INTRODUCTION

In the struggle for India's national independence Bengal occupied an important position and Gandhi supplied an unique leadership.

Bengal passed through a period of cultural awakening and nationalist upsurge long before the advent of Gandhi. It was the first province in India to feel the impact of Western rule and culture, and the nationalist reaction to foreign domination also arose in Bengal much earlier than in other regions of India. Thompson and Carrat observed: "Their (Bengalis) training and outlook, their long experience of British rule ... helped to mark them out as political leaders."  

In the pre-Gandhian era direct participation of the masses in nationalist politics took place only in Bengal. The Swadeshi and boycott movement which arose in Bengal in 1905 against the partition of the province by Lord Curzon was a landmark in the evolution of Indian nationalism. An American scholar wrote: "During the Swadeshi years, Bengal was the cynosure of Indian politics, and Bengali leaders claimed that in spirit and organization they were setting an example for other Indians to emulate." Gandhi was fully aware of this pre-eminent position of Bengal and in Hind Swaraj he wrote that

India's "real awakening took place after the Partition of Bengal."\(^3\)

Describing the significance of this movement and its impact on India he observed: "The demand for the abrogation of the Partition is tantamount to a demand for Home Rule ... After the Partition, people saw that petitions must be backed up by force, and that they must be capable of suffering ... The spirit generated in Bengal has spread in the north to the Punjab, and in the south to Cape Comorin."\(^4\) Thus when Gandhi appeared in the horizon of Indian politics, the spirit of nationalism was more articulate, organized and wide-spread in Bengal than in any other part of India. In this state, nationalism assumed a militant character.

After the first world war when the Indian National Congress entered into the Gandhian phase, the Indian nationalist movement stood at a cross-road. Before the war and also during it the nationalist forces of India were largely divided into two groups: moderates or liberals and the extremists. Inspired by the liberal culture of the west, the moderate leaders preferred to maintain close relations with Britain and tried to realize national aspirations gradually through constitutional means. Mass upsurge or violent struggle were completely excluded from their perspective and they believed that there was no basic contradiction between India's national aspirations and the liberal objectives of the British

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rule in India. They, therefore, relied on the method of deputation, negotiation and constitutional reforms. Complete independence of India was for them too distant an ideal to be an issue of practical politics. The extremist position was entirely different. Proud of the past culture of India and encouraged by the nationalist movements of the west, they thought in terms of a struggle against the British and believed that the antagonism between the national aspirations of India and the objectives of the British rule was too fundamental to be ultimately reconciled through negotiations and compromises. They tried to organize mass movements and even to promote violent activities to terrorise the foreign rulers and excite the native people. Even it was not stated in clear and precise terms, complete independence was assumed by the extremist section as the natural objective of the nationalist movement.

Originally a moderate organization, the extremist section arose in the Congress in the beginning of the present century, and for about two decades the history of the Congress was largely a history of the conflict between the two wings. Though challenged occasionally, the leadership of the Congress remained in the hands of the moderates, but gradually this leadership was found completely incompatible with the growth in the tempo of the nationalist movement. It became increasingly clear, particularly during the world war (1914-18) when the doctrine of national self-determination was almost universally
accepted as an ideal, that the moderate goal of self-government within the British empire could not be reconciled with the nationalist aspirations of a dependent people. Under such circumstances, the leadership of the nationalist movement of India passed out of the hands of the moderate wing. It was not captured by the extremists; it almost fell into their hands as the moderates could not keep pace with the nationalist movement.

This change in the leadership of the Congress took place in 1918 and it was the publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report which supplied the occasion for it. It was published on 8 July 1918. The moderate leaders were in favour of its acceptance but there was strong opposition to it in the country and they (moderate leaders) found themselves completely isolated and almost rejected by the people and by the Congress. Without trying to assert themselves the moderate leaders left the nationalist organization and formed their own party which had little influence on the subsequent development of the nationalist movement of India. The exit of the moderates from the Congress was described by the most renowned moderate leader of the time, Surendranath Banerjee, thus:

5. Surendranath Banerjee, the most outstanding leader of the liberal group, for example, wrote: "With me the goal has always been self-government within the Empire; the method for its attainment has been constitutional agitation. A Nation in Making (Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1963), p. 289.

6. It was a report over the joint signatures of Montagu, Secretary of State for India, and Lord Chelmsford, Governor General of India, about the constitutional changes to be introduced in India after the war.
"It (publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report) was the signal of war. There was an angry outcry from the Extremist organs. Even Mrs. Besant, denounced it in her own eloquent and emphatic style .... Curiously enough, on the selfsame day a manifesto issued by fifteen gentlemen of Madras condemned the Scheme in terms equally emphatic .... The late Mr. Tilak said the same thing in his simple and straightforward fashion ....

"In the midst of this excitement and ferment, a special session of the Congress was called to consider the Report, and we who did not profess the same extreme views had to decide what we should do. Should we attend the Congress or not? We decided to abstain. We felt that these hasty and extreme views would dominate the deliberations of the Congress, and that we should not lend them the weight of our support by our presence. We accordingly held a conference of the Moderate party in Bombay on November 1, 1918. I was elected President. It was the first of the Moderate Conferences, which are now held from year to year .... The Congress has become more Extremist than ever, ... We have parted company — it is difficult to say for how long." 7

The Congress, therefore, now became "more extremist than ever", as Surendranath Banerjea has put it. The special session of the Congress referred to in the above quotation was held on 29 August 1918 and it passed a resolution condemning Montagu-

7. Surendranath Banerjea, n. 5, p. 263.
The Chelmsford Report as "disappointing and unsatisfactory." The regular session of the Congress in 1918 was held in December in Delhi and it passed a resolution stating that "in view of the pronouncements of President Wilson, Mr. Lloyd George and other statesmen ... the principle of self-determination should be applied" to India. Referring to this resolution Tendulkar wrote that it "was a new departure in the history of the Congress". Explaining the importance of the Delhi session he further wrote: "The Delhi session revealed a more resolute spirit and a new determination. Its departure from the traditional effusive 'loyalty resolutions' was significant of a change in the Congress mentality." 

Thus, though after the exit of the moderate leadership the Congress showed an unmistakable drift towards extremism, within two years it came under the leadership of Gandhi, who was neither a moderate liberal nor an extremist. By 1918 Gandhi was, as we shall see later, an extremely popular leader in India but his leadership was not yet established over the Congress. In 1918 he attended a war conference convened by the Viceroy in Delhi and started a campaign to recruit soldiers from the British. He then believed

9. Ibid., p. 238.
10. Ibid.
that home rule would be achieved by the Indian people by serving the British empire and not by fighting it. In a letter written to the Viceroy on 30 April 1918 he observed that he supported Home Rule for India, and added: "We must perceive that if we serve to save the empire we have in that very act secured Home Rule." 13 On the issue of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms scheme Gandhi was more with the moderates than with the Extremists. "The scheme deserves," Gandhi said, "sympathetic handling rather than summary rejection. Fight unconditionally unto death with Britain for victory, and agitate simultaneously also unto death, if we must, for the reforms that we deserve." 14

Therefore by this time Gandhi did not share the extremist views. He represented a new philosophy, a new social system and a new technique of struggle which were different from those of the extremists as well as the moderates, and his leadership was firmly established over the Congress by 1920 under circumstances described by us in Chapter III.
The main subject of our enquiry in this dissertation is: how did the extremists within the Congress reconcile themselves to the Gandhian leadership over the organization? In other words, how did they respond to his leadership and to his ideas? A subsidiary part of our enquiry will be: how was it possible for Gandhi to establish his leadership over

13. Ibid., p. 274. Full text of the letter is given.
After the elimination of the moderates from the Congress the extremists were no longer called by that name. During the Gandhi period they came to be known more as leftists. The socialists and the communists were also included within the left forces, but in this dissertation we shall not deal with them. We shall deal with the nationalists who carried the tradition of extremism, and we shall refer to them as militant nationalists. We shall keep our enquiry confined to the militant nationalists of Bengal only where they were most numerous, most articulate, most well-organized and mobilized under proper leadership. They were guided by the simple and clear logic of nationalism — their goal was complete independence, and means was a relentless and uncompromising struggle against foreign rule by any means, violent or non-violent. Gandhi looked at the problem from a different point of view. The Indian struggle for independence was taken by him as a part of his larger experiment with truth and non-violence. He did not stand simply for national independence but for a new social order which would emerge out of independence. The struggle for independence was considered by him in terms of a constructive programme for building up a new social system, and not simply in terms of a negative programme to end the foreign rule. If he adopted an
uncompromising attitude it was not in relation to the struggle against foreign rule, but in relation to the means of the struggle. Under such circumstances how did the militant nationalists of Bengal react to the Gandhian leadership? How did they try to promote their struggle for independence through the Congress under Gandhi's control? What was their attitude towards the Gandhian social order and constructive programmes to realize it? How did they respond to his political philosophy and his analysis of the social problems of the country? These are some of the basic questions which we shall try to examine in our dissertation.

The dissertation has been divided into seven different but closely related chapters. In Chapter I a historical account of the growth of militant nationalism in Bengal has been given. Without this background the outlook of the militant nationalists of Bengal cannot be understood and their response to the Gandhian leadership and ideas cannot be explained. In Chapter II the basic outlook of Gandhi has been briefly explained in order to bring into focus the difference between his outlook and that of the militant nationalists of Bengal. On Chapter III the response and attitude of the militant nationalists of Bengal towards the Gandhian leadership in the national struggle for independence has been analysed. In this Chapter the whole freedom movement during the Gandhian phase has been taken into consideration which has made the chapter rather unduly lengthy.
The response of the militant nationalists of Bengal towards the Constructive Programme of Gandhi, as well as the extent of the success of that Programme in Bengal has been discussed in Chapter IV. The attitude of the leading social and political thinkers of Bengal towards the Gandhian political thought has been discussed in Chapter V with particular reference to the thinkers (they were also political leaders) championing the cause of militant nationalism. The impact of Gandhism as well as of militant nationalism on Bengali literature has briefly been referred to in Chapter VI. The dissertation ends with Chapter VII containing concluding observations.

There are a large number of books on the social and political thought of Gandhi and his role in the nationalist movement of India. Similarly there are many books dealing with the various aspects of the nationalist movement in Bengal. But no major work has yet been undertaken specially on the subject explained above. A critical study of the interaction between Gandhism and militant nationalism in the context of Bengal politics may enable us to judge the significance of the Gandhian phase of India's freedom movement better.

In order to collect data for my subject I have used mainly the following sources:

(1) Works of Gandhi,
(2) Records of the Home Department of the Government of India available in the National Archives of India, New Delhi,

(3) Reports published in various newspapers and journals,

(4) Writings and speeches of different social and political leaders of Bengal during the Gandhian era and also of the pre-Gandhian period,

(5) Books, pamphlets and articles dealing with India's freedom struggle and India's political thought mainly of the Gandhian period,

(6) Relevant works of Bengali literature.

I have also collected some valuable information by interviewing several persons who were connected with the Gandhian movement in Bengal or with Bengal politics during the Gandhian phase.

Lastly I would like to make it clear that in preparing this dissertation I have tried to maintain an objective attitude as far as possible. It is well known that in certain quarters of Bengal there is a feeling of antipathy towards Gandhi, and this is found not only on the popular level but also, in some cases, on the scholarly level. I have tried to understand and explain this feeling without being influenced by it. My purpose is not to justify the stand of Gandhi or that of the militant nationalists of Bengal, but to understand their relations and mutual interaction. In order to understand and analyse these I have to make my own comments and
observations, whenever necessary. While making these comments and observations I have tried to guide myself solely by rational considerations and have not allowed myself to be swayed by any regional loyalty.
CHAPTEB 1
BISE OP MUTANT NATIONALISM IN BENGAL IN PRE-GANDHIAN PERIOD

The British conquest of India had both a liberating as well as a degrading effect. The liberating effect followed from the rational-liberal culture and advanced economic system represented by the new rulers and the degrading effect emanated from the exploiting and oppressing character of foreign domination. In our country, particularly in Bengal, the province which first came under the British rule, only the liberating effects were felt in the initial stage. This was felt by a section of the Hindu leaders who considered the British regime much better than the Muslim rule which it replaced. Rammohun Roy, who was most prominent among these leaders, wrote in his famous Appeal to the King in Council: "The greater part of Hindustan having been for several centuries subject to Muhammadan Rule, the civil and religious rights of its original inhabitants were constantly trampled upon. ... The Natives of Bengal wanting vigour of body, and adverse to the active exertion, remained during the whole period of the Muhammadan conquest faithful to the existing Government, although their property was often plundered, their religion insulted, their blood wantonly shed. Divine

1. The Muslims naturally reacted differently. Since power and influence were snatched away from their hands, they were in a truculent mood and they boycotted the British as far as possible. Bengal under the British rule was considered by them as a dar-ul-harb against which the Muslims must declare jihad or holy war. In spite of sullen resentment against the new regime, they had to remain quiet for a long time because even during the Muslim rule there did not develop among the Bengali Muslims any aristocratic class strong enough to lead them to an open rebellion against the English. It was only during the Wahabi movement which was launched in about 1820 that the Bengali Muslims started an agitation to convert Bengal from dar-ul-harb into dar-ul-islam.
Providence, at last, in its abundant mercy, stirred up the English nation to break the yoke of those tyrants and to receive the oppressed Natives of Bengal under its protection. ... Your dutiful subjects consequently have not viewed the English as a body of conquerors, but rather as deliberers, and look up to Your Majesty not only as a Ruler, but also as a father and protector.²

Peary Chand Mitra, another important leader of the nineteenth century Bengal, wrote in 1840: "The ancient Hindu spirit of enterprise, which the storm of Muslim oppression has entirely extinguished, ... will now be kindled and burnt in the bosoms of the rising generation, who will ... open sources of employment in the extensive field of commerce."³

From the above extracts it is clear that the Hindu leaders hailed the British rule not simply because it put an end to the Muslim domination over them but more significantly because of their hope that it would open up before the people the vista of a new line of development and progress. No one could conceive of this new line of development for India so clearly and so comprehensively as Rammohun. In this Appeal to the King in Council, from which we have already quoted, Rammohun expressed his gratitude to the British Government for "granting to all within its jurisdiction the same civil rights as every Briton enjoys in his native country, thus putting the Natives of India in possession of such privileges as their forefathers never expected to attain even under Hindu rulers".

"Under the cheering influence of equitable and indulgent treatment, and stimulated by the example of a people famed for their wisdom and liberality", he added, "the Natives of India, with the means of amelioration set before them, have been gratefully advancing in social and intellectual improvement." 4

Rational Liberal Culture in Bengal.

Rammohun was thus firmly convinced of the progressive character of the British rule in India, and he believed that to ensure their own development the Indians had much to learn from the Western civilization. With this attitude towards the new regime, Rammohun started a comprehensive movement in Bengal in order to enlighten the people and reform the society. This movement which had a profound impact on the making of the modern Bengali mind was essentially rational in character. Coming in contact with the western ideas Rammohun had developed a rational-utilitarian outlook, and such terms as 'reason', 'social comfort', 'commonsense', 'justice' are found frequently in his works. He sought to justify his reforms not simply by an abstract appeal to reason but also by what appeared to him the rational elements in the Hindu shastras. He believed in the rational foundation of religion but thought that in course of time religion came to be associated with blind faith, mysticism and evil practices, and suffered degeneration due to human weaknesses and ignorance. He, therefore, adopted a discriminating attitude towards religion, accepting those elements which were found to be compatible with reason and discarding those which seemed to be irrational. The best and the most reliable guide for human conduct, according to Rammohun, was

individual rational judgement reinforced by ancient religious wisdom. The *shastric* injunctions which had no rational support were unacceptable to him, but in order to make his reform proposals convincing he sought the sanction of the rational elements of ancient religious authority behind them. To support one's views with the authority of other thinkers is not an irrational process. It removes doubts from and adds conviction to one's own rational judgement. Rammohun's attempt to justify his reforms with ancient Indian authority, particularly the Vedic and Upanishadik literature, must be understood in that light. Though, as we shall see later, his emphasis on the Vedic tradition ultimately gave rise to the doctrine of Vedic infallibility, Rammohun did not interpret the Vedas and the Vedanta philosophy in that spirit. Inspired by the western concepts of reason and utility he sought rationalism in Indian culture, and found in the Vedic philosophy a tradition on the basis of which a rational form of worship could be established and social evils connected with popular Hinduism could be combatted. The discriminating attitude which he developed towards religion in general was applied to the Vedanta philosophy also. Though his religion came to be known as Vedantism, he did not accept all the ideas of the Vedanta philosophy (*mayabād*, for example), and his interpretation of Vedanta was so different from the traditional interpretation that Rammohun's Vedantism was considered by many as a caricature of Vedanta and not Vedanta proper.⁵

Rammohun rightly understood that under the existing conditions of the country it was the western education which would serve

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as the most potent agency for enlightening the minds of the people. The system of education which was in vogue in Bengal during that age was thoroughly antiquated and absolutely unsuitable for attaining progress which the European countries had already achieved. Referring to those educational institutions R. C. Majumdar wrote: "These were valuable for imparting knowledge of religion and customs on orthodox principles such as were in vogue hundreds of years ago, but were hardly of any value either in practical life or for widening the bounds of knowledge. While the world outside had made rapid progress in different branches of secular learning during the preceding two hundred years, India practically stood still where it was six hundred years ago." Rammohun worked hard for the promotion of western education in Bengal, and he sought the Government's cooperation in this respect. The officials of the East India Company were largely in favour of promoting oriental learning, and in his famous letter to the Governor General, Lord Amherst, on 11 December 1823 Rammohun strongly urged the Government to introduce western education and protested against the proposed foundation of the Sanskrit College.

Though Rammohun could not bring about any immediate change in the policy of the Government, he was able at least to articulate a demand which, supported by other factors, was ultimately accepted by William Bentinck in March 1835. In his letter to Amherst, Rammohun wrote: "The Sanykrit

system of education would be best calculated to keep this country in
darkness.\textsuperscript{10} Though he was uncompromisingly opposed to "the Sangscrit
system of education", he did not ignore the value of the Sanskrit
language as such. In this letter he suggested that "if it were thought
necessary to perpetuate this language for the sake of the portion of
the valuable information it contains," it might easily be done "by
holding out premiums and granting certain allowances" to the most emi-
nent professors of Sanskrit in this country.\textsuperscript{11} The limited amount of
money which the Government was prepared to spend for education in his
country should, in his opinion, be utilized mainly for promoting western
learning and sciences and not for a Sanskrit college.

It may be mentioned here that Rammohun's concern for the promotion
of English education and western sciences did not make him indifferent
towards the development of Bengali language. His writings in Bengali,
his promotion of Bengali journalism and his pioneer translation of some
of the Hindu \textit{shastras} earned for him in later period the well-deserved
title of the Father of the Bengali prose. He tried to make Bengali langu-
age the vehicle of serious thoughts and modern ideas.

Rammohun took up the cause of the new education in right earnest
because it alone could lay the foundation of his success in other spheres.
The traditional system of education produced a mentality of conformism
to the existing social customs and conventions, and the intellectual
stagnation thus caused precluded all movements towards social justice and

\textsuperscript{10} Rammohun Rachanavali, p.436.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 435.
all revolts against religious obscurantism. During the Muslim rule and largely due to the influence of Islam a number of reform movements arose in the Hindu community asserting the unity of Godhead and renouncing all caste distinctions and elaborate ritualism. In the eighteenth century Bengal we find in the Hindu society some religious groups and sects which repudiated polytheism, idolatry as well as caste divisions. The most prominent of such sects were the Karta-Bhaja, the Spashtadayaka, the Balarami, the Sahbadhanis, the Khud Biswasis and the Ramvallabhis. These unconventional religious sects remained confined to the people belonging to the lower strata of society and they did not pose any serious threat to the Hindu orthodoxy. They did not represent any calculated and conscious attempt at re-examining the religious practices and institutions from a rational and utilitarian point of view. Rammohun blazed a new trail in the reform movement of the Hindu society by adopting a rational and pragmatic standard to judge its utility. He understood that for the development of a rational and utilitarian outlook among the people the introduction of the western system of education was necessary.

In spite of his rationalism and utilitarianism Rammohun was a religious man. He, as we have indicated earlier, believed in the rational foundation and utilitarian significance of religion. In the Tuhfatul Muwahhiddin (c. 1804), a book written by Rammohun in Persian with an

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Arabic introduction, he pointed out that there was a universal agreement among the people of all countries about the existence of a Supreme Being as the creator and sustainer of the universe. Such an agreement was, however, not found, he wrote, in man's ideas about the attributes of this Supreme Being and about religious doctrines and practices. The former (faith in the existence of a Supreme Being) is regarded by Rammohun as 'natural' for man, and the latter (religious doctrines and practices) as results of 'habits and collective training.' The doctrinal differences that exist among the People belonging to different religious groups led him to conclude that "all religions contain some elements of error." Though Rammohun believed in the existence of a Supreme Being behind the universe, he had no faith in religious miracles, and condemned all persecutions in the name of religion. The doctrine of soul and faith in the existence of a world beyond death were, however, regarded by him as socially necessary, though their real character, he admitted, remained hidden in mystery. He considered them socially necessary because he believed that fear of punishment in the 'other world', like the fear of government in this world, would prevent men from committing social crimes. The "hundreds of painful and useless regulations regarding eating and drinking, purity and impurity, auspiciousness and insuspiciousness" prescribed by different religions were condemned by

13. An English translation of the book appeared first only in 1884. It was translated by Maulvi Obedullah, a Muslim scholar, at the request of Rajnarayan Basu. The Tuhfat has been translated in Bengali by Jyotirindra Nath Das and is included in Rammohun Rachanavali, pp. 714-729.


15. Tuhfatul Muwahhiddin, see Ibid., p. 718.
Rammohun as sources of social evil and peoples' misery.\textsuperscript{16} Thus though Rammohun did not go beyond religion, it must be conceded that his approach to religion was rational. He thought in terms of causal relations and postulated God or Supreme Being as the cause of the universe. Whenever religion deviated from the general principle of this causal relationship and degenerated into blind faith, he condemned it. He wrote in the \textit{Tuhfat} : "In worldly affairs men do not accept one event as the effect of another unless they can discover a causal relation between the two, but under the influence of religion or religious faith men do not hesitate to accept one phenomenon as the effect of another even in the absence of any causal relationship."\textsuperscript{17} As an illustration he referred to man's faith in the efficacy of prayer to cure diseases. He considered such faith as absolutely irrational, and religion, as he conceived it, had nothing to do with such mysteries. How could a rational man, Rammohun asked, accept an explanation for which there was no proof and which went against reason?\textsuperscript{18}

Rammohun did not accept religious mysticism and obscurantism at any stage of his life, and throughout his life he retained his faith in an Absolute Being as the creator and sustainer of the universe. In \textit{Vedantasastra} (1815) he wrote: "Just as the observation of an earthen pitcher leads one to imagine the existence of a potter, so the observation of this wonderful world leads men to assume the

\begin{itemize}
\item 16. \textit{Ibid.}, p.720.
\item 17. \textit{Ibid.}, p.723.
\item 18. \textit{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
existence of its creator who is described by the word Brahma."¹⁹
Such a world, Rammohun believed, could not emerge simply from
atoms which have no consciousness.²⁰ In the introduction to
Mandukyopanishad he wrote: "Without the assumption of an eternal,
all-knowing and all-powerful cause the creation of such wonderful
things of the world cannot be explained."²¹ "God must be realised",
he wrote in his Introduction to the Ishopanishad, "as the cause
of this world, as the source of the laws which govern the world."²²
This was the rational foundation of Rammohun's religion. The
Supreme Being was conceived as a hypothesis, necessary to explain
the creation and maintenance of the law-governed world, and the
universal acceptance of this Being by the people of all countries
supplied empirical validity to this hypothesis. There was no mys-
ticism in his approach to religion—it was thoroughly intellectual.

Rammohun tried to introduce this intellectual and rational
spirit in Hindu religion. He found it in a state of utter confusion
with its original rational approach completely submerged in blind
faith and superstitious practices. The people had no knowledge
of their religion as explained in the Vedas and the Upanishads
and were following the traditional customs without exercising
their rational judgment in any way. In order to raise the voice
of reason in this atmosphere of ignorance and prejudice Rammohun
translated and published parts of Vedic and Upanishadic literature
with suitable introductions. In the preface to his translation
of the Ishopanishad he denounced the attitude of faith in the

²⁰. Ibid., p.64.
sphere of religion in a direct and forthright manner, and wrote that the nature and quality of a substance could not be changed by faith. Poison, Rammohun pointed out, would produce its effect even if it was taken as milk on faith. He wondered how people who did not purchase an ordinary commodity from the market without due considerations could accept principles on religious and spiritual subjects simply on faith and on the basis of tradition without considering them rationally and without consulting the original shastras. The main target of his criticism was the image worship of the Hindus which completely overshadowed the original rational concept of Brahma as the creator and sustainer of the universe and encouraged the growth of irrational legends and myths, depicting the gods and goddesses as human beings with power to make miracles. According to his analysis the degeneration of the Hindu religion into idolatry was due partly to the greed of the Brahman priests, and partly to the indolence of the people. He wrote that though many of the learned Brahmans knew the true nature of their religion, they encouraged idolatry, because the rites, ceremonies and festivals connected with it constituted a good source of their income. The people also derived immediate and direct pleasure in propitiating images through these rites and ceremonies without taking the trouble involved in comprehending Brahma intellectually as the Eternal and Immutable Being behind this universe.

This view of Rammohun gave rise to a protracted controversy in the Hindu community and Rammohun had to defend himself against

23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
the criticism of many traditional Hindu leaders who tried to justify the existing mode of worship. In reply to Sankar Sastri's defence of idolatry, Rammohun wrote that though it was difficult and almost impossible to attain perfect knowledge about the nature of the Godhead, it was easier for the rational human beings to conceive of the Almighty Being behind the universe than to accept the images as gods and goddesses. "To read the existence of the Almighty Being in his works of nature is not", he argued, "so difficult to the mind of a man possessed of common sense, and unfettered by prejudice, as to conceive artificial images to be possessed at once of the opposite natures of human and divine beings which idolaters constantly ascribe to their idols." The idols which were constructed by men, Rammohun pointed out in this connection, could not be "converted by ceremonials into constructors of the universe". Mrityunjay Vidyalankar, a great Sanskrit scholar and a pandit attached to the Supreme Court, published in 1817 a book entitled Vedanta Chandrika justifying the traditional system of Hindu worship of various gods and goddesses. In Vedanta Chandrika Vidyalankar pointed out that image-worship, however imperfect, was also a means to worship the Supreme Being and wise men, he argued, should not meddle with mere forms. In reply to Vidyalankar's argument

25. Sankar Sastri was an English teacher of the Madras Government College and in December 1816 he wrote a letter in the Madras Courtier opposing Rammohun's views on idolatry. The letter of Sastri provoked Rammohun to publish in 1817 A Defence of Hindoo Theism in Reply to the Attack of an Advocate for Idolatry at Madras from which we have quoted.

Rammohun wrote a tract entitled *Bhattacharyer Sahit Vichar* in which he admitted that image worship might be necessary for the weak and the ignorant, but pointed out that the mode of worship which was meant for the weak and the ignorant was actually made universal by people like Bhattacharyya for the sake of their material profit. One Goswami - his real name was possibly Ramgopal Sarma - tried to refute Rammohun's view that Brahma was without form, and maintained that the authority of the Puranas was no less important than that of the Vedas. He identified Sri Krishna of the Puranas with the Supreme Being or Brahma of the Vedanta. In his tract *Goswamir Sahit Vichar* published in 1818, Rammohun answered these charges and pointed out that there was no relation between Sri Krishna of the Puranas and the principles of the Vedanta. He referred to the 'immoral' conduct of Sri Krishna, and asked the wise people to judge impartially how such conduct could be justified by the Vedanta. Utsavananda Vidyabagish who was a devotee of Vishnu and one Kavitakar who could not be identified, as well as the renowned Brahmin of Madras, Subrahmanya Sastri, among others, tried to defend the traditional idolatry of the Hindus as against Rammohun's view of the worship of one Supreme Being without form. Rammohun had to publish different tracts in order to refute their arguments.


While promoting social reforms Rammohun always tried to reinforce his appeal to reason by those passages of the \textit{shastras} which were in agreement with his reform proposals. Most of his social reforms – abolition of the sati system, end of polygamy and kulinism, recognition of the women's right to inherit the property of their husbands – aimed at ameliorating the conditions of women, and Rammohun found that the ancient \textit{shastras} of the Hindus actually recommended various measures to promote "the comfort of the female part of the community". These measures, though long forgotten by the society, were regarded by him perfectly rational. In a tract written in the form of a conversation between an Advocate and an Opponent of the practice of burning of widows Rammohun explained his ideas on the sati system. The Advocate in that tract justified the practice on the authority of Harita, Angira, Vyasa, Vishnu, Gotama and Brahma Purana, and the Opponent in reply said: "Such an argument is highly inconsistent with justice. It is every way improper to persuade to self-destruction by citing passages of inadmissible authority". The Opponent, after referring to the laws of Manu which prescribed an ascetic life for the widows and thus by implication opposed the practice of sati, stated: "The Sastras, and the reasonings connected with them, enable us to discriminate right and wrong. In those Sastras

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Rammohun Rachanavali}, p. 573.
\end{enumerate}
such female murder is altogether forbidden. And reason also declares that to bind down a woman for her destruction, holding out to her the inducement of heavenly rewards, is a most sinful act".\textsuperscript{34} Thus Rammohun tried to promote social reforms with the help of the shastras in so far as they appeared to him consistent with reason.

In his attempt to abolish polygamy he referred to the views of Yajnavalkya and Manu who authorized second marriage only under some special circumstances.\textsuperscript{35} In order to have the right of a wife to inherit the property of her husband recognized by society, Rammohun referred to the views of a number of lawgivers of ancient India - Yajnavalkya, Katyayana, Narada, Vishnu, Vrihaspati, Vyasa - who explicitly recognized this right. The laws which caused social degradation of women and deprived them of independent status were regarded by him unacceptable and irrational, introduced by "arbitrary authorities."\textsuperscript{36} This discriminating attitude towards the religious texts was an important feature of Rammohun's rationalism.

Rammohun's method of reinforcing rational appeal with religious sanction was followed by many other reformers in India during that period. It was followed by the Christian missionaries who on humanitarian ground urged the Government to pass laws abolishing such baneful customs as the sacrifice of children to the Ganges (system of infanticide) and burning of widows alive (system of sati). When the Government hesitated to pass any measure which might offend the religious susceptibilities of the people, William Carey of the

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p.574.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., pp. 497-498.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p.494.
Serampore mission consulted the Hindu pandits and pointed out to the Government that the practice of infanticide had no sanction of the Hindu shastras behind it and that the religious texts which referred to the practice of sati did not make it obligatory. This emboldened the Government to prohibit the practice of infanticide in 1802, and during the period 1813-1817 various orders and regulations were issued by the Government to its officers through the Nizamat Adalat prohibiting the practice of sati against the will of the widows and excluding some groups of widows from its operation altogether. In the subsequent period Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar also followed the same technique when he sought to introduce widow remarriage in the Hindu society. In order to prevent the burning of widows Rammohun referred to Manu who maintained that after the death of her husband the widow should lead the life of an ascetic. Vidyasagar, for the purpose of promoting widow remarriage, pointed out that the laws of Manu were meant for the people of the Golden Age (Satya Yugo), and in the present age (Kali Yugo) the laws of Parasara who recommended widow remarriage must be followed. Some of the reformers

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used religious texts as a convenient means to convince the people. Rammohun used them possibly both for convenience as well as out of conviction. He always sought confirmation of reason in the past tradition. In the introduction to his *Translation of The Gens Upanishad* he wrote significantly: "When we look to the traditions of ancient nations, we often find them at variance with each other; and when, discouraged by this circumstance, we appeal to reason as a surer guide, we soon find how incompetent it is alone to conduct us to the object of our pursuit. We often find that, instead of facilitating our endeavours or clearing up our perplexities, it only serves to generate universal doubt, incompatible with principles on which our comfort and happiness mainly depend. The best method perhaps is neither to give ourselves up exclusively to the guidance of the one or the other; but by a proper use of the lights furnished by both, endeavour to improve our intellectual and moral faculties, relying on the goodness of the Almighty Power, which alone enables us to attain that which we earnestly and diligently seek for."  

The most important social reform with which the name of Rammohun remained associated was the abolition of the Sati system. Encouraged by the support of Rammohun and his associates Lord William Bentinck ultimately passed a regulation in 1829 abolishing the sati rite altogether. This gave rise to a protracted controversy within the Hindu society of Bengal. The orthodox section submitted to the Governor General two petitions praying for its annulment on the ground that it was actually an interference with the

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religious affairs of the Hindus. Rammohun also sent a petition signed by 300 persons congratulating the Governor General on this salutary measure. In his reply to the petition of the orthodox leaders Lord William Bentinck pointed out that according to the Hindu _shastras_ the widows were required to lead a life of strict and severe morality but not to destroy themselves, and, therefore, their prayer could not be granted. He, however, advised them to appeal to the King-in-Council if the new regulation still appeared to them repugnant to the fundamental principles of British administration. Accordingly, the opponents of the regulation held a public meeting on 17 January 1830 and resolved to appeal to the authorities in England. An organization of orthodox Hindus known as Dharma Sabha was also formed at this meeting with Radhakanta Dev as Secretary. It was the most powerful organization in Bengal which tried to maintain Hindu orthodoxy against the movement launched by Rammohun. In order to refute the arguments of the orthodox

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41. See Brajendra Nath Bandyopadhyay (ed.), _Sangbadpatrey Sekaler Katha_ (Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta), Vol.1 (1377 B.E.), p.259. The book is a collection of various reports and extracts published in the newspapers and periodicals of Bengal on various aspects of her social life during the period 1818-1830. The second volume deals with the period 1830-1840.

42. For the Bengali version of this petition see _Ibid._, Vol.1, pp. 257-259.

43. For the Bengali version of Bentinck’s reply see _Ibid._, Vol.1, p.260.

44. For the English version of the petitions of the orthodox group and of Rammohun group and Bentinck’s reply to both see A.C. Dasgupta (compiled), _Selections from Calcutta Gazette: 1824 to 1832_ (Superintendent, Government Printing, West Bengal, 1959), pp. 466-476.

group Rammohun published in 1830 the tract Abstract of the Arguments regarding the Burning of Widows, Considered as a Religious Rite, and one of the purposes of his voyage to England was to defeat the efforts of his adversaries for the repeal of Bentinck's abolition decree by the London authorities. 46 A meeting of the Brahmo Samaj held on 10 November 1832 decided to send letters of thanks to the King of England and his Privy Council as well as to the Court of Directors for abolishing the sati rite and Rammohun was authorized to submit those letters personally during his stay in London. 47

We have discussed Rammohun so long not with the purpose of giving an account of his reform movement, but to give an idea of the impact of his movement on the people of Bengal. He was able to initiate a great debate in which the traditional social and religious customs of the Hindus and their conventional attitude towards the shastras were challenged. Referring to this debate it was written in 1845: "The noise of theological controversy reverberated throughout the country. The Hindu community became divided into two great parties, the Brahmo Sabha party and the Dharma Sabha party. The principles of these Sabhas carried on their warfare in every part of Native society, in every Tol, in every Baitakhana, in every Dalan, in every Chondimundub, in every Zenana". 48 Even if this account is considered exaggerated there is no doubt that Rammohun was able to create a stir in the Hindu society of Bengal, and the outlook of

46. Amal Home, n. 38, p.22.
the modern Bengali Hindu was largely influenced by it. "The success which had attended its (i.e. Brahmo Sabha's) exertions", it has rightly been pointed out, "showed that the national character of the Hindus - pre-eminently distinguished by a spirit of exclusiveness and disunion, and an apathetic indifference to all but the animal wants of life - had changed for once. No other part of India passed through such a social and intellectual movement on such an extensive scale after they came under the British rule. In this great social controversy the custodians of traditional Hinduism found themselves on the defensive and their hold on the educated section of Bengal in the subsequent period declined decisively. The main cause of this decline must be sought in the spread of the western education to which the orthodox leaders themselves contributed. Radhakanta Dev, the supreme leader of the orthodox group, was, for example, actively associated with the Hindu College, Calcutta School Book Society, Calcutta School Society and other institutions which were main agents for the spread of new education. The orthodox leaders sought to promote new education only for the material benefit which it ensured. But new ideas inevitably came with the new education undermining the foundation of the Hindu orthodoxy. Thus the new education proved to be the Frankenstein for the orthodox group, and Rammohun's reform movement being in consonance with the spirit of the new education inaugurated a new age.

49. Ibid., pp. 375-376.
in Bengal. Though R.C. Majumdar denied the pioneering role of Rammohun in various fields of social reform and maintained that he was not the inaugurator but only a representative of the new age of Bengal, Rammohun's scheme of reforms appears to us so comprehensive, his attempt to implement it so vigorous and his intellectual power so above his contemporaries that we may possibly rightly hold that the age belonged to him.

Storm of Radicalism over Bengal.

If the orthodox group criticised the reform movement of Rammohun from, to use the modern phraseology, the rightist point of view, the Radical Derozians criticised it from the leftist standpoint. Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831), an extraordinarily gifted individual of Portuguese-Indian ancestry, was appointed a teacher of the Hindu College in 1826. He was a student of the Dharmatala Academy.

52. Derozio died on 26 December 1831 and R.C. Majumdar pointed out that the Calcutta Gazette on the same evening while publishing the news of his death stated that he died at the age of 23 years and 8 months. If this information is taken as correct, one must agree with the conclusion of Majumdar that Derozio was born in 1808 and not in 1809 as is usually supposed. R.C. Majumdar (General Editor), History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. X: British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, Part II (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965), p. 435, fn. 6.
53. There are two excellent biographies of Henry Derozio written in English, one by Thomas Edwards published in 1884 and another by Elliot Walter Madge published in 1905. Recently two biographies in Bengali language have also been published, one by Benoy Ghosh and another by Jogesh Chandra Bagal. The following two books also contain valuable information about the life and activities of Derozio:

Peary Chand Mitra, A Biographical Sketch of David Hare (Basumati Sahitya Mandir, Calcutta, 1949) and Sibnath Sastri, Ramanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Banga Sama (Ramanu Lahiri and Contemporary Bengali Society) (New Age, Calcutta, 1957).
which was founded by David Drummond, a Scotsman, who came to Bengal in 1813. A follower of David Hume, Drummond was a free thinker with a critical attitude towards religion, and he accepted no authority other than reason. Influenced by his teacher, Derozio also developed a rational spirit and radical views and he was able to inspire the students with his iconoclastic ideas. Unorthodox as a teacher, he encouraged his students to think rationally, accepting nothing on trust, tradition or authority. They formed an organization known as Academic Association with Derozio as President and Umacharan Bose as Secretary in order to discuss various subjects with a free mind. Krishnamohan Bandyopadhyaya, Rashik Krishna Mallik, Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhyay, Ramgopal Ghosh, Peary Chand Mitra, Radhanath Sikdar, Ramtanu Lahiri, Madhav Chandra Mallik, Govinda Chandra Basak, Sib Charan Dev, Hara Chandra Ghosh and other followers of Derozio took a leading part in these discussion meetings which were occasionally attended by such distinguished persons as David Hare, Sir Edward Ryan, Justice of the Supreme Court, W.W. Bird who later became Deputy Governor of Bengal, Dr. Mills, President of the Bishop College and even the Private Secretary to Lord William Bentinck. These free, fearless and rational discussions stirred the young hearts of the students to their very depths and they began to denounce the Hindu social and religious practices openly. In the words of Haramohun Chattopadhyay who was then clerk


of the Hindu College: "The principles and practices of Hindu religion were openly ridiculed and condemned. The Hindu religion was denounced as vile and corrupt and unworthy of the regard of rational beings." In a journal of the Derozians, Madhav Chandra Mallik wrote: "If there is any thing that we hate from the bottom of our heart, it is Hinduism." They regarded wine and beef as symbols of liberation from all superstitions and sometimes they followed the orthodox Brahmins in the streets shouting "we eat beef." There were many examples of such open defiance of Hindu customs and usages. Instead of reading the "sacred" book Chandi some of the Derozians began to recite passages from the Iliad and the Odyssey before the idols which were worshipped in their houses. One student of the Hindu College hailed Goddess Kali of the famous Kalighat temple of Calcutta with the words "Good Morning Madam" to the great irritation and embarrassment of his father.

This open defiance of Hinduism naturally alarmed the traditional custodians of the Hindu society and many parents refused to send their children to the Hindu College. The college authorities therefore became cautious about the activities of Derozio and the Managing Committee which included Radhakanta Dev, Ram Kamal Sen and other orthodox Hindu leaders resolved on 23 April 1831 to dismiss Derozio from the college in view of the existing state.

56. Ibid., pp. 101-102.
57. Ibid., p. 87.
58. Ibid., p. 102.
60. Ibid., p. 83.
of public feeling in the Hindu community. Derozio was ultimately forced to resign.

The Derozians antagonised not only the orthodox section of the Hindu society but also the reform group led by Rammohun. Rammohun had a positive faith in the existence of an Almighty Being and he tried to justify his reforms not only by an appeal to reason but also with the sanction of relevant parts of the Hindu shastras. Derozio did not preach atheism but neither had he any faith in God. In reply to a question "Do you believe in God ?" Derozio wrote:

"I have never denied the existence of a god in hearing of any human being. If it be wrong to speak at all upon such a subject, I am guilty, for I am neither afraid nor ashamed to confess having stated the doubts of philosophers upon this head, because I have also stated the solution of those doubts". Explaining his approach to the problem he further observed: "To produce conviction was not within my power, and if I am to be condemned for atheism of some, let me receive credit for the theism of others". Derozio, in other words, had doubt about the existence of God, and he explained to his students the arguments both for and against His existence. Rammohun's attempts to seek religious sanction behind his reforms appeared to

61. Wilson who was Government's representative to the Managing Committee of the Hindu College asked Derozio this question about his views on God, On 25 April 1831 Derozio sent a letter to him along with his resignation letter to the Managing Committee. Thereupon Wilson wrote a letter to Derozio stating the "rumoured charges" against him and asking most politely his views on certain questions including the question of God. We have quoted above from the reply which Derozio sent in answer to Wilson's questions. The full texts of all these letters are reproduced in Peary Chandra Mittra, n.53, pp.20-31.
the Derozians as a wrong method to realize a right end. In a letter dated 24 July 1846 a leading Derozian, Ramtanu Lahiri, wrote to Rajnarayan Basu, who, along with Devendranath Tagore and others, led the Brahmo movement in the post-Rammohun period: "I cannot think much of the Vedantic movements (i.e. Brahmo movement) here (i.e. Krishnanagore) or elsewhere. The followers of Vedanta temporize. They do not believe that the religion is from God, but will not say so to their countrymen, who believe otherwise. Now, in my humble opinion, we should never preach doctrines as true, in which we have no faith ourselves. I know that the subversion of idolatry is a consumption devoutly to be wished for, but I do not desire it by employing wrong means. I do not allow the principle that means justify the end. Let us follow the right path assured that it will ultimately promote the welfare of mankind. It can never do otherwise". 62

The main charge of the Derozians against Rammohun and his followers, which was implied in letter quoted above, was their compromising spirit. Even in their own personal lives, the Derozians pointed out, they did not follow the principles which they preached. Rammohun was opposed to the caste distinction but he wore the sacred thread of the Brahmin throughout his life and even took with him a Brahmin cook when he went to England. 63 Prasanna Kumar Tagore was a close associate of Rammohun and led the movement against idolatry but the Durga puja was held in his house every year with usual grandeur. 64 This compromising attitude and this discrepancy between profession and practice

led the Derozians to condemn the reformers as timid and inconsis-
tent. In their journals they openly criticised Rammohun and his
followers particularly Prasanna Kumar Tagore. Derozio himself wrote
in the *East_Indian*, a daily English newspaper which he himself
brought out after his forced resignation from the Hindu College:
"What his (Rammohun Roy's) opinions are neither his friends nor
foes can determine. It is easier to say what they are not than what
they are. ....... Rammohun, it is well-known, appeals to the *Veda*s,
the *Koran* and the *Bible*, holding them all probably in equal esti-
mation extracting the good from each and rejecting from all what-
ever he considers apocryphal. ......... He has always lived like a
Hindoo. ......... His followers, at least some of them, are not very
consistent. Sheltering themselves under the shadow of his name,
they indulge in licentiousness in everything forbidden in the sha-
stras, as meat and drink, while at the same time they feed the Brah-
mins, profess to disbelieve Hinduism and never neglect to have
*poojahs* at home". 65

The Derozians or members of the Young Bengal group adopted an
uncompromising attitude. They stood by reason both in theory and in
their personal lives and ignored the popular customs altogether.
This difference between the two groups was largely due to the differ-
ence in the character of the movement which they tried to promote.
Rammohun and his followers were reformers; they tried to change the
society from within. Derozio and his followers were rebels and
heretics; they tried to assail the society from outside. The Derozians

65. Cited in A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, "Rammohun Roy and his Contem-
poraries", in V. C. Joshi (ed.), n. 63, p.100.
led an intellectual movement, and therefore, they laid emphasis on individuals with clarity of views and courage of conviction. They were not afraid of their alienation from the society, and, therefore, they did not hesitate to antagonize people who followed the traditional way. Rammohun, on the other hand, led a social and religious reform movement, and for its success he required the cooperation of a large section of the society. He wanted their support even at the cost of compromise on points which he considered non-essential. He did not insist on strict adherence to his rational views if he could secure from the people a general support for his reform proposals. In order to herald the new, the Derozians repudiated the old, but in order to reform the old, Rammohun adopted a discriminating attitude towards it. Rammohun tried to convince the old leaders without offending their religious feelings as far as possible. In this connection the remark of Sutherland on Rammohun is significant. He wrote: "On questions of religious faith Rammohun Roy was in general too pliant, perhaps from his excessive fear of giving offence, or wounding the feelings of anybody". The Derozians, on the other hand, delighted in ridiculing the traditional leaders and in giving a direct offence to their religious sentiments. These two movements having much in common refused to cooperate with each other. The Derozians condemned the reformers as half-liberals and Rammohun regarded them as "more

debased than the most bigoted Hindu".

The hostile relations that existed between these two groups weakened the reform movement, and this was referred to in some of the contemporary English journals of Bengal. The *India Gazette* and the *Bengal Hurkaru* wrote directly about this controversy with implicit endorsement of Rammohun's methods.

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67. Ibid., p. 371. S. D. Collet's book quotes Standord Arnot as stating that Rammohun "Often deplored the existence of a party which had sprung up in Calcutta, composed principally of imprudent young men, some of them possessing talent, who had avowed themselves sceptics in the widest sense of the term. He described it as a party ... who, from education had learnt to reject their own faith without substituting any other. These he thought more debased than the most bigoted Hindu, and their principles bane of all morality".

68. The *India Gazette* in its editorial on 21 October 1831 wrote: "Here (i.e. Calcutta) as well as elsewhere there is a conflict going on between light and darkness, truth and error, and it is because we cannot fully approve of the temper and proceeding of those who have our best wishes that we now advert the subject in the hope of leading them to a more correct appreciation of the circumstances in which they are placed, and to the adoption of better adapted means for the promotion of their object". Supporting this view of the *India Gazette* the *Bengal Hurkaru* observed: "We agree with our contemporary of the *India Gazette* that some of the Hindoo Reformers in their abhorrence of superstitions have been in some instances carried away by the violence of their feelings into foolish extravagances and very idle bravadoes". Referring to this controversy the *Bengal Hurkaru* further remarked: "The merits of the two sects have excited some rather angry and irritating discussions, which while they can do no good to either party may seriously injure the cause which both equally profess to have at heart, and only adopt different means for the attainment of the same end." All the three passages quoted above are taken from Binoy Ghosh, *Vidrohi Derosio* (Bak-Sahitya, Calcutta, 1961). pp. 115-117.
What was the impact of the Young Bengal movement on the Bengali mind? Untramelled by Indian tradition and unrestrained by any pragmatic considerations of success the Derozians raised a storm in Bengal which did not last long but produced a strong reaction. It influenced the Bengali mind more by what it provoked than by what it actually did. An intellectual upsurge of great potential significance, the Young Bengal movement could not reach the stage of maturity and the spirit of free enquiry which it tried to encourage was consumed by its youthful exuberance. It appeared as a meteor in the intellectual firmament of Bengal and vanished soon without leaving an organization or developing a school of thought to sustain the movement of free thinking blazed by Derozio. The Derozians in their later lives remained scattered in various occupations and professions (many of them were appointed Deputy Collectors) and became renowned for their ability and honesty. Many of them were engaged in literary as well as social service activities. Peary Chand Mitra (Tecehand Thakur) made abiding contributions to Bengali literature, and he along with Radhanath Sikdar brought out in 1854 *Masik Patrika*, a magazine in simple colloquial style. Krishnamohan who became a Christian missionary studied Ancient Indian Thought and wrote a book on the six systems of Hindu philosophy (1861-62). In 1875 he published another book under the title *Aryan Witness*. Tarachand Chakravarty translated Manu. These activities promoting Bengali literature and explaining Indian tradition were however undertaken by the Derozians in their individual capacity and they were not integrated with the main activities of the Young Bengal movement.
By the middle of the nineteenth century the Young Bengal movement gradually faded away. By going directly against the Indian tradition "they failed to develop any movement outside their own charmed circle". The people by and large considered them as a small Anglicised group who admired everything western and condemned everything Indian. The Derozians themselves could not sustain the tradition of free thinking. Soon after the death of Derozio Mahesh Chandra Ghosh and Krishnamohan Bandyopadhyaya embraced Christianity, Peary Chand Mitra developed interest in mysticism and joined the Theosophical Society, Sibchandra Dev joined the Brahma Samaj and wrote a book on spiritualism and super-natural forces, Ramtanu Lahiri came under the influence of Keshav Chandra Sen and Ramgopal Ghosh and Dakshina Ranjan Mukhopadhyay who became active in the political field could not maintain their former iconoclastic spirit. Susobhan Sarkar who studied the Young Bengal movement carefully and with sympathy considered it "something ephemeral and unsubstantial", and he thought that its real weakness was the "failure to build up a sustained movement and a developing ideology." Its rational philosophy was totally obscured by its operational style which shocked the people instead of enlightening them. Referring to such activities of the Derozians, Sarkar observed: "Contemporaries were shocked mostly by the indulgence in the socially forbidden food and drink, in the

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71. Susobhan Sarkar, n.69, pp. 25, 121.
'cutting their way to ham and beef and wading to liberalism through tumblers of beer'. But this was mainly the means of asserting the right of individual judgement in matters of established customs, not unusual at a critical point of development". But the means which they adopted virtually defeated the purpose of the movement. By adopting an arrogant, contemptuous and defying attitude towards the society at large they stultified their own growth. Gradually the Derozians themselves lost their moorings and the movement which Derozio launched ultimately disappeared. In popular view this movement remained identified with reckless denunciation of Hinduism, blind imitation of the West and contempt for national culture.

In spite of its weaknesses the contributions of the Derozian movement to the making of the modern Bengali mind cannot be denied. A large section of the educated people who remained outside this movement regarded the Derozians as misguided - rather than depraved - young men blinded by the dazzling light of western learning. They were condemned for their excesses but in spite of this condemnation there was an under-current of admiration for their courage of conviction, urge for knowledge and search for the truth. As the clerk of the Hindu College Hara Mohan Chattopadhyay wrote about the followers of Derozio in the College: "They were all considered men of truth. Indeed, the College boy was a synonym for truth, and it was a general belief and saying amongst our countrymen ... that 'such a boy is incapable of falsehood because he is a college boy' "73. Therefore, if their excesses were

72. Ibid., p.120.
condemned, their excellence was appreciated. With reference to his teacher Pyari Charan Sircar who exercised great influence in moulding his mind and character, Bipin Chandra Pal, for example, wrote: "He was, in my young days, the leader of a movement against this evil to which the Young Bengal had taken with as much as they took to the study of Shakespeare and Milton." The central figure of Rabindranath's short story 'Bhaiphonta' said with pride: "My father Sanatan Datta was a student of Derozio. He had a strange attraction for wine, but his attraction for truth was greater." Such mixed reaction is found in the attitude of many leading persons of Bengal in the post-Derozian period. If the Bengalis developed a mixed feeling towards the Derozians they, however, developed a hostile attitude towards the orthodox group which brought about the dismissal of Derozio from the Hindu College.

Emergence of National Culture in Bengal.

In the subsequent period nationalist culture arose in Bengal not as an ideology of the orthodox group nor as a reaction to the free thinking movement of Derozio but in the context of the Anglicising influence of the western education. With the growth of western education there arose a group among the Bengalis with a tendency to lead an Anglicised way of life accepting everything English and discarding everything 'native'. They tried to give up

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not only the superstitions and evil practices of traditional Hinduism but also their own culture and religion, language and manners, dress and food. Radhanath Sikdar, a prominent Derozian, as for example, became, at one stage of his career, almost an Englishman in his manners and customs and food habits and even began to pronounce Bengali words like an Englishman. According to Sibnath Sastri's account, many of the Derozians believed in Macaulay's view that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia, and, therefore, they replaced Kalidas with Shakespeare, Ramayana and Mahabharata with Edgeworth's Tales and the Bible appeared to them much superior to the Vedas and the Upanishadas. Dr. K. D. Ghosh, the father of Sri Aurobindo, had such a fascination for the western way of living that he wanted his children to be brought up in a purely western atmosphere without any trace of Indian influence. National culture arose in Bengal as a protest against this perversion. The Anglicizing influence of the western education took an alarming dimension when a large number of educated Hindu youths succumbed to the Christian missionary propaganda, particularly after the arrival of Alexander Duff in Calcutta.

Alexander Duff, the famous Scottish missionary, came to Calcutta in 1830. A distinguished educationalist, Duff, soon after his arrival, founded the General Assemblies Institution with the co-operation of Rammohun Roy. Duff found the atmosphere created

77. Ibid., p.142.
by the Young Bengal movement very suitable for his missionary activities and he believed that the educated youths who were disillusioned of Hinduism might easily be converted to Christianity. He arranged a series of lectures by Christian missionaries in which Hinduism was condemned and Christianity was placed as an alternative. The Hindu College students were naturally attracted by these lectures and they were largely influenced by them. A large number of Hindu intellectuals of Calcutta were gradually won over by the Scottish missionary, and this gave rise to a major sensation in the Hindu society. In the earlier period the Serampore missionaries carried on their activities mainly among the depressed and poorer section of the people, and, therefore, their success did not perturb the Hindu leaders so much as the conversion of well-known persons belonging to the newly emerged educated class. Moreover, the earlier missionary propaganda was directed against the evils of the traditional Hindu society which were condemned by the reformers themselves. In the post-Rammohun period Alexander Duff, his fellow missionaries and their 'native' converts launched their attack not against the evils of orthodox Hinduism, but against reformed Hinduism as built up by the Brahmo Samaj movement. Krishnamohon Bandyopadhyay maintained that the

78. For these activities see Rev. Alexander Duff, India and India Missions (Edinburgh, 1840).

79. We have already referred to the conversion of two leading Derozians, Mahesh Chandra Ghosh and Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyay. Due to the activities of Alexander Duff there were many other converts, and they included such persons as Kailas Chandra Mukherjee, Peary Mohan Rudra, A. C. Majumdar, Lal Behari De, Michael Madhusudan Datta, Prasanna Chandra Banerjee, Tara Charan Banerjee, Umesh Chandra Sarkar, Jnanendra Mohan Thakur (son of Prasanna Kumar Thakur).
"pure Hindooism" of Rammohun was no better than the "popular Hindooism" because the Vedic literature itself was saturated with idolatry. Rammohun's attempt to find out Monotheism in the Vedic-Upanishadic tradition was considered by him as futile. The Vedic tradition, he pointed out, might lead to Monism but not to Monotheism or faith in a Supreme Moral Being which alone, he believed, could inspire moral feelings. Alexander Duff also attacked Hindu religion and culture particularly the Vedanta philosophy in severe language and at times in a savage manner. He criticised the faith of the Brahmos in the infallibility of the Vedas.

The Brahmo Samaj of that period was, however, too weak to take up the challenge of the Christian missionaries. After Rammohun left India for England in 1830 the Samaj, under the supervision of Ramchandra Vidyavagish, was reduced to a moribund organization, and somehow continued its existence with the financial support of Dwarkanath Tagore. It was the Tattvarodhini Sabha founded in 1839 by Devendranath Tagore (1817-1905) which started a counter-movement defending the Vedanta religion against the onslaught of the missionaries. Son of Dwarkanath Tagore, Devendranath had his early education in the Anglo-Hindu school of Rammohun and later on he was admitted to the Hindu College. He was not a direct student of Derozio but came in

82. Debendranath Tagore, n.5, Appendix 17, p. 297.
close contact with the rational and scientific ideas of the West and joined the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge organized by the Derozians in 1838. Though the radical views of the Derozians had little impact on his essentially conservative and spiritual bent of mind, he developed a rational outlook within the framework of the religious mode of thought.

One of the most important activities of the Tattvabodhini Sabha was to defend the Vedanta religion of Rammohun against the Christian attack. The whole controversy centered around the doctrine of the Vedic infallibility. Alexander Duff’s criticism of the Brahmos for their faith in the infallibility of the Vedas had already been mentioned. The Tattvabodhini Patrika which was started in 1843 published a number of articles defending this faith to which the missionaries also gave their replies. During this period (about 1843-1846) Devendranath regarded Vedanta as a revealed religion and defended it in that light. The editor of the Tattvabodhini Patrika, Akshay Kumar Datta, the most renowned free thinker and rationalist among the Brahmos, did not, however, share this view of Devendranath. Gradually, as the controversy became more and more intense, there arose doubts in the minds of Devendranath and other leaders of the Tattvabodhini movement about the validity of this doctrine, and they felt the necessity of studying the Vedas thoroughly. There was no scope for such a study in Bengal, and, therefore, in 1845-46 Devendranath sent several students to Benaras for this purpose. In 1847 he himself went there to study the Vedas along with his students.83 This study ultimately led him

83. Ibid., pp. 67, 89.
to give up the doctrine of Vedic infallibility. He found that neither the Vedanta nor the Upanishad could be accepted in its entirety. Being thus disillusioned, the Tattvabodhini Sabha gave up its faith in the doctrine of Vedic infallibility and in a meeting of the Sabha held on 28 May 1847 it was decided that their religion would henceforth be called Brahmo Dharma and not Vedantism. The Brahma community as a whole renounced Vedantism openly in 1851.

The repudiation of the doctrine of Vedic infallibility by the Brahmos under the impact of the Christian criticism was actually a triumph of reason over dogmatism. The discriminating attitude with which Rammohun judged various Hindu shastras was now applied to Vedanta and Upanishads also. As a matter of fact, Rammohun, as we have stated earlier, himself did not accept Vedanta as a whole, and did not believe in the infallibility of any scripture. It was Ramchandra Vidyabagish who was responsible for the rise of this doctrine among the Brahmos. Their decision to discard this doctrine after a critical re-examination of the relevant shastras testifies to their essentially rational approach to the problem of religion. As Rajnarayan Basu has put it: "After the death of Ram Mohan Roy, the catholic character of the Samaj was not destroyed. Even while its leaders admitted the Vedas to be a

84. The term Brahmo Dharma was not used during the time of Rammohun. His religion was known as 'True Religion based on Vedanta' or simply Vedantism.


86. Ibid., pp. 368-369.
revelation, they did so solely on account of the 'reasonableness and cogency of these doctrines'\(^{87}\) as compared with the other Shastras of the Hindus and the religious scriptures of other nations. ... Their error lay in believing that whatever they contained was reasonable and cogent. As soon as they perceived their mistakes after a wider study of the Vedas, they shook it off at once. Now, why did they do so easily? The reason is that a higher standard of belief had always predominated in their minds ... that is, the standard of reason ..."\(^{88}\).

The \textit{Tattvabodhini Sabha} carried the rational tradition of Rammohun under the new conditions of Bengal. If Rammohun used rational ideas to fight mediaevalism, the \textit{Tattvabodhini Sabha} used them to build up the foundation of modern national life. Rammohun welcomed English education not to Anglicise the country but to modernize it, and, therefore, the development of vernacular language and rational elements in Indian tradition were equally emphasized by him. In the post-Rammohun period the English education made considerable headway and along with the rational and scientific spirit it also brought an Anglicising tendency and a wholesale contempt for everything national. This de-nationalizing influence made a section of the western-educated youths an easy prey to the Christian propaganda for conversion.

\(^{87}\) This quotation is from the book \textit{Vedantic Doctrines Vindicated} (\textit{Tattvabodhini Sabha, Calcutta, 1845}) which was a compilation of 4 articles published in the \textit{Tattvabodhini Patrika} in defence of the doctrine of Vedic infallibility. The name of the author is not mentioned anywhere in the book or in the \textit{Patrika}. The articles undoubtedly explained the views of Deben-drnanath but it is believed by many that they were actually written by Rajnarayan Basu.

The Tattvabodhini Sabha made an attempt to arrest the growth of this blind Europeanism or perverted modernism without reverting to Hindu orthodoxy. Out of this attempt arose the national culture in Bengal which was not a negation but continuation of Rammohun's spirit under new conditions. The process of the rise of this national culture was, however, aided by the following three factors:

1. Discovery of the past culture of India,
2. Growing unemployment among the English-educated youths of Bengal and the growing realization of the exploiting character of the British rule, and
3. Nationalist movements in the West.

In order to arrest the de-nationalizing influence of modern education the Tattvabodhini Sabha tried to give it a national character. Its journal the Tattvabodhini Patrika published an article on the educational system of the Hindu College in which we find a clear exposition of its ideas on education. While explaining the limitations of the Hindu College the article emphasized that education should have not only a liberal but also an utilitarian character and it should aim not only at the intellectual unfoldment of the students but also their moral and physical development. It suggested development of education on national lines by giving emphasis on the study of Bengali language and Sanskrit literature as well as history and geography of India. The enthusiasm of the students to learn the details of the history

and geography of European countries with no interest in their motherland appeared to it as an unhealthy and sinister development. The Tattvabodhini school which was founded in 1840 on these principles may be regarded as the precursor of the national schools that arose in large numbers during the Swadeshi days of Bengal politics.

Rajnarayan Basu, a Brahmo leader of the Tattvabodhini Sabha and a close associate of Devendra Nath Tagore, made seminal contributions to the emergence of nationalist culture in Bengal which we shall discuss here in brief outline. In his book Hindu Athaba Presidency College Itibritta (History of Hindu or Presidency College) published in 1876 Rajnarayan Basu fully acknowledged the good effects of the English education, but he thought that the country would derive real benefit from this education when its people become as strong and courageous and freedom-loving as the Englishmen themselves. Instead of imitating blindly the manners and customs of the Englishmen the people should, he wrote, develop their own talents and work independently for the educational, literary and economic progress of the country retaining their national identity as far as possible. The growing unemployment among the educated people and rapid deterioration of the economic conditions of India led Rajnarayan to give emphasis on the technical and utilitarian aspect of modern education. In his book Sekal Ar Ekal (in this book published in 1874 Rajnarayan

90. Devendranath Tagore, n. 5, Appendix 17, pp. 299-300.
91. For a critical account of the ideas and activities of Rajnarayan Basu see Asru Koley, Rajnarayan Basu: Jivan O Sahitya (Jijnasa, Calcutta, 1975) and Jogesh Chandra Bagal, Rajnarayan Basu (Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta, 1379 B.E.).
Bose tried to compare the conditions of contemporary Bengal with those which existed in the earlier part of the century. Rajnarayan pointed out that the ever-increasing number of educated youths could not be absorbed simply in professional services, and, therefore, he exhorted his countrymen to learn industrial arts and technology from England and start new industries in India in order to bring India's economic dependence on England to an end. Referring to the economic and moral degradation of India he wrote in *Bridhha Hindur Asha* (Hope of an Old Hindu): "If we had a king of our own, this miserable condition of our country might have been remedied. In the absence of such a king, the people should try to bring about the remedy through their united efforts. ... Is it possible for us to realise this objective if we remain dependent on others for ever? Why should we depend upon the government so much for everything? Do you expect that the Government would come forward to provide you with your food? They are foreigners. Do you believe they would promote your welfare ignoring their own interests? We can never expect such 'nishkam dharma' (duty with no thought of any interest) from them". The conflict of interests between the British rulers and the Indian people which remained largely obscured during the time of Rammohun now became more apparent.

The discovery of the ancient culture of India made

93. Foreign scholars like William Jones, James Mackintosh, John Wilson, Charles Wilkins, H.T.Colebrooke, Horace Hayman Wilson, Alexander Cunningham, James Prinsep were pioneers in discovering that in the past India had built up a culture of conceptionally high order. The Asiatic Society founded in 1784 contributed much to this discovery.
Rajnarayan Basu and his associates proud of their past heritage, and, therefore, they no longer looked at the western civilization with the reverential attitude which was implied in the acceptance of the British rule as providentially ordained. In order to create a new India the Bengali leaders now derived their inspiration more from the past culture of India than from the western civilization. In a letter published in the Tattvabodhini Patrika of Asvin 1803 Saka (1881 A.D.) Ranjarayan wrote that the Hindus should be encouraged to develop a civilization similar to or even better than what they had built up in the past. In this letter he emphasized not only the religious aspect of ancient Indian civilization, but also their achievements in the fields of science and industry.

Though it derived its inspiration partly from the ancient civilization of India, the nationalist movement of Rajnarayan Basu should not be confused with the revivalist movement of Swami Dayananda or the Theosophical Movement of Mrs Annie Besant. Swami Dayananda, the founder of the Arya Samaj, did not recognize any liberating significance of the English education or western civilization and he believed in the doctrine of the Vedic infallibility. The Theosophical Movement gave open support to all traditional practices and occult mysticism of the Hindus, and offered, in the words of Bipin Chandra Pal, "an open apology in defence of our current faiths and practices, claiming a much higher wisdom than that of modern rationalism". 94 A purely revivalist movement

was organized in Bengal also by the Sanatan Dharmarakshini Sabha (Association for the Preservation of Traditional Religion) which was founded by Kamalkrishna Deb and Kalikrishna Deb of Sobhabazar, Calcutta. It tried to revive the spirit of the Dharma Sabha, and its activities included the interpretation and exposition of the old Hindu Shastras, restoration of Shastric rites and offering homage and felicitations to the renowned Brahmin pandits. Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachuramani was another important figure in this revivalist movement in Bengal and he was supported by the popular Bengali journal, the Bangabasi. The Navajeevan started and edited by Akshay Chandra Sarkar also supported the cause of revivalism during this period. This revivalist movement, however, had little influence in Bengal, and Bipin Chandra Pal wrote that the supporters of this movement "could be counted only in three figures". Referring to the nature and impact of this revivalist movement on the Bengali mind another scholar wrote: "They (Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachuramani and others) vigorously defended every text and ceremony of orthodox Hinduism, often without any trace of rationalistic approach or outlook. ... Sasadhar Tarkachuramani in particular became very popular for some time but ultimately did not prove to be an important force". The nationalist culture represented by Rajnarayan was basically different from this revivalist movement. He tried to create a new India by nationalizing

96. Bipin Chandra Pal, n.74, p.347
the Western spirit, as it were, and the Sanatanists sought to maintain traditional Hinduism by abjuring the western ideas.

In order to develop the spirit of nationalism among the people Rajnarayan founded the Society for the Promotion of National Feeling (Jatiya Gaurab Sampadani Sabha). Referring to this Society which he founded at Midnapore, Rajnarayan wrote in his autobiography: "The members of the Jatiya Gaurab Sampadani Sabha said 'Surajani' instead of 'Good night'. Instead of greeting each other on the first of January they used to do so on the first of Baisakh (first month of the Bengali Year); they tried to talk purely in Bengali language without using any English word. Whoever used an English word had to pay fine of one paisa". In order to form such a Society on a larger scale he published in 1866 a Prospectus of a Society for the Promotion of National Feeling among the Educated Natives of Bengal. It was a call to the Bengalis to give up foreign habits and develop national culture, and it gave emphasis on the following points: revival of national gymnastic exercises, Hindu music, Hindu medicine, publication in Bengali of the researches of European scholars on Indian antiquities, cultivation of Sanskrit, education of the children in mother tongue before giving them lessons in English, use of mother tongue free from an admixture of English words in private conversations, introduction of such foreign customs which might infuse national feeling, prevention of the

98. Rajnarayan Basu was at Midnapore as Headmaster of the Government District School from 1851 to 1866.
100. For full text see Modern Review, June 1944, pp.444ff.
introduction of harmful foreign customs and giving foreign customs already introduced a national character.

Rajnarayan's national outlook and his attempt to maintain national identity of the Bengali Hindus was due not only to the discovery of the past culture of India but also to the impact of the nationalist movements of the West and experience of the oppressive and exploiting character of the British rule in India. During that time the nationalist movements of Germany and particularly of Italy had exercised a profound influence on the minds of some of the Bengali leaders. Describing the nationalist culture of Bengal during his student life, Bipin Chandra Pal observed: "We saw or imagined a great similitude between the position of the Italians under Austrian domination and our own position under British rule". Biman Behari Majumdar also wrote: "The efforts of Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour for achieving the Unification of Italy in the sixties of the last century produced a tremendous effect on Indian political thinking. It is significant that Rajnarayan Basu published the Prospectus of the Society for the Promotion of National Feeling (Jatiya Gaurava Sancarini Sabha) in 1866, the year in which Venetia was transferred from Austria to Italy".

With the growth of western education and political consciousness, the Bengalis began to feel more and more evils of foreign rule. Comparing the conditions of Bengal during his time with those existing during the time of Rammohun, Rajnarayan Basu also wrote: "The

Bengalis during that period were satisfied with the political conditions of the country. The spread of English education was still very limited, their political awareness was not developed and the Europeans also treated them well. For these reasons they were satisfied with their political conditions. At present, due to various factors, discontent is found on all sides. The English education has given rise to higher aspirations in our minds but our government cannot fulfil those aspirations. We understand clearly the limitations and shortcomings of our government, but our hands and feet are tied; we have no right to say anything about the removal of those limitations and shortcomings. Thus, the liberal culture of Rammohun developed into the national culture of Rajnarayan due to changes in the political conditions of the country. If the national culture appeared conservative in relation to the liberal culture of Rammohun's time, it was due to this political factor. "His (Rajnarayan's) conservatism", Bipin Chandra Pal rightly commented, "was, in fact, inspired far more by political than by social motives."

Inspired by the ideals of Rajnarayan Basu, Nabagopal Mitra, a Brahmo leader closely connected with the Tagore family, founded the Hindu Mela in 1867. It held annual sessions on the last day of the Bengali year with the object of fostering national

\[\text{\textsuperscript{103}}\text{Cited in Jogesh Chandra Bagal, Rajnarayan Basu, n.91, pp. 75-76.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{104}}\text{Bipin Chandra Pal, n.74, p.212.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{105}}\text{Rajnarayan Basu wrote that Nabagopal Mitra derived the idea of the Hindu Mela from his pamphlet Prospectus of a Society for the Promotion of National Feeling Among the Educated Natives of Bengal. See Rajnarayan Basu, n.88, p.52.}\]
feelings and developing the spirit of self-help among the Bengali Hindus.  

The Mela through an elaborate programme of patriotic songs, national gymnastics, physical culture, exhibition of indigenous arts and crafts attracted a large number of people and aroused tremendous public enthusiasm. During its long thirteen years of existence (1867-1880) it contributed much to enkindle the fire of nationalism into the hearts of many in Bengal.  

Besides organizing the Hindu Mela Nabagopal started the National Paper (1865), founded the National Society or Jatiya Sabha (1870) and opened a national school (1872). He also helped in establishing the first national theatre, organized the first Bengali circus and founded a school for physical training. The word 'national' became so much associated with Nabagopal that he came to be known as 'National Nabagopal'. Though he had to publish his journal National Paper in English, he was indifferent about its grammar and idioms. This indifference to English language was also a sign of his national patriotism.

It was this national issue which brought about a split in the Brahmo Samaj in 1866. Keshav Chandra Sen (1838-1884) tried to develop it into a universal movement transcending all national

106. Referring to the second objective Gaganendranath Tagore, Secretary of the Hindu Mela, wrote: "The spirit of self-help is a special quality of the English nation; we are trying to develop that quality". Cited in Jogesh Chandra Bagal, Bharater Mukti Sandhani (Bharati Book Stall, Calcutta, 1355 B.E.), Chapter on Nabagopal Mitra, p.117.

107. Rabindranath Tagore in his boyhood was associated with this Mela and recited patriotic poems in its annual sessions.

108. It was a permanent organization to spread the ideals of the Hindu Mela throughout the year.


111. Ibid., p.213.
boundaries, but Devendranath Tagore, Rajnarayan Basu, Nabagopal Mitra and others began to emphasize its national or Hindu character. In his speech on *Hindu Dharma Sreshthata* (Superiority of Hindu Religion) Rajnarayan argued that inspite of its universal and non-communal character, the Brahmo Dharma arose out of the evolution of the Hindu religion. Keshav Chandra Sen, the champion of universalism, gave, on the other hand, more emphasis on the non-Hindu sources of the Brahmo religion. In one of his speeches Keshav clearly observed: "Brahmaism is destined to become a power in the world".

The nationalist outlook of Devendranath, Rajnarayan and many others urged them to oppose the universalist religious tendency of Keshav, and, hence the first split in the Brahmo Samaj. In 1866 Keshav Chandra Sen and his followers broke away from the original Brahmo Samaj which henceforth came to be known as the Adi Brahmo Samaj.

Keshav Chandra Sen preferred to follow the path of religious universalism, because he kept himself largely aloof from the political issues of the country in the context of which, as we have explained earlier, the nationalist culture arose in Bengal. "Keshub Chunder's appeal", Bipin Chandra Pal wrote, "was exclusively to the religious and moral sensibilities of the rising generation of his English educated countrymen".

112. For a brief and lucid discussion on the controversy between nationalism and universalism within the Brahmo Samaj during this period see David Kopf, "Rammohun and the Bengal Renaissance", in V.C. Joshi (ed.), n.63, pp.41-42.


115. Bipin Chandra Pal, n.74, p.188.
section of the English educated youths became gradually more interested in political issues than in social problems. This change in their interest was mainly due to, as we have already pointed out, new aspirations which arose in their minds as a result of the western education but their failure to fulfil them in the existing political set up of the country. This increasing interest in political problems gave a nationalist orientation to their outlook and the social and religious problems which received first priority in the earlier period gradually receded into the background. The nationalist culture arose in Bengal as a result of this gradual drift towards politics, but Keshav Chandra Sen's universalism thoroughly ignored this rising trend. Therefore, the impact of Keshav on the rising youths of Bengal was very limited. His appeal to the younger generation began to decline and his group suffered a second split in 1878. Explaining the reasons of his declining influence Borthwick observed: "One reason may have been that he no longer addressed himself to young people in particular, as they were (obviously) no longer his contemporaries. Another reason was that many active young men found his religious piety overwhelming and uncongenial, and directed their energies to other fields, especially politics". The second reason stated above appears to be the real cause because the young people are seldom led by their contemporaries. Though the immediate cause of the split in Keshav's group in 1878 was the

116. Meredith Borthwick, n.113, p.150.
Cooch-Behar Marriage controversy, the more fundamental factor leading to the division should not be lost sight of. The growing interest of the rising generation in politics and the ascendancy of national culture in Bengal were responsible for the decline of Keshav's influence over the Bengali youths and the two splits in the Brahmo Samaj movement.

117. In 1872 the Native Marriage Act was passed largely due to the efforts of Keshav Chandra Sen. This Act, among other provisions, fixed the minimum age for the bride at 14 and for the bridegroom at 18. But in 1878 Keshav's eldest daughter who was not yet 14 was married to the Maharaja of Cooch Behar who was not yet 16. This led a large group of Brahmos including Sivnath Sastri, Ananda Mohan Bose, Bipin Chandra Pal, Shib Chunder Deb to finally break away from Keshav's Samaj, and they founded the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj in 1878. Keshav's group came to be known as the Navavindhan or New Dispensation.

118. It was under the leadership of Raja Rammohun Roy that political activities on modern lines began in Bengal and gradually a large number of political associations were formed. The most important of such associations were: Zamindary Association (1837) later renamed Landholders' Society, Bengal British India Society (1843), British Indian Association (1851), Indian League (1875), Indian Association (1876). The Indian Association called two All India National Conferences in Calcutta, first in 1883 and the second in 1885. When the second conference was being held in Calcutta, the first session of the Indian National Congress was held in Bombay. The social reformers themselves took initiative in political activities, and, gradually, particularly with the rise of nationalist culture, political movement assumed greater importance than social reform movement.
Foundation of Militant Nationalism in Bengal.

The nationalist culture which thus arose in Bengal due to various factors was given a strong philosophical foundation by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Swami Vivekananda. Born in Kanthalpara, near Calcutta, in a Kulin Brahmin family, Bankim was one of the first two graduates of the Calcutta University. After graduation he joined the civil service, but in addition to his official career he developed himself into one of the most renowned authors of Bengal. We are not concerned here with the many-sided activities of Bankim and shall remain satisfied with a few remarks on his contributions to the growth of nationalism in Bengal.

Bankim was fully aware of the importance of nationalism in modern European history, and he was very much impressed by its role in bringing about the unification of Germany and Italy. He found that this feeling of nationalism was foreign to the Indians, and he was grateful to Britain for bringing this idea to this country. In order to inspire the Indians with nationalism, he made a careful analysis of its constituent elements and found that it was based on two fundamental principles. The first was a feeling of close identification of interests of the individuals belonging to a particular community, and the second was differentiation of interests of the particular community from other communities.

tried to explain the reasons (which we need not discuss here) why neither of these two elements of nationalism had developed in India among the Hindus. Under such conditions he thought that the only way to arouse the Hindus with nationalism was to preach this doctrine in the form of a new religion. Bankim believed that all aspects of the Hindu life were dominated by religion and therefore nationalism would have no influence over the Hindus if it was presented simply as a political doctrine. He, therefore, tried to raise nationalism to the position of a religion through his literary works.

In *Kamalakanter Daptar* Bankim identified the goddess Durga with *Bangabhumi* and in *Anandamath* he developed his ideal of religious nationalism with such superb literary skill that in course of time this book actually became the Bible of Bengali patriotism. The new order of monks or Santans of the *Anandamath* worshipped mother country as the only goddess with the mantra *Bandemataram*. In the immortal song *Bandemataram* Bankim identified goddess Durga with Motherland and thus gave the popular religious practices a nationalist interpretation. By explaining the *Bhagavat Gita* and popularising the Krishna cult he placed before the people the ideal of Dharmayuddha which, in the context of the national movement for independence, strengthened the anti-British feelings of the people, and justified the use of violence.

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against the foreign rule. Bankim admired the martial qualities of Srikrishna and justified the killing of Kangsa and Jarasanddha for the establishment of Dharmarajya. In course of time a group of Bengali nationalists easily identified British rule with that of Kangsa and Jarasandha. Bankim tried to unify the Hindu nation by placing before it the ideal of Srikrishna, and maintained that the Hindu ideal of Srikrishna was much superior to the Christian ideal of Jesus Christ. An ideal, he said, must represent full and harmonious development of all the human potentialities, and this, according to Bankim, was found in Srikrishna and not in Jesus Christ. Jesus did not possess the ability to lead a Dharmauddha or to administer a Dharmarajya. All these and other qualities were developed in Srikrishna in perfect harmony. "Therefore", Bankim wrote, "Krishna is the real ideal for man - the Hindu ideal is superior to the Christian ideal".

Bankim clearly advocated violence in order to realise a noble objective. In Anandamath Satyananda told Mahendra that the Santans were Vaishnavas but they did not follow the non-violent policy of Sri Chaitanya. The real Vaishnavas, he said, must fight the evil forces, defeat them in war and save the world. God represented, Satyananda explained, not only love but also strength and force. In discussing the character of Srikrishna Bankim justified the application of force to realise a good end, and maintained that the doctrine which stated that "the end does not sanctify the means"

123. Krishna Charitra in Ibid., Sahitya, Vol.I, pp.73,180. Kangsa and Jarasanddha were oppressive kings according to the epic of Mahabharata.

124. Ibid., p. 111.

could not always be accepted. Biman Behari Majumdar has rightly described Bankim as the first political prophet of modern India to foresee the need of creating a band of selfless sanyasis for achieving the liberation of the country. Soon after his death a group of Bengali nationalists, inspired by his ideal, started their fight against the foreign rule as a new Dharmayuddha.

The religious and militant nationalism of Bankim was developed into a dynamic force by Swami Vivekananda. Born in a Kayastha family of Calcutta, Narendranath Datta (this was the original name of Swami Vivekananda) was a graduate of the Calcutta University. He came in close contact with the ideas of John Stuart Mill, Hume and Herbert Spencer and was attracted by the monotheistic ideas of the Brahmo Samaj. But his intense desire to know the truth in religion was not satisfied until he went to Ramkrishna, the priest of Dakshineswar. Highly impressed by his deep religious convictions and self-confidence Vivekananda became his disciple and spent his whole life as a sanyasi preaching religion throughout the world. His great success in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1893) and his triumphant religious tours in America, England and other countries made him a world figure.

Possessed of an iron will and volcanic power he boldly asserted everywhere that in spite of her political slavery and economic backwardness India was superior to the west in spirituality. With his inspiring personality and persuasive eloquence he was

127. Militant Nationalism in India, n.102, p.54.
able to impress many in the West and even to secure some notable converts, the most renowned of whom was an Irish lady named Margaret Noble, better known as Sister Nivedita. Since the time of Rammohun the educated section of the Hindus became increasingly aware of the evils and drawbacks of their religion and society. Such a self-critical attitude was necessary in order to come out of the paralysing grip of the traditional and mediaeval life. But national regeneration on modern principles was not possible without pride and self-confidence in some elements of national culture. This was provided by Swami Vivekananda who found in the Vedantic tradition of Hindu culture an element on the basis of which the Hindus could assert their superiority over the West in the spiritual field. Rammohun was also proud of the same tradition, but he used it mainly for the removal of evils from the Hindu society and for the acceptance of the western rationalism. Vivekananda used it to create self-confidence of the Hindus and to quicken their sense of national pride and patriotism. In order to build up a modern India Rammohun fought against mediaevalism with the help of the British Government which appeared as a great modernising agency. When that movement made considerable progress and a new educated middle class with modern ideas arose in the country, Vivekananda instilled in their hearts pride in their own Vedantic tradition so that they might take up the work of national regeneration with confidence in their own strength. If Rammohun used Vedantism to fight mediaevalism, Vivekananda used it to lay the foundation of modern nationalism.

The message of India's spiritual superiority over the West was exhilarating to the Indians, particularly to the Bengalis. It strengthened their growing sense of nationalism and spirit of
independence, Vivekananda made it a mission of his life to preach the spiritual superiority of the Hindu civilization throughout the length and breadth of India, but no part of the country was so much influenced by his ideas as Bengal. This was not simply because Vivekananda belonged to Bengal but primarily because Bengal was fully prepared to use his ideas to promote its national movement. Vivekananda’s ideas assumed a special significance in Bengal in the context of the nationalist culture which had already developed here by the efforts of Rajnarayan Basu, Nabagopal Mitra, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya and others.

What was the political and nationalist significance of Vivekananda’s message? According to Vivekananda every country has "a national purpose of its own" and "the social manners and customs of every nation", he wrote, "are being moulded into shape, so as to bring that purpose to fruition". Political independence, he observed, was the backbone of the French character, the business principle of the trader was inherent in the English character and spiritual independence was the national purpose of the Hindu India. The spiritual superiority of the Hindus over the Western nations was, therefore, due to their "national character evolved out of thousands of centuries". Therefore, Vivekananda did not consider Hinduism


130. Ibid., pp. 457-58.

131. Ibid., p.460.
or Vedantism as a universal religious force independent of India. In his thought India was completely identified with Hinduism.

Secondly, Vivekananda's religion did not ignore the material aspect of human life and he believed that India would not be able to play her spiritual role in the world unless there was an immediate improvement in her material conditions. He wrote: "I do not believe in a God who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven." Vivekananda's religion thus was not concerned simply with spiritual problems. His message was directly related to the present material conditions of India. Thirdly, Vivekananda's religion was largely humanist in character, and its essence was service to man, to Daridranarayan. When Vivekananda was in the U.S.A., a brother monk wrote to him about the miseries of the people which he had seen during his journey through Gujrat and Rajputana. In reply Vivekananda wrote: "The poor, the ignorant, the illiterate, the afflicted - let these be your God; Know that service to these is the highest religion." Thus, the religious ideas of Vivekananda arose against the background of India's degrading conditions, and referring to these conditions he wrote: "Who is responsible for it all? As a Vendantist I cannot but put that question to myself". His answer was: "Not the English; no, they are not responsible; it is we who are responsible for all our misery and all our degradation, and we alone are responsible". Vivekananda held the Indians responsible because they

had no confidence in their ability and always considered themselves too weak for any great and noble work. He sought to remove this paralysing sense of weakness by making the Indian conscious of their divine character and their infinite potentialities. He wrote: "Let us proclaim to every soul ... Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached. Arise, awake! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak; the soul is infinite, omnipotent, and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do not deny Him! Too much of inactivity, too much of weakness, too much of hypnotism has been and is upon our race. O Ye modern Hindus, dehypnotise yourselves. The way to do that is found in your own sacred books. Teach yourselves, teach everyone his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity." \[135\]

Vivekananda exhorted his countrymen to dedicate themselves for the time being exclusively to this work of awakening the Indians. He said: "For the next fifty years this alone shall be our keynote—this, our great Mother India. Let all our vain gods disappear for the time being from our minds." \[136\] Whatever might have been the intention of Vivekananda, his message promoted revolutionary and militant nationalism in Bengal. This feeling of patriotism was further strengthened by such poets of Bengal as Rangalal Bandyopadhyay (1827-1887), Hem Chandra Bandyopadhyay (1833-1903), Nabin Chandra Sen (1847-1909). The famous drama Nil Darpan written in 1860 by Dinabandhu Mitra (1835-1973) had also contributed to the growth

\[135\] Ibid., p. 193.
\[136\] Ibid., p. 300.
of national feeling by exposing the oppression of indigo planters.

**Militant Nationalism in Bengal Politics.**

The spirit of nationalism which arose in the Bengali mind through the conscious efforts of a galaxy of social leaders, religious reformers, writers and poets found an institutional expression in the formation of a large number of local samities or organizations in different parts of Bengal in the beginning of the twentieth century. The *Anushilan Samiti* which may be regarded as the pioneer of these organizations was formed in Calcutta in 1902 with Pramatha Nath Mitra as its President and Satish Chandra Bose as its Secretary. Inspired by the ideals of Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda, the *Anushilan Samiti* created among its members a burning sense of nationalism, organized classes on moral education and provided facilities for physical culture in the form of lathi play, gymnastics and sword-play. During the same time and on the same principles a large number of organizations were formed throughout Bengal. The most important of them were: *Atmonnati Samiti* of Central Calcutta, *Suhrid Samiti* and *Sadhana Samiti* of Mymensingh, *Brati Samiti* of Faridpur, *Swadesh Bandhab Samiti* of Barisal and another group founded by Swami Prajnananda, the founder of *Sankar Math* of Barisal, which came to be known as the Barisal group. Besides these groups, a large number of local organizations were formed in different parts of Bengal and thus

the Hindus of the whole province came under the stimulating
influence of nationalism and were swayed by the thrill of patrio-
tic fervour. Of these various groups mentioned above two
attained the status of provincial organizations and exercised
great influence on the subsequent development of Bengal politics.
One was the Jugantar group arising out of the Anushilan Samiti
of Calcutta and the other was the Dacca branch of the Anushilan
Samiti formed in 1906 and led by Pulin Behari Das. A group of
young members of the Calcutta Anushilan Samity gradually felt
dissatisfied with the programme and method of work of the leader-
ship and became impatient for violent revolutionary activities.
In spite of the opposition given by Pramatha Nath Mitra and other
leaders they started a paper called Jugantar in March 1906 and
began to preach revolutionary ideas openly. The group which was
formed around this paper came to be known as the Jugantar group.
Barindra Kumar Ghosh was its leader and this group had the support
and blessing of his illustrious elder brother, Aurobindo Ghosh.
Like this group the Anushilan Samiti of Dacca also adopted the
programme of revolutionary violence against the advice of its central
leadership, and, therefore, it also drifted away from the Calcutta
Centre. Thus though the Anushilan Samiti of Dacca and the Jugantar
group of Calcutta became almost identical in their objectives,
there remained a significant difference in their organizational

138. Nalini Kishore Guha, Banglay Diblabbad (Revolution in Bengal)
(A. Mukherjee & Co., Calcutta, 1969), pp.292-295; Pratul Chandra
Ganguli, Biplabir Jiban-Darshan (Philosophy of Life of the
139. For a history of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti see James Campbell
Ker, Chapter VI, pp. 140-154.
140. Arun Chandra Guha, First Spark of Revolution (Orient Longman,
structure. The Jugantar developed more as a movement than as a rigid party but the Anushilan Samiti of Dacca was turned into a centralized organization with elaborate rules, iron discipline, constitutional formalities and rituals of oath-taking for new members. 141 Both the groups started frantic preparations for a violent movement against the British Raj but before they could start the movement, Bengal was partitioned by Lord Curzon which served as a signal for the outbreak of a wide-spread mass agitation in the province.

The partition of Bengal in 1905 which was justified by the Government on the ground of administrative convenience appeared to the people as a subtle attack on the growing solidarity of Bengali nationalism. Inspired by extremist nationalism and organized in a net-work of militant Samities the Hindu community of Bengal stood like a rock firmly opposed to the partition of the province. The movement which arose in the form of a protest against the partition of the province was soon turned into a struggle for Swaraj or national independence. Bankim's war-cry Bande Mataram was now accepted as the national slogan in Bengal inspite of the prohibitory orders issued by the Government putting a ban on its shouting. 142


142. While discussing the anti-partition agitation of Bengal the Sedition Committee Report stated: "The novel (Anandamath) had been written many years previously, and the song (Bande Mataram) hitherto had excited no particular emotion, but now gradually it was raised to the rank of a national anthem". Sedition Committee Report, p.19.
The victory of the small Asiatic country, Japan, over its large European adversary (Russia) during this time, had its immediate impact on the Bengali mind, already saturated with anti-British militant nationalism and it strengthened their determination to fight the foreign domination. Referring to Bengal's reaction to Japan's victory the Sedition Committee Report observed: "They (the nationalists of Bengal) contrasted Bengali acceptance of this insult (partition) with the brilliant valour shown by Japan against one of the proudest of the European nations. Had Bengalis no religion, no patriotism? Let them remember their Mother Kali, the goddess of strength! Let them improve their own strength!"  

The reaction of the Bengal nationalists which has been aptly described by the authors of the Report was unique in India. The minds of the nationalists in other parts of India were not prepared to respond to the Japanese victory in this manner.

During the revolt of 1905 Bengal developed a new technique of struggle against foreign domination which came to be known as Passive Resistance. Describing its nature Bipin Chandra Pal wrote in the Bande Mataram on 18 September 1906: "Our method is passive resistance which means an organised determination to refuse to render any voluntary and honorary service to the government."  

In the words of Aurobindo Ghosh: "The first principle of passive resistance which the new school has placed in the forefront of

143. Ibid., p. 19.

their programme is to make administration under present conditions impossible by an organized refusal to do anything which shall help either British commerce in the exploitation of the country or British officialdom in the administration of it, unless and until the conditions are changed in the manner and to the extent demanded by the people. This attitude is summed up in "Boycott".  

Originally conceived as an economic weapon (boycott of British goods) the idea of boycott gradually assumed the character of four-fold non-cooperation — economic boycott, educational boycott, judicial boycott and boycott of administration. 

This technique of passive resistance was an important contribution of Bengal to the freedom movement of India. As Aurobindo Ghosh has put it: "Boycott has solved the greatest problem of Indian politics; it has shown the way, perhaps the only way, in which a disarmed people living under all the difficulties of an alien autocracy can identify themselves with the cause of their country." It was almost an anticipation, politically, though not philosophically, of the Gandhian method of non-cooperation. Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee have pointed out: "The Non-violent Non-Cooperation of Mahatma Gandhi is thus found to be


146. For Aurobindo's explanation of four-fold boycott see Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, *India's Fight for Freedom or the Swadeshi Movement* (Firma K. L., Calcutta, 1953), p.192.

anticipated in a substantial measure by the doctrine of Passive Resistance as adumbrated by Bipin Chandra and Sri Aurobindo during the Swadeshi days (1905-1911)." 148

The Boycott movement had a positive side also which was known as Swadeshi. Referring to these two aspects of the movement Bipin Chandra Pal wrote: "First, the creation in the public mind of a strong sense of aversion to all official connection; and second, the opening of such ways and means in our own industrial, commercial educational and social life, as will find to the people almost everything that they now go to the government for." 149

Though an attempt was made to build up a constructive movement against all the aspects of the four-fold boycott, it was successful actually in the economic and educational field only. The economic boycott of the British goods was accompanied by a programme to encourage national industries. "Industrial revival", Surendranath Banerjee wrote, "followed as a matter of course, and devoted men, instinct with the new spirit, applied themselves to the development of our indigenous industries". "(The) political enthusiasm of our people", he continued, "was linked with the fervour to uplift our industrial status. The Swadeshi movement was in spirit a protectionist movement". 150 The Swadeshi movement had similarity with Gandhi's Constructive Programme in conception though not in content. Both aimed at developing a national economy within the

148. Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics, n.145 p.XXX.
existing structure, but the Swadeshi movement stood for the industrialization of the country and not for the revival of the Charkha.

The most notable success of the Swadeshi movement was achieved in the field of education. The criticism of the British-controlled system of education and the demand for national education arose, as we have already mentioned, much earlier than the anti-partition agitation. The existing system of education was condemned mainly on the ground that it was calculated to serve the administrative requirements of the ruling authority, and instead of promoting patriotism it inculcated among the students a sense of loyalty to the foreign government. Moreover, the absence of any provision for utilitarian, physical and moral training and the negligence of the vernacular language were regarded as its major drawbacks. In 1902 Satis Chandra Mukherjee formed the Dawn Society in order to inspire the students with the swadeshi spirit and to remove the deficiencies of the prevailing system of education. The Society had an Industrial Section which started in 1903 a Swadeshi Stores where country-made goods were collected and sold.\(^\text{151}\) The Society's journal, The Dawn Magazine, also published articles and various statistical information about the economic life of India from the swadeshi point of view. When a large number of students all over Bengal boycotted the government-controlled schools and colleges in the

\(^{151}\) For details see Haridas Mukherjee, *Satis Mukherjee : A Father of the Bengali Revolution* (Calcutta, 1948).
wake of the anti-partition agitation, Satis Mukherjee and many distinguished persons of Calcutta decided to give a concrete shape to the idea of national education. Accordingly, on 16 November 1905 an education conference was held at the premises of the Bengal Landholders Association which was attended by almost all the important leaders of Bengal. This conference decided to establish a National Council of Education to organize a system of education on national lines and under national control. The education which the National Council sought to promote was not basically different in nature from the education introduced by the British in India. Its aim was to build up a system, not in opposition to, but standing apart from, the existing pattern. It tried to impart education, ordinarily through the medium of the vernacular language, retaining English as a compulsory subject and inspiring the students with a genuine love for their country. The National Council of Education stood for a "three-dimensional system" of education with literary, scientific and technical streams. But a moderate section of the Bengal nationalists headed by Tarak Palit, Bhupen Bose, Nilratan Sircar and others wanted to leave the literary and scientific streams to the existing system and to supplement it by starting a course only of technical education under national management. The difference on this point became so acute that the nationalists were divided into two groups, and, in addition to the National Council of Education, a new organization known as the Society for the Promotion of Technical Education, was

152. For details of the conference see Bhola Chatterji, Indo-British Cultural Confrontation: Gooroodass Banerjee and His Times (Minerva Associates, Calcutta, 1979), pp.157-161.
also set up. The Bengal National College and School was founded by the Council (August 1906) and the Bengal Technical Institute by the Society (July 1906). Aurobindo Ghosh was the first principal of the National College and School and its teaching staff included such distinguished persons as Benoy Kumar Sarkar and Radha Kumud Mookherji. A large number of national schools formed in different parts of Bengal were brought under the control of the National Council of Education. 153

The movement for national education and the whole constructive or positive side of the struggle however soon became emasculated as the first flush of enthusiasm for political agitation subsided. Though Satis Chandra Mukherjee started his constructive movement through the Dawn Society few years before the outbreak of the antipartition agitation, it became popular only in the context of the national struggle which started in 1905. During this struggle national schools were organized throughout the province and the demand for national education became a popular demand. The basic motivation behind this demand was to strengthen the struggle against the foreign rule and not to lay the foundation of a new society within the structure of the British empire. It was on this issue that an acute difference of opinion arose between Rabindranath and other political leaders of Bengal which ultimately led the poet to retire from active politics. The nationalists of Bengal were convinced that political independence must be achieved first before

153. This account of the National Council of Education is based on Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, A Phase of the Swadeshi Movement (National Education) 1905-1910 (Chuckerverty, Chatterjee and Co., Calcutta, 1950), pp.38-74. For details see Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, The Origin of the National Education Movement (Jadavpur University, Calcutta, 1957).
the country could make progress in other fields. As Aurobindo has put it: "The political salvation of our country is thus the prime necessity, not only because it is worth having in itself, but also because it is the one pre-condition of our national progress in the different walks of life". The Sandhya, a nationalist paper with extremist and militant views, founded by Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, similarly wrote in 1904: "We want complete independence. The country cannot prosper so long as the veriest shred of the Feringhi's supremacy over it is left. Swadeshi, boycott, all are meaningless to us, if they are not the means of retrieving our whole and complete independence. .......

The boycott and swadeshi agitation of 1905 was soon followed in Bengal by a violent movement against the foreign rule. As already indicated, this movement was led mainly by the Jugantar group of Calcutta and Anushilan Samity of Dacca and it took the form of assassinating the Government officials in order to strike terror into the hearts of the foreign rulers. Bombs and other explosives were manufactured in strict secrecy and money was collected through political dacoities. They also made attempts to organize revolts by enlisting the sympathy of the Indian soldiers in the British army and by seeking the co-operation of the enemies of British in the international field. Like the Santans of the Ananda Math the members of the secret societies were dedicated workers ready to

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sacrifice their lives for the liberation of the Motherland. The
cult of violence was taken from Bankim Chandra and the movement
was sustained by the message of Shakti and fearlessness so success­
fully preached by Vivekananda. Though Vivekananda's ideas had
nothing to do with violence, the revolutionaries drew courage and
inspiration from his speeches and writings which enabled them to
embrace death cheerfully. "From much evidence before us", the
Sedition Committee Report concluded, "it is apparent that this
influence (Vivekananda's influence) was perverted by Barindra
(Barindra Kumar Ghosh, the leader of the Juggantar group in the ini­
tial period) and his followers in order to create an atmosphere
suitable for the execution of their projects". 

156 No Indian would perhaps disagree with this view particularly if the word 'perver­
ted' was replaced by the word 'utilised'. It was, however, Auro­
bindo Ghosh, the elder brother of Barindra, who prepared the scheme
for a violent revolutionary movement in Bengal on the basis of
the ideas of Bankim and Vivekananda, and the scheme was sought to
be realised in practice by Barindra and his associates. In his
famous pamphlet Bhawani Mandir Aurobindo identified Bhawani or
goddess Durga with India and explained the scheme of a new order
of sannyasis who would work for the emancipation of the country.
The similarity between his approach and that of Bankim, as explained
in his novel Ananda Math, is palpable. Following the path of Bankim,
Aurobindo wrote in this pamphlet that the nation "is not a piece
of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It

156. Ibid., p.17.
is a mighty Shakti, composed of the Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation. ... The Shakti we called India, Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of the shaktis of three hundred millions people. ..." He thus preached the gospel of power and strength as the necessary pre-condition for political emancipation. Referring to the work of Vivekananda he observed in this pamphlet: "If the work does not progress as it once promised to do it is because we have once again allowed the terrible cloud of Tamas to settle down on our souls - fear, doubt, hesitation, sluggishness". To carry on his work what was necessary was strength and he wrote: "Strength then and again strength and yet more strength is the need of our race". In his Autobiography Barindra wrote that this pamphlet made him "mad" and excited him beyond measure.  

Though philosophically the underground revolutionaries of Bengal were products of the militant nationalism of the Bankim-Vivekananda-Aurobindo tradition, their organizational structure and methods of struggle were much influenced by those of the secret societies of European countries. The Carbonari Party of Italy and the exploits of Mazzini and Garibaldi were constant sources of inspiration for them, and the secret societies of Russia which were engaged in a bitter struggle against the Czarist rule were accepted by them as their model. The lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi

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along with the Bhagavad Gita and the writings of Vivekananda were included in the syllabus meant for the education of their mem-
ers.\textsuperscript{159} In an article published in the Jugantar on 3 March 1907 it was stated: "Be not afraid. Not very many listened to the young Mazzini on the day when, wounded to his heart's core by the sufferings and poverty of Italy, he firmly resolved to free his country from bondage. But today Italy has expiated her own sin and has washed away in human blood the blackness of her stigma. Oh, sons of Bengal, worshippers of Sakti, will you be averse from that ?\textsuperscript{160} In course of a search in Calcutta the police seized from them documents about the general principles followed by the Russian secret societies and the method of their work.\textsuperscript{161} The Jugantar also published many articles on the activities of the Russian revolutionaries and explained the necessity of similar activities in India.\textsuperscript{162} The underground revolutionaries of Bengal considered themselves at war with the British,\textsuperscript{163} took inspiration from the Sepoy mutiny of 1857,\textsuperscript{164} hated the westerners from the very depth

\textsuperscript{159} Sedition Committee Report, p.23.
\textsuperscript{160} Cited in James Campbell Ker, p.66.
\textsuperscript{161} Sedition Committee Report, pp.96-97.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., p.15 fn., 22.
\textsuperscript{163} In their pamphlet Bartaman Rananiti they wrote: "Destruction is natural and war is, therefore, also natural. .... War is inevitable when oppression cannot be stopped by any other means whatsoever. ... It is for this reason that Sri Krishna, god himself, acted as charioteer, holding the reins in his hands at the battle of Kurukshetra. It is for this reason that the god Ram Chandra planned the destruction of Ravana". Cited in James Campbell Ker, p.47.
\textsuperscript{164} In an article published on 2 May 1908 on the Mutiny of 1857 the Jugantar wrote: "Is it possible that the fire which was kindled fifty years ago has been altogether extinguished within so short a time? Is there no one who has kept some smouldering embers of that fire to burn the race of mlecchas? Has the flame of the fire, which has in all ages destroyed demons and monsters, been put out altogether?" Cited in Ibid., p.69.
of their hearts, and thought that the Bengalis would show the Indians the way to their salvation.\textsuperscript{165}

The violent activities of the secret revolutionary societies started in Bengal in 1906, but the first major incident took place on 30 April 1908 at Muzaffarpur in Bihar in which Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki were involved. Though their purpose was to kill Kingsford who, as Chief Presidency Magistrate, Calcutta, had tried cases against the \textit{Yugantar}, \textit{Bande Mataram}, \textit{Saddhnya} and other revolutionary newspapers, they threw the bomb by mistake into the carriage of Mrs. and Miss Kennedy, the wife and daughter of a local barrister. The bomb outrage, however, led to extensive searches in Calcutta and to the arrest of Aurobindo Ghosh, Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Ullaskar Datta, Upendra Nath Banerji and other revolutionary leaders. In spite of severe repression by the Government, the movement continued to grow. The heroic activities of the revolutionaries received unbounded admiration of the entire Hindu community of Bengal and they roused the wildest passion among them. The Bengali journal \textit{Jugantar} attained a circulation of 7,000 in 1907, and its sale was so large that, as the Chief Justice pointed out, the crowds seeking to purchase it formed an obstruction in the street.\textsuperscript{166} Pratul Chandra Ganguli wrote that he saw copies of \textit{Jugantar} which were priced only two paise being sold at Rs.2/-.\textsuperscript{167}

\textsuperscript{165} On 30 November 1907 the \textit{Yugantar} wrote: "Today the Bengalis alone of all the Indians have understood that the Westerners are a set of fierce and blood-thirsty beasts of prey. .... The Bengalis have understood this, and are constantly trying to dispel the illusion. The Bengali is today making all India appreciate his own sterling divine qualities". Cited in \textit{Ibid.}, pp.68-69.


\textsuperscript{167} Pratul Chandra Ganguli, n.138, p.121.
One leader of this movement later on wrote that there was possibly no middle class family in Bengal which did not in some way or other come in contact with this movement. The statement was not very far from the truth, though it must be remembered that this movement remained confined largely, almost exclusively, to the Hindu community. The Bengal revolutionaries gradually extended their movement to other parts of India and even gave it an international character. They were active in the United States, Japan, Germany and other countries including Russia of the immediate post-revolutionary period. During the first world war they tried to organize an internal armed uprising and also entered into an international conspiracy which came to be known as Indo-German Conspiracy. Though the movement was not successful, the attempt was inspiring and the impact was wide-spread. The names of the leaders and martyrs of the movement became household words in every Bengali Hindu family. The engine of coercion was let loose against them by the ruling authority and the torture they suffered and the sacrifice they made amazed the people and filled their hearts with hatred against the British. A movement with such wide ramifications and broad sweep was unprecedented in the history of any nation striving for emancipation. But when the first world war ended, it was thoroughly disrupted, the international conspiracy failed, the internal revolt betrayed, the leaders abroad bewildered, the members within imprisoned, and the supreme leader, Jatindranath Guha.

169. For this conspiracy see Kalyan Kumar Banerjee, Indian Freedom Movement: Revolutionaries in America (Jijnasa, Calcutta, 1969).
Mukhopadhyaya with few of his lieutenants died fighting the enemy in the open battlefield at Balasore on the bank of the river Buri Balam in Orissa. Under such conditions of defeat and depression there appeared in the western part of India a new and dynamic leader, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, with the message of a non-violent struggle. How did Bengal respond to that message?

Features of Bengal's Militant Nationalism.

Before we start discussing this question it is necessary to make some observations in the way of summing up our major findings in this chapter. We have seen that by the time Gandhi appeared in the scene of Indian politics, a large section of the Bengali Hindus were thoroughly saturated with the national sentiment. Nationalism was accepted by most of them as a new religion and they stood for complete independence. They were convinced that national independence would never be realized without a national struggle and that without national independence all programmes of national development through constructive activities would be futile. This was the spirit of militant nationalism.

What was their idea about the technique of the struggle against the British? We have referred to two struggles launched by the militant nationalists of Bengal against the foreign rule. One (anti-partition agitation) was the mass movement based on passive resistance and the other was an underground revolutionary struggle based on violence. Were they two different methods of struggle which were mutually exclusive? Or, were they two different
aspects of the same method. Though Barindra Kumar Ghosh and his close associates in Calcutta as well as the Dacca Anushilan Samiti did not join the passive resistance movement, there were many who were involved in both. Aurobindo was the most prominent figure in both the movements and he considered them integrally related to each other. He compared the passive resistance with the diplomatic weapon of a state and the violent movement with its military strength, and maintained that just as a state must remain prepared with both, and use them according to circumstances, so a nation fighting for independence must apply both the weapons to realise its objective. He wrote: "As diplomacy needs, as a condition of its success, armed strength behind it, - un-applied but capable of being effectively applied should this diplomacy fail - so constitutional agitation which is a form of diplomacy in countries that are subject to autocratic rule, needs, as a condition of success, the determination of the people to do and dare whatever the situation may demand, for the realisation of their aims and ideals."

170. In his Autobiography Barindra described the Boycott and Swadeshi movement as a "movement of the Vaisyas" and wrote that during this movement they actually used foreign goods in order to avoid the notice of the police. Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Barindrer Atmakahini, n.158, p.13.

From the account of another revolutionary leader we find that the Anushilan Samiti of Dacca also adopted the same attitude but the various district units of the Jugantar supported the Swadeshi movement. "Dacca Anushilan, unlike the district units of what later on became Jugantar, kept itself more or less away from public movements almost all along". While referring to "public movements" he meant, among other activities, participation in "the anti-Partition and Swadeshi movement". Arun Chandra Guha, Aurobindo and Jugantar, n.141, p.30.

171. Aurobindo Ghosh, "The Realism of Indian Nationalist Policy", Bande Mataram, 24 April 1908. The article is reproduced in Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics, n.145, p.375. By "constitutional agitation" Aurobindo meant passive resistance movement and not the movement of the moderates carried through petition and prayer. The latter method was thoroughly rejected by him,
We may, therefore, conclude that passive resistance supported, whenever necessary and possible, by acts of violence, was the technique of national struggle as conceived by the militant nationalists of Bengal in the pre-Gandhian period. During that time Bengal did not think of national struggle in terms of non-violence. Aurobindo thought that politics should be governed by the morality of the *kshatriya* (soldierly virtues) and not by "the Brahmanical duty of saintly sufference."

Another important question which requires a critical examination is: to what extent did the Bengali nationalists of the Bankim-Vivekananda-Aurobindo school retain the rational spirit fostered in the earlier period by Rammohun and Derozio? What was their attitude towards western civilization as distinct from western domination? What was their attitude towards social reforms? Did they continue the earlier efforts to develop among the people a rational and discriminating outlook?

In order to answer these questions we should remember the basic difference between the objectives of these two movements — a rationalist movement led by Rammohun and Derozio and a national extremist movement led by Bankim, Vivekananda and Aurobindo. They arose in two different contexts with different, though related, objectives. Rammohun-Derozio movement arose in the context of a struggle against the medieval mentality of the people with the object of modernizing the country. The national extremist movement arose in the context of a struggle against foreign domination in order to make the country independent. In the former case the western civilization served as a source of inspiration and the

172. Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, *Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics*, n. 145, p. XXXI.
British Government as an ally. The exploiting character of the alien rule was not clearly perceived during this stage and this gave rise to the "providentially ordained" theory. The main weapon to fight against the mediaeval and superstitious outlook of the people was "reason". The cult of Shakti or a technique of mass mobilization was irrelevant to it. But the national extremist movement against foreign domination which was initiated at a later stage by the English-educated people inspired by the ideas of Bankim, Vivekananda and Aurobindo required mobilization of a large section of people, and therefore, it had to assume more or less a populist character. The traditional religious language and symbols were therefore used in this movement. In this context the philosophy of Dharmayuddha and the cult of Shakti preached respectively by Bankim and Vivekananda became relevant for the fighters for independence. A national struggle required a philosophy which would have a strong emotional appeal just as the struggle against mediaeval superstitions required a philosophy of rationalism.

Thus the character of the national-extremist movement of Bengal was clearly different from that of the movement launched by Rammohun and Derozio. But the former was not directed against the latter. The leading thinkers of the nationalist camp such as Bankim, Vivekananda and Aurobindo cannot be placed in the same category along with those who opposed the modernist movement of Rammohun and tried to maintain the traditional social set-up. 173

173. David Kopf, however, made an attempt to trace the origin of the nationalist attitude to the Dharma Sabha and he wrote: "The Dharma Sabha by means of Sati abolition issue organized India's first protonationalist movement against foreign interference in the internal affairs of Hindus". See "Rammohun Roy and the Bengal Renaissance", in V.C. Joshi (ed.), n.63, p.29.
Rammohun had great appreciation for all aspects of western civilization — its science and industry, its rational and utilitarian philosophy as well as the ethical principles of Christianity. The nationalists who appeared in the subsequent period also recognized the superiority of the West in the material aspect of civilization but believed that it was deficient in spiritual aspect. This deficiency, they believed, could be remedied by India's spiritual message. With the discovery of the wealth of the ancient Indian culture mainly by the European scholars, the Hindus naturally became proud of their heritage and they tried to get over their inferiority complex by proclaiming the superiority of their spiritual culture over the materialist civilization of the West. But they did not deny the importance of material development and admitted that India had much to learn from the West in this respect. Bankim Chandra drew a clear line of distinction between the sphere of science and that of religion and maintained that India must learn science from the West and religion from their own scriptures.\textsuperscript{175} Vivekananda, the great

This view appears to be untenable because, unlike the nationalists, the Dharma Sabha had no political grievance against the rule of the Company. See Sumit Sarkar, "Rammohun Roy and the Break with Past" in \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 63-64. Moreover, the nationalists were not in favour of retaining social evils like the Sati system. As we have explained earlier, the nationalists considered political issues more important than social problems and they believed social evils would gradually be removed through modern education. There were some nationalists who were too anti-Government to tolerate its interference in their social affairs.

\begin{footnotesize}
174. Rammohun's views on Christ and Christianity were clearly explained in his tract \textit{The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness} published in 1820.

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champion of Indian spiritualism, said: "We talk foolishly against material civilization. The grapes are sour". In 1898 he told his disciples at the Belur Math: "You have not the capacity to manufacture a needle, and you dare to criticise the English: Fool! Sit at their feet and learn from them the arts, industries, and the practicability necessary for the struggle for existence." The ideal society which he had in view would be based on European industrialism and Indian spiritualism. "Can you make a European society with India's religion?" he asked. "I believe it is possible," was his answer. Analysing the ideas of Vivekananda, a foreign writer has pointed out: "The solution for India's condition, he (Vivekananda) had decided, could be found in the West; India's poverty made the teaching of religion impossible without first rectifying the physical ills of the country." Aurobindo's spiritualism also did not imply any denial of material prosperity. "It is a great error to suppose", he wrote, "that spirituality flourishes best in an impoverished soil with the life half-killed and the intellect discouraged and intimidated." He did not stand for the ideal of poverty and observed: "There was never a national ideal of poverty in India as some would have us believe, nor was bareness or squalor the essential setting of her spirituality." He also recognized the liberating significance of

180. Sri Aurobindo, The Renaissance in India (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1936), p. 11. Though Aurobindo wrote it during his Pondicherry period, he held the same view when he led the revolutionary movement.
181. Ibid., p. 45.
the impact of the western civilization on India, and referring to this impact he wrote: "It gave three needed impulses. It revived the dormant intellectual and critical impulse; it rehabilitated life and awakened the desire of new creation; it put the reviving Indian spirit face to face with novel conditions and ideals and the urgent necessity of understanding, assimilating and conquering them. The national mind turned a new eye on its past culture, reawoke to its sense and import, but also, at the same time, saw it in relation to modern knowledge and ideas. Out of this awakening vision and impulse the Indian renaissance is arising, and that must determine its future tendency." In their literature the militant nationalists of Bengal denounced the Englishmen severely in the context of their domination over India but they did not condemn the western civilization as such. Their faith in the superiority of Indian spiritualism did not prevent them from appreciating the contributions of the West towards the development of material civilization.

So far as their attitude towards social reform was concerned it may be said that though they were not indifferent to the social evils, they were not inspired by any spirit of social revolt. They stood for the removal of the existing social evils but tried to create a reverential attitude towards the Indian cultural tradition in order to promote a sense of national pride among the people. Their attitude was that India's past tradition was not inconsistent with social reforms.

182. Ibid., pp. 18-19.
at present. As Vivekananda has put it: "I tell my countrymen that so far they have done well — now is the time to do better." The movement for national independence, however, ultimately diverted the attention of the militant nationalists of Bengal from social problems to political issues. "One of the most urgent problems that the nationalist movement faced," Charges H. Heimsath wrote, "may be stated concisely: should social reform precede political reform or vice versa?" The militant nationalists firmly believed that political change should come first though the leaders of the reform movement of the earlier period (Rammohun and others) thought that social reforms were necessary for political progress.

Such was the outlook of the militant nationalists of Bengal. They were impatient of British rule but not opposed to Western civilization. They were proud of the spiritual culture of India but not advocates of India's traditional social system. They were inspired by Bankim and Vivekananda but also appreciated Rammohun and Derozio (except the extravagance of the Derozians). They believed in religion but made nation their supreme goddess. They wanted social reconstruction and industrial progress, but regarded foreign rule as its greatest impediment, and tried to get rid of foreign rule by any means. With this outlook how did the militant nationalists of Bengal respond to the Gandhian leadership and Gandhian ideas? In order to discuss this question elaborately we must at first know at least briefly the basic approach of Gandhi. This is attempted in the next chapter.