CONCLUSION

English literary writings by Indians in nineteenth century (post)colonial Bengal operated with the agenda of self-representation. The response of the colonised Indian/Bengali to colonial education and to his colonised predicament was complex and assorted, subtle and sustained. This is not the kind of writing that screams or curses. But that does not in any way take away from its subversiveness. The commonest literary tools employed to undercut British supremacy are realism, irony, humour and the comic mode in general. Social realism operates side by side with the use of indigenous myth and tradition to represent contemporary life. The authors writing at this time mostly convey their thoughts in a sustained, but subtle manner. This is perhaps one of the reasons why it has escaped the kind of theoretical and critical attention that is due to it. This literature ought to be given more space not only in theoretical and critical writings, but also in academic curriculum dealing with Indian Writing in English.

The above chapters amply illustrate that Indian Writing in English in nineteenth century Bengal was not a “freak phenomenon”, but rather a medium by which the “native intellectual” was writing/representing himself and his desh, articulating his aspiration for being heard. Far from being “exotic”, “rootless” or “crude”, this literature actually discourses on some of the most important issues of the day, from British legislation to the condition of the peasants, from the “mutiny” to the question of self-rule. Though rooted deeply in Indian tradition and culture these texts make no attempt to “exoticize” India. Rather, there is a constant cultural negotiation and examination going on. In spite of this, this is an area that has remained in the back-stage. This “beginning”
of Indian writing in English is overlooked and the moment of inauguration speciously stipulated to a much later date.

Some of the questions that prompted this research are: We use the past (events/history) to make sense of the present (culture/literature/psychology), why can't we use the past to make sense of the past? If the postcolonial condition is inaugurated with the onset of colonialism, then why has sufficient space not been devoted to the postcolonial condition when colonialism still prevailed? While we always talk of the effects of colonialism, the "residue" of colonialism etc, what were the immediate socio-cultural effects on the colonised and how is it reflected in their literary productions? Is the early postcolonial consciousness different from its later manifestations? Hopefully, the above chapters have found some answers to these questions.

Postcolonial studies have characteristically highlighted the coloniser's role in exploiting knowledge and language as power, and concentrated on texts that were produced by the "imperial agency" to stabilize the myth of British cultural supremacy. It is perhaps imperative now that we begin to pay attention to those texts that were produced by the colonial subjects in the colonial period. The general tendency has been to homogenize all literary productions of all the colonies under a convenient theoretical umbrella (for instance Bill Ashcroft et al., see page 20 above) or Frederick Jameson ("all third world texts are necessarily ... national allegories") or Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (the subaltern cannot speak)). Speaking against these generalizing tendencies, Aijaz Ahmed argues that "... there is no such thing as a 'Third World Literature' which can be constructed as an internally coherent object of knowledge" (Ahmed In Theory 96-7). Ahmed further states that "There are fundamental issues—of periodization, social and
linguistic formations, political and ideological struggles, within the field of literary production, and so on— which simply cannot be resolved at this level of generality without an altogether positivist reductionism" (97). While Ahmed was refusing to be theorized by his "civilisational Other", we may argue on his lines that the earliest postcolonial consciousnesses in Bengal and their manifestations in literature written in English, have many shades of meaning and levels of significance that cannot be brushed aside with a stroke of the pen that treats them collectively. Each text has a lot to tell, but only if we choose to hear.

Ahmed contests Jameson's claim that "all Third World texts are necessarily... national allegories" on the grounds that the "national allegory" model cannot be the "primary" or "exclusive" "form of narrativity" in the Third World (even the categorisation of "Third World" is debated by Ahmed in the first place). There are other things to narrate too. So as early as the nineteenth century when the first English texts were being written by Indians/Bengalis, we find that this literature is not essentially "allegorical", though it is doubtlessly infused by a sense of self identity and representation.

The authors writing in this period were either representing social realities (Krishna Mohan Banerjee's *The Persecuted*), or imagining rebellion against the British Rule (Kylas Chunder Dutt's *Journal* or Shoshee Chunder Dutt's *Republic*) or engaged in negotiating and interrogating colonialism and its effects (Shoshee Chunder Dutt's *Reminiscences, The Young Zemindar*), or upholding the condition of the less privileged and poorer sections of society (Lal Behari Day's *Bengal Peasant Life*), or even questioning British historiography (Shoshee Chunder Dutt's *Shunker*), and conventional
British representation of the colonised (Shoshee Chunder Dutt’s *Reminiscences*). Some
of the authors display a strong sense of their indigenous identity and their rich cultural
and religious heritage (Shoshee Chunder Dutt, Kshetrapal Chakravarty). Others
represent the domestic scene and its negotiations with the changing socio-cultural
climate (Bankim Chandra, Toru Dutt, and Kshetrapal Chakravarty).

In the light of the above one cannot agree with Meenakshi Mukherjee when she
says in *The Perishable Empire* that “The Indian novel in English during the colonial era
had no way of drawing sustenance... and that could be one of the reasons why this body
of writing was destined to reach a dead end at that time” (23). This argument
erroneously presupposes that unlike vernacular literature this “body of writing” reached
a dead end because it could not draw its “sustenance” from “political aspirations,
imaginative adventure, historical reconstruction as well as a desire to document
contemporary life” (23). The above chapters amply illustrate that nineteenth century
Indian Writing in English (in Bengal) draws on the themes mentioned by Mukherjee.
What else but “political aspiration” is sought in Kylas Chunder Dutt’s *Journal* or
Shoshee Chunder Dutt’s *Republic*? What is Shoshee Chunder Dutt’s *The Young
Zemindar* if not “imaginative adventure”? Is not Shoshee Chunder Dutt’s *Shunker*
“historical reconstruction”? Does not Krishna Mohan Banerjee’s *The Persecuted*
“document contemporary life”? It is strange why literary historians, scholars and critics
consistently overlook these elements in the above mentioned texts.

The first text produced as a result of the Bengal-British cultural encounter was,
as has already been noted above, Krishna Mohan Banerjee’s *The Persecuted*. This text
which realistically represents the contemporary socio-cultural situation is not only the
first text in the body of Indian Writing in English, but also the first in the whole of modern Indian literatures to have such a theme. It is the first modern Indian drama that articulates the shared/collective experience of many young Indians/Bengalis who were negotiating with the contesting pulls of tradition and western knowledge.

In the same year that Macaulay’s (in)famous Minutes on Education was published, arguing for the necessity of an English education for Indians so that a convenient class of “interpreters” may be produced, Kylas Chunder Dutt wrote A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945, which was published in Calcutta Literary Gazette on 6 June, 1835. But while Macaulay’s Minutes became the favourite tool of postcolonialists vouchsafing how knowledge and language operate as power, the significance of Kylas’ text, notwithstanding its very bold theme of rebellion, was lost on all. While Macaulay was using his best rhetoric to establish English education and dreaming of the “imperishable empire of our arts and literature”, Kylas, a young student of the Hindu College (the first college of Western education in India to be set up by the initiative of middle and upper class Bengalis), was also using his newly acquired knowledge for writing-representing, and visualising an Indian rebellion (that too by Western educated students of the Hindu College) against the British.

When looking at the colonial period, too much attention is paid to the coloniser’s perspective. It is imperative that at least equal attention should also be paid to the responses of the colonised: to examine, for instance, to what uses were the colonised putting their education? In a similar element Shoshee Dutt’s The Republic of Orissa: Annals from the Pages of the Twentieth Century, (published in Saturday Evening Hurkura, 25 May, 1845), also has the daring theme of rebellion against the British rule,
years before the first major rebellion against the British actually happened in 1857. Shoshee's text is revolutionary in its imagining of independence and its concepts of "nation" and "nationality".

The authors writing in this period were already stressing the cultural difference between the English and the Indians in general and the Bengalis in particular. They were already articulating the idea (an idea that has now gained much currency) that cultural difference with the English does not make the indigenous culture "inferior", indeed that, that kind of a valorisation cannot be sanctioned. This literature displays colonial and postcolonial modernity through its emerging sense of etching an indigenous identity that is not necessarily obliged to mimic the West.

Thus we find that in *Bengal Peasant Life* Lal Behari Day spells out the cultural difference between the Bengalis and the English in the *Preface* itself. Throughout the novel Lal Behari projects in detail the daily life of Bengal peasants, their joys, sorrows, rituals, festivals, in short, every aspect of their life. He contests the image of Bengali effeteness and also underlines the cruelty of British legislations and regulations. The East-West cultural negotiation in Lal Behari's text is best brought out through the many literary allusions in the text (a complete list of these allusions and their varied sources is given in Appendix C below).

This literature not only encompassed within it the unavoidable anxiety of the cultural negotiation as is evident from the use of English/Western education, particularly literature but was also instrumental in indigenous identity formation and in the formulation of desh-bodh. Accordingly, we see that in Shoshee Chunder Dutt's *Reminiscences*, the author uses irony and humour to negotiate with his colonised
condition and also to draw attention to the dual, often contradictory, aspects of the British Rule.

In a very different vein are written two of Shoshee’s other texts. Shunker—*A Tale of the Indian Mutiny of 1857* is a pioneering work because it is the first attempt by an Indian author (in English) to narrate the events of the 1857 rising. Shoshee’s text is revolutionary for its daring inversion of the rape metaphor and its challenge of the British notion of the savage and the civilized. Shoshee *The Young Zemindar: His Erratic Wanderings and Eventual Return: Being a Record of Life, Manners, and Events in Bengal from Forty to Fifty Years ago* is a step forward from the earlier texts, with its promise of the vision of a united India.

Nineteenth century Bengal was a melting pot of influences that did not exclude from its purview the site of family and intimate relationships. The impact of the vibrant, uneven, socio-cultural environment in nineteenth century Bengal, which witnessed an unprecedented collision of entirely alien cultures and religions, now came to be extensively felt in the closed space of the family. Matters of everyday household life too became open for debate. Consequently, women became the subject of a lot of verbal and written discourse, both in the vernaculars as well as in English. These dialogues soon crossed the literary threshold so that novels came to be written on women-centric subjects: Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Rajmohan’s Wife*, Kshetrapal Chakravarty’s *Sarala and Hingana*, and Toru Dutt’s *Bianca*, are all named after the woman protagonist in them.

The above study sufficiently demonstrates that while it is true that the “cultural colonization theory” of India by the British cannot be underestimated, in India,
particularly in Bengal, this "cultural colonization" did not go uncontested. Moreover, the consequences of this "cultural colonization" far outwitted English expectations/purposes. As is observed by Meenakshi Mukherjee in The Perishable Empire, "When Thomas Babington Macaulay spoke of 'the imperishable empire of our arts... and literature...' which would outlast the sceptre, he could not have anticipated the way history would rewrite the terms of that continuity" (xi). The literary texts that came to be written in the English language in nineteenth century (post)colonial Bengal are foundational texts in the history of Indian Writing in English, and indeed, all Indian literature.

History certainly asks us to re-consider/re-view the coloniser-colonised negotiations. While sufficient attention has been paid to the theory of complicity, it is today crucial that we also begin to look at the counter-texts of contestation. As is borne out by the texts studied in the above chapters, the colonial period was in no way a period of homogeneous/total textual dominance. The colonial subject, particularly he who had the advantage of Western education, was not an imperial agent as he is so conveniently theorised to be. There is no doubt a sense of ambivalence in his attitude to the imperial rule, but that did not in any way blind him from seeing the colonial rule in an analytical manner, with all its inherent defects, nor did it deter him from representing himself. His vision was certainly not as impaired as it is made out to be, because as early as 1835, he could envision a rebellion against the colonial rule. Moreover, this "native intellectual" was deeply conscious about the political and the socio-cultural environment around him and was engaged in representing the condition of the peasants, the tribes, and the middle-classes. The texts discussed above are characterised by ambivalent or hybrid situatedness, generated by the interplay of western education, imperial discourses and
indigenous culture and tradition. If any common aspect is to be sought in these texts, it is their representational quotient and their *desh-bodh*. All the texts, in their own diverse ways, were writing India, writing self.