Chapter-2
Anandamath

Out of a group of Bengali writers that arose during the second phase of the Renaissance, Subodh C. Sen Gupta regards only four writers significant- the dramatist Dinabandhu Mitra (1830-73), the two poets Hemchandra (1838-1903) and Navinchandra (1847-1907), and “last and first, the great Bankimchandra” (18). Mitra’s drama Nil-darpan criticized the exploitation of the indigenous labour and peasants by the British traders. Hemchandra wrote patriotic poems titled “Bharat-Bilap” (Lament of India) and “Bharater Jagaran” (The Awakening of India). With the similar tones, Navin Sen wrote “Palashir Yuddha” (The Battle of Plassey). These three writers had nationalist fervor, but “none of them could produce a work that would not only inspire but also provide a plan or programme for direct action. Such a gospel of revolution nationalist India found in Bankim Chandra’s writings…” (19).

Bankim’s literary career is the story of a progressive transition from the plane of pure art to a prophetic plane. From a mere writer he turned out to be, what Aurobindo called ‘a seer and nation-builder’…A nation must first be born in the ideas and imagination before it is born in the world of fact. Far removed from the scene of moving action or exciting events, a few quiet men of contemplation supply the motive force for social dynamism. There were books that shook the world and thus made history-Rousseau’s Social Contract or Mrs. Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin. In the same way, though on a smaller dimension, Bankim’s Anandamath (The Abbey of Bliss), which contains his immortal Vande Mataram, roused the country and brought about an upheaval. (Bose, S.K. 1-2)

Set in the backdrop of the famine of 1770, Bankim’s Anandamath (written in 1882) is based on the Sanyasi ‘Rebellion’ against Mir Jafar, the ruler of Bengal and the
British tax collectors. In other words, on the literary canvas, it is a portrayal of the ‘historical’ confrontation between the Children of Mother Earth and the Muslim ruler of Bengal, who rules but does not govern, in league with the British. The historical setting of the novel significantly puts light on the gravity of the famine which occurred in Bengal in 1770 and its aftermath: “The low-caste and those who lived in the forests started to eat dogs, mice, and cats. Many fled- and those who fled and went to strange parts and died there of starvation, while those who remained died of disease, either because they ate the uneatable, or for want of eating at all” (Chatterjee Anandamath¹ 132). In reality, the famine is estimated to have caused the deaths of 10 million people (one out of three, reducing the population to thirty million in the then Bengal²). The natural catastrophe didn’t soften the Company to lower its revenue demand. Amiya P. Sen informs us, “Notwithstanding the devastating famine that affected north Bengal in 1769-70, the Company’s administration is known to have collected nearly as much revenue in the following year (1771-72) as it did during the year preceding the famine. This human tragedy forms the backdrop of Bankim’s well-known novel Anandamath” (An Intellectual Biography 6).

The people suffered, but the king extracted taxes to the full. And because they had to pay their taxes in full, the poor ate but once a day…Once again people went hungry…Then Muhammad Reza Khan, the king’s revenue officer, thinking to show how important he was, at once increased taxes by 10 percent, and great was the lament in Bengal. (Chatterjee 131-2)

Bankim admittedly borrowed material for Anandamath from Hunter’s The Annals of Rural Bengal (1868). Like the Children in the novel, “it is said that some of these wandering mendicants even built a fort in North Bengal, with the Teesta, then a vast sheet of water, acting as a barrier against the sepoys of the Nawab or the company” (Gupta, Subodh Chandra Sen 26). Pradeep Bhattacharya in “The Inspiration of

¹ For the present study, I have chosen the Oxford edition of Anandamath, translated by Julius J. Lipner. All further references to this text will be mentioned with the writer’s last name and page number only. If any other edition of the text is referred to, the name of translator will be mentioned in parenthesis.

² The territory of the then-Bengal included modern West Bengal, Bangladesh, and parts of Assam, Odissa, Bihar, and Jharkhand.
Bankimchandra’s Anand Math” tells us that the painstaking research of Kishanchand Bhakat, assistant teacher of mathematics in the M. N. Academy High School, Lalgola (in the district of Murshidabad), spanning over two decades, seems to have proved that Bankim’s novel was inspired by Bankim’s stay with Rao Jogindranarain in Lalgola after the Duffin controversy. Apart from it, Chittaranjan Bandopadhay in his edition of Ananda Matha (Calcutta, 1983) has suggested that Ananda Matha was inspired by the life of Vasudev Balwant Phadke whose case “created a sensation all over the country” (Das, Sisir K The Artist in Chains144) and whom R. C. Majumdar calls “the father of Indian militant nationalism” (Bose, S.K. 76). Phadke, a fearless Hindu, was anti-British. In 1879, he formed an army of tribal people in a forest and gathered arms by unfair means of plunder to loot the Kheda Treasury “as a first step towards overthrowing foreign rule”. “His diaries were translated into Bengali by Dakshinacharan Chattopadhyaya in Amritbazar Patrika in 1879. Bankim started writing Anandamath very shortly after that” (Sarkar, Tanika “Birth of a Goddess” 3961).

It is pertinent to mention that the novel is not completely faithful to the available versions of history and historical facts. For e.g., Mir Jafar who had actually died in 1765 is presented as the Nawab of Bengal during the famine of the 1770s. Unlike their portrayal in the novel, the Sanyasis were neither Bengali nor moved by the spirit of nationalism in reality. Moreover, the battles Bankim has mentioned in the first four

3 Bhakat asserts that most probably Bankim took the first few lines of “Vande Mataram” from a book in the family of Kali Brahma Bhattacharya, who was the Guru of the Raja’s family in Lalgola. He tells us that the dynastic deity of the Lalgola Raja family was Vishnu. Besides, the images of goddesses are inspired from the temples in Lalgola. “Bhakat proposes that Satyananda of the novel is none other than Kali Brahma Bhattacharya; that Dhirananda is based on the court poet and priest of Lalgola, Trailokyanath Smritibhushan; that Bhabananda is based on the character of Raja Jogindranarain Roy (himself a tantric Sadhak), who stood by Bankim and helped him get away from the wrath of the British militia; that Jibananda reflects much of Bankim himself” (Bhattacharya “The Inspiration of Bankimchandra’s Anand Math”).

4 Almost immediately after the Duffin controversy, Bankim took three months leave. Pradip Bhattacharya says that after the incident there must have been considerable resentment in the Berhampore Cantonment among the British militia and, apprehending bodily harm, Rao Jogindranarain Roy took Bankim away to stay with him in Lalgola.

5 Also mentioned in (Haldar 92), (Gupta, Subodh Chandra Sen 27), and (Sarkar, Tanika “Birth of a Goddess” 3961).

6 The Commander-in-Chief of his army, Mir Jaffar detested Siraj-ud-daula in the battle of Plassey in 1757. With the support of the Company, Mir Jafar proclaimed himself the Nawab of Bengal. Siraj-ud-daula was captured and put to death. When Jafar failed to satisfy heavy demands for money from the Company, he had to give place to his son-in-law, Mir Kasim who was a nominee of the Company, in 1760. Jafar preferred to reside at Calcutta on a pension of Rs. 1,500 p.m. grudgingly sanctioned by the new Nawab, Kasim.

And, when Kasim’s tuning with the English also did not go well, he was defeated in the battle of Buxor (1764). Later, Clive, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the British possessions in Bengal, came forward with the dual system whereby the Company acquired real power while the responsibility for administration rested on the shoulders of the Nawab of Bengal (Grover, B.L. 51 & 65).
editions were not fought in the old kingdom of Birbhum. He admits as much, “The battles described in the novel didn’t take place in the Birbhum region; they took place in northern Bengal...I don’t consider this to be a fatal discrepancy, for a novel is a novel, and not history” (qtd. in Lipner 36). It is true that the novel was not meant to be docufiction, a factual account dressed up in the garb of a novel (59). The novel is, in fact, important for the successful creation of the atmosphere of a particular period of history, suffused with national sentiment. Rabindranath Tagore remarks in his conversation with Mulk Raj Anand, “This novel is a legend of the struggle for freedom, and the passion behind it seems to reflect Bankim’s vision of free India” (Chatterjee Anandamath, Trans. Basanta Koomar Roy 15).

Historians hold varied views on the significance of the Sanyasi ‘Rebellion’ in Indian history. Some refer to it as an early war for India’s independence from the foreign rule, since the right to collect tax had been given to the British East India Company after the Battle of Plassey in 1757. On the other hand, other scholars view it as acts of militant banditry following the famine of 1770. At first glance, in the novel also, Mahendra finds the sanyasis ‘robbers’. He says, “But a bad job! Banditry no less!” (Chatterjee 143). Through this dialogue, Bankim has presented the common opinion about the Sanyasis. This picture is also found in most of the historical accounts of the ascetics in Bengal. However, by portraying this story of violence in the colours of nationalism, the novelist has given a new shape to the ‘rebellion’ in the backdrop of Vaishnavism; he has artistically brushed away the basic materialistic motives of the real ascetics mentioned in the academic history. In fact, the novelist has replaced the historical Sanyasis with the nationalist Santans, an outcome of his imagination and about whom there is no reference in the history of Bengal. It is the novelist’s

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7 “Although the famine and the rebellion are historically recorded facts, Bankim didn’t emphasize the historicity of the novel in the first edition. In the second edition (1884), by popular demand he added an introduction where he quoted from Gleg’s Memoirs of the Life of Warren Hastings and W. W. Hunter’s Annals of Rural Bengal to show what had actually happened in 1773, but he went on to add that he did not want to write a historical novel” (Mukherjee, Meenakshi “Anandamath: A Political Myth” 903).

8 “Prior to 1800, monks of the Shaiva and Vaishnava cults exercised political and economic influences as merchants, bankers, and most importantly soldiers. With the East India company consolidating its base in India with the same commercial and profit-making interests, a prolonged series of skirmishes resulted in Bengal and Bihar between 1760 and 1800, referred to as the ‘Sanyasi and Fakir rebellion.’ The rebellion was not ideologically motivated by the perils of the nation. Bankim draws upon this historical event to legitimize his ascetic national trope; however the nationalist rhetoric is entirely his invention. Further he is completely silent about the role of Muslim fakirs.” (Chakraborty, Chandrima, End Note 15)
construction of ‘truth’ on the literary canvas, which is otherwise missing in the academic history. In other words, the writer has created a parallel text that opposes the textual history. He challenges the British version of Bengali history as the English, according to him, exaggerated the facts of their bravery in official documents. The novelist writes:

Captain Thomas instantly sent a report to Kolkata declaring that with a force of 157 sepoys he had overcome 14,700 rebels: 2,153 rebels had been killed, 1,233 wounded, and 7 taken prisoner (Only the last was true.). (190)

Bankim’s urge to create a tale of valour and self-assertion in the historical setting of Bengal seems to lie in his concern with and regret over the lack of “masculine” literature of Bengal/India and “effeminate” representation of the Hindus by the English rulers. Due to the cultural difference, the English were unable to understand the “ideal form of courage” for the Hindus (Bald 16). Suresht R. Bald writes, “For the Hindu, the ideal form of courage was the ability to master one’s self, to bear pain rather than inflict it; his battles were internal. It was difficult for those used to defining manliness in the context of the feudal chivalric life to appreciate the Hindu's version” (16). However, Bankim, under the Western benchmark of masculinity, has notably asserted the ‘external’ form of ‘courage’ in Anandamath. In the first issue of Bangadarshan, Bankim critically views the reasons behind the ignominious position of

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9 “Horrifying stories of how starving peasants were forced to feed on field rats while British revenue collectors went about exacting their dues gained wide currency in eighteenth century Bengal, and became a part of public memory. Bankim heard such stories from an extremely old relative who might have born sometime in the 1760s, but he also personally witnessed similar conditions that recurred during the Orissa famine of 1886” (Sen, Amiya P. An Intellectual Biography 6).


11 “It was assumed in England that most Indians lacked manliness and courage and were innately effeminate. Kipling popularized this image of ‘effeminacy,’ especially of the Bengalis” (Bald 17).

12 Bankim himself has admitted the ‘emasculated’ aspect of Bengali men. “Unlike imperialist discourse, he also identifies Westernization as a cause of the emasculation of the indigenous Hindu male. In essays such as ‘Bharat Kalanka’ (India’s Shame), ‘Kamalakanta’, and ‘Babu,’ his conceptualization of the degeneration of the body of the Hindu male becomes the symbol of the negative impact of colonial rule. He identifies the elite’s obsession with studies as the cause of ‘brain fever’ and ‘feeble developments of muscles’ (Rosselli 124-5). He holds English education responsible for the widespread desire to mimic British manners and customs. He suggests that the material security that the British administration provided led to the elite’s neglect of the physical culture of akharas and indigenous sports” (Chandrima, Chakraborty 14).
the land. According to him, there was lack of unity and desire for freedom among the Hindus against the British. He feels it was the enervating climate and the philosophical systems which combined to encourage inaction and valorized salvation. In the words of Irfan Ahmed, “the weakness of Hinduism, as he (Chatterjee) saw it was its quietism and perhaps its undue stress on the spirit” (29).

Dipankar Roy in “Representation of the ‘National Self’- Novelistic Portrayal of a New Cultural Identity in Gora” says that the projection of Sannyasi, which was marginalized, in the centre on the canvas of fiction was a witting effort “to valorize the spiritual principle of the rising nationalist consciousness” and to construct masculinist anti-imperialist discourse that could counter the colonial projection of a ‘superior’ western masculinity. “The reinterpreted and reconstructed figure of the sannyasi was to prove the easy interchangeability of marital and spiritual values- Kshatratej and Brahmatej were projected as the two sides of the same coin” (388).

Anandamath attempts to remind the supposedly emasculated Bengalis that ‘in the long history of subjection there are great episodes of resistance’ (Kaviraj 107). It counters allegations of the Bengali male as ‘helpless, timid, accustomed to couch under oppression’ (Macaulay 12) and proves ‘Western historiography as false’ (107). The presence of physical prowess in the past is then established as constitutive of Bengali/Hindu masculinity. (Chakraborty, Chandrima 15)

Nationalism and Vaishnavism

From my very early years, the question which often occurred to me “What shall I do with this life?” “What is to be done with this life?” Throughout my whole life I searched for the answer….To fulfill the object of my life, I laboured at the risk of my life. As a result of all this labour and all this trouble, I have learnt this much that the leaning of all the faculties to God is devotion, and without

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devotion there cannot be any humanity. (Chatterjee Essentials of Dharma 78)

Bankim, an intellectual of the second phase of Renaissance and a keen student of the rise of nationalism in Europe in the post Napoleonic Nineteenth century, knew that the idea of nationalism was foreign to India. He believed that the roots of nationalism lay in a glorious history and the realization of a people that they had a distinct message to give to the world. For Bankim, this message was ‘Dharma’ (Haldar 179-180). Anandamath, a tale of vengeance, valour, and violence, attempts to synchronize ‘Dharma’ and militant nationalism into one discourse that would find strong expression in Aurobindo’s views on nationalism in 1908: “Nationalism is not a mere political programme; Nationalism is a religion that has come from God; Nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live” (“The Present Situation” 818).

Anandamath, essentially dominated by the integrative strain of Vaishnavism which is a symbolic representation of Hinduism, depicts Bengali Hindu nationalism against the Muslims in league with the English. In Hindu mythology, Vishnu is one of the primary manifestations of God, apart from Brahma and Shiva. Bankim had been inspired by Krishna since childhood. He expressed his devotion to Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, on the literary canvas, particularly in his later works. Anandamath portrays the devotion of the Vaishnava Code of the Children as a strong basis of “state-seeking nationalism” (Guichard 15).

The service to the Code is very hard for the Children who initiate into the vow as they have to renounce their family, caste, wealth, property, and pleasures until “the aim is achieved” (178). Apart from it, they have to restrain their senses, and whatever they acquire, they have to give it to the treasury of the Vaishnavas. The cause demands

15 The second phase of the Renaissance attempted to revive Hinduism in India.
16 It is interesting to note that there was a temple of Radhaballav (Krishna) as well as a temple of Shiva in Bankim’s family house. With regard to it, M. K. Haldar comments, “Hindu religious sects in Bengal were never sharply divided among themselves. The same person could worship all gods and that too sometimes on the same day” (7).
17 Sarkar observes, in Bankim’s later writings, “Themes of class, caste and gender abruptly disappear…their absence filled by reflections on all that constitutes authentic and fully historicized Hinduism, on how the Hindu nation may be imagined and constructed” (Sarkar, Tanika Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation 156).
18 There are two kinds of Santans or Children. Those who are not initiated are either householders or beggars; they come at the time of battle, and after they have received their share of the loot or some other reward, they go away. The other kind is of those children who are initiated. They are the leaders of the Order.
complete dedication because “if your mind remains tied by the rope of worldly concerns, then like the kite bound by its string, you will never be able to soar into the heavens” (178). If need be, the Children have to give up life also. However, if one is attached to the worldly ties, he “will forget God’s work”. As per the norms and values of the Math, the penance lies in one’s death if any rule is broken. It is believed that Vishnu himself watches over the Children. Satyananda says:

Don’t break any of the promises you have just made. Vishnu himself is witness to this. He … will destroy the breaker of these promises and cast him into hell eternal. (Chatterjee 181)

To highlight the spirit of militant nationalism within the framework of religion, the novelist has constructed the Code that is significantly different from Lord Chaitanya’s Vaishnava code. The Children are culturally different from the traditional Vaishnavas in a number of ways such as the last rites and food habits. They apparently do not adhere to strict vegetarianism (Jibananda eats “rui fish from the lake” at Nimmi’s house). The writer says, “They (the Children) … were devotees of Vishnu, not members of some Vaishnava sect, so they cremated their dead” (212). The Children or the Santans are not “genuine ascetics” since “…in order to survive, all the genuine ascetics had fled to such areas as Kashi and Prayag. Only the Children assumed the guise of ascetics at will, which they abandoned when the need arose…” (157).

The novelist has politically divided the traditional Vaishnavism, a philosophy of peace and non-violence, into three parts and one of which justifies the Santans’ militant ways. Satyananda says that God consists of three attributes- goodness, energy, and quiescence. Each attribute has its corresponding spiritual practice. God’s mercy and benevolence, which arise from His goodness, is worshipped by loving devotion as done

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19 Kanthalpara, the birth place of Bankim, had a temple of Radha-Vallabha. During the Rath Yatra, a lot many people came to pay their obeisance. Bankim participated in the festival. All the time, devotees could be seen totally absorbed in chanting and singing. “In his more mature years he repudiated Vaishnavism but his involvement with the Radha-Krishna legend and his love of Vaishnava lyrics never weakened” (Das, Sisir K. The Artist in Chains 4).

20 “Modern Benares and Allahabad, respectively, sacred pilgrimage centres for Hindus” (Lipner 157).

21 Undoubtedly, it cannot be ruled out that “a tradition of militancy has characterized Hindu asceticism from a fairly early period, atleast from the seventh century A.D.” (Chakraborty, Chandrima Note No. 15).
by the followers of Chaitanya Vaishnava. God’s attribute of quiescence embodied in “four armed form” must be worshipped with “ritual offerings of flowers, sandalpaste, and so on”, while “God’s power, however, arises from his attribute of energy, and that must be worshipped by warfare, by the destruction of those who hate God” (179). The Children worship Vishnu by warfare, Satyananda adds. Thus, the children are simply “an order of religious devotees” who “don’t aspire to temporal power (180). All they wish to do is destroy the Muslims who are presented as “enemies of our Lord” (180).

The ideology of militant Hindu nationalism mainly rests upon the discursive practices of Hinduism. Satyanada justifies that the Children are violent in their ways because “the mark of the authentic Vaishnava practice is subduing the evildoer and rescuing the world. For is not Vishnu himself the protector of the world!... It was he who destroyed the demons…” (Chatterjee 179). Moreover, through the example of Krishna in his interpretation of The Geeta, Bankim asserts that duty is determined by circumstances. In the conditions in which Krishna- as a man and not as a God- established peace and order, destruction was necessary. Thus, it was the duty of Krishna to annihilate the existing disorder in order to begin new construction. In the novel, Vishnu appears to be a symbolic justification of violence as the Vaishnavas give more importance to the Mother, the daughter of Vishnu, than Vishnu. “This is an attempt at a synthesis between Shakti worship and Vishnu worship, a new cult in which the application of force for the deliverance of the Motherland is not ruled out” (Bose, S.K. 77).

Irfan Ahmed says, “In Bankim’s new version of Hinduism, religion ceased to be an agency for spiritual salvation. It no longer remained a medium of dialogue between man and the ultimate” (29). Ahmed’s observation does not seem to be valid as he overlooks the crucial point that militant nationalism in the name of religion is presented as ‘Karma Yoga’ in the novel and thus, according to The Geeta, a path leading to

22 “Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (birth name- Bishwambhar) was born in 1485...On a pilgrimage to Gaya for his late father’s sacred rites he turned deeply spiritual and also came under the influence of a sage named Ishwarapuri, who taught him the worship of Krishna. In 1510, Bishwambhar left home and his wife Bishnupriya and embraced monkhood through another ascetic named Keshav Bharati. He took on the name Shri Krishna Chaitanya and after some travels in Bengal went to Orissa and made Puri his main centre” (Sengupta, Nitish 116-7). “His life and work constitute a watershed in the history of Vaishnavism that centres on worshipping Krishna, the great Hindu god, as the embodiment of Supreme God and prescribes breaking away from orthodox rituals and casteism, and chanting the name of God in ecstasy” (115) “…the new Vaishnavism also provided sustenance to a whole generation of people who, after the disappearance of Buddhism from Bengal, had felt somewhat helpless at being caught between ritualistic, traditional (Hindu) religion and Islam, neither of which they were able to accept whole-heartedly” (118).
liberation. The Mahabharat itself justifies the battle of Kurukshetra as a ‘Dharma Yuddha’. Bankim differentiates between religion, a western concept, and ‘Dharma’. ‘Dharma’ is a practice of life, whereas religion chiefly includes the worshipping of God. In other words, ‘Dharma’ for Bankim is religion as culture. It “is the fullest development of all the potentialities of man. Anushilan, when achieved fully, leads to cessation of rebirth, leads to Moksha” (Haldar 136). The Sanyasi Rebellion is portrayed as a ‘Dharmic’ action or devotion to the Ultimate, leading to ‘Moksha’. Besides, The Vishnu Purana also mentions that liberation lies in the support of the goddess Earth, which, in the novel, is replaced with the Mother (representing then Bengal), who is Vishnu’s daughter and whose safety and well-being is the prime duty of every Child. The Mother is deemed as the Children’s “way to salvation” (Chatterjee 169). In this construction of religio-political ambience, the very aim of liberation or salvation amid violence under the guise of ‘Dharma’ is not out of the scene; it strengthens the bond between Vaishnavism and militant nationalism.

Religious fervor reigns supreme in the novel and leaves no place for atheism or agnosticism in order to execute a ‘Dharmic’ version of militant nationalism. Interestingly, the Divine also responds in one way or the other; supernaturalism seizes the ambience in the novel. In the first edition of the novel, Bankim wrote that the novel was meant to reflect that “[t]here is a link between the heavens and this world” (qtd. in Sarkar, Tanika “Birth of a Goddess” 3959). Kalyani is conditioned to believe in God as a reality that operates human affairs. Satyananda himself indirectly admits at one place

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23 In Julius Jolly’s translation of The Vishnu Purana, the chapter “Vishnu and the Goddess of the Earth” introduces the Goddess of Earth and her relationship with Vishnu. The Goddess of the Earth appears in the Vishnu Purana itself and according to the mythology, on her query regarding her sustenance, the Lord tells the Goddess, “Those who practise the duties ordained for each caste and for each order, and who act up strictly to the holy law, will sustain thee, O earth; to them is thy care committed…O radiant goddess of the earth, the eternal laws for the aggregate of the four castes, together with the customs to be observed by each order, and with the secret ordinances, Which will affect the final liberation of the virtuous persons, who will support thee. Be seated upon this splendid golden seat, O handsome-thighed goddess” (8-11).

24 The Mother or the Mother Earth refers to then Bengal, which is significantly different in social and political aspects from ‘all the other places- Magadha, Mithila, Kashi, Kanci, Delhi, Kashmir’ (Chatterjee 146). Jnanananda also speaks of the mother earth particularly in relation to Bengal: “For a long time we have been wanting to smash the nest of these weaver-birds, to raze the city of these Muslim foreigners, and throw it into the river- to burn the enclosure of these swine and purify Mother Earth again! Brothers, that day has come!” (169).

The Children are specifically concerned about the ‘Hindu Identity’ in Bengal (147). “In particular, everyone was angry with the Muslims for the anarchy and the lawlessness of their reign…many Hindus were keen to establish a sense of Hindu identity” (189). But the novelist’s view of the rising power of the English is not confined to Bengal; Warren Hastings is called ‘the rising sun of the English race in India’ (189).
that the Children possess special powers- “We have taken the great vow and God is merciful to us” (Chatterjee 159). Dhirananda says Satyananda knows that Bhabananda will die today in the battlefield and “that in the next life he will attain heaven” (211). The rebellion itself is deemed as a religious struggle for a sacred cause. The portrayal of religious imagery to describe the aftermath of the famine also draws the readers’s attention: “The place of the Goddess Durga’s festival now became the jackal’s lair, the dais for Krishna’s Dol festival became the owl’s refuge, while in the temple’s meeting hall poisonous snakes searched for frogs in broad daylight” (188). Satyananda psychologically conditions the Children with the diction of religion: “An unrighteous villain called Thomas has killed many santans. Tonight we shall slay him and his army. This is the command of the Lord of the world!” (204).

Interestingly, the account of ‘history’ presented in the novel is also an amalgamation of human and divine activities. It is influenced by not only the cruel Nawab but also the gods. At a number of places, the novelist from the third person point of view refers to the gods as active participants. The novelist writes, “in Asvin the gods became unfavourable” (Chatterjee 131), “[b]ut in 1771, God was very favourable” (188), and “…by God’s will, Warren Hastings was Governor General in Kolkata” (219). Apart from it, all the characters believe that the gods are the ultimate creators of destiny. Kalyani attempts to commit suicide, as she believes that God has commanded her to do so. When the Children lose their battle, Jibananda asks Satyananda, “Maharaj, why has God become so unfavourable to us?” and Satyananda says, “I am certain that He who has shown mercy to us for so long, our Lord who bears the conch, the discus, the lotus and the mace, will again be merciful to us” (176). At the victory of battle, Satyananda says, “Today the Lord of the world has been merciful to us, and the santan code has triumphed!” (211). When Satyananda leaves for the collection of weapons and for the arrangement of craftsmen for making weapons, he uses the word ‘pilgrimage’ for his exploration (176). And Bankim Chandra shows that it was the willingness of God in the execution of the imperial policy of the English in Bengal.

From his seat in Kolkata he (Warren Hastings) fashioned an iron chain and resolved to shackle the whole land, from sea to sea, islands and all.
And one day, the Lord of this world, sitting on his throne, agreed without more ado to let it be so! (189)

Hindu nationalism is the product of Hindu philosophy and thought processes; it doesn’t ignore moral and ethical aspects of nationalism. The novelist dwells upon the idea of selfless devotion which is a thematic concern of *The Bhagavadgita* also: “In the minds of those who are too attached to sense enjoyment and material opulence, and who are bewildered by such things, the resolute determination for devotional service to the Supreme Lord does not take place” (Text 44, 2.45, pp118). He emerges as philosopher-patriot trying to rest nationalism on the older Hindu concept of selfless action (*nishkam karma*). Shanti tells Jibananda, “But never abandon your duty as a hero” (Chatterjee 166). In Kalyani’s dream, she is told that her husband “must serve” the Mother (154) and “If you remain with your husband, he will not be able to serve her (the Mother). Come to Me.” It establishes national duty as more important than family duty.

The novel emphasizes that the motive behind ‘Karma’ may be high but the means must be ethical. Bhabananda and the other Sanyasis do not pay much attention to the means of Karma; they get influenced by the tough time, which leads to their debacle. Noticeably, the ending of the novel is in favour of the English because of bad means such as looting, hatred, and pointless killing instead of inescapable violence done by the Children. Along the lines of *the Mahabharat*, violent stream²⁵ in the compelling circumstances is justified and accepted by the writer.

In the Prologue to the novel, the writer establishes the importance of dedication to the cause which is more significant than a person’s life. Shanti voices the human predicament, “What I regard as devotion may actually be hypocrisy or self-deception” (Chatterjee 182). The novel reveals that ‘Dharma’ needs consistent dedication. In *The Bhagvad Geeta* Lord Krishna says, “One who restrains the senses of action but whose

²⁵“It (Ahimsa) appears first in Brahminical literature in the 6th century B.C in the Chandogya Upanisad (3.17.4), the only occurrence of the word in the thirteen principle Upanishads. There it is inconspicuously included with a number of other virtues- austerity, alms-giving, uprightness, harmlessness (ahimsa), truthfulness —as gifts for priests...A few centuries after the time of Chandogya Upanisad, the Bhagavadgita mentions Ahimsa four times but again without any emphasis, merely including it in lists of virtues (10.5; 13.7), of qualities good and bad (16.2), and of austerities (17.14). The whole purpose of the Bhagavadgita is not for, but rather against, Ahimsa, since it represents Krishna as delivering the discourse to Arjuna to persuade him to do his duty selflessly as a member of the militant caste (Ksatriya), renounce his pacifism (1.28-47; 2.2-3), and fight the battle of righteousness, in which effort Krishna is successful (18.73).” (Brown , W. Norman “Some Ethical Concepts for the Modern World” *Rabindranath Tagore A Centenary Volume 1861-1961*, pp. 378).
mind dwells on sense objects certainly deludes himself and is called a pretender” (Text 6, Chapter 3, pp 152). The Children do not emerge victorious in the ending as they don’t fight as ‘Dharma Yodhas’;26 they are swayed by material pursuits; they are involved in pointless killings. Overall, the Children’s cult of Vaishnavism, to the readers’ surprise, appears to be inhuman, ineffective, destructive, and against its own values, whereas Bankim’s personal sense of ‘Dharma’ is humane. When Jibananda follows Mahendra, he finds a seven-day hungry woman lying by the roadside. Jibananda saves her life and continues on his way, “abusing her vilely all the while for the crime of delaying him” (Chatterjee 160). Notably, Jibabanda’s conception of ‘serving’ the Mother is narrowly confined to the land. His sister also criticizes him, “I am supposed to be afraid of you because you have left your wife and kill people! Don’t forget, we come from the same stock” (164). Jibananda calls her wife ‘sinner’, who even does not complain for having left alone at home (164). The Santans “set fire to as many Muslim homes as they could find” (167) until Satyananda instructs them to go back as “[t]here’s no need for such a pointless and evil course of action” (170). Bhabhananda fails to control his senses and falls for Kalyani’s beauty. Jibananda also breaks promise by meeting his wife.

The path of ‘Dharma’ is not easy; it demands commitment and dedication. However, in the novel, poverty and hunger lead to the degradation of human values. The bandits, who capture Kalyani and child, plan to eat human flesh (135). The narrator himself comments, “In certain circumstances, human beings become nothing but ravenous beasts” (135). It reminds us of William Golding’s The Lord of the Flies, a modern novel, which also indirectly refers to ‘struggle for existence’ (Darwin) that ultimately leads to ‘the survival of the fittest’ (Herbert Spencer). Human instinct

26 “The Mahabharata war is referred to, in the Bhagavadgita, as a dharma yuddha. A dharma yuddha is a war fought in defence of justice and righteousness and for the security and well-being of the community (lokasamgraha). Qualifying a war as a dharma yuddha distinguishes it from those forms of violence that are not sanctioned in Hinduism. One example of this would be violence for the sake of achieving power and wealth. A nation or a group may be motivated, by greed, to seize the assets and resources of another nation or community or to gain power through the conquest and control of others. We may refer to such a war as an artha yuddha. The Bhagavadgita identifies greed as the primary source of evil and the warrior, Arjuna, is repeatedly urged not to be motivated by greed... In the case of a dharma yuddha, however, violence is not used for personal profit or pleasure but in defence of justice. In a dharma yuddha, the opponent is not demonised and the rhetoric is not characterized by hate and contempt. Even though Arjuna must struggle against the Kauravas, he is still called upon by Krishna to see God in his opponents. Good does not belong exclusively to one side and evil to the other” (Rambachan).
relegates social and moral values in survival-crisis; even the Sanyasis though with a noble purpose fall prey to it.

Bhabananda said, “…Hunger has driven all of them from the villages around to become bandits. Who isn’t a bandit nowadays? We too fed on looted spoils today. Two maunds of the kotwal’s rice were in transit, and we captured them and consecrated them to our Vaishnava bellies!” (139)

This ethical and moral falls impure the fight for liberation. The mysterious healer says in the ending, “Satyananda, do not grieve. It was mistakenly, by means of banditry, that you gathered wealth and won your victory. Wrongdoing can never produce any holy fruit. So you will not be able to free the land” (229). This idea is the main thematic concern of the narrative.

S. K. Bose writes, “Years later the people were taught by Gandhiji that the means must match the ends in purity. Whenever Gandhiji found that sin or violence had entered the mass agitation coming up under his leadership, he didn’t hesitate to call it off even in the midst of its impressive success and thus retire into the silence of his soul” (96). Swami Vivekanand also emphasized that one must pay as much attention to the means of work as to its end in his speech “Work and its Secret” delivered in Los Angeles. Originally, this message occurs in The Geeta: “O chief of the Bhäratas, when there is an increase in the mode of passion the symptoms of great attachment, fruitive activity, intense endeavor, and uncontrollable desire and hankering develop” (Text 12, Chapter 13, pp 613). And this passion leads to ‘greed’ (Text 17, Chapter 13, pp 617). Further, violence for greed is sin (Text37-38 Chapter1 pp58-59). This ‘greed’ takes one to the gates of ‘hell’ (Text 21 Chapter 16 pp 676). The novelist has wittingly portrayed the moral and ethical lapses on the Children’s part to support the ending that favours the English as rulers.

**Ethnic Criterion of Nationalism**

In the novel, Hindu nationalism has sought to identify Bengali nation according to ethnic criterion, which specifically seeks to unite all people of a certain ethnicity heritage together. An ethnic group is a unique population which has some sense of
collective history and which shares symbolic markers. The Children in the novel have ethnic bond with one another as they belong to the same Mother and follow the code of Vaishnavism; they share a sort of racial, cultural, territorial, and symbolic unity. The key elements in Hindu philosophy– stoic attitude, self-abnegation, devotion to ‘Dharma’ (duty), detachment, celibacy, and rigorous atonement – find due place in the plot of the novel, and tradition and values make foundation for collective self-consciousness among the Children. The novelist portrays Hinduism as a powerful force that contains the heritage of wisdom and that mostly guides the Children’s life style. “Bankim did not seek relief in religious nationalism; he made nationalism and patriotism a part of religion–‘Anushilan, Dharma’ ” (Haldar 185). In the words of Mulk Raj Anand, “It (Anandamath) is a legend in the tradition of the Mahabharata”.

The novel successfully delineates a period of time when traditional values are the basis of life and give a sense of spatial and temporal belongingness. Kalyani refuses to eat anything as her husband “has not eaten yet” (Chatterjee 138). When Kalyani meets Mahendra in the abbey, she requests Mahendra to eat “a little first, and then, sitting to one side, Kalyani ate from what was left” as per the custom (152). Worshipping is also an activity that acts as a strong factor of psycho-spiritual unity. Satyananda Thakur is seen “performing his early morning worship” (148). At another place, Satyananda says, “It’s now evening and I must attend to my evening prayers” (177). Renunciation, dedication, and celibacy are core to the Indian religious philosophy of ‘Sattva Guna’. The Children of Mother Earth are renouncers, who will go back home once their “job is done” (148). Bhavananda, Jibananda and Satyananda have taken the vow of celibacy for the bigger cause of nation-state. On the contrary, the concept of celibacy is missing in the western materialistic view. The English are hedonists as they give importance to physical pleasures and comforts. The typical Hindu characteristics and manners lay the foundation of the Hindu Bengali nation, and confer national identity upon the Vaishnavas who can be distinguished from ‘the others’/the English.

Bankim portrays the Hindu Sanyasi tradition with the element of supernaturalism in the novel, probably inspired by his father’s retrieval from death long

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time ago. Bankim’s father Jadavchandra was barely eighteen, when he contracted a fatal illness, and at one point of time was given for dead. Miraculously, however, he was retrieved at the cremation ground by a sanyasi. “Later, the ascetic visited Jadavchandra, initiated him into a mystic cult and gave him gifts. Until the end of his life, Jadavchandra maintained an enigmatic silence about this man. Bankim and his brothers were highly impressed by this man” (Das, Sisir K. The Artist in Chains 5). Just like Bankim’s father, Jibananda’s life is also retrieved by a Physician sanyasi in the novel. The Sanyasis and supernaturalism provide conducive ambience for Hindu mysticism and spiritualism in the novel.

Casteism, another element of Hindu ethnicity, plays an important role in the discourse of nation and nationalism in the novel. For unity among the Children, the caste-system is negated by Satyananda and Vaishnavism. Satyananda at the time of departure says, “But keep the children united” (Chatterjee 176). And before initiating Shanti/Shantiram Debsharma and Mahendra into the cause, Satyananda asks them to renounce their castes; he makes them clear that “[a]ll the Children are of equal standing. Under the arms of this great vow there is no difference between a Brahmin and a Shudra” (181). The cause of nationalism cannot bear disintegration even on account of the caste-system. Anyway, the caste system gives a sense of temporal association to the Hindus; its negation in the novel does not unify all and sundry (e.g. the English), but only those who are divided by the caste-lines in Hinduism. The negation of the caste system is simply according to the tradition as “[w]hat is considered a duty in one set of circumstances is not regarded as a duty in another set of circumstances” (Nanda 16). Rashtra-dharma transcends Varnadharma during the Sanyasis ‘rebellion’. The disavowal of casteism brings the Hindu Vaishnavas closer.

Native language also plays a crucial role in the making of nation. Bankim makes fun of the inability of the British to speak local language. When Mahendra is caught by the sepoys, who ask the English officer for further instructions, the tipsy officer says in Hindusthani, “Take the scoundrel and marry him” (Chatterjee 141). Instead of saying “Sida Karo (Straighten him out!)”, the officer says, “Sadi Karo (Marry him!).” Language emerges as one of the factors which makes the Bengali Hindus different from the British. When Shanti in guise of a Vaishnavi enters the English camp to spy, Major
Edward uses the word ‘gar’ for ‘fort’ instead of saying ‘gadh’\textsuperscript{28}. Edward’s wrong pronunciation tickles the reader. When in Shanti calls him ‘chump of a man’ in Bengali, he asks its meaning. Then she responds, “A great general” (221-222). By this, Bankim makes the English look ridiculous, and therefore more aloof from the local inhabitants who share a common language (Lipner 263).

**Hindu Bengali Nation: the Children and the Mother**

*Anandamath*, which is called a ‘fable’ by Tagore (Chatterjee *Anandamath* Trans. Basanta Koomar Roy 12), is well known for strengthening the metanarrative of Mother land. “Metanarratives can play an extremely important role vis-à-vis the establishment of a particular ideological position in a work of fiction” (Hawthorn 208). The psychological identification of land with Mother fosters unity and fraternity among its inhibitors who belong to varying social strata, and provides a common identity to the people as a nation. “Bankim’s contribution to Indian nationalism was not so much by way of a virulent anti-British/anti-colonial sentiment as by making fellow Bengalis and generally, all Indians, more self-conscious as a people” (Sen, Amiya P. *An Intellectual Biography* 93-4).

Interestingly, the idea of collective consciousness of ‘all Indians’ is missing in the novel *Anandamath* and particularly in the song “Vande Mataram”. The song originally carried ‘provincial’\textsuperscript{29} sentiments. Sri Aurobindo described the song as ‘the national anthem of Bengal’ and Henry Cotton, an ex-member of the Bengal Civil Service, pointed out that the song was essentially a hymn to Bengal as mother (qtd. in Das, Sisir K. 222-3). “…[T]he opening lines of Bande Mataram describe the green cornfields of Bengal and not the sandy and mountainous regions of Rajasthan or that it

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\textsuperscript{28} Near equivalent.

\textsuperscript{29} It doesn’t mean that Bankim was essentially provincial in his outlook. S.K. Bose tells us that Bankim had ‘keen all India awareness.’ ‘Consciousness of India as a whole burns bright many of his works. The essay Bharat Kalanka (Vividha Prabandha I) may be said to represent the gist of his thinking on the matter. Herein he attributes the country’s downfall to the absence of the ideas of nationalism and political independence in India…In another essay, *Bangadarshiner Patra Suchana*, he stresses the urgency of uniting mind and effort among the great variety of races and language groups constituting India…In a letter written to S.C. Mukherji in 1872 he says: ‘There is no hope for India until the Bengali and the Punjabi understand and influence each other and can bring their joint influence to bear upon the Englishman’… Historical studies being the most effective means of stirring up national consciousness, Bankim regrets the lack of a correct history of India, that is, Indian history from the Indian point of view, as much as he regrets the lack of a true history of Bengal…In *Dharmatattwa* (Chapter 24) the preceptor warns that India must not imitate the aggressive patriotism of the west but balance patriotism with universalism...” (102-3).
refers to seven crores of Bengalis rather than to thirty or forty crores of Indians” (Sengupta, S.C. 35).

Although the land is a non-living entity, yet against the European rationalism, it is personified as a Mother by the Santans in the novel. The idea of Mother is not a transcendental experience but an unmitigated reality. The hermit nationalists (the Children) “recognise no other mother” (Chatterjee 145). The Mother is seen as “the very essence of Vishnu’s earthly form” (169). The safety of Mother is a prime motive of life for the Santans who form a nation for a common collective cause. Like other mythological gods and goddesses, the idea of Mother exists as an integrative force among the believers.

Pradeep Bhattacharya in his article “The Problem of Janani Janmabhumischa in Anand Math” throws light on the historiography of the glorification and correlation of land and mother. He says that the occurrence of the Sanskrit Shloka- “Janani Janmabhumischa svargadapi gariyasi (One’s mother and birthland are greater than heaven itself)” is usually attributed to The Ramayana30. But, he argues, none of our epics shows evidence of any concept of a motherland. This attribution of the saying to Rama is “anachronistic and apocryphal”. He leaves the argument open-ended: “Is it then a folk memory of an anonymously composed masterpiece of a Shloka born of patriotic fervor?”. However, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya in Vande Mataram: The Biography of a song writes that glorification of the mother and birthland “occurred in the version of Valmiki’s Ramayana current in Bengal” (78), referring to the Bengali origin of the idea.

According to Amiya P. Sen, “There are glimpses of a ‘Bharat Mata’ in Sanskrit texts going back to the fifth-sixth century C.E” (An Intellectual Biography 99). He adds that the personification of the native land as Mother, the goddess, seems to be only a folk memory. Thus, a clear cut reference to the origin of the concept is not there. He further writes that “Prior to Bankim, the reference to one’s place of birth as the Mother occurs in at least two poems of Madhusudan Dutt- Banga Bhumir Proti (An Ode to the

30 “After conquering Lanka, Rama was supposed to have been asked by his half-brother, Laksmana, to stay on and rule the island. Rama answered: “I would not want to, Laksmana, even if Lanka were made of gold. One’s mother and birthland are greater than heaven itself”” (Lipner 241).
Land of Bengal) and Birbahu Kavya (The Saga of Birbahu), published in 1862 and 1864, respectively” (100).

Tanika Sarkar draws our attention to a play named *Bharatmata* of 1873. In this play, a dejected, pale and broken woman, who is stripped of all her possessions, is shown. This woman, symbolically the Motherland, weeps and speaks. The white men abuse and kick her while her sons keep on sleeping. In the ending, a good sahib appears and “promises her that another Mother, the British Queen, would bring her woes to an end” (3965). Sarkar says, “What *Anandamath* does is to dramatise and transfigure the image of abjection into a lustrous, powerful deity” (“Birth of a Goddess” 3965).

S.K Bose says the productive and plentiful earth is often linked to “the quality of motherland in the ancient texts” (79). Besides, it is said that mother and motherhood are more glorious than the heaven itself. But Bankim, perhaps, has moved a step ahead by conceiving the idea of the mother in the form of goddess Durga and “in terms of modern patriotic spirit”. Prior to Bankim it was perhaps Sayendra Nath Tagore, elder brother of Rabindara Nath Tagore, who adumbrated a similar idea in the song (1867) which begins as- “Children of India, sing together and in complete unison the glory that India is”. In this song, India is described as ‘Mother of Heroes’. Bose adds:

The rudiments of the composition might have been present in some other contemporary compositions as well. But all these were apparently in vague and general terms without the inspiring, exhilarating, quality of the tangible, perceptible, image-making of the Mother of Bankim’s conception. (79-80)

Julius Lipner says, “[T]he concept of ‘motherland’ may be fairly recent one, but that of ‘birthland’ is not. For instance, the expression occurs in the *Harivamsa*, an important and lengthy appendix to the other great Sanskrit epic, the *Mahabharata* (ca. 400 BCE-400 CE)” (242). S. C. Sengupta says that the portrayal of Mother India in Bankim’s novel might have been inspired from the Delphic Priesthood31, a secret

31 “The Delphic Priest, the patriotic priest, the priest militant, spoke thus: ‘My mother has the sea for her mantle, high mountains for her scepter,’ and when asked who his mother was, replied: ‘The lady with the dark tresses, whose gifts are beauty, wisdom, and formely, strength; whose dowry is a flourishing garden, full of fragrant flowers, where
society which strove for the independence and unification of Italy in the early
nineteenth century (55). Carl Gustav Jung opines that the archetypal mother is a part of
the collective unconscious of all human beings (81), and various Jungian students such
as Erich Neumann have claimed that such mother imagery makes the basis of
many mythologies, and precedes the image of the paternal ‘father’.

In the novel, Satyannad Thakur shows an enchanting figure in the lap of Vishnu
to Mahendra and then leads him inside the Anandamath. There are three images of the
Mother in the abbey. These images depict the Mother’s past, present, and future.

The Mother-as-she-was:

There he (Mahendra) saw a beautiful image of the Goddess as Bearer of the earth, perfectly formed and decorated with every ornament.

Satyananda says, “She who subdued the wild beasts such as the elephant and lion underfoot and set up her lotus throne in their dwelling place. She was happy and beautiful, adorned with every ornament, radiant as the risen sun and full of majesty. Prostrate yourself before her.” (Chatterjee 149-150)

The Mother-as-she-is:

“Yes Kali”, said the monk. “Blackened and shrouded in darkness. She has been robbed off everything; that is why she is naked. And because the whole land is burning-ground, she is garlanded with skulls. And she’s crushing her own gracious Lord\(^{32}\) underfoot. Alas, dear mother.”

The tears streamed down the monk’s face. Mahendra asked, “Why has she a club\(^{33}\) and begging-bowl in her hands?”

\(^{32}\) “The god Shiva, in familiar iconic form. But this can also be translated, ‘well-being’” (Lipner 150).

\(^{33}\) “Probably in the shape of a skull” (Lipner 150).
“We are children, and that’s all we could put in her hands as weapons”, said the monk. (150)

The Mother-as-she-will-be:

Mahendra saw a golden ten-armed image of the Goddess in a large marble shrine glistening and smiling in the early morning rays.

Prostrating himself, the monk said, “And this is the Mother-as-she-will-be. Her ten arms reach out in ten directions, adorned with various powers in the form of the different weapons she holds, the enemy crushed at her feet, while the mighty lion who has taken refuge there is engaged in destroying the foe. Behold her whose arms are the directions”— here Satyananda’s voice broke down and he began to weep— “whose arms are the directions, who holds various weapons and crushes the enemy and roams on the lordly lion’s back, who has Lakshmi personifying good fortune on her right, and the goddess of speech who bestows wisdom and learning on her left, with Kartikeya signifying strength and Ganesh good success, in attendance! Come, let us prostrate our-selves before the Mother”. (150)

Then with folded hands and upturned faces both cried out in unison: “You who are blessed above all good things, the gracious one, who bring all things to fruition, our refuge— Trymbaka, Gauri, Narayani— salutations to you.” (150-151)

The Mother in past is “Jagaddhatri, the goddess of agriculture, who cleared the forests and tamed wild beasts. Kali, the second goddess, denoted the lapse from production and civilization, she marked the time of reversion to the jungles” (Sarkar “Birth of a Goddess” 3966). She sprang from Durga’s head and defeated Durga's enemy, Mahishasura. Mother in the form of Kali is naked because the earth is impoverished in the chaotic rule. The land has become a cremation ground, so Mother is

34 “The Goddess, as Shakti or inherent power of the Godhead; here she transcends sectarian divisions” (Lipner 151).
now garlanded with skulls. The third image, the mother in future or the Mother-as-she-will-be is Durga. In Hinduism, Durga represents the empowering and protective nature of motherhood. Her ten arms are well-weaponed and spread in ten directions indicating her influence. With the lion as her steed, she is herself engaged in demolishing Asura or the demon representing the forces of evil. Her two daughters, Lakshmi and Saraswati, represent respectively wealth and learning, and her two sons, Ganesha and Kartikeya, symbolize success and strength. Thus, the image represents happy and prosperous people.

The images of the goddesses bestow the divine character upon the land. It is not only the personification but also the deification of land. In Hinduism, Mother is revered and worshipped; the famous saying ‘Matri devo bhava’ (‘Mother is divine’) places Mother on the high pedestal of divinity. The bond between the land and its inhibitors is the one between a mother and her children, and a goddess and her devotees. It is a befitting example how a national culture is often ‘invented’ (Hobsbawn and Ranger) and how a nation is ‘imagined’ (Anderson).

The concept of land as Mother is the very basis of nation and nationalism in the novel. The female figure in the lap of Vishnu is a representation of the Mother. Tanika Sarkar tells us that though Bankim ‘invented’ a goddess, but he also took material for her construction from what was available to him. The first mother in Bankim’s sequence is Jagaddhatri and “the annual worship of Jagaddhatri had been introduced in Bengal as late as the 18th century by the leading conservative Hindu King Krishanchandra Raya of Krishnagore” (“Birth of a Goddess” 3966). Besides, the manifestations of Durga and Kali, the concrete images of the Mother, has roots in the Shiv-Shakti model35 of Hinduism.

A land may belong to the people of different classes; but the Children, who are essentially Vaishanav, believe that only the Hindus are ‘the Children’ of the Mother

35 Indian Philosophy consists of three organic models of man-woman relationship: 1. The Brahma- Maya Model 2. The Purusha-Prakriti Model 3. The Shiva-Shakti Model. The Shiva-Shakti Model of Shakta philosophy refers to a form of life where woman’s position is stronger and pronounced. The central thesis is that the world is produced by the female element. Shiva is also considered as the form of Shakti. Here woman is considered the mother of everything. She is neither inert nor like an animal but living and intelligent. She is not the object of enjoyment but like a man, she is an enjoyer, an agent. She is not an obstruction to liberation but is an aid in liberating the self. The Purusha-Prakriti Model gives more importance to differences between man and woman. As Maya is not different from Brahma, the Brahma- Maya Model does not give any separate status to women.
which is embodied in the land. On the other hand, the land is just a material or physical entity for the Muslims, ‘the foes’. Thus, in the novel, the Mother, the province of Bengal, is to be freed from the Muslims who are non-conformists for the Children. The novel is focused on the sentiment of nationalism which has taken birth out of the keen desire of making Bengal a Hindu nation by eradicating the Muslims and uniting all Hindu ‘brothers’.

…Jnanananda cried out in a loud voice, ‘For a long time we have been wanting to smash the nest of these weaver-birds, to raze the city of these Muslim foreigners, and throw it into the river- to burn the enclosure of these swine and purify Mother Earth again! Brothers, that day has come! (169)

Bankim has specifically portrayed the Bengali Vaishnavas against the Muslims of Bengal. It is indirectly shown that India was not a nation at that time as the English employed “the highly trained, well-equipped and very powerful Indian and foreign Company troops” (190) against the Santans of Bengal, which was also a part of the Indian subcontinent. In the novel, the idea of collective consciousness is limited to Bengali Vaishnavas only. Besides, the desire of making Bengal a state of the Bengali Vaishnava nation conforms to the view that a nation always struggles for a nation-state. After winning the battle, Satyananda says, “So proclaim santan rule in Barendrabhumī, collect taxes from our subjects and assemble an army to conquer the city. When people hear that Hindus are ruling, many soldiers will gather under the santan’s banner” (212). And “Everyone said that the Muslims had been defeated and the land was the Hindus’ once more! Let all cry “Hari” freely now!” (214). Bengali Muslims against Bengali Vaishnavas also make claim to the nation-state of Bengal. Although the northern Bengal is not now under the Muslim control, yet none of the Muslim admits it (119). Thus, the claim on nation-state is not only physical, but psychological also. This reminds us of Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* and Saddat Hassan Manto’s “Toba Tek Singh”.

Grosby opines that the mind of the individual develops within various socio-cultural contexts such as family and educational institutions. One attains understanding
of ‘self’ amid such contexts. For example, a child learns native language and participates in ‘the same evolving tradition’. When such traditions

that make up part of one’s self-conception are shared by other individuals as part of their self-conception, one is then both related to those other individuals, and aware of the relation. The relation itself, for example living in the same geographical area or speaking a common language, is what is meant by the term ‘collective consciousness’. (9)

When the people who participate in the same tradition differentiate themselves from those who do not participate (distinguish ‘us’ from ‘them’), they have “a self-designating shared belief”, which is called a “collective self-consciousness” (10). Grosby adds, “The nation is a social relation of collective self-consciousness” (10). In the novel, conditioning plays significant role in the construction of nationalism through ‘a self-designating shared belief’. The grand narrative of the land as mother is an emotional construct. “The child’s body is made of flesh and blood of the mother, likewise grains, water, air, and vegetation produced in the motherland create the bodies of its inhabitants. Therefore, it is natural for the inhabitants to deem that country as the motherland (Chaubey 50)” (My Translation). The Children in the novel are conditioned to believe and to develop psycho-spiritual attachment with the land. In the beginning, when Bhabananda sings the song in praise of the Mother and calls his land Mother, Mahendra raising doubts says, “But that’s our land, not a mother!” (145). Later on, Satyananda arouses emotions in his mind by showing the three images of the Mother. The religious colours given to the Mother— “on Vishnu’s lap sat an enchanting image” (149) – appeals Mahendra’s traditional mindset, which is already conditioned in a society in which religion and the gods are unseen concrete reality.

The Children are psychologically conditioned to ‘participate in the same tradition’ of ‘Vande Mataram’ and to have ‘a self-designating shared belief’. Besides, since the novel is centred on Vaishnava Bengali nation, the collective consciousness is encouraged through the spread of anti-Muslim sentiment in the guise of the ‘cultural practice’ of ‘worshipping’ ‘at Vishnu’s lotus-feet’ (188). Psychological conditioning leads to the development of collective consciousness in ‘the imagined communities’.
Resultantly, “In Bankim’s conception, Santan resistance has some mass appeal, for, in one of the several encounters with the Yavanas, they are shown to have the support of no less than ten thousand men.” (Sen, Amiya P. An Intellectual Biography 60). Another similar example is of the fair: “Usually more than a lakh of people gathered at the fair. However, since this was now the Vaishnav’s domain, surely they would attend with great show” (Chatterjee 219). In the battlefield, “twenty five thousand santans like the torrent of an ocean” fought (225).

To strengthen Hindu unity is the main motive of the Children. Satyananda replies to Mahendra’s query, “When all Mother’s children recognize her as the Mother, she will be gracious to us” (Chatterjee 151). The Hindu Bengali nation is particularly against Bengali Muslim nation, symbolized by the Muslim king. Bhabananda asks “but does our Muslim king protect us?” (147). Here, the use of the word ‘us’ refers to all Vaishnavas, not only the Children. Thus, Bhabananda has clear intention that not only the Santans but all Vaishnavas have suffered at the hands of Muslim ruler in Bengal. Notably, religion and regime are interlinked to shape up the theme of nationalism in the novel.

**Vande Mataram**

The song “‘Vande Mataram’ can be studied from two perspectives. First, it can be explored in relation to the text in which it appeared for the first time, keeping in view its importance within the plot of the novel. This perspective is from the view of ‘art for art’s sake’. Secondly, the song can be studied as an autonomous song which gave birth to a rallying cry in the Indian nationalist movement.

“Vande Mataram” was originally written to fill up a blank page of Bangadarshan around 1875, but “a cold and adverse observation of the proofreader so annoyed” (Das, Sisir K The Artist in Chains 214) Bankim that he refrained from publishing it at that time and incorporated it into *Anandamath* after some years. It is notable that neither *Anandamath* nor “Vande Mataram” gained currency during the life-time of Bankim, who once disappointedly said, “Of what use is my writing *Anandamath* or even your attempting to understand its underlying message… I see no future for a self-seeking and

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36 ‘Bande Mataram’ according to Bengali script.
greatly disunited people such as Bengali. Instead of the slogan ‘Vande Mataram’ (‘I bow to thee Mother’), let us cry ‘Vande Udaram’ (‘Glory to the Belly’)’ (qtd. in Sen, Amiya P. An Intellectual Biography 105-6). The song attracted the notice of several writers and critics, but it failed to receive extraordinary appreciation during the life-time of Bankim.

It inspired a picture of Mother India by Harishchandra Haldar which was printed in 1885 in a journal called Balak. In 1886 Hemchandra Banerji wrote a poem, ‘Rakhi Bandhan’, wherein he included the first two stanzas of Vandemataram. Hemchandra hailed it as the song of the people of India. (Das, Sisir K. The Artist in Chains 215)

However, the song became popular suddenly around 1905 and played an important role in the freedom struggle of India.

The song was sung at the Congress sessions twice, first by Rabindranath Tagore in 1896 and subsequently by his niece Sarala Debi Chaudhurani in 1905. In October 1905, a society named ‘Vandemataram Samprasay’ was formed in Calcutta. It organized several processions in which the song was sung by hundreds of youngmen. Its branches in Dacca and Navadwip helped spread the song. “All of a sudden the word ‘Vandemataram’ became prestigious and captivating; it was chosen as title of books and newspapers and organizations. In September 1905 appeared Vandemataram, a collection of patriotic songs, and in August 1906 the famous English daily Vandemataram, under the editorship of Aurobindo” (217). In 1908, when Vinayak Damodar Sarkar (1883-1966), the first Indian revolutionary to give a nationalist interpretation of the armed revolt of 1857, and Hardayal, a Delhi born revolutionary, organized the golden jubilee celebration of the 1857 revolt in London, they printed the phrase ‘Vandemataram’ on the invitation cards and the function was inaugurated with the song ‘Vande Mataram’. During Gandhi’s non-cooperation movement, the popularity of the song even grew more. People were enthusiastically ready to sacrifice their lives in the name of ‘Vandemataram’. The slogan ‘Vandemataram’ became a rallying cry
during the freedom struggle of India. The song was adopted by the constituent Assembly as the national song in 1951 (214-227).

The Muslim community in India is antagonistic towards “Vande Mataram” as the novel in which it appeared is said to be anti-Muslim and the references to the goddesses in the song are against Islam and its doctrine of monotheism. A handout called ‘Lal Istahar’ (The Red Pamphlet) was issued during a riot in 1906-7 in East Bengal urging the Muslims not to use ‘Vandemataram’ as a slogan. In the Calcutta riots of 1921, ‘Vandemataram’ was used as a slogan by the Hindus probably for the first time against the Muslim rioters and from this time onwards ‘Vandemataram’ began to be used as the war-cry of the Hindu fanatics (220). In 1938 Mohammad Ali Jinnah demanded that the song must be given up by the Congress. Chiefly due to the Muslim resistance to the song, the working committee of the Indian National Congress selected a sub-committee including Maulana Ab’ul Kalam Azad, Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose and Narendra Dev to survey all the current national songs and “to seek the advice of Tagore in finally selecting a song as the national anthem” (221).

Tagore was aware that there was a stanza in “Vande Mataram” related to the goddess Durga, in whom the Muslims did not believe. Thus, he advised the committee to use the first two stanzas of “Vande Mataram” as national song. He wrote:

To me the spirit of tenderness and devotion expressed in its (the song’s) first portion, the emphasis it gave to the beautiful and beneficial aspects of our motherland made special appeal so much so that I found no difficulty in dissociating from the rest of the poem, and from those portions of the book of which it is a part. (qtd 221)

It is also said that the reason the first two stanzas of the song were recommended to be the national song was that it was associated with and used by the freedom fighters such as Bismil, Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, and Ashfaqullah Khan, not because of its incidental association with Anandamath. Most of the people who were well aware of the song neither knew Bankim nor anything about Anandamath.
“Vande Mataram” is an invocation to the Mother, a personification of the motherland, who gives “joy and gifts in plenty” (Chatterjee 145). The Mother is blessed with the beauties and bounties of nature- “Rich in waters”, “Rich in fruit”, “Cooled by the southern airs”, “Verdant with the harvest fair”, “With nights that thrill in the light of the moon”, and “Radiant with foliage and flowers in bloom”. She has all the gifts which are necessary for a land or a people to be happy and prosperous. The writer pays homage to her. He not only glorifies her feminine attributes of beauty and productivity, but also her defensive strength. He says that the Mother’s power lies in her “Seventy millions” children with “sharpened swords”. The Mother and the Children are identified with each other. The Mother is the “wisdom”, “law”, “heart”, “soul”, “breath”, and “strength” of her Children. The Mother is allegorically represented as Durga and Lakshmi; she symbolizes virulent strength, beauty, and prosperity.

Mr. Rezaul Karim, a veteran writer and Congress leader of Bengal, strongly refuted the allegation that Bankim was a Muslim-hater and that “Vande Mataram” itself was idolatorous. According to him, the song did not signify what was known in Arabic as Ebadat or the worship of God but the worship of the motherland. Islam, in his views, did not bar conceiving the Motherland as Mother which had been portrayed by several Arabic and Persian poets (Bose, S.K. 88). Anil Baran Ray in “Bankimchandra: Development of Nationalism and Indian Identity” suggests that the goddess imagery in the song is symbolic of certain qualities-‘pursuit of creative energy, wealth and prosperity, knowledge and enlightenment, devotion and dedication, and so on’- Bankim wanted his countrymen to inculcate. Bankim’s idea of ‘Anushilan Dharma’ also carries the spirit of humanism.

The mixed Bengali and Sanskrit diction of “Vande Mataram” makes the song enchanting and enthralling. The rhythmic quality of the composition leaves everlasting impact on the psyche; its intense music soothes as well as inspires. In the novel, the song acts as an effective tool of nationalism; its lyrical aspect makes it more appealing and emotional; it arouses the sentiment of nationalism among the children who feel united through the revered Mother. The song clarifies that Bankim’s idea of the Mother is confined to the province of Bengal as the Mother’s strength lies with ‘Seventy Millions’ (Sapta Koti), the approximate population of the then Bengal (Malkani 44); it
further enfolds only the Hindus if its meaning is not symbolically deciphered. The song within itself does not carry any ill-will against the Muslims; it is usually criticized for the book from which it is taken. However, the contribution of the slogan ‘Vandemataram’ to the Indian freedom struggle cannot be overlooked.

**Economic Aspect**

The drain of wealth from India to England was the core of nationalist critique of colonialism. The drain that was a unilateral transfer of funds started after 1757 when the English acquired political power. It is estimated that

> [f]rom 1765 to 1770 the company sent out of Bengal nearly 33 per cent of its net revenue in the form of goods. The wealth drained out of India played an important part in financing Britain’s capitalist development. It has been estimated that it constituted nearly two per cent of Britain’s national income at that time. (Chandra, Bipan Freedom Struggle 5)

In *Anandamath*, Bankim has vividly portrayed the crisis due to the drain of wealth during the famine of Bengal in 1770. The epicurean ruler, Mir Jafar, takes opium and sleeps, whereas the British take in the money and issue receipts. “Bengali wept and went to ruin. So while Bengal’s revenue belonged to the British, the burden of government fell on the nawab” (Chatterjee 140). The revenue that chiefly depends upon agriculture is not lowered during the famine. The novelist writes, “People could die of starvation, but the collection of revenue didn’t stop. Yet there wasn’t that much revenue to collect- you can’t come up with wealth that mother earth hasn’t produced!” (140).

The novel centres on economic issue which emerges as the root cause of social instability and which plays an imperative role in creating a rift between the Muslim king and the Bengali Hindus; it unites the Children during famine for plundering and robbing the money which, according to them, does not belong to the indifferent king (146).

Satyananda is keen on initiating Mahendra into the code primarily for economic reason: “If he does (join) it will be greatly to our advantage because all his wealth collected over generations will be put to the Mother’s service” (151). Even people want to become the Children because they see “that there was considerable gain in becoming
a santan” as “the santans would loot their belongings and distribute them among the new devotees of Vishnu” (189). Besides, the very purpose of the Children’s rebellion is to dissuade the English from their materialistic pursuits. The healer says:

At present the English are traders. They are intent on amassing wealth and do not wish to take on the burden of ruling a kingdom. But because of the Children’s rebellion, they will be forced to take on the burden of ruling, for without this they cannot collect wealth. (Chatterjee 229)

The Muslims and the British: The Question of ‘the Other’

The novel gives birth to an endless debate on the relationships among the Hindus, the Muslims, and the British and their representation by Bankim Chandra. Full of supernatural elements, the novel depicts a mysterious physician/healer who rekindles life in Jibananda in the ending of the novel and projects the significance of the English rule at that time. The healer’s advocacy for the English rule captures the very attitude of the Bengali people in 1880s when there was a growing racial, cultural, and political alienation between the British and the Indians and it was thought that the British rule in India was a necessary evil until the Indians were in a position to manage their own affairs (Lipner 7-8). Providential was the euphemism the Indians tended to use to legitimise and justify the colonial regime. The Indians believed that Indian representation in the government would be encouraged by the British themselves; they simply wanted to kindle a sense of responsibility as caretaker rulers in the British. It was only later, towards the turn of the century, when the disappointment set in and it was felt that the British rule had outstayed its usefulness (7-8).

Meenakshi Mukherjee in “Anandamath: A Political Myth” also speaks about the ‘ambivalence’ of the educated Indian of the nineteenth century’ which is evident in Anandamath. Amiya P. Sen writes, “The conclusion in Anandamath appears to be in consonance with the argument, often articulated in the contemporary Bengali press, that

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37 “In 1875 when the Prince of Wales visited India a perfumery company in Britain announced a poetry competition with a hundred-guinea prize for the best poem welcoming the Prince of India. It is amazing how many poets from all over India joined the competition and wrote fulsome praises of the empire. Many of the same poets had written spirited nationalistic verse elsewhere (e.g. Nabin Chandra Sen in Bengali)” (Mukherjee, Meenakshi “Anandamath: A Political Myth” 904-5).
Hindus, in their own self-interest put the British into the position of power” (An Intellectual Biography 61). From another perspective, it cannot be refused that Bankim was the first Bengali Deputy Magistrate under the British Rule. His willing or unwilling38 embrace to the British is obvious and easily comprehensible. This attitude of Bankim is summed up as – “...under the pressure of a foreign government, even the truest patriot turns a traitor to his country” (97). It is usually said that Bankim favoured the English and portrayed them in bright colours in the novel. The tipsy British commanding officer becomes all of sudden active when the two hundred armed men surround the sepoys; he rushes up to the carts and gives the order to form a square, “for in times of danger the English overcome their addictions” (Chatterjee 142). The writer leaves no chance to flatter the English; he presents them as a superior race. At one place, he writes: “In the rain of fire, the south Indian, Muslim, and north Indian troops started to flee. Only a handful of the whiteskins made a stand and began to die” (209). The British and the Muslims are compared in the novel; this comparison makes the picture clearer: “an Englishman won’t flee even to save his life, whereas the Muslim will run off when he begins to sweat” (147). Thus, according to the novelist, the English possess some exemplary, ‘fine’ qualities which are not present in the Muslims and the Sanyasis, and these “qualities don’t fall off trees; you have got to practice them” (148).

Relegating the law and order in the kingdom of Mir Jafar, the novelist praises his contemporary English colonialists in the following words: “...It wasn’t an English jail; English law didn’t exist at that time. Today we live in a time of order; at that time there was no order. Compare the times of order and disorder” (158). He makes clear that the Almighty had sent the English to India under a heavenly scheme and even the English were not aware that they had come to rescue India (191). Bankim, who was working as a Magistrate in the British rule, has also used the following expressions and views for the English:

38 “The seeds of Bankimchandra’s anti-British sentiments were sown in Berhampore, the district headquarters of Murshidabad district where he was posted as a Deputy Magistrate. Lt. Col. Duffin, who didn’t know that Bankim was a magistrate, abused him. Bankim filed a criminal case against the Colonel. Later, Duffin offered an unconditional apology to Bankim in open court. Almost immediately thereafter, we find Bankim taking three months leave. After this incident, there must have been considerable resentment in the Berhampore Cantonment among the British militia and, apprehending bodily harm, Rao Jogindranarain Roy took Bankim away to stay with him in Lalgola” (Bhattacharya, Pradeep “The Inspiration of Bankimchandra’s Anand Math”).
“Warren Hasting, the rising sun of the English race in India” (189)

“a highly competent officer, Captain Thomas by name” (189)

“Our brave Englishman loved to hunt” (191)

“hero Captain Thomas’s” (191)

“Captain Thomas was a man of extraordinary courage” (191)

“…Captain Thomas, who had been fighting to the very end…” (207)

The confrontation between the Hindus and the Muslims in Bengal is the main issue of the novel; the English are portrayed in the backdrop. Bhabananda tells Captain Thomas, “[T]he English are not our enemies. But why are you here to help the Muslims?” (207-8). Shanti also asks the English officer, “Why do you people interfere in a fight between Hindu and Muslim?” (192). Although every foreigner being ‘melisha’ is despicable according to Hindu scriptures, yet the English are not criticized for that reason but for being in league with the Muslims. After the destruction of the Muslim rule, the Healer in the end tells Satyananda, “Hindu rule will not be established at this time…The English are very knowledgeable in the outward knowledge, and they are very good at instructing people. Therefore we will make them king” (229). Here, it is interesting to refer to a statement of British official in 1832: “the Hindus ‘were considerably more attached to our rule than the Mohammedan’” (qtd. in Sen, Amiya P. An Intellectual Biography 13).

The Children though courageous are not shown visionary and discerning. In the battlefield, Jibananda doesn’t follow Bhabananda’s advice of turning back (206). However, when he sees a lot of destruction of Vaishnavas, he says, “You were right! There’s no further need for Baishnava deaths. Let us retreat slowly.” The victory of the santans in the battlefield is just incidental; otherwise, they were turning back under the instructions of Jibananda. The writer says, “The santan army with Jibananda were dispirited and ready to flee…There was no escape” (208). It was only “the boom of new cannon” (209), which suddenly appeared and changed the scene on the battlefield.
Was Bankim actually in favour of the English? If Bankim had written the novel to glorify the English, he would not have taken great pains to portray the Children in patriotic colours, says Sisir K. Das in *The Artist in Chains* (139). “The sannyasis as described in the official reports would have been more appropriate for this purpose. Why did he choose those relevant facts from the sannyasi revolt which were positively anti-British?” (Das, Sisir K. 139). And notably the first addition of the novel stated:

The Vishnu temple was completely deserted. Suddenly the lamp flared up brightly. The flame didn’t extinguish. The fire lit by Satyananda didn’t die out so easily. If I can I shall tell that story later. (qtd. 144)

These lines were deleted in later editions and Bankim didn’t continue the tale. This statement of the novelist, as Sisir K. Das says, is to be seen in the context of the Sepoy Mutiny.

In his essay on “India’s Independence and Dependence”, Bankim remarks that liberty can be achieved within foreign rule also, but only if there is no discrimination. On the contrary, a country with self-rule may not enjoy liberty even if it is independent. It is usually believed that Bankim Chandra was influenced by Mill’s Utilitarianism and Comte’s Positivism. Bankim was not against the Englishmen per se, but their unfair practices. In his own life, he never spared the lawlessness on part of the British. Bankim’s younger brother Purnachandra shares an incident when Bankim was a Magistrate of Khulna sub-division at the age of 22-23. An indigo planter spread lawlessness and Darogas didn’t dare arrest him because he always carried a pistol with

39 “A system of ethics according to which the rightness or wrongness of an action should be judged by its consequences. The goal of utilitarian ethics is to promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Jeremy Bentham, an English philosopher, was the founder of utilitarianism; John Stuart Mill was its best-known defender (Utilitarianism).” Sisir K. Das says that it would not be wrong to suggest that Bankim tried to construct a utilitarian theory of art by emphasizing that art is good not because it is useful, but that art is useful because it is beautiful. Bankim believed that the most important task for an artist is to create beauty which provides happiness which is beneficial (The Artist in Chains 116).

40 Positivism is “a strong form of empiricism, esp. as established in the philosophical system of Auguste Comte, that rejects metaphysics and theology as seeking knowledge beyond the scope of experience, and holds that experimental investigation and observation are the only sources of substantial knowledge” (Positivism).

41 “He (Bankim) was appreciative of the great achievements of England and hoped that so long as Indians don’t achieve equality with the English nation, their feeling of dislike for the English should remain, as such feelings alone can provoke the Indians into competitive adventures” (Haldar 184).
him. Bankim, a courageous man, arrested the planter and appeared as a witness in the High Court (Haldar 13).

In the novel, the healer, who presents the British as friends, describes the Muslims as foes of the motherland. It is important to point out that in the actual ‘rebellion’, the Hindus sanyasis and the Muslim fakirs both fought against the British East India Company. But in Bankim’s construction of the past, the Muslims have been discriminated. Rather than portraying them realistically, the novelist has presented them as the foes, who are cruel and who bring pointless destruction. Cruelty of the Nawab’s retinue is described as: “So it was that the eager retinue of the king, unable to find the ascetics anywhere, smashed the pots and pitchers of the ordinary folk and went back only partially satisfied” (Chatterjee 157).

The Children feel that the Hindu identity is threatened because of the Muslim king’s attitude, and it is important to ‘destroy’ all the Muslims (147). The confrontation against the Muslims is justified as an attempt to “establish a sense of Hindu identity” amid “the anarchy and lawlessness” of the Muslim reign (189). Jnanananda cries out, “Come, let’s raze the city of the foreigners to the dust! Let’s purify that pigsty by fire and throw it into the river! Let’s smash that nest of tailor-birds to bits and fling it to the winds!” (169). The Muslim ruler is considered as an obstacle in the making of Hindu Nation-State in Bengal. The Children’s wish to wipe out the Muslims from Bengal (no mention of other places with regard to it!) to establish Bengal as a Hindu province is mobilized by Hindu nationalism. In the words of Irfan Ahmed, “In Bankim’s new version of Hinduism, religion…became a means of creating a virulent Hindu nation that he intended for remedying what he viewed as two daunting challenges: the internal weakness of Hinduism and a tyranny of Islam and Muslims over Hindus” (29).

It is important to note that the killing of the Muslims is viewed as the worshipping of Vishnu (189). The Muslims are presented as foes of Vishnu, probably because once Muslim kings destroyed Hindu temples in India. The antagonism against

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42 There are many instances of temple desecrations by the Muslims in the history of India. For example, Ulugh Khan sacked Gujarat’s famous temple of Somnath in February 1299. In 1661, the governor of Bengal, Mir Jumla, sacked the temples of the neighbouring raja of Cooch Bihar. However, historian Richard M. Eaton asserts that the Muslim rulers destroyed only politically relevant temples, which were patronized by an enemy king or a formerly a loyal king who became a rebel. For more information, see The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontiers, 1204-17060 (New Delhi: OUP, 1997) and Essays on Islam and Indian History (New Delhi: OUP, 2000).
the Muslim king for his poor administration and policies in Bengal exacerbates the historical tensions, and it turns out to be a fight against the ruler’s religion and its followers. Religion emerges as a representative marker of one’s personal identity in the novel. The bitter religious strains of the past become an obstacle in the realization of a united present. Ernest Renan rightly says that the glorious memories of past play important role in making of a nation, but his other point that religion is not significant in a modern nation is not valid in the case of the Bengali Hindus or the Sanyasis of the novel since it is religion itself which has shaped up the past and its bitter ‘memories’ have eclipsed the present. The Children wish to lay the foundation of Bengali nation-state on the basis of Vaishnavism against the Muslim religion.

The presentation of the Sanyasi ‘Rebellion’ as a war waged by the Hindu Sanyasis against the Muslim ruler for the survival of Hinduism obscures the actual central setting and issue of famine of 1770 and the significant role played by the Muslim fakirs in the ‘rebellion’. Sarkar observes, in his (Chatterjee’s) later writings, “For Bankim now the resolution of social and national malaise seemed to lie in imagining an apocalyptic war with Muslims through which Hindus would ingest their valour and prove their ability to make a nation” (Sarkar, Tanika Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation 156).

Was Bankim prejudiced against the Muslims? Can we say, the short, crispy plot of Anandamath is a blend of the biased religious attitude and the spirit of militant nationalism? These questions are not easy to answer. With regard to it, S.K. Bose says, “If the decadent Muslim regime is condemned, it is not because it is Muslim but because it is decadent.” (99). He supports his argument by referring to Bankim’s character of Sitaram who serves the Muslims and the Hindus alike and who has a Muslim Fakir named Chand Shah his adviser (99). Besides, in “Epilogue” to Rajsinha, Bankim clears: “A man, whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim, who has dharma along with other qualities, is superior. A man who with all his qualities lacking in Dharma is inferior, no matter whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim”. Tanika Sarkar says:

Bankim’s earlier portrayals of good Muslims as well as his later critique of Hindu patriots who degenerate, are scoured out of his larger literary corpus to cancel out the force of the image of the Hindu nation and the
power of the words of anti-Muslim violence and denunciation within Anandamath. (‘Birth of a Goddess’ 3964)

She feels, “Anandamath was an experimental movement within a wide and complex literary history that Bankim encompassed”.

To conclude, the presentation of the Muslims as foes is to mislead and distract the English, and to present Hindu nationalism in action; it may also have been inspired by the historical decadence during the Muslim rule in Bengal. The novelist, keeping in view the powerful British rulers of his time, has politically constructed the plot of the novel that reveals the strength and valor of the Bengali Hindu nationalists during the rule of a Muslim King in league with the English; the real message is masqueraded under the explicit, surface meaning. Although the novel portrays the English with ‘fine’ qualities, yet the main focus of the novel is on the Bengali Hindu nationalists, the Sanyasis. The positive picture of the English is not all bright; the novelist makes fun of the English for not being able to understand the native language. It, in a way, shows the downside of the foreign rule. Symbolically, it reflects the cultural alienation between the foreigner ruler and the native subjects. The sweet words for the English are used to mask the deeper message of Hindu nationalism in the novel. Otherwise, what was the need to write a story of the masculine and virulent aspect of Bengali Hindus if the novelist in fact wanted to praise the English? Sisir K. Das asserts that there is enough evidence to show that the novel was designed to arouse patriotism, and that was directed against the British. Bankim never made the intention explicit, rather he made several changes in the subsequent editions of the novel to camouflage it (The Artist in Chains 141).

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43 “In the first edition Bhabananda complains, ‘Our raja (king) does not protect the people.’ But in the fourth edition the word ‘raja’ is substituted by the word ‘musalman’ obviously to tone down the criticism of the British administration. The Bangadarshan version refers to the sexual exploits of Thomas among the santan girls. They were deleted in the second edition. The first version mentions the defeat of a group of English soldiers by the santans, but in the subsequent versions the word ‘English’ is replaced by ‘sepoy’. The Bangadarshan version as well as the first edition of the novel refers to Jibananda’s opponents as ‘English’. But in the next edition ‘English’ was replaced by ‘yaban’ and in some places by ‘ned’ both terms implying the Muslims, the second term being a pejorative one. The word ‘ingrejder’ (of the English), which occurs in chapter VIII, Part iii in the first edition, was changed to ‘shatruder’ (of the enemies)...It must not be thought, however, that Bankim replaced all references to ‘English’ by ‘Muslim’. Many references positively anti-British and in consonance with the patriotic fervor of the santans, still remained unchanged in the book and they made it politically dangerous” (Das, Sisir K. The Artist in Chains 141).
The participation and role of woman in the nationalist discourse of *Anandamath* draws our attention. The story is set in those days of Bengal, when even the monk believes that women have “the tiniest amount” “like the amount of water in a cow’s footprint” (Chatterjee 183), and “[a] woman has no place in the code of the hero” (184). Bankim, a partial feminist, in *The Essentials of Dharma* goes against the orthodox attitude against women and states that the ‘Dharma’ of a wife, who is a Co-Dharmic according to the Hindu Dharma, is to assist her husband in his ‘Dharma’ (152-3). Bankim elaborates his views on wife as a Co-Dharmic through the character of Shanti in *Anandamath*.

Shanti has immense mental and physical strength. She refuses to change her clothes and decides to meet her husband with “rags on” probably because she believes in the embellishment of soul, not of body. Later, she doesn’t mind cutting her long beautiful hair and spoiling Dhaka sari for a noble purpose. She shuns material comforts and feels satisfied in all conditions. When Jibananda momentarily drifts away from the path of the Children, she tells him that her happiness lies in being a hero’s wife and makes him realise his fault and glorifies the importance of duty. She shapes up her destiny- “I will do what I have planned to do” (175). She takes the womanhood to another level. When Satyananda says that being a woman she is not fit for the Code, Shanti says, “Surely woman can have strength of arm too!” and passes the strength test by fitting a length of wire to a steel bow, the task passed by the four Children so far. The monk astonishingly asks, “Are you a goddess, or a human being?” (183). Shanti has staunch faith in her capabilities and asserts her identity and individuality in the following words: “I am a monk, a leader of the santan army, a terrific hero, so of course I know everything!” (216).

Shanti is the symbol of Shakti in the novel. According to the Hindu mythology, a male form is essentially incomplete and presupposes the existence of a female form. God cannot be incomplete; hence Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva have female counterparts. There is Saraswati for Brahma, Lakshmi for Vishnu and Shakti for Shiva. “Together
these couples embody the Hindu understanding of the ultimate divine. Brahma creates, Vishnu sustains, Shiva destroys⁴⁵, while Saraswati, Lakshmi and Shakti embody knowledge, wealth and power respectively” (Pattanaik 31). The relationship between a particular god and his female consort is so integral that one cannot exist without the other. Frank Morales says that Shakti manifests in the ‘i’ of Shiva’s name. According to the grammatical rules of classical Sanskrit, if a consonant is not followed by a vowel, it is automatically assumed that this consonant is followed by the vowel ‘a’. Resultantly, without this ‘i’ in his name, Shiva becomes Shava, or a lifeless corpse (Agrawal, S.K. 51). Thus, it is the feminine principle that is the animating force of life itself. Shanti epitomizes this animating force of Jibananda’s life. She clears to Satyananda that it’s a wife’s duty to follow her husband in household as well as in his service to the Mother, even in the battlefield:

“Could Rama have become a hero without Sita?” “Well, who drove Arjun’s chariot while he fought with the Yadavi army from mid-air? Without Draupadi would the Pandavs have fought in the battle of Kurukshetra?” (Chatterjee 184)

Shanti vehemently asserts:

Is it sinful Master? The wife follows her husband. Is that sinful behaviour? If the code of the santans calls this sinful, then the code itself is sinful! I am his partner in life. He is following a particular code, and I am here to share in it. That’s all. (184)

Satyananda feels the fire in her forehead “just like Goddess Bhabani!” (185). Shanti is not passive in her support to her husband’s efforts for independence; she acts as a fellow warrior who displays the immense potential of a woman. She is an independent

⁴⁵ “From the metaphysical point of view, Brahma represents jiva-atma, the soul seeking answers, hence unworthy of worship. Vishnu and Shiva represent param-atma, the soul that has found the answer. Having found the answer, Vishnu continues to participate in the world while Shiva withdraws from all things worldly. Vishnu’s eyes are therefore always open while Shiva’s eyes are always shut” (Pattanaik 27).

“Historically, Brahma represents the earlier Age of Rituals when Hindu society gave more importance to the mechanical execution of yagna. In the Age of Worship, yagna faded into the background and with it Brahma. More attention was given to Shiva and Vishnu. Shiva represents the hermit’s way of life; Vishnu represents the householder’s way of life...There is great rivalry between the worshippers of Shiva, known as Shaivas, and the worshippers of Vishnu, known as Vaishnavas. Each side tries to position one over the other. For devotees, their patron deity is always the svayambhu, self-created, self-contained and self-reliant, and hence greater than the rest. Thus Vishnu is svayambhu for Vaishnavas and Shiva svayambhu for Shaivas” (27-8).
and keen learner. She, an embodiment of gender equality, is sure of her victory. She asserts her identity and individuality by challenging Captain Thomas. During her adolescence, she gives her lustful teacher “such a forceful blow on the forehead with the right that he fell unconscious to the ground” (173). Shanti is quite fearless. She sets off alone in search of her own land, and by means of her courage and prowess makes unimpeded progress. She befools the Captain and Major Edwards in the guise of a vaishnavi and collects some significant information which leads to the victory of the santans in the ending of the novel. In terms of dedication and morality, Shanti surpasses Jibananda, her husband.

The author, through Shanti’s character, suggests that gender inequality is more or less a psychological issue; it takes its origin in social conditioning. Both men and women can play a significant role in the attainment of a goal like independence. Shanti grew up among boys and thus became like them in the absence of any woman at her home. Bankim Chandra believes that woman or man behaviour is a social construction. Like boys, Shanti dresses up, smears sandalpaste on her forehead, and wears the sacred thread across her neck during her childhood. Conditioning through experience and transference transform the personality of Shanti. At one place, the novelist writes, “But by her physical exercises and other activities Shanti had acquired strength difficult even for a man to attain…” (173). The novelist emphasizes that woman is made woman. Simone de Beauvoir also believes that one is not born, but rather becomes a woman.

Unlike some of today’s feminists and Marxists, Bankim Chandra realises that man and woman are made for each other; there is natural attraction between them. The novelist has hinted at the importance of one’s control over senses and the attraction towards a female beauty, which otherwise may lead a hero like Bhabananda astray. Bhabananda says, “If I knew that I would ever see such beauty, I would never have

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46 Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* beautifully explains that a wife’s dependence upon her husband is a big obstacle in the way ‘to affirm’ her independence. She writes, “The women of today are in a fair way to dethrone the myth of femininity; they are beginning to affirm their independence in concrete ways; but they do not easily succeed in living completely the life of a human being. Reared by women within a feminine world, their normal destiny is marriage, which still means practically subordination to man; for masculine prestige is far from extinction, resting still upon solid economic and social foundations” (9).

47 Lesbian feminists go to the extent of abolishing heterogeneous marriage; they see it as an oppressive institution for women. Engels also argues that monogamous marriage is a social institution that has nothing to do with love, and everything to do with private property. He writes that if women are to be truly emancipated, they must be economically independent.
embraced the santan code” (197). He realizes his folly and sacrifices his life in penance in the ending of the novel (200). When Kalyani goes out to look for her husband, she is warned by a sepoy: “‘But you’ve come of age, yes, you have!’ said the guard. ‘That’s wealth enough in this world! Even I could be a bandit for that!’” (215). Amiya P. Sen writes that Bankim ostensibly had the sensitivity and courage to show the mutual attraction between men and women even outside marital life that orthodox society may have privately found exciting but did everything to suppress in public life. This new sensitivity in Bankim Chandra was an outcome of his reading of European literature.” (An Intellectual Biography 17)

Shanti sets an epitome of ideal man-woman relationship by rising above physical desires and tiny things for the higher spiritual and noble purpose. She tells her husband:

…We are no longer worldly folk. The two of us must remain just as we are, renouncers, forever following the path of celibacy. So let’s wander about as pilgrims from region to region…praying for the Mother’s well-being. (Chatterjee 228)

Thus Shanti occupies, as Julius Lipner states, an ambivalent status, not indeed of being half-woman and half-man (ardhanarisvara), but of being, in a sense, fully woman-and-man. She switches from one state to the other- male santan in appearance, coquettish itinerant singer of hymns (Vaishnavi) in disguise- as the occasion demands. Lipner adds that this liminal existence symbolizes her transformation, at the end of the action, into one kind of new woman Bankim envisaged for Mother-India-as-she-would-be. “She preserves the essence of her glorious womanhood; but she does so by reinventing both her husband and herself according to one enduring ideal of traditional Hinduism-that of ascetic renunciation. In Bankim’s novel, this is done in the service of the Mother” (Lipner 13-4).