Introduction

In this research project, I have tried to explore how the idea of Indian nation and nationalism is constructed in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Anandamath*, Rabindranath Tagore’s *Gora*, and Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura*. The theme of nation and nationalism is the major integrative force in these canonical texts, which, through the lens of fiction, present a historical view of pre-independent India in chronological order. The present study focuses on socio-political themes (i.e. colonial encounter, identity crisis, the role of Muslims, the position of women, Hinduism, language, etc.) along with the psychological, historical, and cultural unity among Indians, which directly or indirectly influence the discourse of nation and nationalism in the texts. Besides, the writers’ ideological stances plus the construction of their contemporary scenarios (in *Gora* and *Kanthapura*) and history (in *Anandamath*) have also been discussed. To unfold the deeper meanings, this research work mainly relies upon historical exploration and various theories of nation and nationalism.

*Anandamath* is based on the Sanyasi Revolt; *Gora* is about the clashes between the Brahmo Samaj and the Hindu society in Bengal, whereas *Kanthapura* encapsulates the impact of Gandhism on the Indian struggle for independence in an imaginary South Indian village, Kanthapura. In *Novelists and Political Consciousness*, S. R. Bald says

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1 ‘To construct’, in simple words, means ‘to fashion and devise something systematically’. It usually involves a deliberate, witting, and intentional effort. It may include various motives which may be political, social, economic, or literary. Comparatively, the word ‘building’ as in ‘character building’, ‘nation building’, and ‘to build a house’ emphasizes positive labour and it involves ‘putting parts or materials together’, whereas ‘construction’ is linked with planning, manipulation, and politics in modern-day. In this context, the word ‘make’ is mostly used as a neutral term. About ‘representation’ and ‘construction’, Rumina Sethi says, “The latter is a representation more by design, or by intent. The former is more or less a substitute for ‘appearance’ (once upon a time we used the expression ‘appearance and reality’ rather a lot, as if to posit the difference between them). ‘Representations’, too, are not innocent of intent, however. The word ‘representation’ also means ‘construction’ ordinarily... However, out of the two terms, ‘construction’ definitely seems to be the more manipulative and discursive” (Sethi “Email”). Tagore has differentiated ‘construction’ from ‘creation’. “Construction is for a purpose, it expresses our wants; but creation is for itself, it expresses our very being. We make a vessel because water has to be fetched. It must answer the question why. But when we take infinite trouble to give it a beautiful form, no reason has to be assigned” (Tagore “Construction versus Creation” 471). The analysis of literary works as constructions and creations reveals two different positions, similar to ‘art for society’s sake’ and ‘art for art’s sake’.

2 The term ‘Indians’ is loosely applied here. The focus of *Anandamath* is Bengali Hindus; In *Gora*, the concept of being Indian is above caste, class, and lineage; *Kanthapura* portrays a village community driven by caste and class divisions.

3 “The use of the term ‘theories’... is somewhat misleading because all schools of thought about how nations came to be, when and what the role of nationalism in their formation was are actually approaches rather than theories” (Harris 47).
that political consciousness in India, as in other colonized societies, appeared in four stages ranging in “admiration and acceptance of almost everything western” (29), “educated Indian’s disillusionment with the British” and, in consequence, “revival of traditional values” (30), “Indians’ demands for greater political participation/self-government”, and “rejection” (31) of nationalism for “humanist global concerns”.

The first three phases are overlapping in the novels under study for this project. Anandamath explores the first phase of political consciousness within the framework set by Bald; Gora the second; and Kanthapura the third. The ending of the first novel anticipates the beginning of the second, and the third is an elaborate extension of the second at one level. One phase of time leads to the other phase, which itself ultimately moves on to the next one. It results into a linear history of Indian nationalism. “The past may have gone out of sight because of the commotion of the present, but it has not passed away. It is there in the very bones of Bharatvarsha” (Tagore Gora 114).

This study attempts to trace the serialized development of the construction of Indian nation and nationalism in Anandamath, Gora, and Kanthapura respectively.

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Throwing light on the history of Indian nationalism, Subodh C. Sen Gupta in “The Pioneers” [of nationalism] says that in the Battle of Plassey in 1757, Robert Clive dealt a crushing blow to Muslim sovereignty in Bengal. Raja Rammohun Roy, one of the social crusaders, found that “the Europeans who were firmly establishing themselves in India were not merely traders and administrators but also exponents of a new culture which would rejuvenate our ancient heritage” (7). Thus, he became a “reformer before a revolutionary”5. He firmly believed that it was important to set our house in order before showing a way out to the foreigners who had saved the country

4 For the present study, I have chosen the Sahitya Akademi edition of Gora, translated by Sujit Mukherjee. All further references to this text will be mentioned with the writer’s name and page number only.

5 Bipan Chandra in Essays on Indian Nationalism writes that intellectuals like Roy, Derozio, Gopal Hari Deshmukh, popularly known as Lokhitwadi- and Dadabhai Naoroji raised their voices against the destruction of Indian handicrafts, high land revenue demand, economic exploitation and the drain of wealth from India, and the humiliation of political domination and racial discrimination. However, they still supported the colonial rule till 1860 as they "expected it to rebuild India as a spirit economic image of the metropolis" (75). It can be concluded that the intellectuals were aware of the dark side of colonization in India, but they supported it in hope of progress. In 1860s, when “the reality of social development falsified the hope”, “the process of disillusionment set in gradually after 1860” (75).
from chaos and disorder. In 1823, in a historic letter addressed to Governor-General Amherst, Rammohun Roy pleaded that official funds be utilized in the propagation of the “useful knowledge” of the West instead of the speculative philosophical systems of the Hindus. Rammohun found the latter to be practically as useless as the medieval scholasticism of Europe (Sen, Amiya P. An Intellectual Biography 9). He significantly put efforts for the emancipation of women, the spread of European enlightenment in Bengal, and the abolition of evils in orthodox Hinduism by establishing the Brahmo Sabha in 1828. He passed away a loyal subject of the East India Company in 1833.

Like Roy, Maharishi Devendra Nath Tagore (Rabindranath Tagore’s father), Keshab Chandra Sen and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar were also influenced by the liberal western ideas. “All these may be said to constitute the rational-liberal phase of the Indian renaissance with pronounced Western overtones and the reformers drawing largely upon Western ideals to reconstruct the society” (Bose, S.K. 4). Even though there was not complete rejection of the Orient, says S.K. Bose, yet there was no acceptance of Hindu beliefs and ideas without criticism. The inflow of western rationalism gave a blow to the age-old traditions, and the new spirit of enquiry took birth. Nevertheless, Bose adds, a reaction against Westernization was inevitable.

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6 Rammohun has used the term ‘Supreme Being’ in one of his later works, The Universal Religion. He believed that ‘Unitarianism’ (theologically, the idea of an indivisible Godhead) could be defining feature for both Hinduism and Christianity. He was not an extremist like Derozians of Hindu College (‘if there be anything under heaven that I or my friends look upon with most abhorrence, it is Hinduism’, declared Madhav Chandra Mallick, a Derozian.) On the contrary, he believed that “when shorn of its irrationalities or excesses, Hinduism could not only be given a new lease of life but also proclaimed as one of the finest religions in the world. The thesis (which gathered greater strength and momentum by the late nineteenth century) that Hinduism had been deliberately corrupted over time for certain vested interests, probably originated with Rammohun. Rammohun is believed to be the first modern Indian to have used the term ‘Hinduism’ which collectively describes a wide range of religious beliefs and practices associated with the Hindus. Evidently, Rammohun was trying to forge together a pan-Indian community of Hindus, united in thought and deed as against local communities often separated by religious sectarianism. Perhaps this might partly explain why Rammohun rested his religious reformation on highly philosophical texts like the Upanishads rather than the Puranas which formed the textual basis of several religious cults or communities” (Sen, Amiya An Intellectual Biography 20-21). Interestingly, Rammohun Roy never accepted Christianity as an alternative to Hinduism. He criticized the Christian missionaries who used social reforms for “complete evangelization of India”. For him, religious reforms were simply necessary steps in social reform (Das, Sisir K. The Artist in Chains 58).

7 Saumyendranath Tagore in Makers of Indian Literature: Raja Rammohun Roy says that “the Brahma Samaj which was the later development of the Brahma Sabha, was not a creation of Rammohun, either in thought or deed…..The nobel vision of Rammohun Roy- of creating a universal meeting ground of monotheists of all races- The Brahma Sabha- faded away when Rammohun left the shores of India, and was ultimately lost with his death. Its place was taken by the Brahma Samaj, the meeting ground of only Hindu monotheists” (43-48).

8 “On 4 October 1855 Vidyasagar sent a petition to the government of India signed by 957 people for the legalization of widow-marriage…The government enacted a law legalizing Hindu widow remarriage on 26 July 1856” (Das, Sisir K. The Artist in Chains 61).
Discontent against social and political discrimination\textsuperscript{9} and the drain of wealth in the British rule blazed into fire within twenty five years of Rammohun’s death when the Sepoy Mutiny (1857 Rebellion/ the First War of Independence/Uprising/Mutiny) broke out. The first rumblings of the Mutiny were heard in Vellore and covered almost all the places from Meerut to Bengal. This mutiny was important as it was “a people’s movement against foreign rulers who were proud of being aliens and looked down upon Indians as inferior specimens of humanity” (Gupta, Subodh C. Sen 10). Except occasional communal clashes, equally significant was the manifestation of Hindu-Muslim unity during this time.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) appeared on the socio-religious scene during this period. Though born in Gujarat, he chose the militant provinces of Punjab and U.P. as the field of his missionary activity, which started in 1866. He believed that a foreign ruler, even if good and benevolent, could not promote the welfare of a subject nation because the differences on the issues of culture, language, and customs couldn’t be avoided and these differences ultimately led to disagreements and clashes which would be impossible to resolve until the country was free (11). He always advocated his love for his own land and people. He believed in the Aryan theory and rejected Hindu idolatry. According to him, the Vedas posited only one formless God and “if anywhere there are references in the Vedas to more than one God, these should be rejected as later accretions” (12). He complained against Brahmos for these “enlightened” men’s pride in English education, foreign ways and manners, and ignorance of the native heritage. Gupta remarks that Dayanand’s idea of nationalism is very narrow as it “excludes the

\textsuperscript{9} “From the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, in fact, a growing hauteur could be detected on the part of the British (in their press, and in their social and administrative dealings) with regard to Indians. There is evidence to suggest that this was a reflection of changing social attitudes in England. But it was the so-called Black Acts of 1849 which indicated to what a pass things had come. In that year four bills were drafted, one of whose principal aims was to place Britons under jurisdiction of Indian judges sitting in the East India Company’s criminal courts (hitherto Britons had been answerable only to the Supreme Court in Calcutta, which had British judges). This raised such a storm of protest from the British that the government was forced to withdraw these ‘black’ bills. English-educated Indians were appalled by this show of racial aversion. They increasingly felt the need to form associations in the face of the British rule to express solidarity in the cause of what can only be described as a broadly political agenda. A notable example was the British Indian Association (with not a single British member?) set up in Calcutta in 1851...This vision included political reform (such as the separation of political and legislative functions in governing bodies) and Indian representation in government. What we may call a protonationalist consciousness among influential circles of the Bengali middle class was developing” (Lipner 6-7). “[T]he Ilbert Bill was ultimately passed in a very truncated form. As a result when Lord Dufferin took over as Viceroy from Lord Ripon, he found whites and blacks divided into two hostile camps” (Haldar 25).
region south of the Vindhyas and also people professing other faiths whether in the south or the north” (13). Undoubtedly, he adds, Dayanand’s Arya Samaj made a significant contribution to nationalism by making Hindus conscious of their national heritage. Going beyond sectarianism, at the same time, Dayanand “held out both Shivaji and Guru Gobind Singh, neither of whom had anything to do with the Vedas, as noble examples for modern Indians, because both of them had stood up against foreign domination” (14).

Commenting on the social scenario of those days, S.K. Bose writes that the Arya Samaj, the Ramkrishna Paramahansa movement, and the Theosophical Society were inclined, in their own ways, to assist the revival of Hindu faith and culture. Noticeably, the remarkable enthusiasm generated by Vidyasagar’s widow-remarriage movement in the fifties gradually declined by the seventies, while his movement against polygamy simply didn’t become popular. The mood of the country was changing. “A new note of ‘assertive Hinduism’ was heard above the voice of rationalism. This was the second phase of the renaissance, its emotional revivalist phase, and it was in full swing” (4).

Bankim Chandra belonged to this phase of the renaissance. Bose adds:

But, however strong the urge for a revival of the past might have been, a complete rejection of the West was plainly not possible. The spirit of Western culture and rationalism had gone deep into the various strata of the educated society broadening outlook and weakening the hold of traditional beliefs and customs. A complete return to the pristine past was thus not within the realm of feasibility...Bankim represented one of the finest fruits of this synthesis of Eastern spirit with Western rationalism. Steeped initially in the European philosophies of utilitarianism and positivism, Bankim himself applied western methodology to his reinterpretation of Hinduism. (5)

10 Roughly from the age of forty, Bankim began to be interested in religion and philosophy. “Steeped initially in the European philosophies of utilitarianism and positivism, Bankim himself applied western methodology to his reinterpretation of Hinduism” (Bose, S. K. 4, 40).
It is, perhaps, the reason that Bankim consistently rejected the Vedic revival of Dayanand Saraswati on the ground that this was “archaic, irrational, and ill-equipped to meet modern needs” (Sen, Amiya P. *An Intellectual Biography* 2). This was also the reason behind Bankim’s attempt to re-interpret *The Bhagavad Gita*. At the same time, it is equally valid that “Bankim did tend to read history in terms of divinely ordained scheme” since he believed in the idea of God’s recurring descent on earth as an avatar (2). When Bankim’s eldest grandson fell seriously ill (sometime in 1875), Bankim Chandra “fervently prayed before the family deity at Kanthalpara for the child’s speedy recovery” (37). In the words of Sisir K. Das,

He admired Sanskrit literature but rejected Sanskrit poetics in preference to Western poetics; his love for Kalidas was great and yet he found in Shakespeare ‘the immortal poet of universal human literature’; he studied the Vedas zealously but considered them primarily as inspired nature poems; he formulated a theory of religion as much on the basis of *the Gita* as on the basis of Comte’s positivism and Mill’s utilitarianism. He had a strong fascination for the supernatural and yet he presented a new Krishna, a historical hero11, devoid of the halo of divinity. (*The Artist in Chains* XI)

Bankim Chandra’s *Anandamath* is the first work chosen for this research project. Bankim Chandra, a great literary artist, was born in Bengal on 26th June 1838, three years after the adoption of English as the official language of India and principal subject of education12. His formal education began at an English school in Midnapore, the place where his father was posted, in 1844. After four years of his schooling, he came back to his home in Kanthalpara and got married to a girl of five in 1849. In the same year, he entered the school section of Hooghly College, situated on the western

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11 “Regarding Krishna he says, ‘I too firmly believe that Krishna is God incarnate; my Western education has only strengthened this belief’. But here in *Krishnacharita* he does not allow his firm faith to interfere with his historical judgement; here he is concerned with Krishna as a human character, with historical Krishna. And he is firmly of the opinion that an ideal character like Krishna, with a harmonious blending of the highest qualities and free from blemish of any kind, could not be found in any other country’s history or literature” (Bose, S. K. 47).

12 The life sketch of Bankim and the social scenario of Bengal during his life time are chiefly based upon the following sources: (Das, Sisir K. *The Artist in Chains* 1-239), (Bagal IX-XIII), (Bose, S.K. 7-19), (Lipner 3-26) and (Sengupta, S.C. 121-131).
bank of the Ganga. He won many awards and distinctions and went up to the college level with a feather in his cap. During this time, he learnt Sanskrit also from a private tutor and started contributing to poet Ishwar Chandra Gupta’s reputed journals *The Sambad Prabhakar* (1831) and *The Sambad Sadhuranjan* (1847) at the age of fourteen. In 1853, he participated in a poetry competition on the pages of *The Sambad Prabhakar* and won a cash award. In 1856, Bankim Chandra left Hooghly College to join the Presidency College at Kolkata to study Law. His book of verse *Lalita Purakalik Galpa Thatha Manas* (*Lalita-An Old Tale- And Manas*) was published in the same year. Then, he turned to fiction. In the creative sphere of his life, nothing significant happened except the publication of *Raj Mohan’s Wife* in English during 1856 to 1864.

Established in 1857, the Calcutta University started holding the entrance examination from April that year. Bankim sat for it from the Law department of the Presidency College and passed it in first division. In 1858, the B.A. examination was conducted for the first time with thirteen candidates appearing for it. Only two of them cleared the exam and Bankim was one of them. This achievement led to his appointment as Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector by an order of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in the same year. His first posting was in Jessore (now in Bangladesh). His law study was interrupted for the time being; he cleared Law examination much later in 1869. His first wife with whom he had tied wedlock in 1849 died in 1859. Bankim got married to Rajlakshmi Devi in 1860. In 1864, Bankim’s English novel *Rajmohan’s Wife* was serialized in the journal *Indian Field*. In 1865, his first Bengali novel *Durgeshnandni* and the very next year *Kapalkundala* were published.

In 1869 when Bankim passed B.L. (Law) examination, he wrote an essay “On the Origin of the Hindu Festivals”. His novel *Mrinalini* also appeared in the same year. Next year, he wrote another essay “A Popular Literature for Bengal”. Two articles in English titled “Bengali Literature” and “Buddhism and The Sankhya Philosophy”, which appeared anonymously in *The Calcutta Review* in 1871, are now credited to Bankim Chandra. In 1873, Bankim took the initiative of *The Bangadarshan* as editor. A number of Bankim’s important works were first published in this journal. In 1873, his “The Study of Hindu Philosophy”, *Birhbriksha* and *Indira* were published. In the next two years, *Yugalanuriya* and *Chandrashekhar* were published. In 1876, Bankim’s
journal stopped publication and reappeared in the next year under the editorship of Sanjib Chandra. *Rajni* and *Upkatha* (comprising *Indira*, *Yugalanguriya* and *Radharani*) appeared in 1877, whereas *Krishnakanter Will* came on the literary scene in 1878. In 1882, letters in the Hastie Controversy, *Rajsinha* and *Anandamath* were written. In 1884, Bankim sponsored a monthly magazine called *Prachar* on the pages of which the novel titled *Sitaram* (1887) was serialized. Bankim’s *Letters on Hinduism* were probably written between 1857 and 1882.

Apart from Bankim’s fourteen novels (one novel in English and thirteen others in Bengali) and other non-fiction works in English, there are non-fiction works in Bengali also. These works along with their date of publication are as follows- *Lokrahasya* (1874), *Vigyan Rahasya* (1875), *Kamala Kanter Daptar* (1875), *Vivid Samalochana* (1876), *Samya* (1879), *Probondho Pustak* (1889), *Muchiram Guder Jeebon Charit* (1884), *Krishna Charitra* (Part-1) (1886), *Vividh Probondho* (Part-1) (1887), *Dharmatattwa* (Part-1) (1888), *Vivid Probondho* (Part-2) (1892), his incomplete treatise *Srimadbhagavadgita* (1902), and *Devatattwa O Hindu Dharma* (After 1939).

Bankim’s career spanning 33 years, as an administrator, was a period of constant transfers, tours and postings. At that time, the Presidency of Bengal comprised the provinces of Bihar, Orissa and Assam besides Bengal proper. Bankim was posted in no less than 15 districts and sub-divisional towns of Bengal and Orissa and sometimes more than once at one place. He is known for his popular clashes with Col. Duffin in 1873 and Rev. Hastie in 1882 during his job. However, he never offended the

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13 Once Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita (The Gospel of Ramakrishna) jokingly asked Bankim what had caused to ‘bend’ his body (in Bengali, the word ‘bankim’ means bent), the latter quipped that this had been resulted from the kicks of the white master’s boots! (Sen, Amiya P. *An Intellectual Biography* 41).

14 “One afternoon, Bankim was crossing a field where Colonel Duffin and his friends were playing a game of cricket. Incensed at Bankim’s not alighting from his palki to offer the ritual salaam to the sahib, the colonel hurled abuse and physically assaulted the ‘upstart’ Indian. Bankim reacted by filing a criminal case against Duffin who was later forced to tender a public apology in court” (Sen, Amiya P. *An Intellectual Biography* 36).

15 In September 1882, at the residence of Maharaja Harendra Krishna Deb of Shobha bazaar of Calcutta a *shrad* ceremony was performed with pomp and show. The occasion was graced by 4000 pundits and the elite Bengalis. Among other things, the family idol of Gopinathji was also displayed on a silver throne. William Hastie, the principal of the General Assembly’s Institution (Later, The Scottish Church College) wrote a letter in *The Stateman* condemning the hypocrisy of educated Hindus. For Hastie, the reverence shown to the idol only exposed the morally degenerate state of the Hindu mind and the ‘defilement’ of the Hindu soul. Two more letters written in the same vein appeared in the paper on 26th and 27th September respectively. Bankim took a strong notice of Hastie’s anti-Hindu stance and his first rejoinder to the Hastie letters appeared in the same paper on 6 October, under the pseudonym of ‘Ram Chandra’. A regular exchange of letters followed till 18th November. Bankim wrote, “Will you allow me to
government and performed his duty with full dedication. After his retirement in 1891, the government conferred the title of Raibahadur on him in 1892. In 1894, Bankim was awarded the title of the Champion of Indian Empire. In March, the same year, the diabetes he had been suffering from took a serious turn and he passed away in April 1894.

M. K. Haldar tells us that Bankim’s job as a magistrate was never his ‘personal calling’. “His mission was literary and his commitment was to intellectual pursuits for the good of his own people” (16-17). For him, his professional job was a means of earning his bread and butter. Bankim didn’t believe in the ideology of art for art’s sake. He always used writing for social purpose. He advised the younger contemporaries that they should write only if they were sure of “their power and intention to create beautiful things, or do some good to mankind” (Das, Sisir K. The Artist in Chains X). According to Haldar, Bankim adopted “almost a Utilitarian view of Literature” (116). Bankim rejected the rasa theory because “it limits the disposition of the mind only to nine categories, when according to him, they are innumerable and varied” (114).

Anandamath, one of the most controversial novels of Bankim, has raised a lot of criticism. Some view it as an anti-Muslim novel; a section of critics finds it highly patriotic in spirit, whereas another section of scholars calls it an artistic failure. Keeping aside the above criticism momentarily, I would like to emphasize the importance of this novel within the framework of this thesis. To speak of nationalism in the context of Anandamath, at surface level, may seem discordant for the difficulty to correlate the inside description of the text with the outside discourse of Indian history.

suggestion to Mr. Hastie who is so ambitious of earning a distinction as a sort of an Indian St. Paul that it is fit that he should better acquaint himself with the doctrines of Hindu religion before he seeks to demolish them?” In this controversy, Bankim insisted on a distinction between what he called the ‘real’ Hinduism and the popular Hinduism...He said, ‘Vedas are dead’ and ‘they do not represent the living religion of India.’ He said “The religious worship of idols is as justifiable as the intellectual worship of Hamlet or Prometheus.” The identity of ‘Ram Chandra’ was revealed by Rev. Krishnan Mohan Bandopadhyay, the Derozian-turned-Protestant missionary, in one of his letters Dated 10 November 1982. (Bose, S. K. 40-41), (Sen, Amiya P. An Intellectual Biography 38-39) & (Das, Sisir K. The Artist in Chains 158-60).

16 It is persistently levelled against Bankim that his characters in the novel are not realistic and cannot be located in contemporary Bengali society (16). “Critics were quick to point out how the Santans in Anandamath were modelled more on Protestant monks than Hindu sanyasis even though they wear the gerua” (Sen, Amiya P. An Intellectual Biography 67). Sisir K. Das says that the novel “has got all the defects of Bankim’s art- his tendency to pontificate, his theatricality, his crude burlesque, his mock-heroism, his dull and predictable rhetoric, and his frequent intervention of deus ex machina” (The Artist in Chains 148).
and nationalism. First of all, the beginning of Indian nationalism is traced back to the outbreak of the First War of Independence/ the Rebellion of 1857/ 1857 Sepoy Mutiny. Thus, a novel depicting the setting of the 1770s cannot be situated in the ‘outside the text’ discourse of nationalism. Nevertheless, in fact, Anandamath is very important in the context of Indian nation and nationalism. The cinematic adaptation of the novel proclaims that the historic event upon which Anandamath is written, couldn’t find its due place in the textual history of Indian independence because of the politics of the Britishers who called it- a mere “infestation by bands of Senassies (Hastings)” (qtd. in Lipner 293). In the beginning of the movie, the ‘rebellion’ is referred to as ‘The Sanyasi War’. Understanding of the event from this perspective gives birth to a new debate- whether this event was a mere insignificant rebellion or the ‘historic’ first war of independence. Whatever information has been gained from the historical accounts, it clearly contradicts the ‘fictional facts’ and the hyperbolic statement given in the beginning of the movie. With regard to Anandamath and Debi Chaudhurani17, historian Nitish Sengupta says:

But the sanyasi rebels in actual history were far removed from the idealized picture of both Debi Chaudhurani and the Santans of Anandamath. They were from upper India while Debi Chaudhurani and the Santans were Bengalees. Also, they were generally devotees of Shiva while the latter were Vaishnavites. The principal motivation of the real sanyasi rebels was looting while the characters of Bankim were highly motivated patriots. Despite the halo of patriotism bestowed on the sanyasi and fakir rebels, the real sanyasis and fakirs, to quote Jadunath Sarkar, ‘were plunderers though some of them were zamindars of Oudh. Freedom of the country, suppression of the wicked and protection of law-abiding people were ideals unknown to them and the attribution of these to them is only born of Bankim Chandra’s imagination.’ (222)

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17 Another novel of Bankim with the overtones of history.
The novel is purely a construction of the sentiment which actually didn’t exist at all among the sanyasis of Bengal, the protagonists of Anandamath, in the 1770s. Despite the fact that Indian nationalism could be a later phenomenon in reality, the novelist has purposefully constructed the idea of active nationalism in this novel without giving much importance to the available accounts of history. The novel cannot be easily situated in the Indian history of nationalism, as it does not simply ‘represent’ but ‘construct’ a history of nationalism. Therefore, the novel demands a critical appraisal from the view of Indian nationalism.

The second reason that apparently minimizes the importance of the novel from the perspective of Indian nationalism is based on the ‘inside’ description of the text. The British Rule, which is said to have given birth to Indian nationalism, was not clearly there so far, according to the text; the English were only tax collectors in the rule of the Muslim Nawab, Mir Jafar. The narrator says, “In 1770 Bengal had not yet fallen under British sway. The British at the time were Bengal’s tax collectors. All they did was collect the revenue; they took no responsibility for life and property of Bengalis. Their task was to collect the money, while the responsibility for life and property belonged to the evil Mir Jafar, a vile, treacherous blot on the human race” (Chatterjee, Bankim Anandamath140). The ‘history’ within the text constructs a period of independent Nawabs of Bengal, free from any direct interference from the British in socio-political affairs of the province. The portrayal of the British being politically inactive in the 1770s doesn’t fit in the frame of academic history. In fact, the Britishers had attained the rights of tax collection18 in Bihar, Orissa, and Oudh in addition to

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18 The Battle of Buxar was fought on 22 October 1764 between the forces under the lead of the British East India Company led by Hector Munro and the combined Muslim army of Mir Qasim (the Nawab of Bengal), Shuja-ud-Daula (the Nawab of Awadh) and the Mughal King Shah Alam II. “The combined Mughal army was defeated by the superior strategy, equipment and motivation of the British forces. Buxor, more than Plassey, was the real foundation of British conquest of Bengal, and for that matter, India...Buxor left a foreign merchant company in military and political control of the territory from Ayodhya to Chittagong.” (Sengupta, Nitish 183). The Battle of Buxor eventuated in the Treaty of Allahabad.

“The directors of the Company in England, meanwhile, once again appointed Clive as the Governor of Bengal; and Clive, who was then in England, was sent back to India to settle matters. He negotiated the treaty of Allahabad in 1765 CE with the powers that had been defeated in the Battle of Buxar. Clive restored Awadh (except for the districts of Allahabad and Kara) to nawab Shuja-ud-daula in return for 50 lakh rupees as war indemnity. Awadh was made a buffer state between the English and the Marathas. The districts of Allahabad and Kara were given by Clive to the Mughal emperor, Shah Alam II, in return for the grant of the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, as well as the right to dispense civil justice in the region. This meant that the English were granted the
Bengal by 1772. Nitish Sengupta says, “The granting of the dewani to the company was to become the legal foundation for British rule in Bengal” (185). Thus, the English were not simply tax collectors; they were a strong and fast spreading foreign power in the Indian subcontinent. In reality, contrary to the fictional portrayal, Mir Jafar had died in 1765. Julius J. Lipner writes, “From 1765, in fact, the East India Company was effectively in control of Bengal, being the power that appointed the Nawab and his ministers, a fact that Bankim with his strong historical sense must have known” (60).

The novel is very important for this research project from the perspective of Indian nationalism. Chandrima Chakraborty has called Anandamath “a foundational text for the understanding of Indian nationalism” and “a representative text” in his paper “Reading Anandamath, Understanding Hindutva: Postcolonial Literatures and the Politics of Colonization”. He further writes, “Anandamath is a good exemplar for showing how representation is constructed and authorized within specific socio-cultural contexts and patronages”. The novel comes first in the chronological order among the other works under study for this project. Therefore, in the present study, it acts as a fundamental text from which the idea of Indian nation and nationalism springs up and finds further projection in Gora and Kanthapura respectively.

Bankim’s life and works have been explored and studied by many a scholar. Julius Lipner’s translation of the novel as Anandamath, or The Sacred Brotherhood includes an introduction and critical apparatus by the translator. In the comprehensive introduction, Lipner has studied the social backdrop of Bengal, the life of Bankim Chandra, the origin of the novel and its historical significance, and ‘the making of a translation’. This work is highly acclaimed in the academic circles. In The Artist in Chains: The Life of Bankimchandra Chatterji, Sisir K. Das throws a flood of light on Bankim’s life and works. Dilemma of Bankim’s anger for and reconciliation with the

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19 “By gaining the Diwani powers, the Company’s position as a territorial power in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was legalized, and it was no longer just a body of merchant adventurers. Additionally, the Mughal emperor, Shah Alam II, became completely dependent on the Company for his maintenance, since he directly came under its protection. Although Mir Jafar’s son was made the nawab in Bengal, the English remained the virtual rulers. Later even this puppet nawab was deposed in 1772 CE, and the Company assumed direct control of the province of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. As a direct result of the battles of Plassey and Buxar, therefore, the English were able to establish their rule over the richest province in India” (Farooqui 369).
English authorities is expressed as follows: “Like the chained Prometheus he would often scream in pain and anger, and like Prometheus again he would accept the authority and reconcile with it” (56). The book is metaphorically divided as Morning (1838-1869), Midday (1869-1880), Afternoon (1880-1887), Evening (1887-1894), depicting the phases of Bankim’s life in a linear order. S. C. Sengupta’s *Bankimchandra Chatterjee* is a book in ‘Makers of Indian literature’ series, published by Sahitya Akademi. In this short and terse book, the writer has briefly discussed Bankim and his literary pieces. The special attraction in this book is ‘Literary Criticism,’ in which Bankim is discussed as a critic as well.

S. K. Bose’s *Bankim Chandra Chatterji* is a book in the series ‘Builders of Modern India’, published by the Publications Division of Government of India. In “The Mantra and The Monastery”, Bose has discussed *Anandamath* in detail. He says that the novel, emphasizing the didactic message of “the deliverance of the Motherland”, is “no ordinary novel; it is a novel with a purpose” (76). M.K. Haldar in *Foundations of Nationalism in India: A Study of Bankimchandra Chatterjee* discusses Bankim’s life and works in addition to his ideas on ‘Dharma’ and nationalism. Bankim, the writer says, approves of idol worship as intellectual worship just in the manner of aesthetic appreciation of *Hamlet*. He believes that the Indian religious philosophy is post-Vedic and to the Indian student, the Vedas have historical importance; they do not represent living religion of India. He criticizes Max Muller for his neologism ‘henotheism’ that is used to convey neither monotheistic nor polytheistic characteristic of Hinduism. Bankim takes umbrage at Max Muller’s ignorance of Hinduism and considers Henotheism as another term for Polytheism. Being a positivist, Bankim is a man of science. He rejects that the omniscient Vedic ‘Rishis’ knew all that modern science has explored. For Bankim, idol is symbolic and has its own existence, whereas fetish is an object embodying the supernatural being and has no existence apart from that object. “Hinduism rejects fetishism and accepts idolatry” (132). At the same time, Bankim regrets that science does not flourish among the idol worshippers.

Haldar opines that Bankim’s idea of ‘Dharma’ has roots in the philosophy of ‘Anushilan’ which reflects in married woman’s devotion to her husband, in the rituals in
Yoga, in celibacy of widow. ‘Anushilan’ also makes the foundation of The Bhagvad 
Gita. Influenced by the Utilitarian philosophy, Bankim prefers customs to 
Sastras at the 
time of clashes. He says that sea voyage is permissible according to Hindu ‘Dharma’.  
He is a humanist also. For him, a true devotee is “a motiveless performer of good to 
others” (144). Haldar claims that Ananda Matha was not taken as a serious threat by the 
Raj. He adds that it is evident from the fact that no legal proceedings were started 
against the novelist unlike in case of Upendranath20 (19).

Amiya P. Sen in Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay: An Intellectual Biography 
presents a critical commentary on the life and works of Bankim. The writer also 
discusses Bankim’s ideas of ‘Religion’ and the nation as Mother. Bankim Chandra 
Chattopadhyay: His Contribution to Indian Life and Culture is a collection of seminar 
papers, edited by Ujjal Kumar Majumdar. Some of the papers in the book have been 
briefly mentioned in this paragraph. Arun Kumar Basu traces the influence of Comte 
and Mill on Bankim in “Bankimchandra and Contemporary Western Thinkers”. 
Gopikanath Roy Chowdhury in “Ideas of Social Reform in Bankimchandra’s novels” 
establishes that Bankim was not against the remarriage of widows, as it is usually 
perceived. He says that Bankim followed unbiased rationalism and equality of rights. 
S.P. Banerjee in “Bankimchandra on Dharma and Anusilan” writes that ‘Dharma’, “a 
constituent of human nature itself, is a necessary feature of every man. Every 
individual, theistic or atheistic, must have his/her dharma as it is his/her own svabhava 
(nature)” (74). ‘Dharma’ is a common property of all human beings irrespective of their 
religion; it is ‘Manusyatva’ (humanness). “In order to manifest this manusyatva in its 
fullness all the human faculties must be properly cultured (‘Anusilita’)” (74). Thus, the 
base of religion is culture. ‘Anusilan’ neither encourages involvement nor withdrawal, 
but a balanced and restrained approach to Man’s instinctive demands. On the other 
hand, religion is based upon devotion to the Supernatural; it is compulsorily theistic. 
Out of the three paths leading to liberation- ‘Gyan’, ‘Bhakti’, and ‘Karma’, Bankim 
gives utmost importance to ‘Bhakti’. Prahlad, for him, is an ideal devotee. “…dharma

20 “…Upendranath Das was prosecuted for writing Surendra-Binodini Natak a few years before the publication of 
Ananda Math. In this drama, Upendranath showed prisoners breaking the gates of an imaginary British jail and 
killing a cruel District Magistrate, Mac Crendle, who was also fictitious” (Haldar 19).
is the harmonious and balanced development of all human faculties which also ends in happiness- happiness of all. As noted earlier proper development of the faculties (vrttis) is possible only through anusilan (culture)” (78). ‘Dharma’ views all religions and human beings equal. Bijit Kumar Datta talks about the historical settings of Bankim’s novels and their sources in “Bankimchandra’s Historical Novel-A Brief Sketch”. Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay in “Bankimchandra’s Researches in The Mahabharata” traces the weaknesses of Bankim’s argument with regard to the historicity of Krishna.

Pradip Bhattacharya’s “The Inspiration of Bankimchandra’s Anand Math” acknowledges the painstaking research of Kishanchand Bhakat, a High school teacher, who asserts that Anandamath was inspired by Bankim’s stay in Lalgola after the Duffin controversy. Another article of Bhattacharya, “The Problem of Janani Janmabhumishca in Anand Math” attempts to trace the roots of a Sanskrit Shaloka in the praise of Mother, which appeared in the novel. It is believed that the Shaloka ‘Janani Janmabhumishca’ is taken from The Ramayana, but actually there is no such evidence, according to the writer who ends the treatise on a question- ‘is it then a folk-memory…?’ In “Reading Anandamath, Understanding Hindutva: Postcolonial Literatures and the Politics of Canonization,” Chandrima Chakraborty throws light on the selective academic interest in Indian literature particularly when there is “an enormous increase in the publication of English language fiction by the Indian diaspora”. This selective tendency also sidelines “Indian literatures written in languages other than English”. Bankim’s Anandamath, though a highly significant novel from the nationalist point of view, is not prescribed in postcolonial courses in North American academic institutions. The writer regrets and exhorts academicians to “be sensitive” while framing postcolonial literature courses. He does not simply “interrogate” national history but also shows “how it gets written and read in varying socio-historical contexts”. He himself claims that his “essay hopes to disturb the stability of canons with a focus on questions of literary history, the materiality of production, and the politics of postcolonial literary consumption in North America”.

In “Contextualising Vande Mataram”, Irfan Ahmed criticizes the anti-Muslim spirit of Anandamath and finds fault with the spirit of nationalism in it. He says, “A
nationalism which deliberately stigmatizes Muslims as ‘swine’ and ‘the other’ can by no means be an inclusive nationalism uniting under its fold the diverse communities that inhabit this country” (30). Shamsul Islam in “The History and Politics of Vande Mataram” speaks of the origin of the song “Vande Mataram” and its sudden popularity when “in 1905 came Curzon’s announcement of the partition of Bengal”. He also unfolds the contemporary politics of furling up the issue of ‘Hindutava’ through the song for vested interests. He believes that the present day controversy of the song is only a political move “in the dangerous game the fundamentalists are involved in: confusing and dividing people”.

Tanika Sarkar in “Birth of a Goddess: ‘Vande Mataram’, Anandamath, and Hindu Nationhood” speaks about the complexities and controversies of Anandamath. According to her, Bankim has “layered ambiguity with uncertainty” for a purpose in the novel. Sarkar says that the novelist portrays the Muslim ruler to be responsible for the misfortune of the Hindus. “The Muslim ruler, who is a concrete individual, is expanded into an entire community” (3960). The agent of the famine is shown as the Muslims, whereas the victims are identified with the Hindus. Bankim, unlike his previous works, portrays agrarian distress as an effect of communal relations. The novelist also eliminates the contribution of the Muslim fakirs in the rebellion and “frames the events within an overarching agenda of Hindu nationhood: an idea that would not have existed even in prototype in the late 18th century” (3960). In this novel, the writer drifts away from history and admits in the Preface to Debi Choudhurani that he did not intend Anandamath to be “a fully historical novel”. Sarkar says that Bankim had already used historical narrative in Rajsingha, in which Hindu Kings and princesses were portrayed united against Aurangzeb. “The compulsions and ideals that Bankim ascribed to the making of that war, however, were no longer enough.” In Anandamath, the novelist depicts a “holy war” “without the imperative of power and self-interest”. This scheme helps the novelist to instill patriotism through the image of the goddess, a theme significant in Bankim’s era. Going beyond Rajsingha, which lacks patriotic ‘Bhakti’ or devotionalism, selflessness of ascetics, and the participation of villagers, Bankim combines the three forces of selfless purity, populism, and faith to lay the foundation of
the new Hindu nation. Sarkar believes that the novelist’s attitude to the British was ambivalent. “Colonialism, for Bankim, was a historical necessity” (3961).

Sarkar says that the novel was like an open text because of additions and alterations made in it. During Bankim’s own lifetime, five different editions were printed. “Scholars have identified 259 alterations across the five versions” (3962). It is straightforwardly wrong to say that the earlier versions were anti-British and the later anti-Muslim under the colonial pressure, since the earlier version also “contained fulsome praise for British martial valour. That was edited out in the later version…Moreover, the ferocious denunciations of Muslims remain constant across different editions” (3962). It is said that Bankim had expected trouble from his seniors. To guard himself from anything unpleasant, he requested Keshub Chandra Sen, a Brahmo reformer, to write a Preface to the second edition, “underlining its politically inoffensive character”. Finally, Keshub’s younger brother wrote the Preface and Keshub himself wrote to Lt. Governor assuring that ‘it (Anandamath) was a patriotic text but not a seditious one’. In the first edition, Bankim wrote something uncharacteristic about the novel, regarding the rebellion as ‘social revolution’, not political one. “It is said that the novel intended to demonstrate that Bengali wives sometimes aided husbands and sometimes did not- something that the novel does not portray. Also, that revolutionaries are suicidal.”

One can legitimately infer that Bankim wittingly “made the novel sound aseptic to avoid trouble” (3962). It is interesting to note that the ‘Santans’ used critical language against the British troops in the serialized version, dated 16th January 1882. Bankim was removed from the post of Assistant Secretary on the plea that the post was abolished. He was transferred as an Undersecretary (said to be a ‘demotion’) on 22 January 1882. Sarkar says, “It is difficult to imagine that the colonial bureaucracy moved with such alacrity, noting, translating, deliberating on and finally taking action against a passage within less than a week” (3962). She argues that the colonial censorship was more alert against newspaper articles and audio-visual theatre rather

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21 In the advertisement of Ananda Math, Bankim wrote: “Bengali women are often of great help to the Bengalees; but sometimes they are not. Social revolution, is often only self-inflicted pain. Revolts are self-destructive. The British have rescued Bengal from lawlessness. An attempt has been made in this book to clarify all this” (Haldar 93).
22 It refers to ‘the Children’ in the native language.
than literary texts (3963). At the same time, it is not to forget that the post of Assistant Secretary was “restored in no time and an Englishman was appointed to it” (Haldar 15), a point that is overlooked by Sarkar. The English antipathy against the Indian officers as well as the commoners was a well-known fact in those days.

Sarkar further speaks about the journey of “Vande Matram” from the novel to a rallying cry during the freedom struggle, the Muslim antagonism towards it, and finally the official status of the first two stanzas of the lyric as national song. Interestingly, most of the Congress nationalists emphasized anti-British aspect of the novel, whereas the Hindutva ideologues explored it as an anti-Muslim text with a clarion call to establish a Hindu nation. However, Sarkar adds, “Bankims’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” (3964). She feels, “Anandamath was an experimental movement within a wide and complex literary history that Bankim encompassed”.

Sarkar also comments on the portrayal of Vaishnavs “with a difference”. She says that these Vaishnavs worship Krishna as a demon slayer and not as an erotic or child figure which is traditionally popular among Bengali Vaishnavs. Their devotion is closer to Shakta worship, “directed towards the figure of the bloodthirsty goddess”. “Bankim unifies two great sectarian traditions of Bengali devotionalism, Shakta and Vaisnav” (3964).

Meenakshi Mukherjee in “Anandamath: A Political Myth” says that the novel, which could be “the first political novel” (903), was written to fill the lacuna of glorious past of Bengal. The history of Bengal was “a history of defeat, surrender, and exploitation” (904). In Anandamath, Bankim “fused for the first time a revived Hindu religious fervor with a new found nationalistic zeal” since he “wanted to create a new myth of valour for Bengal in order to shake the people out of their somnolence” (903-4). The idea of nationalism was actually missing in the Sanyasi-Fakir Rebellion in 1773. The writer also traces three reasons for the popularity of historical novel with literary license in India. She says that the life of the middle class Indian writer was “limited,
hedged, in by social restrictions and politically servile” amid “a whole new world of imagination, humanism, and triumph of the self over hierarchical society”, established through “contact with the British literature”. The creative writer often turned to the past for an infinite glorious, heroic, and wide picture of human stature. Secondly, she adds, historical novel was traditionally closer to story-telling than the realistic fiction of the western world. Thirdly, the historical past provided an opportunity to the writer to glorify the past, rejecting the prevalent servitude.

Mini Chandran in “The Translator as Ideal Reader: Variant Readings of Anandamath” compares the three translations of Anandamath from Bengali to English and tries to prove that every translation is a translator’s “individualist reading” and “interpretation” of the text and “evokes an emotional response (rasa) similar to the one evoked by their source text”. The translations do not focus on ‘the targeted readership’ but are determined by the translator’s “own private ideologies”. Aurobindo’s translation of the novel is “the perfect vehicle to push his own militant ideology”. In his translation, Basanta Koomar Roy replaces the ‘goddesses’ of the past, of the present, and of the future with the maps of India in the past, in the present, and in the future. India takes the place of Bengal, and the foes are not the Muslims but the British. Thus, the novel attains national secular character. “Roy’s choice of title as Dawn over India is in keeping with the secular discourse of the nation being propagated in the 1940s, and evokes the impending freedom that the nation was eagerly awaiting” (302). The last chapter of the novel is not included in the text, wherein the healer advocates the British rule and the translator states “rather hesitantly”; “We can only conjecture that if Chatterjee had been alive he would have approved of this omission” (303). Julius Lipner’s translation with an introduction of 124 pages to this novel of 100 pages “almost becomes an apologia undermining the ‘rasa’ of the Bankim text” (308). This translation is “from a postcolonial academic location”. She adds:

What Lipner sees as the central issue in the text is ‘Bankim’s ideological project: the status of the Muslim in his re-visioning of history’…Lipner contends that Bankim was in fact even-handed in his judgement of Muslims but was unfortunately not perceived to be so. This argument
comes in the wake of the revival of the ‘Vande Mataram’ debate at a national level. (303-4)

Anil Baran Ray in “Bankimchandra: Development of Nationalism and Indian Identity” explores Bankim’s concept of nationalism and its contribution towards the development of the Indian identity. The writer says that Bankim’s attitude towards Utilitarianism was ambivalent. Bankim, though acknowledged its influence, was critical of the view as it was deprived of ethical element and biased towards the largest number. On the contrary, the Indian tradition advocated happiness for all and misery for none. Therefore, Bankim preferred Indian ethics and religion to the Utilitarian view of life. Moreover, such a philosophy motivated the English to reap their own material benefits. Bankim rejected the contemporary Indian politics of verbosity, which was practically insignificant and which was confined to a few cities like Kolkata, particularly to the upper stratum of society. Besides, its discourse was produced in English, ostracizing the major population. “Such politics, far from doing any good to the people, actually alienated them”. Bankim repudiated such politics and advocated activism- ‘gather honey or sting’.

Ray adds that Bankim, thus, favoured Indian tradition for its strength. However, in India, the two important constituents of nationalism- “the political expression of the distinctiveness of a people living within a certain geographically defined territory and united by race, religion, language, tradition, heritage, and culture”- were missing. The proposition emerged due to three reasons. First, since war was specifically a matter concerned with Kshatriyas (the warrior caste), the other castes never united to face an invader. Secondly, the people here never bothered for independence, but for good governance. Thirdly, their religious attitude obscured distinctions of race. They believed that God was “the indwelling spirit of all beings and that the distinction between a foreigner and native was artificial”.

The writer says that Bankim understood that the best way to instil the spirit of nationalism in Indians was to mix it with religion. He took the idea of worshipping
‘human deity’ from Auguste’s positivism and took it further to ‘Anushilan Dharma’ without making any distinction between the concrete and the abstract. He believed that God was the inner essence of all human beings.

God was in all beings. Therefore, devotion to God meant progressively extending one’s love for oneself and one’s family to one’s community, to one’s country and finally to whole of humanity or the entire human race. Love for the whole humanity, however, was an ideal very difficult to realize in actual practice and so Bankimchandra advised his countrymen to take love for one’s country as the highest religion. (Ray)

Ray adds that through the familiar goddess imagery, Bankim created land as the mother, and the Mother’s children were exhorted “to think only of their motherland as their mother”. One’s individual self could attain the best self- ‘Purana Manushyatva’ (Full humanity) - through national self, which is divine. In this way, Bankim synthesized his philosophies of religion and nationalism. Bankim also laid importance on “by arms means”, which was the theme of Anandamath and which justified militant nationalism. Through Anandamath, Bankim appeared to give directions to future revolutionaries that they must rely on the armed struggle against their foreign subjugator and that the nation was above self-interests. The writer says that the novel bestows a unique politico-religious identity upon Indians and through the story of Anandamath, we as a nation are differentiated from other nationalities such as the English. Bankim Chandra believed that as an ancient nation with thousands of years of history, culture and heritage, Indians had valid and appropriate reasons to be disappointed about their being dominated by the English, but they didn’t have to spoil their energy in hurling abuses at the English. On the contrary, they should positively channelise their sense of national bitterness by engaging in constructive competitiveness with the English in different walks of life and be equal, if not better than them, in those walks of life.

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23 Anil Baran Ray writes, “Comte argued that since God could not be seen but only imagined and that since He was extra-cosmic and superior to humanity, man should devote himself rather to the worship of concrete humanity than an abstract God.”
If critically analysed, Ray’s exploration tries to establish Bankim’s idea of nation at Indian level, whereas a number of sources show that Bankim was least concerned with India, his idea of nation was basically confined to Bengali Hindu nation.

Subodh Chandra Sen Gupta in his book *Swami Vivekanand and Indian Nationalism* has written a chapter named “Bankimchandra and Ananda Math”. In this chapter, he says that Bankim’s work was innovative; it inspired as well as provided ‘action plan’ to the nationalists. Bankim was a proud Hindu and his national spirit was “outraged by the unfounded claim made the Muslim chronicler Minhajuddin that Bengal (or Gaur) was conquered by Bakhtiyar Khilji with the help of only sixteen cavalry men” (20). Although he artistically portrayed how it could be possible in Mrinalini, yet he called it “True History That Never Happened”. With the limited resources available to him, Bankim said that Khilji might have occupied the land but he faced opposition from the people. Consequently, he and his successors “could not occupy more than a third of what we call Bengal”. “The Pala and Sena kings continued to reign undisturbed, owing nominal allegiance to the Pathan ruler of Delhi or his representative nearer home” (20). Bankim believed that the Pathans were better rulers than the Mughals though foreign rule is always a curse. “Akbar built and consolidated whereas Aurangzeb paved the path to disintegration and dissolution” though Aurangzeb combined the small kingdoms of this area and the size of his empire was larger than that of Akbar.

Bankim, the writer adds, was of the view that the colonization and imperialism stuck heels in India because of Indian philosophy- Sankhya, Buddhism, Vedanta, etc. - which preach indifference towards the material world and reject annexation of foreign territory and warfare. Indian philosophy leads to salvation, whereas the West uses knowledge for power. Secondly, India lacked political cohesiveness though there was social and cultural unity. “Wherever the Hindu poured libations to his ancestors, he

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24 “The first Anushilan Samiti founded by Pramathanath Mitra and others in 1902 was modelled on Bankimchandra’s essays collected in *Anushilan or Dharmatattva*, in which there is not a whiff of politics. But when a few years later, possibly under Aurobindo’s direction, young men inspired by patriotic zeal began to give Anushilan and other samitis a revolutionary turn, and Barindrakumar Ghose established a factory for manufacturing bombs, the elders shied away; then the youngsters probably modelled their organization on Satyananda’s Ananda Math and took their idea of manufacturing guns from the novel” (Gupta, Subodh Chandra Sen 25). Besides, Bankim’s phrase ‘Vande Mataram’ was the rallying cry during the Indian freedom struggle.
invoked the names of the sacred rivers of the north and the south - the Ganges, the Yamuna, the Godavari, the Saraswati, the Narmada, the Sindhu (Indus) and the Cauvery. In spite of occasional feuds, Hindus and Muslims had been tilling the soil side by side for centuries. Mir Madan and Mohanlal fought against Robert Clive as readily as Mir Jafar and Rai Durlabh conspired against the native ruler” (22).

Gupta writes that *Anandamath* is inspired by the Sanyasi-Fakir Rebellion, which witnessed the common folk’s participation in anti-British clashes. The wandering mendicants relied upon their speed; they would come back after raids to resume their customary occupation of tilling the soil. The novel is not a historical novel, but a novel of ideas because of the misrepresentation of history in it. The author also refers to Jadunath Sarkar who believes that *Anandamath* is a historical novel because the main action is taken from history and “Bankimchandra vividly portrays the spirit of the age, the interregnum of about eighteen years from Plassey to the establishment of the orderly government by Warren Hastings” (27). Bankim wrote this novel of revolution to inspire people to launch attack against the British and “his criticism of Muslims was only incidental” (29). “Indeed, although the novelist said many hard things about the Britishers, as a Government servant he would not expose all his cards, for with a little caution he might save himself and the book without obscuring his meaning” (26).

In the last part of the chapter, the writer concludes that Bankim chose this setting and plot to “inculcate patriotism as a religion and present the motherland as a divinity” (29).

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Rabindranath Tagore, born in Calcutta on 7th May 1861, was the fourteenth child of Maharshi Devendranath and Sarada Devi. Born and brought up in a well-known family of Bengal, he was privileged to live in a house that was charged with the ambience of art and literature. His father was addressed ‘Maharishi’ because of his

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25 This brief biographical portion has been mainly extracted from Uma Das Gupta’s *Rabindranath Tagore: My Life in My Words*. The following sources have also been consulted: Tagore’s *Boyhood Days and Reminiscences*, Krishna Kripalani’s *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*, Hiren Mukerjee’s *Rabindranath Tagore*, Sukumar Sen’s ‘Some early Influences in Tagore’s Life,’ Kshitish Roy’s ‘Rabindranath Tagore’ and E.J. Thompson’s *Rabindranath Tagore: His Life and Work*. 
uprightness and religious bent of mind. His elder brother Dwijendranath was a philosopher and prose writer, whereas another one, Jyotirindra, was an artist. At the same time, Tagore was “not a pampered boy” (Gupta, Uma Das 15). As a child, he was a victim of “servocracy” (Tagore Reminiscences 10) and always longed for freedom. He would look outside the world through window like Amal in Tagore’s play Post Office.

Tagore’s father believed in monotheism and turned to the Brahamo Samaj, the philosophy founded on the tenets of the Upanishads. Little Tagore too became acquainted with the philosophy of the Upanishads. Tagore, in other words, was blessed with a rich and vast tradition where mythology, theology, and philosophy blended with the Upanishads.

In 1873, Maharshi Devendranath took Rabindranath on a journey to the Himalayas that helped the boy to view the world closely and intimately. Little Tagore breathed in the open air where there was no “servant rule” (Gupta, Uma Das 27). In 1863, Maharishi had bought two bighas of land near Bholpur and built a garden house named Santiniketan, “abode of peace”. This house was later turned into an “ashram for Brahmo householders who needed a place for retreat” (27). On their way to the Himalayas, the father and the son spent some days here.

Tagore was not attracted by school education during his childhood. He remembers, “The non-civilized in me was sensitive; it had great thirst for colour, for music, for movement of life. Our city-built education took no heed of that living fact” (64). Tagore was mainly absorbed in contemplation over life and nature that found beautiful expression in his later works. He went to a succession of schools till 1875 when his mother died. Sukumar Sen in “Some Early Influences in Tagore’s Life” says that young Tagore was educated mostly at home. He adds:

The curriculum included gymnastics, wrestling, music and drawing, and regular study under the care of competent teachers of the humanities and sciences, taught mostly through the medium of Bengali. His early Sanskrit covered a very advanced course. As a tireless reader, he acquired a full acquaintance with the works of leading Bengali authors
and poets of the day, quite early in life. Some learned Bengali authors and poets of the day also engaged his youthful attention. Amongst the classics Kalidasa’s works were his special favourite. A good edition of the Vaishnava lyrics, songs of Chandidas, Vidyapati and other early Vaishnav poets, published in two handy volumes, fell into the hands of young Rabindranath and he read them with unusual relish. (95-6)

In 1877, Tagore went to England for studying law. Here under the influence of the English literature, Tagore began to write his first drama in verse, *Bhagna Hriday* (The Broken Heart). He returned home in 1880 without any degree.

On 9 December 1883, Tagore got married to Bhavatarini, who was named Mrinalini after marriage. At that time, he was touched by the “surge of Hindu revivalism in public life” for a brief period. Soon his life took a turn and he was appointed Secretary of Adi Brahmo Samaj in 1884 (Gupta, Uma Das 87). He wrote against religious fanaticism, falling in an intense argument with Bankim Chandra on religion (87). Krishna Kripalani writes, “…since both the combatants were intrinsically noble, the feud was short-lived” (*A Biography*121). In 1887, Tagore worked on the Manasi group of poems and translated one of them into English. Around 1890, Tagore was asked to take charge of the family’s zamindari in East Bengal and Orissa (Gupta, Uma Das 99). He settled at Shelidah in order to manage the estate affair. He felt himself to be in the lap of Nature and understood human suffering and joy deeply during this period. Tagore says:

Slowly but surely I began to understand the sorrow and the poverty of the villagers and I grew restless to do something about it…I began to try and open their mind towards self-reliance (99).

This period proved to be the most productive period in Tagore’s long literary career. He says, “…it was in Shelidah that my nature developed” (99). Tagore’s wife died after a brief illness in 1902. His daughter Renuka also died in 1903. His father died in 1905 and younger son in 1907. These bereavements added a tinge of sadness to Tagore’s poetry.
In 1901, Tagore started a school in Shantiniketan “as his response to constructive nationalism” (136). He faced financial and social problems to go ahead with the project that was modelled on the ancient guru-shishya hermitages.

Tagore criticized the Congress policies of petitioning the government for favours and designed a programme of action in his essay “Swadeshi Samaj” in 1904. He, being a man of self-reliance, looked forward to “reviving the traditional samaj or society and channeling all constructive work through it, and empowering educated volunteers to live and work among villagers” (148). He was temporarily inclined towards the movement for the revival of Hinduism during this time and reposed his faith in “Hindu religion and society as a means of uniting the country”. He also composed patriotic songs for the Swadeshi Movement. However, shocked at the communal violence and the exclusion of the Muslims and lower castes from the traditional Hindu Samaj, Tagore rejected the ideology of Hindu revivalism and “concluded that the only path to swadeshi lay in constructive work”, not in any religion or samaj. He withdrew from the political movement and turned “his passion to a scheme of rural reform for the Hindu and Muslim tenants in his family’s estates. He was convinced that in his country social change was more urgent than political freedom and blamed the political leaders for shifting the focus” (148).

In 1913, Tagore won the Nobel Prize for the poems of Gitanjali, which he had written between 1907 and 1910. After winning this award, he visited many countries. In 1916-17, he visited Japan and America, and delivered lectures against militant nationalism (172).

Tagore was not in favour of Gandhi’s “passive resistance” as a political weapon without preparing the minds of the masses for the responsibility. He did not join Gandhi’s non-co-operation Movement” (183). As a protest against the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre, Tagore renounced his knighthood which he had accepted from the government in 1915. He wrote to the Viceroy of India on 31 May 1919, “The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring” (183).
The open-air school, Shantiniketan, took the form of a famous University, Vishva-Bharati in 1920. The university was named after its motto- “where the world meets in one nest” (194). Uma Das Gupta writes:

Starting scientific agriculture in the surrounding villages and instituting a comprehensive plan of rural reconstruction were fundamental to Visva-Bharati’s goals…Rabindranath had two objectives in his village work: educate the villager in self-reliance, and bring back ‘life in its completeness’ to the villages with music and readings from the epics as in the past. (204)

In 1924, Tagore visited China, where he had to face opposition due to his views on Chinese Civilization. On his way back, Tagore stayed in Japan for four weeks and reiterated his opposition to militant nationalism. In 1926, Tagore visited many countries including Argentina, England, Scandinavia, and Germany. He met Albert Einstein in Berlin. “From there on he travelled to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and, on his way back home, made stops also in Athens, Cairo and Alexandria ” (253). In the next few years (1927-31), He “took another cultural journey” (265). He visited British Malya, Java, Bali, and Siam. In May 1930, he went to Oxford to deliver Hibbert lectures. In September, 1930, he was invited to visit Russia by the Soviet government.

In September 1932, he (Tagore) went to Poona to visit Mahatma Gandhi who had resorted to a ‘fast unto death’ on the issue of the Communal Award. He was deeply shaken by the sight of Gandhi’s frail body lying in jail and felt anxious about the future of the untouchables without Gandhi. He published an essay ‘Mahatmaji and the Depressed Humanity’ in 1932. In 1933, he wrote Chandalika (The Untouchable Girl)…During 1934-36, he toured many parts of India and Ceylon with students of Visva-Bharati who staged these dramas…Although he no longer travelled to the West at that time, he and the British humanist Gilbert Murray continued to correspond keenly for the promotion of international cooperation. (279)
In his last years, Tagore was dejected to see that there was “little hope of bringing the world closer” and that “the villages hardly changed”. “I see imperfection before me,’ he wrote about his work of village reconstruction in 1938. His deepest regret was that the imperial rule had created Indian elite, which neglected the Indian masses” (293). He was more concerned about social injustices than political freedom in his country. Although he differed from Gandhi with regard to political methods, yet he “put his absolute faith in Gandhi’s leadership of the destitute millions” (293). On 7 August 1941, Tagore closed his eyes never to open them again.

Tagore was a versatile personality. He wrote novels, short-stories, songs, dance-dramas, and essays on various themes. Horst Frenz in Nobel Lectures says that although Tagore successfully wrote in all genres, yet he was first of all a poet.

Among his fifty and odd volumes of poetry are *Manasi* (1890) [The Ideal One], *Sonar Tari* (1894) [The Golden Boat], *Gitanjali* (1910) [Song Offerings], *Gitimalya* (1914) [Wreath of Songs], and *Balaka* (1916) [The Flight of Cranes]. The English renderings of his poetry, which include *The Gardener* (1913), *Fruit-Gathering* (1916), and *The Fugitive* (1921), do not generally correspond to particular volumes in the original Bengali; and in spite of its title, *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* (1912), the most acclaimed of them, contains poems from other works besides its namesake. Tagore's major plays are *Raja* (1910) [*The King of the Dark Chamber*], *Dakghar* (1912) [*The Post Office*], *Achalayatan* (1912) [The Immovable], *Muktadhara* (1922) [The Waterfall], and *Raktakaravi* (1926) [Red Oleanders]. He is the author of several volumes of short stories and a number of novels, among them *Gora* (1910), *Ghare-Baire* (1916) [*The Home and the World*], and *Yogayog* (1929) [Crosscurrents]. Besides these, he wrote musical dramas, dance dramas, essays of all types, travel diaries, and two autobiographies, one in his middle years and the other shortly before his

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26 “Sadly, the Second world war broke out in his life time” (Gupta, Uma Das 293).
death in 1941. Tagore also left numerous drawings and paintings, and songs for which he wrote the music himself.\textsuperscript{27}

Tagore says, “Just about the time I was born the currents of three movements had met in the life of our country” (qtd. in Gupta, Uma Das 4). The religious, literary, and national movements, which founded the Indian Renaissance, influenced Tagore during his formative years. Ram Mohan Roy initiated a religious movement to shatter the orthodox traditions and to revive the lost spiritual values. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was the pioneer of literary movement. He instilled freshness in literature and shunned the “rhetoric as rigid as death” (5). The third movement was national movement. This was not completely political in nature, but it gave expression to the people of India who were trying to assert themselves. It was an expression of resentment at “the humiliation heaped upon us by those who were not oriental, and who had, especially at that time, the habit of sharply dividing the people into good and bad according to what was similar to their life and what was different” (6).

Tagore was influenced by the three currents of his times. As far as the national movement is concerned, it is true that Tagore did not favour the prevalent idea of nationalism. Gurudev’s views on the subject are chiefly found in his lectures titled Nationalism and two novels Gora and Ghare Baire. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the western ideology of nationalism since it ‘erases’ local cultures, promotes a homogeneous national culture and leads to violence. In this study on ‘Construction of Nation and Nationalism’, Tagore, who disavows the idea of nation and nationalism, may not seem to be an appealing and appropriate choice. However, it is not like this.

Undoubtedly, Tagore loved his country and expressed his deep regard for it from time to time. He inaugurated the meeting of the Congress party that took place in Calcutta in 1896 by singing ‘Bande Mataram’ to his own tune. In 1905, Tagore strongly protested Viceroy Lord Curzon’s decision of vivisecting Bengal into two parts. He attended a number of protest meetings and wrote against this move. He introduced the Rakhibandhan ceremony to symbolise the underlying unity of undivided Bengal. Tanika

Sarkar tells us about Tagore’s inclination towards Hindu spirit underlying in those days. She says:

Along with other nationalist leaders, he (Tagore), at this point of time, had used Hindu rituals for mass mobilization, and he defended Hindu social institutions and statutes, even reconfiguring caste as a consensual and rational division of labour that secured social harmony. In the same way, he also endorsed brahmanical gender practices like widow immolation as consensual. (“Intractable Problem” 41)²⁸

With the passage of time, Tagore’s differences with other Hindu nationalists grew to the extent that he saw the Muslims as equal compatriots²⁹. As the movement progressed, he became more critical of “the upper class and caste Hindu nationalist leadership which unthinkingly commanded and coerced low caste and Muslim peasants to burn cheap foreign cloth while at the same time doing little or nothing for their welfare”³⁰ (41).

“But with it all, he (Tagore) advocated his own plan of constructive nationalism, with the village as the base of all nation-building activities….when the anti-partition movement took any agitational turn, he withdrew himself to his work at Shantiniketan” (Roy, Kshitish 254). In 1912, Tagore wrote ‘Jana Gana Mana’ in Bengali that was adopted by the Constituent Assembly as India’s national anthem in 1950.

Throughout his life Tagore was anti-imperialist, yet he rejected the idea of narrow nationalism. For instance,

[N]ationalistic consciousness is frequently stapled with memories of racial injustice. Colonized nations sought to preserve the scars of tortures perpetuated by the colonizers, in the collective psyche of the nation, as spurs to sentiments of resistance/nationalism. Tagore had renounced his knighthood in protest against the massacre at Jalianwala Bagh. He

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²⁸ On this, see Sumit Sarkar, The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-08, Delhi, 1973. (Foot Note No. 15 & 16 of Tanika Sarkar’s paper “the Intractable Problem” 46)
²⁹ See, for instance, “Bijoya Festival” (1905), cited in S.C. Sarkar, Bengal Renaissance and Other Essays, Delhi, 1970. (Footnote No. 18 of Tanika Sarkar’s paper “the Intractable Problem” 46)
³⁰ Swadeshi Movement in Bengal by Sumit Sarkar and ‘Questioning Nationalism : The difficult Writings of Rabindranath Tagore ’ in Rebels, Wives, Saints by Tanika Sarkar. (Footnote No. 20 of Tanika Sarkar’s paper “the Intractable Problem” 46)
however opposed the erection of a memorial for the victims. (Mukherji, Gangeya 378)

He opposed that because he was not in favour of carrying “the black memory of wrongs and their anger” (378). However, Tagore was critical of the West at the same time. In his essay “East and West”, Tagore wrote that the West had not sent out his humanity to “meet the man in the East, but only its machine” (Tagore “East and West” 52). He said that “the forcible parasitism” of Europe in the two large Continents of the world “must be causing to her (Europe) moral nature a gradual atrophy and degeneration” (50).

Tagore undoubtedly was a powerful critic of worshipping the Nation as god and was horrified by the crimes committed by modern nation-states, yet he loved the land that had nurtured him and never abandoned a basic anti-colonial or anti-imperialistic stance…However he simply didn’t want Indian patriots to imitate European nationalists. It is not without reason that Mahatma Gandhi in his obituary comment on Rabindranath Tagore in 1941 lauded the poet as ‘an ardent nationalist’. Tagore was for non-parochial inclusive nationalism relevant to humanity. (Choudhuri, Indra Nath “The concept of the nation-state”)

Tagore’s Gora has been chosen for this research project as it is a seminal novel on Indian nationalism. In this, the central character goes beyond communalism and sectarianism; he presents what Choudhuri calls “non-parochial inclusive nationalism relevant to humanity”. Besides, “the novel was written (more than) a hundred years ago. Many of the critical questions that it had asked at that time remain unresolved and contentious matters even today; caste, faith, freedom of country and of individual determination, socially forbidden love and patriotic love” (Sarkar, Tanika “Intractable Problem” 37).

If we keep aside the final verdict of Gora and the transformation of its protagonist in the ending, the novel basically portrays the complexities of Hinduism and Brahma Samaj that ideologically clash with each other to strengthen their positions in the society. Gora views Bharatvarsha as a Hindu nation and the Brahmos, who have
broken the bonds of Hindu community and adopted “Kristian like” manners, as “a predatory species” (Tagore 12). Although the clash of forces in *Gora* is not as violent as it is in *Anandamath*, yet religion in one form or the other reigns supreme in the nationalist discourse of *Gora*. Throughout *Gora*, the writer constructs a wave of Hindu nation/nationalism through Gora’s actions and words, and dramatically deconstructs it in the last two pages of the novel. Tagore “demonstrates the violent consequences of Bankim’s gendered, upper-caste, Hindu nationalist formulations” in *Gora*. Besides, the novel also shows “the historical moment that produced hegemonic nationalist imaginings” was “already divided and already self-critical” (Chakraborty, Chandrima).

The novel is important as it attempts to reveal the construction of ideological ‘spaces’ by the two conscious communities, and thus documenting the actual clash of Bengali society in pre-Independent India. This novel is also important as it gives us an idea of India as a whole through the concept of Bharatvarsha, which is missing in *Anandamath*. When compared with *Anandamath*, *Gora* deals with similar motifs and themes such as the idea of Mother Nation, Vande Mataram, and religious nationalism; it also relies upon similar narrative techniques such as negligible space given to the Muslims in the narrative and the presentation of progressive women in contrast with the traditional. Interestingly, these themes and motifs can also be seen in *Kanthapura*, the third novel chosen for this project.

In *Gora*, the novelist has portrayed the dark side of the British rule in India. The rural people of Bengal were bound to suffer the atrocities of the police under the Raj. The foreign officials didn’t have first-hand knowledge of the local people. Hence, their governance was ineffective and faulty. Gora asserts before the British magistrate, “You know much less about those conditions (of Ghoshpara) than I do” (Tagore 180). Tagore in his *Nationalism* also voices the same idea. He says that the British rule is impersonal; it is related to matter and machinery in India. “It has given them (Indian People) an emperor seven thousand miles away, and a Parliament which has no time or wish to attend to their affairs” (Thompson 462). As Indian nationalism is said to be chiefly anti-colonial in spirit, *Gora* acts as a significant docufiction with reference to the Indo-British relationships within the framework of colonialism.
Tagore is a voluminous writer. Scholars have explored various aspects of Tagore’s works from innumerable points of view. P. S. Ramana in his paper “Relevance of Rabindranath Tagore in 21st Century India” throws light on the fall in Tagore’s popularity in the West because of the rise of anti-colonial movements. Besides, the First World War shook the faith of people in humanism, mystic transcendentalism, international brotherhood, which were the core themes of Gurudev’s writings. On the contrary, Tagore’s continuing popularity in Bengal “can be traced to his iconic status as the flag bearer of the shared Bengali as well as pan Indian cultural identity” (2). The poet’s “dream of internationalism appears to have been realized in a sense with large scale individual and group migrations, media connectivity and high speed travel” (5). His moral and philosophical vision of a peaceful and cooperative world, at the same time, is quite relevant in this world of geographical, cultural, and national divisions. Jai Narain Sharma in “Rabindranath Tagore’s views on Rural Reconstruction” calls Tagore “the father of the rural uplift movement in this country” (47). He shares Tagore’s experience in east Bengal where he was given the responsibility of supervising his family’s zamindari in 1890. Tagore revived confidence in the distressed farmers there. Under the expert guidance of Leonard Etmhirts, he started the work of rural reconstruction in Shantiniketan in 1921. His aim was “to give these few villages complete freedom- education for all, the winds of joy blowing across the village, music and recitations going on, as in old days” (51).

Indra Nath Choudhuri in “National Anthem and Rabindranah Tagore” speaks about the controversy related to the national anthem, “Janaganamana.” The writer says that it is wrong to believe that Tagore wrote the song to welcome George V in India. He adds that the controversy took birth due to the erroneous reporting done by Reuter, The Englishmen and The Statesman. Tagore himself clarified that the song was a national song and was not meant for ‘George V or George VI or any George’ in his letters written to Pulinbihari Sen in 1937 and Smt. Sudharani Devi in 1939. Choudhuri refers to two important points in support of his argument. First, there is no mention of a welcome song to the king composed by Tagore in The Historical Record of the Imperial Visit to India, the elaborate report of the royal visit to India. Secondly, the song was
“published under the title ‘Bharat-vidhata’ and subtitle ‘Brahmasangit,’ in the Tattvabodhini Patrika, the official organ of Adi-Brahmo Samaj founded by the poet’s father, and then edited by the poet himself. A song of welcome to an earthly king would never be included in the hymn-book of Brahmo Samaj”.

Tanika Sarkar in “Rabindranath’s Gora and the Intractable Problem of Indian Patriotism” calls Gora “a heroic failure” because of “its eventual failure to secure a reliable and convincing foundation of patriotism” (38). The necessary ingredients of patriotism—geographical integrity, historical continuity and cultural unity—were problematic for modern Indians. Patriots and nationalists had the map of British India that spanned an entire subcontinent. “There never really had been a history of comprehensive politico-administrative unification till well into the colonial era” (38). Instead, there were empires within India. Indian dynasties fought with one another. Apart from it, shared cultural traits were few. Although Sanskrit followed by Persian could be understood in different parts of the subcontinent, yet it was one of the elite languages, used by high-class people for sacred or bureaucratic needs. No doubt, there was a pilgrimage circuit, but it also belonged to some sect or community. In the same way, circulation of goods and trade was limited to specific groups that lacked familiarity and strong emotions for different parts of the country. Cultural traditions and styles of worship were radically different sometimes within a community.

The writer says that in pre-modern times, popular political loyalty was towards the sovereign and his realm. In this context, the Ramrajya is a sound example. ‘Desh’ connoted the ancestral home instead of the birthplace. It referred to familiar people and land. “One of the characteristics of modern patriots like Swami Vivekananda and later, Gandhi, would be to try and travel across the length and breadth of the country: the first step towards being an Indian in true sense of the word” (39). Sarkar adds that a regional patriotism emerged simultaneously with pan Indian or subcontinental patriotism in the 19th century.

Certainly in Bengal, outpourings of patriotic songs from the late 19th century expressed love more immediately and vividly for the land of Bengal. India, in contrast appeared in Bengali patriotic imagination as a
project of power and glory, more difficult to clasp as an intimate love object...Indian patriotism as a felt emotion, was the unintended product of colonial rule which dispersed geographies into a singular whole...It was, finally and supremely, anti-colonial popular movements that melded very large, disparate number of people into a strong, affective community. (39)

It was important, conceptually, to invent a country called India which would appear “an enduring organism” and beyond “the relatively recent history of colonial unification”. Sarkar calls it “strong patriotic emotions in search of a country”. Hinduism as majoritarianism was the only solid option. Nineteenth century Hindu revivalists most often referred to ancient brahminical texts to show cultural continuity and civilizational singularity for Hindu Indians (40). The colonial state had also given freedom to Indians to follow their scriptures with regard to the matters related to beliefs, rituals, divorce, marriage, adoption, succession, inheritance, caste, etc. “Hindu scripture and custom thus were transfigured as precious vestiges of past freedom and as nuclei of future self-governance” (40). It was assumed that the institutions of Hinduism were axiomatically good as they could survive through the ages, and even the foreign invaders had not disturbed them. Such laws and customs contained the wisdom of the past generations. “If we now question them (including traditions about caste and gender), do we not undermine the entire tradition, the obviously great and the good, along with those few elements that now appear to be problematic?” (40). Throughout the colonial period, literature emphatically focused on this issue.

Gora, Tanika Sarkar says, fails to find a convincing locus for Indian patriotism. “Patriotism straddles an ambiguous and unstable ground” (45). Gora portrays the ideal idea of India “something different from and opposed to its actual appearance” (43). “…What is past, what is memory and ideal, what is hidden and opaque is more real than what is experienced, present and visible. This substitution becomes a real need as actual experience offers no real resource” (44). The novel refers to the past of India and its all-embracing spirit to all cultures-then “ethnocentrically, claims exclusively for itself
something that should be available to all humanity: the love of all humanity, unrestricted by territorial borders” (45-6).

Satish C. Aikant in “Reading Tagore: Seductions and Perils of Nationalism” says that Tagore saw nationalism as a constant threat to humanity. He believed that India had never had a real sense of nationalism. Societies could redeem themselves by following the principles of ‘Sarvadharma Samabhava’ (deference to all religions) and ‘Vasudhev Kutumbakam’ (the entire world as one family). Tagore favoured ‘world humanism’ over nationalism and replaced the ideology of nation with the idea of ‘Swadeshi Samaj’. “It was Tagore’s belief that to be truly modern, we need to liberate ourselves from the constraints of nationalist ideology so that we can express ourselves freely in the process of becoming full spiritual beings. This alternative vision of peace, harmony and the spiritual unity of humankind seems more relevant now than ever before” (63). Mohammad Omar Farooq in “Reflections on Tagore’s Gora: Layers of Ignorance and Voices against Prejudice” attempts to counter the stereotypical view about the absence of Muslim themes in Tagore’s works. The writer gives passing reference to Tagore’s short story ‘Musalmanir Galpo’ and analyses Gora in detail to appreciate Gurudev’s “understanding and respect of Islam and Muslims”. The writer is “genuinely moved” by Tagore’s “ability to rise above the parochialism and try to push the existing society toward setting/embracing higher standard for human dignity”.

“Tagore Without Bounds” is 12th lecture in Samvatsar Lecture Series, organized and published by Sahitya Akademi. Divided into two parts, the lecture was delivered by Subhash Mukhopahyay (b. 1919), a well-known Bengali writer. Mukhopahyay buttonholes the readers and shares his personal experience of writing and sending a poem in his formative days to Rabindranath Tagore. Marked by colloquial expression, the writer portrays Gurudev as “a poet of universe” (13) in the first part of the book. He says that Tagore “favoured those who dared to differ from him” (17) for creativity and originality. The poet appreciated the modern writers but also pointed out potential problems in their path. He discouraged over emphasis on “brag about poverty” and “the incontinence of lust” (17-8), and “stamping your work with a label” (20) in the name of “defiance” (21) in the modern literature. According to Tagore, true modernity is
“instead of viewing the world with infatuation, one must see it objectively without any bias…It is this viewpoint that is modern in all ages” (20). In the second part, Mukhopahyay throws light on the vision and versatility of Tagore by elaborating the poet’s selective stanzas and passages. Tagore rejected the available accounts of history which focused on wars and battles, and ostracised the achievements of the common masses in discourse. He advocated humanism and “extolled India as a country which seldom indulged in territorial expansion” (31). He was ahead of his time on issues like peasants’ cooperatives, revival of cottage industries, social reforms, Hindu-Muslim unity, and rural development (37).

Mohammad A. Quayum in “Imagining ‘One World’: Rabindranath Tagore’s Critique of Nationalism” writes that anti-nationalitarian sentiment pervades through most of Tagore’s writings. Tagore believed in an interactive and dialogic world; he advocated inter-civilizational alliance. Being a true optimist, he never “gave up hope for a possible union of the East and the West, in which the East and the West would meet as equal partners in a creative engagement”. Marxist critic, George Lukas, and the English writer, D.H. Lawrence and some others have criticized Tagore and dismissed him as a sentimental alarmist. However, Tagore was a visionary and the West has paid the price for its excessive love for nationalism in the form of the two World Wars, costing millions of lives.

Tagore believed, Quayum says, Indian tradition and history were against the western concepts of nation and nationalism. He was a champion of non-violence and withdrew from the swadeshi movement when it turned violent. It pained him to see that the movement was hijacked by the Bengal Bhadraloks (elites) for their personal interests. Tagore was of the view that it was education not adulation for the Charka that could “liberate India from the tyranny of the past and the towering misery of unreasoned, unbridled orthodoxy”. He maintained that India’s immediate problems were social and cultural and not political. Quayum says that Tagore could be faulted for impracticality. Tagore looked forward to the West’s help to India in its mission, even when he was aware that the West had entered the subcontinent not to unite and to create, but to gain power and wealth.
Quayum concludes that the Indian subcontinent has been divided into three countries since 1947—India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. It has witnessed a lot of bloodshed in the name of nationalism. Tagore’s prediction that joining the bandwagon of nationalism would make India a beggar of the West, has turned into a reality. Although India is a free country now, yet it is marked with corruption and poverty. It is controlled by neo-colonists explicitly and implicitly, “spelling political and cultural doom for its people”. Since anti-colonial nationalism carries the spirit of provincialism and cultural particularism, Tagore’s vision for “one world” does not appear to be possible at least for the time being.

Dipankar Roy in “Representation of the ‘National Self’- Novelistic Portrayal of a New Cultural Identity in Gora” studies how colonization affects the native ‘self’ not only economically, but also culturally and psychologically. Colonization also gave birth to Europhone intellectuals in the colonies “whose condition of ‘bilingualism’ brought along the painful realization of their lost ‘selves’ and called for an urgent need for ‘self-fashioning’ in order to formulate some kind of anti-colonial nationalist consciousness” (386). The writer explores Gora in this context. Banibrata Goswami’s paper “In the World of Men: Tagore’s Arrival in the Spiritual Domain of Nationalism” critically evaluates Tagore’s journey from a Bengali young man to the “inner spiritual space of nationalism” which bears a cultural identity. Refuting Anderson’s view that Asia and Africa have modelled their nationalisms on the models from European or American histories, Partha Chatterjee divides the nation’s space into two parts: the outside material domain and the spiritual inner domain. He believes that inner spiritual space is the one “where the colonized nation seeks its sovereignty in spite of subjection in the outer public space where it might have undergone Western modular influence” (432). The writer quotes Partha Chatterjee: “The greater one’s success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one’s spiritual culture. The formula is, I think, a fundamental feature of anti-colonial nationalism in Asia and Africa.” In the light of Chatterjee’s argument, Banibrata Goswami traces how Tagore’s experiences abroad and in Shelaídaha developed his vision and encouraged him to uplift the condition of the downtrodden. Tagore
developed immense faith in broad humanity “above territorial limitation of his own nation and its narrow nationalism” (438) while in the company of “the walking multitude, which makes the nation” (444).

Gangeya Mukherji in “Open Texture of Nationalism: Tagore as Nationalist” applies Waismann’s idea of ‘open texture’ to nationalism and makes critical appraisal of Tagore in its light. Although Tagore launched a fierce diatribe against the western concept of nationalism, yet Gandhi called him “an ardent nationalist” in his obituary for Tagore. Tagore’s writings and activities add a new dimension to the concept of nationalism and win him the title of a nationalist. According to Amartya Sen, says the writer, Tagore’s attitude was ‘dual’ to nationalism: “Supporting its emphasis on self-respect but rejecting its patriotism...Tagore remained deeply committed to his Indianness, while rejecting both patriotism and the advocacy of cultural isolation” (376).

*The Social Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* by Aparna Mukherjee is an account of Tagore’s social philosophy modelled on the ideas of Brahmo Samaj, Christianity, Vaisnavism, Bouls, ideas of Kabir and national resurgence. The writer also explores Tagore’s principles of social reconstruction and philosophy of education. She says that Tagore was a great humanist and believed in the power of work and democracy based on socialism and secularism. The author concludes that Gurudev “wanted to create a heaven of freedom on earth” (95). G.V. Raj in *Tagore, the Novelist* studies thematic concerns and novelistic techniques in the nine novels of Tagore. The introductory chapter discusses the social milieu in which Tagore’s works are set in. The fourth chapter of the book, “Gora: Dynamics of Syncretism” is dedicated to *Gora*. The writer studies the socio-historical setting of the novel and informs the reader that the idea of this novel crept in Tagore’s mind after meeting Sister Nivedita31, formerly

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31 “The idea of the book probably occurred to Tagore in 1904, when he narrated the story at the request of a visitor to Shilaidaha, the Irish Margaret Noble who became the disciple of Swami Vivekananda...In the published novel, Gora and Sucharita are united in the end, but in the story that Tagore narrated in 1904, the Brahmo girl rejects Gora upon discovering his European origins. Tagore says he wanted to demonstrate to Nivedita the strength of orthodox prejudice against Europeans, but his story made her angry, and she accused him of being unfair to Hindu women. ‘No, it can’t be so. It will be a great tragedy not to unite the two. Why won’t you let things happen in literature that don’t happen in real life?...Unite them. United they must be.’ This might explain why Tagore changed the ending in the published version, but it is equally likely that the change of storyline was triggered by his disillusionment with the Swadeshi movement in 1905 and his awareness that women were not coming out of purdah to claim greater autonomy in their lives” (Chakravarty, Radha “Introduction” to *Gora V*).
Margaret Nobel, who was a fervent disciple of Swami Vivekanand. One important observation of the author reveals that “freeing process” in the case of Gora does not occur in the ending, but “commences the moment Gora steps into the home of Paresh Babu right at the start of the novel, soon after which he is seized with a new restlessness, brought about by ‘…the memory of the questioning glances of two entrancing eyes, soft with modesty, bright with understanding…’” (47). To conclude, the novel “exemplifies the novelist’s vision of a new, syncretistic India, rising above the considerations of caste, community, and race” (113).

*The Sky of Indian History: Themes and Thought of Rabindranath Tagore* is compiled and edited by S. Jeyaseela Stephen. With an enriched prologue, the book is divided into two parts: Thought Concerning Indian History and Themes in Indian History. The writer has collected various Indian historical writings of Tagore which cover details on diverse subjects such as the message and vision of India’s history, Buddha, Shiva Ji, Sikhs, east and west, India, Modern Age, city and village, Gandhi, Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Swaraj, Swadeshi Samaj, and nationalism. B.C. Chakravorty’s *Rabindranath Tagore: His Mind and Art* is a critical study of Tagore as a poet, dramatist, storywriter, novelist, and thinker in the following three phases of his life: the Pre-Gitanjali, the Gitanjali, and the Post-Gitanjali. One of the chapters also deals with realism and humanism in Tagore’s poetry in comparison with the pieces of art of Shelley, Yeats, Eliot, Auden, and Edith Sitwell. The writer makes a sharp distinction between the works of Tagore written before and after 1914. The first phase of Tagore had affiliations with the Romantics and the mystics, whereas the second phase carries the spirit of realism and humanism. The writer says that Tagore studies man in relation to Nature in the pre-Gitanjali period, man in relation to God in the Gitanjali period, and man in relation to man in the post-Gitanjali period. In the same way, the short stories in the pre-Gitanjali period centre around individual lives, whereas the stories written during the post-Gitanjali period focus on the trauma of human life which is the result of social injustice. *Gora* is discussed by Chakravorty in “Rabindranath as a Novelist- The Pre-Gitanjali Period”. The author finds a drawback in the way the conflict in Gora’s mind is finally resolved. “The freedom of outlook that Gora gains in the end has not
been earned by him as a result of spiritual victory but it has been thrust upon him by a mere accident,” the accidental discovery of the secret of his birth (198). The writer also does not agree with Nihar Ranjan Roy who finds the characters of Anandmoyi and Paresh Babu ‘unreal, bloodless creatures’. But, he believes that “the greatness of Gora depends upon its literary value and not upon its moral content.” He concludes, “Gora is a great novel, for it gives us a realistic picture of the conflicting ideologies in the social life in Bengal during the closing decades of the nineteenth century” (203).

*Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today* is mainly a compilation of seminar papers, edited by Bhudeb Chaudhuri and K.G. Subramanyan and published by Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. The book is divided into six parts. The first one is focused on Tagore’s concepts of personality, creativity, and humanism; the second covers the many sided genius of Tagore, whereas the third part contains some of Tagore’s paintings and drawings. The fourth part deals with Tagore as an educator and social reformer. “Rabindranath Tagore- Reviews and Re-examinations” is the title of the fifth part, and the sixth one is named “Rabindranath-in East and West.”

*Rabindranath Tagore* is a book in the series of ‘Political Thinkers of Modern India’. Edited by Verinder Grover, the book comprises seminal essays of Tagore in part one and the critical appraisals of Tagore’s writings by a number of scholars in part two. Some of the essays of this book have been discussed in this paragraph in brief. In “Striving for Swaraj,” Tagore says that Swaraj can be attained through constructive and collective work in the right direction rather than relying on the *charka*, which has distracted the mind of the country from Swaraj. “The right of God over the universe is His swaraj,- the right to create it. In that same privilege, I say, consists our Swaraj, namely our right to create our own country” (11). In “India’s Self-Development and the Way to it,” Gurudev advocates Hindu-Muslim unity and regrets that “under British rule, we have had unified government but not unified responsibility” (15). Besides, Indians and the British do not have complete knowledge of each other. They know each other through stereotypical constructions and statistics. The writer looks forward to the meeting of the East and the West and motivates the Indians to dedicate themselves to their responsibilities and duties to overcome smallness, as “in our smallness lies his (the
Englishman’s) strength”. Tagore asks his fellow citizens to be rest assured that ‘the unarmed’ will be victorious in the end as “…the victory will not be to him who can slay, but to him who can accept death” (18). Tagore looks forward to association between the Indians and the English in “East and West”. He says that “the world today is offered to the west. She will destroy it, if she does not use it for a great creation of man” (47). In “Who is a Mahatma,” which was an address to the inmates of Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati, on 4th December 1922, Tagore says that renunciation and sacrifice lead to the loss of self, which is important to realize the infinite. It is like the state of Dwija - twice born; born of the spirit; born into the light. The true meaning of ‘Mahatma’ “implies the emancipated soul that realizes itself in all souls. It means the life that is no longer confined within itself, but finds its larger soul of Atman, of Spirit” (90).

In the second part of the book, the first essay is “Some Early Influences in Tagore’s Life” by Sukumar Sen. The writer traces the influence of the Upanishads, Sanskrit and Bengali literature in Tagore’s early life. The atmosphere of his family, his own acquisition through contemplation, and study contributed to Tagore’s myriad-minded personality. Humayun Kabir in “Social and Political Ideas of Tagore” speaks about Tagore’s religious outlook and “a vision of reality in which the supreme values were those of truth, beauty and goodness” (207). He says that Tagore considered caste-system as the darkest blot on Indian society. Gurudev advocated freedom and dignity for the individual along with his obligations to society. He admired the ancient culture but also felt that ‘rigidity and conservatism which seek to resist progress and change are the greatest enemies of life’ (210). To stop increasing population in the urban areas, Tagore laid emphasis on the creation of adequate opportunities of life, growth, and expression with mutual cooperation in villages. “He accepted without hesitation the Western idea of democracy but to this he added the Indian conception of the individual’s responsibility for social service” (213). Tagore rejected aggressive nationalism.

In the same book, Kshitish Roy in “Rabindranath Tagore” and E. J. Thompson’s “R. Tagore: His Life and work” have given biographical account of Tagore. Krishna R. Kriplani in “R. Tagore- Poet and Humanist” explores the poet’s personality as a poet,
humanist, and educationist along with his idea of one world. In “The Unmystical Gurudev”, Nirad C. Chaudhuri says that Tagore as a “mystical consoler” is a construction of the west; this image took birth due to the cementing of the gap created due to the worldly splendor of the Edwardian age, by Tagore with the religious fervor of *Gitanjali*. He quotes Gurudev: “You see, they have labelled me as a mystic and when I provide something which is not mystical they are offended” (385). Chaudhuri adds that Tagore was a man of worldly experiences and he applauded the western progress and rejected “a parsimony of selfishness” in Indians which was “bound to alienate him from his countrymen”. Tagore believed that at the root of progress lay the spirit of man. Chaudhuri adds, it is the stark reality that Tagore was rejected as an apostate by his people on account of his inclination for European spirit. On the other hand, Tagore was not adopted by the Europe also, because he was a Bengali by birth and wrote in Bengali. “Thus, in spite of his literary achievement his personal life was a double tragedy” (387).

Sachin Sen’s “Tagore’s Philosophy of Literature” is another essay in *Rabindranath Tagore*. The writer says that Tagore divides man into physical man and personal man. The physical man is concerned about facts and the world of necessity, while the personal man, interested in the world of relations, “establishes relations with the world through his love, through his emotions, through the expression of his personality. Literature is concerned with the world of personality” (592). The surplus emotional energy (which is not all occupied with self-preservation) of man, who is not satisfied with merely living, “seeks its outlet in the creation of Art, for man’s civilization is built upon his surplus” (592). In art, Tagore believes, it is the impression of man himself and not his object that finds expression. Man is ‘created’ by his outer social influences and inner emotional forces. Literature is an integration of ‘the outer world’ juices with ‘the inner juices of man’s emotions.’ It is not factual, but about ‘personal facts’ and it must intensify our consciousness.

Tagore was in favour of sublime literature, which “had no relations to the claims of necessity”. The true artist find out universal soul in his unique, individual way. He is interested in truth, beauty, and joy. He is not concerned with reasoning (the world of science), but with emotion and intuition (the world of personality). Marxists criticize
Tagore, who believes that the writer’s work is to deal with universal spirit/ ‘infinite’ of man; not with class.

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Sisir Kumar Das says that the growth of Indian English Novel in the twentieth century was mainly a response to the political movement of those days. Some of the novels like K.S. Venkataramani’s *Murugan The Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan the Patriot* (1932) were written under the impact of Gandhism. Das adds, “Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao were the most important novelists of the period”, who “gave the novel in Indian English its true character, in style, structure, and content” (*A History of Indian Literature* 289). Anand emerged as a social crusader; Narayan portrayed men and manners of Malgudi; Raja Rao, “unlike his contemporaries”, “constructed a more psychological dimension around his portrayals of human life” (*Alterno Introduction* 14). Although Raja Rao spent most of his life abroad yet his love for and understanding of India has inspired or at least left indelible imprint on others.

In 1983, a conference at the Indian International Center in New Delhi...

‘India,’ he (Raja Rao) said, ‘is not a nation, like France or Italy or Germany: India is a state of being…’ India, Raja Rao implied, is open to whoever can attain it, and his words spoke to me like an invitation.

-Kathleen Raine

*Kanthapura*, the third work opted for this project, is written by Raja Rao. Born in Mysore on 8th November 1908, Raja Rao belonged to an old and learned Brahmin family. He lost his mother when he was four years old. In 1915, he took admission in a renowned Hyderabad based Madrasa-e-Aliya, a school mainly meant- for Muslim noblemen. “A delicate child, rather weak in the lungs, he was sent to Aligarh (in 1926)...in the hope that the change would do him good” (Naik *Raja Rao* 17). Here he came under the influence of Professor Eric Dickinson, who soon discovered Raja Rao’s gift for writing and inspired him to study French and English literature. Rao was always

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32 “...where he (Raja Rao) found himself ‘the only Hindu student in my class’...One of the reasons which motivated Rao to attend this school was that his father was a teacher of Kannada at Nizam’s College in Hyderabad.” (*Alterno, Letizia Raja Rao: An Introduction* 2).
full of gratitude to Prof. Dickinson and proudly said, “I have been made by him. My literary sensibilities were formed by him” (qtd. 17). At Aligarh, Rao learnt French and passed his matriculation. He returned to Hyderabad at the age of 19, in 1927 and obtained Bachelor of Arts degree with History and English as his special subjects from Nizam’s College, Hyderabad, after two years. In 1929, he was awarded Asiatic Scholarship of the Government of Hyderabad for study abroad and he sailed for France.

At the University of Montpellier, France, Raja Rao devoted himself to the study of French and married Camille Mouly, a professor of French and great lover of Hindu thought and culture. In 1931, he shifted to the University of Paris where he carried out research on “The Influence of India on Irish Literature” under the guidance of Professor Louis Cazamian for two years. However, he never completed his doctoral research. Simultaneously, he kept on trying his hand at literary art. Some of the short stories later collected in The Cow of the Barricades and other Stories (1947) first published at this time: “Janvi” (in English) in Asia (November 1933) and “Akkayya” (in French) in Cahiers du sud (December 1933) (Naik Raja Rao 19). In France, his love for India was on the increase; it drew him to India within a couple of years of his leaving it for France. Though Rao never settled down in India, Naik says, “his periodic visits to his motherland since then have been, as he himself confessed to me, attempts to replenish his inner resources by vitalizing contacts with his motherland and its traditional values” (20). Rao’s quest made him to move from one ashram to another. He not only visited the ashrams of Pandit Taranath in Madras and Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry (respectively in 1931 and in 1939), but also spent several months in Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi’s ashram at Tiruvannamalai in 1940. He went to Benares and devoted himself to religious activities and thought of renouncing the world to become a ‘Sadhu’. Swami Atmananda, whom he met in Trivandrum in 1943, convinced him that a person could attain spiritual salvation through meditation while performing his worldly duties. Swamiji was a great ‘Vedantist’ and believed in ‘Advaita’ philosophy.

33 This marriage collapsed after ten years.
34 “Fifteen days before the outbreak of the World War II, Rao had to escape to India” (Alterno, Letizia Raja Rao: An Introduction 5).
Kanthapura, the first novel of Rao, was published in 1938. It is said that he wrote this novel when he was twenty one, but he got it published later. Symbolically, like Auden’s “The Unknown Soldier”, Kanthapura seems to celebrate the contribution of the Indian villages whose stories of valour and courage didn’t find way into the annals of narrative discourse, to the freedom struggle of India. Notably, Raja Rao spent some time in Gandhi’s ashram in the village of Sevagram in 1942. Here he met Gandhi for the first time though he had portrayed this leader through Moorthy’s vision in his novel Kanthapura. With the passage of time, Rao began eulogizing Gandhian ways. That’s why Rao’s portrayal of the failure of Gandhian ‘revolution’ in Kanthapura is replaced with Gandhi’s praise in his later interviews. It is discussed at length in the chapter titled “Kanthapura” of this thesis.

Around the publication of Kanthapura, Rao was also active in politics; he participated in some underground movements against the British. Rao co-edited with Iqbal Singh two collections of socio-political writings, Changing India in 1939 and Whither India? in 1948. Alterno says that such enthusiasm for Indian politics was, however, short-lived. Rao returned to France after the war in 1948. In 1950, Rao visited America for the first time, “initiating a long-time connection that would last a lifetime” (Intro. 6). He delivered lectures on Hindu philosophy at various places. In 1960, his second novel The Serpent and the Rope was published. This novel won the Sahitya Akademi Award for the year 1964. In 1965, he accepted teaching Indian philosophy at the University of Texas, where he lectured until his retirement as Professor Emeritus in 1980. Raja Rao’s third novel The Cat and Shakespeare was published in 1965, though its earlier version under the title The Cat had already appeared in Chelsea Review, New York (Summer 1959) (Naik Raja Rao 22). In the same year, he married the American actress Catherine Jones. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1969 by the Government of India.

From this point Rao’s recognition by the academic world followed an expected course. In 1972, he was named a Fellow of the Woodrow Wilson International Center in Washington. In 1978 he published his second collection of short stories, *The Policeman and the Rose*. In 1984, he was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Modern Language Association of America. On a more personal level, after his divorce from Catherine in 1986, he married Susan, with whom he shared the rest of his life. In 1988, the same year the publication of his novel *The Chessmaster and His Moves*, Rao received the Neustadt International Prize for Literature at the University of Oklahoma ‘for his achievement in fiction.’ Following the publication of *The Chessmaster and His Moves*, and eleven years after the publication of his last collection of short stories, he published *On the Ganga Ghat* (1989), which as the writer suggested in the short forward, ‘should be read as one single novel’ rather than as a collection of separate stories. At this time Rao was eighty one, and still very much engaged in writing. (Alterno Intro. 8)

When Rao was ninety, his non-fiction work *The Great Indian Way: A Life of Mahatma Gandhi* was published in New Delhi. Raja Rao passed away on 8th July 2006. He was posthumously awarded the Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award in India, in January 2007. The life of Rao itself appears to us as that of his round, dynamic protagonists who develop and keep on moving ahead. In *Kanthapura*, Moorthy’s journey starts as a Gandhian and takes a shift to Nehruvian Socialism in the ending of the novel, which is further negated by *Comrade Kirillov* in the second novel of Rao. In *The Serpent and the Rope*, the third novel, the hero is more philosophical in approach regarding illusion and reality. Rao himself started as a pro-socialist and turned towards various gurus/leaders including Gandhi and then ultimately attained more philosophical-spiritual outlook towards his life.

A number of people have critically studied Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* from various perspectives. M. E. Derrett’s *The Modern Indian Novel in English: A Comparative Approach* includes a number of references to Raja Rao and states that *Kanthapura* and
The Serpent and the Rope “convince a westerner of their original form” (96-7). M. K. Naik’s Raja Rao is the first comprehensive study of Rao’s literary pieces. Published in 1972, it is considered as a seminal work on the novelist to date; it throws light on Rao’s life, mind, and creative impulse. The fourth chapter of the book “The Village that was Wiped out of Man and Mosquito” critically explores the setting, narrative technique, and the flavor of Indian speech in Kanthapura. Naik calls the novel “a minor classic” as “its range is limited and the area of East-West confrontation it covers is as narrow as the village which forms its setting. Predominantly political in inspiration, it hardly gave much scope- except in a general way- to the philosophical quest which has been an essential part of Raja Rao’s artistic makeup” (77-8). C. D. Narasimhaiah in his book Raja Rao presents Kanthapura as “India in microcosm” (43). He says, “[W]hat happened there is what happened everywhere in India during those terrible years of our fight for freedom”. According to him, Kanthapura represents all Indian villages through its social structure of a caste-ridden society, agrarian economy, superstitions, traditional values, norms, and customs.

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar in his Indian Writing in English has given a brief account of Rao’s art of writing. He distinguishes Rao’s enchanting prose style from those of R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand. About the narrative in Kanthapura, Iyengar says, “[A]nd the manner of her (the narrator) telling too is characteristically Indian, feminine with a spontaneity that is coupled with swiftness, vivid with raciness suffused with a native vigour and exciting with rich sense of drama shot through and through with humour and lyricism” (390). Meenakshi Mukherjee in her Twice Born Fiction says that Kathapura appears to be inclined towards the Gandhian movement that sweeps over the village Raja Rao describes (45). In the Chapter “The Making of a Nation”, she briefly traces the importance of the choice of the narrator, effective amalgamation of fact and myth, presentation of the Satyagraha as a religious ceremony, and impact of Gandhi on the masses. In another chapter titled “Myth as Technique”, Mukherjee writes about Rao’s unique and innovative art of “mythologizing contemporary reality” (136). She says, “…Raja Rao has attempted to present in Kanthapura, the kind of mind in
which myth and fact are not clearly distinguishable. Moreover, for such a mind a fact
does not become significant until it can be related to a myth” (137).

“Kanthapura: The First Finished Product” is the fourth chapter in Narsingh
Srivastava’s The Mind and Art of Raja Rao, the book which critically analyses Rao’s
idea of India, philosophical outlook, narrative technique, and plot structures. In this
chapter, the writer studies the upliftment of Gandhi “above the ordinary level of the
common men” (42), the pains and pangs of the coolies in the Skeffington State, Rao’s
“artistic detachment and passionate involvement” (46), the plot and characters of the
novel. He says, “The only thing wanting in this novel is that Raja Rao has not probed
into the depth of psychological complexities of the characters. There are no emotional
conflicts and no tensions of psychological origin, nor is there any dilemma of spiritual
propensity” (55). He adds that it might be because the novel is a novel of action. He
calls the novel a “classic of its own kind”. Shymala A. Narayan in his book Raja Rao:
Man and His Works has devoted a chapter to Rao’s short-stories apart from his five
novels. In the third chapter, which is focused on Kanthapura, the writer has critically
studied the novelist’s knowledge of village, the villagers’ staunch faith in goddesses,
money politics, portrayal of the Congress, language, and style in the novel. He says,
“Raja Rao never presents Gandhiji as a flesh and blood character in his novels-such
attempts seem to caricature him, as in Anand’s The Sword and the Sickle (1942) and R.
K. Narayan’s Waiting for the Mahatma (1955)” (36-7). Narayan finds the
characterization of Moorthy unsatisfactory as he appears unnaturally mature at times.

Commenting upon the Gandhian influence on Kanthapura, R. S. Singh in Raja
Rao’s Kanthapura: An Analysis says that Kanthapura can be considered as a central
text in Gandhian literature for portraying the upsurge of Gandhian movement truthfully
and artistically. Raja Rao has given high pedestal to Gandhian ideology at par with the
tradition of Rama, Krishna, the Budha and other great saints who boldly came forward,
even risked life, to lead the erring humanity to prosperity and spiritual satisfaction (55).
Rumina Sethis’ Myths of the Nation: National identity and Literary Representation,
according to Stephen Slemon of the University of Alberta, is “a towering document”\textsuperscript{36}. Sethi’s book focuses on the nativization of English, mass fantasy of Gandhian ideology, participation of women in the Indian freedom struggle, and fictional strategies. The author traces nationalism from its abstract understandings to its concrete manifestation in the novel. The construction of the idea of India as a nation through myths is examined at length. Sethi says that a national intelligentsia from the discipline of English language and literature put efforts to construct a unified nationalist discourse for immediate political motives. She also studies the ideology and activism of Gandhi. Exploring Gandhi’s admiration for village life, his fasts, the Salt March, etc., Sethi explores Gandhi’s ambivalences, and also refers to Rao’s implicit inclination towards a brahmical Hindu nationalism in \textit{Kanthapura}. Besides, the writer also speaks about the tactics of constructing an essentially homogenous nationalist discourse such as combining myth and fact, politics and religion. Gandhi’s contribution towards women empowerment was limited as he didn’t challenge patriarchy. The women were encouraged to participate in the freedom struggle within the set boundaries prescribed by men in the gripping socio-political Indian society; they were not actors who took initiative; they were directed to act by men; they are “marginalised in the essential representations of nationalist discourse” (Sethi 131).

Kaushal Sharma in \textit{Raja Rao: A Study of His Themes and Technique} has devoted a full-fledged chapter to \textit{Kanthapura}. He speaks of Moorthy’s being without any firsthand experience of Gandhi in a sleepy village that ultimately witnesses the turbulence of the freedom struggle. According to him, the total devastation of Kanthapura towards the ending of the novel is symbolic of new life emerging out of the dead one. “Just as a new Phoenix arises out of holy ashes of the burnt one, Kashipura becomes new one. It is a purgatorial process that gives a new life” (24). \textit{A Critical Study of Raja Rao’s Kanthapura}, written by Chamna Lal Dhamija and Deepti Gupta, studies the novel innovatively. It includes critical observations on the various aspects of the novel such as characterization, title, and themes; it also evaluates language, technique, style, and songs of the novel. The novelist has used Kannada structures to give Indian

\textsuperscript{36} Mentioned on the jacket of the book.
flavor to English (17). Keeping in view Kanthapurians, the language has been used in a rhythmic way through repetition and choice of simple words (19). Dhamija and Deepti Gupta have studied the songs in the novel under different titles such as ‘The Goddess Kenchamma’, ‘Songs of Toddy’, ‘Songs of Character’, and ‘Songs of Revolution’. They say Rao has used songs to lay emphasis on the poetic temperament of the villagers and to maintain the consistency of “rhythmic nature of his language” (24). They add that the theme of political struggle is on the surface, whereas social, religious, and spiritual dimensions run deep down the novel (37). Taking into consideration the international readership of Rao, the writers have included a glossary of Kanthapura in the book.

*Raja Rao’s Kanthapura: A Critical Study*, edited by Suman Bala and Ranu Uniyal, includes chapters/papers on the introduction to the novel, the Gandhian connection, village life, women issue, technique of storytelling, and some important themes. Ranu Uniyal in “Textual Analysis of the Novel” critically analyses the text in light of signs and signifiers. Interestingly, the book also includes a notional sketch of the village Kanthapura by Uniyal. Most of the other chapters in the book critically evaluate the novel under different titles. Letizia Alterno in her book *Raja Rao: An Introduction* provides up-to-date information about Raja Rao. She has explored the role of ‘mother’ and ‘guru’ in the life and fiction of the writer. The Chapter “Before and After the Guru: Two Early Works” tries to show a strong link between *Kanthapura* (1938) and *Comrade Kirillov* (1965). She asserts that *Comrade Kirillov* “however, was not published as the writer’s second work as it should have been. It went to press much later in 1965” (126).

P. Dayal in *Raja Rao: A Study of His Novels* studies the philosophical concerns of Rao along with the western overtones and narrative skill in his works. Besides, the writer has specifically devoted five chapters to Rao’s novels. In “Kanthapura and Gandhism”, he explores Gandhian ideology and its impact on Kanthapurians. In reference to the narrative skill of Rao in his various pieces of work, Dayal in “The Narrative Skill” writes that *Kanthapura* is written in the tradition of the Puranas. “If *Kanthapura* is sthala-purana, *The Serpent and the Rope* is considered mahapurana” (135) as it includes “story within the story, fables and legends, philosophical reflections
on Christianity, Buddhism, Vedanta and Tantra, mystical experiences, initiating tests
with interesting intellectual observations on religion and politics” (135). *The Cat and
Shakespeare* is a “teasing parable”. The juxtaposition of the comic and the serious, the
amorous and the metaphysical augment to the intricacy of the narrative (137). In
*Comrade Kirrillov*, the narrative appears to be just a succession of events (138). *The
Chessmaster* follows retrospective flashbacks.

Prem Prakash in “Stylistics in Raja Rao’s Kanthapura: An Indian Response”
applies Indian school of thought on *Kanthapura*. The writer speaks about “the
interpretative application of *Pada*, *Vakya*, and *Pramona*” (40). The three units show
“the external linguistic signs or symbols of inner ideas, perceptual or conceptual,
helping us to recall them. The *Meemansaka*, in general, recognizes the theory of class
connotation of words which can be reconciled with the usage of ‘Elders’”. The writer
also throws light on three types of the Nominal Style mentioned in the *Shastras*:
‘dialogue type’, ‘lecture style’, and ‘artificial type’ (40). “Kanthapura’s Style: A Point
of View” is the first chapter in Qaiser Zoha Alam’s *Language and Literature: Diverse
Indian Experiences*. In this, the writer says that Raja Rao has given the English
language an Indian domicile. The Indianised English reveals the plasticity and
flexibility of English (13).

Uma Parameswaran in her scholarly paper “Without Women the World is not:
Shakti in Raja Rao’s Novels” highlights the significance of women characters in Rao’s
novels within the framework of Indian concept of Shakti. She writes that different forms
of Shakti manifest through the women of Kanthapura. Shakti’s indomitable spirit
possesses them in their Satyagraha against the foreign rule. When women are brutally
beaten up by the representatives of the British government, they think, move, and act as
one, for they are more distinct and pervasive in the devotional aspect (4-27). In his
article on “The Language of Kanthapura,” V.Y. Kantak appears to rate *Kanthapura*
higher than the later novels of Rao. He writes, “Kanthapura within its humbler intention
lays claim to the profound simplicity of a classic, something that the more self-
conscious artistry of the later work seems to miss” (147). Vasant A. Shahane in his
paper “Fiction and Reality in Raja Rao” says that *Kanthapura* is not purely realistic or naturalistic. It is the image of real life, observed in a visionary state of mind (64).

P.P. Panighari in his paper “Gandhi as an Invisible Force in Kanthapura” critically evaluates the novel as a Gandhian novel (150-154). B.D.Sharma and S.K. Sharma in their paper “Gandhism in Crucible: Raja Rao’s Kanthapura” have spoken of the acid test of Gandhian ideology in the novel. They conclude, “…the implication of Moorthy’s preferring socialism to Gandhism is that Raja Rao likes the victims of colonial oppression to adopt the path of socialism” (16). Brahma Dutta Sharma in “Raja Rao’s Kanthapura: A Plea for the Nehruvian Socialism” have spoken of the novelist favours Nehru’s views in the novel. Letizia Alterno in “Re-constructed History in Raja Rao’s Kanthapura: Dynamics of Hindu Nationalism and Anti-colonial Politics” says that the novelist intervenes the discourse of western historiography by “setting things right” (1) through a combination of “fiction, history, and mythological digressions” (1). History is “carefully dehistoricised and re-dimensionalized from the wide domain of British historiography to more localized context of a southern Indian village…” (2). This scheme enables the novelist to give voice to the subaltern with a limitation, i.e. “we are dealing with fictional voices that though empowered within the narrative discourse may still remain without a documented historical say” (5). Senath W. Perera in “Towards a Limited Emancipation: Women in Raja Rao’s ‘Kanthapura’” says that the novel presents a midway situation for the women in the novel. There is much that is unacceptable. For example, concubine Chinna remains in the burnt village ‘to lift her leg to the new customers’. “Yet by portraying the plight of the women the way he has, Rao makes the reader aware of the necessity for change, and in his depiction of Rangamma and Ratna he demonstrates the way in which some changes could be achieved” (109). In “The Experience of Renaissance in Kanthapura,” Madhava Rao says that “Monumental corruption of soul, falsehood and barbarous use of power” symbolize the Dark Age of Kanthapura, which is followed by the Dawn of Renaissance, i.e. spiritual transformation of Moorthy.

Anju Bala Agarwal in “Raja Rao: The Voice of Mother India” speaks about Raja Rao’s unique Indian style which is based on Indian locale, Indian people, Indian
traits and Indian sensibility, Indian myths, and Indian rituals. The writer says, “He (Rao) interpreted Indian politics (particularly Gandhism) in Kanthapura, Indian Philosophy (particularly ‘Advaitavada’) in The Serpent and the Rope and The Cat and Shakespeare and Indian life (particularly South Indian) in The Cow and the Barricades and Other Stories to the west in his unique style” (5). Kiran Arora in her M.Phil. Dissertation The Use of Myths in Raja Rao’s Fiction (1984), submitted to Guru Nanak Dev University, skillfully analyses myths and legends in the novel. She explores how “the polarities between good and evil as exemplified in Rama and Ravana are used to describe the Gandhian struggle against the brutal force of the red man” (21).

Rao’s published work has won applause across the world. Letizia Alterno, Editor-in-Chief of the Raja Rao Publication Project, has done an admirable task of introducing the readers to the beautiful world of Rao’s unpublished oeuvre through the project. With her sincere efforts, the charge that ‘he (Raja Rao) has not been a prolific writer’ (Naik “Preface” to Raja Rao) stands refuted. A lot of Rao’s work is ready for publication posthumously. In fact, Raja Rao, the artist is twice born in the sense that he has taken re-birth through his works which were unpublished and unknown previously. Most of these works are still waiting for either publication or critical acclaim. It is the need of the hour to refresh our study of Raja Rao.

For this project, I have chosen Rao’s first novel Kanthapura, which he wrote in 1933 and got it published in 1938. I have opted for this work keeping in view the larger frame-work of the research topic. Apart from it, I feel that Raja Rao, like a number of other writers, demands a fresh study for various reasons. Perhaps, the writer is a victim of stale, stereotypical criticism. For example, a number of critics view Kanthapura as a Gandhian or Nehruvian novel without paying attention to the use of unreliable narrator in the novel; a number of scholars believe in the cliché that Kanthapura is a microcosm of the macrocosm of India; and a major chunk of intelligentsia has eulogized Gandhi’s efforts in the novel without differentiating the real from the fiction, ignoring the socio-political criticism of Gandhism at larger level. The major problem with regard to our traditional views about the writings of Raja Rao is due to the analysis of Rao’s works without paying much attention to the transformation of the writer’s outlook with the
passage of time, ignoring the development of his literary approach from the physical perspective to the spiritual perspective in parallel with his changing emotional, psychological makeup. Rao views Gandhi differently in his later works in comparison with his early works. With the chronological advancement of his works, the readers can encapsulate Rao’s journey from being anti-Gandhian to Pro-Gandhian. In this research work, I have tried to counter some of the traditional, stereotypical literary criticism of *Kanthapura* within the framework of this thesis.