates that *Orientalism* remains a relevant framework in proving that modernity's 'Distinction' has continued to operate by constructing notions of inferior peoples so that knowledge of the Other forms part of an aggressive campaign for the affirmation of the Self. How this belligerency works among decolonized nation-states vis-à-vis the projected strangeness and inequality of some of their languages and cultures is the object of my enquiry in this chapter.

Christina P. Davis (2020) supports this enquiry by showing how racial categories in decolonized South Asia came to be utilized as a premise for political representation. Exemplifying the consolidation of Sinhala and Tamil identities in the early to mid-1900s, Davis argues that this phenomenon combined with political and economic factors led to rising ethno-nationalism and polarization, culminating in the outbreak of ethnic conflict by the mid-1950s. Clearly, there is an unmissable connection between ethnic polarization and socio-economic factors that intensifies Self/Other mode, which ultimately leads to armed conflict. As Davis details, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Sinhalese identified primarily through regional groups—Kandyan or Low-country—but shifted in the 1930s towards a unified, language-based Sinhala ethnic identity, despite persistent internal differences, for example the caste and class-based ones. Among

Tamils, regional and ethnic distinctions (North, East, Up-country) have been more openly acknowledged. Throughout the twentieth century, the Sri Lankan government inconsistently portrayed Tamils: at times emphasizing their internal divisions to counter separatist claims, while also reinforcing the view of Tamils as a unified Other that helps define Sinhala identity. While this chapter concentrates on the Otherization process separating the Sinhalese and Tamil communities, Davis illustrates how sociolinguistic and educational practices entrench this division. Avowedly, Davis 'points to the role of education policies and practices and everyday interactions in the processes by which language is attached to ethnic, religious, regional, and class identities' (ibid., p. 17). As I elaborate through Said, the method underlying this attachment process is politically motivated. Despite not focusing on the Otherization process, Davis also touches upon the political dimension by pointing out how the minority-language status of Tamil leads to ethnic segregation for the speakers, understandably because of lack of political power: 'I also discuss how the Hindu College youth managed their status as lower-class ethnic minorities by building Tamil cocoons around themselves to insulate them in Sinhala-majority public spaces' (ibid., p. 22). Thus, Davis presents a significant aspect of language-inflicted Otherization, arguing that while Sri Lankans may have fluid or flexible identities, the choice of language—whether Tamil, Sinhala, or English—in public settings serves to reinforce existing power structures and long-standing social inequalities.

Scott Gates and Roy (2018, pp. 111–112) further suggest how the inequalities exacerbated the group equation between two wings of Pakistan, and 'such horizontal inequalities (not the inequality between individuals, but the inequality between groups) are an extremely strong predictor of secessionist conflict'. Since horizontal inequalities are disparities among groups with different identities, which are related to gender, place of origin, religion, and ethnicity, Gates and Roy analyse various events, military strategies, and operational techniques accompanying the armed combat between the two wings to 'provide a broader understanding of the politics underlying the war' (ibid., p. 87).

For this, they recall *Bhasa Andolan*, economic imbalance between the two wings, and the centre-periphery dynamics involved in the context. Thus, Gates and Roy's discussion pinpoints the racial ideology constituting the social and political conflict:

> In 1956, M. Attiqur Rahman became the DMO [Director of Military Operations] of the Pakistan Army. He considered the East Pakistanis to be very good soldiering material and asked [Defence Minister] Ayub [Khan] for greater intake of them into the combatant branches. But, Ayub replied, 'I do not want to expand those classes who have not been tested in battle.' Indeed, Ayub suffered from the Martial Race syndrome, a relic of the British Raj. (Ibid., p. 88)

The colonial mindset demands a thorough investigation to illustrate how the racial discrepancy developed between the culturally dissimilar peoples inhabiting the wings. The inevitability of the cultural conflict turning into an armed conflict is all the more reason for analysing the process through which the transition takes place. It goes without saying that Said's Orientalist critique remains the most suitable framework for this purpose.

The Purported Inferiority of the Bengali Subjects in East Pakistan and their Quest for Socio-Economic Freedom

This section will elaborate on the projected inferiority of Bengali language and culture in Pakistan, how this was resisted by the people, and why the cultural conflict resulted in the Liberation War. To reiterate, this section will illustrate the following five aspects of Orientalism in the context of West/East Pakistan: the formulation of the Self/Other binary; politics underlying the composition; Western Self's ability to speak on Eastern Other's behalf; the exoticized condition of the Other's culture; and the horrific consequences of these processes.

Through demonstrating the effects of Orientalism, I will reveal the potency of the ideology, which the Bengali resistance based on the principles of the Language Movement could not thwart. This will explicate that the Orientalist credo worked as an avalanche that drove the two wings to war, despite the protests and counterhegemonic ideas launched by the intellectuals, politicians, and progressive groups of the Bengali people.

In an interesting article on the cultural memory of united Pakistan, historian Ali Usman Qasmi (2023) argues that 1971 cannot be solely about constitutional lessons regarding the need for provincial autonomy and democratic processes in the country. For Qasmi, more than a balance sheet approach to the warfare is required for realizing the real nature of the Bengali resistance as well as the violence practised by the West Pakistani authorities for quelling the insurgency. Qasmi argues that the failure of the political procedure works as the underlying reason for the territorial conflict that arose. On the one hand, the historian self-contradictorily blames the Bengali leaders for turning the decades-long oppressions and exploitations of the people by the West wing into 'the form of a revolutionary explosion of rage' (ibid., p. 878). On the other hand, he explains that the Bengali intelligentsia were unable to realize that the economic backwardness of the province was not the doing of the Western wing; it dates back to the colonial period. Understandably, the lack of economic improvement of the region was the main reason for the down-gradation of the cultural group in the eyes of the Western authorities. The basis of the Western wing's Orientalist practice towards the Easterners is easily understandable. However, Qasmi's analysis does not reach the baseline of the conflict between the two wings. Instead, he focuses on whether or not it was Pakistan's right to defend its sovereignty. Despite this, he confirms in a counterintuitive way the Orientalist ideology working behind the irresolvable animosity between the two wings, for he summarizes the major forms of injustices issuing from the Self/Other divide:

> The Awami League [the political party leading Bangladesh's Liberation War] sought symbolic redemption for innumerable acts of injustice, starting from 1947: denial of equal status for the Bangla language, the killing of students protesting in favour of Bangla, the bypassing of the Bengali majority through various proposals to establish parity between the two wings (including the establishment of West Pakistan as One Unit), banning Tagore on national radio, snubbing Bengali political opposition in the Constituent Assembly on genuine issues and grievances… Despite being the capital of the majority population of the country, Dhaka was never recognised as a major power centre. (Ibid.)

As I have been arguing, the denial of the rightful status of Bengali language and killing of students demanding it are not sporadic phenomena. They are symptomatic of the subsequent and previous injustices carried out by the West Pakistani authorities, since the Bengali majority was not seen as a viable force in the majoritarian state. In other words, the majoritarian state did not recognize the Bengalis to be the main majority, for they were not believed to be equal with the West Pakistani inhabitants. The inferior status ascribed to the people led to the disparity between the two wings at the expense of the lack of development of East Pakistan. In other words, the province was deemed to be unworthy of proper development, since it was home for the lesser people. It is not surprising that the violence that took place in 1971 even surprised part of the West Pakistani military personnel. Citing Brigadier Karrar Ali Agha (2011), who records the gruesome nature of the military intervention, Qasmi (2023, pp. 881–882) concludes that 'according to Bengalis, the Pakistani military acted as an occupying force intentionally targeting Bengalis for their ethnicity because it considered them unequal or unworthy of respect. There is overwhelming evidence to support this assertion'.

In this chapter, I will not go into the details of the violence to determine its extent, necessity, and nature. My argument centres on the

Orientalist ideology resulting in the armed conflict. Along with M. Farooqi (1972), I stress that the Partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 was disruptive for Pakistan's economy, which had not developed a strong industrial base. Ironically, this worked as fertile ground for a small number of capitalists to exercise their power in the political and administrative structures. It was realized that the prominent twenty-two tycoons, who were initially involved in the trade sector, came to establish their industrial empires through political patronage. Unsurprisingly, the Orientalist ideology regarding the Bengalis of the Eastern wing prevalent in the political field dominated the economic domain as well:

> Since quick profits and not the interests of the masses or of the various regions of Pakistan were the sole motive of these 22 monopoly houses, they used east wing (now Bangladesh), NWFP [North West Frontier Province], Baluchistan and even most of Sind (barring Karachi) as their economic hinterland, as sources of raw materials and markets for their manufactured goods, i.e. these areas were treated as colonies. (Ibid, p. 61)

I will also not excavate *all* the details about the economic exploitation of the Eastern wing, since this is beyond the scope of my discussion. My point is to show how the Bengalis fought against the Orientalist ideologies operating against them in the political, economic, and cultural circles of undivided Pakistan. How the ethos of the Language Movement inspired the Bengalis in this resistance is the pivot of my analysis here.

The first aspect of the Orientalist ideology in operation is the formulation of the Self/Other binary by the West Pakistani authorities regarding the Bengalis. As I explained above, when postcolonial societies restructure their foundational narratives in such a way that their stories of homogenization resemble the unscrutinized Western narratives regarding Self/Other, the practice repeats colonial programme of knowledge production without favouring a dialogue

between the cultural groups involved in this categorization. Mohammad Ayub Khan writes about the foundation-building period in a manner that explains the resurfacing of Self/Other binary in East/West Pakistan context. Khan was the president of Pakistan from 1958 to 1969, whose regime wanted to initiate the notion of modern development of his nation. Trained at the British Royal Military College at Sandhurst, Khan rose to prominence as a commander in chief in 1951 and to the pinnacle as the chief martial law administrator in 1958, which was followed by his presidentship, having exiled his appointer, the then existing President Iskander Mirza. His notion of modernist ambition included not only agrarian reforms and industrial growth, but also democratic experiments. However, he remains immovable regarding the continuation of Self/Other binary, which is superimposed on East/West Pakistan axis. Khan (1967) defines the Urdu/Bengali debate as an issue requiring academic engagement and settlement through scientific discussion, though he laments that its politically incendiary nature becomes familiar. He obviously implies the West Pakistani think tanks, when he expects intellectuals to solve the issue. By accusing them of sitting on the fence, he takes the spotlight by offering a solution to the uncomfortable political issue for West Pakistan. As he explains the matter, which keeps challenging the authorities of the Western wing, despite being settled in 1954/56 through the approval of Bengali as one of the official state languages:

> It is quite clear to me that with two national languages we cannot become a one-nation State; we shall continue to remain a multi-nation State… neither Bengali nor Urdu can become the language of the whole of Pakistan. It is equally true that if the people—both in East and West Pakistan—want to develop cohesion they must have a medium to communicate with each other… To evolve such a medium we have to identify common elements in Bengali and Urdu and allow them to grow together through a common script. (Ibid., p. 102)

If the imagined combined script appears to be the refutation of the Self/Other binary, the insistence on nationalism based on a single official language still nullifies the need for dialogue with the pertinent cultural groups. In addition, by suggesting that the speakers of Urdu and Bengali cannot develop real knowledge about their traditions and practices, Khan buttresses the idea that the foundation of the Muslim majority nation through the common religion is not viable, since the religious identity has to be worked out in the real-world context. Besides, identifying the common elements of the language leads to the distortion of Bengali language, since this task will be quite understandably in the hands of the people working for preserving the oneness of the nation based on Urdu language, rather than religious identity, since the language by now has become the actual means of belonging to the nation.

Why the Self/Other continues in order to preserve the unity of the nation in the preferred method of the Western wing has a stronger economic reason. Indeed, the Otherization started to take place when East Pakistan's economic underdevelopment became more and more apparent to the decision-makers in the Western wing. This is evident from Khan's disagreement with 'the slogan of "disparity"' (ibid., p. 222) widespread in the Eastern wing. He invalidates the idea that the slogan foregrounded the lack of socio-economic equality in the two wings. Instead, he entrenches the Self/Other divide through connecting the comparative capital shortfall in the Eastern wing with the people's proportional poverty. In other words, the relative poverty of the region became the reason for the people's unequal status with their counterparts in the Western wing. Khan keeps synonimizing poverty with otherness:

> Certain parts of West Pakistan were relatively advanced industrially whereas in East Pakistan there was hardly any manufacturing capacity. During the early days of British administration in the central and eastern regions of the sub-continent, all commercial and industrial activity centred round

> Fort William in Calcutta. There was no significant shift when India came under the direct rule of the British Crown. East Pakistan remained a hinterland of Calcutta. (Ibid., p. 223)

Without probing the extent to which East Pakistan could be considered to be the backwoods of Calcutta-centric West Bengal, we can see that Khan is not interested in acknowledging the historical factors causing this phenomenon. His writing mentions the natural resources of the land, but does not investigate the reasons for their inadequate utilization, which could have resulted in a remarkable turnaround in the people's fortunes. Instead, he surmises that history can only 'explain away' (ibid.) this condition. This allows him to assert that the economic distance between the two provinces indicates why the Easterners have to accept the superior position of their Western fellows, despite being part of the same fraternity, since the latter are prevented to be so due to the former's impoverished condition. The Bengali speakers have to be Otherized, since they cannot march ahead at the same speed with the Urdu speakers. Khan is emphatic that no government will be able to eradicate the binary, since they cannot 'compel people in one region to work at less than their capacity till others build up an equal capacity' (ibid.). Following this premise, unequal economic development leads to unequal national standing by demonstrating the postcolonial version of the Self/Other formulation.

Arguably, the Self/Other divide has an underlying political motivation, which can be illustrated in the East/West Pakistan framework as well. The politics underlying the Self/Other composition is about the justification of the Other's subordinate condition, which Khan's autobiography indicates. As Behdad identifies above, the effectiveness of Orientalist representation lies in the capacity of the discourse to establish the subordinate condition as a powerful mode of knowledge, which is invigorated by the neo-colonialist strategy of controlling the objectified Other. This objectification is apparent through the One Unit policy adopted for the two wings. This means that fifty per cent legislative seats in both the houses were allocated to East

Pakistan, while the entire West Pakistan provinces, consisting mainly of four parts, shared the other fifty per cent. The Punjabis intensely protested against this proposition made by the Basic Principles Committee of the Constituent Assembly constructed in 1949 for framing the country's constitution. The Punjabi leaders stressed the Eastern wing's unfair singularity, whereas the province had to surrender its numerical majority by being home to fifty six per cent of Pakistan's population (73 million in number). In effect, the policy turned the majoritarian advantage into a minoritarian factor, since the Western wing always held the political helm. This shows that the single unit status of the Easterners was a means of curbing the political will of the true majority of the majoritarian nation, which is why the Bengalis primarily supported the idea of Pakistan. Lawrence Ziring (1997, p. 608) emphasizes the mismatch of expectations: 'Except for their shared religious experience, the two geographic regions that became Pakistan in August 1947 had few assets with which to bridge their great divide'. Measures like the two-unit formation only widened the divide. These were introduced because the subordinate status and the objectified condition of the Easterners needed to be unquestioningly established.

What makes us think that the subordinate condition of the Bengalis of East Pakistan surpassed their majoritarian fascination? Ved Nanda (1972, p. 328) provides us with valuable insights into the subdued condition of the actual majority in united Pakistan by revealing that

> East Pakistanis never comprised more than 10 percent of the officer corps and only one East Pakistani was appointed minister over the past 15 years [since 1947], holding the finance portfolio for four days. In the Pakistani Army, East Pakistani representation was even less than 10 percent, and of 50 senior army officers who were promoted to the rank of major general and above since 1947, only one was from East Pakistan.

This practically means that West Pakistan-oriented bureaucrats dominated East Pakistan's administration, and mostly remained a

source of disillusionment for the Bengalis. East Pakistan-oriented political leaders were often jailed for supposedly anti-state schemes. As a result, East Pakistan remained constantly outraged, which found expression in student riots and mass protests. We have to remember the student-led Education Movement (1962), where students received bullets again, while protesting against the commercialization of education proposed by General Ayub Khan-appointed commission headed by his education secretary S. M. Sharif, which also reinstated Urdu as the medium of education for the country. Understandably, the political motivation behind the Self/Other binary was that the minority could effectively deprive a majority of economic and socio-cultural rights, since the latter had to resort to political unrest for demanding the restoration of these dues.

It is undeniable that the Bengalis were economically underprivileged and the nascent state of Pakistan had its distinctive challenges concerning resource building. However, this cannot justify the objectification of the Otherized group as unfitted for advancement. The Bengalis required their capabilities to be recognized, augmented, and developed. However, the structural challenges of the decolonized state, particularly the economic ones, meant that the Otherization justified the opposite condition of the expected provision for the cultural group. Therefore, their subdued position inside the whole unit could seem like the objective truth, as Jagmohan Meher (2015, p. 301) unreservedly announces that 'the country's Punjabi dominated army always looked at the Bengalis as less than the Pakistani citizens'. The neo-colonialist strategy of controlling the objectified Other is extremely important to understand, for the failure of the nation-state of united Pakistan was not exclusively linked to the amalgamation of geographical absurdness, constitutional doubt, economic discrepancies, and political disharmony, which critics like Meher highlight. Instead, Said's Orientalist method enables us to perceive that what Meher terms 'Language Issues', indicating that 'much more [was] at stake than only the language or the cultural pride of the Bengalis' (ibid., p. 305, 307), worked as the basis of a politics of discrimination against the culturally

Other and economically disadvantaged Bengalis. This prompted the disintegration of the country by evincing all the other factors involved like the geographical and constitutional ones. It is small wonder that Stanley Maron (1955, p. 144) presciently concludes his article by asserting that 'East Pakistanis will not slacken in their efforts for greater self-rule and… it will be essential that the vital decisions shall not be made only in Karachi'.

Ironically, vital decisions never ceased to be made in Karachi, as the Western rulers, who were seen to be emblematic of '"Punjabi imperialism"' (ibid., p. 134), did not share Maron's astuteness regarding the Bengalis' yearning for ending their Otherization through achieving self-rule. Therefore, the third aspect of Orientalism mentioned above, Western Self's ability to speak on Eastern Other's behalf, started to be visible more prominently in both the wings of Pakistan. To reassert, Orientalism is a regularized body of rallying ideas regarding the Oriental Other that does not necessarily correspond to the reality of his/her existence. As we have seen so far, West Pakistan's insistence on centralism heightened the Bengali apprehension regarding their Otherization, since they were almost absent from the two most important decision-making bodies, namely, civilian bureaucracy and military organization. The lack of presence was interpreted as the Easterners' inability to support the Western centralism by aligning with the system of governance devised by the regimes. British historian L. F. Rushbrook Williams (1972) attempts to reveal the limited ideas regarding the condition of the Easterners on the part of the Western authorities in a detached manner. He discovers that the Western interpretation of the Easterners' backwardness was in effect hasty and non-comprehensive, since the rulers' view looked at the surface reality without taking into account the historical and cultural factors contributing to the constraints. Commenting on the influx of Western officials in the Eastern periphery, the historian observes that these executives

> considered the East Pakistanis to be both clannish and incompetent, prouder of being Bengalis than of being Pakistanis, and largely lacking in the new national outlook… Looking back on this period, an impartial observer might be justified in holding that these competent, bustling Westerners failed to make adequate allowance for [the fact that the Easterners were] … afforded few opportunities for the acquisition of expertise in administration. Nor did they appreciate the fact that the East Pakistanis, although virtually excluded from power and responsibility for the management of their own affairs, had found compensation in other directions. Their artists, their poets, and their orators were both numerous and famous; they had enormous pride in their cultural heritage. (Ibid., p. 18)

Clearly, the Easterners had to constantly fight against the Western superiority in terms of the latter's greater suitability to conform to the Urdu-based national image, administrative advancement, nearness to the Central Government, and vast influence in national matters. This means that the Easterners either had to surrender to the fact that they were unable to vocalize their rights, or, develop political strength to assert their prerogative of managing the socio-economic and political matters of the province.

In this context, the Six-Point movement emerged demanding the Easterners' rights of self-determination. The movement concentrated on six demands brought forward by the Awami League in 1966 to end representation of the East by the West, envisaging a federation of Pakistan giving a great deal of autonomy to the Eastern wing. In March 1966, after a few months at the close of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, when Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announced the Six-Point Demand, it became a resounding success among the Easterners, since they felt that the voice of the 70 million Bengalis was finally heard by ending the idea of the Western Self's ability to speak on the Easterner's behalf. The Six-Point upheld the survivalist urgency of the Easterners through the following steps: (1) a parliamentary form of government

on the basis of universal adult franchise; (2) federating units with only Defence and Foreign Affairs to be lodged in the central government; (3) separate currencies for the two wings, freely convertible into each other; (4) power of taxation and revenue collection for the federating units; (5) liberty of the two wings in international trade; and (6) self-sufficiency of East Pakistan in defence matters. One of Bangladesh's founding economists with his own inputs into the Six-Point, Nurul Islam (2003), outlines how the Eastern political activists did not require specialist knowledge to understand the instrumentality of the movement in opposing the Western orientalist policies in denying them a decision-making role inside the country. They realized that the Six-Point was going to declare their rights to establish control over financial resources, foreign matters, and domestic concerns. They clearly grasped that the West could no longer transfer the Eastern resources by portraying the Bengalis as inept. What the Easterners did not perceive, however, was that the West preferred the dismantling of the country to the acceptance of the Six-Point demand. Nevertheless, the outpouring of support for the Six-Point movement suggested that the ordinary Bengalis had perfectly comprehended the outcome of the orientalist attitude of the West towards the East: 'To stay a longer period with Pakistan making compromises would have brought no gain' for them (ibid., p. 106).

American political scientist Richard D. Lambert (1959) provides us with an insightful analysis of the West's orientalist objectification of the Easterners. Pakistan's one-eyed policy towards the ethno-linguistic characteristics of the Bengalis conjoined by their economic stagnation could not identify that East Bengal may have turned East Pakistan in 1947, but the region had existed for thousands of years with its composite culture, espousing unity in diversity. Through their strong support for the Pakistan movement, the Bengalis sought material well-being, which could not be devoid of their heritage. However, the orientalist approach was bound to clash against the Bengalis' ingrained heterogeneity. The diverseness was the reason for the Bengalis' unification with the Westerners through the hope of expanding the

horizon of the nation by numerous avenues most of which were out of reach for them, since the West Pakistani authorities blocked their voices. Due to the West's undermining of the Bengali striving, it remained unidentified that '[t]he demand for an equal share for the Bengali tongue in state affairs is not unconnected with the demand for greater representation for Bengalis in the central government' (ibid., p. 55). Since the Western authorities decided to interpret both the aspects as signs of the Bengalis' subversive tradition threatening the broader need for stability and progress of the country, they took charge of shaping the Easterners' reality. Lambert registers the inevitable ethnic conflict as an upshot of the orientalist scheme: 'The absence of a regularized recourse to some expression of public opinion… has made it almost inevitable that groups which feel strongly on an issue must make their opinions felt by politically disruptive techniques' (ibid., p. 58).

Why the political spokesmen for the Eastern region, representing the entire gamut of the regional frustrations were not paid heed to, despite civil disobedience like the Mass Upsurge of 1969, can be explained by another orientalist tactic, namely, the exoticized condition of the Other's culture. As I explained earlier, Said demonstrates how the Self's territorial thinking interprets the Other's cultural belonging through the latter's geographical existence. Thus, the geographical distance determines why the Other's domain comes to be known as 'the land of the barbarians'. The exoticization of the Bengalis became quite detectable on the heels of the 1965 war. The military government of the West came out of any illusions they might have regarding the necessity of defending the East from an outside attack, which was the means through which the government believed an attempt to secure the province's secessionist efforts would be made. In the long term, as well, forces stationed in the East were going to incur heavy financial burden, since the government was planning to keep the country's defences at a high level. An influential member of the Pakistan Cabinet during the late sixties, G. W. Choudhury (2014), has no qualms about registering that the 1965 war shattered the myth about the West Pakistani solders'

duty about protecting the Eastern wing. He also writes in a matter-of-fact way regarding the West's requirement of a '"magic lamp"' to alleviate the poverty of the peripheral land, which is why it was becoming a '"painful"' (ibid., p. 60) reference, if not exactly a barbaric phenomenon to the Western authorities. Unsurprisingly, the magic solution to the Bengalis was independence, the footsteps of which were nearing, as the protestors against the military regime's economic policies 'displayed the skeleton of a starved villager in front of *Shahid-Minar*' (memorial to those killed over the language issue) to tell the people' (ibid., p. 30; emphasis in the original) that their economic condition was degrading. Inevitably, the Bengalis' Otherization is linked back to the Language Movement, since the authorities explained the strategy as a compound effect of their geographical remoteness, economic impediment, and cultural unsuitability. Thus, the Bengalis living beyond the Western territory were exoticized based on a loose connection between these three issues.

As Said further explains, the unfamiliarity of space suggested by the Other's geographical distance from the Self's native region is utilized to surmise that the remote people's culture is unsuitable. This exoticization is particularly visible regarding the Sanskrit-based Bengali language, which gave rise to the stereotypic view that these faraway people were deeply influenced by Hinduism, particularly the lower classes and the vernacular elite. This encouraged the Pakistani military's view that the exotic Bengalis would have to purge themselves of Hindu influence, and adhere to the Pakistani version of Muslimness in full. The Western authorities' projection of the Bengalis as lesser Muslims leaves us with no doubt that the Language Movement was pivotal for the Bengalis to realize that the failure of cooperation expected by them between the two wings was due to what Said (1994, p. 75) calls 'the structure of attitude and reference' set up by the West. We can easily comprehend that the exoticized region may have been appearing to be burdensome for the state, as we saw through Choudhury's narration, but the Bengalis were not deemed to be worthy of independence. Instead, the spiralling rigidity of the Westerners

regarding the culturally inapposite Bengalis suggests that the authorities were expecting that these people could be coerced to show their allegiance to a united Pakistan. Richard Sisson and Rose (1990) reveal deeper aspects of the exoticization process spurring the coercive choice. The writers explain that the nation formation in Pakistan prioritized the Punjabis, which promptly alienated the Bengalis, who were not regarded to be properly qualified for Pakistani Muslimness. In fact, they were seen by the Western rulers 'as latter-day Muslim converts still corrupted by Hindu practices, unlike descendants of the founders of Islam or conquerors like themselves' (ibid., p. 9) as a result of which the Bengalis' unmartial nature was taken for granted. Ultimately, the exoticization explains why the Pakistani authorities believed that the Bengalis would abandon their rebellion the moment they were coerced.

We can already decipher that the final aspect of the orientalist strategies, the horrific consequences of these processes, is a natural outcome. As I clarified above, Said is unequivocal about the antipathy and aggression that Otherization stokes up. His opposition against the catastrophic results remains indubitable. Said argues that this is not to defy the constitutive function of cultural differences but to challenge the idea that differences are inexorably derived from reified essences that stimulate armed conflicts and imperial domination. In other words, the Otherization takes place by denying universal values of humanity. This is exactly what happened in East Pakistan after the collapse of the support for the National Assembly. Anthony Mascarenhas identifies the reification of Bengali essence that generated not only the impasse but also the hostility between the two wings after the general election on 7 December 1970; this was conducted based on universal franchise and direct voting the results of which were not accepted by West Pakistan, since the Awami League led by Bangabandhu won a majority (quoted in Oldenburg, 1985). Pointing out the West's incapacity to forget that the Muslims of East were instrumental for the creation of Pakistan, Mascarenhas observes how the Bengalis' demand for self-determination escalated the Western aggression, since the military

authorities believed that the supposedly Hinduized Bengalis could be bulldozed into becoming true Pakistani Muslims, as there would be a renewed attempt to 'teach them Urdu', having an eye to 'cleanse East Pakistan once and for all of the threat of secession' (ibid., p. 729). Thus, the imperialism Said mentions resurfaced speedily. Despite the fact that Awami League captured 160 of the 162 seats in East Pakistan, whereas Z. A. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party won 81 of the 138 seats, the latter decided that the former's campaign based on the Six-Point Demand had unforeseeable implications for the two wings, since the movement was a veiled effort of secession. Consequently, President Yahya Khan decided on 28 February 1971 that the concerned political parties required more time to thrash out an agreement on the draft constitution outside the parliament, which is why the Assembly session would be postponed. Brigadier-General Siddiq Salik (1977, p. 44), who was stationed as Major in East Pakistan around the time recollects that the Bengalis' revulsion to the denial of their rights was palpable, as within hours of the postponement announcement Dhaka as a 'city seethed with fury'. Consequently, Bangabandhu launched his non-violent non-cooperation movement to protest against the government's plan to rekindle the Bengalis' loyalty to a united Pakistan by crushing their rebellious spirit. In other words, orientalist policies had reached the crescendo of the chaos through increasing hostility and aggression by making sure that the Rubicon was evident, where the authorities had realized that the armed conflict was on the horizon, since a decolonized state could not permit secession.

Salik witnesses the reification of the Bengalis' cultural essence much before the arrival of the crescendo, even though he cannot decipher the orientalist approach of his superiors underlying the situation. Recording his impression of Dhaka during the early 1970s, he notices that the Western authorities could hardly rely on the Bengalis' proverbial support for the Pakistan Movement in 1947, since the politicians, business executives, intellectuals, and other individuals he met had become disillusioned about the Muslim majority nation. The imperialist policies were hard for him to acknowledge, however. He was

really concerned whether the army personnel remained loyal to united Pakistan, but discovered to his dismay that 'in the "local-non-local" riots of November 1969, [even] the Bengali troops, deployed on internal security duties, had acted with hesitation' (ibid., p. 9). He had to surrender to the small but unnerving detail that months afterwards, the Language Movement day was commemorated '"as a day of inspiration"' (ibid., p. 14). One cannot help but wonder why the apparently unmanageable Bengaliness had to be curbed by the authorities. It is understandable that they had enough reasons to believe that not all Bengalis could afford to veer away from their support for Pakistan Movement. Nevertheless, the orientalist approach of the Western wing guaranteed that these people could not be assimilated into Pakistan for their presumed cultural essence. Significantly, Salik's book candidly reports the military arbitration for overcoming the duality of Pakistani imperialism regarding the Bengalis. In reference to a conversation between General Yahya Khan and Lieutenant-General Sahabzada Yakub Khan, Salik writes that during the post-election crisis, the President was aware that he might appear to be delaying the secession, but he needed to hasten it. Yakub Khan was asked for his opinion on a seemingly 'hypothetical situation' of military operation to which he replied, '"[i]t has to be quick like a surgeon's knife. And it should be followed by massive action for political and economic healing"' (ibid., p. 39). Despite Salik's silence on the imperialist aggression, it is clear from the rest of his writing that he had no misconceptions about the impossibility of political and economic ameliorations at that historical juncture. A Pakistani ambassador to Sri Lanka and the United States, Husain Haqqani (2013), echoes this by proving the ultimate outcome of Orientalism: war. Describing the West's decisiveness 'as colonial hubris', Haqqani foreshadows the military crackdown by admitting the animosity propelling the measure: 'The West Pakistani elite seemed willing to risk the division of the country rather than allow the Bengali majority to have a leading role in the country's governance' (ibid., p. 149). Commenting on the military action on 25 March 1971 dubbed, 'Operation Searchlight', which massacred thousands of Bengali civilians,

Salik (1977, p. 78) corroborates the Orientalist hubris, as he records a lunchtime conversation among military officials on the 26th: 'Peeling an orange, Captain Chaudhry said, "The Bengalis have been sorted out well and proper—at least for a generation". Major Malik added, "Yes, they only know the language of force"'. Needless to reiterate that this is a classic example of Self/Other divide producing its terminal output: extermination of the Other's humanity.

This annihilation of the humanity of the Bengalis is remarkably portrayed by Selina Hossain's (2003) novel based on a true 1971 Liberation War event, *Shark River Grenade,* which was originally published in 1976. It is a landmark work of Bangladeshi literature, which Auritro Majumder (2016, p. 423) identifies as the Hossain's successful rendition of her social commitments by revealing 'the intersection between public politics in Bengal and gender'. Written in the immediate aftermath of the 1971 Liberation War, *Shark River Grenade* tells a powerful and controversial story that intertwines personal tragedy with the brutal birth of a nation. The novel is renowned for its unflinching look at motherhood, disability, and the impossible choices forced upon ordinary people during wartime. The story is set in the village called Haldigaon, and revolves around the life of a woman named Buri. As a teenager, Buri is married to her cousin Gafur, a widower with two sons, Saleem and Kalim. Driven by a strong desire for a child of her own, she and her husband seek saintly blessings. Their son, Rois, is born but is deaf and mute, which brings Buri immense sorrow. She struggles to comprehend why her patience is being tested this way, despite never harming anyone in her entire life. Gafur dies, and as the family expands, the 1971 Liberation War breaks out. Buri's stepson Saleem joins the guerrilla freedom fighters (*Mukti Bahini*), knowing only two things: 'the border of the motherland and its soil' (Hossain, 2003, p. 75). When the Pakistani army and their local collaborators learn that Saleem is a freedom fighter, they excessively torture and then murder the other stepson, Kalim, by throwing him near Buri's feet. She becomes conflicted in her mind, not knowing whether Kalim's real mother would have been able to snatch him from

underneath the military boot. The emotional turmoil leads to the climactic moment of the novella, when the warfare intensifies. Two young freedom fighters, fleeing from the Pakistani army, take refuge in Buri's home. When the soldiers come searching, Buri makes a shocking decision: she hands over her disabled son, Rois, to the soldiers, deceiving them to believe that he is the fleeing freedom fighter, since he is made to hold the hidden light machine gun. Thus, she sacrifices her own son to save the two young guerrillas, believing they can contribute to the war effort while her disabled son cannot.

The writer does not condone the morally ambiguous decision Buri makes. Instead, Hossais projects this as the psychological violence the war inflicts on a Bengali village woman, curtailing her humanity. Contrary to what Major Malik declares above, Hossain shows that violence is not inherent in Bengali people. The war produces its own 'language of force', which compels a mother to confront a horrific moral choice, pitting her instinct to save for her only child combined with her guilty conscience of being a helpless onlooker of her second stepson's most tortuous death against her duty to her nation and its young fighters. Buri's internal monologue during the tragic moment of turning in her child reveals the full effect of the war's imposition of a limited humanity on her:

> Even if Buri wants to, she cannot solely be Rois' mother now… The few soldiers thank Buri in their own language. They announce this [transfer] as a real work for the country for which they also assure her of a reward. Buri does not understand a word. She remains stuck to the door like a silent puppet… Discovering the weapon in the hands of dumb and deaf Rois, no one protests… The desired prey is now in their possession… They are leaving. Buri feels as if they were wrenching her soul. (Hossain 2003, p. 109)

While Buri's swift action can be praised as a supreme act of patriotism, it can be simultaneously viewed as a problematic dynamics

between disability and nationalism. Interestingly, the soldiers also act because of being inspired by a nationalist ideology, which is about retaining the two-winged existence of Pakistan, while Buri is forced to sacrifice her seemingly unproductive son for her the sanctity of her motherland. Arguably, the novel's continued power to challenge and provoke its readers about unconventional gender role and impossible demands of nationalism points towards an unavoidable fact: the true sacrifice takes the form of a wounded mother's soul and her humanity, for she has to be Otherized by the speakers of an incomprehensible language, who are willing to reward her only when she surrenders to their authorities.

If *Shark River Grenade* works as a metaphorical representation of a riverine motherland subjected to a shark-like military invasion, which is fiercely opposed by the grenade attacks of guerrilla fighters, Rabeya Khatun's (2014) critically acclaimed memoir, *Nine Months of '71,* which was originally published in 1991, records the accumulation of Bengali resistance against their Otherized status inside united Pakistan. Khatun was not just a chronicler of the war, but an oppositional voice against the brutality of the occupying forces, the torture of women, and the extreme fear of the common people. In the memoir, the author portrays constrained life, constant fear, and indomitable longing for freedom in besieged Dhaka, where the dwellers' sleep seems to have gone to exile. Despite the confined situation, the very first entry of the memoir suggests the arrival of violence. On 16 March 1971, Khatun writes the story of processions, documenting that three-decade-long prominent artists and littérateurs gathered around the *Shaheed Minar* with placards and banners displaying slogans like, 'The language of weapons will continue with weapons/Come, let us take the path of armed weapons' (ibid., p. 6). It was as if their minds had already predicted the violence of 'Operation Searchlight' on the 25th. On the dawn of the 26th, Khatun observes after staying awake all night:

> I heard that millions of Rangoon [now Yangon] citizens set off on foot by crossing deep forests, jungles, and swamps towards the

> path of Bengal after the Second World War due to the fear of Japanese bombs. What I saw projected on the movies portraying that time seemed to have a direct replay in front of my eyes. This is even more mournful… Clinging the hands of children, elderly people, and sick relatives or with small possessions, desperate crowds are running towards villages… Only a young girl with a feeble smile mentioned while walking that wherever the two eyes go, we are heading towards that. (Ibid., p. 13)

The diminished and uprooted existence of a war-wrought people has already started to be evident, despite the absence of visible signs of the start of the warfare. The military operation of the night of the 25th has made the Self/Other binary permanent. Khatun's reference to the Second World War not only indicates the human cost of expansionism, but also works as an omen for destruction on an unprecedented scale. Reflecting on the turning points in the history of the two wings of Pakistan, Khatun wonders: 'From '47 to '52, and from '52 to '71 [is the span]. Agitated, rebellious youth groups [have become prominent]. But how will the unarmed Bengali citizens, who are unoffending in nature, combat against the military-educated Pakistani army?' (ibid., p. 17).

Khatun's memoir works as a critical corrective to the patriarchal narrative of the asymmetrical warfare, highlighting the distinct reality of a woman's war, where she has to balance the roles of an absent freedom fighter's wife and an anchor of the family, while facing a significant financial setback without a safety net. As a parent to two teenagers and two young kids, she is always anxious thinking what will happen to the family if the occupying forces find out that her husband has crossed the border to be trained as a guerrilla fighter. As Khatun succinctly puts it: 'The present time is also a fearsome enemy. When one needs comfort and courage from one's kinsfolk, these are the very things facing scarcity in the soil of the motherland right now. Who will look at whom?' (ibid., p. 43). The writer keeps referring to the inhumane time, where the brutal realities of the conflict, including the psychological trauma, physical danger, and the atrocities committed by

the Pakistani army, seem to be too heavy to bear. Despite the fact that widespread dangers are lurking in the occupied city, the memoir works as a testament to the spirit of resistance against what Giorgio Agamben terms as 'bare life', which is 'a life that is neither human nor animal, but rather an inhuman kind of life that exists at the limits of ethical and political categories' (De Boever, 2011, p. 30). The besieged Dhaka dwellers have to occupy the threshold, as they are severely deprived of citizens' amenities. Khatun explains:

> Once power and water disappeared after one o'clock last night, they have not yet returned…In civic life, the need for electricity and water is beyond description. However, in the midst of all those hindrances, I discovered that a dim flame of blue light was lit in my consciousness. It happened whenever the whisper went around that these [guerrilla operations] are nothing—the sound of their [freedom fighters'] approaching footsteps. Very soon, they will enter into the capital in groups. (Ibid., p.56)

The military invasion may have put the Dhaka dwellers into the strait and the narrow, since now they are forced to exist 'at the limits of ethical and political categories' but the memoir keeps the hope alive that *Mukti Bahini* will soon put an end to the trying times. A woman writer's voice against the Bengalis' reduced existence as human beings becomes very effective, because this exercise 'reconstitute[s] the normative figure of the woman as an equal member of the people-nation' (Chatterjee 2020, p. 28), which the freedom fighters have been striving to bring about.

Pioneering Bangladeshi musicologist Sanjida Khatun (2010) further fulfils this role of being an equal contributor in a nation-building mission. Khatun's *Collection of Essays* covers a wide range of topics central to Bengali identity, including culture, literature, language, and education. The essays are not academic pontifications but reflections of her lived experiences, offering perspectives on the cultural movement before and after the 1971 Liberation War. Her advocacy was about

uplifting the Bengalis from their reduced condition, which was a horrific consequence of their Otherization inside united Pakistan. Khatun reminisces that in 1952, she was a fresher in B.A. (Hons.) in Bengali course at Dhaka University. She remembers how she felt at one with the protesters, who took part in the procession on the 21st February through defying the order for gunfire by Nurul Amin, who was East Pakistan's Chief Minister during that time. There were leaflets requesting the female section of Dhaka dwellers to participate in meetings at four in the afternoon on 22nd February. Since she was determined to attend the political gathering, despite all kinds of threats, she notices that her mother decided to come along. As Khatun describes this event:

> I noticed that even Ammu [mother] also changed her sari quickly to accompany me. No, it was not for Bengali language; observing her daughter's restlessness, she could not allow me to travel such a great distance alone. Ammu is actually a scared human being. She used to be afraid of the army and the police like the King of Death. (Ibid., p 17)

Obviously, the young generation found their courage through connecting to their cultural roots, which urged the previous generation to come forward for resisting the West Pakistan-imposed reduced position inside the state. Asserting the newfound courage to restore their full-human status required all the Bengalis to withstand the state machinery, obviously. Khatun explains how the Bengalis reached the untapped reservoir of their emotional and spiritual strength, which enabled them to fight the system. Khatun pinpoints how the people were able to tap into the reservoir through the Language Movement, which encouraged their 'independent judgment' as opposed to any 'narrow notions generated out of their mortification', which could occur due to their economic backwardness, as we saw earlier, as well as their genuine sense of glory through their 'cultural inheritance' (ibid., p. 25). We can clearly see how the Bengalis resisted their dehumanized

condition in united Pakistan through their awareness of their cultural distinctness that survived various forms of colonization.

Khatun clarifies that 'through the law of rotation, when the urge of struggle for independence and self-discovery was felt, the periodic songs of Rabindranath [Tagore]-Nazrul [Islam] became relevant for our movement' (ibid., p. 29). Consequently, Basudha Banerji (2025) remembers Khatun's activist role in accelerating the movement for establishing the Bengalis' self-determination rights in her obituary of the nonagenarian by terming her as 'the gentle giant of Bengali nationalism and culture'. Explaining Khatun's rich life, where she performed as a multifaceted figure in Bengali culture—musicologist, educator, institution builder, author, singer, and activist—Banerji rightly suggests that throughout her 92-year life, she demonstrated what resilience and public service truly meant. Undoubtedly, Khatun's greatest legacy is co-founding *Chhayanaut* in 1961, a cultural institution created not only to resist the Pakistani regime's oppressive cultural policies, but also to rescue the Bengalis out of their diminished existence as a cultural group. Indeed,

> *Chhayanaut* (roughly translates to 'shade of a large tree'; also the name of a Hindustani classical music *raaga*) would grow into a sanctuary for Bengali music and arts, fostering a renaissance of cultural expression at a time when the Bengali identity faced systematic erasure. (Emphasis added and in original)

Helping revive Bengali identity during a time of structural elimination means an enormous effort for not accepting the Otherization of the people as an unquestionable finality. Significantly, Khatun's art and activism provide an answer to the crucial question Anuradha Roy (2020, p. 49) raises: 'Should women have a different nationalism or reject it altogether?' Nationalism and feminism can successfully align when the female voice works against the imposition of Self/Other binary within one national boundary, for the Otherization

of cultural groups, who accord to form a nation, instigates aggressions, which include the patriarchal ones as well.

It should be intelligible from the discussion of this section that all five aspects of Orientalism were displayed by the West Pakistani domination of its Eastern wing. If we are in any doubt, Jahanara Imam's (1989) account of the fateful night of 25 March 1971 makes us perceive the ferocity of the Self/Other divide involved here. Imam is revered in Bangladesh as '*Shaheed Janani*' (A martyr's mother), whose memoir documents that on 'SUNDAY, 28TH MARCH, 1971', she and her martyred son Rumi learnt that the military action designed for straightening out the Bengalis had culminated in demolishing the pillars of the Language Martyrs' Monument, though the foundation remained intact (ibid., p. 48; capitals in the original). It is a historical proof that despite all the aggressions by the Westerners and their loyalist segments in the East, the Otherized Bengalis could not be blended in the Self. On the contrary, Rumi's mother 'cried: "Oh Shaheed Minar, we shall take revenge for this indignity some day"' (ibid., p. 49). It is the indignity of the Self/Other division that could not sustain united Pakistan in the end. As I showed above, West Pakistan's economic policies created a situation of internal colonialism, leading to a vertical ethnic stratification, by which a class character was imposed on ethnic differentiation. It thus became straightforward for the intellectuals, student leaders, and petit-bourgeoisie to mobilize mass support for the Bengali autonomy movement. Demand for the Liberation War was a step down the road, in reaction to the military repression by the West Pakistani government. Ultimately, the dream of a non-divisive society realized through the hardship of Pakistan period gave distinctness to the Bengalis of East Pakistan. The importance of various levels of freedom is the crux of the Language Movement that united all the inhabitants of East Pakistan through shared language, culture, and history. Following Said's prescient illustration of the dangers of Otherization, we can comprehend that even one group of decolonized people can impose the Orientalist structure by another, which is ultimately an exercise of the destructive political process.

The Enemy Narrative Regarding the Tamils and the Inevitability of the Sri Lankan Civil War

I will analyse in this section how Said's Other is applicable in the Sri Lankan Tamil context as well. To repeat the structure of the previous section, tracing the following five aspects will enable me to illustrate the point: the formulation of the Self/Other binary; politics underlying the composition; Western Self's ability to speak on Eastern Other's behalf; the exoticized condition of the Other's culture; and the horrific consequences of these processes. I hasten to add that the Sinhalese/Tamil territories do not exactly form the Wes/East binary in a geographical sense, since the Sinhalese predominantly reside in the Southern, Western, and Central regions, while the Tamils traditionally have a strong presence in the Northern and Eastern zones. Following Margo Kleinfeld (2005), however, I emphasize that territory is both symbolic and real in Sri Lankan context, which makes the Sinhalese representative of the Westerners in the Otherization programme, since they aggressively utilize their religio-linguistic hegemony, as I have elaborated in the previous chapters. In fact, the Sinhalese Otherization of the Tamils by suggesting that the ethnic groups are culturally disparate due to geographical division emboldens the hegemonic goal of defying their common histories. While it is crucial to understand that 'the wet zone in the South fostered an agricultural economy, while a mercantile economy developed in the dry northern and eastern regions', the two types of socio-economic development was turned into a theatre of ethnic animosity and competition soon after Ceylon was recast into postcolonial Sri Lanka (ibid, p. 288). Since then the fictively divided territories have also metamorphosed into a theatre of war based on Self/Other duality between two historically complex peoples professing two distinct and mutually exclusive identities.

The Sinhala-Buddhist formulation of the Tamils as the Other, who are depicted as a threatening force for the unperturbed governance of the country shows the racialization involved in the process (see Seoighe 2017, p. 49). Therefore, I contend that the racial denigration of the

Tamil-speaking Other by the Sinhala-speaking Self is the main reason behind the fact that the minority community currently comprising about 18 per cent of Sri Lankans in a majoritarian society has lost trust in the state and its fully functioning condition. What A. R. M. Imtiyaz and Ben Stavis (2008, p. 138, 139) term as 'Outbidding opponents' is a consequence of the Otherization the progression of which they neatly summarize, as they record how the 'Sinhala-Only' Act in 1956 and the conferring of special status on Buddhism in the Constitution of 1972 led to the 'riots in 1958, 1961, 1974, 1977 and 1983'. These are racial violence showing how the ethnically divided societies utilize tools like languages for deepening the chasm through Self/Other diction, which sets the armed conflict in motion. By exemplifying the five features of Said's Orientalism in the discussion that follows, I argue that the politicization of ethnic discord, which was intensified by the linguistic nationalisms of both the groups, has led to the long-standing Civil War.

I will first elaborate how the formulation of the Self/Other binary works in decolonized Sri Lanka. As we saw above, Said's *Orientalism* makes us comprehend that the construction of Self/Other binaries involves various inconsistencies and omissions, because this ideology is utilized to control marginalized cultural groups. When the colonial control over the Eastern world was established by defining the civilizations and languages of Europe (or the West) by negating those of the Orient (or the East), the narrative muzzled the fact that speaking dissimilar languages does not imply cultivating different expectations for the nation. However, these omissions have to be scrutinized through engaging with the Sri Lankan Tamil context, for example. Harshana Rambukwella (2018) explains that the Self/Other division between the Sinhalese and the Tamils is based on the former's fear about the latter's pan-Dravidianism. As I clarified in chapter one, Tamil is a Dravidian language. This phenomenon is associated with the ethnic group's linguistic affiliation with the Tamils in India so that their linguistic identity can be turned into the ground of labelling the people as an enemy group, since the incorporation of their aspiration means submerging the politico-cultural distinctness of the statistically

disadvantaged Sinhala group in the region. Rambukwella records how this deadlock is evident in a parliamentary speech by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike during the 'Sinhala-Only' Act, since the statesman avows that the Tamil-speaking people need not be anxious about their culture and artistic creations because millions of Tamil speakers in other countries will ensure the existence of these entities, whereas the Sinhala runs the risk of extinction, if the few millions of Sri Lankan speakers stop nurturing the language (see ibid., pp. 98–99). Bandaranaike clinches his speech by nonchalantly adding that "'[p]eople may or may not agree with that point of view, but at least take this as fact, that the vast majority of the Sinhalese felt that way very strongly"' (see ibid., p. 99). This indicates that the founder of People's United Front ambiguously distances himself from the claim that the Sinhalese perceive of a Tamil threat, which they cannot fully justify, though they want to hold on to the belief. 'Whether this threat has some factual basis is something that Bandaranaike leaves for the listener to decide', adds Rambukwella (ibid.). It is because inconsistencies regarding the factuality allow the Sinhalese to generate the Self/Other divide by undermining the dream of equality upheld by the 1930s' *Swabasha* (vernacular) Movement. Thus, the aim of addressing the grievances of colonial history by shaping the postcolonial nation as an accommodating platform was reversed by defining the civilizations and languages of the Sinhalese in contrast to those of the Tamils.

How the language politics became an aid for the Otherization technique is evident through Bandaranaike's omission of Munidasa Cumaratunga as well. Cumaratunga was an eminent scholar and writer of the twentieth-century Sri Lanka, who pioneered the *hela* (indigenous) movement advocating that the purity of language is a required aspect of nationalist loyalty. The movement sought to purify Sinhala language of all foreign elements, including the borrowed characteristics from Sanskrit. From the late 1930s onward, *hela* became a central concern in Sinhala nationalism showing why the preservation of Sinhalese culture, race, and territory was of utmost importance to

the inhabitants of the island. The absence of Cumaratunga from Bandarnaike's speech suggests that linguistic politics did not remain ontological after independence but constituted an epistemological issue in order to advance the majoritarian authority for ensuring the group's greater visibility and rights on the island. Rather than preserving Sinhala race and culture, the Self/Other division changed the majoritarian identity into a bargaining tool for securing the ethnic group's social ascendency. Hence, I disagree with Rambukwella that 'Bandaranaike's liberal elitist nationalism also underscores the protean nature of nationalist discourse' (ibid., p. 100). Instead, his speech demonstrates the fundamentalist influence in his nationalist thinking, which demands the formation of a hegemonic control over the island by defining it as an anchorage of Buddhism. The Self to be identified with this becomes inevitably Sinhalese. Tessa Bartholomeusz and Chandra de Silva (1998, p. 3) expound that while terming the non-Sinhalese as enemy, 'religion and ethnicity' have been successfully combined 'for "Self" and "Other"' division so that the centuries of coexistence between the communities can be overturned. Thus, the Sinhalese alienated the 'the largest minority' for establishing an unclarified '"crisis of identity"' (ibid., p. 6, 25) that amplified their power, as we saw in Bandaranaike's case.

I have to reveal the politics underlying the composition in more detail. As we observed above, the Orientalist discourse produces 'cultural, racial, or historical generalizations' about the Other for justifying the group's subordinate condition. The discursive projection of the subordinate condition ultimately suggests the neo-colonialist strategy of controlling the objectified cultural group. For example, the mytho-history charting the supposedly unbroken genealogy of the 'Sinhala nation' over two millennia involves the generalization of the Tamil Other by unfairly treating the ninth-century Tamil Chola dynasty as more of an outsider than the Dutch, Portuguese, and British colonizers (see Krishna 1999, p. 153). The need for Otherization grew stronger as the Tamil militant activities intensified. This turned the impure Other into the terrorist Other, so to speak, since the existence of

the LTTE meant the politics of 'Sinhala nation' was well equipped to equate all Tamils with the terrorist denomination. This is because the anti-Tamil belief became so deeply embedded in popular Sinhalese consciousness that the cultural, racial, or historical dimensions of the linguistic group have been given a hegemonic unsuitability for being part of Sinhalese social framework. In other words, the Otherized Tamil was no longer a notion of to be exploited by Sinhala politicians for electoral gains; it became intrinsically inseparable from popular Sinhalese imagination of the state from late 1970 onward, when the LTTE was officially founded. Due to the deep cultivation of the hegemony, the image of the terrorist Other could be advanced fairly easily. Thus, the Otherization developed into an established controlling mechanism, since the neo-colonial destruction of the *Swabasha*-inspired aspiration of the ethnic groups' shared destiny became politically unachievable. The exclusion of the Tamil terrorists from being part of the island remained coded into the naming of the community:

> The technical term for the Tamil community is Damilla. But when you say demellic; I won't say it is derogatory but there is a tinge of 'otherness' to it. You never say Sinhellic, for example. There is no word called Sinhellic…there is a whole range of words that you would use in Sinhala to call the Tamil community that always stresses on the 'otherness' aspect. (see Seoighe 2017, p. 56)

This explains why the terrorist label fitted into the Otherization scheme so neatly. Apart from the political justification of the militarization of the ethnic conflict, the Otherization led to the obliteration of the fact that various minority groups, including Christians among the Sinhalese and even many Sinhala Buddhists, opposed the political manipulation of deeply held beliefs regarding Damilla, denoting a racial group constantly causing power struggles and wars for the authentic Sinhalese. The exclusionary language

benefitted the neo-colonial narrative of going into war against an allegedly inherently warring community. However, the political manoeuvre also increased the aggression of the representative linguistic groups. As Anoma Pieris (2019, p. 29) points out:

> Tamil and LTTE identities were often conflated in the minds of many Sinhalese, as was Sinhala identity with Buddhism and state violence in the minds not only of many Tamils but also of international commentators, an association fuelled by popular and media biases. Ethnicised identities were magnified to the detriment of all other social relations and were internalised by many Lankans as existential truths.

The conflation of Tamil and LTTE entities as terrorists led to the national and international understanding that state violence took place due to the irreconcilable ethnic differences. Despite this, as I have been explaining, the worsening of the condition was a predictable result of deliberate distortion of *Swabasha* (vernacular) Movement principles. At the expense of boosting the Sinhalese hegemonic politics, the 'gentler, empathetic practices of these sibling cultures were muffled' (ibid.) so that militancy of both the linguistic groups became inevitable. Thus, the politics of subordination won by defeating not only the historical coexistence of the Sinhala and Tamil speakers, but also the practice of conventional cultural performances in a conflictingly shared island, where even the 'subliminal undercurrents' (ibid.) of these practices could be directed towards the augmentation of the hegemonic politics.

Similarly, the third aspect of Orientalism described above, Western Self's ability to speak on Eastern Other's behalf is visible in the context of Sinhalese/Tamil conflict. As I mentioned above, the geographical imposition of the West on the Sinhalese is not possible but the Sinhala speakers appear West-like to the northeastern Tamils due to the former's hegemonic control over the narrative of national belonging. As Said elaborates, the consistency of Orientalism is maintained by an exercise that shows that the discursive ideas about the

Orient/East/Dominated Territory are generated from the West/Dominant Power's perspective without justifying a realistic correspondence between the former geography and its representation. As N. N. Jha (1994) explains, the lofty principle of unity in diversity did not take root in the majority Sinhala community because the ethnic group developed an explosive mixture of land and language instead. From this perspective, their vision of the northeastern provinces, traditional Tamil native land, presented an Orientalist exercise, even when this was done to pursue unity-in-diversity policy with India's assistance. The signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement (ISLA) of 29 July 1987 presents a revelatory episode here. Unlike Sankaran Krishna (1999), however, I argue that the dramatic signing of the agreement was not simply the symbol of India's diplomatic victory, but also the proof of 'benign and progressive dimensions' (ibid., p. 156) of the regional power's hegemony. It was a decisive effort from the regionally leading country to make Sri Lanka acknowledge its multilingual existence, since the agreement called for founding provincial councils in the northeast following a referendum supporting the devolution programme, as well as the official recognition of Tamil and English alongside Sinhalese as the country's most prominent languages. This suggests a complete overhaul of Sinhala majoritarianism as opposed to the group's Orientalist intention. Even so, Orientalist policy of the West speaking on behalf of the East was visible in this noble initiative, since the question of assessing how far the agreement corresponded to Tamils' reality or their expectations never arose. As a matter of fact, the Tamil voice was 'ventriloquated for them by Indian and Sri Lankan officials, but in no direct way did either the moderate politicians of the TULF or the militants play any role in the drafting of the ISLA' (ibid., p. 158). Thus, the Sinhalese West, so to speak, momentarily forego their hegemonic domination by acknowledging the Tamils' equal status, even though the held onto the Orientalist idea of speaking on behalf of the otherized group. This makes us realize that the postponement of the hegemonic power would be momentary, which turned out to be the actual result. The Sinhalese leaders soon realized that accepting the

merger of the northeast was too much of a compromise, since this could encourage the Tamil secessionist efforts. Krishna depicts the dilemma in a precise way:

> A clause stating that "The President may, at his discretion, decide to postpone such a Referendum" was then added, which would enable Indians to highlight the fact that merger… had been conceded, while simultaneously Jayewardene could sell the agreement to the Sinhalese by saying, yes, we have temporarily conceded on merger, but we can reverse it in the referendum. (Ibid., p. 159)

One way or another, the fact that the Sinhalese can decide the Tamil destiny was treated as a given. J. R. Jayewardene, the then President, wanted to impress the Indians with his supposedly progressive politics but the convoluted gesture could not conceal the Orientalist practice underlying his self-assumed duty to speak for the Tamils as a representative of the Western/Dominant enclave.

This also implies why the language conflict became embedded in an economic conflict as well. The northeastern province has traditionally been the centre of Tamil habitation. However, the repeated waves of Sinhala settlers during the twentieth century, and particularly after independence in 1948, altered the demographic balance of the Eastern province in such a manner that the Tamil population had been halved by the 1970s in the region. The demographic change contains another poignant example of Western/Dominant Sinhalese group speaking for the (North)Eastern subordinate group of Tamil speakers. Asoka Bandarage (2009) explains that post-1977 economic liberalization and the popularly termed structural adjustment carried out under the aegis of the IMF and World Bank largely worsened the Sinhalese-Tamil coexistence. Nevertheless, the process started by challenging the precolonial value systems of the Sinhalese themselves. Bandarage explains, '[t]he Open Economy and the culture of consumerism, the decline of economic competitiveness, and the loss of electoral strength

intensified the Sinhala-Buddhist sense of being a threatened and beleaguered minority in the world' (ibid., p. 82). The beleaguered community felt out of place, as the socialist-democratic politics did not seem to be prevailing in the country and the non-materialistic values guiding the lives of the ordinary people during precolonial times seemed to be disappearing. Naturally, the Colombo-centric English-educated graduates, who were favoured by the Open Economy, economically defeated the *Swabasha*-educated youth of both the communities. Nevertheless, for the Sinhala Buddhists, the hindrance to their socio-political ascendancy mattered most. This is why the dominant Sinhalese policy makers decided to move forward with programmes like diverting the Mahaweli, the longest river of the island, which redoubled the crisis between the two linguistic communities. When Jayewardene's United National Party (UNP) came to power in 1977, a hydroelectric energy generating programme, Accelerated Mahaweli Development Program (AMDP), was expedited with the World Bank funding. Once again, the grand Sinhalese ambition of turning decolonized Sri Lanka into a developmental marvel did not reflect the Tamil viewpoints on this modernist goal. The high-modernist project was to divert water from the Mahaweli to the Dry Zone in the north of the country for providing water for paddy cultivation so that the Sinhala farmers largely brought in from other parts of the country could economically thrive. Indeed, 'the purpose of settling them in this particular place is to fill that land with loyal citizens of the Sinhala-Buddhist nation' (Kelegama and Korf, 2023, p. 2003). The linguistic-religious dimension of the Mahaweli Program proves the Sinhalese power to impose their perspective on the Tamils without showing a realistic correspondence between their native land and its representation, which only aggravated the Tamils' apprehension of being colonized by the Sinhalese.

This leads us to the fourth aspect of Orientalism describe above: the exoticized condition of the Other's culture. As Said explained earlier, the boundary between the familiar and unfamiliar spaces is arbitrary, but more importantly, the geographical distinction is projected onto

cultural dissimilarities with the intension of labelling the Other's culture unfavourable and exotic. Since Sri Lankan nation formation has been dominated by the Sinhalese fear of the consequences of granting concessions to minorities, particularly the Tamils, as opposed to negotiating regional and ethnic loyalties, a Russian-doll-like boundary-making event among ethnic communities started to be the norm. This implies that the delimited Other has also been understood as unfamiliar, strange, and exotic. Following Ahmed Hashim (2013), we comprehend that the boundary-making attempts increased during the 1970s, when Sri Lankan socialist-economic policies came to a halt. The Sinhalese censured Tamils and vice versa when 'state enterprises had to be subsidized, strikers needed to be appeased by the promise of higher wages, and the poor received even larger welfare payments' (ibid., p. 77). The fatal effect of economic worsening was that the youth of the country developed the impression that the parliamentary democracy had failed and so they had to take collective social actions. There was no guarantee that these actions would always remain peaceful. If anything, these protesting plans tended to be violent, at least use the language of violence. Unsurprisingly, '[t]he ideology of the youth was a curious and incongruous mix of barely assimilated Marxist ideas and right-wing, anti-Tamil political venom' (ibid., p. 78). Against this context, JVP emerged as a political power to challenge the colonial conversion of Sri Lankan economy from a self-sustaining infrastructure into a trade-oriented and plantation system. While aiming to completely overhaul the prevailing capitalist formation, JVP problematically reverted to the boundary-making venture between Self and Other. It is because the social base of the JVP mainly consisted of rural Sinhala-Buddhist youth, who were mostly from lower middle-class and wage-labour backgrounds, who led a failed insurrection in 1971. This made the leadership realized that their awareness of the predicament of the Tamils and other non-Sinhala communities was minimal. Despite increasing contacts with the Tamils and Muslims and realizing the magnitude of the socio-economic and cultural obstacles these communities faced, JVP degenerated into a Sinhala-majority party

that vehemently opposed the devolution of power to Tamil-speaking regions. Due to their ideology being a strange combination of radical Marxist belief, right-wing views, and technophobic leanings, some of their leaders decided to settle for a permanent boundary between Sinhalese and non-Sinhalese cultures. The resultant exoticism regarding the Tamils and other minorities is easily recognizable. The resolve was that

> The 'mongrel' Tamil and Eurasian minorities would be driven out, and the supposedly pure Aryan blood of the Sinhalese race would be purified. Buddhism would be restored to its ancient prominence, and the island nation would return to its pristine agricultural self-sufficiency of the ninth century. (Ibid.)

As the path to explore the possibility of dialogue, concession, and persuasion of the Tamils and other minorities incrementally shrank, the boundary-making exercise between Self and Other proliferated. So did the process of estrangement of the Others. Qadri Ismail (2009) explains how social formation in Sri Lanka is not only overdetermined but also unstable; it is because the boundary-mechanism was first set for the Sinhalese and Tamils, which was then followed through in the case of other minorities like the Muslims. In other words, in a Russian-doll-like situation, the Muslims discovered that whatever agency they may have in decolonized Sri Lanka for constructing a meaningful identity, it has to be exerted within the restricted borders of Sinhala and Tamil ideas of ethnic and linguistic belonging. Since these are already contested narratives, the Muslim elites were never able to determine whether the religious or ethnic components of their identities would make them appear less exoticized. More crucially, oscillating between Arabic-infused Tamil and Dravidian Tamil, the community could not create an identitarian discourse for themselves in a society where language was the critical marker of difference. The elites realized at the same time that if they lost their faith for the purpose of shedding their unfamiliarity, they would not have much left for appearing as a

community. Therefore, their supposed foreignness within the conflicted society means that their accommodation within the nation was a more vulnerable issue. In the end, the demand of social formation on the basis of Sinhala language means that

> To the Tamils who resist Sinhala hegemony, it says: accept our hegemony and we will stop trying to exterminate you. And to any Muslims who may have difficulties with continuing to accept Sinhala hegemony: if you don't, we will treat you like we have treated the Tamils. (Ibid., p. 91)

The hegemonic boundary of belonging leading to the amplification of the Other's estranged existence was naturally worsened after riots in July 1983, when the Sinhalese mobs massacred several hundred Tamils, as per government records, though activists have long claimed that the evidence shows the true death toll to be around thousands. In addition, the mobs destroyed Tamil businesses and displaced tens of thousands of the group. It is alleged that the violence was premeditated, which the police and government officials failed to control and/or deliberately encouraged (see Bush, 2003, p.104). Kenneth Bush argues that this was a climactic moment in decolonized Sri Lanka, which established the boundary-making attempt as an inevitability. Despite the LTTE's inception, the entire Tamil population had not been Otherized up until then. This means that they were not all marked as unfamiliar and unfavourable because intra-class contacts between the conflicted communities continued to be in place, which means that the bourgeoisie among the Tamils had been relatively more or less shielded from anti-Tamil turmoil, though they occasionally suffered, if they were located in a lower income Tamil neighbourhood. However, after the 1983 riots, the entire community could be grouped as a beyond boundary phenomenon. Thus, Tamilness could be synonymous with alienness. Bush explains how the class conjunction fell apart and the entire community could be marked as unwholesome:

> Both the violence and the response by Sinhalese political leaders initiated a functional homogenization of 'the other.' When the middle class Tamils became victims in 1983, there was a tumbling down of protective psychological barriers. There was a breakdown in middle-class Tamil complacency and a sharpening of the sense of one's Tamil-ness, despite the many Sinhalese friends which many middle-class Tamils had. (Ibid., p. 126)

Simply put, the Tamil speakers realized en masse that they were not welcome inside Sri Lanka any more. Interestingly enough, this did not stop the Russian-doll-like exoticization process. As Bush further explains, the inter-ethnic divide within the Tamil community continues to spread in a similar manner, since they now compete to build their respective support bases, which leads to the subjugation of other Tamils and Tamil-speaking Muslims and desensitization regarding their shared cultural existence (see ibid., p. 205).

Camilla Orjuela (2008) reiterates that the ethnic deterioration increased after the 1983 riots. She pinpoints that the media exacerbated the favourable/unfavourable dynamics after the riots. The terms she uses for the exoticization are 'polarisation', 'segregation', 'brutalisation of society', 'dividing lines', and 'normalisation' of conflict and so on (pp. 85, 84, 82, 81). One way or another, we realize that the riots made the Tamil community more visible as the unwanted section of society. Indeed, the speakers of the language not only became more self-consciousness, but also appeared exposed as the unseemly part of the environment. Orjuela continues to emphasize that

> Tamilness became a hassle and something to hide. One Tamil lady confided that when moving on the streets in Kandy she would take her *pottu* (bindi) off, in order to not stand out as a Tamil… while one girl in Colombo said, 'When I travel on the bus, I don't like talking… they will identify that I am Tamil… I have to face many problems.' (Ibid., p. 86; emphasis in the original)

In other words, the Tamils belonged to the northeastern provinces, and they are unsuitable for central parts of the country like Kandy, which was the historic centre of Sinhalese monarchy from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries. They are not welcome in the western coast either, despite Colombo being the capital of the decolonized country. Following Said, we realize that the northeastern geography is now attached to the Tamil speakers in an indelible way to designate their exotic Otherness, which they have to regularly suppress.

It is foreseeable that the horrific consequences of the Otherization processes are unavoidable. Said is crystal clear about the malevolence and destructiveness that Otherization propels, as he reaffirms that he did not write Orientalism to play down cultural differences. Instead, his theorization is aimed for revealing the politico-cultural consequences of the process. When difference automatically implies hostility, a whole field of cognition is developed that supports animosity between Self and Other. Consequently, the field stimulates unremitting hostility, war, and colonial control. The Sri Lankan nation-making endeavour after decolonization proves this premise anew. As I have demonstrated so far, disagreement over the question of a national language has not only intensified the ethnic discord, but also brutalized the issues regarding territoriality, racial distinction, and political rights. It is hardly surprising that the enmity between these rival groups has been on the increase ever since the 'Sinhala-Only' Act. This mutual hostility has been expressed through increasing violence as well. In plain words, Tamils resent their subordinate condition, and feel entitled to greater political rights, expressing this disillusionment with decolonization through a wide range of paramilitary activities. At the same time, Sinhala nationalists are indignant at being forced to concede to Tamil demands for more political rights. The ultra-nationalists feel that this undermines their dominant position in terms of their majority and cultural solidity. This fury among the radical nationalists causes them to lambast their Tamil compatriots. Interestingly, various Sri Lankan governments have found themselves in the midst of the turmoil and simultaneously attempted reconciliation with and retribution against

the LTTE in particular. Thus, the Otherization process ensured that all three of these forces—Tamil separatists, Sinhala nationalists and the government—have never escaped the circularity of the phenomenon, and therefore, never become capable of evading the responsibility of the decades-long carnage and hostility.

The uncontrollable wars and colonial measures meant that the antagonism over language policies took regularly different shapes. During the 1970s, this animosity compelled the Tamils to think in secessionist terms, and during the 1980s, the linguistic dispute strengthened Tamils' resolve for revolutionary changes (see Ram, 1997, pp. 42–55). However, riots in 1983 resulted in the deaths and displacement of so many Tamils that the recognition of the following fact became inevitable: transcending the Self/Other binary depends on a deeper knowledge foregrounding 'a recognition of Sri Lanka's reality —that it comprises two nations' (ibid., p. 139). Nations in this context do not imply nation-states. As the *Swabasha* Movement highlighted, Sri Lanka needed one (vernacular) language for two nations with specific political aspirations, who occupy culturally distinct territories that they call homelands, which the Sinhala-aligned nation-state cannot accommodate. As Mohan Ram further explains, a Canadian constitution-inspired resolution 'recognizing the French-speaking province of Quebec as both a distinctive national and linguistic entity' in 1987 is required so that Sri Lanka 'recognizes the Tamils as a linguistic and ethnic group, but not as a *nationality*' (ibid.; emphasis added). The key point here is the act of recognition without which the Self/Other division will continue to fuel hostility and armed conflict. The absence of the will to recognize the Tamils as a people 'with the right to self-determination and the right to their homeland' (ibid.) results into the Otherization process, which shows that cultural difference automatically implies hostility. E. Valentine Daniel (1990) emphasizes this, when he analyses the tussle over history and myth in the country. In 1984, Daniel interviewed two brothers, who relocated to the Dry Zone with the hope of gaining the benefits of diverting the Mahaweli. Interestingly, they were persuaded by the local political

supporters of the government that 'even as the Tamil Colas had frustrated and destroyed the flourishing glory of the Sinhala people's hydro-agricultural past, the Tamil Tigers of today were frustrating and destroying the hydro-agricultural projects of the present and future' (ibid., p. 231). This clearly shows that mytho-history is an effective tool for perpetuating the aversion between the ethnic groups. The linguistic discord keeps being shifted to relentless ethnic conflicts, since the Otherization process never stops. If anything, the ordinary Sinhalese are constantly told that the Tamils are perennial outsiders, which makes an anthropologist like Daniel to realize during his field research 'how [ordinary residents and tourists] had had their fervour and imagination fired' (ibid., p. 241).

The cognition developed by continuously stirring up people's passion and imagination generates a discursive field that relentlessly stimulates hostility, war, and colonial control, as Said stresses. This is evident from the violent context of autumn 1983 riots. The socio-psychological effects of the riots were corrosive for political, economic, and international dynamics. Understandably, the enormous hostility exercised by the Tamil and Sinhalese communities during the riots means that it became very challenging to retain their mutual connections. Though the Tamils are concentrated on the northeast, they do inhabit the northern-most edges as well as the Sinhalese-governed southern regions. This means that animosity between two interdependent communities jeopardized the global image of Sri Lanka as a democratic harbour. The entire South Asia region was jolted by Sri Lanka's ethnic unrest, as its effects rippled across the region due to its interconnectedness through trade and diplomatic relations, for example. Furthermore, the Tamil connection in India and their appeal to the West meant that internationally it became challenging for people and organizations supporting democratic continuation in the decolonized world to obtain insightful interpretations of the deep-rooted cultural cleavages of the island. This means that internally and externally, Sri Lanka became puzzling, since the country's 'reputation as a Third World democracy' was irreconcilable with the post-

independence spiralling of its polity into 'an illiberal democracy' (Amrutkar, 2012, p. 751). The colonial control imposed by the Sinhalese on Tamils had an ironic ramification as well. The LTTE and other Tamil groups started infighting, which was often as vicious as the ethnic conflict on the national level. It is also the case that the Tamils demonstrated colonial control over their own people in the northeast through their brutal and repressive regimes. Following Edward Gibson (2005, p.107), we can identify this phenomenon as 'Subnational Authoritarianism', which means that 'the differential effects of transitions from authoritarian rule on the national and subnational arenas' prove the non-functioning condition of the centre/periphery dynamics. Simply put, the Self/Other binary means that the democratization of the country has been endangered, since '[l]ocal elites isolated their provinces and resisted democratization pressures from the center' (ibid.). Thus, the knowledge of innate hostility between Self/Other destabilizes the country at all levels and in a perpetual manner.

In light of the above discussion, we can clearly see how Said's Orientalism works in another non-European context. Tracing the five aspects of the mechanism in the Sri Lankan context, I have illustrated that the issues of contention regarding language, religion, ethnicity, and political rights are not separate. Even though researchers on the region have been predominantly pursuing the ultimate answer regarding the successful negotiations of Sri Lankan political culture so that it becomes able to cope with the inherent diversity in religion, culture, and language, the deeper question is how these aspects have been fractured through the Self/Other discourse. In other words, once national language started to be the apple of discord, the machinery of Self/Other binary was set in motion, which concurrently incorporated the issues of religion, race, territory, democratic rights, and state security concerns to worsen the political crisis in the island. Despite the current success of counterinsurgency measures in the country, therefore, the termination of the armed conflict is never guaranteed. Evidently, any sustainable peace has to be achieved by transcending the

deeply entrenched Self/Other divide. Bardwell Smith (2006, p. 167) is unequivocal about this clarity regarding a firm political will:

> I am suggesting that behind twenty years of military carnage, decades of communal tensions, often exploding into deadly rioting, and fifty years of separatism there has been a failure by both Tamils and the majority Sinhalas to look across caste lines as well as ethnic, class, and religious divides in a manner which acknowledges and affirms the specificity of the various 'others.'

The Twelfth Rock Edict of Emperor Ashoka to Lead the Way

Through analysing Said's Otherization theory, we have observed the consequences of not accommodating the supposed Other in the nation formation process in decolonized South Asia. A few points need to be outlined here. The Otherization in East Pakistan led to a Liberation War, since the geographical and cultural boundaries of the two wings prove that the concept of a Muslim majority nation was quixotic. Despite the repetitive assaults on the Bengali consciousness, the West Pakistani authorities never succeeded in convincing the majority of the people to erase a vital part of their identity. To be precise, most of the Bengalis in East Pakistan were not confused during the Pakistan period about their being Muslim and Bengali at the same time. The problem was that the West Wing decided to ram down the Bengalis' throats the Pakistani version of a Muslim identity, which was only ratified by the country's authorities. This was after all a neo-colonialist strategy of excluding them from the national discourses and infrastructures. The Tamils' case is distinctly different from this perspective. Despite all the upheavals, it is transparent that they belong to sibling cultures along with the Sinhalese. It seems unlikely that secession is going to transform the centuries of coexistence of these communities into a horrified myth. As I emphasized in previous chapters, devolution has to be negotiated in order to bring back the *Swabasha*-inspired aspiration

of the ethnic groups' shared destiny. The major issue here is not to jeopardize the global image of Sri Lanka as a successful Third World democracy.

The past paves the way for achieving the seemingly unattainable ethnic harmony in decolonized South Asia. Whether it is Civil War-torn Sri Lanka or doomed wings of Pakistan, which was a phantasmagoria all along, the process and outcomes of Said's Otherization theory show that without open-mindedness and pragmatic good sense, it is extremely challenging to achieve nation formation goals in a variegated realm like South Asia. The twelfth Rock Edict of Emperor Ashoka has to be upheld here. In the mid-third century BCE, the king demonstrated an invaluable wisdom regarding the significance of coexistence among various sects. As the preeminent historian of ancient India, Romila Thapar (1961) suggests, Ashoka's plea for tolerance by ruling out the need to impose Buddhism upon others in his empire proves him to be a political realist, who understood how creating enemies out of coexisting people is an invitation for a widespread destruction, confusion, and disorder. Thapar explains that Ashoka probably was responding to Brahmanic criticism regarding sectarian divides and competitions in his kingdom through envisaging a real path towards progress. Nevertheless, his philosophy of progress and peace reverberates through the pages of history, as we learn that

> The superior man though unruffled in his own belief, is supremely tolerant in both word and action of the views of his fellow men, and through such toleration he enhances his own position and that of the group to which he owes his loyalty. (Ibid., p. 165)

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7. Conclusion: Languages as a Prism to Armed Conflicts in Decolonized South Asia

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Throughout the chapters, I have argued that language is not merely a medium of communication, but a critical prism through which to understand the trajectories of nationalism, identity, and ultimately, armed conflict in decolonized South Asia. By comparing the Bengali Language Movement in East Pakistan and the *Swabasha* Movement in Sri Lanka, this study demonstrates that the management of linguistic diversity and rights in decolonized (undivided) Pakistan and Sri Lanka was a primary determinant of their future strength as nations. The central idea is that the failure of the decolonized states to accommodate linguistic pluralism through a secular, egalitarian, and 'liberation-enhancing' nationalism led directly to the escalation of ethnic conflict that turned into full-scale wars. Thus, the work presents an ambitious

and nuanced argument regarding 'Languages at War'. It moves beyond a simple historical account to offer a theoretical explanation for why two similar linguistic movements in postcolonial South Asia resulted in such dramatically different outcomes: one giving birth to a sovereign state with a strong secular humanist tradition (though eventually challenged and contested), and the other generating a bitter civil war and a continued struggle for political rights. The pivotal contribution of my argument to the theme is that language is not just a symbol of identity, but also a fundamental structuring principle of political life in the decolonized world. Tracing the role of languages at two dissimilar wars in decolonized South Asia, my book shows both the possibilities and forestalling of emancipation in contemporary times.

I emphasize here that the decolonial framework I have utilized in this writing does not allow me to address the entire timeline of colonial presences in Sri Lanka and/or Pakistan. Instead, my writing tries to establish that the relevance of European colonization in contemporary times lies in its immediate impact, which is still visible in the challenge of decolonized nation formation in the regions I focus on. Simultaneously, my argument demonstrates that linguistic nationalism itself is a proof that decolonized societies are embroiled in their traditional preferences and prejudices. My intervention in the book is not meant to deny these complexities. On the contrary, I aim to suggest that decolonized societies have a choice: either to be enmeshed in the perennial conflicts or to work towards a better civilizational vision. Through my theoretical framework and examples like Emperor Ashoka's Edicts, I endeavoured to create a pathway towards the latter option.

To reiterate these claims, in undivided Pakistan, the imposition of Urdu as an instrument of 'Official Nationalism' created a Self/Other binary that politically and culturally marginalized the Bengali majority. Conversely, in Sri Lanka, the rise of Sinhala-centric 'Popular Nationalism' systematically alienated the Tamil minority. In both cases, language became the focal point for broader struggles against socio-economic discrimination, political disenfranchisement, and cultural

annihilation. The comparative analysis reveals a crucial divergence in the ethos of the two counter-movements, which shaped their outcomes. The Bengali struggle, informed by a secular consciousness (illustrated through the lens provided by Edward Said) and a humanistic literary tradition (exemplified by Rabindranath Tagore), evolved from a defence of mother language into a broader war of liberation that envisioned a progressive nation-state. It successfully intervened in the dominant nationalist narrative of undivided Pakistan to create space for women's greater participation in society and a critique of patriarchal and sectarian ideologies.

In contrast, the Tamil struggle, while justified in its grievances, often manifested a sectarian and traditionalist ethos. It hardened cultural identity for political ends, but failed to develop a 'nationalitarian' politics that could transcend internal caste and class divisions, and articulate a clear, socio-politically conscious vision for the future. This limited its emancipatory potential, particularly for women, who were often celebrated as supernatural symbols of tradition rather than as equal partners in liberation. Ultimately, the Bengali movement culminated in a successful war of independence and the creation of Bangladesh, a testament to a nationalism that, while born from ethnic identity, aspired towards pluralistic and humanistic ideals. The Tamil struggle, crushed by a majoritarian state and hampered by its own internal contradictions, propagated a devastating civil war and a military defeat that left the core issues of identity and rights unresolved.

The legacy of these conflicts, as analysed through the theories of Benedict Anderson, Said, and Gayatri Spivak, serves as a stark warning. It shows that when a state uses language as a tool for majoritarian hegemony and constructs its citizens through an Orientalist Self/Other binary, it sows the seeds of its own violent unravelling. The path forward, as suggested by the wisdom of Emperor Ashoka's Edict and the humanist philosophy of Tagore, lies not in the triumph of one identity over another, but in building political structures on a foundation of tolerance, accommodation, and a shared commitment to

humanity. In decolonized South Asia, and indeed for multi-ethnic states everywhere, language rights are not a peripheral cultural concern; they are the very bedrock of sustainable peace and emancipation. In answer to the research questions identified in the Introduction, then, I would like to assert the following: Ethnic disparity is produced by national narratives and diffused by national language policies, when decolonized states move away from the socio-economic goals of the movement. Discursive approaches and mechanisms like 'Official Nationalism', 'Popular Nationalism', non-secular and sectarian views of polities, and Orientalist Self/Other binary work towards the production and dissemination of the disparity within national communities in a variegated and ancient region like South Asia. The counter-narratives of ethnically marginalized people cannot be successfully created, if they incorporate these elements, knowingly or unknowingly. For the counter-narratives to be successful in offering alternatives to ethnic competitiveness underlying linguistic streamlining, medieval Sri Lankan ideals like multilingualism could be resorted to. The challenges towards achieving a progressive narrative encouraging such idealisms point to an unthinking modernizing zeal that make decolonized nation-states disregard their perennial identities. For example, the mythical identity of Sri Lanka happens to be 'The Land without Sorrow' as the locale was known to the Chinese, or the 'Isle of Delight', as it was identified by the Arab merchants, which the Sinhalese narratives of ethnic supremacy clearly chose not to uphold. The Elysian image of Sri Lanka seems to be relevant today only for circulating tourism-related advertisements, since the image has been damaged by the political violence of unprecedented scale. The savagery of this violence makes it extremely difficult for the outside world to reconcile with its much-proclaimed identity as 'the island of the Buddha's truth'.

By completely contradicting the idealistic mission, the use of state power to deprive the Tamil minority of language, citizenship, and economic opportunities directly contributed to the rise in Tamil separatist activities. Comparing the Tamil efforts for achieving an aspirational Eelam with the creation of Bangladesh, I have produced a

proper exposition of the connection between language rights and the ethnic people's socio-cultural expectations after decolonization. I offer a fully developed picture of language politics in the two realms with a thorough analysis of the secession of East Pakistan as a result of ethnic dissatisfaction. By offering insights into the historical self-formulation in decolonized South Asia, my book strengthens the view of Global South as a generative source of knowledge about our constantly changing world. The humanistic interpretation presented in the writing contributes to the creation of ideas for confronting the contemporary world riven by ethnic and cultural conflicts. Hopefully, the writing will encourage further research regarding language movements in modern South Asia; cultural models of South Asian nation-states; the relationship between ethnic, linguistic, and national identities in the region; processes of nation building in general; political systems of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka; and last but not least, literary and artistic creations of modern South Asia. Thus, I aim to deepen the understanding regarding cultures and languages affected by postcolonial conditions, internal colonialism, and ideological practices of domination in the modern period.

As I have shown throughout the book, existing studies of South Asian conflicts highlight that the politicization of linguistic diversity is the root cause of the ethnic turbulence. By investigating whether the politicization is possible because of the respective peoples' misleading self-perception in the first place, my book produces effective ideas about reducing ethnic tensions in the area through identifying some preventive measures for this, as indicated above. To restate, this is achieved by examining the empirical evidence through the lenses of postcolonial theories regarding ideological structures and processes. By combining socio-cultural views of language and identity with postcolonial concepts of belonging, the writing offers a theoretical improvement about analysing the complex phenomena of decolonizing processes. Therefore, the crucial question for decolonized nation-states is to decide whether freedom for foreign domination implies a mandate for developing economic resources, obtaining self-reliance, and

enhancing cultural values by advancing democratic practices, or, simply ethnic outbidding.

The example of the creation of Bangladesh becomes particularly relevant in this context. Bangladesh can be cited as the sole example of a state in South Asia where a single language combines almost an entire nation (without this having also caused major internal problems, as this is observed in the case of Sri Lanka). Indeed, the high degree of ethnic homogeneity in Bangladesh, and the esteem associated with Bengali language due to its major role in creating a nation-state, which is boosted by its reputed literary history, suggest that Bangladesh could have been a textbook example of demonstrating that the harmony among citizens, national language, and nation-state leads towards sustained peace, progress, and prosperity. The idealistic dream is far from reality due to the contestation regarding its foundational narrative, to say the least. The dream that the poverty-stricken people of East Pakistan finally found a solid reason that inspires them to stand up in their own right as human beings and claim their dignity remains a dream. On the one hand, the people repeated the marginalization of the inhabitants of the land based on their religious, ethnic, and class identities. On the other hand, the idea that the foundational narrative is pivotal in the people's journey towards fulfilling their desired economic mission is constantly questioned by various groups, deprived or otherwise. This makes us revisit Anderson, who emphasizes that nations are born due to profound changes in the imaginative spheres of the people regarding the entities, which reveals the contingency of the narratives. My writing echoes Anderson to stress that the common purposes initiating a nation-building process require both decolonized people and their leaders' clear-eyed visions and strong determinations for their continuation. I further emphasize that the common ground is better achieved through the dynamics between motherland and mother language, since the right to practice one's mother language is directly connected to one's dignity. Therefore, I suggest that the foundational narrative of Bangladesh remains significant, despite the country's fraught political reality after independence.

To conclude, my writing urges the decolonial movements not just to aim for political independence, but to strive for creating a nation as a civilizational project, since this is the only platform for decolonized people to fructify their democratic and cultural values. However, as the Sri Lankan example teaches us, the vernacular language can also be exploited for winning public support, which can work as a gateway to the parliament, generating native political force. Naturally, this will hinder decolonization movement by requiring people to ascertain their native status. In other words, the marginalized language speakers' fears of suffering from economic and political disadvantages will persist. This is why my writing reveals that as opposed to nativist goals, it is imperative for decolonized polities to recognize that principles of coexistence have to accompany nationalist narratives. In the end, building common purposes rather than unbendingly pursuing the construction of nationalist narratives should be the decolonial aspiration. This will also facilitate greater regional cooperation in South Asia for overcoming socio-economic decline, which is prevalent for not only its different stages of modernization, but also events like the continuation of a civil war in Sri Lanka, as we witnessed in the previous chapter. Ultimately, human right is a precondition for self-reliance, which is what the region seeks. What is needed for lasting peace and progress in the volatile region is no mystery. The concept of 'Sarvodaya' or 'the total good of all' (see Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, 2003) propounded by Mahatma Gandhi is the panacea but it needs to be continuously (re)introduced, emphasized, and above all, exercised.

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