CHAPTER IV

COMPARISON OF RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY WITH ANANDARAM DHEKIYAL PHUKAN

IV.0 Comparison of Raja Ram Mohan Roy with Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan

Raja Ram Mohun Roy and Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan were the two votaries of western enlightenment and progressive ideas in their own respective society. It is generally perceived in the Assamese society that Anandaram was the Raja Ram Mohun Roy of Assam, thereby subsuming the greatness of Anandaram under that of Raja Ram Mohun Roy. The study tried to make a comparative study of both these middle class icons whose contribution to society in their own ways is immense. There is a strong rationale for doing so. Both were great in their individual contexts.

They were the true representatives of the Middle class in their respective societies. In order to have an idea of their class which they represented, we need to delve into the meaning of the concept of Middle Class. Generally, Middle classes were the ones who needed to work to earn a living despite being financially comfortable. They usually maintained a distance, economic, social and cultural, from the lower classes. The middle class in colonial India was not a social group that could be classified as occupying a median position in terms of standard sociological indicators of income, consumption or status. People who called themselves as such were from the upper rungs of the Indian society. Recent critiques of contemporary usages of the category reveal, in pure economic terms, it would make much more sense to speak of the social group we refer to as an ‘affluent class’ rather than the middle class. Most of them were male upper caste Hindus, *ashraf muslims*, or other such high status groups. Many came from so called “service communities”, that is from families and social
groups who had traditionally served in the courts of indigenous rulers and large landlords. They generally had a fair amount of educational training and with an exposure to western education. But merely the knowledge of English, similarity of family background, or even exposure to western education did not transform those educated people into a middle class. This was achieved through cultural entrepreneurship. It was the initiation of new cultural politics which allowed them to articulate a new set of beliefs, values, and modes of politics, thus distinguishing them from other social groups both below and above. It was by transforming traditional cultural values and the basis of social hierarchy that a distinctive middle class emerged.\textsuperscript{433}

A public sphere may have been facilitated by the British in India, but it was ultimately created by the efforts of educated Indians. It was they who invested in presses, worked as journalists, created civic and political associations, and published and debated their ideas either in the press or in the forums of their associations.\textsuperscript{434} And it was through these activities as well as control of the public sphere, that educated and respectable, but hardly among the richest, most powerful or influential of men in colonial India, were able to successfully represent themselves as the middle class.\textsuperscript{435}

Aurobindo Ghosh may well have been one of the first to consistently use the label “middle class’ to describe people who had been variously referred to and who had described themselves as the ‘educated class’ or the ‘thinking classes’ of British India. Of all the brand new articles we have imported, inconceivably the most important is that large class of people – journalists, barristers, doctors, officials, graduates and traders- who have grown up and are increasing with prurient rapidity under the aegis of

\textsuperscript{433} Joshi, Sanjay.(2010). \textit{The Middle class in Colonial India}. Oxford. P. XVII to XIX
\textsuperscript{434} ibid
\textsuperscript{435} Ibid.
the British rule: and this class was called the middle class.\textsuperscript{436} The middle class in colonial India was not a monolithic entity. Probably due to a different pattern of land tenure in the province, the rentier component in the social group which constituted itself as a middle class in Calcutta was distinct from those in other towns such as Surat where merchant groups had a much higher profile. There was also diversity of other kinds. The religious diversity of Delhi or Lucknow for instance, ensured a different sort of public religiosity as compared to Madras. Nor should we assume that even within regions perfect unanimity characterized the middle class. There is no particular moment when the middle class is ‘finally made’. Rather much like other social formations, it is always in the making.\textsuperscript{437}

The Bengal government put forth a very interesting communique announcing the appointment of a committee to consider the question of how the middle class in Bengal could best be represented in the Legislative council. This communique was an epoch making document, as it was the first official recognition that there was such a thing as a middle class in Bengal. The phenomenon was something more than mere social change. The rise of a middle class is the indispensable condition of economic and political progress. Wherever there is a middle class, there is enlightenment, freedom, progress and prosperity. Wherever society is sharply divided into upper and lower strata there is superstition, reaction, poverty and decay. The rise of the middle class in Bengal was therefore a most remarkable and reassuring of the times.\textsuperscript{438}

Christian Missionaries and Baptist missionaries in particular have made tremendous contributions to both the societies in Bengal and Assam. It is true that far

\textsuperscript{436} Ibid, p. XXVI
\textsuperscript{437} Ibid, p. XX-XXI
\textsuperscript{438} Originally published as ‘the middle class’, the bengalee. (Calcutta, 17 February, 1911) cited in Joshi, Sanjay.(2010) \textit{The Middle class in colonial India}. Oxford,
more people have been influenced by Christian teachings than have become Christians, though signs of this influence are more subtle than those of new political concepts such as democracy, socialism and communism. In Assam, the missionaries failed to secure a firmer hold on the minds of the people. The American Baptist Missionaries formed the largest group of missionaries in Assam. The beginning of the Mission takes us back to first Mission Station at Sadiya. The first attempt to reach Sadiya was made from Burma in 1835. In 1836, Major Jenkins and other friends of Missions asked the Calcutta Baptists to start a mission on frontier with chief reference to the Shan or Khamti tribes. The Calcutta Baptists asked the American Mission in Burma to take the field as it could soon, they thought, be connected with the Missions in Burma and open to Missionaries an immense population between Burma and Assam. This seemed a providential opening. So, Reverend Nathan Brown and Mr. Cutter with his printing press, sent from Burma, came to open the New Mission. In 1836, they commenced their work at Sadiya among the Khamtis and Shans.\footnote{The Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference held in Nowgong. Dec 18-29, 1886. Published by the Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Calcutta. 1887. Printed by J.W. Thomas, Baptist Mission Press. p. 20} The American Baptist Missionary Union occupied Assam in 1836 simply as a step towards entering China from the West.\footnote{Ibid. p. 18} They were of the opinion that no country in the world afforded a richer field for philologists than Assam.\footnote{American Baptist Work in Assam. India. 1926. Jorhat Conference. Dec 2- 10, 1926.} The works of the American Baptist Mission were mainly confined to –

A. Hindu Assamese of Brahmaputra Valley.

B. Animistic tribes occupying the Hills to the North and South, especially Garos.

C. Immigrants from ChotaNagpur and other provinces of Central India, who toiled hard in the Tea Gardens.
But, eventually they gained their greatest success amongst the Animistic tribes occupying the Hills to the North and South and the immigrants from Chota Nagpur and other provinces of Central India.\textsuperscript{442} Certainly open conversion to a new faith and sometimes to a new way of life would and did disrupt normal or established patterns of family, caste and village life. The natural reaction to new ideas was conservative: all, to some extent feared rejection by the society in which they lived; it is easier to have the ‘courage to be’ as a part, rather than the ‘courage to be ‘as an individual. Individualism is self affirmation of individual self as individual self without regard to its participation in the world.\textsuperscript{443} The Courage to be as one self, as this was understood in Enlightenment, was a courage in which individual self affirmation included participation in universal, rational, self affirmation. Thus, it is not the individual self as such which affirms itself but individual self as bearer of reason. The courage to be as oneself is the courage to follow reason and to defy irrational authority.\textsuperscript{444} To the Baptists, as to the first Christians, the individual’s salvation was more important than the social cohesion of a family, caste, or village group even though they recognized that Indians usually lived as one of a group.\textsuperscript{445} Thus, the institution of the family in the Indian society proved to be the Achilles heel for the Baptists as a whole. They were not attuned to the realities of the structure of the Indian society at large.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{442} The Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Papers and Discussions of the Jubilee Conference held in Nowgong. Dec 18-29, 1886. Published by the Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Calcutta. 1887. Printed by J.W. Thomas, Baptist Mission Press. p. 123
\item \textsuperscript{443} Paul Tillich, \textit{The Courage to be} (New Haven and London, Yale University Press. 1952). P. 113
\item \textsuperscript{444} Ibid. p. 116
\item \textsuperscript{445} E. Daniel Potts. \textit{British Baptist Missionaries in India 1793-1837. The History of Serampore and its Missions}. Cambridge University Press. 1967. P. 207
\end{itemize}
Rammohan Roy wrote of the doctrines of the missionaries as 'less conformable with reason than those professed by Moosulmans, and in several points...equally absurd with the popular Hindu creed'. By obscuring the essentials of Christianity as taught by Jesus of Nazareth, when not engaged in attacking the religion of their hearers, missionaries had 'completely counteracted their own benevolent efforts.' According to Roy,

'It has been owing to their beginning with the introduction of mysterious dogmas, and of relations that at first appear incredible, that notwithstanding every exertion... I am not aware that we can find a single respectable Musalman or Hindoo, who was not in want of the common comforts of life, once glorified with the truth of Christianity, constantly adhering to it.'

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446 Adam, W and Roy, Rammohan. Correspondence relative to the Prospects of Christianity, and the Means of Promoting its Reception in India. 1825 p. 134
447 Nag, Kalidas and Burman, Debhyoti (eds), The English works of Rammohun Roy, Part 5, Calcutta, 1945-58. p. 66
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446 Adam, W and Roy, Rammohun. *Correspondence relative to the Prospects of Christianity, and the Means of Promoting its Reception in India*. 1825 p. 134

The Baptists failed in their primary goal (which was to convince large numbers of Indians to renounce their caste, believe in Christ, and throw 'their idols to the moles and bats') partly because Hinduism and Christianity rested their claims on superficially much the same grounds; revelation supported by miracles, the accounts which were handed down in books and by oral tradition.

"The missionary insists upon plenary inspiration, becomes stern over forms, continually descants on miracles, imports institutions foreign to the genius of the continent, and in the case of non compliance with whatever he lays down condemns men to external darkness and death. He continually talks of blood and fire and hell. He hurls invectives at other men's faith, however truly and conscientiously held. No sacred notions are sacred to him, unless he has taught them. All self sacrifice, which he does not understand, is delusion to him. All scriptures are false which have grown up outside of his dispensation, climate and nationality. He will revolutionize, denationalize, and alienate men from their kith and kin. He is a Mlecha to hindus, a kaffir to mohamedans, a rock of offence to everybody. He is tolerated only because he carries with him the imperial prestige of a conquering race."

Baptists had the greatest handicap to making large numbers of converts. It was the missionaries' 'want of touch with the people of India, their country and their customs'. They generally tended to look askance at every aspect of Hinduism, Islam, and other non Christian or non Protestant Christian religions. Sometimes their resulting attacks on these aspects were both deserved and useful on purely humanitarian grounds. For instance, Nemai Sadhan Bose, who made no attempt to gloss over the horrific state of Indian society in the early nineteenth century, credits the missionary attacks with

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448 L. and M. Williams (eds.) , Serampore Letters, pp. 62-3, Carey to John Williams, Serampore, 9 Dec. 1800


having aroused the people of Bengal and by filtration the people of all India 'from their slumber and lethargy and stirred them up to think and thus helped to end their immobility'. Missionaries or converts were roughly treated for their beliefs but initially, as far as the former were concerned, only because they used abusive language or provocative tactics in attempting to make known their version of Christianity. 

Muslims were often far more hostile towards the missionaries than their Hindu compatriots and were certainly more prone to violence. Muslims, like the Christians, prided themselves on being possessors of the one true religion, the more resistant. The Musalmans read the books merely to find fault and to be able to argue, not from a desire to be profited thereby. Potts observed that the Hindus were more yielding when convinced than the Muslims.

Contrary to the Hindu reformist moves, there is no indication of any missionary, Baptist or other, connexion with Islamic reform movements in India. The most important of the Islamic reform movements was the Fara’Idis of the 1820s which had as its goal the purification of Indian Muslim through adherence to the strict letter of the Koran, and it shows no trace of direct Christian influence. The Wahabis advocated the purging of Indian Islam of the corruptions, superstitions, and idolatrous practices which had crept into it over the years. At the most, the Baptist presence might have driven some Muslims to examine more thoroughly the Koranic basis of their own religion and

453 Ibid, p. 218-219
thereby made them more susceptible to the Wahabi movement when it was introduced into India.455

All in all there was no evidence of any particularly violent or significant reactions by Muslims and certainly none of violent reactions on the part of Hindus were being directed against the Baptists. The principal reason was not the supposed Indian tradition of tranquillity and non violence, but perhaps that touched on by Ward in 1802 when he commented that he and others were then ‘constantly’ treated with ‘rudeness, contempt and indifference’, ‘notwithstanding the fear the natives in general have of offending an Englishman’. Indians might be rude, contemptuous and indifferent only to restrain themselves from expressing this in a physical fashion through regard for the superior position accorded to the Englishman. And so throughout this period of British rule, Baptist Missionaries, who rarely ventured into areas (except in the case of the Burma Mission) not under the British flag, were protected by their natural association with the conquering power. Not always was the association regarded as an advantage. Many Indians felt, rightly or wrongly, that the Baptists, and later all missionaries, were the religious arm of the British government in India.456

If we were to assume some Indians became Christians to curry favour with the conquering power, and this was at best a dangerous assumption, this would not be regarded by the Baptists as an advantage. They were not anxious for a large number of casual converts; rather they desired to be sure that those who did profess to be Christians were indeed sincere. The major gain from an English birthright lay in the freedom it allowed to preach their doctrines in places and at times when they might otherwise have been unable to do so. This was all important to the Baptists— to make

455 Potts, op. cit., p. 220
456 Potts, op. cit., p. 220
their doctrines of Christianity known to as large a number as possible, giving them the opportunity to embrace Christianity. 457

The first Indian Baptist, and first missionary, Krishna Pal had his baptism in 1800. Baptists did not encourage converts to adopt Western trappings, although they did insist on the relinquishment of caste distinctions. It was hoped that this would lessen the estrangement of Christian Indians from their countrymen, and by so doing lessen the consequences of the hostile reaction of their countrymen. 458

**IV.1 Different strokes for different folks**

The Brahmin reformer and Hindu Protestant Raja Ram Mohan Roy, for a third of century led a group which saw the futility of attempting to preserve what they as well as European missionaries regarded as the debased form of Hinduism then current in Bengal. Instead they struggled, in the face of attacks from a large majority of learned Indians and from all too many missionaries, to cleanse it from the multiple accretions of latter day religious degeneracy and to lead it back to the pristine beauty of the Vedic religion. 459 Ram Mohan Roy was referred to as a Hindu Protestant because, among other things, he claimed the right of private judgement in the interpretation of the scriptural foundations of his faith without repudiating their authority. He tried to reconcile individual reason with the scriptures and the individual conscience with social authority. Without a Ram Mohan Roy, Christianity, very probably would have made much more rapid formal progress than it did. Reformed Hinduism, whether of Roy's or a more orthodox variety, could and did withstand the attacks of Christian missionaries,

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457 *Ibid*, p.221
458 *Ibid*, p. 225
and acted as a buffer between Christianity and orthodox Hinduism. Indeed, it replied in kind. Debased Hinduism, whatever the reasons for its debasement, could not for long have continued to withstand the progress of Western education.\textsuperscript{460}

The founder of the famous and respected Brahmo Samaj had drawn his ideas from many religions. The influence of Muslim Maulavis at Patna, a supposed contact with Buddhism in Tibet, and the teachings of the medieval bhakti saints and the holy Hindu reformers Caran das, Rupram Kaviraj, Sahajananda Swami, Dariya Saheb, Balaram Hari, Dedhraj and more, who fought rigid caste distinctions, idolatry and the poor treatment of women in Indian society, etc., had affected him strongly. Hinduism had always had a reform element. Certainly this was true at the beginning of the nineteenth century when the Baptists themselves reported occasional encounters with members of reformist sects.\textsuperscript{461}

Ram Mohan Roy sought the truths of all religions and formed an outlook which was shaped by the ‘doctrine of self knowledge inculcated by the Upanishads, the social message of Buddhism, the emphatic monotheism of Islam, the simple piety of the Hindu saints and the ethics of Christianity. It was extremely difficult if not impossible to determine with any exactitude the extent of either the ideological or personal relationships that existed between Roy and the dissenters of both Serampore and Calcutta. It was obvious that despite the attempts of both Baptists and Bishops, Roy never embraced Christianity- though he as Gandhi was to do, recognise Jesus Christ as one of the world’s great moral teachers. Lant Carpenter, an English Unitarian who was Roy’s first biographer, unequivocally referred to him as the Christian because his

\textsuperscript{460} Potts, op. cit, p. 226-227
\textsuperscript{461} Ibid, p. 227
‘acknowledgement of the divine authority of Christ’ was ‘in no way inconsistent’ with the maintenance of caste and of a belief in monotheistic Hinduism.\(^{462}\)

This does not mean that Roy acknowledged the divinity of Christ which is quite a different matter from acknowledging his ‘divine authority’. A basic misunderstanding of the tenets of Unitarianism had led to much confusion on this score. According to Unitarian beliefs, which run counter to those of practically all other Christians, one was a Christian if one accepted Christ’s divine authority. In this very limited sense therefore Roy can be referred to as a Christian. By the same standards, however, he could also be called a Muslim or a Buddhist, as he also accepted the divine authority of Prophet Mohammed and Buddha.\(^{463}\)

Circumstantial evidence indicated that, at that early date, Roy would have been exposed to the teachings of Christianity. It would have been strange for a man of Roy’s inquiring mind to have been so close to the expounders of a new faith without becoming involved in some way; and probably he would have read the (1801) New Testament in Bengali\(^{464}\). He wrote “\textit{Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin}” (A Gift to Deists) which was sometimes known by its subject – ‘Against the idolatry of all Religions”. Certain passages might reflect a response to missionary teachings on the trinity. More likely they reflect the Koranic strictures against the basic Christian ideas of birth, death and resurrection of Christ, and more particularly the Koranic scoffing at the Christian idea of one god in three manifestations. There is not much doubt that the main influence of

\(^{462}\) Ibid, p. 228  
\(^{464}\) Potts, op. cit., p. 229
this tract, the forerunner of Roy's later 'Appeals to the Christian Public in Defence of
"the Precepts of Jesus" of early 1820s, was Islamic.465

Rammohun was a respectable Sanskrit scholar, and so well versed in Persian, /
that he was called Mouluvee Rama Mohuna Raya; he also wrote English with
correctness, and read with ease English and mathematical and metaphysical works. He
had published in Bengali, one or two philosophical works, from the Sanskrit, which he
hoped might have been useful in leading his countrymen to renounce idolatry.466

Writing to John Digby early in 1817, Roy attempted to set out a brief account of
his experiences since Digby's departure from India two year earlier. This letter states
that after 'long and uninterrupted researches into religious truth' he had 'found the
doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles, and better adapted for the use
of rational beings, than any others' with which he was acquainted. In efforts to rid
Hinduism of the 'absurdities of the idolatry' practised by its adherents he had translated
parts of the Hindu scriptures into Bengali and Hindustani. This had led to opposition
from Brahmans and from his own family- 'the only comfort that I had was the consoling
and rational conversation of my European friends, especially those of Scotland and
England'.467

Until controversy arose over the issue of the divinity or otherwise of Christ in the
eyear 1820s the Baptists and Rammohun Roy appear to have worked together in many
regards. Indeed, even after 1820, they continued to work together for the abolition of
certain practices. Before this time, Roy aided the Calcutta Baptists (William Yates,
Eustace Carey, William Adam, and others) in a new translation of the New Testament

465 Ibid.
466 Ibid, p. 231
into Bengali, donated land for a school established by Eustace Carey, and even contributed to the building fund for a church erected in Lower Circular Road in 1818. Several of his essays in English (including those on Sati) were printed by the Baptists at Serampore or in Calcutta. After the publication of the first of these in 1816 the Trio (William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward) commented on its composition by that enlightened Hindu, with whom they were particularly acquainted and who sent them copies of all that he printed. Undoubtedly, they hoped Roy was on the brink of accepting their beliefs, and there was a strong indication that he was toying with the idea of doing so. Roy's condemnation of Hindu idolatry and of pseudo religious practices equalled when they did not surpass the Baptists' own fulminations, although their purpose was quite different. The Baptists should have been able to foresee, some argue, that Roy's opinions (published in Bengal from 1815 onwards) showed clearly his belief that all fundamental religious truths could be found in the Hindu scriptures. Perhaps they did realize this. However, their purpose was to make known their concepts of Christianity, and then it was up to the higher and more mystical authority of the Holy Spirit to decide whether an individual became a Christian. Evidence suggests that the doctrines of Baptists and other missionaries such as Deocar Schmid of the Christian Mission Society were well known to this outstanding Brahmin. Of greater importance was that through the Baptists Roy came into coherent contact with a new set of ethics and ideas, alien to those he had previously absorbed, 'but for that very reason capable of providing a new stimulus and leavening for his thought just as his Muslim friendships had done at an earlier stage in his development'. The result was the publication by Roy of a stream of literature which William Adam found in 1818 (not long after he arrived to join the Calcutta Baptists) was shaking 'the fabric of
superstition' among enlightened elements in the Calcutta Hindu community even though their reception had 'not by one iota...(increased)....the seriousness with which religious subjects' were examined.  

Rammohun said 'if religion consists of the blessings of self knowledge and of improved notions of god and his attributes and a system of morality holds a subordinate place, I certainly prefer the vedas'. Apparently willing to accept Christian notions as practised by the missionaries he knew, Roy was not willing to accept their notions of god. He believed Hinduism was fundamentally monotheistic in theory whereas Christianity was not. His strident efforts to restore to the practice of Hinduism its monotheistic basis reached a culmination of sorts with the publication in 1820 of his Dialogue Between a theist and an Idolater. A brilliant statement of the monotheistic position, Dialogue... attacked among many other things the orthodox Hindu’s claim that all the commonly worshipped Hindu Gods were not different beings but 'in reality...one being, which only appeared in different shapes'. In the early nineteenth century it was a common belief that the spread of Western knowledge, particularly Western scientific knowledge, would undermine the non Christian’s inherited beliefs, making way for the coming of Christianity. William Ward too readily saw in Roy’s career an example ‘that the knowledge of European science and the practice of idolatry are incompatible. Perhaps, but this did not mean, as Ward and others discovered, that upon giving up ‘idolatry’ the Hindus in appreciable numbers would receive Christianity with open arms. As has often been the case, the old faith and the system of moral values were destroyed, leaving a vacuum, and as the progress of Western education gathered momentum in the Bengal of 1820s, it was mainly the activities of Rammohun Roy, and

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468 Potts, op.cit., p. 233
particularly his writings, in which he tried to incorporate the best of Christianity within the structure of Hinduism, which filled the vacuum. After the publication of Roy’s first three tracts on Christianity the Calcutta Baptists realized that they had gone too far in supporting Roy against those at Serampore. They refused therefore to publish Roy’s fourth tract (which he published from his own hastily set up Unitarian Press) on the grounds, correct from their standpoint, that to do so would ‘sanction ... (a theological) error’. 470

From their very beginning of their evangelical operations the Baptists, had not found it difficult to convince Indians that Christ was a great moral teacher; the difficulty lay in convincing them to accept the uniqueness of the total Christian message. Possibly they could have tempered their reply with the realization that Roy did not mean to slight their beliefs; that he in fact hoped to provide Hinduism with a stronger ethical base taken from Christ’s teachings. They could not, however, let pass the publication of a work which might completely mislead some Indians as to the essence of Christianity, the more so because it had been published at the Calcutta Baptists’ press which perhaps falsely lent an air of authenticity as a Christian publication. Joshua Marshman declared that Roy’s work in effect degraded ‘the redeemer of the world to a level with Confucius and Mahomet’ and caused him to be looked upon ‘as a teacher and founder of a sect, instead of... as the Lord of all, the Redeemer of men, the sovereign of a judge’ and labelled Ram Mohan as a heathen. Ram Mohan Roy issued his first Appeal to the Christian Public in Defence of ‘the precepts of Jesus’ in March, 1820. Ram Mohun Roy thought that the term heathen was synonymous with the term Hindu and that this in turn was used freely instead of ‘Indian’. Missionary correspondence abounds.
with the expression ‘Christian Hindoo’ – meaning a Hindu, who had been converted to Christianity. Sometimes the expression ‘Christian Heathen’ is also found used interchangeably with ‘Christian Hindu’.\textsuperscript{471}

Roy opined that the use of this word to describe adherents of non Christian faiths ‘violated truth, charity and liberality, which were essential to Christianity in every sense of the word’. To Roy’s first Appeal (which dealt primarily with the thesis that Christ’s moral precepts ‘alone were a sufficient guide to secure peace and happiness to mankind at large – a position that is entirely founded on and supported by the express authorities of Jesus of Nazareth).\textsuperscript{472} The exchange of ideas between Ram Mohan Roy and Joshua Marshman represented the first articulate reflex of the Christianity on an Indian mind which was at once highly responsive to fresh influences and critical, inquisitive and yet firmly anchored in a system of thought and belief, a world view, older than Christianity and which in many ways offered a sharp contrast, if not an antithesis, to the Judaeo-Christian tradition.\textsuperscript{473}

In ‘Appeal to the King in the Council’ of 1823 relative to freedom of the press in India, Roy pointed out that although for two decades, missionaries had been preaching and distributing printed material in attempts ‘to bring the prevailing system of religion into disrepute no alarm prevailed over these activities as Indians (and especially Roy himself) possessed the ‘power of defending their religion by the same means that are employed against it, and ... think no other protection necessary to the maintenance of their faith’.

‘While the teachers of Christianity use only reason and persuasion to propagate their religion (thinking perhaps of earlier times when the Moguls converted large numbers to Islam by force), your

\textsuperscript{471} Potts, Op. cit, p. 236-237
\textsuperscript{472} Nag and Burman (eds.), \textit{English Works of Rammohon Roy}, partV, P.57
\textsuperscript{473} Ibid, Appendix I, pp 439-40
Majesty's faithful subjects are content to defend theirs by the same weapons, convinced that true religion needs not the aid of the sword or legal penalties for its protection.474

At one point of time, Roy had favoured the work of the missionaries if for no other reason than that, as expressed in his first *Appeal*, 'in proportion to the increase of their number, sobriety, moderation, temperance, and good behaviour have been diffused among their neighbours as the necessary consequences of their company, conversation and good example. Soon afterwards, he had begun an all out attack on the foremost proponents of Christianity in India— the Serampore trio using their greatest weapon, the pen. Roy's reply to the criticism that the Hindu *Shastras* of the Vedanta were irrational was published in 1816. Roy had not been able to forego the chance to include 'strictures on some of the dogmas of Trinitarian Christianity (*Father, Son and the Holy Spirit*)' which he had sought to compare with the conclusions of Hindu religious philosophy while defending the latter.475

From 1821 to 1828 Roy was closely associated with the Unitarian Association in Calcutta which was presided over by the onetime Baptist, then Unitarian, Missionary William Adam. Unlike Adam who remained in his own view a devout Christian, Roy was not connected with the association cum church because he regarded Christ as the sole redeemer of mankind and the Bible as the sole record of divine revelation but because Unitarian Christianity conformed to his own monotheistic views better than any other religious group then in existence in Calcutta. He regarded the ethical teachings of Christ as forming the highest available system of morality, and believed

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475 *Ibid*, p. 160
that these views ‘might ultimately prove to be the most effective means of moral uplift of the Indian nation’.  

Roy attacked the more execrable aspects of Hinduism, the whole rationale of intelligent belief in Trinitarianism, deriding what he thought to be Christian polytheism in the same way as he had with Hindu polytheism. He entreated the educated Hindus and Europeans to apply their reason against the doctrine taught by dissenters, and ask why and how they could hold that God was not man and yet maintain that Christ was a god-man or man-god. He questioned whether a believer in the doctrine could ‘have a just claim to enjoy respect in the intellectual world? And whether if he had not exposed himself to censure, should he, at the same time, ascribe unreasonableness to others?  

Roy ridiculed the idea that the Father, son and Holy Ghost were three manifestations of one God and therefore the missionaries claim to be monotheists; writing that ‘any person endowed with a moderate share of common sense, not entirely perverted by early prejudices thrust upon him in the helpless infancy of his mind, must be able to tear off the part coloured veil of sophistry from the face of this creed and discover its real monstrosity’. He went on to advise the missionaries to keep their ideas on the trinity hidden from Indians of Intelligence as these fantasies were very much calculated to lower the reputation of Britons both as a learned and as a religious people. 

In addition to deprecating the basic concepts of Christianity Roy (perhaps in the hope of reforming Christianity) led the way for a multitude of successors in criticizing missionary evangelistic labours in the Brahmanical Magazine. Missionaries were opposed in both their evangelical; and social reform activities by the majority of Indian

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476 Ibid, p. 244
477 Ibid, p. 139-40.
leaders with whom they came into contact. Though conservatives opposed the missionaries on both the social reform and evangelical fronts, the tiny liberal element in Indian Society opposed only the evangelical front, and actually emulated their social reform involvement. Certainly the liberals opposition was far more effective than that of the conservatives who only wished to prop up the rapidly decaying religion of their forefathers. Liberals proposed an alternative to the missionary teachings based more truly on the Hindu tenets found in the Vedanta and in the Upanishads. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the conservatives -- who were resisting attempts at change being made by missionaries, Roy, and young Indian radicals alike -- were completely reactionary. They too were interested in reform, but of a less drastic nature. Perhaps they can be compared with the leaders of the Counter Reformation in Europe who were concerned with reforming some aspects of renaissance Catholicism without returning to the earliest period of the Church History. Prominent Indian conservatives, Raja Radhakanta Deb favoured western education for all, including women, and he was an active member of the School Book Society and similar groups which pressed this object. 479

Rammohun Roy was 'asked to profess the Christian religion, not on the force of evidence, or for the love of truth, or for the satisfaction for his conscience, or for the benefit of his fellow men, but for the sake of the honour and glory it might bring him". This was utterly abhorrent to Ram Mohan's mind and alienated, repelled, and disgusted him 480. In Christianity he saw truth, satisfaction of conscience and solace:

From the early 1820s on, Roy and other liberals as well as some conservatives who still worked with the Baptists and others for the attainment of mutually desired

480 Biswas and ganguli, (eds.) Rammohun roy, pp. 125-6
social and educational reforms felt that because the leading missionaries in Bengal were exclusively European, they were looked upon as encroachers upon the rights and religion of India's poor. Rammohun Roy was of the opinion that

"to introduce a religion by means of abuse and insult, or by affording the hope of worldly gain... (was)... inconsistent with reason and justice; and did not hesitate to compare the way or standard of living of missionaries with that of learned Brahmins noticeably excluding himself- who lived in small huts, ate simple foods, and lived on charity. Truth and true religion do not always belong to wealth and power, high names, or lofty places".482

Roy probably assisted indirectly in spreading of leaven of Christian ideas throughout India, though the effect was offset by his developing a new form of Hinduism which could attract the Western educated Indian in Bengal and elsewhere. He did far more than any other single person to retard the growth of an indigenous Christian church based on Western theological conceptions. The Brahmo Samaj or Sabha (Theistic Society) founded by him in 1828 after he dissociated himself from Adam's Unitarian Association used a congregational form of worship utterly unknown to the ancient form of Hinduism he believed he was restoring; and many of its teachings, particularly ethical, were drawn from those of the Precepts of Jesus. George Howells, then principal of Serampore College, in 1928 believed that Roy was a genuine friend of Christianity because it was more important to lead a Christ like life than to adhere to 'ancient theological dogmas difficult to reconcile with advancing knowledge, and to maintain in a spirit of loyalty to genuine intellectual freedom'.483

482 Nag and Burman (eds.) English Works of Rammohun Roy, Part ii, p. 138
David Livingstone had been quoted as saying – “If we call the actual amount of conversions, the direct result of Missions, and the wide diffusion of better principles the indirect, I have no hesitation in asserting that the latter are of infinitely more importance than the former.” In this connection, Nirmal Kumar Bose observed that ‘the moral poverty and cultural degeneration of Bengal were not adequately felt’ until the coming of the Christian missionary whose activity aroused the country to the need for reform. Charles Heimsath agrees that to a significant degree modern Indian reform – religious and social- acted largely as “a response to the ethical challenges of Christian doctrine and to the “conception of human personality as expressed primarily in the Christian religion”. Even the important expounder and defender of popular Hinduism, the late Kshiti Mohan Sen, readily admitted that at least partly as a reaction to Christian missionary activities, popular interest in the old Hindu documents like the Upanishads (some of which Roy translated into English and vernacular Bengali) had increased.

The main streams along which national awakening surged forward in Bengal in the second half of the nineteenth century were a) intellectual enquiry, resulting from spread of rationalism and modern education through debating clubs, societies, schools and journals. b) Social reform, destroying the fetters of social and religious conservatism which acted as a brake on all social progress. c) Cultivation of the Bengali language and the development of the Bengali literature. d) Direct political consciousness starting with the exposures of British misrule in India and culminating in the demand for self-government. The free spirit first appeared in the class rooms of the

485 Modern Bengal (Berkeley, 1959), p. 27
486 Indian Nationalism and Hindu social reform, p. 51
Hindu College and in the debating clubs of the disciples of Derozio and his like. Shattering the stifling atmosphere of servility and blind faith created by the mantra chanting, hypocritical, feudal orthodoxy, these stormy petrels of the first awakening fearlessly declared that "what is morally wrong cannot be theologically right". They correctly realised that acquiring and spreading of knowledge was the central task. Not to obey the *shastras* but to follow the mandates of truth and reason became their watchword. This way they realised, the country could be rejuvenated and reformed. ⁴⁸⁸

The Universalism of Rabindranath Tagore, was perhaps the single most significant idea to emerge from the Bengal renaissance. This renaissance was characterized by a remarkable creative outburst of literary, artistic and ideological achievements. Universalism, so characteristic of the renaissance spirit and thought, was an intellectual outgrowth of East West contact in Calcutta. At that time the city was a dynamic pivot for acculturating India’s most progressive intelligentsia to modernizing impulses from Western Europe. The Brahmo Samaj (Society for the worship of the one true god) was perhaps the most representative institutional expression of the Bengal renaissance. This movement, made up for the most part of a western educated professional elite, dissatisfied with the shortcomings of their own society and culture with regard to the west, sought to modernize their religious and social traditions. Spurred on by a class of British officials known as Orientalists sympathetically engaged in a scholarly reconstruction of the Hindu past, a newly formed intelligentsia selectively reinterpreted their heritage and strove to reshape their culture in the new image. Rationalism, cosmopolitanism, and dynamic classicism were the three key intellectual values transmitted by British Orientalists to the Bengali intelligentsia while functioning

as windows to the west. These characteristic components, derived from the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, were universal rather than parochial in tenor. Rationalism pertained to the search for ‘constant and universal principles’ of human nature.\textsuperscript{489}

In the 1830s, the antithesis to Orientalist cultural policy appeared in Bengal as Macaulayism, named after Thomas Babington Macaulay, author of the famous Education Minute of 1835\textsuperscript{490}. Macaulayism represented both an alternative to Orientalism as a modernizing program for India and an alternative to universalism as an ideology for modern man.\textsuperscript{491} Hans Kohn, an authority on Nationalism in the west, places the rise of Nationalism “as a general European movement in the nineteenth century” and refers to Macaulay as a chief participant in the movement\textsuperscript{492}. He observed that Nationalism had made the divisions of mankind more pronounced and spread the antagonistic aspirations to wider multitudes than ever before. It also produced a “cultural tension which invested the national struggles with the halo of a semi religious crusade.”\textsuperscript{493}

When Macaulay wrote that the English “have become the greatest and most highly civilized people ever the people saw,”\textsuperscript{494} he was evidently expressing chauvinism (however seemingly true to the Victorians) that was in sharp contrast to what Kohn calls “the rationalization of the eighteenth century with its emphasis on the common sense of civilization”.\textsuperscript{495} Rationalism- the belief in Unity over diversity- then gave to

\textsuperscript{489} Becker, C.L., \textit{The Heavenly city of the eighteenth Century Philosophers} (New Haven: Yale University press, 1964), p. 103

\textsuperscript{490} Kopf, \textit{British orientalism} , pp. 236-251

\textsuperscript{491} “The universal man and the Yellow Dog: The orientalist Legacy and the problem of Brahmo Identity in the Bengal Renaissance” in \textit{Aspects of Bengali History and society} . eds rachel Van M. Baumer. Vikas Publication House, Baumer, op. cit., p. 45


\textsuperscript{493} Ibid, p.13


\textsuperscript{495} Kohn, p. 15
romanticism, the belief that each culture had a special genius which made it intrinsically different from another. 496

In the Bengal of the 1830s, Macaulayism did have the immediate psychological effect of unleashing the yellow dog of National and racial hatred by polarising the loyalties of the intelligentsia into two opposite camps. 497 The Westernizers, called Young Bengal, followed Macaulayism and temporarily set themselves adrift in a cultural limbo between their own heritage, which they naturally rejected, and that of England, the utopia across the seas, which they understood only imperfectly and to which they could never really belong. 498 The older men, who had worked with British Orientalists and were dynamic classicists for most of their adult lives, 499 turned defensive and “Nativist” in their sudden zealous appreciation of Hinduism. 500 They formed an organisation called the Dharma Sabha (Society in Defence of the Hindu Socio-ethical religious Order). 501

Missionaries like the Presbyterian Alexander Duff and converts like Krishna Mohun Bannerji, denied the validity of all things Indian and based their programme on the ethnocentric proposition that Christianity was an integral part of European Civilization. 502 It was at that point of time that the Brahmo Samaj began to play a crucial role in the history of the Bengal Renaissance. Under the patronage of the Tagore family of Jorasanko, and under Debendranath Tagore’s leadership in the 1840s, the Brahmo Samaj with its subsidiary, Tattvabodhini Sabha, became the most popular organization for the increasing number of western educated intelligentsia. Within a

496 Macaulay’s Critical essays, III, 436-437, quoted in Houghton, p. 123
497 Kopf, pp. 253-272
498 Ibid
499 Kopf, pp. 108-126, 178-213
500 Ibid, pp. 263-272
501 Ibid, p. 266
502 Ibid, 260-261
decade after 1843, Debendranath had endowed the movement with a structure (the Brahmo Mandir or Church) had evolved an ideology (the Brahmo Dharma) and had provided an identity (the brahmo Covenant).503 According to Professor Muhamed Ali, who had studied closely both the Sabha and the Samaj, the real numerical breakthrough took place in 1845–46 when the membership increased from 145 to 500, largely as a result of an influx of young College Students.504

While the missionaries were trying to make inroads among the intelligentsia, the Brahmo Samaj provided what they hoped would prove an indigenous alternative to Europeanized Christianity. They offered the western educated a reformed Indian religion – Vedantism- which they argued was free of superstition and priestly tyranny. At the same time, Brahmos claimed to offer an ethical system based on Hindu scriptures but reflecting the identical sentiments of the Sermon on the Mount. Finally, it suggested a way of life within the framework of a classical Hindu social order which they said was as accommodating to this worldly asceticism as was Protestantism.505

The origins of the Brahmo reformation ideology, upon which Debendranath and his associates constructed a system, date back to the domestication of modern Unitarianism in Bengal by a remarkable intellect named Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833). The Bengali version of Unitarianism was from its infancy a far more complex phenomenon than its western counterpart as the problems faced by Ram Mohan were magnified by the cross cultural contact. Rammohun faced such questions as- Did he try

to improve the lot of the Hindus from within the system or did he undermine it by assimilating the foreign system. As for the content of Unitarianism, he thought whether India should follow Christ or whether India should follow some Christ like figure in her own tradition who seemingly represented the same principles. His sympathies, as those of a leading pioneer of the reformation, were quite apparent in the way he adapted Christian Unitarianism to Indian Circumstances. His Precepts of Jesus, which constituted his side of a theological debate with a Baptist Missionary named Joshua Marshman, was so thoroughly Unitarian in a European sense and so sophisticated in theological erudition and subtlety that one could be easily misled about the author’s identity. His primary concern was to maintain God against all false ideas and techniques devised by man to adulterate the purity of monotheistic faith. Thus he repudiated all myths, mysteries, miracles, and images which made a mockery of the unity of God head.

Rammohan resembled the familiar liberal and rationalist Unitarian upholding the historical ethical Christ and rejected vicarious atonement, the trinity, and other ‘fabricated fables’. His view was that justice and mercy were more acceptable to God than sacrifice was equally Unitarian in spirit, as well as his scriptural reliance on the “Synoptic Gospels with the emphasis on teachings of Jesus rather than the Gospel of St. John with its meditation of Jesus”. Ram Mohan was once accused of reading into the Vedanta the sublime message of the Christ. He replied that the Vedanta not only contained the unity of God but did so in a way much superior to the Judeo-Christian Bible. Unlike the Bible, the Vedanta did not attempt to categorize the attributes of the

506 Kopf, pp.201-202
507 Ibid, p. 202
Almighty – a gesture which Ram Mohan found both anthropomorphic and futile. That Ram Mohan Roy was then using Unitarianism in an Indian way was evidenced by his attack on the trinity. He argued that whereas Christianity required a blood sacrifice to expiate the sins of man, Vedanta taught that the “only means of attaining victory over sin was sincere repentance and solemn meditation.\textsuperscript{509}

Rammohun used the comparative religious approach as he felt the need to reconcile at least two major faiths. In the process, he was compelled to think comparatively; and as a result his vision sharpened. “A Hindu would also be justified in taking as a standard of Christianity the system of religion which almost universally prevailed in Europe previous to the 15\textsuperscript{th} century... and which was still followed by the majority of Christians with all its idols, crucifixes, saints, miracles, pecuniary absolutions from sin, trinity, transubstantiation, relics, holy water and other idolatrous machinery”.\textsuperscript{510} He argued that the authentic Christian tradition was submerged and corrupted, so the authentic Hindu tradition was likewise submerged and corrupted. He willingly admitted that “our holy Vedanta and our ancient religion been disregarded by the generality of moderns.”\textsuperscript{511} This comparativist approach, coupled with a modernist outlook, placed the Hindu reformation movement on an Orientalist foundation from which indigenous traditions could be defended at the same time they were modified according to progressive values in contemporary western societies.\textsuperscript{512}

The Brahmos’ ideological defence of Vedantism was certainly an important factor in stopping the advance of Christianity among the intelligentsia but, remarkably

\textsuperscript{509} Reprint of \textit{A Controversy Between Dr. Tytler and Ramdoss} (Calcutta: Tattvabodhini Press, 1845), p. 2 to 6
\textsuperscript{510} \textit{Ibid}, p. 7
\textsuperscript{511} \textit{Ibid}, p. 21
\textsuperscript{512} Kopf “The universal man and the Yellow Dog: The orientalist Legacy and the problem of Brahmo Identity in the Bengal Renaissance” in \textit{Aspects of Bengali History and society}. eds rachel Van M. Baumer. Vikas Publication House, p. 50
such was accomplished without resorting to yellow dog fanaticism. Besides ideology, the Brahmos, if they were convincing enough, held a certain advantage among their fellow alienated intellectuals: their reinterpretation of Hinduism, if accepted ultimately in place of popular Hinduism, would bridge the gap between themselves and the mass of their countrymen. The Macaulay like missionaries, on the other hand, rigidly persisted in Europeanizing their converts with the inevitable result that each and every Indian Christian underwent excommunication and denationalization.513

Rammohun Roy's forefathers served in the Muslim administration and for that, their tastes and lifestyle were entirely secular, and their chief interest lay in the pursuit of business affairs. It was Rammohun’s early venture as a moneylender that brought him into close contact with members of the British community. For ten years he was associated with two of them, both civilians, either in an official capacity or by private arrangement. Early in this period, he wrote his first tract, Tuhfat - Ul-Muwahiddin, in which he expounded his belief in monotheism. The tract suggests a fair knowledge of Muslim theology on Rammohun’s part and testifies to the knowledge of both Persian and Arabic before he learned Sanskrit. He studied the latter language, along with the Hindu Sastra, during his stay, in Rangpur from 1809 to 1814. There was evidence that the Pandit with whom he studied, and who was a lifelong friend, initiated Rammohun into Tantrism. It was after he moved to Calcutta in 1815 that Rammohun had closer contact with the Christian doctrine through his associations with Christian clergymen both in Calcutta, De comments that he entertained friends and distinguished visitors in his two large houses, a practice which brought him “in close contact with a larger world, in which prevailed in those days three divergent types of culture, Hindu,

513 Ibid, p. 51
Muslim and Christian”.514 His ancestors, in the latter half of the 18th century served the Mohammedan rulers of Murshidabad and acquired property in some capacity or other”.515 From his investigation of the three religions emerged a strong Universalist conviction which manifested itself mainly in his writings on the nature of God. His religious tracts were devoted to advocating worship of a Supreme Being without form or symbolic representation. While he was remembered chiefly for his preaching of the worship of one God and for his attacks on idolatry, his writings in that connection also contained the first significant change in the understanding of righteous conduct which was voiced in the nineteenth century Hindu community.516

The pursuit of the knowledge of God, through proper worship (to be understood as prayer and contemplation of the Supreme Being) and exercise of self restraint,517 was in Ram Mohan’s view the highest aim of the righteous man. Closely associated with that aim was the manifestation of righteous conduct in relation to one’s fellow man. This was not the older notion of occupational duties to be carried out conscientiously for the efficient working of society. Rather Rammohun’s concept of service to one’s fellow man was associated with moral ideas of consideration, compassion, and the Golden rule.

518 In a strong statement in his Second Defense of the Monotheistical System of the Veds, Ram Mohan denounced the traditional Hindu doctrine of Karma, pointed out the distinction between the Sanskrit term and the English word, works. Yet at the same time he cited, in support of his position, the great Hindu authorities Manu and

515 Ibid, p. 503
Sankaracharya, who placed the highest value on knowledge of God through contemplation and worship:

"To English readers, however, it may be proper to remark, that the Sanskrit word which signifies works, is not to be understood in the same sense as that which it implies in Christian theology, when works are opposed to faith. Christians understand by works, actions of moral merit, whereas Hindus use the term in their theology only to denote religious rites and ceremonies prescribed by Hindu lawgivers, which are often irreconcilable with the commonly received maxims of moral duty: as for instance, the crime of suicide prescribed to widows by Ungeera, and to pilgrims at holy places by the Nursingh and Koorma Puran. I do not therefore admit that works, taken in the latter sense are necessary to attain divine faith, or that they are indispensable accompaniments of holy knowledge: for the Vedanta in chapter 3rd, section 4th, text 37th, positively declares that the true knowledge of God may be acquired without observing the rules and rites prescribed by Sastra to each class of Hindoos; and also, examples are frequently found in the Veda, of persons, who though they neglected the performance of religious rites and ceremonies attained divine knowledge and absorption by control over their passions and senses, and by contemplation of the Ruler of the Universe, Manu, the first and chief of all Hindu lawgivers, confirms the same doctrines in describing the duties of laymen... the illustrious Sankaracharya declared the attainment of faith in God, and the adoration of the Supreme being, to be entirely independent of Brahmanical ceremonies..."519

In explaining the distinction between the popular understanding of Karma and the western notion of merit, Ram Mohan led to an important distinction to be made within the context of Hinduism—the distinction between customs and fashions (traditions and usages) and scriptural authority. It was a distinction that was to be widely used throughout the century by men of various persuasions and it was related both in origin and usage of another crucial principle of Rammohan, namely, the

519 Ibid, p.117
necessity of rational approach to textual criticism in the interpretation of scriptures. In
his introduction to the *Kena Upanishad*, he wrote of his work:

"It will also, I hope, tend to discriminate those parts of the Vedas which are to be
interpreted in an allegorical sense, and consequently to correct those exceptional
practices, which not only deprive Hindoos in general of the common comforts of
society, but also lead them frequently to self destruction, or to sacrifice of the lives of
their friends and relations".  

He led the way to a critical interpretation of the most sacred of Hindu texts. It
was remarkable and its results far reaching. Contrary to the practice of some later
Bengali Intellectuals, he made the sacred texts the sole authority for his arguments, but
his method of interpretation made it possible for him to prove his point of view.  

The teachings of Rammohan’s literature led away from a notion of righteousness based on
performance of Karma. Righteousness consisted in cultivating knowledge of the
Supreme Being through adoration and contemplation. Along with this righteousness
was a sense of moral social behaviour which directed the individual’s thoughts and
attitudes outward to an awareness and consideration of other men’s feelings and
conditions. These ideas reveal a dramatic change of interpretation of righteous conduct.
While individual responsibility remained strong and personal, the individual’s freedom
of action and sense of social involvement were quite different. Although Rammohan’s
message of moral conduct was liberal and opposed to the sanction of tradition, he was
still careful, despite both his luxurious style of life and his writings on religious
document, to keep intact his caste standing, a consideration of greatest importance in his
day.  

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520 Ibid, p. 35
521 Baumer, eds. Op. Cit, p. 89
522 De, Sushil Kumar, *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed.(Calcutta: Firma K.L.
Post enlightened rationalism was at the heart of the intellectual tradition encountered by the Bengali intelligentsia. It disturbed their faith in the received tradition. Even efforts to restore that faith had to be in terms of rational thought, and not unquestioning acceptance. Reason was the foundation of scientific enquiry. Exploration of matters pertaining to human society and even the norms of personal life were within the latter's purview. Raja Ram Mohan was a great admirer of Bentham's ideas. From the very beginning of the utilitarian impact, however, Bengali intellectuals questioned its individualistic assumptions.\footnote{Ibid, p. 20-21}

Renaissance, according to the Bengali intellectuals, was the new consciousness, creativity and social initiatives. The Bengali Bhadralok had a fairly low opinion of his own station in life and the achievements of his class. Ram Mohan had a low opinion of his ritual ridden society which, he thought, killed all initiative. He perhaps, felt naively, that the contact with educated Europeans might help cure these frailties. Commerce, the mainstay of the urban economy in Bengal was firmly in British hands, as was banking, insurance and transport. There was only a handful of wealthy Bengalis, enriched by the dealings with the Company and the permanent settlement. But the class which could aspire to a high office both under the Nawabs and in the early days of the Company rule was now reduced to seeking employment in the lower levels of the bureaucracy or was confined to the profession of the petty Vakil.\footnote{Ibid, 351}

English learning was said to have severed our links with the mass culture but also with the enriching tradition of Persian based education. Especially regretted is the loss of Mutazilla rationality. Encyclopedia of Islam states that the Mutazilla was a doctrine rooted in medieval Islam and centred on the question of free will versus

\footnotesize{\textit{\textsuperscript{523} Ibid, p. 20-21}}

\footnotesize{\textit{\textsuperscript{524} Ibid, 351}}
predestination. Rammohun may have derived the style of argument in the Tuhfat from the academic tradition of the madrassas, but not the substance. Other traditions of rationality were also at work. The rejection of idol worship and beliefs in god in the case of his father was a product of his training in Nyaya, but it did not affect his very active acquiescence in orthodox practice. Even the most ardent Westernized accepted from that vast storehouse only what appealed to them in the light of their historical experience and cultural preferences. If one falls prey to the impression that the Mutazilla rationality was somehow substituted by the colonial rationality, then Muslim society should have had made rapid and close advancements towards their Hindu brethrens.

While there are many manifestations of modern Hinduism, it seems the story always begins with Ram Mohan, who has been lauded as “the Father and Patriarch of Modern India”. After Durkheim and Weber, what needed explaining was the progressive demise of religion or, at the very least, the curious case of its inexplicable survival. According to the secularization thesis, modernity would witness the inevitable withering away of religion. In a bureaucratic, technological, pluralistic world organized by instrumental rationality, appeals to the supernatural would be ruled out; legal, scientific, educational, and political discourse would be conducted on empirical and rational grounds alone.

525 Ibid, p. 353
526 Ibid, p. 355
Rammohan promoted a version of monotheism he hoped would restore the rational and moral basis of Hinduism; he translated the ancient Upanisads into Bengali and English; he publicly debated the truths of Hinduism and Christianity with a variety of interlocutors, Hindu and Christian; he supported the spread of English education in India; and he campaigned to suppress the practice of widow immolation, known to the British as suttee. But in the present context, Rammohan's most relevant accomplishment was the founding of a society in 1828, the Brahmo Samaj, to foster his vision of Hindu monotheism. Though born a Brahmin, Rammohan's spiritual development took him down a number of intellectual avenues. Early in life he was said to have studied in Patna and Benares, Centres for Arabic and Sanskrit learning, respectively. His first published essay was a lengthy rationalistic appeal for monotheism, written in Persian, *Tuhfat al-Muwahhidin* (A present to the believers in one god).529

Much of his most mature work focussed on mastering and translating Sanskrit texts on Vedanta from the Upanisads to the Brahma Sutras. In addition to his immersion in Indo-Persian and Vedantic learning, Rammohan also studied Tantra and had worked in close contact with the English collector, John Digby, for a dozen years in the outlying districts of Bengal. Thus, by the time he settled in Calcutta in 1815, he had amassed the kind of experience that would earn him acclaim as a polymath scholar and polemicist. Whether drawing upon Muslim *Mutazilite* theology or Enlightenment ideals of reason, Rammohan was a quintessential rationalist. That his rationalist critique of religion could build upon Hindu and Muslim intellectual traditions suggests the degree to which his work challenges any neat dichotomy of tradition/modernity. Was he modernizing

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traditions? Was his modernity tradition-based? Was he a traditional modernizer or a modern traditionalist?

Rammohan's rationalist critique was at times Deistic in its tone (this is most noticeable in his English works) and at others it retained its indebtedness to sacred Hindu scripture (something made very clear in his Bengali writings). What was central to his vision was what he once referred to as a "simple code of religion and morality." This simple code could be found at the heart of all religions, and Rammohan worked to explicate both its Christian and its Hindu articulations. The core of authentic religion—which for Rammohan would need to be disentangled from the fanciful myths and idolatrous rites of his own day—was belief in one Ultimate Being who was "the animating and regulating principle of the whole Collective body of the universe" and who was the "origin of all individual souls." All that was required to worship such a Being was compassion or "benevolence towards each other."

This was the theological and moral bedrock upon which Rammohan established a new religious organization, the Brahmo Samaj, or the "society of the worshippers of the absolute," that met for the first time in north Calcutta on August 20, 1828. At this point there was "no organization, no membership, and no creed." Those gathering with Rammohan were encouraged to know the Supreme God according to Rammohan's reading of the Upanishads, which he referred to as the Vedant (i.e., Vedanta). Following the classical Hindu tradition, acquisition of such knowledge would require study,

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531 "The Brahmunical Magazine, or the Missionary and the Brahmun. No. IV," in The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy, 198. These words from 1823 emerge from a Hindu context, but may profitably be compared to what Rammohan elsewhere says with regard to Christianity; see his "Second Appeal to the Christian Public in Defence of 'The Precepts of Jesus'," in The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy, p. 566.
meditation, and diligent restraint of the passions. But Rammohan also insisted that
everything done in this world should be done in a spirit of dedication to God. He was
just as opposed to renunciatory forms of Hindu worship as he was to idolatry and
polytheism. His ideal was the *brahmanistha grhastha*, the "godly householder."534

From the moment he stepped ashore at Liverpool on 8 April 1831, until his death
in Bristol on 27 September 1833, Rammohun Roy1 was courted and received by Britons
of all social classes and both genders. The Indian reformer was presented to King
William IV and seated among the foreign ambassadors at William's coronation. He
attended London plays in the company of nobility, was introduced to the House of
Lords, and flirted with a popular actress with aristocratic male friends. Religious and
political thinkers sought him out to engage in spirited discussions, and Dissenting and
Anglican clergymen vied with each other for the honour of his presence at their
services. Prominent middle-class reformers were constantly at his side, their daughters
or unmarried sisters often especially attentive to him. And, while in Manchester, a
crowd of factory workers followed Rammohun about on his tour, the men and women
insisting on shaking his hand or embracing him. As a contemporary noted, Ram Mohan
was clearly the lion of the season (Bentinck 658-59).535

In 1832 Ram Mohan consulted C. W. W. Wynn, a noted constitutional expert,
about his eligibility to sit in Commons. He was encouraged to do so by remarks that
Wynn had made in 1831 at a Royal Asiatic Society meeting to the effect that Ram

533 See Dilipkumar Biswas, "Ramamohaner dharmacinta," in *Ramamohana Smarana*, ed.
Pulinbihari Sen et al. (Calcutta: Ramamohana Raya smritiraksana samiti, 1989), 368–69.
534 See Brian A. Hatcher, *Idioms of Improvement: Vidyasagar and Cultural Encounter in
535 *Defining Christians, Making Britons: Rammohun Roy and the Unitarians*Author(s): Lynn
ZastoupilReviewed work(s):Source: Victorian Studies, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Winter, 2002), pp. 215-
243Published by: Indiana University Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3830327
Mohan was "as much a British subject as any gentleman present." Crucial here is the phenomenon of the "voyage in" made by colonial subjects to Europe, a form of circulation between periphery and core that brought the unstable boundary separating colonizer and colonized to European shores.

Unitarianism proved to be Ram Mohan's point of entry into a nation disentangling itself from an established church. In many ways Christianity's permeable borderland, Unitarianism facilitated his inclusion in a restructured British body politic as well. The contested nature of religious identity, coupled with the increasingly fragile relationship between church and state, made it possible for contemporaries to consider Rammohun a Briton, eligible even to sit in Parliament. This is why so many flocked to see him: he was, in key respects, a mirror in which the possibilities of a modern British nation in the making were reflected.536

The Unitarians were in the forefront of the intellectual and political radicalism that led to the undoing of the British establishment in the early nineteenth century.537 Dermot Killingley argued that 'Rammohun's publications in Persian, Sanskrit, Bengali, and English can be seen as attempts to localize his religious ideas by situating them within the linguistic and cultural horizons of his Muslim, Hindu, and Christian audiences. That is to say, Rammohun expressed core ideas-the unity of God, the common tendency of organized religions to divide and mislead, and the need to restore rational forms of worship-in varying ways to make them appropriate to different

537 Ibid, p. 219
religious groups. Therefore, when Rammohun declared to Christians "that his morality is no other than that of the gospel", this should be seen, not as a mistranslation of his Vedanta beliefs, but a sincere attempt to speak from within the Christian tradition, as he had done with regard to the Muslim and Hindu traditions. Such a perspective renders more intelligible Rammohun's important controversy with Baptist missionaries, since his ability to write with confidence from within the radical Christian tradition was a crucial factor in these debates.

Rammohun's facility with the language and ideas of the Christian tradition is related to a larger process whereby the Pre colonial Indian intelligentsia transformed itself into westernized intellectual elite through colonial service. Like many others of this class, Rammohun used his Persian education and cultural knowledge to become a munshi, or secretary and cultural broker, for various British officials, most notably John Digby. Fluent in the language and customs of north Indian court culture, and versed in the nuances of diplomatic exchange, munshis such as Rammohun found their linguistic and cultural skills in demand by British officials struggling with languages and political customs they only imperfectly understood. But, while others developed extensive business partnerships with Europeans in Bengal, Rammohun invested his money in rural estates and Calcutta properties, and he devoted his time to religious and social reform. He did join a fledgling free trade movement among Bengalis calling for European

540 Killingley, p.160.
541 Ibid, p. 220
settlement throughout Bengal. These activities brought him into contact with Britons hostile to the Company's economic restrictions, which contributed to his familiarity with the ideas and strategies of the British reform tradition. This encounter with European free traders took place, however, only after Rammohun had retired to Calcutta in 1815. His first contact with western radicalism came earlier, occurred through the medium of religious ideas, and grew out of his own religious agenda. When he became the munshi of John Digby in 1805, Rammohun was already a wealthy man and apparently motivated more by intellectual than financial concerns. Improving his knowledge of the English language was a top priority: in 1805 Rammohun's English skills were poor, but that changed as he used his access to Digby's correspondence, European visitors, and British newspapers to acquire an excellent command of written and spoken English.

The Precepts of Jesus in 1820, Rammohun's knowledge of European religious radicalism encompassed key features of Unitarianism. Killingley argued that the Precepts challenged the Baptist missionaries in Bengal by suggesting that they had wrongly presented their religion to Indians (138-39). Focusing on doctrinal disputes and miraculous events unintelligible or unconvincing to local audiences, these Christian emissaries, Rammohun argued, had neglected the "simple code of religion and morality" found in the New Testament. He compensated for their missteps by selecting passages from the gospels most likely to reach Indian audiences. The Precepts was also an attempt to expand the definition of Christianity using the vocabulary of Unitarianism. Rammohun noted in his preface three accepted definitions of a Christian: to some, only

those who believed in the divine trinity were "justly entitled to the appellation of Christian"; to others, a Christian is one who acknowledged the Bible as the revealed word of God; while still others required from him who claims the title of Christian, only an adherence to the doctrines of Christ, as taught by himself, without insisting on implicit confidence in those of the Apostles, as being, except when speaking from inspiration, like other men, liable to mistake and error. Killingley suggests that Rammohun publicly raised the possibility of claiming "the title of Christian" under this third and broadest of all definitions. He was able to do so because the tools of rational Dissent were now at his disposal thanks to his European friends. Unitarianism meant different things to different adherents, but by this time most who professed to be Unitarians grounded their faith on reason and scripture. While some came to their beliefs through the rationalist tradition of which deism was a part, many others found that a close reading of the Bible undermined commonly held notions of the trinity.

But the missionaries were also clearly disturbed by the challenge to Christian orthodoxy that Rammohan made using a newfound fluency in the discourse of European religious radicalism. The Precepts employed familiar methods to contest their view of the Bible's integrity and of key doctrines such as original sin. Their unease was enhanced by the recognition that Rammohan still seemed poised to claim the identity of a Christian, but using the expansive definition adopted by Unitarians in Britain. The Precepts had to be refuted, then, not only for its impact on missionary work in Bengal, but also for the support it gave to heterodoxy back home. Ram Mohan Roy discovered

546 (Roy, English Works 5: 3)
547 Killingley, 147
in the Vedas what he needed to resist the western influences. This was an ideology of strategic syncretism: syncretism because there was a strong intention to reform one's society through the assimilation of western values consistent with the Hindu cultural equilibrium; and strategic syncretism since the equilibrium in question remained the prime concern. This strategy combined two dimensions, the first one being directed towards 'psychological' demands, the second one concerning 'mimetic' aspects of ideology building.\footnote{ibid} This syncretism served strategic purposes for three related reasons. It enabled Hindus to use European methods (such as proselytism) against them - this was the 'mimetic' dimension; it strengthened the self-esteem of Hindus by convincing them that the new prestigious values and ideas were derived from their golden age - this was the 'psychological' dimension; and it remained partial which was part of the strategy of cultural vindication - since Vedic precedents were also reinterpreted to legitimise certain cherished institutions such as socio-ritual hierarchy in the case of the varna.\footnote{Ibid, p. 522}

Rammohun's religious views remain a vexing issue. He moved freely between Islamic, Hindu, and Christian rationalist traditions. Some scholars argue for a succession of influences - "Persian, Vedantic and Occidental" - roughly in line with the chronological events of his life.\footnote{Rajat K. Ray, "Introduction," in Joshi, V.C. Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernization in India. Delhi: Vikas. 1975. p. 7.} Others seeking to reclaim him from the Unitarian Christians who, proclaimed him a convert - had sought to demonstrate that Rammohun remained always a Vedantin.\footnote{This point is ably argued by Robertson, Rammohan, pp. 165-181. See also the editors' note in Sophia Dobson Collet, The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy, ed- Dilip Kumar Biswas and Prabhat Chandra Ganguli (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1962), pp. 97-100.} Dermot Killingley offered a third approach. He suggested thinking of Rammohun as addressing different audiences when he wrote in Persian, Bengali, and English. Each had distinct religious discourses and different

\footnote{ibid} \footnote{Ibid, p. 522}
sacred texts that Ram-mohun used in turn to present his core ideas. Thus, when the Bengali reformer argued for the unity of God and rational forms of worship, or warned that all organized religions tended to divide and mislead, he did so in ways tailored to the mental universe of each distinct audience. Professional translators today call this localization - situating a text within the linguistic and cultural horizons of the target audience. One of Rammohun's many talents was successfully localizing his religious ideas for Muslim, Hindu, and Christian audiences. Or, as Killingley phrased it, he learned to speak with confidence from within their respective religious traditions.553 Rammohun adopted the language of Deism to explain Vedanta to English-reading audiences. He used phrases such as "Supreme Being" or "the Author and Governor of the universe" to render concepts such as isvara, brahman, or atman intelligible,554 and he wrote of "Nature's God" and "the dictates of common sense" in ways evocative more so of a philosopher than a pandit.555

Rammohan and his coevals created a constitutional history for India that centred on the institution of the panchayat, a local judicial body. While some expatriates and Indian radicals discussed "independence" or "separation" for the country as early as the 1830s, Rammohan himself argued for constitutional limitations on the Company's power and Indian representation in Parliament. Under liberal British government, he believed, an Indian public would emerge, empowered by service on juries and the operations of a free press.556

554 Killingley, Rammohun, pp. 37-38, 57, 96
This surge of support for a wide range of constitutional liberal reforms in India, Britain, Iberia, Greece and Latin America explained why Bishop Reginald Heber described the small Bengali intelligentsia as "advanced Whigs" when he came to India. They deplored the East India Company's monopoly, high taxation and constant frontier wars. Any successful rebellion against autocracy across the world was therefore a cause for rejoicing in Calcutta. The Portuguese celebration was not unique. Rammohan Roy himself hosted several celebrations in Calcutta Town Hall for the Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American revolutions between 1820 and 1823.557

The Swiss political economist J. De Sismondi, writing later in the Paris Revue encyclop'edique, remarked that reports of Rammohan's presence at events, such as when Spanish reformers reissued the original 1812 Cadiz constitution, clearly disproved the stereotype, purveyed by British colonialists, that India was doomed to social stagnation by caste prejudices against social mixing. What we can discern from that liberal constitutionalist moment, then, was the emergence of a small international public sphere—including Indians—that was unified not so much by coherent intellectual influence, but by political affect.558

Rammohan was born into a Brahmin-Mughal service family, he moved through an early phase of personal religious enquiry and become closely associated with a number of British scholar officials and Unitarian ministers in Bengal. He learnt several

557 (*B. Majumdar, History of Political thought from Rammohun to Dayananda (1821–84), vol. 1 (Calcutta, 1934), 22)


Doi :10.1017/S1479244306001028. Printed in the United Kingdom.
European languages and, by 1815, had become spokesman for a religious tendency in Hinduism (Vedanta-sastra) that rejected "idol worship" and asserted that true Hinduism was monotheistic and little concerned with issues of caste. His opposition to the burning of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres, sati, a relatively uncommon but ideologically charged practice, earned him the enmity of the neo-orthodox in Bengal. His insistence that modern Hinduism was a corrupt form of a pure and monotheistic ancient religion caused his mother to disown him and his relations to try to disinherit him. But the crusade against corrupt practices, especially widow-burning, led him to publish numerous pamphlets in English, Bengali and Sanskrit and to found the subcontinent's earliest Indian-run newspapers.559

Rammohan's reading of European debates about constitutional government informed his construction of India's past and its future. In 1822, at the height of the liberal euphoria over the Spanish and Portuguese revolutions, he published "Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females According to the Hindu Law of Inheritance".560 He wished to explain that India had once had a constitution and it was the decline of this constitution and its checks and balances that had sunk India into backwardness. Yet, equally, he implied that if the Indian mind had once managed to conceive the notion of constitutional balance and the separation of powers, it would one day do so again. Thereafter, Rammohan said, a kind of division of powers existed. The Brahmins had "legislative authority", while the "second tribe should exercise the executive authority". After this, India enjoyed peace and harmony for many centuries.

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560 Rammohan, "Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females", in The Essential Writings of Raja Rammohun Ray, ed. B. C. Robertson (Delhi, 1999), p.147–55
Then, unfortunately, “an absolute form of government gradually came again to prevail”. Brahmins abandoned their legislative role and began to take offices “in the political department”, becoming dependent on the Rajput and later Maratha rulers. This despotism allowed the Muslims to invade India from the twelfth century, “destroying temples, universities and all other sacred and literary establishments”. The British might well establish “quiet and happiness”. But the auguries were not good. In many respects, the East India Company had perpetuated despotism, allowing the consolidation of executive and judicial powers in the office of the revenue collector and his corrupt post-Mughal deputies. Rammohan’s picture of the evolution of the Indian constitution represented a melding of itihasa, divine legend, with a particular, “Hindu”, view of medieval history. This was novel, though it built on an Indian tradition of interpreting and historicizing family and clan histories (vamshavalis) as much as on the work of European orientalists. At the broadest level, liberal historicizing, whether about Anglo-Saxon England, ancient Athens, Rome or India, represented an appeal to history and civilization that circumvented the legitimacy of present despotisms. This was of the utmost importance in a racially charged colonial situation where Indians in general and Bengalis in particular were denounced as backward. In referring to “royalists”, the return of despotism and popular rebellion, Rammohan was locating Indian history within the wider realm of international constitutional liberalism. Yet Parasurama, the leader of the legendary rebellion of the Shastras, was a complex figure for Hindus. He was amatricide and murdered his Rajput enemies’ families.561

One critical aspect of Rammohan’s vision of an Indian constitution, however, was that it depended on Indian agency. Earlier British constructs of a “Hindu

561 (* Ibid, 147–8, note 1.)
constitution” gave a much more static picture of Indian history: it was the British who
would re-establish ancient India’s “constitution”. How did India’s ancient constitution
relate to its present travails? To begin with, Rammohan’s own vision of political
progress was international. Reform and nation-building in India depended on the
success of constitutional revolutions throughout the world. Above all, Rammohan
argued tirelessly for the reform of Parliament. He watched the passage of the Reform
Bill with trepidation, stating in 1832 that if it failed in Parliament he would sever all ties
with Britain. Nevertheless, he appears to have hoped that a liberal rule in Westminster
would reduce the power of the Company to that of a territorial government. Parliament
would oversee Indian legislation more closely and divide judicial from executive
powers across the subcontinent. Separate cadres of Indian judges and local executive
officers would strengthen and eventually replace the European civil service, which
would itself increasingly work in Indian languages. Rammohan was advocating a
“mixed constitution”, as described by Hume, in which learned and aristocratic
governance would be complimented by a limited popular check. Thus, at that stage
Rammohan did not advocate the establishment of a representative government or
council in India itself, as did a few British radicals, notably Robert Rickards, and the
younger generation of Bengalis educated at the Hindoo College. Rammohan was as
sceptical as Bentham of the concept of natural rights, including a natural right to self-
rule. Instead, he hoped that the Imperial Parliament would act as the legislative guardian
of India and other dependencies. He also supported the idea, promoted by some British
politicians of both parties, including Bentham, that representatives of India and the
colonies would sit in the reformed Parliament, turning it into something more like the French Assembly or the forum demanded by American colonists before 1776.\textsuperscript{562}

Yet Rammohan also feared a "colonial form of government" in which a British minister might become overwhelmingly powerful in Indian affairs. Someone who knew him well later remarked that he distrusted the "subservience" of Parliament to ministers. Here Rammohan perhaps had in mind what he knew of the causes of the American Revolution. Better would be "a limited government presenting a variety of checks on any abuse of its powers".\textsuperscript{563}

Rammohan tended to use the word "separation" to envision the eventual end of direct British rule in India, as did the liberal Governor General, Lord Hastings. He apparently believed that this would only happen some long time in the future. Yet resident British radicals as well as some Indians were already using the word "independence". This was as early as 1832. The \textit{Colombo Journal} wrote deprecating this talk. The \textit{Bengal Hurkaru} responded that though distant in time, the education and improvement of Indians would ensure that "some moment will occur favourable to independence".\textsuperscript{564}

Since Rammohan advocated neither direct local political representation nor the early separation of India, it is difficult to see him as the first nationalist, as some historians did in the early twentieth century. Yet he can perhaps be described as a


\textsuperscript{563} Ram Mohun Roy. \textit{Asiatic Journal}, NS, 12 (1834), 212.

colonial patriot someone who conceived of India as a cultural and geographical unity. He increasingly came to refer to India, rather than Hindustan, as “a nation” and argued that from the cultural and moral perspective Indians, or “Asiatics” more generally, were the equals of Europeans. At other times, he used the word Hinduism (Hindur in Bengali), both positively and negatively, and he was one of the first Indians to do this. Contemporaries were aware of this. Disappointed Unitarians believed that he had opted for “Hindu Unitarianism” rather than Christian Unitarianism in 1818 because of his “patriotism”. Since he held that all religions have an equal claim to authority, custom and a sense of solidarity would define a “national cult” and consequently a nation.

The Calcutta Tory newspaper John Bull ridiculed Rammohan’s embassy to England on behalf of the Mughal emperor as unnatural since the emperor was a Muslim. Rammohan’s veiled threats that Muslim India would revolt if maltreated were suggested, the paper went on, by “a species of patriotism which likely enough owes its birth to the ‘March of Intellect School.’

At the broadest level, Rammohan was attempting to build an Indian “public” or civil society from the ground up, so that within a generation Indians would begin to share in power and legislative authority. Where possible, like his European liberal peers, he sought to reduce and tame the despotic power of the Company, even if this meant an accession of authority to the distant sovereignty of the Westminster parliament. That

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565 C. A. Bayly, The Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India (Delhi, 1996)
567 (*Killingley, Rammohun Roy, 53.)
568 “Selections from the Calcutta Press 1826–33”, Bengal Past and Present, 26 (1923), 50.
stood out even more sharply in two cases where Rammohan was more radical: juries and the press. For him, the element of popular balance in his mixed constitution depended on the proper working of these institutions and, once again, their antecedents in the Indian past had to be envisioned. 569

The issue of juries emerged in the 1820s as a domestic British imperial problem, that of the press as an international liberal cause. To constitutionalist thinkers in Britain from Blackstone to J. S. Mill the jury was at the heart of the constitution, more important in some senses than parliamentary representation itself. The 1825 Juries Act gave jurymen the power to judge points of law as well as of fact. But contemporary British ideologies of cultural difference clashed with the need for the sense of the community. At this time Indians were still debarred from selection for grand juries on the grounds that, being non-Christians, they were incapable of taking a meaningful oath. Nor, it was said, would they send their own people for punishment, particularly if they were Brahmins. More open critics, such as James Mill, argued that Indians were morally depraved as a race by long eras of despotism. But, that struck at the heart of the evangelical case that the “Hindu mind” was capable of moral reform and regeneration and would later be converted to Christianity. There was also a practical problem since Indian merchants, who underpinned much of the credit of Asian trade, were excluded from being jurors on critical cases involving commercial interests Rammohan and his group, along with his learned Madras and Bombay contemporaries, argued strongly for a change in the Indian regulations to permit their countrymen to serve. The argument was, first, that respectable Indians were morally fully capable of taking oaths and that Hindu religion abominated lying. Second, an ancient system of jury, the panchayat

(literally, a body of five men) had always existed in India. Finally, by taking part in judgment, Hindus and Muslims would be contributing their essential local knowledge to proceedings, while at the same time learning to participate in a growing civil society. Concurrently, Ram Raz, a judge in the princely state of Mysore, was among the first Indians to designate the judicial tribunal the foundation of Indian political philosophy. In a letter of 1828 he traced an analogy of the *panchayat* to the ancient Hindu law books, where it was called the *sabha*.570

The third British context for the emergence of Indian liberalism in addition to the constitution and the jury was the issue of press freedom. Free communication was an essential dimension of the liberal theory of civil society, as important as free trade and, like free trade, regarded as a moral as well as an economic imperative. One of Rammohan's arguments for the colonization of India by select bodies of Europeans was precisely that an analogous flow of money back to Britain from India would be inhibited if more respectable Europeans actually lived in the country. There indeed, was one of the earliest expressions of an argument which was to become central to the ideology of Indian nationalism: the idea of the "drain of wealth" from India, later elaborated by the Bombay nationalist leader and liberal MP Dadhabhai Naoroji. Indians and British liberals put up fierce opposition to arbitrary deportation of editors and formal press censorship. Rammohan's argument worked at two levels. First, at a practical level, he argued that a free press was essential in the discovery of arbitrary acts by figures in authority; it had in effect, a representative aspect. Again, an Indian public could only

come into existence through the expansion of public knowledge and the press was an organ of education. At a second level, Rammohan and his followers argued that the notion that press freedom would lead to Indian unrest was a fiction. India’s polite and commercial society had already demonstrated its implicit loyalty to the British connection through massive investments of wealth in property and businesses around Calcutta and in East India Company and British bonds and financial instruments.571

Rammohan Roy has conventionally been termed “the father of modern India”. But that paternity is clearly a complex phenomenon. Most of his contemporaries regarded him as a pseudo-Christian or even an outcaste. Many younger people, grouped around Derozio, regarded him as too conservative on the matter of civic “rights” and representation. Even some of his British contemporaries endorsed Indian local self-government more vigorously than did he.572

Yet he was both an original thinker and an inspiration to later generations. He produced the first identifiable “canon” of modern Indian political thought. He was the first Indian to represent the growth of freedom in India as an essential part of a wider trans-national quest of humanity for self realization. Before 1830 British and Indian radical journals were discussing India’s “independence” or “separation”, the evils or advantages of “colonisation”, the “drain of wealth” from India, and the need for balance between central power and local agency in a future constitution. Early Indian liberals—though not Rammohan and his immediate circle—had already developed an anti-landlord rhetoric as vigorous as William Cobbett’s. All of Rammohan’s major political arguments related directly to British and European debates on equivalent issues. This

571 Appeal to the King in Council, 1823, in Raja Ram Mohun Roy: His Life, Speeches and Writings (Madras, c. 1920), 39.
572 Appeal to the King in Council, 1823, in Raja Ram Mohun Roy: His Life, Speeches and Writings (Madras, c. 1920), 39.
was the period before the Reform Act of 1832 when domestic British politics was violently contentious and radicals were acutely aware of the European and American dimensions of constitutional liberalism. Reformers regarded the ascendant press not merely as a medium of communication, but as an embodiment of the process by which diffusion of useful and moral sentiments would have ultimately create a liberated, trans-national civil society.\textsuperscript{573}

However, it was Raja Ram Mohan Roy who argued the case for English in his historic memorial to Lord Amherst. In his memorial (1) to the British Governor-General, Raja Ram Mohan Roy wrote\textsuperscript{574}:

"When this seminary of learning was proposed, we understood that the Government in England had ordered a considerable sum of money to be annually devoted to the instruction of its Indian subjects. We were filled with sanguine hopes that this sum would be laid out in employing European gentlemen of talent and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences, which the natives of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world... The Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. "This memorial written as early as 1823 reflected the considered opinion of a great Indian who effected the transition from mediaeval to modern India. He was not against Sanskrit but was opposed to the Sanskrit system of education based on grammatical niceties and metaphysical subtleties in the modern age. Indeed Ram Mohan Roy viewed the study of Sanskrit as a fountain- head of creative inspiration but not as a barren field of speculation. In his time the problem of choice as between the various languages did not arise. But his plea for a modern system of education through the medium of English is even more relevant today. For even Sanskritized Hindi obviously lacks the advantage of English because it


substitutes for the heroic age of modern civilization a small and narrow provincial dialect of its own chauvinistic and mediaeval way of life. And English is no longer the exclusive language of the British Isles, but the language of a new world culture based on liberal and technological values, the medium of a new global civilization, which includes the intellectual idiom of Raja Ram Mohan Roy's India in its majesty and sweep. Viewed in the perspective of history, Lord Macaulay was the architect of the concept of Indian secularism and the father of the idea of the Indian nation heralded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Independent India's secular outlook owes not a little to the legal system based on Lord Macaulay's Penal Code which established the principle of equality of all before law in the history of the country. Lord Macaulay also hoped that Indians might "in some future age demand European institutions" and that "if such a thing ever came about... it would be the proudest day in English history ". Moreover, the impact of the English language on modern India not only forged Indian political unity but even generated a process of social and cultural change which brought in its wake certain characteristics such as parliamentary democracy, secularism, individual human rights and the foundations of infrastructure in a developing economy. The adoption of the English language did not symbolize a process of cultural enslavement but heralded a new era of creative consciousness. This is not a phenomenon peculiar to India."

He was the first man to perceive, with a prophetic and generous vision, all the potentialities of true cultural fellowship, to visualise how much it could broaden the field of human activities, how fully it could enrich experience and human understanding, how powerfully it could promote the growth of an international society. The object, the goal, so to say, of society is to secure the happiness of the greatest possible number, and when left to itself a nation cannot attain this object, when it does not contain within itself the principles of future progress, it was better for it that it should be guided by the example and even by the authority of a conquering people who are more civilised. It was not the isolation of independence, but the brotherhood of inter-dependence of individuals as well as of nations that he found to be the most effective civilizing force. 'When we have to depend' he used to say, 'by the very
conditions of our existence upon all things and all beings in nature, is not the fiery love of national independence a chimera? In society, individuals are constantly driven by their weakness to seek help from their neighbours, above all if the neighbours happen to be stronger than they: why, then, should a nation have the absurd pride of not depending upon another? Sincere as this conviction was, it did not mean that he wanted any nation to subject itself to a reactionary power. Nothing reflects more vividly his uncompromising opposition to the forces of reaction than the passion with which he championed the cause of the Reform Bill agitators. He went to England to throw his weight in favour of the movement. His cosmopolitanism made him a sincere friend of freedom-fighters all over the world. When the news reached India that the people of Naples after extorting a constitution from their despotic ruler were crushed back into servitude, Rammohan Roy was so depressed by it that he observed the day as one of mourning. Christian missionary education did not have the same impact on all Afro-Asian societies; in fact one can discern three different types of impact in three areas, namely French Africa, British Africa and India. In the first case, missionary educators were quickly replaced by the colonial government as the educating agency formally by the decree of 1904. The immediate reason was probably the new wave of anticlericalism in France following the Dreyfus affair in which the Catholic Church and the army brass were ranged with the vengeful persecutors of Colonel Dreyfus - who was finally declared innocent and rehabilitated. The advantages of an anticlerical educational system were thus not reaped in terms of technical or scientific education, but they appeared in the toning down of the schizophrenia between devoutness and modernism,

which still characterises the Anglophone African elite. In India, the story and the consequences of Christian missionary education are far too complex for a brief note, but the highlights include first, the general indifference and even discouragement of Christian missionary activity by the British and secondly, the inoculating and revitalising effects of that activity on the Hindu elite. The East India Company, controlled mainly by the Anglican English and Scottish Presbyterians when it set out on its career of conquest was aware of an already existing sizeable coastal population of Roman Catholics, the much earlier educational activity of Jesuits and the growth of a sceptical and secular industrial society at home in Britain. Their main policy was one of general discouragement of missionary activity, specific discouragement of British missions and partial encouragement of non-British missionary activity - Danish, Dutch or Swiss. The conflict between anachronistic Christian spirituality and western secularism did not form the primary conflict in education. The more important confrontation was between Christian propaganda with instrumental educational institutions and Hindu and Muslim counterpropaganda through education as well as all the other instruments used by western missionaries. Thus, Indian nationalism took shape at first partly through religious counter-propaganda, which finally carried Hindu spirituality right into the West. 576

The Concept of the Renaissance in Bengal posited in the context of British colonial rule was based on the fundamental premise that the western education and political infrastructure disseminated a sense of rule of law and justice and fostered an intellectual development of the people on an entirely new line. The intellectuals of the

19th century Bengal emanating from that class of people had a long cherished goal of life to become the junior partaker of British administrative system. Rammohun Roy, the "father of the Indian renaissance," was overwhelmed by the British sense of justice and law. He was pained to have seen Hindustan for several centuries subjected to Mohammadan Rule, and the civil and religious rights of its original inhabitants being constantly trampled upon. 577

Rammohun was shocked to see the want of "vigour of body" of the inhabitants of Bengal and regretted their aversion to "active exertion" against the Muslim plunders. He greeted the King's Most Excellent Majesty with the following words: "Divine 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." He further pleaded on behalf of the class he represented: "your dutiful subjects have not viewed the English as a body of conquerors, but rather as deliverers, and look up to your Majesty not only as a Ruler, but also as a father and protector." 578

Ram Mohan Roy composed Tuhafat-ul-Muwahiddin in 1802. Based on oriental knowledge, it was a general and speculative treatise on the origin and character of religion and religious system, in which Ram Mohan came very close to an atheist stand. Not that he denied the existence of God and the other world, but he accepted them only with reservation for pragmatic reasons. The reservation was that neither the existence of God nor of the other world could be proved. Yet he considered them as necessary for the proper conduct of man in society: Mankind are to be excused [he said] in admitting


and teaching the doctrine of the existence of the soul and the next world for the sake of
the welfare of the people as they simply for fear of punishment in the next world ...
refrain from the commission of evil deeds.⁵⁷⁹

Ram Mohun Roy believed that human beings were naturally social beings and
they were required to live socially. But as society depends upon individuals
understanding the ideas of each other reciprocally and on existence on some rules by
which the property of one is defined and distinguished from that of another and one was
to be prevented from exercising oppression over another, so all the rulers inhabiting
different countries, and even the inhabitants of isolated islands and the submits of lofty
mountains, had invented special words indicating certain ideas, which formed the basis
of the invention of religion and upon which the organisation of society depended.⁵⁸⁰

Ram Mohan questioned and rejected the dogmas of faith and miracles which
were not necessarily integral to the original character of religion. They were a part of an
accretion process brought into play by religious leaders purely for their selfish interests,
which they achieved by misleading their unsuspecting followers. Supernaturalism and
monopoly of scriptural knowledge were the effective instruments used to achieve that
end. The religious system, beliefs and practices, therefore, assumed the character of
deception. All religious systems, Ram Mohan argued, were systems of human
deception.⁵⁸¹

What was more important was that Ram Mohan did not limit the application of
rationality to religion alone, but extended it to all social and natural phenomena, by
underlining the principle of causality linking the whole phenomenal universe. He wrote:

"The secret of the universe lies in this that in this world, the existence of everything depends upon a certain cause and condition.... It is not hidden from those who have a sound mind and are friends of justice, that there are many things, for instance many wonderful inventions of the people of Europe and are not obviously known and seem to be beyond the comprehension of human power, but after a keen insight acquired by the instruction of others these causes can be known satisfactorily."  

The intellectual implication of this rational explanation was clear enough: there was nothing in the social and phenomenal world which was not susceptible to causal explanation. To Ram Mohan the sole criterion was demonstrability—that is, truth should not be repugnant to reason.

One of the chief characteristics of Renaissance humanism in Europe was a revolt against the otherworldliness of medieval Christianity and an effort to bring into focus the problems of existence in this world. It was only in this respect humanism in India had some parallel with the European phenomenon, for India did not experience the great surge of creativity which was the hallmark of humanism in Europe. The religious protest and reform movements during the pre-colonial period—beginning with Buddhism to the heterodox sects in the eighteenth century—were invariably concerned with the ways and means of salvation. In contrast, religious reform in colonial India was almost indifferent to the earlier preoccupation. On the other hand, a definite shift in emphasis from otherworldliness and supernaturalism to the problems of existence was quite evident.

Ram Mohan was a path-finder in the aspects of Inequality and poverty, which he saw as the main causative factors of human suffering. Giving evidence before the House of Commons, he underlined the overwhelming poverty of the people and pointed out

582 Ibid, p. 950
how, except a few landlords, almost everyone lacked even the common comforts of life.

Universalism sought to establish that all religions were essentially true but pursued different paths for the realisation of God. Religious thought in nineteenth century India was not only rooted in that idea but also explored and elaborated its various dimensions in the context of the multi-religious situation in India. Ram Mohan, for instance, considered different religions as national embodiments of one Universal Theism.

Jenkins had compared Anandaram’s contribution to Assam to that of Rajaram Mohun Roy in Bengal. Dhekiyal Phukan had received education in the Hindu College, and like many other newly educated Indians. Derizio and Captain Richardson had great influence in diverting him towards the currents of western education. Later on, this was complemented by Iswar Chand vidyasagar, and who taught and acquainted him with old Sanskrit Sastras and contemporary literature in his Sanskrit College. It was generally believed that a renaissance had begun in Bengal. However, there was dispute between the rulers and the ruled pertaining to the nature of this so called Renaissance. Macaulay in his Minutes of 1835, laid stress on the fact that English had the same place in India as Greek and Latin which had played the pivotal role in Europe on renaissance, awakening the people from its slumber and inertia. Indian intellectual elite however believed that change would come from within a reformed society.

585 Brijendranath Seal, Rammohan Roy-The Universal Man, Calcutta, 1924, p. 14
586 Dr. Hiren Gohain, ‘Dhekiyal Phukan and the notion of renaissance in Assam’ in Gariyoshi, January, 2007 issue, p. 26
587 Dr. Hiren Gohain, ‘Dhekiyal Phukan and the notion of renaissance in Assam’ in Gariyoshi, January, 2007 issue, p. 26
Dhekiyal Phukan's *Ain O Byabastha Sangraha* in Bengali contained beautiful narration of *dewani* laws, which was of immense value to the learned society of Bengal. Gunabhiram Barua observed that the book was the first of its kind in Bengali or any vernacular language and as such very helpful to the people. He further stated that only one who possessed the intellectual capacity and the required social consciousness would be able to write such a book.\(^{588}\)

During the revolt of 1857, Anandaram had reassured the British Government that there was no sense of discontentment against them and that they should rather have full faith in the Assamese. \(^{589}\) Perhaps, Anandaram was toeing the line of the Bengali intellectuals.

Dhekiyal Phukan on reading about Peter the Great made a promise to himself that he would always strive for the betterment of Assam. \(^{590}\) While Dhekiyal Phukan was all praise for the British rule, Maniram Dewan was against the British system of justice as such. \(^{591}\) Anandaram was closely associated with Matilal Seal, Pearychand Mitra, Raja Radhakanta Deb, Debendra Nath Tagore and often visited them. He even attended the prayers of the Brahma Samaj\(^{592}\) and the discussions in the Bethune assembly. \(^{593}\)

Teachings of morality and the intricacies of science were dealt by Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan. During his stint as Junior Assistant Collector in Nagaon, he cut down 20 feet of land and brought waters to river *kolang* in the dry season as mentioned in the 5\(^{th}\) and 6\(^{th}\) part of the book of Gunabhiram Barua. He supported and participated


\(^{589}\) Ibid, p. 136

\(^{590}\) Barua, op. cit, p. 101

\(^{591}\) Sarma, Benudhar. *Maniram Dewan*, 1950, p. 132

\(^{592}\) Barua, op. cit, p. 100

\(^{593}\) Dr. Hiren Gohain, 'Dhekiyal Phukan and the notion of renaissance in Assam' in Gariyoshi, January, 2007 issue, p27
in the efforts of the missionaries for restoration of the Assamese language as the official language.594

In a letter to Anandaram, Captain Matthie reminded him that had he not gone to Calcutta for higher studies on the advice of his and Jenkins, he would have remained poor and helpless. He was also reminded of the fact, that of all the Bengalis and the Assamese, he was the first one to occupy the top government posts of the day (Sub assistant) and that he drew the highest salary in the province. Hence, he should be ever grateful to the government and should exhibit the same through his conduct.595 Thus he was given a free hand in implementation of his bright ideas in the day to day administration. Anandaram strongly believed that Assam came under the rule of the British due to Providence alone and that too for its betterment.596 During the Burmese invasion, a sense of hopelessness prevailed in Assam. And that, then, it was relieved from the horrible dark phase, the Assamese should be ever grateful to the providence.597

Anandaram believed Western Civilization was the measuring yardstick for all civilizations. Therefore, he tried to popularise European notions of progress through his writings. Even then, he was of the opinion that through one’s own devised method, one can be at par with the European civilization someday or the other. There could have been surely a light of knowledge in other parts as well.598 He entertained no sense of appreciation for the pasts of India as well as Assam, and there was a keen sense of fascination for the western science and technology from his view. Thus he was a devotee of the colonial modernity. He showed keen fascination for scientific endeavours. He reminded to the boys of Assam (it could have been to all the children of

594 Barua, op. cit. p. 127
595 Barua, op. cit. p. 111-112
596 Asamiya lorar mitra, p. 148
597 Ibid, p. 157-158
598 Ibid, p. 117
Assam) that these machines were present in England, America and Europe only. Since, they did not possess these machines, how come the Assamese proclaim themselves as civilized⁵⁹⁹. At the same time, he proclaimed that the only way to become civilized was through education. The Bengalis had become so due to the establishment of Bishop College, Hindu College, Sanskrit College, High Schools and so on. Through education, the Bengalis had become civilised and in a matter of time, all the Bengalis would have had become civilised as the Europeans did.⁶⁰⁰ He appealed to his Assamese brethrens that they should have faith in the civilizing mission of the British rule. He reminded that prior to many centuries, the British were just like the Nagas and Abors in respect of rituals, character and civilization. But, due to the power of steam and science they became civilised and courageous. He thought that with the passing of time, history could be repeated in the case of the Nagas and Abors. So, he felt then, that the day was not far when machines would have had run with the help of steam and they would have given a stiff competition to the British.⁶⁰¹

Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan had a constricted notion of culture. He had a unilinear notion of progress. He considered the Nagas and abors to be uncultured and that the Nagas constituted the lowest rungs of society. How slowly darkness would have yielded before lights emanating from knowledgeable rulers like the English.⁶⁰² Both the missionaries and the educated Assamese thought for the expansion and the spread of Western Culture and civilization. He was of the opinion that Education and the inculcation of the mental exercises (Industry, labour and punctuality) would help them to become civilized as the Europeans. Education gives light and knowledge, and

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 135
⁶⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 138
⁶⁰¹ Dhekiyal Phukan, Anandaram. Orumdooi, Feb 1849, Publication board, p. 145
⁶⁰² Dhekiyal Phukan, Anandaram. Orumdooi, Aug 1849, p. 64
when one attained knowledge, one attained God and knows what one’s duty stands for.\textsuperscript{603}

Anandaram believed that Labour in a concentrated manner led to education.\textsuperscript{604} He was of the opinion that time and tide waited for none.\textsuperscript{605} So, he urged everyone to make full use of time and appealed to all to live and work in the present.\textsuperscript{606} Discipline, forgiveness, truthfulness, perseverance, devotion to God and respect for parents were some ideals for which he espoused in the \textit{Asaamiya Lorar Mitra}, in his efforts to exhort the youths of the Province.

The European notion of Karma Yoga – work is worship, had been popularised in R H Tawney’s “Religion and Rise of Capitalism”. In the nineteenth century western teachers popularised it and preached it as an integral part of Education. The Hindu College in which Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan received his education, was established to instruct the sons of the Hindus in the European and Asiatic language and Sciences. Ram Mohun Roy urged Lord Amherst to allow the teachings of useful Sciences. Lord William Bentinck said that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar wrote to the Bengal Government that Education system of Bengal ought to strive for the creation for modern Bengali Literature.\textsuperscript{607} Anandaram’s thinking was quite akin and in fact based on the thinking of the colonial rulers.

Rammohun Roy supported Western education. The newly educated Indians were of the view that until they become civilized, they should not try to demand self rule and

\textsuperscript{603} Asamiya Lorar mitra, p. 1-2
\textsuperscript{604} Ibid, 3
\textsuperscript{605} Ibid, p. 5
\textsuperscript{606} Ibid, p. 13
In Bengal, William Carey and his Munshi Ramram Bandhu laid the foundations of modern Bengali Language, while in Assam, Nathan Brown, Miles Bronson started the movement for the support of Assamese language and over and above that gave a modern orientation to it. English Baptist Mission worked in Bengal while American Baptist Mission worked in Assam. The American Baptist Missions was inspired by and followed the example of William Carey. Each had great respect for the other and thus there was a sense of cooperation between them. They felt that it was useless to baptise people at a tender age and if they were ignorant. Only when they receive knowledge do they qualify themselves to get baptised in order to experience Christ. The Baptists gave equal importance to scientific knowledge as they had given to spiritual knowledge because they feel that the source and base of the truth about the physical world and spiritual wealth is one and the same God.

Anandaram was an aide of the missionaries in their efforts to salvage the lost prestige of the Assamese language. Both of them were successful in building the edifice of Modern Assamese prose. Anandaram was fascinated by his contemporaries in Calcutta. He wanted to replicate the notion of progress and Renaissance in his society as well. He loved his country and that was why he wanted it to be just like the society in Europe. He was not contended only with his literary or educational attainments. He wanted his society to progress and become civilized. But this dream was to materialise within the British rule and not without. Even an administrator like Jenkins, came out...

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608 Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan & the notion of Renaissance in Assam. Dr. Hiren Gohain. Part II. Goriyoshi. Feb 2007, p. 22
609 ibid
610 ibid
611 ibid
612 Gohain, op. cit. p. 23
613 ibid
of his way to offer help to the Missionaries if they were willing to spread the message of the Gospel among the Singphos and the Khamtis. 614

To point out the importance of Orunudoi, Nathan Brown wrote a letter to Danforth and is reflected in the Book by H.K. Barpujari, \textit{American Missionaries and North east India},---

\begin{quote}
'The orunudoi has been considered by the mission as one of the most powerful instrumentalities for gaining access to the mind of the Assamese... No other instrument that we could use would exert half of the influence in enlightening the native mind and undermining their Shaster as a paper of this kind.'
\end{quote}

The object of the Orunudoi was act as a disseminating tool of the positive aspects of the British rule to free the minds of the ill impacts of the Shastras and to create an attraction towards western knowledge and religion. The Orunudoi taught the people to be grateful to the British regime for its beneficial and positive effects. 615

The Orunudoi expressed in no uncertain terms that--

\begin{quote}
'In our country as soon as they become educated, they cultivate a sense of disrespect for the agriculture. They forget that with education, they can benefit much better in agriculture by applying the cultivated knowledge. We do not need such education which teaches us to exhibit hatred towards a simple and humbler ways of making a livelihood. 616

We are not dependent in all ways. Our education system is in the hands of the foreigners. We cannot even express whether we are hungry or not. It is a matter of great shame. 617
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\begin{enumerate}
\item Neog, maheswar, \textit{Orunudoi, History of 150 years of newspapers of Assam}, 1998, p. 10
\item Gohain, op. cit, p. 24
\item Assam bandhu, Vol II. edited by Dr. nagen saikia, p. 59
\item Bahi, Kati, 1852, p. 257
\end{enumerate}
\end{flushright}
Independence is the soul force of all leading Universities in the developed countries. Educational Institutions bereft of this Independence is lifeless. They cannot help in the production of lively and conscious persons.  

Colonial rulers confined the notion of social progress to the preservation of ancient social traditions. Only the higher classes took advantage of the progress under the colonial rule. Majority of the people were unaware of the transformation taking place in the education scenario of the country. Anandaram Dhekial displayed great ignorance towards the Garos and Mikirs. This was a colossal mistake on his part. He considered the Nagas as constituting the lowest rungs of society and thereby pronounced as uncultured. It is fine that he viewed them through his prism of Bengali and Assamese culture. But, did he ever cared to think to look at the so called Bengali and Assamese culture from the prism or worldview of the Nagas and abors. Thus he had a constricted notion of culture.

Anandaram stood as a votary of the assamese language. But, at the same time he displayed a great sense of maturity when he said that Bengali should be cultivated as a language indispensable to complete the course of vernacular education and that the standard Bengali works should be introduced into the higher classes. He understood the relative gap between him and his native people with respect to the grasping an alien language, Bengali. In this way, he was considerate enough to keep in mind the interests of his native illiterate brethrens. His Ain O Byabastha was the first of its kind in the Bengali language. He translated the decisions of Sadar Dewanny and Nizamat Adalat for the sake of the interest of his people. He was an ardent supporter of women's

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618 Bahi, Fagun 1852, p. 311
619 Gohain, op. cit, p. 24
620 Asomiya Lorar Mitra, p. 104
621 Appendix to Mills Report, p. 41
education, as he started the process in his home by imparting education to his wife. He had to his credit several administrative innovations, which he displayed to the fullest extent, when he presented a memorandum to Mills. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan proved his mettle in the administrative domain. He did a yeoman’s service when he clearly exposed the facts along with the Baptist Missionaries in the struggle for reinstatement of the Assamese language, which in turn helped in the construction of a Greater Assamese Society in the subsequent time.

Any educated middle class derived from the colonial situation is first of all imitative of its rulers. Indeed even in the earlier historical periods, the Roman historian Tacitus and the Arab historian and sociologist Ibn Khaldun had noticed that tendency. That becomes stronger in an educated middle class. In due course of time, for several reasons, that tendency led to its dialectical opposite, namely revivalism. The main reason was that this class was rebuffed by the colonial rulers politically and socially and then turns against its own imitativeness. In India this tendency took shape early against Christian missionary propaganda and went through several stages of sophistication, resulting in a rediscovery of the western work ethic in the Hindu scripture Bhagavadgita.

Both Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan and Raja Rammohan Roy yearned for a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction which entwined disciplines such as Mathematics, natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences. They grew up in well bred and influential families. It would be naive on our part to assume that since they had embraced Western education, they have had surely forsaken Eastern learning. They never wanted the Sanskrit learning of the country to suffer. Anandaram tried to simulate the happenings in Bengal while Assam was lagging far behind. Since,
Assam had to struggle with the very medium of instruction. Both believed in the miracle of the British rule. Ram Mohan Roy even used the word 'separation' at a time when there was constant discussion about seeking 'independence' from the British Empire. They hoped that the frailties of their respective societies could be cured by the providential rule of the British. The three rooms of Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan in which he entertained local, European and his intellectual self, exhibited the cosmopolitan and liberal thinking which was displayed even by Raja Ram Mohun Roy in his dealings with people of Muslim, Christian and Hindu traditions. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan was considered as the first Modern man of Assam. Likewise, Raja Ram Mohan Roy was considered as the first modern man of India in general and of Bengal in particular. Both were overawed by the wonders of Western education.

Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan maintained a harmonious relationship with the Missionaries because they headed the collaborative mission of reinstating and developing a language as beautiful as the Assamese. He had a deep sense of reverence for them. But, in the case of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, he was not so appreciative of them. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was so much enmeshed in matters of religion that he even went to the extent of grappling with the very philosophies of different established faiths. But, even then he balanced both Science and religiosity. He found their doctrines less conformable with reason. In his opinion, the missionaries were devoid of any touch with the customs and people of the country. So, that may be the reason for the smaller number of converts in the country. Ram Mohan Roy tried to uphold Monotheism and Universalism. He reconciled reason with scriptures. He drew inspiration from many religions. In other words, his mind was the confluence of varied religious ideas. He was against idolatry and polytheism as such. So, he considered the idea of the Trinitarian
Christianity Faith in the form of *Father, son and the Holy Spirit*, as one kind of polytheism.

Even then, Ram Mohan Roy shared some commonality with the Missionaries. Both were against the debased form of Hinduism. Both held Jesus Christ as one of the world's great moral teachers. He believed that the moral precepts of Jesus Christ alone were sufficient to attain salvation. He was acquainted with the knowledge of European radicalism. His Unitarianism was confined to Christ or a Christ like figure. His Brahmo Samaj stood for Vedantism. He localized religious ideas for Hindu, Christian and Muslims alike. So that, it could be comprehensible for all people placed at different contexts. Ram Mohan Roy was deft at applying rationality to all domains of society including religion. He was an epitaph of Liberalism- because he championed the cause of Jury, free press and constitutionalism. He stood for such kind of constitutionalism in which there would be preponderance of the parliament. Ram Mohan Roy stood for Internationalism and tried his best to create conditions for the emergence of a truly trans-national civil Society.