Chapter: 6

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In this chapter has been made to examine the reaction of the Indians in terms and adjustment to western ideas and ideologies that led to the development of a 'hybrid' English educated native elite. A trend that followed in its trail was manifested in a search for identity and authenticity of the 'natives' that expressed itself in cultural and religious revivalist movement. It was a reaction of the colonised to the colonial cultural subversiveness.

Seeking avenues for trade the British stepped into India in the 17th and gradually established, with their perseverance and the response of the indigenous society, a colony that was to emerge as a classic colony destined to play a crucial and important role in the development of British Capitalism.

Bengal, became the focal point in Eastern India of British trade and circulation of British merchant capital. Consequently, in the process of the development of a colonial state Calcutta the centre. In course of time Bengal underwent a transformation, both remarkable and significant. Politically overthrown by the British she came fast under the sway of an alien culture and civilisation. Imbibing new knowledge, technology, believes values, and institutions of the West, it was Bengal which was to develop a high degree of rational thinking and initiate a process of social and religious reforms which was to regenerate the entire country. One single factor which was mainly responsible for bringing about the change from medieval to modern age, was the introduction of English education and the western ideas which followed. It resulted in a complete cultural chaos.
particularly within the zone of English education does of political power was accompanied by loss of faith in the country’s age old culture. A surging wave of European ideas and ideals seemed to sweep India off her cultural moorings.  

Colonialism, being a cultural project of contract, tried to impose alien values not through legislation, nor by force; the path chosen for what can be termed as cultural colonialism was education. In fact Macaulay saw in “English education the main key to the full colonization of India”. And he suggested, “We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern.” His argument was that since English was the language of the ruling class it should become the means of Indian education system. Thus “colonial education laid the structural basis for the development of an ideology”. It can be said that the basic aim of the British education not only the district of Rajshahi, Pabna and Rangpur but in entire Bengal between 1854-1947 was to create a class who could support the British to implement their designs in the country. But approach of the middle class also radical. They were also influenced by rational philosophy. They still tired to compromise modernity with tradition and this was the beginning of hybridity and at the same time a search for authenticity. Thus English language and culture played a significant role in imparting western orientations to the traditional society. This was the British viewpoint. A very interesting of study in the response of the Indians to this alien cultural penetration. A very important fact to be remembered is that initially the British rulers did not introduce English education, they did not even encourage it till 1855 when they took the responsibility of introducing it. In the mean time considerable progress had been made in the diffusion of English education in Bengal through the efforts of some Bengalis
especially the Hindus, and the Christian missionaries who became the vanguards of English education in the country. The need for a liberal education was keenly felt by a good number of Bengali gentlemen. Assimilation of British ideas and values in their culture resulted such an interaction between the British and Bengali elite. This Bengali elite were the western educated Hindu upper caste who were professionals Government employees or engaged in commercial enterprise. In this reaction between the two the British were obviously in the dominant position while the Bengali elite, assimilating British values and ideas in their culture was the subordinate partner. Martin Oran's theory of the rank concession syndrome (R.C.S.) (where he observes the synthesizing process of different group) is relevant to the Bengali elite of the 19th century. In an attempt to raise its status, a society, which concedes rank to a dominant society, emulates attributes of the letter to raise its status. The reason why it does so is that technologically the dominant society is more powerful. Therefore the attainment of some practical goal was the real motive behind it. Great economic benefits were achieved as a result of entering into relations with British commercial, financial, administrative organizations in Calcutta, British lifestyle, British customs, British system of education, British behavior pattern were borrowed and adapted because successful economic interaction demanded it. The leaning towards western education instead of traditional education was because of the former's practical importance. This is where mimicry came in: the Bengali elite tried to mimic the British so that in the words of Macauley they would become English in tastes and intellectual outlook. An effort to compromise modernity with tradition was the beginning of hybrid culture of the Indian.
Though this was mainly the picture of the Bengali elite in and around Calcutta, the same may be projected in analyzing the Bengali elite in other parts of Bengal. This elite class patronized by the British was bestowed with titles of Raja, Maharaja, Rajah, Bahadur. In the districts of Rajshahi, Pabna and Rangpur the prominent among this aristocrats were Raja Bahadur Prasanna Nath Ray (Rajshahi), Raja Pramada Nath Ray (Rajshahi), Maharaja Jagadindra Nath Ray (Rajshahi), Raja Bahadur Harnath Ray Chaudhury (Rajshahi), Khan Bahadur Ershad Ali Khan Chaudhury (Rajshahi), Rai Banamali Rai Bahadur (Pabna), Khistish Bhusan Rai Bahadur (Pabna), Rai Shahib Tarak Nath Maitra (Pabna), Rai Shahib P.N. Chaudhury (Pabna), Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandy (Rangpur), Babu Chandra Kishore Ray (Rangpur), Maharanees Surnomoyee (Rangpur), etc. Besides, there were many zamindars in those districts who lived in Calcutta. Moreover the emergence of some district and mofussil towns due to the induction of colonial administrative and judicial system in the 19th century accelerated the process of growth of western educated Hindu Bhadralok middle class.

The Muslim middle class did not emerge till then. The Muslim apathy towards all that was English, a natural corollary to their disappointment and disapproval being removed from political and economic power by the was the reason behind this British backwardness. The trend was reversed in second half of twentieth century when the Mohammedan Literary Society (1863) of Abdool Luteef and Central National Mohammadan Association (1877) of Syed Ameer Ali played an important role to awaken the Muslim society. Mohammedan Literary Society was established, “to educate the Muslims in western learning through English medium and to prepare them equal to the educated Hindus and the English men in social intercourse.”7 Central National
Muhammadan Association was established to look into the interests of the Muslims. The Anjumans established to serve class interest at different times in the Moffasil towns in Bengal. Anjuman I-Islami, Anjuman I-Islamia, Anjuman I-Islam all of these societies branches were Mymensingh (1875), Chittagong (1880), Noakhali (1885), Rangpur (1887), Comilla (1887), Faridpur (1892), Jalpaiguri (1892), Sylhet (1894), Sirajganj (1898), Pabna (1905), Darjeeling (1909) etc. By the turn of the twentieth century several Muslim writers, journalists, and social workers drew attention to this problem and suggested ways of overcoming it. In the districts of Eastern Bengal, where the largest number of Muslims were concentrated, the rate of progress, except at the primary stage, was slower than that of the Hindus. But gradually the number of Muslims of the district of Rajshahi, Pabna and Rangpur were becoming interested in participation in politics and shares in jobs. In the districts of Rajshahi, Pabna and Rangpur the prominent among this educated Muslims were Moulvi Tofazzail Hossain (Rajshahi), Moulvi Imaduddin (Rajshahi), Moulvi Madar Box (Rajshahi), Moulvi Abdul Karim(Pabna), Moulvi Mofukharul Islam (Pabna), Syed Ismail Hossain Seraji (Pabna), Moulvi Wasim Uddin (Pabna), Syed Izhar Hossain (Rangpur), Abdul Mazid Chaudhury (Rangpur), Shaikh Fazlul Karim (Rangpur), Moulvi Taslimuddin Ahmad (Rangpur) etc. Those were drawn towards westernization and the modern education was also ambivalent. Thus led to a steady increase in the number of educated both at the lower and higher levels.

However towards the second quarter of the 19th century the hypnotic spell of foreign civilization began to recede. It was a slow but steady process-giving rise to a wave of self-consciousness of the Hindus. Rational thinking leading to social and religious e.g.
Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Hari Sabha, Branno Sabha, reforms development of intellectual eminence, induction of liberty and freedom and organisation, a fall out of western learning began to influence the Indians particularly the Hindu mind set. The Bengali elite because more and more conscious of their identity with their own culture. The search for authenticity began, the process expressed itself in various outlets, political, social, and economic. The British became aware of it as is evident in the remarks Elphinstone related by General Briggs who had served under him: Educating the natives, "may be our high road back to Europe", he had said. But there could be no turning back.

Stepped in western ideas of liberty democracy, fraternity the educated Indian elite game a new direction to national views, with a demand for participation and involvement in the state machinery and finally freedom from foreign yoke. The year 1885 was a landmark in the history of India, when the Indian National Congress was established. Gradually the nationalist upsurge engulfed the whole subcontinent. The district of Rajshahi, Rangpur and Pabna was not lagging behind the freedom movement. Many of its politicians and leaders, students and intellectuals were arrested and persecuted in the cause of freedom. The meanwhile seed of separatism, implanted in the Indian soil by the British after 1857 mutiny began to bear fruits. Both the communities, Hindus and Muslims were provoked against one another. The central national Muslim Association reported the interest of the Muslim community prior to the foundation of the Muslim league in 1906. A sense of loyalty of the Muslims to the British developed as the latter tried to uphold the claims of the Muslims. The need to western ideas through education was increasingly felt. Meanwhile the partition of Bengal in 1905, the creation of the new
province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, and the Swadeshi movement that followed added a new colour to the national movement, that of militancy. Between 1905 and 1921, therefore, we find a great ferment of educational thought within the fold of the country’s struggle for freedom could be noticed. A demand for Swadeshi education was made. Both the Hindu and Muslim communities of Eastern Bengal joined hands in Swadeshi movement. Great Poet Rabindranath Tagore presided over the meeting that was held in Pabna in 1908 where Barrister Abdur Rasul and Didar Box took part. Didar Box delivered his speech and requested the Muslim society for the active participation in Swadeshi Movement. Mujibur Rahman editor of the Mussalman, he wrote:

My humble appeal to my Hindu brethren is that they should guard against giving a place in their minds to the idea that “anti-swar" and “Mussalmans" are synonymous. I regret to have to observe that such an idea has, in many places, worked in calculable mischief…"

So, many Muslims were attracted to the movement and they were very famous for their educational qualification, social identification etc. The educated intelligentsia and the students of Rajshahi, Pabna and Rangpur districts also took part in the Swadeshi movement. The Rajshahi college which was the nerve center of higher education in North Bengal took the lead in the movement. Nripendra Chandra Banerji wrote that “the waves of swadeshi movement were still in full swell and the open movement of negative boycott and positive and constructive swadeshi thwarted and repressed with all the engines of law and unlaw at the disposal of a Government to which the vast majority of the virile and patriotic Hindu population were hostile had run underground and revolutionary and terrorist groups and cells, had been formed in every district in Bengal and Rajshahi was
no exception."^{10} At the earlier stage of Swadeshi Movement in Rajshahi about 1904-05, five pro nationalist persons persuaded the students of Rajshahi college to stir up troubles in favour of Swadeshi Movement. They were Kedareswar Acharya, Prasanna Kumar Bhattacharya, Kesori Mohan Chaudhuri, Hari Charan Maitra, Mahendra Kumar Saha Choudhuri.^{11} These persons in a printed appeal to the masses explained to them that the Swadeshi Movement was a movement for the economic emancipation, and that it could be developed by silent, slow and steady work. The people were encourage to purchase country made good. They further said: we do not think it is at all necessary now, for you to detract your attention form studies; but we do think that you should have love for your country made things and that you should purchase them and use them in preference to foreign article."^{12}

In 1908, Jogendra Nath, a third year student of this college and a zaminder of the district of Rajshahi, had attended the provincial conference held at Pabna where anti British and pro-independence views were expressed. In the district of Pabna, Edward College, and Bipin Bihari High School were the centers of revolutionary recruiting and activity. One observer has remarked: "the college was hundred percent under Swadeshi control, every body from the Principle to the junior most peon or orderly were Indians. Only the President of the Governing Body was a European I.C.S. by regulation the District Magistrate."^{13} In the district of Rajshahi, Pabna and Rangpur, most of the school and colleges actively took part in the Swadeshi Movement. Not only the students, the teachers also actively supported the patriotic movements. In the district of Rangpur, Professor Hirendra Mukharjee of Carmichael College delivered a lecture for the encouragement in the Swadeshi Movement at Palashbari, Rangpur district. * Palashbari
had grown to be a real power centre in the district. It was almost like a state within state,
he declared.\textsuperscript{14}

The Swadeshi Movement, was followed by the Non Co-operation Movement for achieving
independence by means of passive resistance: all governmental assignments such as
armed forces and deserting all educational institutions.\textsuperscript{15} Of course it was a logical
consequence of the swadeshi Movement. Bengal including Rajshahi, Rangpur and Pabna
was profoundly affected by this movement. The main idea behind Gandhiji’s Non
cooperation Movement of 1920-21 was that Swaraj could be obtained within one year if
the public followed his advice in general and, in particular, completely boycotted the
institutions.\textsuperscript{16} He desired to create a complete deadlock and paralyse Government by
calling upon the people to make a supreme, co-ordinated, and comprehensive effort to
non-cooperate with the alien rulers and naturally expected that the youth of the country,
which included the students reading in schools and colleges, should take a prominent part
in the struggle and sacrifice a year of their life for the cause of national freedom.\textsuperscript{17} It
began to gain momentum after 1921. The initial emphasis being on middle class
participation, such as students leaving schools and colleges and lawyers giving up their
legal practice.\textsuperscript{18} Gradually the movement became more militant, with the beginning of
boycott and organization of public bonfires of foreign cloth.\textsuperscript{19} The principle K.K.
Banerjee in his Quinquennial Report for 1917-18 to 1921-22 remarked: “Non
cooperation with educational institution exits because the education imparted is hardly
beneficial. If the Non-Cooperators could establish better schools and colleges the present
ones would be practically emptied. The real remedy lies in thorough and drastic
improvement of the present system of the collegiate and the secondary education.”\textsuperscript{20}
fact, the response of the students to the call for the boycott of schools and colleges was far more successful than any other form of boycott or non-cooperation suggested by the Congress.\(^2\) As a result of the non-co-operation movement, in the Rajshahi divisions many national schools were established of which two, in Bogra and the Rai Daulatpur High school of Pabna were famous. Besides, two more the Aryan Academy and the Amritalal Middle English School (unrecognized) in Pabna were converted into national institutions.\(^2\)

Swadeshi and Non-cooperation movements were a source of great discomfort to the British Government. The District Magistrate with police officials came to the school and college and had all the boys lined up and made a search for the accused boys. The Government also tried to control the students and by other means. The D.P.I. H. Sharp circulated a letter to the head of the institution prohibiting the reading of a weekly paper *The Bengalee* by the inmates of hostels attached to the institutions. In this regard H. Sharp mentioned to the Principle of Rajshahi College in 1908 said “though the *Bengalee* professes to be a moderate paper, I think its tone is very objectionable. It hold up Government to ridicule and abuse on every possible occasion. *The Bengalee* is not on our authorized list; and I shall be glad to know if this paper is going to be discontinued.”\(^2\)

It also created a wave of patriotic feeling, not only among the students of national institutions, but among the student community as a whole.

There was the other side of the story too. Not all people in Bengal felt the impact of British system of education and its consequent effects. The vast population of Bengal including the Muslim majority living in Eastern Bengal were agriculturists by profession. They had neither the means, nor the inclination to understand the benefits of English
Education. Having difficulties to make both ends meet they could not even pay a small school fee or buy books for their wards. The distance to schools and the difficulty of finding accommodation for scholars, coming from interior areas, were factors that operated against the spread of education among them. All they could afford was to send their children the traditional Pathshala. From the beginning of the twentieth century however an increasing communal demand for agricultural products like jute, rice, tobacco and other cash crops the economic fortunes of some of the big peasants did brighten up. They were sending their children to schools where English was taught. This was marginal: the majority were in the deprived lot. In earlier Bengal therefore not all the people, including those living in Rajshahi, Pabna and Rangpur, shared the awareness whether economic, political or social that came through modern education. To them the concept of mimicry or hybrid and culture was unknown Neither were they whether Muslim or Hindu, at home with Anglo Centric or Euro centric ideas. They remarked the ‘nature’ changing to their age old customs and traditions. The Bengali society as a whole with its majority, minority discourse of its representation of culture and the people was subjected to a number of splits and crossings where dominant identities claiming authenticity was challenged.

There participation in the national movement for independence, which has been narrated briefly in the next section, to came late: later than that of the English educated intelligentsia from where the leaders, steeped in western ideas and thought, came. They could not the motivated either by the by the ideologically inspired desire for
independence or by the ambition to command the new sources of economic wealth developed under imperial rule.\(^{20}\)

Besides, not all belonging to the English educated middle classes were anglicized. They regarded the reformists favourable response to western influences as serious affront to India’s cultural heritage and intellectual pride. \(^{21}\) In Eastern Bengal the middle class emerged especially in Rajshahi, Pābna and Rangpur, belong to this category. To them the question of ‘authenticity’ was the dominant theme. Later when the Indians reacted to the new structural forces released by colonial interest, the assertive authenticity of the colonized challenged the British policy of subversion.
Notes and References:

1. Chandra, B. *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India.* p.209.
9. The Mussulman, 09 August 1907.
20. *Quinqueennial Report on the Rajshahi College for the years 1917-18 to 1921-22.*
