



Research Article

## Narratives of ‘Common Civilization’ of South Asia: Tracing the Origin of Shared Values and Culture

Vijay Prasad Jayshwal<sup>a,\*</sup> , Seema Kumari Shah<sup>b</sup> 

<sup>a</sup>Faculty of Law, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal.

<sup>b</sup>Women’s Rehabilitation Centre, Lalitpur, Kathmandu, Nepal.

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\*Corresponding Author: Vijay Prasad Jayshwal  
(vijayjayshwal1991@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** South Asia is a constructed concept. Although South Asian countries choose to function within the paradigm of independent statehood, they are undergoing overlapping developments rooted in the distant and recent colonial past. This paper reflects on the notion that South Asia has a common past. In this context, the civilizational politics of India is addressed and the discourse on civilization is unwrapped to understand its contemporary and historical perspectives. The study of South Asian history constructs that Indus valley civilization presents a common ground for cultural and civilizational associations of South Asian countries. To understand the changing form of Indian civilization over the period of time, this paper examines four variants of Indian civilization: Orientalist, Anglicist, liberal nationalist, and Hindu nationalist variants. In this discussion, the perception of Tagore and Gandhi on nationalism is considered, and discourse on civilization between Asian thinkers like Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Western thinkers like Samuel P. Huntington are provided to understand the historical underpinning of Indian civilization.

**Keywords:** Indian civilization, Indus valley civilization, South Asia, Asian unity, Nationalism.

### I. Introduction

The idea of Asia is a contested concept as it is often thought as a European formation which was brought into play to meet the European principles. The term ‘Asia’ is often looked through the lens of geographical and cultural unity (Milner and Johnson, 2001). Amitav Acharya (2011) brings forth the notion that Asia has “multiple (although not always mutually exclusive) conceptions, some drawing upon material forces, such as economic growth, interdependence and physical power, others having ideational foundations, such as civilizational linkages and normative aspirations” (Acharya, 2011). The geographical linkages within South Asia is tracing the concern of common civilization. The Indus civilization and its expansion in region in terms



of shared culture, values, norms and aspirations are also depicted as of reflection of common civilization. The source of origin of human development in terms of soft culture narratives are also seen as reflection of common civilization. The term also is a constructed concept hence encompasses multiple variations in perception and understanding.

The common civilization construct has helped to connect emotionally and physically in the region and it has further assisted to think beyond the geographical boundaries of the States. This has further helped to think beyond relations of the political units and is more soft cultural based narrative in the region. For example, India-Nepal relation is beyond political level and has multiple layered of development. The common understanding of the each other cultural values and development in soft power is also significant factors for the understanding. The thinking pattern based on the values of this region is also one of manifestation of the common civilization benefit.

Asian unity is driven by the victory of Japan over Russia in 1905. Other various parts of Asian region bring forth the logic of an Asian Unity. For example, Colombo conference held in 1954 was attended by Ceylon, Indonesia, Burma, India and Pakistanis, and Bandung Conference in Indonesia in 1955 (Milner and Johnson, 2001). To project the Bandung civilization influence, Asia also had civilization of its own (Nandy, 2005). Europe and North America have been dominated by Western culture, but Asia has unique culture and civilization that has extended throughout the region (Yamazaki, 1996). Countries went through the phase of colonization and decolonization in India (Khilani et.al., 2013) which brings a turning point in Southern region of Asia. South Asian countries developed differently in the political context, but have similarity in institutions and culture (Singh, 2005). These similarities are also considered as reflection of common origin of the countries. The long shared different forms of bond has also created a strong projection of common civilization narratives and further leading to shared values across the region.

South Asia is a more constructed concept which constitutes eight diverse sovereign states of different sizes: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Maldives, including Myanmar, which was a province of British India until 1935 (Bose, 2004). The term "South Asia" was used after the 1950s, as a replacement for 'Indian subcontinent' (Markovits, 2014). This term is generally referred to "Indian subcontinent" (Masica, 2005) which comprises India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Although these South Asian countries are geographically defined (Masica, 2005), they share a colonial past. They have universal culture and civilization in links (Khilani et al., 2013). The subcontinent holds their ancient history which extends back to five millennia. The modern history of the subcontinent has to do with the experience of British colonialism, the understanding of which has been limited over the period of time. There has been evolution of shared cultural environment in South Asia (Bose, 2004). When one talks about South Asian countries, Indian civilization reflects on the idea of South Asia having a

common past (Katzenstein, 2009). Despite prevalence of commonality among South Asian nations, there are unique cultural attitudes and practices associated with the concept of South Asian regions (Bose, 2004). This similarities lead to the common development of perception towards each other existence and values on it.

Due to difference in identities, one civilization could perceives another civilization as a threat and as Huntington says, there is a chance of clash between civilizations which ultimately becomes threat to world peace (Huntington, 1996). Susanne Rudolph challenges the claims made by Huntington and discusses the variants of external and internal conceptualizations of Indian civilization. Civilizational politics of India merges the existing and past standpoints. He finds out that there are multifaceted identities and civilization which move inside and outside of South Asia (Rudolph, 2010). Tagore and Gandhi have different understanding of civilization. This variants in understanding civilizational construct is also major reason for searching the common shared values and norms, guiding together for the development of civilizational linkages.

## **II. Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this paper is to look at how Indus valley civilization presents a common ground for cultural and civilizational associations of South Asian countries? The attempt of this paper is to examine the four variants of Indian civilization: Orientalist, Anglicist, liberal nationalist, and Hindu nationalist variants to understand the changing forms of Indian civilization over the course of time. Finally, this paper intends to produce the narratives of “common civilization of South Asia by bringing into play the perception of Tagore and Gandhi on “nationalism” and the views of Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Samuel P. Huntington on “civilization.”

In the first section of the paper, the discourse on civilization provided a synopsis of understanding the contemporary and historical perspectives in addressing the civilizational politics of India, thus reflecting on the underlying evidence of South Asia having a common past. The second and fourth sections of the paper explore the discourse on civilization in understanding the contemporary and historical perspectives while addressing the civilizational politics of India. The third section of the paper looks at the history of South Asia which is studied through understanding of Indus valley civilization where lies a common ground for cultural and civilizational associations of South Asian countries. Finally, the fifth section of the paper brings forth a conceptual approach in understanding the Indian civilization through Tagore’s and Gandhi’s perspective on nationalism.

## **III. Materials and Methods**

This paper has a two-pronged analysis: Conceptual and Historical. The research is a qualitative historical analysis which employs Tagore’s and Gandhi’s perspective on nationalism to understand common civilization associated with the South Asia region. The paper intends to take the conceptual discourse on

common civilization further by delving into discourse on civilization between Asian thinkers like Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Western thinkers like Samuel P. Huntington. The findings in this paper have been proposed by looking at secondary sources like books and articles. Due to scarcity of data and materials on common civilization of South Asian countries, this paper mostly relies on the secondary sources for looking back the history of South Asia.

#### IV. Literature

The word "civilization" denotes to the conglomeration of people sharing and practicing a particular set of values and culture (Wei, 2012). The history of South Asia shows that this region is a home to the Indus valley civilization. The people of this region are integrated by a common cultural and ethical position, ancient literature in Sanskrit, Prākṛit, regional languages, music, dance, ways of worship, marriage customs, culinary habits, costumes, dishes, interdependent natural environment, common practices, related to traditions like Tantric practices and Bhakti. Religion is another necessary force that connects the people of South Asian region. In the ancient times, Ashoka promoted Buddhism in South Asian countries by sending missionaries to these countries. The ancient civilization shows that there is apparent cultural difference between egalitarian Muslim countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Maldives and Bangladesh; egalitarian Buddhist countries like Bhutan and Srilanka (though Srilanka is more religiously mixed; and Hindu countries like India and Nepal.

The transfer and union of cultures results from the south Asian polity under monarchy which extended over to South Asian countries. The culture, art, architecture, cuisine, religion surpass beyond the borders of the states and directs it in the path of a super-national entity. The Asia values associated with the South Asian culture is significant in developing a sense of commonalities, faith and cooperation among the people of South Asian countries and thus creates a pan Asian identity. This reflects that the South Asian region believes in the union of civilization, rather than clash of civilization (Arif, 2014).

It is difficult to discover the starting and ending point of a civilization. There was transformation in the relationship between nations and civilization during/at the end of World War I. From then, civilization had been introduced as a "singular and universal phenomena in much of the world"(Duara, 2001). Most analysts find civilizations to be complicated and mixed as civilizations are open to the outside influence (Jackson, 2010).

Civilization is "*an open-ended process, a discursive formation shaped by contestations generated from within and from without. It is an ongoing processes, and in particular, as ongoing processes through which boundaries are continually produced and reproduced*" (Rudolph, 2010: 137; Hall and Jackson, 2007a: 6).

Boundary separation determines a civilization. The importance of social dynamics is present in the notion of civilization. In order to know the values of social dynamics, one needs to understand the composition of civilization and the boundaries associated with it. The study on the prevalence of rigid border in civilization

appears like structural realists' explanation for the relations between states in a multipolar system. He highlights on inter-civilizational anarchy not being different from interstate anarchy. Thus, he brings the relevance of civilization and their social dynamics to the study of contemporary world politics (Jackson, 2010). The debates on civilization continue. On one hand, civilization is "monocultural at home and multicultural in abroad" (Jackson, 2010), as Huntington says. On the other hand, modern civilizational analysts consider civilization to be varied within and say that a distinct line divides one civilization from the other. It is difficult to recognize a civilization or draw a fine line to separate one civilization from the other (Jackson, 2010).

In the discourse on civilization, the "civilizational constellation" becomes an important concept which needs to be understood. There is lack of distinct boundaries, internal unity, and rigid amalgamation in the notion of "civilizational constellations (Jackson, 2010)." Katzenstein says, "*Civilizations are not static and consensual but dynamic and politically contested*" (Katzenstein, 2009). Civilizational constellation in the past is thus marked by the multiplicity and pluralism in the present. Despite divergence in the course of contestation around different concerns, there is "unity in diversity" in all civilizations (Katzenstein, 2009). Contemporary literatures on civilization reject Huntingtonian essentialism in different ways. The temporal variability of a civilization focuses on the combination of multiplicity of historical practices and processes in order to generate certain uniqueness. The internal discussion and dialogue among members of a civilization emphasizes on the controversial nature of those debates (Jackson, 2010). Jackson takes into account the views of Benedict Anderson who says, "*National communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined*" (Jackson, 2010, Anderson, 1991:6). Anderson explicitly argues about the "character of human community and human social action" and observes how people manage to survive in a group. Susanne Rudolph carries an open discussion about the nature and boundaries of civilization which structures the activities of participants in those debates. Rudolph takes the debate more towards Indigenous Indian society (Jackson, 2010)

### **Indus Valley Civilization: Threshold of Civilization Discourse**

Indus valley civilization is the largest civilization of the four ancient world civilizations- Egypt, Mesopotamia and China. Still, it is the least known civilization as its scripts have not been translated yet. Although there are around 400 different symbols originated on many pieces of pottery, seals, amulets and other artifacts, the civilization still lacks the means of translating the script, as a result, the discovery of Indus valley civilization still remains ambiguous (Shri Devasthanam, 2014).

The historical study suggests that Indus valley culture (3300–1700 BCE) flourished along the Indus river basin and its streams in present Pakistan. The remains of this culture are also seen in the northern Afghanistan along the Oxus river, in the current Gujrat and Haryana state in central India. When the people left the Indus

valley, they also left behind many cities and towns; especially Harappa, Mohenjo Daro and Lothal. The knowledge about human settlement in history reveals that the Indus valley people were well- planned and well-organized (Shri Devasthanam, 2014).

Three main theories have been proposed to explain the origin of Indus valley civilization and its relationship with Hinduism. First, the Indus valley civilization was considered as an Aryan civilization and its script had roots in the earlier Sanskrit. The Harappan civilization which disappeared was noticeable during the time of excavation at Harappa. Various forms of scripts like Sumerian, Egyptian, Hittite, or even old Slavic, were found during Harappan civilization. This theory of considering Indus valley civilization as an Aryan civilization has been raised by different groups to prove that Aryan culture was not the outcome of migration but rather the culture is indigenous to the Indian sub-continent. Second, the Indus valley culture was viewed as proto-Dravidian. This culture is taken an important component of the indigenous culture of the Indian sub-continent. This is a popular theory developed by Russian and Finnish teams of researchers in the late 1960s and 1970s, which reveals that the cryptograms can be derivative of the Dravidian language group found particularly in South India, some are scattered throughout India, particularly in northern Pakistan. The link between Aryan or Dravidian culture and modern Hinduism is based on the images on the Indus seals like the image of the bull and the mother goddess, etc as evidence to Hinduism. In the recent years, a team of American researchers have proposed a third theory which shows that there is not any relationship between Indus valley civilizations with Aryan or Dravidian culture and Hinduism. The genesis of the Indus symbols from Aryan or Dravidian culture cannot be evidence of written language. As a result, it has been argued that the Indus valley civilization is uncultivated and thus it has no relation with Aryan or Dravidian cultures (Shri Devasthanam, 2014). Thus, it is difficult to reach to a conclusion that Indus valley civilization has or doesn't have any connection to ancient Hinduism.

### **India: A Civilization Territory (A Role Model)**

The discussion on civilization provides the insights of India. Indian civilization was weakened by the state of California. The state of California passed down an explanation of Indian history which did not consider Indian culture and religion to be indigenous to the subcontinent. As a result, Indians in the United States and non-Indians received the non-indigenous explanation of Indian history. Such explanation of Indian history by outsiders would give different understanding to the notion of Indian civilization (Jackson, 2010).

The contemporary and historical perspectives are combined while addressing the civilizational politics of India (Katzenstein, 2009). Rudolph categorizes the term "civilization" into two forms: first, civilization raises singularity and holism, second, civilization brings up the idea of heterogeneity and plurality. The former constructs civilization as "*an internally homogeneous cultural program with firm boundaries*" (Rudolph, 2010:

137) and constitutes the idea that people within boundaries find people outside boundaries as the other (Rudolph, 2010). Ashis Nandy's argument on the perception of self and other captures this idea of viewing people within boundaries as "self" and people outside boundaries as "others" (Nandy, 2005). The latter form of civilization is considered as "*a heterogeneous and pluralist concept*" (Rudolph, 2010: 137), in this form of civilization, there is permeability of borders and engagement of one civilization with other civilizations in which the members share identities. Pluralists and open civilizations learn from each other and they share many features among each other (Rudolph, 2010), like Indian civilization.

When a civilization is viewed as "other," there arises the thought of taking the "other" civilization as different and a threat to its own civilization (Rudolph, 2010). The thought of differences in the notion of civilizations might lead to clash between civilizations. Huntington finds the clash between civilizations as the threat to world peace and highlights on the importance of international cross-civilization cooperation in restoring peace. He says that there has been reconfiguration of world politics as the dispute on ideological differences has shifted to the contest on cultural differences. Huntington provides a strategic framework for the West to conserve its culture and claims that people around the globe should learn to survive in such complex and multi-civilizational world (Huntington, 1996). This theory of clash of civilizations of Huntington came across many criticisms.

Amartya Sen (1999) claims, "*Diversity is a feature of most cultures in the world. Western civilization is no exception. The practice of democracy that has won out in the modern West is largely a result of a consensus that has emerged since the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, and particularly in the last century or so. To read in this a historical commitment of the West--over the millennia--to democracy, and then to contrast it with non-Western traditions (treating each as monolithic) would be a great mistake*" (Sen, 1999: 16).

Rudolph also challenges the claims made by Huntington on Hindu civilization. "Hindu civilization" takes into account religion, the one comprehensive cultural factor which overthrows all other factors. She organizes the notion of civilization from the term "Hindu" to "Indian." "Indian civilization" provides room for the debates among numerous cultural elements. Thus, civilization exists as fusion of different cultural factors. They never remain pure and become mix or hybrid overtime. Rudolph (2010) presents that syncretism and hybridity are prevalent in Indian civilization. The notion of Indian civilization provides a historical background in presenting the enough commonality existing among the South Asian countries in terms of language, arts, literature and religion. The role of both insiders (*deshis*) and outsiders (*videshis*) is significant in creation of Indian civilization as the ongoing debate on the meaning of Indian civilization is based on what these insiders and outsiders decide to emphasize. In this context, means do not justify the end as no specific conclusion is derived from the ongoing debates on Indian civilization (Rudolph, 2010).

Over time, civilization has developed in alternative forms, upon which Rudolph draws our attention. Rudolph says that the discourses on civilization work as ideologies did. She has presented four variants- Orientalist, Anglicist, liberal nationalist, and Hindu nationalist variants- of Indian civilization so as to highlight the “fluid, civilization and changing life forms” to be the foundation of the historical actors and not the creation of entities like boundaries (Rudolph, 2010).

### **Variants of Indian civilization**

The East India company officials in India shaped the Orientalist variant in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Like Western civilization was based on Greek and Roman texts, the “classical Indian civilization of Orientalists” (Rudolph, 2010: 140) was based on Sanskrit language which was interpreted in India’s traditional texts. The Orientalists gave the concept of “civilization” on India in post-colonial writing. In this way, the intellectual understanding of Indian civilization (Asian culture, language and people) was introduced as a new civilization throughout the world. There was “made-in-Europe image of Indian civilization” (Rudolph, 2010: 141) in the first-half of the nineteenth century. The Anglicist variants came into play and the image of Indian society was dominated by the utilitarian and evangelical East India company officials. The first and second generation Indians who were influenced by the Western education supported this Western domination. Instead of using Indian languages in the education system, the Anglicists introduced English languages for educating Indians, and the historical evidence introduced in the books written in Sanskrit language was given less value. Thus, English language used as a tool for educating Indians contributed to the victory of the Anglicists in making Indians “*Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect*” (Clive and Pinney, 1972: 249, Rudolph, 2010).

Western literature imposed a different view of Indian history and challenged the “classical Indian civilization of Orientalists.” The two images of Indian civilization shown by Orientalists and Anglicists are produced by the Indian actors within India under the influence of external civilizational retort. Rudolph explains the arguments made by Benedict Anderson (1991) as “*nationalism is the appropriation of the process for characterizing the nation which spills over into the production of civilizational marker*” (Rudolph, 2010: 141). Thus, the discourse on Indian civilization shows how the “outsider is inside” in a colonized country like India and continues the debate on Indian civilization.

The third variant of Indian civilization explains the inclusionary type of liberal nationalist and exclusionary type of Hindu nationalist. The image of Indian civilization keeps on changing based on how the participants are involved in the discourse of Indian civilization and it became more unbalanced in the nineteenth century. Many aspects of Indian civilization found in the traditional society wiped away and it became difficult to hold features associated with Indian civilization. Indian civilization, which included peacefulness, religion



and poverty, now comprise violence, expansion of middle class and politics like nuclear capability, IT revolution, etc. The third variant of Indian civilization suggests that the Indian subcontinent has “composite civilization” which accepts many religions, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Swami Vivekanandan’s attempt to represent Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religion in 1983 pressurized European image of Indian civilization. Many textbooks once again included the Hindu nationalist as the leading actor, thereby rebuilding the Indian history and Indian civilization. Gandhi and Nehru viewed Indian civilization as open and liberal. They adopted non-violent means to freedom and discussed on the existing theology, simplicity and social hierarchy associated with Indian civilization. A liberal nationalist thus played an important role in bringing back the classical construct of Orientalists and restructuring the representation of Indian civilization disgraced by the utilitarians/evangelicals. India became habitat to various civilizational branches, thereby representing Indian civilization as complex and liberal. There has been ongoing debate between Hindu nationalist variant of civilization and liberal nationalist variants of civilization since long. The fourth variant of civilization, Hindu nationalist variant of civilization, contains the discourse on Indian history. Different battles have been fought by Indians over the demonstration of history of Indian sub-continent and foundation of Indian civilization. There are several stories told on the origin of Indian civilization; some believe that the roots of Indian civilization lie in “Aryaninvasion” and Aryans wrote the Hinduism texts, Rigveda. On one hand, theories suggest that Aryan civilization is Indus valley civilization of ancient Harappa, while some consider Indus valley culture as proto-Dravidian. These theories differently explain the origin of Indus valley civilization and its relationship with Hinduism. On the other hand, Hindutva/advocates of Hindu nationalists see the image of civilization as “closed and self-contained.” They do not accept the claim that the people and culture of India is the result of invasion or movement, rather, they argue that Aryans were perhaps the inhabitants of Harappa and Rigveda was introduced by native Harappans. There are both inside and outside facets of Indian civilization. Inside, there was revision of Indian history of sub-continent in the text-books of schools. Outside, there was an appeal made to the California State Board of Education by the “diasporic Indian partisans of the indigenous thesis” (Rudolph, 2010:151) for correcting the California public school readers. The Hindu nationalist variant of civilization raised a question if Muslim sovereign should be included as a part of complete India or as enemy/foreigners. Although there is existence of syncretism and hybridity in the Indian civilization, Hindu nationalism avoids syncretic route of Muslim rule. This shows how Hindu nationalism tries to destroy the mixed inheritance of Indian civilization in order to renovate India into a “homogeneous Hindu civilization” (Rudolph, 2010: 152).

Hindutva takes the majority Hinduism (850 million) as primary civilization of the Indian subcontinent, and it also takes into account the non-Hindu minorities. Identity politics in India also shaped the exclusivist nature of Indian civilization. In a multi-religious nation like India, political Hinduism came into power in 1990s and started using extreme anti-Muslim idea in order to secure and develop its political future. Behind the

hidden political benefit of Hindu extremists, Muslims were represented as a foreigner due to search for a "pure" Hindu civilization in Indian religion of the Indian history. Hinduism has thus played a significant role in representing the culture and politics of South Asia. Both the intellectual and cultural communities have been working eventually on changing the version of Indian civilization (Rudolph, 2010).

### **Indian Civilization from the Perspective of Tagore and Gandhi**

Nationalism is important in the discussion of civilization. Based on civilization links, particular groups of community or citizens of a particular nation develop the feeling of nationalism. Indian civilization brings forth the idea that burden of colonial legacy impacted the nationalism. It is essential to understand the history of South Asia deeply. To understand nationalism, one can go into the history of ideas on nationalism and analyze the ideas brought by the thinkers of South Asia, and also look at the notion of ethnic nationalism shaped by the Indian civilization. The two important figures in history, Tagore and Gandhi, have presented their own views on the discourse of civilization through the lens of nationalism. Tagore and Gandhi understood South Asian (Indian) social fabric and their idea of nationalism as different. Ethnic identities shape the idea of neighborhood in South Asia. Neighborhood in South Asia is redefined by triad. After colonization, the process of state formation in India and Pakistan includes the concept of ethnic nationalism. Ethnic nationalism was also present in South Asia before 1947. British used ethnic identities as exploitation. Ethnic identities then came against state after British went (Anderson, 1991). In the course of colonial domination, Western civilization travelled conceptually throughout the world and influenced the meaning of civilization in the Indian subcontinent (Jackson, 2010).

### **Discourse on civilization from Tagore's understanding of nationalism**

Rabindranath Tagore turned out to be an important part within the discourse on nationalism. Nationalism is derived from the concept of nation and has ideological underpinnings attached to it. Notion of territoriality differs- nation as an artificial construct- patriotism more tied to the construct as it is tied to home. He was against the concept of nationalism as 'self' distinguishes from 'other.' He says that the distinction between self and other do not really come in home. So, there should be global imagination of nationalism. This concept of nationalism is anti-Indian as it goes beyond the cultural and religious notion of nationalism. He differed from other thinkers, in a sense; he says that Indus valley civilization cannot be understood by past, but in medieval India, this notion is explained. Identity of Indian nation cannot be built on rigid boundaries but instead need to go with fluidity (Anderson, 1991).

Tagore influenced the Bengali literature and political movement of Bangladesh which shapes the identity politics in Bangladesh. It has been argued that Tagore had a different perceptiveness of Indian civilization

and history which made him imagine ahead of nationalistic dialogue. Tagore's understanding of nationalism is critique of realist perspective. For realist, self-interest determines the state behavior. Tagore, on the other hand, objects the sovereign power of state as it harms the development of individual liberty. He places spiritual freedom over political freedom. He prefers to use the word "patriotism" and not "nationalism." He had mix perception of autonomy, the self, religion and originality. He looks at the negative side of nationalist violence that ignores individual decorum and sovereignty. For Tagore, society is above the state. He is highly committed to the welfare of society and is against the use of violence in forming nationalist states. He aims to orchestrate all human races within the South Asia region and defines nation as a political and economic union of people. Tagore's outlook towards nation and State was seen as opposing which shows his willingness towards society (Rahman, 2013).

For Tagore, *"Nations live in an atmosphere of fear, greed, and panic, due to the preying of one nation upon other [sic] for material wealth. Its civilization is carnivorous and cannibalistic, feeding upon the blood of weaker nations. Its one idea is thwart all greatness outside its own boundaries. Never before were there such terrible jealousies, such betrayals of trust; all this is called patriotism, whose creed is politics"* (Rahman, 2013: 148).

Tagore finds the origin of India's problem in the social context and not political, and thus suggests for the need of social cooperation in order to deal with the social problems with confidence. Rahman presents Tagore's nation-state as aggressive and competitive on the outside and disciplinary and dominant internally which lead to the decomposition of identity. Rahman captures the Tagore's understanding of civilization through the lens of nationalism. Extremist activities in the name of nation during the anti-British movement was really disturbing for Tagore because Tagore had perception of fear of World War I which he thought was the result of extreme nationalism of Europe. The constructed identity of Bangladesh has been exposed by the cultural pluralists. People who have constructed the political history of Bangladesh, propose the "usable past," and understand history to legitimize their political mission. Rahman senses the values of Tagore's vision of ideal society as a driving factor that leads towards a better future, thereby raising concern for social and individual freedom (Rahman, 2013).

### **Discourse on Civilization from Gandhi's understanding of nationalism**

Like Tagore, Gandhi was also against the notion of nationalism as it seems to be ideology-based. Gandhi talks about civic nationalism, which is a universal concept and entails for the need to respect for the dignity of human beings. In Gandhi's understanding of nationalism, the difference between 'self' and 'other' is absent. He brings forth the idea that notion of justice; right and self-development need to supplement the notion of

nationalism. Gandhi is a grand strategists and his idea is solely associated with the understanding of non-violence, compassion and kindness (Anderson, 1991).

Gandhi says that men have not been able to be perfect in any part of this world. He compares Indian civilization with Western civilization. He says that Indian civilization has belief in God and is intended towards being a moral human being while Western civilization is godless and spreads immorality through the world. Thus, Mahatma Gandhi appeals every Indians to attach to their ancient Indian civilization (Gandhi, 2014). Nehru and Gandhi played an important role in shaping the image of inclusivist civilization. Gandhi believed that every religion holds truth, while Nehru believed religion to be artificial facts which would fade away. Gandhi's and Nehru's explanation on religion shows the rationalist and spiritualist version attached to the inclusivist variant of Indian civilization (Rudolph, 2010).

## V. Main Results

The liberal nationalist advanced the classical construct of Orientalists and the Hindu nationalist considered Hinduism primary in the representation of Indian civilization, which arose the feeling of exclusion among Muslims in India. For Gandhi, there lies truth in all religion and he talks about civic civilization which involves respect for the dignity of human beings, and like Gandhi, Tagore also discovers the essence of civilization in the society rather than politics. The discussion on civilization provides the ground reality of Indian civilization to be fluid and dynamic as there is ongoing debate between Western and Asian thinkers on the image of Indian civilization, and the debate on the origin of Indian civilization still remains a matter of contest. The paper attempts to open up the discourse on Indian civilization by exploring the influence of outsiders in shaping the image of Indian civilization. So, it is necessary that Indian civilization is studied deeply than just highlighting on the critique of Asian thinkers about Huntingtonian explanation on civilization.

## VI. Conclusion

The South Asian countries, despite being attached to distinctive cultural beliefs and practices, have a colonial past and thus there is a shared cultural environment in South Asia. In order to encounter if South Asia has a common past, the Indian civilization and civilizational politics of India has been reflected through both the contemporary and historical perspectives. There has been ongoing discourse on civilization between the thinkers of South Asia (Susanne Hoeber Rudolph) and thinkers of the West (Samuel P. Huntington). The history of South Asia is studied through understanding of Indus valley civilization which presents a common ground for cultural and civilizational associations of South Asian countries. The discussion on Indus valley civilization provides different claims related to its relationship with Hinduism and the origin of Indian civilization.

Language was used as a tool by both Orientalists (Sanskrit language) and Anglicists (English language) to present their influence on the history of Indian civilization during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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