



Eric Hobsbawm: Invention of Tradition

Occlusives

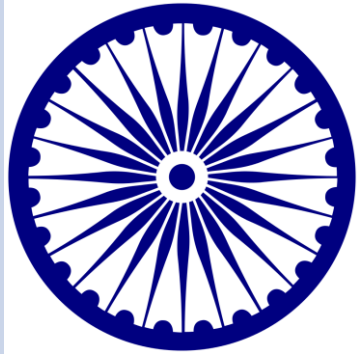
	Voiceless plosives		Voiced plosives		Nasals
	unaspirated	aspirated	unaspirated	aspirated	
Velar	क ka	ख kha	ग ga	घ gha	ङ na
Palatal	च ca	छ cha	ज ja	झ jha	ञ ña
Retroflex	ट ṭa	ठ ṭha	ड ḍa	ढ ḍha	ण ṇa
Dental	त ta	थ tha	द da	ध dha	न na
Labial	प pa	फ pha	ब ba	भ bha	म ma

Sonorants and fricatives

	Palatal	Retroflex	Dental	Labial
Sonorants	य ya	र ra	ल la	व va
Sibilants	श śa	ष ṣa	स sa	

Other letters

ह ha	ळ ḷa
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- Theories and Practices of Nationalism
- HSS444 – Monsoon 2020
- Aniket Alam



Main Arguments of Hobsbawm - I

- Survey of academic literature on Nation – Nationalism
 - Search for Objective and Subjective factors, features
 - None satisfactory
- More profitable to begin with “concept of nation” (nationalism)
- Then move to creation of this concept
- “The nation as conceived by nationalism can be **recognised prospectively**; the real ‘nation’ can only be recognised *a posteriori*”
- Need to pay attention to the changes and transformations of the concept

Main Arguments of Hobsbawm - II

- Follows Gellner: principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent
- Nation is neither primary or unchanging
 - Historically formed in a particular context
 - Stress the element of artefact, invention, social engineering
- Nationalism comes before Nations
 - Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round
- 'National Question' is located at the intersection of politics, technology, social transformation

Dual Phenomena

- Constructed from 'Above' by rulers, intellectuals, elites
- But cannot be understood outside the ideas, opinions, feelings of the 'sub-literary level'
- The **view from below** is crucial to understand nationalism
 - Official ideologies of state and movements are not guides to the minds of **even the most loyal citizens** of supporters
 - Cannot assume that national identification excludes or is always superior to **other identifications which constitute the social being**
 - National identifications can, and do frequently, **change and shift** in time (sometimes in short periods)

Three Phases

National feelings **develop unevenly** among social groups and regions within the same national territory or State

01

First phase

- Purely cultural, literary and folkloric
- No political, or 'nationalist', implications

02

Second phase

- Pioneers and militant begin political campaigns

03

Third phase

- Nationalist programmes acquire mass support

‘Getting its history wrong’

- Nationalism creates its history
 - Projects nation back in time and into the future
 - Territory and people, intertwined
- “Nothing appears more ancient, and linked to an immemorable past”
- Traditions are **invented, created, transformed**
 - By formal institutions of the State
 - By people and movements through practice
- A political act to bring in aspects of Gemeinschaft in industrial society
 - ... and thus normalise it among people



Invented Tradition and Custom

- Invented Traditions are **Invariant**
- Invented Traditions impose **Ritualized Repetition**
- Customs by nature are flexible, open to new practices
 - For example, customary law (before it is turned into invented tradition)
 - Custom is what judges do
 - Invented Tradition is the wig, robe, formal paraphernalia, ritualised practices surrounding judicial action
- “The decline of ‘custom’ inevitably changes the ‘tradition’ with which it is habitually intertwined”



Invented Tradition and Convention

- Convention and routine do not have ritual or symbolic value
 - Though they may sometimes acquire that incidentally
- Any action/practice which requires repetition will tend to develop some conventions and routines for convenience and efficiency
 - Airline pilots
 - Fast-food counters
- Helps new workers familiarise
- Sometimes these habits are difficult to break
 - Bureaucratisation
- Their justification is technical, not ideological



Nominal Continuity, Substantial Difference

- Formalisation and Ritualization of past practices or symbols
- When rapid transformation of society destroys older social patterns
- **Impact of novelty is softened by dressing it up as antiquity**
 - “The use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes”
- New traditions **grafted** on old ones
- New traditions **dressed up** to look old
- New traditions with **new visage but claiming old links**
- Not just by nationalism...
 - also for socialism, marketing strategies, corporate cultures...

Three Overlapping Types

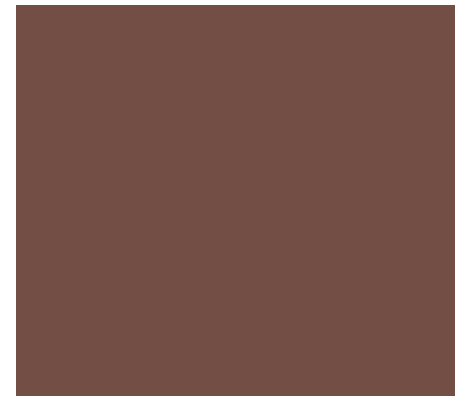
- Those establishing or symbolising **social cohesion or membership** of groups, communities (real or imagined)
- Those establishing or legitimising **institutions, status, relations** of authority
- Those meant for **socialisation**, inculcating **beliefs, value** systems

Invented tradition reintroduced status into the world of contract



Tradition as Practice

- Content of invented tradition remains vague, the practices symbolising it are compulsory and fixed
 - “The National Flag, the National Anthem and the National Emblem are the three symbols through which an independent country proclaims its identity and sovereignty, and as such they command instantaneous respect and loyalty. In themselves they reflect the entire background, through and culture of a nation.”
~Taken from Government of India document
- New, invented traditions have filled only a small part of the space left by the decline of customs and older traditions of pre-modern society
 - Minimal in private life
 - Important in public life



Nation as Invented Tradition

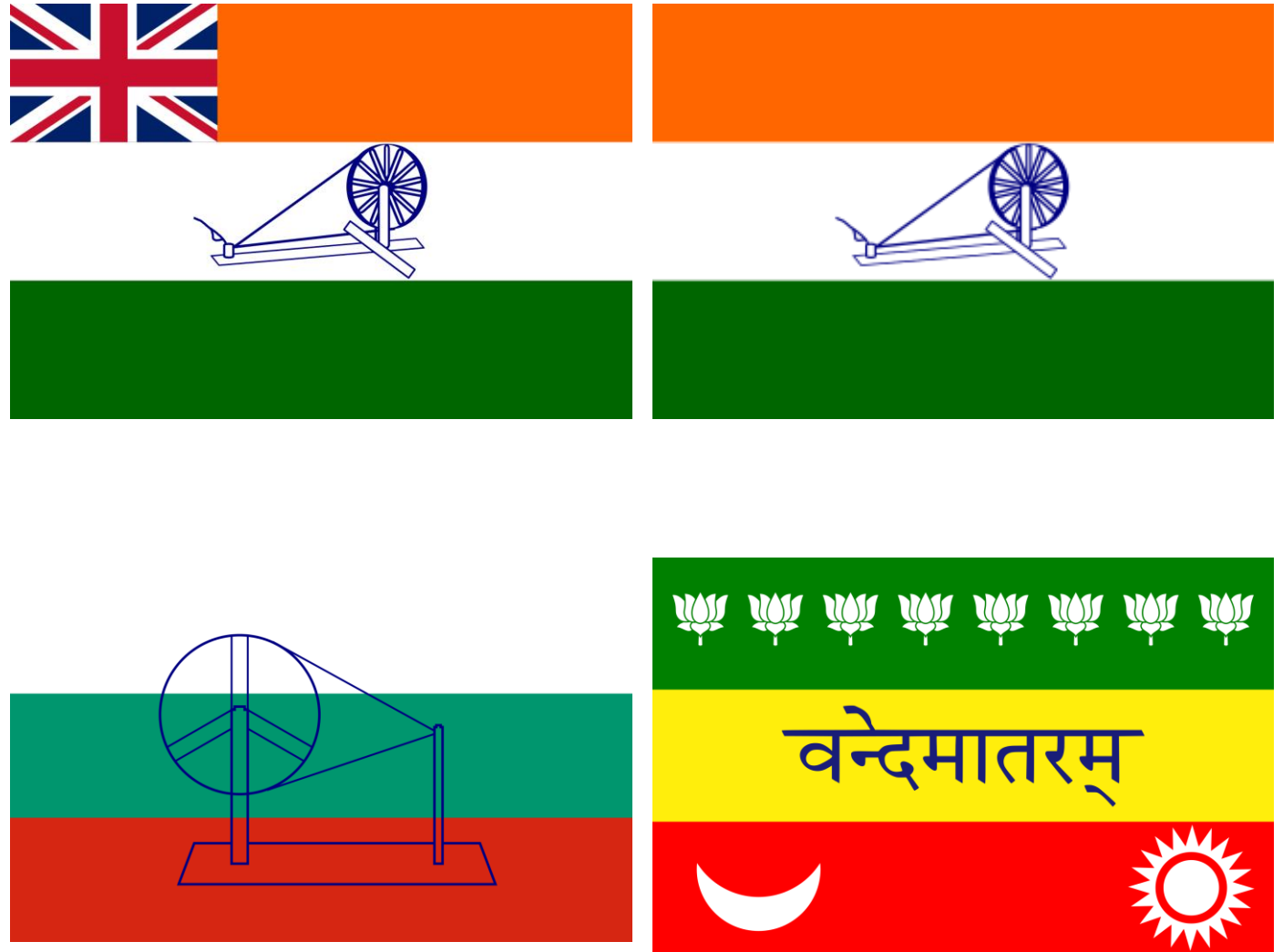
- All markers of nationhood are invented traditions
 - Flag, Anthem, Personification, Monuments, March-past, Holidays,
 - Language and script
 - Religion
 - Food, clothes
 - Sports, leisure
 - What else....?
- Study of invented traditions needs multi-disciplinary work by historians, anthropologists, political scientists, linguists, etc...

Invented Traditions in India

- Slides from Shyam & Mohsin DHP

Invented Traditions in India: Flag and Emblem

- Discovery of Ashoka and Mauryan empire
 - James Princep
 - Brahmi (and Kharoshti) script and identifying Ashoka (*Devanampriya Piyadasi*)
 - Alexander Cunningham
 - Extent of the Mauryan Empire
 - Friedrich O Oertel
 - Excavated the Sarnath pillar which provided the Ashoka Chakra and Sarnath Lions
 - National Flag and National Emblem
- Constituent Assembly
 - Flag Proposed in July 1947
 - Accepted by Aug 1947
 - Objections from Hindu Nationalists, Communists
- Flag Code





Invented Traditions in India: Bharat Mata

- “Our **history is the sacred biography of the Mother**. Our philosophies are the revelations of the Mother’s mind. Our arts – poetry, painting, music, drama, architecture, sculpture, all these are the outflow of the Mother’s diverse emotional moods and experiences. Our religion is the organized expression of the soul of the Mother. The outsider knows her as India. It is... exceedingly difficult , if it be not absolutely impossible, for the European or American to fully appreciate this strange idealization of our land...”
- First imagined by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in Anand Math (1882)
- *Vande Mataram*
- From Bengal to India in the early 20th Century
- Changed iconography with the **map**
- Temple(s)



Invented Traditions in India: Modern Vernaculars

- 1700s India: Persian as language of State
 - Similar to Latin in Medieval Europe; English in present day India
 - Sanskrit and Arabic: highly regarded classical languages, long history of scholarship
 - Persian replaced 1832 Bombay/Madras; 1837 Bengal Presidency
- Different languages of people in an unbroken continuum in Indus plains, Ganges plains, Deccan...
 - Moors, Indostan, Hindawi, Rekhta, Urdu, Hindi, Bhasha
 - A variety of scripts drawn from Nagari, Nustaliq, and other sources

“...elegant language which is used in every part of Hindoostan and the Dukhin, which is the common vehicle of intercourse among all well-educated natives and among the illiterate also, in many provinces of India; which is almost everywhere intelligible to some among the inhabitants of every village...” [H.T. Colebrooke, cited by John B. Gilchrist]



Invented Traditions in India: Modern Vernaculars

- “The Command of Language and the Language of Command”
- From 1770s onwards British effort to master Indian languages
- Fort William College
 - Hindu and Muslim languages:
 - Bengali became Hindu; Grammar and Dictionary; excised Persian words
 - Linguistic Duality of Hindi-Urdu
- Serampore Missionaries’ School Book Societies
 - Technical necessity of printing: standardise grammar, orthography, script
 - Purpose was to preach religion: Sanskrit register for Hindus, Arabic/Persian register for Muslims
 - Gave a religious boundary to a language community



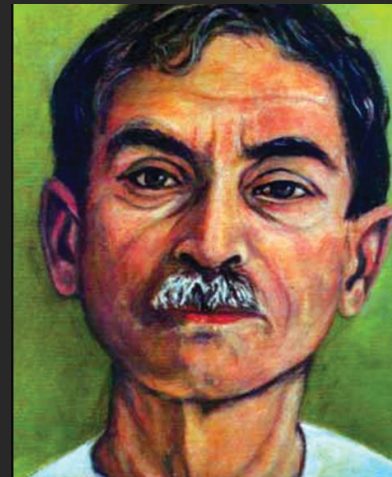
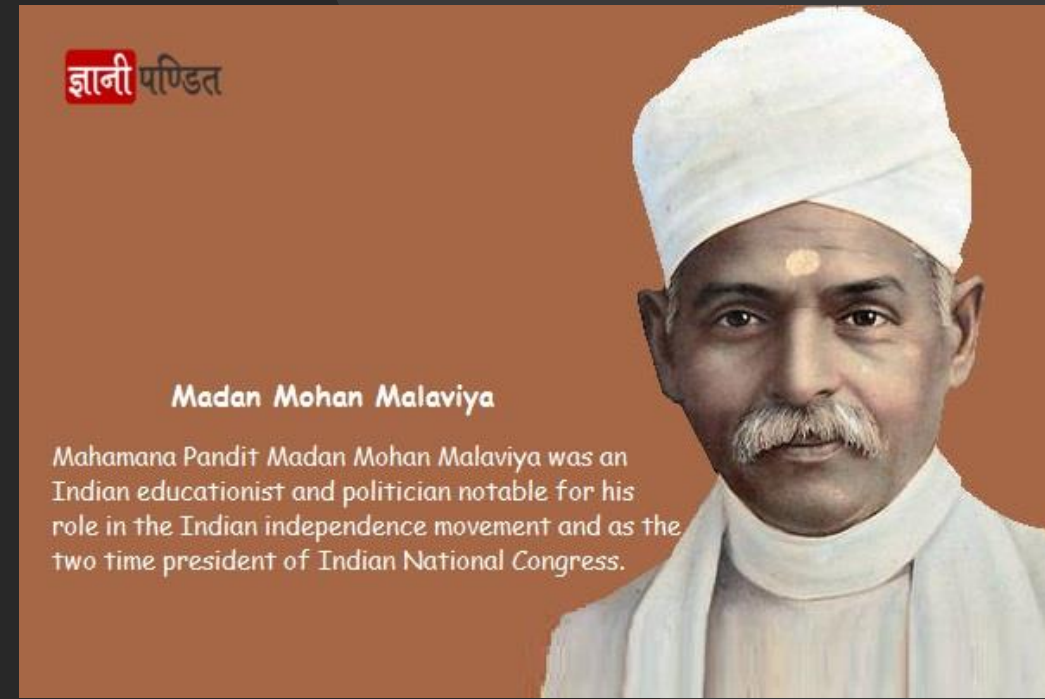
THE COLLEGE AT SERAMPORE.

Invented Traditions in India: Hindi/Urdu

- Push for Nagari script picked up momentum in 1880s onwards
 - School education
 - Judicial and Administrative work; primacy of Nastaliq questioned
- Nagari Pracharini Sabha
 - Pushed for official recognition of Nagari script
 - “...mischievous folly of some Hindi writers, who make up for their want of command over the vernacular by unnecessary importation of Sanskrit words...” [Lala Sita Ram, to Hindi Sub-Committee, 1902]
 - “The antagonism of maulvis and pandits, each endeavouring to supersede the vernacular currency with words coined from their respective mints has, no doubt, done much to widen the breach between Urdu and Hindi, and to give rise to the false impression that they are two different languages” [J. c. Nesfield, Director of Public Education, Oudh, 1876]
 - “Attempt should be made to assimilate the two forms (Urdu and Hindi) into one language, which may be called Hindustani, and may be written either in the Nagari or Persian character” [Lakshmi Shankar Misra, Nagari Pracharini Sabha, 1902]

Invention of Hindi

- First demand to be allowed to use Nagari script
 - Named “Dev-Nagari” to stress divine origins; link to religious texts
- Hunter Commission on Education, 1882
 - 76 memorials for Nagari/Hindi, signed by 58,289 people
- Madan Mohan Malaviya: superiority of Nagari script over Persian
 - Link to spread of education, social reform, political loyalty
- 18, April 1900: Order allowing use of Devnagari in Courts of Law
 - 1915-16: School Text books should be in Hindi with Nagari Script
- Initially the fight was over script; but script and language were soon conflated
- Hindi and Urdu emerged over the 1910-1940s as distinct languages
 - Strange division: Same grammar, same syntax, synonym words from Persian and Sanskrit roots; elision of local vocabulary.
- “...the Hindi language, which we have come to call Hindustani and Urdu also...” [M.K. Gandhi, 1937, *Harijan Sevak*]
- Thousands fail basic school exams in their “Mother Tongue”. How?

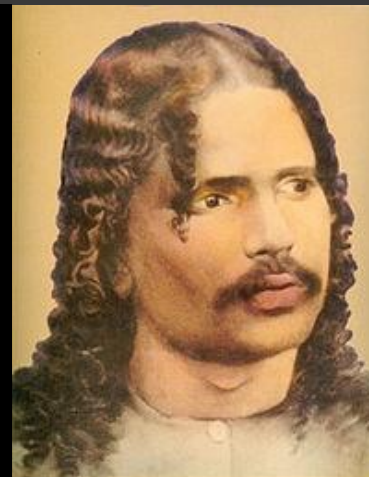


भाषा साधन है, साध्य नहीं ।

जो व्यक्ति सच्चा कलाकार है,
वह स्वार्थमय जीवन का प्रेमी
नहीं हो सकता ।

साहित्य की सर्वोत्तम परिभाषा
“जीवन की आलोचना” है ।

~ मुंशी प्रेमचंद



Invented Traditions in India: Food

- The first tea plants were smuggled into Bengal in 1850s
- Tea production began in the 1870s
 - Mainly for export to Britain and Europe
 - Became a staple drink in India in the 1910s onwards
 - Initially considered a mild intoxicant; general use only about mid-20th century
- Cottage Cheese / Paneer / Chhena
 - Milk spoiling was seen as ill omen
 - Technology came with Europeans
 - Emerged in the 19th century with urbanisation and spread of sugar
- Sugar
- Rava



Invented Traditions in India: Place Names

- Name of the country: India, Bharat, Hindostan
- Names of cities and towns were changed after independence
 - Genealogies were crafted
 - Names and spellings
 - 110 place names changed between 1953-1957
- Names of States of the Union
 - Districts
- The true history of the place to be reflected in the name

Invented Traditions in India: Religion



- Public ceremony of worship
- Durga Puja
 - Celebrated in homes of landlords and merchants
 - 1790: first public Durga Puja in Hoogly district
 - 1830s: First public Durga Puja in Calcutta
 - 1910: Community Durga Puja, open to all, in Calcutta and Delhi
- Ganesh Puja
 - 1892: First Public Ganesh Puja
 - 1893: Praised by Bal Gangadhar Tilak as anti-caste, uniting move
- Santoshi Mata
 - Ganesh's daughter, first heard of in North India in the mid 1960s
 - 1975 film Jai Santoshi Mata made her popular and an all India deity

Invented Traditions in India

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