Chapter One: The Induction of English in Bengal and the Native Intellectual

The Socio-historical Context

British rule in India had originated in Bengal and it was inevitable that Bengali society would be the first to experience the consequent socio-political changes. These socio-political transformations had far reaching consequences. The first of these was the change in the economic configuration of Bengal in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, England began to acquire Indian territories. When Siraj-ud-Daula, the ruler of Bengal, attacked the British settlement in 1756, Calcutta was recovered by an expedition by Robert Clive who succeeded in bringing down the ruler of Bengal after the battle of Plassey in 1757. In 1765 the East India Company took possession of Bengal, Bihar and parts of Orissa from Shah Alam, the existing Mughal Emperor. Most historians have explained the British conquest of Bengal in terms of the “internal crises of Bengal in the early 17th century” which “inevitably brought in the British”.¹ This “political crisis theory” explains that the “expulsion” of the British from Calcutta in 1756 could not be borne by the indigenous ruling elite, and therefore they had a hand in the heralding of the British domination of Bengal. This favourite theory of British historiography is one of the expedient tools for justifying the colonial mission and has been countered by Indian historians such as Sushil Chaudhury who have pointed out that Bengal was one of the most prosperous provinces of the Mughal Empire and that it had also become one of the most important centres of international trade. Bengal’s fertile land, its rich and varied agricultural output, its highly...
skilled weavers and artisans, and it's highly developed financial and communication network made it the most valuable support of the Mughal Empire. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Europeans trading in Bengal were fully aware of its rich potential and "began to harbour dreams of conquering it". Chaudhury says that "There is ample evidence to show that many of the Europeans in the 1750s were freely writing about or discussing the possibility of conquering Bengal." He thus concludes that "it was neither by chance nor by accident that the British conquered Bengal in 1757" (Italics mine). Plassey laid the foundation of the British Empire in India: "Bengal was the springboard from which the British expanded their territorial acquisition and subsequently built up the empire which gradually engulfed most parts of India" (Chaudhuri, *Prosperity to Decline* 2-3).

When the British first came to India, the basic economic structure of Bengal was feudal. The introduction of money as the chief measure of value and instrument of exchange, both in rural and urban areas upset the existing economic equilibrium. The spirit of money-making brought about a significant change in the nature of human relationships in the society. The paternalism of the "benevolent despots" of the feudal days was largely replaced by a kind of cash-nexus by the new class of money-minded land speculators and land revenue contractors and sub-contractors, whose socio-economic position was firmly stabilized by the enactment of the Permanent Settlement (1793) and the subsequent legalization of the intermediate tenures. Thus the old feudal aristocracy was replaced by a more dehumanized feudal aristocracy (many of whom were "absentee zamindars), a re-orientation of the feudal set-up to make it more subservient and accommodating to the capitalist-imperialist ethos of the British rulers.
Following the British conquest, Bengal gradually degenerated into economic decline. There was a massive change in the status of the artisans who were the “hinge” of Bengal’s economy. The so long independent artisans were now “reduced to the position of virtual slavery under Company rule in the second half of the eighteenth century.” Since the Asian merchants of the export trade were also eliminated from Bengal’s commercial world by the British, “both trade and industry languished” (Sushil Chaudhury 9).

The British policy of economic strangulation led to a distorted process of urbanization, and to the consequent growth of a semi-feudal urban social hierarchy. Calcutta became the centre of British administration, trade and commerce. In the process, a class of Bengali elite developed that could interact with the ruling British. This was the bhadralok, a socially privileged and consciously superior group, economically dependent on landed rents and professional and clerical employment. During the second half of the eighteenth century this elite group became permanent residents of Calcutta.

Though the Bengal economy as a whole was already degenerating, some individuals (mainly traders and money-lenders) rapidly acquired fortunes by working as partners with the British. This group included individuals such as Rammohan Roy (1774-1833), Radhakanta Deb (1784-1867), and Dwarkanath Tagore (1794-1846). Later, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the breed of middle-income Bengalis gradually came into being and consolidated itself into the socio-economic structure Calcutta. This group included small land-holders, government employees, teachers, journalists, and the like. This group included personalities such as Michael
Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873), Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884), Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894), Kedamath Datta Bhaktivinoda (1838-1914), Sisir Kumar Ghosh (1840-1911), to name just a few. A third group consisting of unemployed and under-employed men made up the non-productive proletariat in the new imperial capital of Calcutta. Interesting accounts of these people can be gleaned from the memoirs and writings of foreign travellers, and from news reports in contemporary periodicals.

The new Bengali urban aristocrats, the *nouveaux-riches* were composed of heterogeneous people of diverse social origins. The lure of money levelled to some extent the barriers of traditional caste occupations. The new urban aristocracy became “mini-nawabs”, and took much pride in the parade of all sorts of feudal vices: in competitions and luxuries such as extravagant religious and social ceremonies; entertainment of British officials for gaining their favour and patronage; and in “nautch” girls. Bengal (and particularly Calcutta) witnessed an interesting and unique social situation. Bengal’s first collaboration with the British had been trade. Other collaborations, of far reaching consequences, were now to follow. As noted historian Tapan Raychaudhuri rightly argues,

The contact with the West was a crucial factor in the transformation of modern Indian sensibilities, but the term westernization is an inappropriate description of the changes in question... [They were] the end results of processes which went far deeper than mere imitation, borrowing or amalgamation of disparate cultural traits. The contact...was a catalyst: it triggered off responses and reactions which acquired a life of their own. The results, manifest in new ways of thinking, feeling and
action, were very different from their counterparts in the Indian past or contemporary western experience (Perceptions, Raychaudhuri 4).

Partha Chatterjee also speaks of the “eastern” type of nationalism as being characterised by “an effort to ‘re-equip’ the nation culturally, to transform it.” Chatterjee says that this could not be done by simply “imitating the alien culture”, because then the nation would lose its “distinctive identity”: “The search therefore was for a regeneration of the national culture, adapted to the requirements of progress, but retaining at the same time its distinctiveness” (Chatterjee 2).

Sisir Kumar Das also points out that, “The period between 1835 and 1857 witnessed the consolidation of the British power in India and also the growth of the Indian ambivalence towards the British rule” (Das 83). Postcolonial theorists like Leela Gandhi have dealt with this problematic “ambivalent and symbiotic relationship between coloniser and colonised” (Gandhi 11). Albert Memmi, the French language Tunisian novelist, opined that the colonial condition “chained the coloniser and the colonised into an implacable dependence, moulded their respective characters and dictated their conduct” (Memmi, Dominated Man 45). The colonial annals of Bengal alleviate any attempt to homogenize the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised into a simple dichotomy of oppressor and oppressed. In such context, the texts written in English in the changing social, cultural, religious and economic climate of nineteenth century (post)colonial8 Bengal may be seen as diverse, complex, indigenous responses to the surfacing of two seemingly paradoxical intellectual phenomena: the radical nationalism that univocally repudiated the idea of the empire, and the cultural pluralism that made the idea of progress rationally acceptable.
Introduction of English in Bengal

We have no documentary evidence to indicate how the Bengalis and the British communicated with each other in the early days, but we shall perhaps not be far out of truth if we imagine that the initial language of gesture soon yielded place to a verbal mode of serviceable conduct based on a set of essential glossary and limited syntax. But what is amply evident is that very soon both sides felt the need of a better understanding of each other's language.

The Christian missionary interest was the spread of their religion, while the interest of the East India Company was administrative efficiency. The Fort William College was established in 1800 in Calcutta to teach Bengali to the Company officials. On the part of the English, the utility of language as a tool of power/control was always obvious. Thus Nathaniel Halhed, author of *A Grammar of the Bengal Language* (1778), the first grammar of the Bengali language wrote in the *Preface* to his book,

> The wisdom of the British Parliament has within these few years taken a decisive part in the internal policy and civil administration of its Asiatic territories; and more particularly in the Kingdom of Bengal... Much however still remains for the completion of this grand work; and we may reasonably presume, that one of its most important desiderata is the cultivation of a right understanding and of a general medium of intercourse between the government and its subjects; between the Natives of Europe who are to rule, and the Inhabitants of India who are to obey... The English ..., who are masters of Bengal, may... add its Language to their acquisitions: that they may explain the benevolent principles of that
legislation whose decrees they enforce; that they may convince while they command; and be at once the dispensers of Laws and of Science to an extensive nation (Halhed i-ii).

But while the English were interested at this point of time in learning Bengali, the Bengalis were gearing up for learning English. This history has been documented by historians such as Sisir Kumar Das, who have recorded that by the end of the eighteenth century English became “the undisputed European language” in India. People were very quick to realize its importance and the first learners belonged to the three port towns, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, “particularly Calcutta, the capital of British India.” As may be expected, the early learners had little interest in English literature, but what they realized was that knowledge of English carried “the promise for a better financial status”. Thus “with the promise of a brighter economic career, English entered the Indian society” (Das 29).

During the final decades of the eighteenth and the early decades of the nineteenth century, there was quite a crop of schools where Bengali boys could pick up some English. William Adam, a Baptist missionary, describes the typical village school in a report on rural education in Bengal prepared in 1835. He writes that these schools were held in “shabby straw-built structures” or “in open air under shady trees”, and were “run by teachers who were little respected and poorly rewarded.” He also notes that “discipline was enforced in these institutions in a rough and ready manner by the lusty exercise of the cane as well as numerous forms of sadistic infliction” (N. K. Sinha (Ed.) 273, 280-1).
The fourth chapter of Peary Chand Mitra's (pen name Tek Chand Thakur) novel *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (1855) begins with the description of the early days of these schools. Mitra remarks that in these schools the boys read Thomas Dyce and memorized meanings of words. He also states that a youngster, who, at a dinner party, could rattle off compound words, became a much admired cynosure of the gathering. A similar account is also provided by Rajnarayan Basu in *Sekal aar Ekal* (14). Such was the spate of schools at this time that it came to be said that "Every Englishman in straitened circumstances—the broken down soldier, the bankrupt merchant, and the ruined spendthrift—set up a day school" (Carey 445-58). There were schools set up by Bengalis too. In *Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Banga Samaj*, Sibnath Shastri mentions that the first Bengali to set up such a school was probably one Ramjoy Dutta. He also says that Gour Mohan Auduy's school made quite a name for itself (76-9). Both Sivnath Shastri and Rajnarayan Basu mention that in this first era of English learning, the student who read the most, read *The Arabian Nights*, and he who read the 'Royal Grammar', was regarded as a topmost scholar. At this time hardly any attention was paid to either grammar or syntax. The emphasis was on the learning of English words and it was one's knowledge of English vocabulary was regarded as the determining factor in judging one's knowledge of the language (Ghose, *Bidrohi Derozio* 26). Because of their strange methods to learn the English, the Bengalis became a source of humour for the British. Instances of what came to be known as "Bengali English" were often published in English newspapers. Rajnarayan Basu gives many examples of such usage (Basu, *Sekal aar Ekal* 19-22).
A source of humour for the nineteenth century British, was “Bengali English” the colonised’s attempt to appropriate the coloniser’s language? Attempting to impersonate his master’s language, the nineteenth century Bengali created an “other” of the standard British English. Theoretical hindsight would no doubt posit it as involving both “alteration” as well as “making new”: Homi Bhabha has famously said that “colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Bhabha goes on to say that “the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (Bhabha, 1994).

But at that point of time was this “othering” a conscious strategy or was it simply a failure to impersonate with perfection? What was the use to which it was put in contemporary indigenous English literature? We have an example in Krishna Mohan Banerjee’s The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of the Hindoo Society In Calcutta (1830), the first Indian drama in English. In this drama, Banerjee shows the “corrupt” Brahmin Kamdeb speaking “Bengali English”—“Yesh Yesh; I rich man, he not make me respect. We must order Mohadeb to transportation from house; and we must excommunicashian him”, and adds a foot-note to the effect “This is the way in which many, pretending to know the English language, murder it in a cruel manner” (17). For the English educated Banerjee therefore, the “deviation” from the “standard” English was nothing short of “murder”, and he also seems to have attached some kind of a value judgement on the basis of the knowledge of English, because while the “bad” character Kamdeb speaks “bad” English, the “good” old servant
(who is not expected to have attended an English school), not only speaks "good" ("standard") English, but also alludes to Shakespeare as he speaks.¹⁰

Thus even before 1835 (the year Macaulay delivered the infamous Minute on Education), English had already penetrated some of the urban areas in Bengal. The Hindu College was established as early as 1817 by the initiative of upper class Hindus, and Rammohan Ray, the first Indian to write extensively in English, wrote a large number of books in the English language between 1816 and 1833 (including his famous 1823 letter to Lord Amherst arguing for the establishment of Western education for Indians). Rammohan’s initiation into the English language, however, had been rather late. In his essay on the English writings of Rammohan Roy, Bruce Carlisle Robertson quotes John Digby,¹¹

At the age of twenty two he commenced the study of the English language, which not pursuing with application, he, five years afterwards, when I became acquainted with him, could merely speak it well enough to be understood upon the most common topics of discourse, but could not write it with any degree of correctness... By pursuing all my public correspondence with diligence and attention, as well as by corresponding and conversing with European gentlemen, he acquired so correct a knowledge of the English language to be enabled to write and speak it with considerable accuracy. He was also in the habit of reading the English newspapers... (Robertson, in Mehrotra (Ed.) 33-34).

Rammohan thus did not acquire his knowledge of English from any school. He did not undergo institutional learning for acquiring skills in the English language. He
learnt the language by careful study of his master's "public correspondence", "by corresponding and conversing with European gentlemen" and by "reading the English newspapers". This is striking because at this point of time most of the methods by which Bengalis attempted to learn English were very different. 12

The Shift of Focus from English Language to English Literature: The Hindoo College

Consciously or unconsciously, the English language gradually came to be synonymous with superior intellect, superior learning, and even superior morals. Ceasing to be merely a language, it came to symbolize a whole way of life. Ironically enough, Macaulay's aim to form "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, in morals and in intellect" had already begun to be realized much before he formulated the idea in the 1835 Minute, though not without resistance. Macaulay was therefore not the pioneering force behind the establishment of English education in Bengal. Rather, the middle and upper class Bengali Hindus played a dynamic role in the matter. 13

The establishment of the Hindu College on January 20, 1817 not only testifies the vibrant role of the Bengali upper classes in the establishment of English education, but it is also the marker of the shift in the native demand from English language to English literature. The Hindu College represents the first collective effort made by Indians themselves for the education of their children in English language and literature, as distinct from knowledge merely of English vocabulary. A report in the Calcutta Gazette dated 17 January, 1828, reads:
English education among the inhabitants of Bengal, has hitherto had little more than the mere language as its object; a sufficient command of which for conducting the details of official duty, comprehended the utmost ambition of many native students. The *Spelling Book*, a few *Reading Exercises*, a *Grammar* and a *Dictionary*, formed the whole course of their reading... and little more was effected than qualification as a copyist or accountant. The Hindoo College is intended to compass something more; to teach Bengali youth to read, and relish, English Literature; to store their minds with the facts of history and science, and to enable them to express their conclusions in a clear and polished style: founded upon a comprehensive view of society, and the phenomena of nature.

Thus for the first time, English language was cultivated in the Hindu College, not to the extent necessary to carry on business with Europeans, but as the most convenient channel through which access was to be obtained to the literature of the west. The annual reports of the Hindu College of the years 1827-1828 state that: "The studies in the Institution were Natural and Experimental Philosophy, Chemistry, Mathematics, Tytler's Elements of General History, Russell's Modern Europe, with Milton and Shakespeare" (De 481). In 1857, the Universities of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay were set up on the model of the London University, primarily holding examinations and conferring degrees on students who came up from all kinds of colleges. The recommendation for the Universities was contained in the *Woods Despatch* (1854), named after Sir Charles Wood, the then President of the Board of Control. *Woods Despatch* also recommended the establishment of a Department of Public Instruction,
and the giving of grants-in-aid where desired and deserved. With the development of the Education Departments and the Universities, the new education system took firm roots.

Within a decade of its existence, the Hindu College had become the centre, with the dynamic personality of Derozio as its axis, around whom gathered the youthful liberals of Bengal—Calcutta, to be precise—signalling a new social and political awakening. No doubt this awakening had severe limitations, but its importance, nevertheless, cannot be underrated. Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831), started teaching in the Hindu College in 1826, at the very young age of seventeen. Many of the students of the higher classes were also in their early teens and he soon literally became their friend, philosopher and guide. Derozio encouraged his students to judge the customs, practices, and the rules of Hindu society, according to the dictates of logic and reason alone. As a result, the Derozians (as the students of Derozio came to call themselves; they also came to be known as "Young Bengal") condemned Hindu dietary laws, the authority of gurus and priests, caste divisions, women's inferior status, idol worship, and other traditional Hindu practices. Above everything, Derozio taught his students to think for themselves.14

In 1827-28, under his guidance and often in his house, regular debates and discussions took place, and thus was born the first youth association of Bengal (and of India)—the Academic Association. Referring to the sittings of this Association, Rev. Lal Behari Day wrote that it was here that "the choice spirits of young Calcutta held forth, week after week, on the social, moral, and religious questions of the day. The general tone of the discussions was a decided revolt against existing religious institutions" (Day, Recollections of Alexander Duff 29). Derozio's students made an intense study of
Western literature and drew their inspiration from it. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the works of Voltaire, Hume, Locke, Tom Paine, etc, began to be imported to Calcutta. Advertisements of these books appeared in the *Calcutta Gazette, Morning Post, Calcutta Chronicle*, and other magazines. The Derozians besides being influenced by Western culture, admired the progress of the Industrial Revolution, and cherished with fond romanticism the ideals of the American War of Independence (1775–1783), the French Revolution (1787), and the July Revolution of 1830.

As much as English language education brought the ideas of the west to India, so did British Orientalism facilitate the transmission of new cultural attitudes to the *bhadralok.* British Orientalism was inspired by the needs of the East India Company to train a class of British administrators in the languages and culture of India. The inspiration behind British Orientalism was the idea that traditional oriental learning could be combined with the rationalism of the west. Through the researches of Sir William Jones it came to be known that many European languages including Latin, Greek, German, have cognates/cognitives that were now traced back to a reconstructed hypothetical language, namely Indo-European. It also became evident that ancient India had a vast tradition of linguistics, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and architecture. That the Mauryas ruled a vast empire, and that classical civilization reached its peak under the Guptas, were also significant discoveries of Orientalist scholarship. The fruits of British Orientalism though intended to serve the needs of company servants and European academicians, had a profound impact on the *bhadralok*, who gained a systematic overview of the Sanskrit Hindu culture, and became aware of the rich cultural
past of his country. British Orientalism lit the fires of Hindu pride and became one of the most powerful ideas of nineteenth century India.

In direct contrast to British Orientalism came the introduction of Christianity into Bengal. The Charter Act of 1813 had opened the doors to Christian Evangelicals who quickly established themselves throughout India, including Bengal. They validated the imperial process through the concept of the civilizing mission. Seeking to obliterate the Hindu religion, they wanted to replace it with Christian values, English education, and Western ideas, and attacked the very foundations of Hindu religion and culture. While many conversions (Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, and Lal Behari Day) attested their success, these missionaries also created a powerful impetus to reformulate and understand the Hindu traditions in the light of modernity. The educated Bengali elite became keen on religious reform. Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), Sisir Kumar Ghosh (1840-1911), Bhudev Mukhopadhyay (1827-1894), Kedarnath Datta Bhaktivinoda (1838-1914), Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891), Akshay Kumar Datta (1820-1886), Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94), Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), and many others, in their own ways, attempted to redefine and defend Hindu ideas in modern (contemporary) terms.16

Bengal’s interface with the British culture and literature thus led to complex cultural relations and negotiation of ideas that were developing and mutually shaping each other throughout the nineteenth century. People adapt themselves to the necessities and the opportunities of more or less oppressive or invasive cultural impositions, live into alien cultural patterns through their own structures of understanding, thus producing something familiar but new, by a variety of stratagems, whether desperate or cunning or
good willed. The postcolonial concept of hybridity refers to this merging of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and colonised cultures. In nineteenth century Bengal, intellectual and social change was achieved in roughly two ways: “by breaking caste or dietary taboos (by eating beef), and ... by instituting social reform (say, in support of widow remarriage).” However, this bourgeoisie also attempted to recover “the very tradition that, at other times, it seemed intent on redefining or even disowning” (Amit Chaudhuri 3). In nineteenth century Bengal then, a new social, intellectual and political milieu was taking form in the wake of the interface of the two hitherto alien cultures, the primary site of which was the Hindu College.

In the next few chapters I shall examine the English language texts written by Bengalis who were the products of this colonial milieu and colonial education. Contrary to the popular view, these texts neither blindly mimic British literary modes nor is their approach conciliatory. Rather, this is an intellectually stimulating, analytical literature that represents indigenous life, manners, customs and even contests British historiography.
Notes and References


2. The chief sources for this section are:


3. Permanent Settlement, the outcome of a long drawn debate and discussion among the policymakers of the East India Company, was concluded by the Cornwallis administration in 1793. It was a grand contract between the East India Company Government and the Bengal landholders (Zamindars and independent *talukdars* of all denominations according to which the landholders or Zamindars were admitted into the colonial state system as the absolute proprietors of landed property. The Zamindars were also endowed with the privilege of holding their proprietary right at a rate which was to continue unchanged for ever. Under the contract the government was barred from enhancing its revenue demand on the zamindars. Though the zamindars had the right to transfer their land freely by way of sale, mortgage or gift, their *raiyats* were denied such a privilege. They had the customary right to hold the land hereditarily subject to payment of rent regularly, but no right at all to transfer the right in any form. In relation to government, zamindars had of course one obligation to perform. It was to pay the government revenue demand absolutely punctually. The zamindars were warned that in case any of them failed to pay the kist at the stipulated date "a sale (in auction) of the whole of the lands of the defaulter, or such portion of them as may be sufficient to make good the arrears, will positively and invariably take place." (Section 7,
Regulation 1, 1793) The Permanent Settlement must not be looked at as merely an arrangement for revenue collection. It was rather contrived as the core part of the control system of the colonial state. All other parts of the administration, such as executive, judiciary, and police were geared to the desired working of the permanent settlement system. However, in spite of all care to preserve the system, it began to erode under the impact of new circumstances effected by the rise of imperialism and later, the growth of nationalism, introduction of the revenue sale law, and growth of population. The system suffered a series of amendments and modifications and finally, it was abolished in 1950.

The term *bhadraloka* is commonly used in Bengali social discourse and literature to refer to any educated and respectable gentleman mainly of the three Bengali upper castes (*brahmanas*, *kayasthas* and *vaidyas*). Parama Ray defines the *Bhadralok* thus: Derived from the Sanskrit word *bhadra*, which has been glossed severally as refined, privileged, and propertied, *bhadralok* (respectable men, gentlemen, generally Hindu) were distinguished from *chhotolok*, or the lower orders. They were broadly divided into the *abhijat* bhadralok, who had acquired their fortunes in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as business agents of the British, and the *grihasta* or *madhyabitta* bhadralok, a middle income group characterized by English education, professional occupations, and salaried (rather than entrepreneurial) status. It is the latter group that has come to be associated most powerfully with the term *bhadraloka*. (Parama Ray, 'Bhadralok/Bhadramahila', *Keywords in South Asian Studies*, ed. Rachel M. Dwyer)

5. See Appendix A for biographical details of Rammohan Roy, Radhakanta Deb and Dwarakanath Tagore.

6. For biographical details see Appendix A


8. The chronological division between colonial and postcolonial is no more valid today. The moment of colonization itself marks the beginning of the postcolonial experience.

6. *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (1857), published in the year of The Revolt of 1857 Peary Chand Mitra (1814-1883) portrays early 19th century Calcutta society and focuses on the bohemian life of a character named Matilal. Thakchacha is another important character. *Alaler Gharer Dulal* is thought to occupy a unique position in the history of Indian, and certainly Bengali, literature as "the first work in Bengali which can be described..."
as a novel." As in England, where the rise of the novel is associated with the industrial revolution and emergence of a new sensibility, so in India the novel's beginnings are said to be linked to the penetration of the market economy into the countryside, the emergence of a middle class, and the advent of other forces of 'modernization' and 'Westernization.' The growth of the novel, Humayun Kabir was to write in his monograph on the Bengali novel, "is associated with the development of the scientific temper and the emergence of the middle class." With the consolidation of British rule, and the transition of authority from the East India Company with its errant ways to the Crown, supposedly the very embodiment of the 'rule of law', both the rulers and the ruled could devote more attention to the much vaunted ethic of 'improvement', and "life became more settled and conventional". Kabir ventured on to say that "the new middle classes stress individuality and human dignity", and presumably meant to indicate that in India, as in England, the novel would be a carrier of these values. (Vinay Lal Indian Literature, no. 139 September-October 1995:164-70.) The author used Chalita Bhasa, the colloquial prose form, hitherto never used in writing. Since Peary Chand's Alaler Gharer Dulal was the first book written using the colloquial form, this style came to be known as 'Alali language'. Peary Chand used plenty of contemporary Bangla and foreign words, as well as Bangla words derived from Sanskrit but in a corrupted form. He used the pseudonym Tekchand Thakur'. The novel was serialised in a monthly magazine, Masik Patrika (1854), founded by Peary Chand himself. Later, a dramatised version, written by Hiralal, was staged at the Bengal Theatre (January 1875). The novel has also been translated into English.

10 This old servant refers to Antonio, the faithful servant in Shakespeare's As You Like It, whom he uses as a measure to judge himself as a servant. He also uses classical allusions such as the friendship between Hercules and Patrocles, Achilles etc

11 In 1803 Rammohan became munshi of John Digby, an official of The East India Company, and then rapidly rose through the ranks to sar-ristadar (head clerk), soon becoming Digby's diwan. Digby became his close friend and confidante and is an important source of information about Rammohan's early years.

12 However, once having acquired considerable mastery of the language, Rammohan went on to write profusely in English. Rammohan's English writings include Translations of an Abridgement of the Vedant (1816), English translations of Kena (1816), Isa (1816), Katha (1817), and Mundaka (1819) Upanishad expositions, A Defence of Hindoo Theism(1817) and A Second Defence of the Monotheistical System of the
Vedas (1817), his famous tracts against Sati, Translation of a Conference between an Advocate for, and an Opponent of the practice of Widow Burning (1818), A Second Conference (1820), Brief Remarks regarding modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of females according to the Hindoo Law of inheritance (1822), petitions against restrictions on the Calcutta press, the Memorial to the Supreme Court, and Appeal to the King in Council (1824), A Letter to Lord Amherst on Western Education (1823), persuasively arguing against public education in Sanskrit, Prospects of Christianity in India (1824), Universal Religion: Religious Instructions Founded on Sacred Authorities (1829), Exposition of the Practical Operation of the Judicial and Revenue systems of India (1832), Answers of Rammohan Roy to the Queries on the Salt Monopoly (1832), Settlement of India by Europeans (1832) and the famous autobiographical letter published in the Athenaeum and the Gentlemen's Magazine in 1832.

13 "About the beginning of May, a Brahmin of Calcutta, whom I knew, and who is well known for his intelligence and active interference among the principal native inhabitants, and also intimate with many of our gentlemen of distinction, called upon me and informed me, that many of the leading Hindus were desirous of forming an establishment for the education of their children in a liberal manner as practiced by Europeans of condition: and desired that I would lend them my aid towards it, by having a meeting under my sanction." (Letter from Sir Edward Hyde East to Mr. J. Harrington, another judge of the Calcutta Supreme Court)


15 The term Orientalism derives from a Latin word Orien referring simply to the rising of the sun, to imply "the East" in a relative sense. This is the opposite of the term Occident, which has largely dropped from common usage. The first 'Orientalists' were 19th century scholars who translated the writings of 'the Orient' into English. The word began to develop negative connotations following the publication of the groundbreaking work Orientalism (1978) by the U.S. based Palestinian scholar Edward Said. Following the ideas of Michel Foucault, Said emphasized the relationship between power and knowledge in scholarly and popular thinking, in particular regarding European views of the Islamic Arab world. Said argued that Orient and Occident worked as oppositional terms, so that the "Orient" was constructed as a negative
inversion of Western culture. Said puts forward several definitions of Orientalism in the introduction to *Orientalism*. Some of these have been more widely quoted and influential than others:

- "A way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience." (p. 1)
- "A style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'." (2)
- "A Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." (3)
- "...particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a veridic discourse about the Orient." (6)
- "A distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts" (12). While it is impossible to ignore the Saidian implications of the term Orientalism, I have here used it in a general and classificatory sense.

16 See Appendix A for details on Bhudev Mukhopadhyay and Vidyasagar.

17 Hybridity/ Syncreticity models of postcolonial approach are most influenced by post-structuralist theories; they often deconstruct the binary oppositions of center/periphery, master/slave, coloniser/colonised, civilization/savagery, etc. not only do these models examine how colonial contact 'hybridizes' culture and its representations, but they also explore the ricocheting effects of alterity. To quote Homi Bhabha "Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialis disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—its rule of recognition... This partializing process of hybridity is best described as a metonymy of presence" (Bhabha, *Location* 14-15).