CONTRIBUTIONS OF BENGALI THINKERS TO THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY IN INDIA: A STUDY OF SELECT THINKERS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF BURDWAN FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ARTS (POLITICAL SCIENCE)

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This thesis examines the specific formation of a liberal democratic intellectual tradition in Bengal in the nineteenth century. This tradition was worked in thought and reforms and protest action by a group of activist-thinkers who have not drawn the attention they deserved in the existing writings. This thesis explores a varied range of ideas, principles and arguments, activities of those Bengali intellectuals and public figures who articulated liberal and democratic consensus in the nineteenth century.

The historical context of post-Enlightenment and modernity as its offshoot gave birth to a new cognitive mind known as Bengali *Bhadralok* who played significant role in the articulation of democratic ideas through constant interaction, collaborations and confrontations which were essentially based on the existing colonial political context. They were mostly activist-thinkers who helped to bring about a transformation in the age-old socio-cultural practices prevailed in the society as well as the unjust governing practices of the colonial rule. It was nineteenth century Bengal which took the pioneering role in the rise of political consciousness, articulation of liberal and democratic ideals, giving birth to various political ideologies and formation of reverential sense of national feelings. Moreover it was Bengal in the nineteenth century which witnessed the remarkable emergence of civil-societal associations and movements, incarnation of political associations and the historical birth of print media especially the vernacular media as the chief engine of preaching the liberal democratic ideas of the newly educated Bengali intelligentsia.
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Dated: Abhisek Karmakar
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INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

This thesis examines the specific formation of a liberal democratic intellectual tradition which was articulated in Bengal in the nineteenth century. It explores the varied range of ideas, arguments, activities and sensibilities of those Bengali intellectuals and public figures who broadly subscribed to the liberal and democratic consensus in the nineteenth century. The chief reason behind selecting Bengal as the context of this study is obvious enough, being the seat of the historical context of the Renaissance and the post-colonial modernity; it gave birth to a new cognitive mind known as Bengali Bhadralok. With the introduction of new ideas and modern western education an educated middle class intelligentsia emerged historically which helped to bring about a transformation in the age-old socio-cultural practices prevailed in the society as well as the unjust colonial governing practices. It was nineteenth century Bengal which took the pioneering role in the rise of political consciousness, articulation of liberal and democratic ideals, giving birth to various political ideologies and formation of reverential sense of national feelings. Moreover it was Bengal in the nineteenth century which witnessed the remarkable outgrowth of civil-societal associations and movements, incarnation of political associations and the historical birth of print media specially the vernacular media as the chief engine of preaching the liberal democratic ideas of the newly educated Bengali intelligentsia. The incarnation of Bengal as the centre of the Renaissance made it the emblem of new ideas and culture. It was Bengal where the new socio-cultural and political consciousness emerged historically and shaped the historiography of colonial South-Asia

The term ‘thinker’ in the title of the dissertation has been used in a narrower sense. The personalities explored in the study were not ‘thinkers’ as we generally regard the term in Western political-philosophy. Rather they were activist-thinkers who articulated a liberal and democratic mode through the incarnation of modern Western education, belief
and political-philosophy. They were all guided by and thought through a post-Enlightenment framework of knowledge. In doing so, while responding to the emerging socio-political force in contemporary political context they tended to put their ideas into action in the specific political context and popularized their views through newspapers (both vernaculars and English), associations and public meetings. In this respect our study is and to be context-bound.

The scope of the work is limited to the nineteenth century since it is generally regarded as the most formative period in the political history of Bengal not only for the Renaissance or modernity but also for the articulation of newer political ideals and principles; it also witnessed the Hindu revival movement. The present work seeks to revisit the nineteenth century Bengal from a relatively different angle which tends to explore the emergence of liberal democratic thrust of various activist-thinkers, the Bengali educated intelligentsia known as Bhadralok. They are termed as ‘activist-thinkers’ because of their direct engagement with emerging civil-societal movements as a response to the un-hitherto change in the existing socio-economic and political life of contemporary India. These civil-societal associational activities as a response to the alien rule often emerged as anti-colonial which led the activists translate their ideas into action through their mouthpiece of journals and various associations. The present work does not claim to cover even a mere part of this vast and complex intellectual history of Bengal between 1800 and 1900. Moreover, it has selected only a few activist thinkers in the ambit of the study, who rendered specific but significant contributions to the rise and growth of democratic thought and conditions in the nineteenth century. In this sense it is extremely selective. It has also aimed to explore most of those thinker-activists who had remained neglected in the existing writings on this period in history of Bengal. The historical origin, nature, evolution, success and failure of the Renaissance and modernity in the nineteenth century have been explored by various scholars from different angles. But a distinctly democratic tradition of political thought within this broad canvas of the
then Bengal had suffered undeserved neglect. This study seeks to ratify the neglect by filling in the gap.

Survey of Existing literature

In the historiography of colonial South-Asia the nineteenth century Bengal as the centre of the Renaissance and cultural modernity has been explored to a good extent by various scholars belonging to different schools. The contributions of Bengali Bhadralok to the making of a democratic tradition in thought and action by articulating democratic ideas and practices has remained neglected in most of the scholarly studies related to post-Renascent Bengal. Most of the studies connected to the historical emergence and nature of democracy in India have focused on the post-independence period.

C.A.Bayly’s *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (2012) remains a master piece. It has covered the period from Raja Rammohun Roy of early nineteenth century to post Independence India in the 1950s. The scope of the book is vast and complex intellectual history, which examines the genesis of liberal ideas in the political context of colonial India. Bayly (2012: 1) argues that the Indian liberal ideas were foundational to all forms of Indian nationalism and the country’s modern politics. This liberal tradition though politically contextual and internally contested range of thoughts bore general feature in terms of personal freedom, representation in government service, on grand juries, demanded freedom of press and freedom of assembly. He argues that the nature and inter-relations between liberalism and democracy in a multi-ethnic empire like India were affected by colonialism (Bayly, 2012: 2).

Sartori’s *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital* (2008) is another recent contribution. It has examined the history of political and intellectual life in the nineteenth and twentieth century-Bengal. It has tried to locate Bengal’s culturalism into the global history of the concept. The rise of Bengali liberalism in the first half of nineteenth century and its inherent dilemmas, specially the inherent crisis formed the Bengali liberalism time and place specific. Sartori (2008: 68-77) claims
the emergence of Bengali culturalism as a part of ideological formation which was broadly liberal. However, he did not examine the potentially democratic dimensions of this new intellectual wave in Bengal.

Peter Robb’s work *Empire, Identity and India: Liberalism, Modernity and the Nation* (2007) is an important work that examines the role of empire in the making of modern India and the interconnections between liberal policies, modern technology and popular education. Robb (2007: 2) focuses on how the colonial state and economy affected the social and political life of Indians, which created possibilities for active political actions. In doing so the Robb has explored the complex inter-relations between liberalism as an ideology and imperialism as a political and economic agenda in colonial India. The pragmatic state-oriented policies by alien rulers and the response of the educated Indian liberals who, in most of the cases accepted and reconciled themselves to empire have explored in this work to some extent (Robb, 2007: 13-14) But the scope of the study is too wide and complex to quench the thirst of gaining a comprehensive analysis of the response and interaction of emerging Indian intelligentsia to the colonial policies.

Biman Behari Majumdar’s books *Indian Political Associations and Reform of Legislature* (1965) and *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas: Form Rammohun to Dayananda* (1967). The first one is a comprehensive work on the rise, growth and role of political associations in colonial India. Since the purview of the study was limited only to the political associations it remained far from providing an overall picture of the interactions, collaboration and confrontation between the Indian activist-thinkers and the colonial government. It was represented in the latter one, “History of Indian social and Political ideas in which has focused on the political activities of Indian modernizers from Rammohun Roy to Dayananda. But it is surprising to note that this book, though explored the rise of liberal school of political thought in the second half of nineteenth century has neglected the role of Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee and Surendranath Banerjea both of whom played a remarkable role in articulating liberal-democratic ideas.
Indian Awakening and Bengal (1976) by N. S. Bose is one of the crucial works connected to the reawakening of Bengali middle class in the nineteenth century. The book has focused mainly on the introduction of Western education, religious reforms movement, chiefly the Hindu revival movement. The conservative reaction to the unhitherto social change and the intellectual confrontation (Bose, 1976: 65-68) that follows is well explored in this book. But the over emphasis on nationalism, as is the case with others, has apparently foreclosed any inquiry into the democratic thrust in the new thinking by some groups of Bengali intellectuals.

Nirmal Sinha’s monumental work Freedom Movement in Bengal (1818-1904): Who’s Who (1968) is one of the significant works related to the political history of nineteenth century Bengal. The main attraction of this book is that Sinha has explored the varied range of social and political ideas, arguments and activities of one hundred and forty eight reformers of nineteenth century Bengal irrespective of familiar and unfamiliar personalities. But the major limitation of this work is that in most of the cases due to its huge scope it has not delved into the detailed account of the contributions of those reformers.

Dependence and Disillusionment: Emergence of National Consciousness in Later Nineteenth Century (2011) is one of the recent works by S. Chandra which has examined the rise of national reverential feelings as an inevitable consequence of disenchantment and estrangement to the British governance in the second half of nineteenth century, more specifically from the Revolt of 1857 onwards. This is too is oriented very much to nationalism and neglects democracy.

K. Sarkar’s Nationalism in Bengal (1856-1912): A study of Cultural Conflict Towards British Racial Impositions” (2012) add to the same genre: rise of nationalism in Bengal. Like most of the works on nationalism in India it too has ignored the articulation of democratic thought by some Begali Bhadralok. It recognized the role of Bengali
intelligentsia in the formation of national feelings but their fight for the conditions and practices---is hardly if ever highlighted, let alone discussed.

Anil Seal’s *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (1968) is a classic work that has provided a detailed account of the origin of nationalism in India as a part of the dominant theme of world history during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He viewed the rise of nationalism in India as a result of continuous clash between two dominant forces: the imperialism of the West and the nationalism of its colonial subjects (Seal, 1968: 20-22). Simultaneously, Seal has neglected another major outcome of this clash between these confronting forces, i.e. the historical incarnation of positive conditions for the rise of democratic ideas in the nineteenth century.

Chatterjee’s celebrated work on Bankim, Gandhi and Nehru (1986: 54-84) has not considered the democratic elements in Bankim Chandra Chattapadhyay, the lone nineteenth century thinker explored in his work. Heavily focused on the formation of nationalism, democracy has been relatively neglected in Chatterjee (1986). Chatterjee’s recent work is *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (2013) which has examined the rise of anti-absolutist civil-societal movement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in India. The detailed explorations of Chatterjee regarding the response of the Bengali elites to the changing socio-political issues in colonialism are important contributions. Apart from the role of emerging civil-societal movement this seminal work examined the role of press media in the making of liberal democratic awareness to some extent.

Ram Gopal Sanyal’s *A General Biography of Bengal Celebrities: Both Living and Death* (1976) is an important work that examines the contributions of some renowned Bengalis of the Nineteenth century such as Digambar Mitra, Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, Surendranath Banerjea, Ramgopal Ghosh and some others. Apart from providing a biographical account this work has exclusively focused on the political
activities of those Bengali modernizers who played important role in the modern awakening of Bengal.

Two important classic works of Goutam Chattopadhyay: *Awakening in Bengal in Early Nineteenth Century* (1965) and *Bengal: Early Nineteenth century* (1978) have explored the early nineteenth century to a good extent. While the first one has presented the original works of early Bengali intelligentsia mostly belonging to the ‘Young Bengal School’, the latter has been an attempt to present some of the important Newspapers of contemporary Bengal viz. *Kaleidoscope, the Reformer* and *the Bengal Spectator*.

Sudipta Kaviraj’s *The Enchantment of Democracy and India* (2011) has examined the nature and historical emergence of democracy in India without a prior tradition of liberal thought, which according to him, is not less than a ‘historical scandal’ as it defies almost all the postulated pre-conditions for the rise and growth of democracy in any country (Kaviraj, 2011: 14). He analyzed various peculiarities of democracy in India. Kaviraj in another book *The Trajectory of the Indian States: Politics and Ideas* (2010) claims that the rise of modernity does not make human civilization suffer complete disenchantment and think unideologically about everything. Equally, it creates new forms of enchantments. Democracy in this respect is nothing but a political enchantment of modernity (Kaviraj, 2010: 11). These works have analyzed the India’s post-independent experience with democracy and its inherent dilemmas in relation to religion, culture, social inequalities and the identity questions.

Among vernacular works there are some important studies elaborating the social and political history of nineteenth century Bengal. Among those the most important that deserves special mention is Sibnath Shastri’s seminal work *Ramtanu Lahiri o Tatkalina Bangosamaj* (2007) (in Bengali). The title of the book may suggest that it deals with the biographical sketch of Ramtanu Lahiri but it is enriched with exclusive explorations and elaborations of contemporary socio-political issues in Bengal in the Nineteenth Century.
Shastri has attempted to give a vivid picture of the advent of political consciousness in Bengal but chiefly remained confined to the issue of nationalism.

Jyogesh Chandra Bagal’s eminent work *Unobingso Satabdir Bangla* (2011) (in Bengali) has explored the life and works of some of the eminent personalities of nineteenth century Bengal. Since most of them belonged to the first half of nineteenth century it remained unable to explore the latter half, specifically the last quarter of the century, the most formative period in terms of the rise of nationalism and the institutionalization of democratic principles in Bengal as well as in India.

Narahari Kaviraj’s editorial work *Unish Sataker Banglar Jogoron: Torko O Bitorko* (1984) (in Bengali) has been one of the most influential works related to the historical nineteenth century. The chief significance of the book is that the first and third sections of the book have explored the role of some of the leading newspapers of the nineteenth century both vernacular as well as English. Kaviraj has tended to connect the emergence of democracy in India with the post-Enlightenment and modernity and argued that the rise of bourgeois liberal democracy had been an integral part of the Renaissance in Italy and enlightenment in France between fifteenth and Eighteenth century.

Partha Chatterjee’s work on vernacular press and Renaissance entitle *Bangla Sambadpatra O Bangalir Nabajagoron* (1818-1878) (1977) (in Bengali) is a seminal book on the contribution of Bengali print media in the modern awakening in Bengal. The critical explorations and analysis of the book has made it one of the significant works in any study related to the nineteenth century reascent Bengal. Binoy Ghosh’s *Banglar Nabajagriti* (1948) (in Bengali) is another important book of the nineteenth century Renaissance in Bengal, which explores the contributions of some of the eminent personalities in the process of building an intellectual ambience in favour of liberal democratic conditions.
Conceptual Framework: The Post-Enlightenment Framework of Knowledge

Since the focus of the study is the historical formation of a Bengali democratic thought in the age of the Renaissance in the nineteenth century colonial India it necessitates a prior conceptual framework of knowledge before venturing into the complex set of social and political context in contemporary Bengal. The Renaissance in Bengal was a Renaissance in a colonial world which has to be different from that of the European one. Globally speaking, the Renaissance in Italy was never confined only to Europe but amplified throughout the whole world and was incarnated in India, more specifically in Bengal during the nineteenth century colonial context. But this European Renaissance bore a cultural tradition and transformation of four centuries in the name of Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment between fifteenth century and eighteenth century. The Renaissance in India, more specifically in Bengal was a post-Enlightenment intellectual tradition.

The basic feature of this post-Enlightenment framework is connected with the rise of rationalism and cognitive knowledge based on scientific analysis. With the introduction of pragmatic state-oriented system of modern education, drastic change in the means of communication, liberal policies towards age-old cultural prejudices and the rise of Bengali intelligentsia a rational cognitive educated class emerged which shaped the post-Enlightenment ideas in the nineteenth century. This post-Enlightenment thought was featured with free will, free traffic of ideas, rational humanism, moral freedom and reasonable argument in place of traditional taboos and prejudices. Since this post-Enlightenment framework of knowledge emerged in colonial Bengal its nature was different in terms of political and cultural contexts which were not liberal. This post-Enlightenment thought in colonial Bengal had ambiguities, half-heartedness, and huge ambivalences which have always been a part of the post-colonial liberal tradition. Partha Chatterjee (1986: 25) has pointed this out in his examination of nationalism in Bengal.
In other words, what is familiarly known as ‘Bengal-Renaissance’ was nothing but an intellectual tradition of ‘Post-Enlightenment’ which was an integral part of global cultural transformation between fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. This post-Enlightenment age in Bengal has to be considered in the context of colonial nineteenth century which, by nature was distinctly different from the western World.

**Post-Colonial Liberalism and Democracy**

There is a general consensus among the scholars (Burckhardt, 1860: 81-89) that it is the culture of Renaissance that has brought a sense of reason, rationality, individualism and secularism in human civilization. What is this post-colonial liberalism? How is it different from the trajectory of liberalism in the West? Post-colonial liberalism, as Ivison (2002: 5-6) argues, is an attempt to offer a different framework for relations, between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples from a non-indigenous perspective. It ascribes most importance to three distinctive liberal values, i.e. equality, liberty and positive political arrangements for the overall well-being of the individual. Theoretically the political history of colonial world—the rise of nationalism and the articulation of democratic principles cannot be understood from a typical (Western) liberal perspective. It has to be considered in a post-colonial liberal perspective which is indigenous and distinctly different from European liberalism. It has to be understood in a peculiar political and economic context of colonial India.

The formation and articulation of an intellectual democratic thought in the nineteenth century colonial Bengal was similarly affected by the colonial liberal framework of knowledge different from democratic thought in West. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this democratic thought was deeply context-bound. There is no particular or absolute model of democracy as a concept throughout the World. The conceptual genealogical evolution of the idea of democracy suggests that it is primarily a context-bound concept, or a bunch of ideas which has always been affected by the socio-cultural and political reality in a particular society. Therefore, it has to be discussed in
context. Democracy throughout the world has remained context specific. There is no universal or general set of ideas of democracy. Whether it was the Pericles’ model of democracy in ancient Greece or American democracy, or the British one—each of the models of democracy bears a specificity and political context. Kaviraj (2011: 8-10) has pointed this in explaining the inherent peculiarities of democracy in every country. He argues, “the democratic process is historically uneven: different regions and different classes of people enjoy highly differential benefits of democratic government and its social consequences . . . Indian democracy are peculiar in the sense in which every democracy is peculiar. British democracy shows peculiarity of never undergoing a revolutionary rapture in its political tradition. French democracy is peculiar in the sense of emerging from a revolution . . .”. Thus Kaviraj argues that there is no universal set of pre-conditions for the successful operation of democracy in anywhere.

Since the articulation and diffusion of democratic ideas articulated by Bengali intelligentsia was quite coeval with the process of emergence of nationalism in nineteenth century Bengal it was also ambivalent and often contradictory due to this different political context. The post-colonial democratic tradition therefore has to be considered in a colonial context. It emerged as an intellectual response, often radical response to the colonial arbitrary policies while the emerging educated intellectual found the essentiality of democratic conditions which were absent in that political context.

Research Questions

This explorative study in Indian political thought seeks, broadly, to answer three research questions: what are the contributions of Bengali intellectual tradition in the nineteenth century to the development of the concept of democracy in colonial and post-colonial India? What was so specific and original in their thought that could go beyond the specific context? What are the distinctive characteristics of the ‘activist-thinkers’ in our study?
Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the democratic intellectual tradition in the West in order to locate our study in the appropriate genealogy of democracy;

2. To assess the implications of various historical movements in colonial India for preparing the intellectual bases of democracy;

3. To examine the contributions of some select Bengali thinkers to the making of liberal and democratic tradition of thought;

4. To analyze the articulation of democratic elements and principles in response to the emerging socio-political issues in colonial India;

5. To explore the remarkable role of print media and various political associations to form the civil-societal movements beneficial to the emerging democratic political consciousness in the nineteenth century Bengal;

Research Method and Sources

This is essentially a theoretical and explorative research which seeks to examine specific mode of articulation of democratic thought and the contributions of the Bengali thinkers to the concept of democracy in India. The research is basically qualitative, descriptive and analytical. The method followed is mostly archival and interpretative.

We have utilized a number of sources such as books, magazines, biographies, letters, web data and newspapers. We aim at analyzing and interpreting the available literatures on the subject in order to identify the contributions of the activist-thinkers who have remained neglected in the existing literature.
For the purpose of conducting this research, a large amount of primary and secondary sources have been used from different libraries such as National Library of Kolkata, Central Library of Burdwan University, Ramkrishna Mission Library of Golpark, Centre for Social Studies, Patuli, Rammohan Library, Sukhiya Street and Central Library of Raja Rammohun Roy Mahavidyalaya College and the District Library in Burdwan.

Chapter Outline

Apart from the introduction and conclusion the thesis has six chapters.

Chapter 1: Conceptual Genealogy of Democracy in the West: An Outline

In this chapter an attempt has been made to examine the conceptual genealogy of democratic thought in the West. Since we concern ourselves in this study with democracy and democratic tradition of thought in Bengal, this necessitates a prior understanding of the democratic intellectual tradition in the West in order to locate our study in the appropriate genealogy of democracy.

Chapter 2: Renaissance, Modernity and Democracy in Nineteenth Century Bengal

The second chapter is an attempt to explore the cultural bedrock for the advent of modern liberal democracy in the nineteenth century in Bengal. The basic ingredients of liberal democracy viz., individuation and secularization of society, relative economic prosperity and industrialization, mass-literacy, principle of political tolerance and consciousness of ‘self’ were relatively absent in India, while, in contrary the society was characterized with omnipotent social dominance over individual and the factors like caste, creed, gender and other community based issues were more active in the society. In such a society where individual had no distinct place or empowered enough to overthrow the socio-cultural prejudices it was the Renaissance and modernity in the nineteenth century in Bengal which kindled the society up with new aspirations, new consciousness and liberal democratic ambience.
Chapter 3: Contributions of Raja Rammohun Roy and his Associates in the Making of a Liberal Democratic Intellectual Ambience in Nineteenth Century in Bengal

The third chapter aims to focus on the remarkable role of Raja Rammohun Roy and some of his close associates in the making of liberal democratic intellectual ambience in the early nineteenth century Bengal. Rammohun Roy, through his vigorous and radical views and activities almost in all spheres of society, viz. religious and social reformation movements, education, law, tolerance, public opinion, civil liberty, rule of law, separation of power, freedom of press and economic thoughts altogether, it may be argued, took pioneering role in the incarnation of liberalism in India.

Chapter 4: The Young Bengal Movement and the Articulation of Democratic Ideas and principles in Bengal in Post-Rammohun Era (1830-1860)

The fourth chapter deals with the Young Bengal Movement which played a significant role in building the liberal democratic consciousness between the third and sixth decades of nineteenth century. Among those some of them are Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhayay, Tarachand Chokrabarty, Krishnamohan Banerjee, Rashikkrisna Mallik and Ramgopal Ghose.

Chapter 5: The Rise of Nationalist Democratic School in Bengal: 1850-1885

The fifth chapter aims to explore the historical advent of liberal thought and the rise of nationalist democratic school in Bengal in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. For this purpose we have sought to explore the rapid growth of political consciousness, the incarnation of national sentiment and the epoch of constitutional agitation. This chapter has also explored the emergence and role of various political associations like British Indian Association (1852), Indian League (1875) and Indian Association (1876). Simultaneously, it has also examined the illustrious thoughts and activities of some unexplored Indian liberals like Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, Harish Chandra Mukherjee, Jogendranath Vidyabhusan and Sisir Kumar Ghosh.
Chapter 6: Ideas into Action: The Role of the Liberal School in Bengal

The last chapter, the sixth one of the thesis seeks to examine the vigorous activities of Surendranath Banerjea, Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, Lalmohun Ghosh and Manmohun Ghosh. It explores their vigorous political and civil-societal movements in terms of constitutional agitations, turbulent journalism and associational activities accelerated the process of diffusion of constitutional liberal atmosphere in the late nineteenth century.

Conclusion sums up the findings and assesses their implications for India’s democracy in the post-independence period and beyond.
Chapter I

The Conceptual Genealogy of Democracy in the West: An Outline
FIRST CHAPTER

The Conceptual Genealogy of Democracy in the West: An Outline

The remarkable success, effectiveness and acceptability of democracy throughout most parts of the world have attracted much attention of the scholars. Numerous debates can be seen relating to its historical and dramatic survival in different circumstances with different ideals; such as— Liberalism, Marxism, Capitalism etc. Spicing the very controversies a good number of adjectives or terms have been used by various thinkers to classify it into different ‘types’ or ‘models’, for example, liberal, social, direct, indirect, deliberative, dialogic (Giddens, 1994: 113) protective, pluralist, elitist, radical, associational (Bhargava and Acharya, 2008:108) guided, selective, neo, basic… (Crick, 2009, 7-10). However, the point of unanimity is seen, on the notion that democracy may be viewed as a political system that puts constitutional restraints even upon a freely and fairly elected government. Since the last half of twentieth century, especially in the twenty first century, some unprecedented political changes have been seen. In the 21st century the resilience and remarkable launching of democracy even in so-called undemocratic regimes from the Arabic world to Egypt have really posed some fresh challenges to the authoritarianism of many brands. By the centuries the world witnessed how the pre-modern enemies of democracy-- centralized monarchy, hereditary aristocracy, oligarchy based on narrow and exclusive suffrage have lost their legitimacy in the eyes of the governed (Dahl, 2001: 01). The question is: what made democracy prevail almost all over the world which is highly diversified? Or, what is the conceptual genealogy of democracy and what lies ahead?

The Meaning:

The meaning, purpose, extent and functioning of democracy are rampantly and radically changing day by day. Today, it has become extremely civil society-centric and
human rights-centric. In short, from a typical political ideal it has become exclusively ‘a way of life’, enriched with democratic consciousness among the governed and has reached at the door.

The meaning of democracy can be estimated into two aspects-- procedural and substantive. The procedural aspect involves the mechanism of free, fair and competitive elections, by which governments are held responsible or accountable to the governed (Giddens, 1994: 104) and at the same time through a constitutional framework it guarantees and protects peoples’ right, liberty etc. The substantive aspect pertains to socially based value judgment, cultural ethics etc. (Ramaswamy and Mukherjee, 2005, 02). Giovanni Sartori (1965: 18), in his famous work Democratic theory points out that even the Greek term ‘demos’ was ambiguous. He points out at least five meanings of the term demos; a great many, everybody, an organic whole, absolute majority and limited majority. In modern sense, of course, it refers to the ruled. To him, democracy is a form of political system where no one enjoys unconditional and unlimited power (Sartori, 1965: 18). In broad terms, democracy can be seen as a recipe for an acceptable set of institutions where popular power or consent determines the nature of the government. How is this consent to be given? Since this consent is directly connected to participation, then how much participation is desirable? Through which mode, directly or indirectly, this consent is to be given? To have those answers, before such queries we must look at briefly, the historical development or conceptual genealogy of democracy through the years.

The Conceptual Genealogy of Democracy

It is really interesting as well as astonishing that how, has the ancient Greek demokratia, though in different form been survived while it was regarded misfit for rule even in ancient Greece? Before venturing into the amazing conceptual genealogy of the demokratia we must define what does the term ‘genealogy’ mean? Or, why would we focus on the genealogy of democracy? Genealogy is simply the study of historical
tradition or development of a particular belief. The Greek word genealogy refers to genea, ‘generation’ and logos, ‘knowledge’.

In philosophy, genealogy is a historical technique in which one questions the commonly understood emergence of various philosophical and social believes by showing alternative and subversive histories of their development or evolution. (http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php/genealogy, 2nd Oct, 2011). It has been developed in the works of Nietzsche and Foucault. From a post-modern point of view Foucault considers genealogy as a particular investigation into those elements which we tend to feel are without history. Describing genealogy as the ‘archeological method’, he thinks it is not the construction of a liner development; instead it seeks to show the plural and sometimes contradictory past of the subject.

**Ancient Greece: The Athenian Democracy**

Any attempt to focus on the genealogy of democracy must started from the ancient Athens¹, from where it is thought the term democracy, or demokratia was introduced (Dahl, 2001: 11). To view the historical sources of modern democracy, Dahl points out the direct democracy in ancient Greece, the republicanism in Rome, the renaissance in Italian city states in the Middle-ages and the idea of political equality. Crick (2009: 6-8), in account of the genealogical view of democracy, includes the rhetoric and events of the French revolution and later the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau.

The seed of modern democracy, it must be mentioned, was sown in the 18th century BC when Hamurabi, the ruler of Babylon had established the earliest known legal code, which undoubtedly is the basic ingredient of the concept of rule of law (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2005:30). Later in the 6th and 5th century BC the Greek ‘polis’, i.e., the city state developed the idea of due process of law and constitutional government which may be argued as the gift of Greece, more specifically, of Athens to the modern world. Athens, after the Persian war of 490 BC to 479 BC, not only became the imperial power but also it experimented with the democratic norms and free institutions to a great extent.
During 6\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} century BC Athens became the main centre of culture and provided the most civilized society that had ever existed. Some great philosophers, like- Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Democritus, Plotinus and some of the greatest statesmen, like Solon, Pisistratus, Pericles played significant role in that cultural tradition (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2005: 33).

Among the poleis, Athens and Sparta represented different modes of political system. While Athens was the centre of vibrant, direct and participatory democracy enriched with democratic institutions like Ecclesia (Assembly), Boule (Council) and Heliaea (Magistracy) then Sparta was extremely Oligarchic. At the centre of Athenian demokratia, there was the Ecclesia in which all citizens were entitled to participate and could speak at it’s meetings in order of one’s age within an allotted time measured by a water clock (Dahl, 2001: 12). Did these political institutions run by the principle of representation? What was its nature in comparison with modern concept of representation? Or, how were these representative institutions dealt with direct participatory democracy in Athens?

Hanna F. Pitkin\textsuperscript{7}, in her famous work, The Concept of Representation (1967: 241) argues that the Greeks knew nothing about representation. She claims the word ‘representation’ is of Latin origin and they used the word representation to address the Athenian institutions only, as they had no corresponding word or concept. Barker (1967: 38), on contrary, argues that if we would think the Greeks knew nothing of the principle of representation, then we shall be taking an unduly narrow view of the scope of representation. He argues:

The expression of the general will is not necessarily confined to ad hoc elective bodies, but may take any sufficient and convenient shape without violation of the theory of democratic self government. Before we can say that representation was unknown to Athenian democracy, we have to prove that the Athenian executives had no representative position or basis of its own. In the second place, to deny the existence of representation at Athens is to forget the existence of the Council (Boule). (Barker, 1967: 38)
Further, Barker (1967; 38-39) continues that at Athens and most of the other Greek city-states, excluding a few numbers of oligarchies, the Boule (council) and Ecclesia (Assembly) existed and performed side by side. The composition of the council (Boule) at Athens was purely representative and the Demes (introduced in the regime of Clethenes in 515-495 BC) acted as the local constituencies or electorates. For the purposes of local government the Athenians were divided into about a hundred Demes or we may call wards or parishes or township (Sabine, 1973; 22). It is more interesting that these demes did not directly elect the 500 members of the council, but each deme elected and more astonishingly elected on a proportional system as per the member of the inhabitants, which was, to a great extent more democratic. The candidate, willing for the seat of the council had to pass a test of their qualifications for eligibility criteria. So, it can be claimed that Athens initiated, not only the idea of representation but the idea of proportional representation (Barker, 1967; 39). Besides, registering the Athenian citizens at the age of eighteen, the deme’s important role was to present candidates to fill the various bodies by which the Athenian demokratia carried on. The system was a combination of election and lot.

Moreover, all citizens at Athens, under isonomie (law) were equal and were entitled to vote or be voted either by secret ballots or in some cases, by raising their hands and in some cases by lottery system. Beyond the system of lottery, it was distinctly democratic^3, since it equalized every one’s chance to hold office (Sabine, 1973, 23). The council was not as the powerful as assembly. Since election and representation are quiet different things, anyone, even if directly elected, is not really representative without proper representative authority (Pitkin, 1967: 107). And in this sense the Athenian council was less powerful than the assembly which dealt with important decisions, such as declaring war or peace, passing isonomies (law), confirming or amending the report of the council, examined and scrutinized or sometimes amplified the enactments and supervised the executive officials and even issued decrees when the Assembly was not in session. Another significant pillar of Athenian democracy was the Heliaea or the
magistracy consisting of six thousand jurors elected annually from the register of citizens by a system of ‘lot’. The jurors were distributed into ten panels consisting of at least five hundred each. (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2005, 43)

Some of the great statesmen, namely Solon, Cleithenes, Pericles took significant role in strengthening Athenian democracy. Solon (640-589 BC) made a number of important reforms; like ending slavery for debt, reducing the quantum of debts, limiting the estate etc. Among his important economic as well as democratic reforms three important reforms were- abolition of enslavement for debt, Creation of the right of a third party to seek justice against an unjust decision of the magistrate by establishing a popular law court or Heliaea and the introduction of appeals to a popular tribunal (Sabine, 1973, 34). Pisistratus (545-510), in short regime preserved the democratic reforms made by Solon. Clethenses (515-495 BC) took significant role in promoting democratic norms by the dividing the cities into demes with ecclesia, magistrates and administration for the sake of good governance. Each person was allotted to a deme and was registered his citizenship for that deme. Perhaps, it was the first effort to introduce formal citizenship even on the basis of residence and not just birth. (Sabine, 1973, 36-37)

Pericles (493-29 BC), one of the ten Strategoi or military commander was elected between 467-29 BC and became highly powerful to influence within the Athenian government. The Periclesian era, known as the golden era of Athens, reached at its peak in the field of culture, honour and fame. Democracy, for Pericles, meant a form of government as a co-operative enterprise of all citizens. The famous speech, he delivered on the occasion of funeral during the Spartan war, strengthened the root of Athenian democracy (Sabine, 1973: 26). Pericles considered democracy in Athens as the best form of government as it provided equal justice and equal rights to all irrespective of distinctions. To him, a good government provided respect for the rule of law and freedom both individually and collectively.
The rights and obligations of Greek citizens were not individualistic but rather, were public rights and duties. Any way, one must admit, it was Athenian democracy which recognized the principle of equality before law (isonomie) and an independent judiciary (heliaea) for the first in the world ever. These unique features were admired by Herodotus who considered Athenian Democracy as the epitome of freedom and some of his contemporaries – Sophocles, Aristophanes had the same view. Thucidides, the historian who continuously emphasized that the basis of Athenian Empire is the right of the strong to rule the weak, had also admired the democratic institutions and norms, as they were the source of strength to Athens (Barker, 1967: 84-85).

However, one must admit that the Athenians democracy was not only be criticized on the ground that it excluded women, resident aliens and slaves from democratic process but also on the ground of democratic norms, of fair competition, as it ran by the ‘lot’ system almost in all hierarchical levels of institutions. Their notion of citizenship was also criticized from democratic point of view. Aristotle even excluded old, young and infirm and argued that a good citizen was one who shared in the civic life of ruling and being ruled in turn (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2005: 42).

Notwithstanding the fact that Athens introduced a form of direct and participatory democracy, the Aristocratic within Athens – Socrates (469-399) and Plato (427- 347 BC) criticized it from their different point of views. Plato’s hatred for democracy is no secret (Mackie 2003, 2). He detested democracy on the ground that it was the rule of doxa (opinion) over philosophia (knowledge) (Crick, 2009, 1). His preceptor, Socrates had argued in favour of ‘knowledge’ as to him, it was secure because knowledge always based on reasoning reference to a cause, while ‘opinion’, on contrary, is insecure as it is liable to be forgotten, or to be changed by some new impressions (Barker, 1967: 103). Therefore, it may be argued that the government based on ‘opinion’ is equally insecure. They both stood in favour of knowledge (philosophia) rather than opinion (doxa) and in this aspect, democracy as the best form of government was not accepted by them. On Athenian direct and participatory democracy Plato claimed, instead of the professional
the amateur was predominant. To him, the rule of ignorant and amateur to govern was wrong, because any man might speak in the Assembly to sway its decision, any man, whatever his capacity, had opportunity to hold executive office by the chance of lot system (Barker, 1967, 173). Thus, democracy, to Plato was the rule of ignorance. He argues:

An axe which is used to curve a tree, as well as to cut it down is an axe misused; and a man who attempts to govern his fellows, when at best he is only fit to be a tolerable craftsman, is a man not only mistaken, but also unjust - doubly, indeed, unjust, not for only does he not do his own proper work, but he shoves the better man aside (quoted in Barker, 1967, 173).

Thus, Plato argued that due to democracy an amateur, ignorant can occupy the chance of a deserving man to govern. His disciple Aristotle too was against democracy. The three lawful forms of rule, according to him, are Monarchy, Aristocracy and Polity, the rule of either one person or a few or a multitude in the public interest and the corresponding transgressions are tyranny, oligarchy and democracy, the rule of one or a few or a multitude in there own interest (Skinner, 1992: 59). He classified democracy as the best of the bad constitutions as to him, collective opinion or judgment is more acceptable than of individual ones (Farrar, 1992: 33-34). Therefore, when he wrote Politics, being conscious of the representative institutions, he discussed the possible varieties in the structure of the deliberative body and came near to suggesting a representative assembly. He wrote, “It is a good plan that those who deliberate should be chosen in equal numbers, by election or by lot, from the upper class and the masses” (Quoted in Barker, 1967: 40). Thus, both Plato and Aristotle did not advocate in favour democracy as it seemed misfit to them in terms of justice and good governance. Though Pericles, in his funeral speech, called democracy ‘a government of the many’, Aristotle gave a crudely realistic definition to call it ‘government of the poor’ as he keenly observed the breaking up of Greek democracy by the class struggle (Sartori, 1965: 253).
Thus, political ideas of ancient Athenian democracy; like active citizenship, equality before law (despite some exceptions), justice, liberty were too significant to neglect in the study of conceptual genealogy of democracy. Athenian democracy was distinctly different from modern democracy as it was ‘polis’ where citizens had active participation in politics (Sartori, 1965: 252) and in this aspect, it can be claimed that it was the starting point of the journey of democracy in the West.

**Ancient Rome: The City Republic**

Ancient Rome, the successor of Greek ideas and principles, initially embraced Athenian democratic principles as they believed in mixed government, just as Aristotle believed, the mixture of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. Like Greeks, the Romans too had a vibrant and direct form of democracy. Though the terms like representation, representatives etc were there in Roman political system but these were not in modern sense of ‘representative’ government. By representative, they did not mean elected persons acting for others; but they used it to mean bringing something (or someone) present again which (or who) was absent earlier (Pitkin, 1967: 3). In other words, the basic contributions of the Romans to the development of democracy was, to introduce the secret ballot system in vote, which was regarded as one of the most essential requirements for safeguarding democratic freedom, the universal system of law, establishment of the citizens right to private property and the experiment with mixed constitution combining monarchic (Caesar), aristocratic (Senate) and democratic (Assembly) (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2005: 50-53). This mixed constitution, analyzed explicitly by Polybius and Cicere who have taken significant role in Roman political thought. Polybius, in his *Universal History* explained the nature, success and essentiality of the mixed constitution which entitled the checks and balance principle to provide stability and fairness. He described the Roman constitution as the senate (the most powerful comprising aristocratic element) proposing, the people (to whom the senate and consuls, executive monarchical elements depended) resolving and the magistrate (the Tribunes representing the democratic element) executing the laws (Crick,
Cicero, too resurrect the idea of a balanced, participatory and composite constitution, as, to him, Monarchy was the rule not for people but for one; Aristocracy was the rule for the few and democracy was nothing but the rule by the incompetent. (Sabine, 1973: 160-161)

Thus, the Roman government involved both, a complex set of institutions and a much elaborate and rationalized set of values, the values of democracy where the central power laid in the hands of plebeians, the common people who elected the Tribunes, the main constitutional device, as being magistrates they were entitled to execute the laws proposed by the senate and could put the veto power too. (Crick, 2009:27). Nevertheless, the people could not govern; they could tear the government down. Thus, the basic essence of Roman republic: from *res* referring ‘thing’ or ‘affair’ in latin and *publicus*, ‘public’: loosely rendered, a republic belonged to the people, was appeared. (Dahl, 2001: 13).

However, the Republic of Rome ran through a complex set of institutions, the influences of which was later shown in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century British Parliament, the French idea of sovereignty of the people and the American idea of constitutional restraints over government or the theory of checks and balances. But the Romans never thought of the representative form of government even when the problem came through increasing even overwhelming number of citizens. Nonetheless, they were practical and innovative in many respect, they never solved this problem by establishing the representative form of government (Dahl, 2001: 13-14). And with the fall of the Roman Republic, the direct popular-rule entirely disappeared in Southern Europe, except the political systems of some of the small and scattered tribes (Dahl, 2001: 15-16)

**Italian City-States: The Resurrection of Republicanism**

The wave of direct democracy, like ancient Athens and Rome resurrected after almost one thousand years in Italian city-states in the 12th century. These three direct democracies formed the bedrock of the modern idea of democracy. In Italy, direct
democracy based republics grew in small city-states and people used to participate in the
government to meet their own affairs and needs. Nonetheless, initially the popular
participation was restricted for upper-class families: nobles, large land owners and the
like, but later the so-called middle-classes like smaller merchants, bankers, craftsmen etc
began to demand their full participation in the government (Dahl, 2001: 16). Thus, the
direct participatory republics flourished in a number of Italian city-states namely, Venice,
Florence etc. which ultimately, may be argued, formed the bedrock of the so-called
renaissance. But these democratic governments met various gigantic problems like
economic crisis corruption, oligarchic set-up (both internal and external) in the
development of democracy. Thus, by the beginning of the fourteenth century many cities
began to forfeit or voluntarily cede their self-governing popular constitutions to
hereditary authority in the name of securing greater unity and civic peace, (Skinner,
sixteenth century and Venice survived as a republic until the eighteenth century (Skinner,

The Machiavellian Stand

Machiavelli, the exponent of the idea of strong state, often had been mistaken as
anti-democratic or anti-republican. But it was his The Discourses where the republican
Machiavelli emerged by his emphatic argument: a stronger state is that which can carry
its people with it (Crick, 2009: 35). He furnished the democratic ideal as one of the
components of a mixed republican constitution. A mixed or balanced constitution where
the power of the people is great and needs to be harnessed by being given a share and at
that point Machiavelli brings the political idea of Roman republic into the early modern
world (Crick; 2009: 35). Political participation, according to him, is not merely the
involvement of the wealthy and noble (like the early Italian city-states) but also of
artisans and small traders (Mukherjee and Ramaswami, 2005: 55). Machiavelli believed
that there must be two opposite dispositions in every republic, that of the populace and
that of the upper class and that all legislation favorable to liberty is brought about by the
clash between these two. According to him, the republic is acceptable only if it is guided by free individuals and public spirit and a republic which, in danger time cannot resort to a dictatorship of a strong prince will generally be ruined (Crick; 2005:36).

The English Civil War

In England, though the milestone of civil and political liberty was the ‘Magna Carta’ or the Great Charter of 1215, the first demand for democratic equality and political agitation came into focus in the 17th century by the Levellers, the informal alliance of political agitators for the first sake of constitutional reforms, equal rights under law, freedom of trade, right to vote etc. They were the first democrats who thought in terms, not of participatory self government but of representative government within a nation-state (Wootton, 1992:71). The Levellers though did never directly want democracy gave much emphasis to the norm of political equality, as to them, all men are born free and equal and advocated representative government within a nation-state, popular sovereignty, written constitution to protect individual rights etc. Thus, earlier to Locke they emerged the ideal of natural rights though not literally. It was Harrington, who in his The Prerogative of Popular Government (1657) took a major step towards rehabilitating the idea of democracy by equating it with ‘good popular government’ and revived the republican tradition which declined with Florentine Republic (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2005: 60). By Levellers, he meant those who wanted to level men’s property equally and in his Principles of Government (1660) he advocated for a balanced democracy by prescribing equal division of property to stabilizing the political power and to the greatest franchise (Wootton, 1992: 73).

After Harrington the political thought of John Locke can be undoubtedly regarded as one of the significant milestones in the conceptual genealogy of democracy. His glorified work Two Treatises of Government, just at the backdrop of Glorious Revolution of 1688, reveals his notions of legitimate and limited government. Legitimate authority, according to him is a trust that respects individual rights and is responsible to these rights
which are natural: the right to life, liberty and property (Macpherson, 1977: 228). Claiming the consent of the people as the keystone of legitimate Political authority Locke, not only rejected the version of Hobbsian political absolutism but simultaneously criticized Robert Filmer’s *Patriarcha* (Dunn, 1969: 62). The significant impact of Locke upon later political thinkers like Burke, Hume, Smith, Paine, Jefferson, Montesquieu, Rousseau and countless unexplored others since the eighteenth century help us to shape the democratic notion as well as the political consciousness of France, England and America (Asheraft, 1987: 112).

**Towards Representative Democracy**

The central question is how the republican tradition of direct participatory democracy of ancient city-states had been transformed into indirect or representative form of democracy. Or, how and when did the representative democracy first appear? What were the essential conditions of its emergence? What role did the American Revolution and the French revolution take in its emergence? What made representative democracy prevail so dominantly throughout the world?

Actually whatever have come into act in human civilization throughout the world, have come on some certain logical and contextual ground. The very introduction of representative form of democracy is contextual. Despite some controversies it can be stressed that representation needs not be democratic, nor democracy necessarily be representative. Representative democracy is the historical synthesis of two distinct and to some extent alternative political traditions. ‘Democracy’, a Greek word with no Latin equivalent, refers to direct rule by the people. In contrast, ‘representation’, a Latin word with no Greek equivalence entails a delegated action on behalf of someone else (Urbinati, 2011: 23). Then, what brought those two things together historically? And when does the concept of representative democracy appear? Despite some controversies over its emergence and effectiveness the unanimity is seen on its reason of connecting or synthesizing the centre and the periphery within a state. This problem of connecting
centre with local has been cited by thinkers and scholars like Dahl, Manin, Urbinati, Hayward, Pitkin etc. Dahl (2001; 16) argued that the popular governments (Whether democratic or republic) of ancient Greece, Rome and Italy all lacked several of the crucial characteristics of modern representative government as those governments, though composed of popular local governments lacked an effective national government or elected representatives. Thomas Paine, too points that the Athenian democracy lacked the capacity of transforming the plurality of interests held by its free and equal citizens into a unitary process of decision making (Urbinati, 2011: 31). Dahl (2001: 103) further points that the origin of representation was not democratic but it was a device by which undemocratic governments, especially Monarchs could lay their hands on precious revenues and other resources they wanted, particularly for wars. Manin, in his *Principles of Representative Government* (1997), claiming similar view argued that ancient Athenian council (*Boule*) was not representative but only a collegial magistracy (Landemore, 2008). Urbinati, in her *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy* (2006) thinks that the English constitutional revolution of the 17th century perhaps, was one of the important steps towards representative democracy.

According to Urbinati and Manin the story of representation started in the Middle Ages, in the context of the church as the church sought to represent the community of the entire Christendom and representation then used as a way of unifying the Christians or connecting the large body of believers. Nonetheless, Scipione Maffei, in a comparative and historical study on the republican form of government claimed that the Romans practiced representation for the sake of giving voice to the main nations composing the empire and he referred to Tacitus who in his *Germania* described the form of representation and parliamentary institutions used by the German tribes to voice their claim to the Roman Senate (Landemore, 2008). But Hannah Pitkin, in ‘The Concept of Representation’ denied that the Roman knew anything about ‘representation’ or ‘representative government’ as it is used in modern sense (Pitkin, 1967: 3). Actually, until the American Revolution the dominant belief was that democracies had to be small
and homogeneous in terms of political community for the sake of common good. This view was shifted by the American founders who saw representation as a tool to transcend the underlying diversity in human societies (Alonso, 2011:170)

Whatever the origin was, it must be admitted that representative form of democracy is nothing but the expansion of democratic norms, the expansion of the popular will, especially in a place where direct rule of people is impossible in terms of its territory and huge provinces. The significant role of English Civil War, the American Revolution and the French Revolution can also not be denied— in the emergence and acceptability of it.

What were the leading factors to move towards indirect or representative form of democracy? Or, what criteria did the ancient democracies lack in comparison to modern indirect democracies? Two of the many factors that the ancient democracies more specifically the Athenian democracy lacked, were the question of inclusion and the election of representatives with the authority to enact laws. (Dahl; 2001: 102). They, it can be argued, developed an assembly which can be regarded as ‘the primary democracy’. But was that assembly democracy (direct) enough for large territory with huge citizens and a good number of constituencies? Actually the size and the number of citizens matter and perhaps, these led the notion of democracy to go for representation. And the basic unavoidable argument, for advocating for representation was by broadening the electoral base, the legislature or parliament could be converted into a more truly representative body that would serve democratic purposes.

Thomas Hobbes, in the sixteenth century presented the question of representation in an importantly new way that is to say in order to create the sovereign state. Representation was, he believed, a way for giving legitimacy to the absolute sovereign while disempowering the people, who were only the subjects (Landemore, 2008). Skinner argues that Hobbes created representative system in an anti-republican function and never used representation to create a government based on people’s opinion. Rousseau, of
course, apparently rejected the idea of representative democracy. In his *The Social Contract* he famously countered the Hobbesian idea that a people legislative will be vested in some group or individual that acts with their authority but rules over them. Instead he believed that, to hand over one’s general right of ruling oneself to another person or body constitutes a form of slavery. (Bertram, 2010: 1). In this book he emphatically argued that Sovereignty cannot be represented for the same reason that it cannot be alienated from the sovereign. It consists essentially in the general will, and the will cannot be represented (Urbinati, 2011: 34). This hostility to the representation of sovereignty also extends to the election and periodic re-election of representatives to sovereign government. Therefore, asserting this as a symptom of ‘moral decline’ and ‘loss of virtue’ Rousseau argued that, those legislative assemblies based of representation bind citizens in terms that they had not themselves agreed upon.

In the late Eighteenth century, Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine appeared as the champions of representative form of parliamentary democracy. Burke consistently argued in favor of the political representation, not in terms of the mere interest of the constituents but in terms of the interest of the whole nation (Pitkins, 1967: 168-170). Thomas Paine even stated in 1792 that it was wholly inaccurate to see representation as a mere remedy for the implementation of popular sovereignty in a large territory. In fact, it allows popular sovereignty to exist and to operate in a legal and social space (Urbinati, 2011: 32). Rejecting Rousseau’s notion of general will, Burke emphatically argued that the government should rest on wisdom and not on will; the good of the nation emerges not from a general will but from the general reason of the whole. Thus, he rejected the idea of representation as implying the possession of the ballot or in mere numerical majorities, as it had no real significance in forming the mature opinion or interest of the country (Sabine, 1973: 560).

Burke thus created the notion of virtual representation, in which there is a communion of interest and sympathy in feelings and desires. The notion of virtual representation, as he argued, was rather extension of democratic norms as he thought that
localities without a member in Parliament nevertheless “have an equal representation because you have men equally interested in the prosperity of the whole, who are involved in the general interest and general sympathy…” (quoted in Pitkin, 1967: 172). His notion of representative democracy hence something different as it argues that representation might exist without electoral representatives.

Burke’s notion of representative democracy has been criticized as he was, to some extent, the exponent of parliamentary oligarchy because he protested against the notion of democratic franchise (Pitkin, 1967:168). His concept was elitist too as he was emphatic in favor of wisdom and virtual representation as the members of parliament, the elite group, discovered and enacted what is best for the nation. Therefore at Bristol speech (Nov 3, 1974) while addressing to his Bristol constituency he argued:

A representative is not for consult the wishes of his constituents; as different constituencies have different interests…a parliament, that one whole. You chose a member indeed, If the local constituent should have an interest or should from a hasty opinion, evidently opposite to the ‘real good of the rest of the community’ the member of that place ought to be as far as any other, from any endeavor to give it effect. (Speech of E. Burke delivered at his arrival in Bristol at the conclusion of the poll, on 3rd November 1774 www.tarn. Or /Burke.html, 16.02.2012)

The Nineteenth century world has witnessed the consistent and dominant victory of representative democracy in most parts of the world, especially in liberal democratic European countries. The post-French Revolution (1789) democratic theory came to be divided into two opposite camps; the conservative thinkers who inclined to identify representative government in terms of popular sovereignty in a negative way and on the other hand, the liberals used the term representative democracy as a political system with election but with universal suffrage. (Beyme, 2011: 52).

John Stuart Mill, in his famous book Considerations on Representative Government (1861) defended representative democracy, as, to him; direct democracy is impracticable in anywhere but a small community (Brink, 2007). According to him, in
representative democracy the representatives, by charging up with the task of voting, after free and open discussion, consider views about what would promote the common good, which is one of the essential criteria of liberal political theory (Brink, 2007). In this aspect Mill was with similar view on representation and representative with the Eighteenth century Edmund Burke. Though standing in favour of indirect nature of democracy, as it is blessed with the idea of inclusion, Mill saw two kinds of dangers associated with it: a low grade intelligence of the representative body controlled by popular opinion and class legislation by the numerical majority. To overcome these dangers he argued for wisdom before universal suffrage and suggested to limit the democratic character of representation through a more or less restricted suffrage (Beyme, 2011:52). Though it was feasible but Mill suggested the way-out in term of ‘proportional electoral system’ that aimed to create broad interests. However to make it properly feasible Mill advocated for plurality of votes rather than ‘one man vote’ system. He emphatically argued:

The most direct mode of affecting this would be to establish the plurality of votes, in favor of those who could afford a reasonable presumption of superior knowledge and cultivation... The perfection, then, of an electoral system would be that every person should have one vote, but that every well educated person in the community should have more than one, on a scale corresponding as far as practicable to their amount of education (Quoted in Brink, 2007: 1-2).

Mill was also conscious enough about the relation between representative democracy and national diversity. He believed that the existence of a multinational population would invite authoritarianism by lending itself to a ‘divide- and-rule technique’. Earnest Barker and Robert Dahl later expressed the same opinions in this concern. They, like Mill believed that the people without fellow feeling, especially if they use different languages, the united public opinion which is essential for the successful working of representative government can never exist (Alonso, 2011: 170-171). To escape from authoritarianism it tended to dissolve into as many democracies as there were nations within--which Dahl rightly concluded as ‘the price of polyarchy may be a
break up of the country’. This view remained unchanged till the twentieth century and scholars of transitions to democracy during the last decades of twentieth century even declared that ‘without the right to national self-determination, neither democracy nor the democratic peace shall flourish in the world (Alonso, 2011: 171).

The shared belief was that representative democracy is highly unstable and prone to collapse in a multi-national polity as the actors in conflict are likely to use authoritarian or violent methods to reach their respective claims. More specifically, the state representatives, the majority elite will inevitably tempted to subvert the democratic norms to defend the minority nationalists and the territorial integrity. Vice-e-versa, the minority nationalist would use violence to create pressure over the state (Alonso, 2011: 171-173).

Despite this hypothetical analysis made by Mill, Barker, Dahl and many contemporary thinkers, the successful co-existence of representative democracy and multinational cultural groups has widely been in existence in many countries, like Belgium, Canada, India, Denmark, Finland, Italy and Spain etc. With the ideal of representing the interests and views of electors who are absent from the chambers and forums where decisions are made, the representative democracy had spread itself throughout the major democracies not only in Europe but in most part of the world.

The Crisis of the Representative Democracy

The historical synthesis of democracy and representation may be the outcome of the expansion of democratic norms or democratization especially in multilayered and larger territories where the direct participatory rule of the governed is next to impossible, but not beyond shortcomings or criticism. Unlike direct or participatory democracy of the ancient world the expansion of world-wide-web of the indirect representative democracy, after practicing, seems to be inimical to the ideal of the rule of the demos. Even, before such practical experience with the synthesis between democracy and representation it was Jean Jacque Rousseau who was opposed to this synthesis and argued that the
representative governments will certainly violet popular sovereignty. He argued: “Sovereignty cannot be represented for the same reason that it cannot be alienated from the sovereign, the people” (Urbinati, 2011:36). Rousseau actually rejected both democracy and representation as they were, he thought, both structurally based on discussion and opinion and therefore fatally inclined to corruption. (Urbinati, 2011:36-37).

Such hypothesis made by Rousseau (and of course Montesquieu) in the eighteenth century has become unquestionably significant in the practice of representative democracy through the uneven journey of two centuries. Democracy cannot be turned into representative democracy because representation entails an illegitimate transfer of power from principal (demos) to the agent (representatives). Hence, representation is inimical to democracy. Such observations made by some of the contemporary thinkers namely: Bernard Manin (1997), Sheldon Wolin, Maravall, Sonia Alonso, John Keane, Hannah Pitkin (1967, 2004) and David Beetham.

According to these observers representative democracy is a highly contradictory process as democracy is the rule of the people who are equals (at least legally), while, on the other hand representative democracy is combined with indirect decision making that supposes a hierarchy of competence, that is, representation. Further, once elected, the peoples’ representatives, it may be argued that instead of their electors’ opinion always guided by their concerned party-interest. Therefore the opinion of the people remains a secondary concern of the representatives, especially in party based democracies, emerged simultaneously with the emergence of representative form of government. This modern party-based democracy often appears as another connected problem, especially when party-whips used to given on concerning members who are democratically elected by the demos and not by the parties. Again, party interest appears as prior in terms of importance even if the matter is, to some extent, against public interest.
This shortcoming has been eminently discussed by Wolin who, regarding representation an enemy of democracy, argued that representative form of indirect democracy frustrates collective actions by splintering and replacing the *demos* by political professionals who ultimately protect the powerful particular interest. According to him this indirect democracy makes a mockery of the majority rule and the majorities are artifacts manufactured by money, organization and media (Alonso, Keane and Merkel (eds), 2011: 04).

Barnard Manin, in his *Principles of Representative Government* has carefully examined the historical evolution of the key features of modern democratic institutions and rightly considered that the representative form of democracy is nothing but a consciously chosen alternative of the popular self-rule. To him it is a balanced system of amalgamation between democracy and aristocracy. (Alonso, Keane and Markel (eds), 2011: 05)

Among some contemporary debates another popular point is – there is an ongoing tussle between representatives who make political judgments and the represented, who themselves also make political judgments. This tussle often links and delinks the source of power, the ‘demos’ and the users of power, ‘the representatives’. (Alonso, Keane and Markel, 2011: 5) Neera Chandhoke, an eminent scholar has focused on this tussle between the representatives and the represented in the article entitled *Crisis of representative Democracy*. She, emphatically accusing the system notes that “electoral democracy is deeply compromised when people (candidates) who lose elections are given ministerial berth.” (Chandhoke, 2004: 1-3). The said tussle begins here, specially, to site this Chandhoke mentions the general election of 2004 in India and raises the question - is it legitimate to bring in defeated candidates into the institutions of power through back door by introducing him or her in *Rajya Sabha*? (Chandhoke, 2004: 1-3). Do such measures not dishonor popular mandate or the lack thereof? This practice and the practice of party whips to the popularly elected representatives really demean the notion of
democracy and further raise the question, to whom the popularly chosen candidates accountable and through which means?

Analysts like Crouch, Dahl and Pitkin raise another issue concerning the crisis of representative democracy, i.e. the political asymmetry in the representation of interest which is hollowing out democracy’s core principal of political equality (Alonso, Keane, and Markel (eds), 2011: 8). According to Hanna Pitkin the growing power of so-called guardian institutions and the processes of unelected representation, new corporatism in labour relations and economic policy, rise of independent central banks and advisory councils of experts in the field of government are examples- that have begun to supplant elected government bodies (Alonso, Keane and Markel, 2011: 8).

With these arguments it can be mentioned that the core institutions of representative democracy— elections, political parties and parliaments— are about an impending malaise or at least failing in the eyes of many citizens. Dissatisfactions to election procedure, poor electoral turnouts etc are the ultimate and precise consequences of that malaistic syndrome. Even the citizens, the represented often tend to be not informed or ill-informed about the particular activities and policies of the government. The hollowness of the representative democracy along with party-politics is one of the significant factors of the growing dissatisfaction, i.e. a citizen believes a particular political ideology, albeit, the person whom he does not like as his representative, somehow gets the nomination to that political party which belongs to the same ideology of that citizen, then whom would he be vote for?

According to Bernhard Wessels who made a comparative analysis of thirty countries on election based representative democracy, the contemporary representative democracies are evidently not performing to the satisfaction level of the governed as they are failing to deliver the economic and social goods. He thinks that the institutions of representative democracy are threatened not only by endogenous forces but by exogenous factors as well. He further argues that the women remain grossly under represented even
in the large democracies (Wessel, 2011: 97-100). Klanse Von Beyme, another contemporary thinker points out that the weaknesses of representative democracy provide the ideal soil for the growth of either right-wing ethno populism in Europe or left-wing redistributonal populism as in Latin America (Beyme, 2011: 58-61). He regards populism as most important and significant challenge against representative democracy and in this connection he explicitly discusses that how due to failures of representative democracy, the age-old republicanism has been re-discovered in the nominative theories of post-democracy (Beyme, 2011:66-70). Scholars like Pitkin (2004), Valach (2011), and Rant (2005) have claimed the whole system of representative democracy should be changed as, due to number short comings, it has become oligarchic (Pitkin, 2004), capital oriented (Valach, 2011) media-centric (Rant, 2005) and cursed with ignorance, trivialized egoism, corrupted and corporate-centric (Rant, 2005). Thinkers like Heavy Rant (2005) has voiced against the unholy relationship between money-media-representatives-(and) democracy. Rant thinks, in most of the counties including USA, representative democracy has lost its legitimacy long ago (less than 50% bother to vote) and democracy, in reality, has become pure plutocracy (Rant, 2005). Accusing the mediatization of democracy he suggests, “Take back the media? Ban political advertisement; replace it with authentic journalism and public speech; Put Fox and CNN etc out of business, out of air--- they are the threat to freedom and democracy” (Rant, 2005). This practice of ‘making’ and ‘selling’ news out of money is really one of the biggest obstacles to practice democracy in the real sense. So, it can be argued that the institutions of modern representative democracy are ultimately in the service of capital and political power groups, which in real, makes the citizens only the passive spectators (Valach, 2011).

**Republicanism within Representation: A Normative Diagnosis**

Due to overwhelming dissatisfaction with the representative democracy (indirect) and growing challenges against the hollowness of institutional arrangements of liberal
(representative) democracy, various diagnosis or alternative models, for the sake of surviving the formal components of representative democracy are seen.

Various new notions which claim to be the alternative models of the representative democracy, are being introduced continuously in the contemporary era. Such as, ‘democracy of negotiation’; ‘civil society-centric democracy’; ‘co-operation among networks’; ‘sub politics’; ‘cosmopolitan democracy or transnational democracy’ (a combination of Habermas and theories of civil society); reflexive democracy’ (directed against centralized and homogeneous structure of decision making and in favour of multi-layered system of decision making connected by networks etc.) (Beyme, 2011: 66)

Among these various notions, in the age of post democracy three normative approaches are-

1. revival of republicanism and self government by Pitkin, Sandel, Zolo and Llanque Kurps;

2. notion of deliberative democracy developed by Habermas; Elster, Goodin, Dryzek;

3. Dialogic democracy, an idea developed by the thinkers of radical politics, such as Anthony Giddens and Robert B.Talisse.

Hannah Pitkin revisited the concept of representation almost after four decades of her famous book *The Concept of Representation* (1967) in an article entitled ‘Representation and Democracy: An Uneasy Alliance’, (*Scandinavian Political Studies*, 2004, 27/3, 335-42) which is one of the significant approaches to this concern. In this article she claims that representation has a problematic relationship with democracy as the two ideas have different even conflicting origins. Democracy, by origin is a Greek idea which was based on participation and bore no relationship with representation while, on the other hand, representation begins, at least as a political concept from the late medieval period, when it was regarded as a duty by the monarch (Pitkin, 2004; Manin,
According to Pitkin the representative government has become a new form of oligarchy with ordinary people excluded from public life. Revisiting the relation between democracy and representation she finds it problematic and even dangerous since ‘a self perpetuating elite rule passives or privatizes masses of people’. In this concern, to get rid of the problem she suggests to expand or enhance the mode of participation in proper way (inclusively) from the very grass-roots. She further warns that three obstacles block the access to this possibility today: the scope of public problems and private power, money, or rather wealth; and ideas and their shaping in an age of electronic media (Pitkin, 2004: 335-42).

Besides Pitkin, scholars like Sandel, Zolo, Llangue Kurps (Beyme, 2011, 65-67), Marcos, Chavez, Livingstone (Rant, 2005), Valach, (2011), and many others have introduced participatory democracy enriched with self governance in different ways. All of these thinkers unanimously advocate in favour of participatory democracy for and by the civil society, not for and by the political parties. Therefore it can be argued that a clear vision of republicanism, more specifically, of direct rule is continuously re-appearing with the growing dis-enchantment to representative form of indirect democracy.

Thus, Republicanism, an old tradition of political thinking that stretches back to renaissance, has recently been re-discovered. Llanque kurps thinks that republicanism, in this concern, is said to be more democratic than liberalism- and more liberal than traditional representative democracy. (Beyme, 2011: 66). Hannah Arendt, too advocates for the re-establishment of republicanism, as, according to him, it revitalizes the citizenship through decentralized self government since it directed it’s energies against state apparatus legitimated through nationalized and state founded parties and against the apolitical privatization of a de-political population (Beyme, 2011: 66).
The Deliberative and Dialogic Democratic issues

Another normative approach, in this concern is deliberative democracy, known as discursive democracy, an idea in which deliberation is central to decision making. The term deliberative democracy was originally coined by Joseph M Bessette in 1980 in his work ‘Deliberative Democracy’ and later it was enriched by Habermas. Rather than mere ‘voting’ system this approach claims authentic deliberation. Despite, it is compatible with both representative democracy and direct democracy, the approach is often exclusively used to refer to decision-making directly by citizens (http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=deliberative_democracy, 28.07.2012). To combat the shortcomings of representative democracy James Fishkin, one of the exponents of deliberative democracy, designs practical implementations of deliberative democracy for over fifteen countries and describes five essential characteristics for legitimate deliberation: information to the participants, Substantive balance, diversity, conscientiousness and equal consideration. Cohen, in his article ‘Deliberation and Democracy’ (1989) has emphatically described direct participatory character of deliberative democracy which stresses to include respect to the pluralistic value, transparency and most of all, to respect the deliberative capacity of other members. To conclude, it may be argued that the discourses of deliberative democracy have stronger normative components than liberal representative democracy, but weaker component than the republican ideal which begins from the principle of sovereign citizenship (Beyme, 2011: 67).

Another normative hope has appeared in the form of ‘Dialogic Democracy’, an idea developed by B.Tallisse, A, Giddens and many to make alternative or supplementary ideal of liberal representative democracy. According to these thinkers dialogic democracy is more than an extension of liberal democracy. Antony Giddens in Beyond left and Right: the Future of Radical politics (1994) claims that dialogic democracy creates forms social inter change which can contribute substantially, perhaps even decisively, to the reconstructing of social solidarity (Giddens, 1994:112). Dialogic Democracy is neither only the proliferation of right nor only the representation of interest, rather it concerns the
development of cultural cosmopolitanism and in this sense it can be argued that it encourages the democratization within the sphere of liberal democratic polity (Giddens, 1994:113). Thus, the notion of dialogic democracy is that only the dialog in a public space provides a means of living along with the ‘other’ people in a relation of mutual tolerance—whether the ‘other’ is an individual or a group (Giddens, 1994:115). So these two normative versions of democracy, the deliberative and dialogic may be seen as outcome of deep normative concerns against the fallacy of representative democracy and to these views, equal representation has become secondary to a deliberative discourse for the sake of demos.

To conclude, we may argue that despite long ‘ups’ and ‘downs’ democracy has flourished throughout the world. In its journey an explicit transformation- from direct democracy to indirect representative form of democracy and presently with a number of disillusions again moving towards direct Republicanism, can be seen. But most importantly, from ancient Athens to the 21st century—world democracy has survived despite its relative decline with the two consequent great wars and rise of Nazism, Fascism etc. In contemporary political science it is continuously argued that democracy has become ‘a way of life’ and ‘a living myth’ in which masses almost all over the world have put their faith. Thinkers like Kothari thinks democracy is in the process of ‘mythefication’ that when questions are raised on its limits and contradictions, the answer given is that the world is going through a process of historical change (Kothari, 2005:146). In contemporary politics, the dissolution of Soviet Union, the post cold war announcement of the ‘end of history’ and the consequent appeal for the spread of democracy round the world, have enhanced the prospects of democracy in large part of the world (Kothari, 2005:146). In the 21st century, some unprecedented democratic movements have been seen especially in the Arabic world- in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Jordan etc. Anyway, to view the conceptual genealogy of democracy the general apprehension is that it is a Western concept which has been imported historically in East. Then what causes its remarkable success in India since Independence? What is the root of
such enchantment towards democracy in India? Can we say that there is no contribution of Indian thinkers to the concept of democracy? Narahari Kaviraj (1984: 162) has argued that the rise and development of democracy in India is nothing but an integral part of the world-wide democratic tradition. In India the emergence of democracy was contextual. The articulation of democratic ideas and principles in India can be traced back to colonial nineteenth century post-Enlightenment period as an integral part of the development of the concept. With the introduction of pragmatic state-oriented system of modern education, drastic change in the means of communication, liberal policies towards age-old cultural prejudices and the rise of Bengali intelligentsia a rational cognitive educated class emerged which shaped the post-Enlightenment ideas in the nineteenth century— a matter that is examined in the chapter that follows.
Notes

1. Some recent studies claim that it was Sparta where the history of European Democracy began. For details, see Hornblower, (1992) “Creation and Development of Democratic Institutions in Ancient Greece” in Dunn J. (ed.), *Democracy: The Unfinished Journey*, Oxford University Press.


3. Though it is called democratic it must be taken into account that majority of people in Athenian democracy remained excluded from the system of vote. The women and slaves had no legitimate share in democratic processes.

4. Democracy has always been context-bound. It has no universal principle which can be generalized. It is always affected by specific socio-cultural and political context of different countries.
Chapter II

Renaissance, Modernity and Democracy in Nineteenth Century Bengal
SECOND CHAPTER

Renaissance, Modernity and Democracy in Nineteenth Century Bengal

The conceptual genealogy of democracy that has been focused in the previous chapter has revealed the acceptability, complexity and diversity of democracy in most part of the world. It may be argued that there is no unique or absolute model of democracy in terms of its nature and practices. The emergence, growth and success of democracy in a particular society depend on certain historical and socio-cultural preconditions; such as— the presence of strong bureaucratic state, capitalist mode of production, secularization of society, relative economic prosperity, industrial revolution, growth of literacy among the people etc. (Kaviraj, 2011: 2). It is interesting to note that none of these preconditions was possessed by India when it started its journey with a democratic constitution during the years following the British withdrawal in 1947 (Ganguly, 2009: ix). After a long tradition of hereditary monarchy and authoritarian colonial rule the emergence, remarkable resilience and relative success of Indian democracy, which are unfamiliar or inexplicable in terms of western democracies have posed some important questions and attracted the attentions of the scholars (Jayal, 2001: 1). Unlike the West, it is a case of democracy without a prior tradition of liberal political thought (Kaviraj, 2011: 15). The basic ingredients of liberalism—individualism, principle of self-determination, importance to individual rights, principle of political tolerance were relatively absent in India while, in contrary, the society was characterized with gigantic social dominance over individual. Issues like caste, gender, socio-cultural prejudice and other community based issues were more active in the society. Here, the questions arise: what made India’s democracy so persistent since independence? Even the so-called preconditions for the success of a democratic government are being challenged by the remarkable survival of India’s democracy and this success poses the question: Are
those preconditions really essential preconditions for the success of democracy? If so, then how has democracy in India successfully survived?

The answer to such questions, it may be argued, lies in the historical origin of democracy in India. There are endless controversies on this issue. General presumption is that the concept of democracy is one of the products of Western civilization and has been successfully introduced in India. Contrary to this kind of popular belief some argue that the British did little or almost nothing to promote the growth of democratic institutions in India. They argue that the Indian nationalists from the nineteenth century onwards successfully appropriated liberal democratic principles from the United Kingdom and infused them into the context of Indian politics (Ganguly, 2009: ix). In other words, renaissance, modernity and cognitive rational thinking in the nineteenth century Bengal gave birth to liberal democratic mind which to a great extent, made the cultural ambience of democracy in India. The question is: how is the emergence of democracy in India related to renaissance and modernity of the nineteenth century Bengal? How did it cause the political and cultural ambience of democracy in India without a proper growth of liberal tradition? Before attempting to such questions we ought to focus on the meaning and nature of renaissance in nineteenth century Bengal.

**Bengal Renaissance and Modernity: Different schools and controversies**

The term Renaissance, broadly meaning ‘re-birth’, was used in the context of the Greco-Roman learning since the late 15th century. After the long curse of unproductive and dark mediaval period, renaissance introduced modernity in all spheres of human activities. In India, more specifically in Bengal, renaissance occurred through vigorous intellectual and creative movements which expressed itself by bursting out into a whole range of creative activities—cultural, social, political and economical throughout the nineteenth century. It brought some fresh and unprecedented challenges towards the so-called orthodox socio-cultural dogmas and made some drastic or revolutionary changes almost in every sphere of human life—art, music, socio-cultural norms and values,
political consciousness etc. This remarkable awakening, Renaissance was the direct outcome of a variety of socio-political circumstance, viz. the impact of Western education and culture, liberal and political views, modernity, modern technology, Western philosophy etc (Sengupta, 2008: 209-10).

Endless controversies have been witnessed on the nature and role of nineteenth century Bengal Renaissance. Scholars like Sibnath Sastri, Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Annada Sankar Roy, Jyogesh Chandra Bagal, Kaji Abdul Wadnd, Narahari Kaviraj and Sushobhan Sarkar are some of those who glorify the historical importance and significance of Bengal Renaissance. According to this school of thought, it was truly a renaissance, an awakening from the stupor condition of orthodox Bengal society. Sarkar (1979: 11) in Notes of the Bengal Renaissance opined that the eminent identities of the nineteenth century Bengal took the pioneering role in the modern awakening of India which, to some extent, made it comparable to the position occupied by Italy in the story of European Renaissance. This school explicitly compares Calcutta to fifteenth century Florence on the ground of the centre of awakening (Ghosh, 1948: 20; Kaviraj, 1984: 1) asserts that awaking of Bengal was not a mere story but a historical truth. To them, it was a process of re-activation which expressed itself in various socio-cultural movements and ultimately sowed the seeds of modern India.

Subsequent, researches have doubted this over-glorification of the Bengal Renaissance. According to this school of thought, whatever happened in Bengal during the nineteenth century was not Renaissance but the deviation of an elite Hindu intelligentsia from mainstream of Hindu Society. Scholars like A. Poddar, Jayantanuj Bandyopadhyay, Sumit Sarkar, Gopal Haldar, Dipankar Chakraborty and Tapan Roy Choudhury belong to this school. To them, it was incomplete, over-glorified, distorted, Culcutta-centric (Dey, 1987: 134) and most importantly, it was colonial renaissance which can never be compared to the Italian Renaissance (Mukhopadhyay, 2000: 24-26). Sarkar (2002: 67) asserts, “The renaissance in Bengal lacked the tremendous sweep and vital energy of the many-sided upsurge in the midst of which was shaped its European
prototype. According to this school the renaissance or awakening of Bengal, more or less limited within the newly educated Bengali middle class, the Bhadralok or the upper stratum alone of the society (Bose, 1976: 16). Binoy Ghose (1948: 176) emphatically opines that the Bengal Renaissance was not like modern European Renaissance in terms of its nature and intensity. Addressing it incomplete and bewildered Jayantanuj Bandyopadhyay (2004: 23-30) claimed that the cultural and intellectual revolution in ancient India was, in any way, more influencing than nineteenth century and instead of reviving its past glory the nineteenth century- modernizers only stuck to alien culture and civilization.

Nonetheless, the remarkable role of renaissance and modernity in nineteenth century Bengal can not be undermined. It must be admitted that there were shortcomings in Bengal Renaissance. But there were limitations in Italian Renaissance too. Irrespective of all differences of opinion on the nature of nineteenth century awakening and its correct terminology, its all pervasive influence on the making of modern India is beyond any doubt or controversy. The significant role of Bengal Renaissance in making the cognitive revolution characterized by collective eminent identities can not be denied (Dasgupta, 2007: 2). This particular cognitive revolution came from a small but remarkable community of individuals in Nineteenth century Bengal in the form of there respective individual acts of creation in a number of realms, in particular— arts, literature, social reforms, diversified socio-cultural activities etc. Thus, it created the cultural ambience for the growth of modernity and modern liberal outlook, especially in socio-political sphere in nineteenth century Bengal.

**Bengal Renaissance: Creating the Cultural Ambience for Modern Liberal Democracy**

Modernity, rationality, humanism, secularism, modern liberal democratic norms—all, it may be argued, are the direct or indirect influenced outcomes of renaissance in Europe since fifteenth century. Jacob Burckhardt (1860: 81-89) in his eminent book *The
Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy claimed that it is the culture of renaissance that has brought rationalism, individualism and secularism in human species. The European Renaissance followed by counter renaissance lasted hardly another century and the consequent century was relatively unproductive (Ray, 1976: 10). Then in the Protestant countries the historical ‘Reformation Movement’ was seen and in France, despite being Catholic the Enlightenment accompanied by French Revolution occurred in the Eighteenth century. So, during these four centuries the World has witnessed an evolution in the names of Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment – the enormous impact of which was never encompassed within Europe but amplified throughout the whole World and was felt in India, more specifically in Bengal during the British rule in the nineteenth century and was welcomed by Raja Rammohun Roy, considered by some to be the ‘father of modern India’ (Kaviraj, 1984: 162-164; Chakroborti, 1935: 01). So, the renaissance in Bengal was never historically rooted in its own soil but a brief and mixed blend of European Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment of about four centuries (Ray A., 1976: 11). That’s why recent researches tend to call it ‘post-Enlightenment’ instead of the Renaissance.

Be that as it may, Renaissance or post-Enlightenment, Hindu Revivalism or elite Bengali awakening – whatever happened in nineteenth century renascent Bengal, had made a cultural ambience for the growth of liberal and democratic norms. From fifteenth century renaissance in Italy to eighteenth century enlightened France, the basic attraction and culture of modern Europe was the bourgeois liberal democracy (Kaviraj, 1984: 162) and similarly, it may be argued, in nineteenth century Bengal the socio-cultural ambience for this bourgeois democracy was built through this post-Enlightenment and modernity. This liberal ambience was not resultant in a sudden span of time but took almost over a century through continuous process of social and political change.

The leading factors responsible for the growth of liberal democratic ambience in the 19th century contemporary Bengal may be traced as the following: rise of an intelligentsia as a part of modernity; introduction of western education (Kopf, 1977:678-
rise of civil societal consciousness (Chatterjee, 2013: 13-18); role of oriental journals and newspapers, social reform movements; origin of a number of political associations and huge impact of western philosophy to create a modern outlook about individual and society. The significant role of modernity should also be acknowledged here. Kaviraj (2010: 15-16) rightly points out that modernity has various distinct aspects: the rise of a capitalist economy, growth of modern state institutions and resultant transformations in the nature of social power, emergence of democracy, decline of the community and rise of strong social conduct. He (2011: 11) in a comparatively recent work claims that rise of modernity does not make human society suffer complete disenchantment and think unideologically about everything. Simultaneously, it creates new forms of enchantments. Democracy, in this respect is nothing but a political enchantment of modernity. Almost all these outcomes of modernity, it may be argued, were felt to some extent in nineteenth century Bengal through gradual but radical socio-cultural changes. One of the remarkable trends of modernity was the growth of political consciousness which had been gradually built through the impact of European Renaissance, Reformation, Glorious Revolution (1688), American was of Independence (1776) and French Revolution (1789) and Enlightenment (Kaviraj N., 1984: 164). The central essence of this European Renaissance was the rise of individualism and anti-authoritarianism which led to bourgeois democratic awakening (Bandyopadhyay J., 2004: 19). Through the bourgeois awakening Europe witnessed revolutionary resistance against any kind of autocracy, movement against socio-cultural inequalities etc, which marked a great influence on the modernizers of renaissance-Bengal. In this respect it may be argued that the bourgeois awakening in Bengal was nothing but an integral part of worldwide bourgeois democratic awakening (Kaviraj, N., 1984: 164). From Raja Rammohum Roy of early nineteenth century to Rabindranath Tagore of the twentieth century, the vigorous chain of social and political thought enlightened with the wave of modernity have built the cultural ambience for democracy, the far reaching consequences of which can still be felt in the post independent India through the dramatic experience of India’s experiment with liberal democratic norms, establishment of democratic
government and its interesting resilience, development of democratic institution and transformation of socio-cultural values different from traditional Indian history.

**Rise of an Intelligentsia**

The rise of an intelligentsia was of crucial importance because it brought rationalism, humanism and socio-political consciousness free from all traditional dogmas of premodern society. This new type of intelligentsia brought into by some eminent identities stood for social change. Their ideas, attitudes, knowledge, changing life style, distinct professions created a new cultural tradition. The more sophisticated they become regarding the sources of Western superiority, the more they understood the causes of their own culture’s inferior position. But it is noteworthy that this intelligentsia, although dissatisfied with their social order, was unwilling to renounce their heritage. Instead, they formed organizations designed to change the existing order— to modernize it. (E.g. from Rammohun Roy came the *Brahmo Samaj*, from Vivekananda came the Ramkrishna Mission) (Kopf, 1977: 678-80). It was the main trend of contemporary Bengal. In the words of historian Jadunath Sarkar, “The Indian Renaissance was possible only because a principle was discovered by which India could throw herself into the full current of modern civilization in the outer world without totally discarding her past.” (Quoted in Bose, 1976: 16). This trend has been pointed by Sarkar (1979: 68-71) as ‘ideological clash’, a clash between Western modernism, liberalism and conservative traditionalism, Orientalism. This clash was often confrontation and often assimilative. Through the rise of an intelligentsia in nineteenth century Bengal the contradiction started with liberal Westernism, the first trend that tended to attack traditional practices and institutions and ultimately built the democratic ambience enriched with modern Western education. The rich influence of modern Western political thinkers, viz. Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Mill and Burke made the modernizers of Bengal not less revolutionary against traditional social prejudices which were irrational and blind, e.g. the unjust practice of ‘Sati’, social ban on widow marriage, practice of polygamy, child marriage, depressed status of women etc. (Bandyopadhyay, 2004: 105-119).
On contrary, the second trend, the Oriental traditionalists, somehow rejected the modern Western stand and advocated for the *Shastra* to reinforce the oriental tradition which attached supreme importance to the Holy Scriptures for understanding the Indian society (Bandyopadhyay, 2004: 118). In other words, the orientalists, giving much importance to the heritage and past glories of India argued in favour of the greatness of the traditional culture and often, romantically asked: in what way are we less great? (Sarkar, 1979: 71). Thus, it may be pointed out that throughout the nineteenth century Bengal witnessed co-existence of two apparently opposite ideas. Nonetheless, the rise of an intelligentsia, irrespective of all controversies introduced the cultural ambience for rationalism and liberal outlook.

**Role of Western Education**

The introduction of modern Western education was one of the most influencing factors to create the cultural ambience for democracy because it grew ideas like rationalism, humanism, utilitarianism, positivism and liberal democratic norms in Indian Soil (Tripathi, 1994: 45). The educated middle-class Bengalis who were highly influenced by western liberal school of thought tended to impose Western method of education and advocated for learning English as an indispensable language of science, technology, administration and politics. A close study of the history of England, the works of Plato, Aristotle, Becon, Adam Smith, Gibbon, Hume, Locke, Voltaire, Bentham and Mill, influenced the minds of those newly educated Bengali middle-class (Majumdar, 1965: 7). It may be argued that the role of modern Western education was not less significant than the role of the revival of traditional Greek and Latin literature, culture and education in the case of European Renaissance. The deep enchantment towards classical Greek culture and education gave birth to the modern Europe with which the birth of modern India influenced by Western modernity, rationality and humanist movement is comparable here.
In pre-colonial Bengal the entire system of education was highly localized and specific with five different types of institutions each of which marked out for a specific social group, viz. ‘Sanskrit Tols’ and ‘Arabic Madrasas’ for upper class Hindu Brahmins and high class Muslims respectively. ‘Pathshals’ and ‘Maqtabs’ were for poor Hindus and ordinary Muslims respectively. The Persian schools were for those Hindus and Muslim elites who learned the language of the court (Bhattacharya, 2005:156-57). But the introduction the pragmatic state oriented approach of colonialism posed some fresh challenges towards that pre-colonial system of education and introduced a more generalized and liberal system of education in accordance with capitalist principle (Bhattacharya, 2005: 157).

Among the most significant developments that took place in late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century was the revival of Oriental learning, growth of Bengali language and an increasing urge for English education (Bose, 1976: 17). Governor Generals C. Wellesley and W. Hastings were attracted and paid much attention to enrich the oriental education system. A Government notification published on 21st December, 1798 shows that:

From and after the 1st January 1801 no servant will be deemed eligible to any of the offices here in after mentioned, unless he shall have passed an examination (the nature of which will be hereafter determined), in the law’s and regulations and in the languages (Bengali, Persia, Urdu), a knowledge of which is here by declared to be an indispensable qualification (Quoted in Bandyopadhyay, 1979: 21).

The establishment of the Calcutta Madrassa in 1781, The Asiatic Society in 1784, the Fort William College in 1800 and Serampore Mission in 1800 may be marked as epochal point in the educational as well as socio-political history of Bengal (Shastri, 2007: 50-51). Fort William College (estd.1800) became the main centre where oriental languages such as Bengali, Urdu, Persia, Sanskrit and Tamil were taught along with modern European languages, viz. Greek, Latin, English literature and science subjects.
The main aim was to train the probationer British civilians in the languages and culture of the subjugated country to reach their own means (Sarkar, 1960: 62)

Besides Asian languages soon the urge for Western language, more specifically, urge for learning English was desperately felt among the newly educated Hindu society. The Alien rulers too felt the need of English known natives for their own means. The dispatch from the Board of Directors of the East India Company to the Governor General of India in 1854 explicitly noted:

This knowledge (Western education) will teach the natives of India the marvelous result of the employment of labour and capital, rouse them to emulate us in the development of the vast resource of their country …confer upon them all the advantages which accompany the healthy increase of wealth and commerce; and at the same time, secure to us a larger and more certain supply of many articles necessary for our manufactures and extensively consumed by all classes of our population (cited in Bhattacharya, 2005: 157).

Before the remarkable launching of the Hindu College a good number of schools for the growth of English education in Bengal were seen. In 1785 John Stansberrow set up an English school at Mirjapur in Calcutta. After three years in 1788 another school with the same vision was established by J. T. Hope at Park Street road. The Calcutta Academy founded by William Cummings and the Classical school set up by Peter Mosse are also noteworthy here. Another school set up by Sherburne at Chitpur road was significant as the modernizers of Bengal renaissance learned English and Western education in that school. Many distinguished Bengalis of nineteenth century like Dwarakanath Tagore, Prosanna Kumar Tagore, his brother Hara Kumar Tagore, Ramgopal Ghose and many were educated in Sherbourne’s school (Shastri, 2007: 50). In 1800 the Martin Bowls school and followed by Union school in 1801 by Jagmohan Basu, took important role in spreading Western education in early nineteenth century (Bandyopadhyay, 1979: 24-23). The Dharmatala Academy known as Drummond Academy where Derozio, the propounder of Young Bengal was a student, took
significant role in the modern awakening of Bengal (Mukherjee, 1968: 20-21, Sarkar, 2002: 99). The establishment of Hindu College (later known as Presidency College) in 1817 was an important landmark in the spread of western education in Bengal during early nineteenth century. Some recent researches claim that it was David Hare who was the originator of the scheme of Hindu College (Mukharjee, 1968: 23). His deep urge for spreading western education made him retire from his business of watch. Besides Hindu College, Hare devoted himself in propounding and developing the Medical College, School Society, School Book Society, Agrihorticulture Society, District Charitable Society etc (Bagal, 2011: 86-96, Roy B., 1989: 1-9). The significant role of Serampore College (1817), Sanskrit College (1824), General Assembly Institution (1830) (presently known as Scottish Church College), Dhaka College (1841), Chittagong College (1869) etc are also noteworthy in the development of western education in Bengal (Mukherjee, 1968:23-70). The Christian Missionaries too rendered tremendous service to the cause of mass education free from prejudices and superstitions. They raised the standard of mass education by developing the western education (Shastri, 2007: 55, Ray, 1989:1).

Thus, the Christian Missionaries, a number of English schools, some well-wisher British and some of the social reformers altogether brought a new wave of learning breaking all the barriers of social and cultural life. The main issue in imparting the western education was, it must be admitted the uneasy alliance between the traditional mode of education and the new notion of western education. The battle for education did not range between English and vernacular but between Anglicism and Orientalism (Palit, 1980: 101). While the conventional education system in pre-colonial Bengal based on certain socio-cultural strata, the new education system since the nineteenth century believed in homogenization following a generalized system of education to all caste and class.

The introduction of western education, it may be argued made an inevitable dichotomy with the common traditional culture and bifurcated the social and cultural norms radically and in an unprecedented manner. The dichotomy was between the
premodern system of education and culture. The symbolic association of the two languages the English and the Indian vernacular was reinforced and created two separated world; viz. the social world and the political world (Kaviraj, 2011: 162-164). Before 1835, the British rulers did almost nothing to develop the English education in Bengal (Mukherjee, 1968: 65-66). Instead, it was the newly educated Bengali middle class who cordially welcomed English education by regarding it as an indispensable language of science, legality, administration etc. and incorporated its unfamiliar principles and imposed them on a society going through rapid change or transformation. But the strange dichotomy in practicing the foreign language was seen as the women and the lower classes could not access the changed atmosphere in society due to social and economic reasons. The newly educated Bengali babu⁴, on the other hand used to speak Bengali at home but English at public sphere like in office or public discussions, which in any case also necessary for career advancement in colonial bureaucracy (Kaviraj, 2011: 164). But the question that arises here: was English really indispensable language to create the cultural ambience of modernity in the nineteenth century Bengal? Reformers like Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra and Rabindranath Tagore tried to prove that ‘modern’ and ‘English speaking’ were not necessarily equivalents by writing about science in Bengali. Nonetheless, in formal sphere the connection between modernity, Westernism and English language remained indelibly (Kaviraj, 2011:164-65).

Whatever, it may be argued that the very introduction of western education and culture altogether formed the bedrock of liberal democratic ideal which flourished through the wave of modernity in colonial India, particularly in Bengal. Another significant feature of the colonial modernity explored by Kaviraj (2011, 164-65) in creating the democratic ambience is too important to ignore. He points that with the process of modernity the enumeration of population, i.e. census came to notice, which created the majority and minority; and imprints them indelibly on the minds of social groups, even when democracy was unknown or non-practiced in India. But it paved the way towards democracy. Thus, the education afforded by the colonial state in the
nineteenth century, to a large extent was responsible for not only the creation of a specific attitude towards learning, but also created liberal outlook in the society. The importance of such ideological function or the growth of liberal view took significant role in the nineteenth century Bengal.

**Social Reform Movements: Articulation of Democratic Ideas**

The earliest response to the radical wave of renaissance and modernity in Bengal since the early nineteenth century may be traced in the form of drastic social and cultural reform movements which were started quiet successively by the Christian Missionaries followed by *Brahmo Somaj* movement and Young Bengal movement. The role of some inscribed identities in the process should also be noted here. The Christian Missionaries, apart from propagating Christianity and taking tremendous attempts at the growth of English education took significant role in the society. The first organized and effective missionary activities in Bengal began with the foundation of the Serampore Baptist Mission in 1800. Earlier to this, there were three Missionary Societies: namely, The Baptist Missionary Society (estd. in 1792), London Missionary Society (estd. in 1795) and Church Missionary Society (estd. in 1799) (Bose, 1976: 134-35)

The prime object of these societies, the propagating of Christianity was materialized by vehement attack on Hinduism through exposing the falsehood that had been nurtured by Hindu priestly class in the name of religion. To meet this object they strongly believed that expansion of Western education would prepare the ground in favour of Christianity. Their vehement criticism against Hindu religion, ultimately paved the way to social reform movements (Bose, 1976: 138) which, it may be argued, took significant role in creating the ‘liberal’ outlook in Bengal society.

The rise of Young Bengal, the radical followers of Derozio was of crucial importance. The year 1828 is remarkable from three distinct historical reasons. In this year Derozio formed the Academic Association; Lord Bentinck came in India as the Governor General and Rammohun Roy set up the historical *Brahmo Samaj* at Chitpur
Rode in Calcutta (Sastri, 2007: 67). Thus, a new epoch in the modern awakening of Bengal was started. From May, 1826 to April 1831 in a short span of only five years Derozio, with his charismatic personality, attitudes and ideas influenced his pupils, the members of Young Bengal. Some of those were Radhanath Sikdar, Ramgopal Ghose, Pearychand Mitter, Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhyay, Ramtanu Lahiri, Sibchandra Deb and others. Derozio used to encourage his students to debate freely and question all authorities. The role of the Academic Association (estd. 1828) was significant for building the free and rational thinking in its members. It organized various debates where its members participated with full freedom and free thinking. They were highly inspired by Voltaire, Hume, Locke, Tom Paine, Smith, Bantham and others. They made intense study of Western philosophy and literature. Among those the most popular were Tom Paine’s *Age of Reason* and *Rights of Man* (Bose, 1976: 73). In philosophical views they were enchanted by Francis Becon, David Hume and philosophers of the Common-Sense school— Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart and Thomas Brown who stirred the fearless and hopeful minds of leading Hindu Youths of Calcutta (Ahmed, 1976:48). Soon their rational views made them revolutionary against all falsehood nourished by Hindu religion and contemporary society. The rational and cognitive atmosphere radically denounced the Hindu religion as vile, corrupt and unjust from rational point of views. In this regard they engaged in creating a liberal and just society which was important for democratic conditions. In Academic Association one of the most familiar topics was the degraded state of Hindus caused by their ignorance and superstitions and it was then resolved that nothing but a liberal education could enfranchise the minds of the people (Bose, 1976: 73). Derozio’s extraordinary influence produced a terrific social impact which brought about an intellectual revolution among his pupils. In 1832 the Calcutta Christian Observer published:

…several of the boys in the first and second classes (of the Hindu college) had acquired a remarkable degree of courage and spirit in expressing their opinion on all subjects, particularly on the subject of religion. The principles and practices of the Hindu religion were openly ridiculed and condemned; and angry disputes were held on moral subjects.
The sentiments of Hume had been widely diffused and warmly patronized. Reason was now promoted to be a God, and custom voted to be the idol of fools…The Rationalist had it all their own way. (Quoted in Ahmed, 1976:47-48)

By the beginning of nineteenth century these radical ideas grew which were promoted by Derozio actively. Their vehement attack on Hindu religion increased until it pervaded the house of almost all radical. The confrontation with typical Brahmins or the priestly class began as they alarmed and shocked the contemporary society by various activities unjust to the eyes of society. They often shouted at orthodox Brahmins, “We take beef”, “See, we are taking water from Muslims” and gave up their other daily religious and ritual activities (Sastri, 2007: 71). In short, they regarded themselves as ‘liberals’ and started a radical intellectual revolution in the society. They were the first liberals who took significant role in promoting liberal atmosphere in Bengal during early nineteenth century (Chatterjee, 2013: 20).

Besides Young Bengal movement another remarkable move in the course of social and religious movement was the historical Brahmo Samaj movement which sought to reform Hinduism socially and spiritually. It was started by Rammohun Roy who took a middle path between the conservatives who defended the intrusion of foreign ideas and practices, and the Westernizers who tended to give up their Hindu heritage. He never yearned only for alien cultural imports but devoted much of his time and energy to re-interpreting his own social and religious tradition (Kopf, 1977: 678). By the late 1820s, due to the radical activities of Atmiya Sabha⁹, Rammohun Roy became even a rival of Christian Missionaries along with traditional Hindus. The confrontation expanded to a remarkable degree when he published Precepts of Jesus, Final Appeal to the Christian Public and Brahmanical Magazine. It led to almost premature demise of Atmiya Sabha (Chattopadhyay, 2003: 130). In this historical period he set up⁺ the Brahmo Samaj (1828), a society for dispassionate worshippers of God with no room for unnecessary rituals, prejudices or parochialism (Chakraborty, 1979: 18)
The prime object of Brahmo Samaj movement was never encompassed within combating the aggressiveness of the Christian Missionaries and vindictively controlling the conversion of Hindus to Christianity. Simultaneously, revolting against unjust social dominance over individual it set the pattern for new progressive movements all over the country. But it must be admitted that the Brahmo Samaj movement was limited within a particular circle of enlightened liberal intellectuals. On the other hand the age-old orthodoxy was too powerful for the rational or utilitarian reform movement initiated by Brahmo Samaj (Bose, 1976:141). After the premature demise of Rammohun, Brahmo Samaj was run quietly successfully by Devendranath Tagore, Akshay Kumar Dutta and Keshav Chandra Sen (Chattopadhyay, 2003: 131). The Tattvabodhini Sabha founded by Devendranath Tagore should also be acknowledged here for attracting people towards Brahmo Samaj (Bose, 1976: 144). The importance of such sabhas and samities in creating civil and political consciousness in accordance the cry of the time was crucial one.

Rise of Civil Society Movement

The first civil-societal consciousness, it may be argued, was felt in Calcutta by the end of eighteenth century and the beginning of nineteenth century. Partha Chatterjee (2013: 13) has rightly marked this new trend as ‘traditional–modernity’ which had two explicitly different ways. The first one seen in late eighteenth century was state-oriented that intended to impose sovereign power of state; while, on the other hand, the second trend was ‘anti-absolutist’ which tended to establish and protect civil and political rights of people against the absolute power of the state. The only way to reach the second goal was to form civil societal movement free from the authority of the state. Though, in Western Europe and Northern America, this civil societal movements was highly powerful in eighteenth century, in India it took birth only during the early nineteenth century at Calcutta due to the vigorous activities of new intelligentsia, the Christian missionaries, the Eurasians and some well wisher British. Their social and political activities (mainly reform movements) led to the establishment of a good number of
sabhas and samities, (social, cultural and political) educational institutions, print media etc. Of these, the most significant role, to build civil societal awareness, was taken by numerous debating societies established by the both contemporary trends—liberal modernizers and traditional Conservatists (Bagal, 2011:155). Following Tocqueville (1996: 223-239), the renowned French thinker, it may be argued that the role of such civil society in building democratic spirit or promoting civil and political participation was significant.

In the early nineteenth century the nature of this civil society movement was compound and diverse as those were headed by Bengalis, Europeans and Eurasians. In contemporary Calcutta most of those civil societal associations: educational, commercial, cultural were of this nature (Chatterjee, 2013: 18-19). Some of those were Sarvatattvadipika sabha (estd. in 1832), an association for the cultivation of knowledge (Bose, 1976: 143), society for the Acquisition of General knowledge (estd. in 1838) etc. The Town Hall (estd. in 1813) in Calcutta was of crucial importance as it was the main centre of historical civil societal movements. For example, agitation against censorship on press (or print media) in 1823, meeting for the demand of free immigration of the Europeans in India in 1829 etc. are notable. (Chatterjee, 2013: 19). Besides, European speakers there were Bengali speakers like Dwarakanath Tagore and Rammohon Roy. The early civil society movements, most of which happened with the demands of liberty of media or press, free trade, free immigration (of the Europeans) and other civil rights of the natives, were against absolute power of British East India company. Most significantly, the British liberal ideals, such as rule of law, equality and individualism were the basic ideologies of such movements.

**Growth of Public Opinion, Political Consciousness and Democratic Ambience**

The anti-absolutist movement of civil society for the protection of citizen rights became most revolutionary on the issue of freedom of press. Till the beginning of nineteenth century there was hardly any sign of political consciousness in India as it
lacked any sense of integration and the whole society was bifurcated in huge socio-cultural and economical cleavages which, it may be argued were significant factors to the foundation and consolidation of the British rule in India. The British rule in India, Marx noted (in 1853), had an explicit “double mission to fulfill … one destructive—the annihilation of the old Asiatic society, and the other regenerative—the laying of the material foundation of Western society in Asia. It had begun the latter by imposing political unity, now (1853) to be strengthened and perpetuated by the electric telegraph; by introducing the first free press in Asia, a new and powerful agent of reconstruction”. (Rudolph and Rudolph, 2010: 21-22). Here lies the significant role of free press not only as an agent of reconstruction; but also as agent of bourgeois awakening in India to create the liberal democratic ambience enriched with freedom of expression, right to resistance and right to raise questions against rulers or state.

The role of numerous newspaper and journals, both the vernaculars and English played significant a role in the making of public opinion in colonial Bengal in the early decades of nineteenth century. The first paper, a weekly, named ‘Bengal Gazette’ was started by J. A. Hicky (in 1780) who described it as: “a weekly political and commercial paper open to all parties but influenced by none (Majumdar, 1971: 273-74). Hicky took remarkable role in creating the anti-absolutist movement in Bengal by his rigorous and daring journalism. Though in earlier days Bengal Gazette published some non-political news, soon some hot libelous gossips relating to the top ranked officers including Governor General’s personal issues made Hicky stand in front of the blood-shot eyes of Warran Hashtings (Ahmed, 1976: 59; Chatterjee, 2013: 13). Declaring himself a ‘freeman citizen’ living in the main city (Calcutta) of British Empire Hicky became more reactionary and the confrontation became fatal when he published the criticism against Hastings made by Charles Fox in the British Parliament. Even, the notion of ‘representative democracy’ which was the main trend of contemporary America, first exposed in Hicky’s Bengal Gazette in 1781, against the ‘By law’ that empowered the newly appointed Commissioners to put taxes on house, shop and land. But Hicky, quiet
explicitly protested that and published: “Nobody can impose a tax without having representation of a particular mass.” It produced undesirable consequences for Hicky in the form of imprisonment. In 1802 on the way to China Hicky died a premature death. (Chatterjee, 2013: 15).

What Hicky did was significant enough for creating the democratic ambience in favour of freedom of opinion and political consciousness. None of the vernacular papers appeared before 1818, the remarkable year not only for initiating the first Bengali newspapers, namely Digdarsan, Samachar Darpan and Bengal Gazette (Bose, 1976: 368), but also it was the year which witnessed the abolition of censorship on the press imposed by lord Wellesley in 1799 (Ahmed, 1976: 1). This, undoubtedly made a considerable encouragement to the publication of a great number of newspapers (in both languages), viz. Gospel Magazine since 1819 (by Baptist Auxiliary Missionary Society), Brahmunical Magazine since 1821 (by Rammohun Roy in the name of Sabprasad Sarma), Samsad Kaumudi since 1821 (by Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay and Tarachand Dutta), Samsad Pravakar since 1831 (by Ishwar Chandra Gupta), Samsad Rasaraj since 1839 (Gaurusankar Tarkaragish) etc. There were some of the newspapers and periodicals ran by the contemporary trend of thinking, i.e. bourgeois liberal democratic ideal, namely Bangadut (by Nilratan Haldar since 1829), Jnananveshan since 1831 (by Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhyay) Bengal Spectator (since 1842), Hindu Patriot, Tattvabadhini Patrika since 1843 (by Aksay Kumar Dutta), Somprokash since 1858 (by Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan), Bangodarshan since 1872 (by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee) (Kaviraj N, 1984: 163).

Besides Bengali and English soon, by 1820 a number of newspapers in French, Urdu, and Hindi used to be published. But tension grew to a remarkable degree when Silk Buckingham, the turbulent editor of Calcutta Journal used to publish the faults and corruptions of the Government. Being radical he championed the freedom of press and propagated liberal views of the West through his paper (Chatterjee, 2013:15-16) In spite of being warned and admonished by the Government he continued his activities
unabated. Majority of the Governor General’s Council wanted to deport¹⁶ him but Lord Hastings declined the proposal. No sooner Hastings left India Buckingham was deported. But he continued to agitate for the freedom of press in India (Singh, 1989: 3-4). Adam, the officiating Governor-General issued a powerful press ordinance which took liberty of press away (Kar, 2009: 10, Singh, 1989: 4) In 1823 after the deportation of Buckingham the constitutional agitation, one of the significant attributes of liberalism (questioning against the authority) started by Rammohun Roy against the ‘Press Ordinance’ at the Supreme Court of Calcutta. (Chatterjee, 2013: 17). The petition was signed by five significant personalities, the associates of Rammohun, namely Chandra Kumar Tagore, Dwarakanath Tagore, Harachandra Ghosh, Gouri Chandra Bandyopadhyay and Prasanna Kumar Tagore (Majumdar, R., C., 1971: 276, Chatterjee, 2013: 17, Singh, 1989: 4-5).

It may be claimed that the daring act of Rammohun Roy and his five associates marked the beginning of distinctly political activity responsible for the growth of public opinion in the nineteenth century. Ramesh Chandra Dutt (1981: 155-59), one of the pioneers of modernity in Bengal rightly mentioned it as the epoch of constitutional agitation for political rights. The next Governor Generals Lord Bentinck, Charles Metcalfe took liberal policy towards press to enfranchise it from the bondages and took tremendous role in promoting liberal and democratic ambience in India. Apart from print media various political associations too took epoch-making role in the modern awakening of the country.

**Role of political Associations**

The dense network of various political and socio-cultural associations, though confined in urban areas enhanced political consciousness and public opinion throughout the nineteenth century. The multi-faced activities of such political and non-political organizations promoted political participation of people even in colonial society. The numerous organizations, mostly called *Sabha* or *Samiti* enhanced the associational life of the people. Initiating with *Atmiya Sabha* of Raja Rammohun Roy in 1815, a huge number
of associations appeared in quick succession, mostly organized and led by newly educated middle class Hindus (Bose, 1976: 357). Some of those notable here were Gourio Samaj (1823), Sarbosubhakari Sabha (1850), Bethun Society (1851), The National Society, Society for the Promotion of National feelings (1866) etc. Even some associations were formed in the United Kingdom to help the cause of India. The notables of these were British India society (1839), India Reform Society (1853), London Indian Society (1865) etc. (Majumdar, 1965: 96-97).

The First two political associations— the ‘Bengal Landholders’ Association’ (known as Zamindary Association) and ‘Bengal British India Society’ were established in 1837 and 1843 respectively (Sastri, 2007: 127, Majumdar, R., 1971: 282). Dwarakanath Tagore and Prasanna Kumar Tagore, two associates of Rammohun Roy took leading role in founding the Bengal Land Holders’ Association (Kriplani, 1980: 180). The latter, Bengal British India Society was proposed by George Thompson to establish an organization with explicit political outlook in 1843. Amongst Bengali activists Chandra Sekhar Dev, Tarachand Chakraborty, Pearychand Mitter, and Ramgopal Ghose took crucial role in its establishment (Majumdar, 1965: 27-30). The growth of political awareness did not happen in a sudden span of time. Its origin can be traced back to a short but significant story. No sooner the Supreme Court was set up in Calcutta a number of civil courts and criminal courts were established in different suburbs in Bengal. But the British residing at those mofussils, especially the European indigo-planters remained beyond the jurisdiction of the criminal courts of company and as a consequence of that exemption their repression over natives as well as the general and judicial officers of company became too aggressive to put up with within 1850’s. The increasing demand to combat such unjust oppression even from amongst the officials of the company led Drinkwater Bethune, the liberal minded secretary of the then Governor General to draft four Acts abolishing exemption of the British-born subjects from the jurisdiction of East India Company’s criminal courts and protected the rights of the judicial officers. (Sastri, 2007: 126). Soon, addressing those four drafts as ‘Black Act’ the English immigrants
organized huge movement and within a few days they gathered hundreds of supporters and raised a healthy fund of thirty-six thousands. Their reactionary movement produced positive consequence in favour of them and the Indigo-planter became absolutely powerful. The decline of such drafts aggrieved the newly educated middle-class Bengalis (Sastri, 2007: 126).

Nonetheless, the movement made deep mark upon the new intelligentsia as they observed how, within a short span of time the Englishmen formed so reactionary political movement and gathered so a healthy fund. Ramgopal Ghose, the only Bengali who wrote a tract entitled ‘Remarks on the Black Acts’ received insulting attack at Agri-horticultural society. All this, it may be argued, formed the bedrock of political consciousness and the urge to form such movements in the two contemporary political associations set up on a sound footing. In 1851, to promote political movements in various issues some expressed interest in merging up ‘Bengal Land Holder’s Association’ and ‘British India Society’. Due to the initiatives taken by Digambar Mitra, Ramgopal Ghose a general meeting of two political association organized and on 31st October in 1851 the remarkable ‘British Indian Association’ was established (Sastri, 2007:127-28). Soon its branches spread in Madras, Poona and Bombay (Ghosh, 2009:59).

Though there were European members in the two former political associations, the vehement agitation against the ‘Black Acts’ created a feeling of estrangement which made the European community aloof from the British Indian Association. Raja Radhakanta Dev was the president while Debendranath Tagore, Digamber Mitra, Ramgopal Ghose were some of the distinguished members occupied different posts in the association. The association bore a distinct political outlook from the very beginning. In 1852 when the new Charter Act was under consideration several political organizations, especially the British Indian Association sent petitions to the British Parliament complaining against grievances. The petition was to a great extent emphatic against the perilous act of the union of executive (or Political) power with the legislative and prayed
for the establishment of a Legislature not only based on distinct persons but also on those who possess a popular character representing the sentiments of the people.

The significant political movement for democratic rights organized by the British Indian Association preached high in 1853 when the demands made by them went in vain in the Charter Act of 1853. Inspired by the huge agitation made by British-born subjects against the proposed ‘Black Acts’ (drafted by Bethune) the association continued the agitation for the inclusion of Indians in the Legislative Council and demanded the recognition of the principle of equality for all classes of people in the eye of law (Majumdar, R., C., 1971: 283). Admiring the huge political role of the British Indian Association historian Ramesh Chandra Majumdar (1971: 283) writes:

A scrutiny of the demands made by the British Indian Association of Calcutta, taken along with those proposed since the days of Rammohun and his associates, seems to indicate that most of the political demands of the Indian National Congress (1885) during the first ten years were largely anticipated by the political leaders of Bengal more than thirty years before.

The distinct political activities of the association geared up with the intension of eliciting public opinion and for this purpose it translated various bills into Bengali, framed questionnaires on important topics (like indigo-planting, measures of reform of grievances all the people) and circulated quiet extensively all over. The political demands of the members of such associations created a keen liberal and democratic ambience. For example, Pearychand Mitter and Ramgopal Ghose urged for opening the doors of all offices including civil service, without any reservation, to Indian, on the ground of equality. Ramgopal Ghose severely criticized the proposed constitution of the Legislative council which did not represent “native views, native feelings and native talents”. This kind of views and activities were the proofs of his democratic mind (Sinha, 1968: 109). Condemning the exemption of the British-born subjects from the jurisdiction of criminal courts in the muffussils, Kishori Chand Mitra opined it was unconstitutional, unjust and oppressive in practice. Dakshina Ranjan Mukhopadhyay, one of the radical Derozians,
championed the idea of representative government and proposed each province should have a council consisting of government nominees and representatives of the people in equal number. According to him, the representatives would have to be elected by the people of concerning districts possessing a reasonable property qualification and the Supreme Council would be constituted by members half of whom would be nominated by the government and the remaining half by the provincial councils (Sinha, 1968: 106).

To combat the peril of autocracy and to advocate for liberal democratic norms modernizers of Bengal from Rammohun Roy to Bipin Chandra Pal severely carried on agitation for the separation of the judiciary from the executive branch of the administration. Gobinda Chandra Dutta was one of those who were emphatic for such ideal of separation of power. To protect individual’s democratic rights he condemned the system of imprisonment on mere suspicion without adequate proof even the convict bears so a bad character (Majumdar, R., C., 1971: 284).

The British Indian Association must be acknowledged for the remarkable role it played to create liberal and democratic ambience in 19th century Bengal. Possessing a distinct political outlook it professed to be an organization of all classes of people. The constitution of this association was so democratic that it provided for election of all chairs at regular intervals, (Majumdar, 1965: 36-37). The role of British Indian Association can be sorted out in four significant movements. Firstly, it carried on agitation for the inclusion of Indians on the principle of equality to Civil Service; secondly, it fought for the introduction of fair jury system and organized movements against the judicial administration of the government. The worst feature of which was the preservation of special status of European offenders in the eye of law. Thirdly, it made agitations for the separation of judiciary from executive and lastly, it demanded for having Representative Councils and Representative Government. Thus, it may be argued that these political agitations and activities which were started candidly by Young Bengal since 1830’s and successively carried of by British Indian Association and other political organizations took enormous role to spread liberal and democratic consciousness among the people and
gradually caused a reflection of a virile spirit of nationalism during the second half of nineteenth century.

A profound democratic demand was seen on the issue of the ‘stamp duty’ under resolution XII of 1826, which was vehemently condemned by Chandra Kumar Tagore as unjust taxation. The levy of stamp duty was criticized in the Government Gazette as—such a mode of taxation without the consent or knowledge of the subjects brought out clearly the caprice of the rulers. The Bengali agitators raised the echo of the American cry—“no taxation without representation” (Sinha, 1968: 28). Such a democratic demand and agitation was carried forward in the second half of nineteenth century by Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, a liberal intellectual who wanted the tax-payers to control expenditure through their representatives.

Before the establishment of Indian National Congress in 1885 there were another two political organizations the importance of which can not be overlooked in to making of India as a nation. Those were ‘The Indian League’ and ‘The Indian Association’ established in 1875 and 1876 respectively. The failure of the British Indian Association in mobilizing the mass contact paved the way to organize some small organizations in quick succession. It was Sisir Kumar Ghosh who with the assistance of Annada Mohan Basu, Durga Mohan Das, Shambhu Charan Mukherjee established the Indian League on 25th September, 1875 as a middle class political organization for the whole country. Apart from promoting the political interest of the masses, the League was dedicated to furthering a feeling of nationalism among the people (Sinha, 1968: 272). The crucial importance of the Indian League was hailed by the journal ‘Englishman’ as “the first marked sign of the awakening of people of this side of India to practical life” (Majumdar, 1965: 140).

Surrendranath Banerjea (1998: 39) together with Ananda Mohan Basu and others set up the Indian Association on 26th July, 1876 with the vision of focusing the real need of India. Annada Mohan Basu was elected the first Secretary and holds the post till 1885,
while Akshay Chandra Sarkar became the Assistant Secretary of the association. In his auto-biography *A Nation in Making* Surendranath Banerjea (1998: 39) has explicitly mentioned four aims and vision of the Indian Association which were as follows: (1) the creation of a strong body of public opinion in the country; (2) the unification of the Indian races and people upon the basis of common political interest and aspirations; (3) the promotion of friendly feeling between Hindus and Mohammedans; and lastly, (4) the inclusion of the masses in the great public movement.

Needless to say, Indian Association had a great deal to perform because of the liberal wind-blown by the former organization, the British Indian Association since 1851. Amongst various political movements for democratic rights of the individual organized by Indian Association, the most significant was the agitation against the orders of Marquis of Salisbury, the then Secretary of States for India, which reduced the maximum limits of age for the open competitive examination for the Indian Civil Service, from twenty one to nineteen years. Regarding it’s a deliberate attempt to smash the prospects of Indian candidates for the Indian Civil Service the Indian Association resolved to organize national movement in a public meeting held at the Town Hall on March 24, 1877 (Banerjea, 1998: 41). The meeting was of crucial importance in terms of its object and huge participation. Despite the prime object of the meeting was to extent the maximum limit of age for the open competitive examination, but the underlying spirit, the true purpose of the civil service agitation, as Banerjea (1998: 41) writes, was the awakening of a spirit of unity and solidarity among the people of India. It roused a kind of national feeling by bringing various Indian provinces upon the same common platform and to unite them through a sense of common grievances and the inspiration of a common resolve.

By the mid-80s of the nineteenth century the Indian Association succeeded in getting in touch with the growing political consciousness in the *mofussils*. It organized political agitations on various issues quite persistently and it was the Lytton era when it preached high due to his reactionary activities. The Indian Association organized a huge

Another significant political agitation\(^{21}\) organized by the British-born subjects on the issue of Ilbert Bill in 1883 during the viceroyalty of Lord Ripon was so enormous that historian Jadunath Sarkar (1960: 76) candidly termed it as a ‘political revolution’ since it stirred the Indian public opinion which, by now was quite formidable. Following the ‘Black Acts’ (1849), it sought to abolish the unjust privileges enjoyed by the British-born subjects and tended to bring them under the jurisdiction of Indian Magistrates. The violent agitation conducted against the Ilbert Bill by the collective force of official Europeans, non-official European trading community, lawyers, planters and journalists and even the Eurasians ultimately abated Lord Ripon by the enormous pressure from home and abroad. But it was regarded as a humiliating defeat to the Indians and as a consequence they persistently continued agitation for democratic rights of equality. Once again the Indians observed an example of strength and success of an organized political agitation in overawing the rulers (Sarkar J., 1960: 76-77).

The indignation led to unprecedented public agitation when Surendranath Banerjea was sentenced to two month’s imprisonment for contempt of court in a passage published in his paper Bengali (Bose, 1976: 275). To note the intensity of the political agitation Ananda Mohan Bose in the report of the association:

That “good cometh out of evil” was never fully illustrated than in this notable event. It has now been demonstrated, by the universal outburst of grief and indignation…that the people of the different Indian provinces have learnt to feel for one another; and that a common bond of unity and fellow-feeling is rapid being established among them (Quoted in Banerjea S, 1998: 76).

After the establishment of Indian National Congress in 1885, Surendranath Banerjea, Lal Mohan Ghosh, W. C. Bonerjea and Bipin Chandra Pal, the Congress stalwarts sustained their endeavour for having truly representative councils in the
country. Surendranath Banerjea, particularly, led the campaign in India and in England as well to persuade the government to concede the principle of election and the right of the council members to discuss budget and ask questions on matters of public interest. Though the principle of election was indirectly conceded by the Council Act of 1892, it fell far short of Congress demands, which led to the rise of extremism in Bengal by the first decade of twentieth century (Sinha, 1968: 28-29). The unabated and persistent political agitations for various democratic rights, especially in the second half of nineteenth century caused an elevating effect upon the public mind, widened the vision and strengthened the moral fiber of the countrymen.

To conclude, it may be argued that the renaissance and modernity in the nineteenth century paved the way for democracy, though not in the form of mere government but in form of an ideal. The present chapter does not claim that renaissance caused democracy in India. In fact, it is not an essential object of renaissance and modernity. Nonetheless, what it did throughout the nineteenth century was of crucial importance because it sought to create a space—institutional, social and cultural. Through the gradual but steady evolution in social and political life a higher platform was appeared in the society, which stirred a strange and hitherto unfelt awakening among people and it created new hopes and aspirations. Through the persistent activities of newly educated Bengali middle class from Rammohun Roy to Bipin Chandra Pal this cultural ambience had been built through a number of factors—introduction of Western culture and education, impact of Western liberal philosophy, growth of liberal public opinion by press and civil society and most importantly, the role of political associations. Besides the modernizers some well-wishes British, Eurasians took significant role in this process. Even, according to Surendranath Banerjea (1998: 59) some reactionary rulers were often a blessing in disguise. By their reactionary activities (e.g. Vernacular Press Acts, Arms Acts of 1878) they helped to stir a community into life, a result that years of agitations would perhaps have failed to achieve. The series of social and political activities – movements for reforms – that were inspired by the above intellectual movements, and which would further the case of democracy is taken in the chapter that follows.
Notes

1. Partha Chatterjee in a recent lecture on Atharo Unish Sataker Bharotborso: Onnobhabe Dekha (in Bengali) organized by SUCHI (Society for Understanding Culture and History in India) at Bangla Academy, Kolkata on 17th April has argued that it was early nineteenth century Bengal where consciousness for a civil society movement felt for the first time through a member of journals and paper, and most importantly by some centre of English education in the town of kolkata. (see Chatterjee, Paratha, Atharo Unish Sataker Bharatborso: Onnobrahe Dekha, SUCHI, 2013, Pp.13-19)

2. The significant role of the Christian Missionaries in developing the English learning in early nineteenth century Bengal is too important to ignore. Missionaries in Serampur like William Kerry, Marsman, by taking the help of Raja Rammohon Roy and Drarakanth Tagore established a good number of English schools. For further study, see Shastri, (2007), Ramtanu Lahiri o Tatkalim Bangosamaj, New Age Publishers, Kolkata, Pp. 55-60)

3. Kaviraj (2011) argued that the very introduction of rational western educational policies bifurcated the Indian society’s common sense and divided Indian culture in a radically different and unprecedented manner. See Kaviraj, S. (2011), The Enchantment of Democracy and India, Permanent Black, New Delh, pp. 162-64

4. Bengali Babus or Bhadralok referred to the upper class and high middle class Bengalis of nineteenth century, specially those who with there leisure and financial background could be able to access the educational degrees which was too costly to acquire for the all. See Tripathi, A., (1994), Italir Renaissance o Bangalir Samskriti, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, Pp.36-48

5. The missionaries were allowed by the charter ACT of 1813 to carry on their propaganda in British territory instead of being confined to the Danish settlement of

6. There were some who were not direct student of Derozio but attended his classes and the debates of Academic Association, namely: Rasik Krishna Mallick, Harchandra Ghose, Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyay. See Bagal, J.C., (2011), *Unobingso Shataker Bangla*, Vivekananda Book Centre, Kolkata, Pp.150- 55.

7. Derozio’s students had free access to his house at lower Circular Road where they came and spent long hours in discussing various socio-cultural and political issues. Then it transferred at the Sri Krishna Sinha’s (principal of Hindu College) house at Manicktala. Feeling the need of a particular debating club Derozio in late 1828 establish Academic Association. For further study, see, Bagal, J.C., (2011), *Unobingso Shataker Bangla*, Vivekananda Book Centre, Kolkata, P.152, Bose, N., S., (1976), *Indian Awaken and Bengal*, Firma K. L.M. Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata, Pp.72-74.

8. The increasing demands of *Age of Reason* were noted by Alexander Duff, a famous Scottish missionary. He noted that from one ship a thousand copies of the book were landed and sold at rupees one per copy; but the increased demand made its price rupees five per copy within a few months, See Bose,(1976), *Indian Awaken and Bengal*, Firma K. L.M. Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata, P. 78.

9. *Atmiya Sabha*, where various contemporary social issues were discussed and debated was established by Raja Rammohun Roy in 1815. Some of its distinguished members were Gopi Mohan Tagore, Dwarakanath Tagore.

10. There are two different accounts of the origin of *Brahmo sabha*. According to one, after the failure of Unitarian Committee, Adam (Rammohan’s friend) suggested the
foundation of a new body. Another story is, while returning home in his carriage Rammohun was suggested by his two associates— Tarachand Chakraborty and Chandra Sekhar Deb, that they should have a place of worship suited to their views and principles instead of attending a Unitarian service. See Bose, (1976), Indian Awaken and Bengal, Firma K. L.M. Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata, P.139; See Shastri, (2007), Ramtanu Lahiri o Tatkalin Bangosamaj, New Age Publishers, Kolkata 2007:68.

11. Partha Chatterjee has pointed a new trend enriched with enormous potentialities was seen by late Eighteenth Century which may be marked as traditional-modern sovereignty and was fully exposed in late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the from of nationalism. For detail, see Chatterjee, Partha (2013), Atharo Unish Sataker Bharatbarso:Onnobhabe Dekha, SUCHI, Pp.7-19.


13. The year 1818 is also marked for the established of Calcutta school society, The Serampur College, Calcutta School Book society and most importantly in this year Rammohun Roy published his famous tract on ‘Sati’ in which he profoundly denounced the custom sanctified by tradition.

14. Jnananveshan was one of the popular Derozian journals. From 1833 it became a bi-lingual weekly and the Bengali section was practically run by Gourisankar Tarkavagish.

15. The scheme of Somprokash was of Vidyasagar and he helped Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan in running the paper.

16. Deportation was the main tool of the Government to punish an unabated publisher. Soon the solution to avoid such punishment was discovered. The government could
not deport a person by birth an Indian. Soon it became so common to put a Eurasian or an Indian citizen as publisher of the paper.

17. The ‘British Indian Society’ was organized by William Adam, the friend of Raja Rammohun Roy in July, 1839.

18. Drafts of the four act were— (a) Draft of an Act abolishing exemption from the jurisdiction of the East India Company’s criminal Courts;

(b) Draft of an act declaring the privileges of her Majesty’s European subjects;

(c) Draft of an act for the protection of judicial officers; and


19. Not only the Indians were the victims of repression of the Indigo-planters but also judicial officials of the company were subjected to oppression by them.

20. Some of the minor associations built in contemporary India and England which took important role in political awakening were— The National Society, The Bombay Association, The East India Association and The National Representative Committee etc. See, Majumdar (1965), *Indian Political Association and Reform of Legislature (1818-1917)*, Firma K. L. M., Kolkata, Pp. 65-104.

Chapter III

Contributions of Raja Rammohun Roy and His Associates in the Making of Liberal Democratic Intellectual Ambience in Nineteenth Century in Bengal
THIRD CHAPTER

Contributions of Raja Rammohun Roy and His Associates in the Making of Liberal Democratic Intellectual Ambience in Nineteenth Century in Bengal

The growth of cultural ambience for democracy in the nineteenth century Bengal that has been focused in the previous chapter has revealed the significant role of the Renaissance and modernity in creating positive conditions for the growth of liberal democratic consciousness. It must be remembered that searching for democratic thought or democratic elements in nineteenth century colonial Bengal is not an easy task. Instead of the ideal of 'self', the central and indispensable element of European bourgeois liberal democracy, the contemporary society in India was highly characterized by gigantic social dominance over the individual. Caste, gender and community based issues were more active in the then society. But during the nineteenth century through a series of vigorous social and political activities of some eminent identities, introduction of Western education, important role of press and various political associations have altogether marked an epoch in the cultural and political history of Bengal. The main object of this chapter is to focus on the contributions of Rammohun Roy and some of his associates to the creation of liberal democratic (intellectual as well as material) ambience in the early nineteenth century in Bengal.

In the previous chapter it has been discussed that the fifteenth century Renaissance in Italy onwards the prime attraction and culture of modern Europe was bourgeois liberal democracy (Kaviraj, 1984: 162). During these four centuries the world has witnessed such intellectual movements as the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment—the enormous impact of which was never confined within Europe only but spread world-wide. It was felt in India, more specifically in Bengal in the early
nineteenth century (Roy, 1976:11) and was welcomed by Raja Rammohun Roy (1774-1833), the life-long warrior who is considered by some (e.g. R.N. Tagore, S Radhakrisnan, B.C. Pal) to be the ‘Father of modern India’.

The rigorous social and political activities of Rammohun Roy made him the pioneer of the Renaissance and modernity in Bengal and in India as well. Through his vigorous and radical views and activities almost in all spheres of society, viz. religious and social reformation movements, education, law, tolerance, public opinion, civil liberty, rule of law, separation of power, freedom of press and economic thoughts altogether, it may be argued, he came to be known as the pioneer of liberalism in India. No wonder, some scholars compared him to the position occupied by John Locke in the case of European liberalism and democratic tradition (Tripathi, 1994: 54).

The existing writings on Rammohun Roy have revealed his illustrious liberal activities in socio-economic and political realms to a good extent. Among the earliest biographers of Rammohun it was John Digby under whom he worked for a period of nine years in three different places: Ramgarh (1805–1808), Bhagalpur (1808-1809) and Ramgarh (1809–1814), published two of Roy’s works, Translation of an Abridgement of the Vedanta and The Translation of Kena Upanisad to which he added a biographical note. Lant Carpenter who was associated with Rammohun during his last days in Bristol authored two eminent books: A Review of the Labour, Opinions and Character of Raja Rammohun Roy (1833) and A Biographical Memoir of the late Raja Rammohun Roy (1835). In those works Carpenter illustrated Rammohun as a great champion of theism and a true believer of the greatness of Christian system of morality. During mid-1830’s following the demise of Rammohun some renowned works were published by some of his close British associates like Stanford Arnot, James Sutherland and Unitarians like Robert Asphand and W.J. Fox. Among those Stanford Arnot’s note published in the Athenium Magazine (5th oct,1833) was of crucial importance as it published the only autobiographical note written by Rammohun Roy in a letter to Mr. Gordon.
In the following decades among the English literatures on life and works of Rammohun two eminent works were *The Last Days of Rajah Rammohun Roy* (1866) by Mary Carpenter and *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy* (1900) by Sophia Dobson Collet. Both of these works were more complete and well furnished in comparison to the previous works but were not above shortcomings. They were more indulged to Rammohun’s religious thought than other aspects of his life. Even those English writers, from their own predisposition tended to present Rammohun as an ardent supporter of Christianity.

Among vernacular works there are huge numbers of writings on life and works of Rammohun Roy. The earliest oriental writing came from Kissory Chand Mittar, a contemporary Derozian, who projected Rammohun as a philosophical theist. Most of the classic oriental works on Rammohun were published in the late Nineteenth century. Among those one of the eminent works was *Mahatma Raja Rammohun Rayer Jibonchorit* (1881) by Nagendranath Chattopadhyay a member of Brahma Samaj. It was an illustrated huge works which dealt with Rammohun’s religious, Social and political thoughts and activities to a great extent. Two classic books of Sibnath Shastri, *History of the Brahma Samaj* (1912) and *Ramtanu Lahri O Tatkalin Banga Samaj* (1904) were also significant writings to fetch knowledge on Rammohun Roy. Another important work which is considered a classic is *Rammohun Samiksha* (1983) written by Dilip Biswas who also authored *The Correspondence of Raja Rammohun Roy* (1809-1831) in 1992, which is enriched with Rammohun’s original letters written by him in different circumstances to different people. In these books of Biswas detailed account of Rammohun’s multifaceted activities are written mostly based on original sources and records. Another eminent publication based on primary sources *Selections from Official Letters and Documents relating to the Life of Raja Rammohun Roy* (1938) by Ramaprasad Chandra and Jatindra Kumar Majumdar was of crucial importance. Apart from these, the commemoration volume of the Rammohun Roy centenary celebrations in 1933 edited by Satish Chandra Chakraborty is noteworthy here as it includes huge
number of articles on Rammohun by various renowned figures of India, such as Rabindranath Tagore, Bipin Chandra Pal, Sarabapalli Radhakrishnan and many. In a recent book *Daya: Rammohun o Amader Adhunikata* (2011) (in Bengali) Ranajit Guha maintained a relatively newer approach in projecting the specificity in the then socio-political context to which Rammohun responded. In doing so he negates the popular assumptions labeled against him in existing writings. Guha, 2011: 90-93)

The main problem related to existing writings on Rammohun both by the English writers as well as the oriental writers is that most of the books have projected Rammohun from some certain predispositions, among which some were imposed over him. The first one, for example, is that, most of the existing writings tend to present Rammohun as a staunch supporter of British colonial rule by considering it as a divine boon. The question that arises here: Did Rammohun face a direct British rule in his time? What kind of state he fought against? Or, in other words, was there any form of state during his days in Eastern India?

To understand such questions, it may be argued that one must focus on the historical context against which Rammohun responded through his multifarious activities. Contrary to the popular beliefs it would not be an exaggeration to note that Rammohun, in contemporary Bengal never governed by, or faced the British rule directly. It was a mere company rule (East India Company) against which Rammohun fought in different occasions. So, to furnish his character as a devoted worshipper of British colonial rule is not justified. In fact, he fought against the unruly policies, such as policies towards Education, Press, Judicial and Revenue system taken by the Board of Directors of the Company. It was a peculiar historical context that has never been found in any part of the World as there was no state in its proper sense in the Eastern part of India till the Revolt of 1857. The historical and political context that Rammohun dealt with was the repressive and arbitrary Company rule on the one hand and on the other, the rest of India was governed by the Mughal Empire. In the first half of the Eighteenth century, politically and economically, the Eastern India, more specifically the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and
Orissa, were gradually getting alienated from the Mughal Imperial System. The process of autonomous status though was started by Mursid Kuli Khan in the late 1720s, but it was Alivardi Khan, who by the 1740s had established an administrative system entirely separated from the rest of the empire (Marshall, 1987: 50-51). Though Alivardi Khan nullified all practical Mughal interventions he never had thrown off his allegiance to the ideal of a Mughal empire. Yet, he made Bengal, Bihar and Orissa an emerging separate entity. After the battle of Plassey in July 1757 and the consolidation of the Company rule, the Eastern India became entirely separated from the Mughal Empire.

Another assumption that imposed quite hyperbolically is that, they regard Rammohun as the father of Indian nationalism. On contrary, it may be argued that during his time there was hardly any sign of national feelings in the early nineteenth century. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century when the question of national consciousness or right to self determination came into focus in the contemporary society (Guha, 2011: 89-91).

**A Brief Account of his Early Life: The Making of Rational-questioning Mind**

Like so much about Rammohun, there is even controversy about the year of his birth. Some claim it was 1772 while there are some who prefer 1774 as his birth-year. Unfortunately, there is no incontrovertible evidence in support of either of the two dates (Bose, 1976:31). At Aron’s Vale cemetery near Bristol, England, where he was buried, the year 1774 inscribed, which has made the latter year of birth more acceptable (Dasgupta, 2011:100-101). He was born at Radhanagar of Hooghly district (then Radhanagar was under Burdwan district) in Bengal. His father was Ramkanta Roy and mother Tarini Debi, better known as Phulthakurani. In his own account, the letter written to Mr.Gorden and published in Athenium Magazine on 5th October 1833 he wrote that he came of a paternal lineage of ‘Brahmins of a high order’— he was a Kulin Brahmin who sometimes in the past (almost one and a half centuries ago) had given up the ‘religious duties of their race’ to which they had been formerly devoted, to have temporal
aggrandizement in terms of wealth and power by devoting themselves to the service of Mughal emperors (Carpenter, 1976:14, Dasgupta, 2011:101).

Having his early education at home *pathsala* under *gurumahashay* Rammohun was sent to Patna to study Arabic and subsequently to Benaras to obtain knowledge of Sanskrit and observed the mythical and philosophic past of Hindu Philosophy (Carpenter, 1976:1). In Patna he studied the Koran and was highly influenced by the *Sufi* philosophy and became interested in democratic teachings of the Koran and by the development of logic in Arabic thought. The rationalistic thought by some of their schools of thought, notably the Mutazilas and the Philosophy of *Sufi* also touched his rational mind (Tagore S., 1966:9). After his return from Patna he had differences with his father on orthodox religious issues and he went to Tibet. In Tibet Rammohun caused the displeasure of the Lamas and got into serious trouble. He was however saved by some kindhearted ladies and managed to escape from Tibet (Chattopadhyay, 1973: 11-12). According to Mary Carpenter (1976: 2), one of his earliest biographers, Rammohun later turned energetically to women related reforms in order to repay the help he had once got from women when his life was in danger.

In 1803 after the demise of his father Ramkanta Roy, Rammohun Roy moved to Mursidabad where he published his first writing *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin* or ‘A gift to Monotheist’. In this work he vehemently protested against the ideology and superstitions of all creeds (Bose, 1976: 32). By then he had joined the service of East India Company in the Revenue Department as a *Dewan* to Thomas Woodford and later in 1805 he began to work under John Digby, with whom he worked at Rangpur during 1809 to 1814 as *Sheristadar* or Native Assistant to the collector of Revenue (Moore, 1942:7). There, in Mursidabad he published in Persian, with an Arabic preface, a work entitled *Against the Idolatry of all Religions*, which though not refuted by anyone but brought out for him a host of enemies. In 1814 he retired to Calcutta and Digby left for England (Shastri, 2007: 39). Life in Calcutta may be regarded as most fruitful period in his life. His radical activities were not limited only into expressing views against idolatry accompanied by
superstitions or ignorance but also launched an unprecedented crusade against problems prevailing in all spheres of social, political and economic life under colonial rule. His illustrious activities, such as publishing numerous tracts, pamphlets, memoranda and journals, establishment of various associations and schools for the zeal of social, political and economic reforms ultimately paved the way for the inauguration of liberalism or modern liberal democratic norms in the first-half of nineteenth century in colonial Bengal (Chakroborty, 1979: 15-17; Bayly, 2012: 47; Guha, 2011: 81-92; Bose, 1976: 52-59).

**Inauguration of Liberalism and Democratic Consciousness**

Did Rammohun champion the idea of democracy? Did he move for government based on popular consent and modern liberal conditions? The answer to such questions is that Rammohun made no direct contribution to the introduction of democratic system in post-independent India. In his multi-faceted activities he was never emphatic for democratic governance. Regarding the consolidation of British-rule in India as a kind blessing of the God, Rammohun conveyed his cordial gratitude towards the foreign rulers. Moreover, he wished to prolong the governance of the alien rulers for the sake of all-round development of India. So, he never posed any direct attack on colonialism in India. Mohitlal Majumder (1965: 12-13) claims that Rammohun had hardly any consciousness about political rights of the people and he did little or almost nothing to promote any political movement for political rights. He criticized caste-system, but in public life he not only strictly observed the caste regulations but also, as his friend and admirer Adam noted, he even symbolized his spirit in this respect by keeping on his body the sacred thread, the distinctive mark of a Brahmin till death (Majumdar R., C., 1972: 41). Such types of contradictions were there in the activities of his co-reformers too. Prasanna Kumar Tagore, one of the close associates of Rammohun, publicly denounced idolatry in his journal the *Reformer* but he used to celebrate *Durga Puja* at his residence with usual pomp and ceremony (Ahmed S., 1975: 101). That is why the Derozians, the young radicals dubbed Rammohun and his followers ‘half-liberals’(Bengal Harukuru, October 26, 1831). According to Jayantanuj Bandyopadhay (2004: 52-57) the activities
of Rammohun and *Brahmosomaj* did not reflect a proper or real Renaissance in comparison to its European counterpart. While the European Renaissance was the resurgence of Greeco-Roman learning based on rationality and realism, Rammohun and his associates of *Brahmosomaj* avoided the rich rational culture and intellectual tradition of ancient India and instead of reviving its past glory they only stuck to alien culture and civilization. Therefore, historian Ramesh Chandra Majumdar (1972: 49) does not wish to call Rammohun the inaugurator of new age in India but to him, he was just one of the representatives of modern India.

Nonetheless, the remarkable role of Rammohun Roy as the earliest spokesman of the Bengal Renaissance can not be underestimated. Even some of the allegations labeled against him were exaggerative; viz. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar (1972: 43) claimed that despite being a denouncer against the barbaric practice of *Sati* he (Rammohun), to the utter surprise of Bentinck opposed the proposal to prohibit it by legislation. But the ‘Minute on *Sati*’ written by Bentinck (November 8, 1829) has clearly established that Rammohun, in place of public enactment wanted to “suppress the practice by increasing the difficulties and by the indirect agency of the police” (quoted in Biswas, 1983: 344). Moreover, nowhere in the Minute Bentinck showed any surprise against such opinion of Rammohun.⁷ He, it may be argued, took the most significant role in the making of modern India through his vigorous activities in social, political, cultural and economical spheres in Bengal. If from closer introspection the radical activities of Rammohun be judged one can find all the basic ingredients of liberal democracy—— reform movements based on reason and humanity, importance to liberty, individualism, freedom of press, rule of law, separation of power, freedom of belief, consciousness of rights of an individual, importance of public opinion as a basic condition of legitimacy of governance, secular religious thought based on reason and tolerance, economic thought and constitutional government—— all of which are needed here to focus to apprehend his role in creating the liberal democratic ambience in the early nineteenth century in Bengal.
Religious Reform Movement: Manifestation of Rationality and Tolerance

The tremendous effect of Western education and culture manifested itself not only in religious or social issues but also profoundly caused the liberal political consciousness in the nineteenth century society in Bengal. Reason, tolerance, rationality, humanism, it may be argued, are the cultural outcomes of Renaissance as well as of liberalism in the West. Rammohun Roy tried to bring reason or rationality in an area dominated by prejudice, blind-faith or age-old superstitions. This ‘reason’ or ‘rationality’, the basic feature of modern liberal democracy, was applied by Rammohun as a condition of accepting any socio-cultural issue. In his *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin* (1949) he argued that each individual has an innate natural faculty to know the truth and falsity of various religions including prophets, religious authority and traditional revelation (Roy, 1949: 3-5).

To establish his religious views on sound-footing Rammohun, with an agenda of destroying the roots of the ignorance and superstitions in the name of religion, took several measures, such as organizing conversations, discourses, publications, establishing associations as instruments of social and political transformation. Accordingly, he set up *Atmiya Sabha* in 1815, the Calcutta Unitarian Association in 1821 and the *Brahma Sabha* in 1828. He published a translation of the Vedanta Sutra in 1815 and the Bengali translation of *Isa, Kena, Katha, Mundaka and Mandukya Upnishad* between 1816 and 1819 (Roy A. K., 1976: 26-29). The publication of the *Vedanta* may be marked as the beginning of his role as a reformer and its introduction gave an outline of religious ideas he intended to pursue. The great champion of monotheism Rammohun vehemently attacked the corrupt practice of Brahmins in the name of religion. Despite being a high class Brahmin he wrote:

Many learned Brahmins are perfectly aware of idolatry and are well informed of the nature of the purer mode of divine worship. But as in the rites, ceremonies and festivals of ideology they find the source of their comforts and fortunes, they…advance and encourage it to the almost of their power, by keeping the knowledge of their scriptures concealed from the rest of the people (Roy, 1946: 44).
Such a critical spirit reveals the extent of his rational religions belief. Advocating for his idea of a single Unitarian God he crusaded against the polytheism of orthodox Hinduism and believed that monotheism supported a universal moral order for humanity. Though Rammohun was occidental at his early life he even engaged with confrontation, known as ‘Srirampur controversy’ against the missionaries during 1820-1823. It was on the same issue— reason and liberal religious belief. In 1820 he published a small tract entitled *The Precepts of Jesus, The Guide to Peace and Happiness* from Baptist Mission Press (Collet, 1962: 109). He, in the introduction of the book expressed his opinion against the doctrinal part of the ‘New Testament’ concerning dogmas, mysteries and miracles. It brought undesirable consequence to Rammohun. He was dubbed ‘heathen’ and ‘injurer of the cause of truth’ by Rev. Deocar Schmidt, a Christian missionary (Sen, 2012: 124). The Controversy⁹ went on by reply and counter-reply in different books published by Rammohun and in *The Friend of India* by the Christian missionaries, namely Schmidt and Dr. Joshua Marshman. It is significant to point that while the missionary press persisted its attack against *Vedanta* and Hindu Unitarianism Rammohun, in a calm way, in *Brahminical Magazine* (No. 4) wrote: “In accordance with the mild and liberal sprite of universal toleration, which is well-known to be a fundamental principle of Hinduism, I am far from wishing to oppose any system of religion…” (Quoted in Tagore, 1966: 19-20). On Rammohun’s refute of Trinitarianism, Dr. Marshman, failing to give any cogent argument attacked Hinduism in an unworthy manner by saying that Hinduism owed its origin to the ‘Father of lies’. But Rammohun, again proved his respect of tolerance of counter opinion in a calm manner and replied, “We must recollect that we have engaged in solemn religious controversy and not in retorting abuse against each other” (Quoted in Tagore, 1966:20). These, it may be argued revealed his sound reasoning, analytical judgement, dignified restraint enriched with the virtue of tolerance to opposite counter opinion which, in any way, is one of the basic ingredients of modern liberal democratic thought.
Another, perhaps the most remarkable feature of modern liberal notion of religion which Rammohun bore was his secular vision to all sects. He, it may be claimed, was too secular in his belief and activities to incline to any particular sect or religion and intended to lay a common foundation of universal religion (Mukherjee, A, 1968:145-147). He belonged to all religions— Hinduism, Buddhism, Islamism and Judaism but, simultaneously, none of these religions had completely satisfied him. In December 1833 the ‘Court Journal’ published:

“Rammohun Roy was a Lutheran with the Church-men, a Unitarian with Dr. Carpenter, a follower of Moses and the prophet with the Jews, a pure Hindoo, or rather a Buddhist with a few of his countrymen and a good Mussalman with the discipline of Mohammad” (Quoted in Moore, 1962:160).

Thus, Rammohun was the earliest member among the modernizers of Bengal, who bore such a secular and liberal mind. His ideas were based on blatant religious tolerances. Like John Locke whom he greatly admired, Rammohun was in favour of state’s neutral role towards religions. To him, “True religions needs not the aid of sword or legal subjects” (Sen, 2012: 133). Again in The Reformer (27th Jan, 1833) he wrote:

It lies with every government to establish and preserve a community of feeling, interest and habitude among the various classes of its subjects, by treating them all as one great family, without showing an invidious preference to any particular tribe or sect (Quoted in Pant, 1988: 120)

One of the remarkable features of modernity as well as modern liberal democracy is to raise questions against any established socio-political tradition or convention based on unjust prejudice or system. In other words, raising question against a consolidated system is significant feature of liberalism, which it may be claimed, was promulgated by Rammohun through his vigorous radical activities. He, to emancipate the people, raised questions against the monopoly of the orthodox Brahmins over the sacred texts in reading and interpreting. Intending to destroy such monopoly, during 1815-1823 he published Translation of an Abridgement of the Vedanta and translation of several of the
Upanishads into Bengali, Hindi and English to enfranchise the knowledge of common people about true religion (Chattopadhyay, 2003: 130). In the introduction to the *Abridgment of the Vedanta* he wrote, “In order to vindicate my own faith and that of our forefathers, I have been endeavoring to convince my countrymen of the true meaning of our sacred books” (Roy, 1946:84). In this respect, such a revolutionary activity gave him the position occupied by Martin Luther, the great German religion-reformer. In a letter to Alexander Duff, Rammohun wrote:

> Having read about the rise and progress of Christianity in apostolic times and its corruptions in succeeding ages… I began to think that something similar might have taken place in India and similar results might follow here from a reformation of the popular idolatry (Quoted in Collet, 1962:280).

In this respect, Rammohun, it may be argued was a modern Indian Luther. It is noteworthy that when Luther translated the Bible the wave of nationalism and renaissance in Europe was already at an incipient phase, but contrary to this Rammohun tried to do that with *Vedant* in the so-called orthodox society in Bengal (Pantham, 1986: 37).

**Political Ideas of Rammohun: The Earliest Champion of Democratic Conditions**

The illustrious political activities of Rammohun in bringing out the Bengalis as well as the Indians from their stupor condition should be acknowledged not only for the awakening of political consciousness among the people but also for creating an ambience of modern liberal democracy in India. His espousals of socio-political and economical policies, especially his rational-liberal ideas, were sharply influenced by modern liberal European thinkers namely, Locke, Hume, Montesquieu, Blackstone, Voltaire and Bentham among whom the latter and Rammohun shared their views through letters to each other (Palit, 1974: 11). The rational political espousals of Rammohun: zeal for liberty, political freedom, uncompromising sense of self-respect, love to unity, equality and tolerance, respect to public opinion and rule of law, freedom of press, secular
religious thoughts, separation of power and constitutional monarchy are some significant evidences of his quest for liberalism as well as democracy.

**Zeal for Liberty: Individualistic view of ‘Self-respects’**

Was Rammohun an individualist? Like much about Rammohun it is one of the controversial questions. While some critics refute to furnish his stature with the adjective ‘individualist’ for his great respect, admiration and gratitude towards British, there are some who tend to acknowledge him as individualist for his philanthropic activities for political reforms. This is because, in his political thought there were always some ambivalences between liberal-capitalism and feudal-aristocratic values (Pantham, 1986: 41). At one hand he sympathized with the freedom struggle of Greeks and Neapolitans and took lively interest in the progress of South-American-emancipation but on the other hand he welcomed, so gladly, the British liberal principles in India\(^{10}\) as blessings.

And yet, irrespective of all controversies, it may be claimed that his quest for liberty is beyond any controversy. While in spiritual world he professed the universal religion, in realm of politics he yearned to see the triumph of the ideals of liberalism and democracy throughout the world. His uncompromising zeal for liberty and self-respect was highly influenced by Montesquieu, Locke and Bentham (Sinha, 1968: 3-4). He translated the *Upanishads* which was based on the ‘Benthamite Slogan’— greatest happiness of the greatest number (Bose, 1976: 36). He was determined that the reformations he wanted to bring in social and religious systems would exert beneficial influence on the political advancement of his country. He, therefore fully recognized the inter-relation between socio-religious reformations and political progress.

His uncompromising sense of self-respect reveals his individualistic view on liberty. Being too dignified and fearless to tolerate any humiliating custom imposed by the English Civil Servants of Company he never put up with and stood up against such humiliations. His petition to Lord Minto (on 12\(^{th}\) April, 1809) complaining against Sir Fredric Hamilton, the Haughty Collector of Bhagalpur, who, like other English Civil
Servants of Company compelled him (and other natives) to lay standing and convey *salaam* to him. As a result of the Petition seeking redress Hamilton got reprimand and warning by the Government.\(^{11}\) This daring act to stand up to white-humiliation in defence of individual dignity and self-respect from an Indian was an unthinkable or unbelievable example in contemporary society but Rammohun did it in such a way, that marked an epoch of political consciousness or awakening from a stagnant state of mind. In other words, this uncompromising sense of self-respect even in the early 19\(^{th}\) century to raise question against unjust custom of the authority in restoration of self-dignity only can lend meaning and significance to democracy as an inspiring ideal and as a vibrant institution in political as well as social life.

Commenting on Rammohun’s quest for liberty, his friend Rev. William Adam, a Christian Missionary wrote —

He would, be free or not be at all… love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul… freedom not of action merely, but of thought… this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment on his mental freedom was accompanied with a very nice perception of the equal rights of others, even of who differed most widely from him (Quoted in Biswas, 1983: 365-66, Palit, 1974: 13).

Rammohun’s love of liberty was nothing but his respect for human rights and self-respect of the individual. Crusading against any form of socio-cultural exclusions in terms of caste and gender based discriminations he wanted to restore the human rights of the vulnerable in the society. It was his respect for human rights that made him glad at the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Act in 1828; the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 (Sen, 2012: 45) and most significantly the prohibition or abolition of *suttee* by Regulation XVII in the same year as all of these attempted to combat against the political or social persecution of certain communities in the name of religion. He opposed the idea of political subjugation of one country by another. Therefore, the nationalist uprisings in South and Central America or parts of Europe were welcomed by him so cordially. Again, he became overjoyed on hearing the success of the
Second French Revolution (Majumder, 1967: 28). But when he heard the failure of the Neapolitan revolution before a marching Austrian army he became too disappointed to attend the private appointment with James S. Buckingham, the turbulent editor of the *Calcutta Journal* on 11th August, 1821. (Bayly :2012:47) To Buckingham, he wrote, “From the late unhappy news I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European colonies… under this circumstances I consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own, and their enemies, as ours. Enemies of liberty and friends of despotism have never been and never will be ultimately successful”12. Later, roughly after two years when he heard that the Latin American colonies were rebelling against their Spanish masters, and more importantly, a form of ‘constitutional’ government was established in Spain, he became over-joyed and to celebrate the occasion he hosted a public dinner at the Town Hall, the earliest centre of civil society in Calcutta in the early nineteenth century (Sen, 2012: 144, Majumder, 1967: 28). Hence, it may be argued that he was so obsessed with liberty and humanism that such movements of far West influenced his public life. He keenly believed that such a movement for liberation, and nationality dawned upon Europe would definitely carry the liberal movements to India in due course of time. His zeal for liberty or emancipation from any form of bondage reveals his passionate yearning for democracy. Therefore he, to promote democracy throughout the world emphatically refuted the curse of imperialism in any form. In September, 1823 *Edinburg Magazine* published:

The lively interest he (Rammohun) took in the progress of South American emancipation eminently marks the greatness and benevolence of his mind, and was created he said, by perusal of the detestable barbarities inflicted by Spain to subjugate and afterwards continued by the inquisition, to remain in bondage that unhappy country” (cited in Palit, 1974:13).
Advocacy of Free Public opinion and Free Press: the Bases of Democracy

Some basic ingredients of modern liberal democracy, viz. existence of free and neutral press, lively public opinion and rule of law, it is significant to note, were present in the thoughts of Rammohun so explicitly. Since his radical mind never shrank from registering a protest against what seemed wrong or unjust on the part of the authority he made vigorous campaigns and agitations for the establishment of truth and justice. This reveals his quest for liberalism or democracy which can be seen in several activities, such as, campaigning against the Press Ordinance of 1823, Jury Act of 1827, views about the significance of strong and active Public opinion and importance of establishing rule of law in the Society. It is pertinent to note here that such radical activities paved the way for the constitutional agitation as a regular weapon in Political movements for reforms within the frame-work of British Administration throughout the 19th century and took enormous role in creating liberal democratic ambience in the contemporary Political society.

One of the remarkable movements that Rammohun made against the authority was his movement for a free press in order to establish a free and vibrant public opinion. Till the beginning of nineteenth century there was hardly any sign of Political consciousness in India as it lacked any sense of integration and the whole society was bifurcated in huge Socio-cultural and economical cleavages which, it may be argued were significant factors to the foundation and consolidation of the British rule in India. In 1818, when Lord Hastings relaxed the censorship on the press imposed by Lord Wesley in 1799 (Ahmed, 1976: 1), Rammohun founded three journals: The Brahminical Magazine (1821), Sambad Kaumudi (1821) both are vernacular magazines and the Persian weekly, Miral-ul-Akbar (1822) (Bose, 1976: 368). By this time Rammohun had correspondence with Silk Buckingham, the editor of Calcutta Journal, who radically championed the idea of free press and propagated the liberal view of the West through his paper. Since Buckingham was a sharp critic of the faults and corruptions of British Government he was warned and admonished by the Government but that could not stop his liberal and
radical activities (Chatterjee, 2013:15-16). No sooner Hasting left India Buckingham was deported and it was John Adam, who succeeded Lord Hasting as Governor General, re-imposed press censorship in March 1823 (Kar, 2009: 10; Singh 1989: 4). In 1823 after the deportation of his personal friend Buckingham and Stanford Arnot (who too was associated with Calcutta Journal), Rammohun started constitutional agitation, one of the significant attributes of liberal democracy (questioning against the authority) against the arbitrary Press ordinance. On 17th March 1823 he submitted a ‘memorial’ to the Supreme Court requesting it to withdraw the regulation, which went in-vain (Sen, 2012: 143). It is important to note here that the petition was signed by five significant personalities, the close associates of Rammohun, namely Chandra Kumar Tagore, Dwarakanath Tagore, Harachandra Ghosh, Gouri Chandra Bandyopadhayay and Prasanna Kumar Tagore who also took significant role in modern bourgeois awakening in the nineteenth century Bengal (Majumdar, R.C., 1971: 276; Chatterjee, 2013: 17). On the rejection of the petition by the court Rammohun submitted an appeal to the King-in Council which too got the same treatment.

The excuse behind such arbitrary rejection was that, since the government in India was not a representative constitutional democratic system and it lacked effective public opinion, a free press would be functionally redundant. Rammohun, on contrary, argued that, since India was a colony, a free press is more necessary to generate such a public opinion which will help the rulers to estimate and avoid any revolutionary activity (Sen, 2012: 143). “Your Majesty is well aware that a free press had never yet caused a revolution in any part of the world”, he claimed in his appeal to the King-in-Council, “because, while men can easily represent their grievances arising from the conduct of their local authorities to the Supreme Government and thus get them redressed, the grounds of discontent that excite the revolutions are removed; whereas, where no freedom of the press existed and grievance consequently remained unrepresented and un-redressed, innumerable revolutions have taken place in all parts of the globe, or if prevented by the armed force of the Government, the people continued ready for
Such a comment reveals the extent of his deep introspection about the significant role of free public opinion and free press in a political system. Both of these petitions, to the Supreme Court of Calcutta and to the King-in-Council made by Rammohun and his associates were remarkable as that marked the beginning of distinctly political activity responsible for the growth of public opinion in the nineteenth century. This daring act was rightly mentioned as “the epoch of constitutional agitation for political rights” by Ramesh Chandra Dutta (1981: 155-59), one of the pioneers of modernity in Bengal. The next Governors, who made liberal policy towards press to enfranchise it from all restraints took tremendous role in promoting liberal atmosphere in India and relaxed the pre-imposed press regulation. On this occasion in March 1835 a Free Press Dinner was hosted at the Calcutta Town Hall where Prasanna Kumar Tagore, one of the co-petitioners to the Supreme Court against the press regulation, formally acknowledged Rammohun as the ‘Liberator of the Press’ (Sen, 2012: 144).

Rammohun bore a deep respect for the liberal public opinion in England and wanted the government to promulgate good laws for India based on such enlightened public opinion. In this context, he advocated for the freedom of press from three explicit arguments: firstly, on matters affecting the public interest the government should predict the sentiment of the people, which none other than a free press can do properly as it would make laws correspond to the public opinion; secondly, through a free press people of India would enable to appeal to the British parliament against local authority and lastly, by a free press the court of Directors would anticipate the extent whether a regulation prove beneficial or perilous to the subjects and whether the excellent regulations are strictly put in practice or not (Roy, 1947: 21-22, Part-iv).

Thus, Rammohun, in his radical liberal activities paid most importance to liberal public opinion. He firmly believed that it would be convenient to the Indians to derive the advantages of the liberal spirit of British public life if the laws were made by the British
Parliament rather than by an Indian legislative council located on Indian soil, as there remained a fear that such council would be arbitrarily controlled by the British Governor Generals. It is necessary to note here that in spite of being a close correspondent of British Governor General, he was conscious of the misuse of power and intended to rely on the liberal public opinion of British people.

**Views on Judicial System: Advocating for Equality**

Rammohun’s deep concern and insightful views of equality and justice may be seen in the replies to the queries made by the select committee of British Parliament on the 19th September in 1831 on judicial system of India. In those 78 answers to the queries Rammohun not only vividly revealed the defects and shortcomings of existing judicial system, simultaneously he advocated in favour of the inclusion of native judges in the judicial system and trial by juries. He identified the main impediments to the fair administration of justice. Some of the important shortcomings that Rammohun cited were: the inadequate number of judges as well as courts, lack of a proper code of law and the inadequate qualification of many of the young judges of the company who, to the courtesy of the then existing judicial system established in 1793 by Lord Cornwallis, were appointed and suffered from lack of proper knowledge of the law of the native land. To him the number of courts in comparison to the vast territory of the country was not proportional and this, as a result, made undesirable delay in the judicial process and increased expense of the procedure to such an extent which made the poorer classes deprived to have proper redress of any injury, particularly those who may be oppressed by their wealthier neighbours, possessing great local influence (Roy, 1977: 8).

Another defect of judicial system, which he gave much importance, was the absence of a common language in the judicial process. Despite the judicial officers of the company possessed enough talent and integrity, their unfamiliarity with the laws of the people over whom they are called to administer justice by these laws, the written proceedings of the court, answer, replies, rejoinders, evidence taken, and document
produced being all conducted in a language\textsuperscript{15} which is foreign to them, they must either rely greatly on the interpretation of their native officers, or be guided by their own conjectures which must be liable to error in most of the cases (Roy, 1977: 9). Rammohun, like Bentham advocated for making of a better code of law, for which the latter formed some movements in England. Both of them intended to reform the judicial system by making it free from corruptions, complications, delay and expensiveness. When he was asked by the select committee about the obstructions caused by lack of better code of law he pointed out the shortcomings of existing regulations of judicial system made by Lord Cornwallis in 1793. He said:

> The regulations published from year to year by the Local Government since 1793, which serve as instructions to the courts, are so voluminous, complicated and in many respect either too concise or too exuberant, that they are generally considered not a clear and easy guide…whose conflicting legal opinions have introduced great perplexity into the administration of justice.” (Roy, 1947: 12, Part-III)

Rammohun’s emphatic arguments in favour of inclusion of Indians into the Judicial as well as Revenue system reveal his introspection and deep love for equality. To remove several defects from judicial system Rammohun suggested including natives more effectively into the judicial system. To the select committee he claimed:

> As European judges in India are not generally expected to discharge judicial duties satisfactorily, independent of native assistance, for not possessing a thorough knowledge of the languages, manners, customs, habits, and practices of the people, and the natives who posses this knowledge…the only remedy which exists, is to combine the knowledge and experience of the native with the dignity and firmness of the Europeans. (Roy, 1947: 17-18, Part-III)

Rammohun, in order to render fair and efficient judicial system gave most importance to the introduction of jury system. Though he advocated for combining “the knowledge and experience of the natives with the dignity and firmness of the Europeans”, he was aware of the possibility of undue influence which a native assessor might attempt
to exercise on the bench under a European judge of insufficient capacity. To get-rid-of such possibility and the contagion of corruption which had become notoriously prevalent in contemporary Indian judicial system, Rammohun championed the idea of trialing by jury. According to him the trial by jury is nothing but a modified and new form of Panchayat system which had been existed in India since remote period. But he recognized the shortcomings and defective plans of jury system by Panchayat and wanted to introduce trial by Panchayat-jury to remove perjury, forgery and corruption.

Rammohun’s ardent support to the Grant’s Jury Bill which rendered natives of India ‘eligible’ to be appointed as ‘justice of peace’ and to sit on Grant Juries as well as Petit Juries, has revealed his views of equality. In answer to the objections made by the Court of Directors against the introductions of Jury Bill by Mr. Grant, he explained the baseless arguments of the Court of Directors and advocated for the equal status of native jurors in comparison to the British jurors. He declined the arguments of Court of Directors which claimed that the natives would never voluntarily sacrifice the time and expense which would be necessary to acquire adequate knowledge of the English Law books and acts of Parliament (Roy, 1977: 37). Against such predisposition Rammohun claimed:

I regret that the Court of Directors should have overlooked the expressed Language of the Intended Bill, which is to render “Eligible” only, not to make acceptance of office compulsory on them. Persons who choose to qualify themselves by acquiring a competent knowledge of British Law and are willing to incur the responsibility may be appointed by the government and those who might decline the labour or the risk would of course not be appointed. (Roy, 1977: 37)

The second objection of the Court of Directors, which claimed that the natives were defective in many qualities, particularly firmness of character, the essential quality to discharge the duties of justice of peace, was also declined by Rammohun. According to him the natives were remarkably performing various functions like, administering, justice, collecting the revenue and conducting the police and magisterial duties. So, the
allegations like deficiency in ‘so many qualities’ or ‘firmness of character’ were according to him not acceptable.

Thus, it is needless to say that Rammohun always confronted against any form of inequality. The Court of Director’s objection about giving a direct cognizance or power to judge the conduct of Europeans to the natives was also combated firmly by Rammohun. According to the Court this would bring some injurious effect in lowering the estimation of the European character. Contrary to such claim made by the Court of Directors of the company Rammohun argued that such kind of direct cognizance had already existed for many years. As an example, he showed the power of common police officers, the native Thanedars to arrest and apprehend all Europeans high or low in rank, whom they found committing any illegal activity. The objection of the Court of Directors to the trial of Christians by natives as jurors was vehemently opposed by Rammohun. He, in his counter remark argued that apart from Englishmen there were native Portuguese Christians, Syrian Christians and most noteworthy the mixed offspring of European and natives and the converted Christians by the Missionaries. To him the term ‘Christian’ does not refer only to the Englishmen but all the various races of these men or communities. Even the Court of Directors placed objection to the issue of trialing of Europeans by Hindus and Mussalman jurors. Against such objection Rammohun advocated:

If the Hindus and Mussalmans are to be excluded from acting as jurors on the trial of Christians on account of their want of community of feeling with them the same objections applies to Christian acting as jurors on the trial of Hindus and Mussalmans. (Roy, 1977: 39)

Such an argument reveals his urge for equality, one of the basic ingredients of liberalism. His earnest advocacy in favour of inclusion of Indians into the revenue departments as well as in the judicial department was nothing but his liberal view of equality. Needless to say such activities of Rammohun made a huge influence over his subsequent activists and reformers throughout the nineteenth century.
Championing the Ideas of Rule of law and Separation of Power:

He, even in early nineteenth century pre-modern society could visualize the perils of centralization of power without the system of constitutional checks and balances. In this concern he advocated for separation of judicial power from the executive. He firmly believed that Laws are the commands of the Supreme governor and therefore, he emphatically advocated in favour of framing the laws for India by the King-in-parliament and not by the Governor-General as the latter, in-spite-of his high status was not the Supreme ruler. Regarding laws as ‘the expression of reason without passion’, he desired to be ruled by the laws framed in British Parliament. This desire of Rammohun, to many, made him simply ambivalent as he cordially respected individual liberty but simultaneously, desired to be ruled by laws made by an alien ruler. The reason behind such ambivalence, it may be claimed was nothing but his quest for having laws based on enlightened liberal public opinion. He was too conscious of the principle of rule of law to think of an Indian Legislative Council. Even he opposed the idea of formulating laws by any servant of the East India Company in spite of his high and exalted position. At the same time, it is noteworthy that he was aware of the ‘difficulties involved in making liberal legislation for a distant land’ (Pantham, 1986, 46). For this concern and to have good laws for Indians, apart from emphasizing the role of free press he suggested to appoint ‘commissions of inquiry’ from time to time and ‘to ascertain the opinion of the aristocracy of wealth and intellect in India regarding any proposed law’. He wrote:

“... by appointment of a commission composed of gentlemen of intelligence and respectability, totally unconnected with the governing body in this country, which may, from time to time, investigate on the spot, the condition of your majesty’s faithful subjects, and judge with their own eyes regarding the operation of the system of law and jurisprudence under which they live” (Roy, 1977: 116).

Thus, it may be argued that it was his zeal of liberal democratic ideal that made him advocating for appointing commissions of inquiry in order to scrutinize the uses and abuses of governance in India. What he wanted was to have a responsible and limited
government and therefore, he proposed a consultation of public opinion before framing any law for the natives. Being adherent to the rule of law and broadly, of liberal democratic principles he demanded codification of laws and separation of power, which, to him were the cardinal principles of a good government. A sharp impact of Montesquieu can be seen on Rammohun when he emphatically opposed the unification of magisterial and judicial power with the office of the collector (Roy, 1947: 25, Part-III). Moreover, he opposed the practice of issuing Ordinances or Regulations by Governor Generals or, by any of the civil servants of East India Company. Therefore, he wrote, “In every civilized country rules and codes are found proceeding from one authority and their execution left on another (Majumder, 1967: 37). Another distinct feature in Rammohun’s political thought was his concern about the misuse of power and therefore, he emphasized the necessity of enforcing responsibility of an officer to his duties.

Rammohun, for his overwhelming admiration to British public opinion and their parliament was criticized by several scholars in time to time. Moreover, to some he was biased to an aristocratic form of government because he desired that only the wealthy and intellectuals should be eligible to criticize a bill or proposed law. Nonetheless, it may be argued that he was too realist to think of any full-fledged representative and responsible democratic government in contemporary India. What he wanted was to be ruled by laws based on enlightened public opinion, which the then society in India did not possess. This, it may be claimed proves his firm faith in democracy. His sympathy and deep quest for constitutional government in every part of West, viz. England, France, America, especially for the first Reform Bill in England are some of the remarkable examples of his strong faith in democracy. He viewed the agitation for Reform Bill as a “Struggle between liberty and tyranny; between justice and injustice, and between right and wrong throughout the world”.
Educational Reforms: The Pillar of Modernity

Rammohun, being a staunch supporter of social reforms gave most importance to education, the chief instrument of social transformation, which, he believed, had an emancipatory role. Like other spheres of his activities ambivalences too are seen in his educational thought or activities. Did he champion the Western form of liberal education? If so, then what made him establish *Vedanta College* in 1826?

Rammohun ardently intended to introduce scientific education based on rational principles because he realized that the educational system prevailed in the then society would never awaken the people from the slumber of centuries. Unlike the early Orientalists, Rammohun vehemently criticized the socially irrelevant and unproductive functions. He was of the opinion (in the letter to Lord Armharst, 11\textsuperscript{th} Dec, 1823) that Sanskrit, as a language, despite being an indispensable part of Bengal society, and produced treatises on law and government, it never became a medium of mass-education, for, as a language, it is circumscribed by a narrow social base and inevitably it remained inaccessible to the common people (Sen, 2012: 120).

Moreover, to him, instead of democratizing knowledge, the prevailing educational system in the contemporary society served as a tool of social exclusion. Such a concern for social exclusion due to parochial educational system made him protest when he heard that the Government had taken a project to establish a Sanskrit school under Hindu pandits in favour of imparting oriental education, which, already was represented by Calcutta Madrassa (estd. in 1781) and Benares College (estd. in 1794) (Shastri, 2007: 47, Sen, 2012: 122). Being too anxious of the attempt he wrote to the then Governor General Lord Armherst on 11\textsuperscript{th} December in 1823, “No improvement can be expected from inducing young men to consume a dozen of years of the most valuable period of their lives in acquiring the niceties of *Byakarun* or Sanskrit grammar” (Roy, 1977: 300-03). Expressing profound regret he argued, “Such a seminary (similar in character to those which existed in Europe before the time of Lord Becon) would load the minds of youth
with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or parochial use”. Therefore, to impart scientific education based on rational principles he claimed, “a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and Anatomy with other useful sciences…” (Roy, 1977: 300-03). He was of the opinion that the Sanskrit system of education would be “best calculated to keep this country in darkness” (Sen, 2012: 121) and therefore he championed the system of Western form of rationalistic education, as he believed, like the thinkers of the Enlightenment that education has the potentiality to enfranchise human mind and society from its barriers.

It seems quite paradoxical since Rammohun, on the one hand advocated for a liberal and enlightened system of education in the letter written to Lord Armharst (11th December, 1823), while on the other hand, scarcely two years later he founded the Vedanta College for the study of Sanskrit literature and for the defence of Hindu Unitarianism. The main reason behind such inconsistency is rightly illustrated by Sophia Dobson Collet (1962, 190-91), one of the earliest biographers of Rammohun. She wrote:

In the ordinary Hindu schools it (Vedanta) was taught in false perspective… Rammohun therefore opposed with all his might the suggestion that the British Government should perpetuate or encourage this kind of Vedantic instruction. At the same time he saw in the Vedanta rightly handled and ‘rightly divided’ a means for leading his countrymen out of their prevailing superstition and idolatry into a pure and elevated Theism… Therefore he founded the Vedanta College. (Collet, 1962: 190-91)

Therefore, he confronted the Missionaries’ huge disparagement of the Vedanta. Actually, during those days, (in early nineteenth century) the influence of the Orientalists was so great that even the government brushed aside any proposal regarding setting up institutions to impart Western education. The proposal of J. Marsman, a Baptist Missionary of Serampore, which argued that a Christian education and conversion (into Christianity) could only contribute towards creating more loyal subject, was even brushed aside by the East India Company and recommended that the government in India should
patronize the study of different branches of Sanskrit Literature. Therefore, the then Committee of Governor General wrote back to Rammohun that “the demerits of Sanskrit Literature had been represented in an ‘exaggerated light’ (Sen, 2012: 123). By the next year the Government established Sanskrit College which offered specialized courses in various branches of traditional Hindu learning.

Nonetheless, it may be argued that the letter of Rammohun, though defeated at the time, marked a great beginning in the process of political awakening in nineteenth century Bengal. The letter advocate for modern Western education is often taken to be the ‘first salvo fired’ in the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy regarding educational policy for India (Sen, 2012: 123). Despite the huge influence of orientalists soon a considerable challenge was posed by contrary set of ideas called Evangelism. Even, in Britain James Mill and his son John Stuart Mill, two great liberal thinkers among whom the former made good impact over Rammohun, keenly criticized Oriental system of learning (Dasgupta, 2011: 154-55). It led the Court of Directors to promote liberal and western learning. Thus, the controversy after ranging for more that a decade was brought to a conclusion by Macaulay’s famous Minute of 2nd Feb, 1835 and Lord Bentinck’s consequent resolution of 7th March, which, by constituting English as the official language of India gave the ascendancy to Western ideals of education (Collect, 1962: 188).

Rammohun, in spite of being one of the principal initiators of the scheme of Hindu College, voluntarily disassociated himself when he came to knew that the conservative patrons vehemently opposed to include his name as its founding member and threatened to withdraw their support from the project (Tagore, 1966: 28-29). Again, despite having differences with Christian missionaries, he cordially supported all educational works carried out by them. Such activities, it may be claimed were some of the instances of his quest for modern Western education. He was so obsessed with the dream of introducing rational and scientific education that he did not bother such vindictive attitude of the orthodox section, who even opposed to mention his name as one of the founders of Hindu
College. Besides such magnanimity, it is also pertinent to note that Rammohun even in early nineteenth century advocate for the education of the girls, which, needless to say was one of the remarkable attempts in creating the ambience for equality, one of the constituting ideals of liberal democratic ideology. In 1822 he established an English School under the patronage of the Calcutta Unitarian Association. Unlike other schools in this school science was written in Bengali, (Tagore, 1975: 20-21). During 1821 to 1824 he published a serious of articles on scientific objects in *Sambad Kaumudi*, viz. ‘Echo in Acoustics’, ‘Properties of the Magnet’, ‘Behavior of the Fishes’ etc (Tagore, 1966: 30).

This remarkable transformation of educational structures was one of the most startling cultural changes in nineteenth century Bengal (Kaviraj, 2010: 16-17). The educational reformation movement introduced by Rammohun helped India to break from the chain of mediaval scholasticism and bore its fruits throughout the nineteenth century by his successors, which ultimately took remarkable role in creating the cultural ambience for modern liberal democracy.

**Economic Ideas of Rammohun: The Liberal Stand**

In his economic ideas, from a broader perspective, Rammohun should definitely be regarded as the earliest member of liberal school. But from a closer observation an ambiguity can be seen in his economic thought. On issues like Colonial economy, Permanent Settlement, Zamindary System, he was so ambivalent that even the contemporary Bengal press remained divided on the question of where to locate him. He supported the zamindary lobby against the regulation which threatened to resume all rent-free lands, simultaneously, he lamented on the miserable condition of the cultivators being victims of ‘Zamindar’s avarice and ambition’ (Roy, 1977: 50). Moreover, despite being aware of the shortcomings of the Permanent Settlement he never had a word to abolish it fully (Poddar, 1982: 29-32). In 1832, in his evidence before the Select Committee of British Parliament on various matters concerning cultivation in India, the
Bengal Harukuru accused him of acting like a ‘Zaminder’, while the Samachar Chandrika labeled him ‘hostile to the interest of the landholders’ (Sen, 2012: 135). For such ambiguities some critics like Derozians accused him and his like-minded contemporaries as ‘half liberals’ (Bengal Harukuru, 26th Oct, 1831: 05).

Notwithstanding such criticisms, the tremendous significance of the liberal ideals of Rammohun about economic policies and private property of an individual can never be undermined. Remarkably, in his economic ideas he was of the opinion that every individual is free to advance his happiness and interest, which sounded much like Benthamite slogan. His recommendations on various issues like: introduction of free trade or laissez faire economy, criticism against the monopoly of East India Company on Salt issue, opening the market for foreign capital and foreign skills, removing restrictions on European settlements in India, Indigo plantation by Europeans— were strikingly similar to the prescriptions in Bentinck’s Minute of May 30, 1829, which were justly described by some as ‘a powerfully written liberal tract’ (Pant, 1988: 120-21).

The individualist Rammohun being an ardent supporter of individual property believed that it is a holy duty of the government to guarantee the right to property of people. Unlike contemporary British thinkers he favored land ownership to be vested in the hands of individual instead of to the state. Answering to the Select Committee he claimed, “From a reference to the laws and the histories of the country, I believe that the lands in India were individual property in ancient times” (Roy, 1977: 45-47). Therefore on the issue of state intervention on landed estates, he argued, “Every man is entitled by law and reason to enjoy the fruits of his honest labour and good management” (Roy, 1977: 45-47). Such a view of private property made him comparable to renowned English liberal thinker John Locke whom he greatly admired and brought him close to the position of the British Whigs who believed in private property as a fundamental social principle (Sen, 2012: 133-37). Similarly, in his “Rights of Hindus over Ancestral Property” he argued that the “validity of existing titles to property should not be, not the contracts founded on the received interpretation of the law should be violated by the government” (Roy, 1945: 22-23, Part-I).
Like several contemporary liberal thinkers, Rammohun championed the idea of free trade, the entry of foreign capital, abolition of all restrictions over European settlers and land revenue reforms to help the process of building more wealth and prosperity in India. When the emerging new middleclass and its bases of property and professions were taking shape in the early nineteenth century Rammohun showed great confidence in the workings of the new institutions and enrichment to attain the greatest good of the greatest number (Sen A., 1975: 129). The opening of the East India trade to private enterprise was begun by the Charter Act of 1813 and culminated by the Act of 1833. During this long span of two decades Rammohun and his associates were inclined to free trade and endorsed their ideology of utilitarian liberalism. In December 1829, Rammohun, Dwarakanath, Prasanna Kumar and some liberal-minded Europeans participated in a meeting held at Calcutta Town Hall on the issue of Laissez-faire economy, where, it was Rammohun who gave formal support to the proposal of colonization raised by Dwarakanath Tagore and they championed the idea of free trade policy and petitioned to the Parliament “to throw open the China and India trade, and to remove all restrictions against the settlement of Europeans in India” (Collet, 1962: 270). Even Kalinath Roy, one of the close and like-minded associates of Rammohun took an initiative to sign a petition to Parliament in favour of colonization (Poddar, 1982: 32). Later in 1832, in the paper entitled ‘Settlement in India by the Europeans’ (14th July, 1831) Rammohun emphasized the need to allow Europeans of ‘character and capital’ to settle freely in India.

It is important to note here that such activities of Rammohun and his contemporary co-modernizers have been vehemently attacked by several scholars time to time. It is not that such critics have totally been wrong or biased in their points. But it must be remembered that the overall development of the country was the absolute object of Rammohun and his associates. The Samachar Darpar published by Prasanna Kumar Tagore on 15th Oct 1831 published that it was not the intention of Rammohun and his associates that “the English should come and cultivate the ground and become landlords”
(Majumdar, 1967: 45). What Rammohun wanted was the further penetration of ‘European skill’ and ‘capital’ to impart superior knowledge and public spirit, which would bring about an industrial regeneration in India. If the ‘European character’ and ‘capital’, he believed, would settle freely in India then the enlightened public opinion would be developed and consequently, the political rights of the Indian would be secured. So it may be argued that the far reaching social and political considerations led Rammohun to recommend greater incorporation of European skill and capital (Roy, 1977: 56). He even firmly hoped that if the Indians would developed to wealth, intelligence and public spirit by the settlement of numerous liberal minded Europeans, the mixed community so formed would consequently emerge as the United states of America formerly did against the arbitration of Britain and attained freedom, and later emerged as a sound democracy based on liberal ideals.

Beside such arguments, the reason behind favouring colonization (in the meeting at Calcutta town Hall in December, 1829) was his deep concern for huge drain of Indian wealth. He was well aware that the industrial revolution in India can never happen without British bourgeois class and therefore to overcome the problem of drainage he suggested that the Europeans accumulating capital in India should be encouraged to settle in India so that the wealth might not go out of the country. Thus, he, before Dadabhai Naoroji focused on the ‘Drain Theory’, which the latter made so popular later (Pant, 1988: 121). Again, he raised the question to reduce land revenue but was aware that it would cause financial crisis of the state. So he suggested to lower administrative costs by recruiting larger number of Indians in place of Europeans. In this way he may be regarded as the earliest champion of Indianization of the civil services which later became one of the significant nationalist demands in the second half of nineteenth century. Thus, Rammohun, though often accused of misreading the nature of colonial rule and colonization, wanted the European settlers to develop the skills and mechanism by superior modes of cultivation, which ultimately would help his countrymen to brush
aside all problems in social, political and economical spheres of life by a force of enlightened liberal spirit.

Conclusion

Rammohun and his associates, the early representatives of Indian renaissance and modernity made a significant contribution to the creation of liberal democratic ambience in the nineteenth century. Of course, they admired British rule and considered it as a divine boon. But it is not that they were anti-democratic. Instead, Rammohun, it may be claimed, even in colonial Bengal, rightly anticipated the inherent truth of democracy, i.e. the freedom of mind and free expression of views about social and political matters can never be flourished in a climate of omnipotent social dominance over individual. So, he admired the British rule not for colonization but for the development of modern liberal ideal, which, he firmly believed would help his countrymen to emancipate their minds from age-old bondages of pre-modern society and culture. What he wanted was to build a connection between society and the state which, to a great extent was amorphous in the pre-colonial Mohammedan era. Therefore, by his illustrious activities he tried to prevent the newly founded alien rule from being totally indifferent to the social and cultural needs of the native community (Chakraborti, 1979: 20-21).

But surprisingly, at the moment to make complete break with the past Rammohun and his like-minded associates have emerged with some hesitation and ambivalence, which have already been discussed. Such activities though to some extent, broke the barriers of tradition but often were far from becoming modern. The reason behind such ambiguities is lying in the socio-cultural background of those modernizers. It is because rationality alone cannot be taken over the whole of a human life. In other words, following Ashis Nandi (2011: 61) it may be argued that to be rational and logical throughout whole life is simply impossible because people live by their feelings, emotions and institutions. That is what happened to those early modernizers. Tradition and modernity are not always strictly opposite to each other, and therefore, even a
modern man can often be guided by traditions in responding to social and cultural issues. In spite of these inherent limitations or ambivalences it would be incorrect to ignore or minimize the remarkable contribution made by Rammohun and his associates to the development of a liberal spirit in nineteenth century India.

The multifarious social concerns of Rammohun made him think of socio-cultural, political and economic issues in contemporary India. He was never a man who dwelt in the mere abstract set of ideas but was also a man of action enriched with enormous self confidence and great optimism. That is why Rabindranath Tagore (1935: 1) in the celebration of his death centenary referred to him as ‘a luminous star in the firmament of Indian history’. He bore such an optimistic revolutionary spirit which neither the animosity of Hindu orthodoxy, nor the hostility of the Christian missionaries, nor the distrust by the British rulers (as evinced in the official reaction to his letter to lord Armherst on Educational Policy) could act as a damper to his illustrious activities (Chaturvedi, 1988: 83-84). His rational introspection made him realize that progress of liberal ideals in India was to be conditioned not by contemplation alone, but by action; not by pessimism, but by self-realization and most importantly, not by isolation from the West but by healthy interaction by imparting the treasures of western knowledge, gift of science and humanistic ideologies. All these, needless to say, gradually created a cultural ambience for democracy and have been providing the cultural root or support to the remarkable resilience of Indian democracy since Independence. In continuation of this process of incarnation of liberal and democratic consciousness, the following chapter is dealing with the contribution of some of his contemporaries and radical successors who marched on the same road built by Rammohun by the third decade of nineteenth century in Bengal.
Notes

1. In the meeting organized by the Rammohun Roy Centenary Committee in 1933 to commemorate the centenary of Roy’s death several speakers like R.N. Tagore, Radhakrisnan, Bipin Chandra Pal addressed Rammohun as the ‘Father of Modern India’. For details, see Chakravarty, S., C., 1935: 1-7 (part-1), 1-22 (part-2).

2. In his posthumously published Autobiographical sketch (1833) which Rammohun wrote to Mr. Gordon of Kolkata in a letter responding to his request he was a bit coy to specify his birth year which has made it more controversial. It was published in Athenium and in the Literary Gazette. (See Carpenter, 1976:14, Chattopadhyay, N., 1973: 3-5)

3. By the time Rammohun was sent to Patna he learnt the Bengali and the Persian languages under gurumahasay and Maulavi respectively.


5. At the same time he published another work in the Persian entitled Manazararat-ul-Adiyan or ‘Discussions on various Religions’.

6. The members of Brahma Samaj, the close associates of Rammohun came from a high society opposed the ‘Sipahi Mutiny’ of 1857 and Indigo planters movement during 1859-60. Even Rammohun did not support the Indigo farmers in their agitation. (See, Bandyopadhyay, J, 2004: 54)

7. After the enactment of the Law on 4th December 1929 when the conservative Hindus formed huge movement, Rammohun was the main advisor of Bentinck and he remained the restless warrior till the final hearing of the Privi Council in 1832 on the petition of conservative Hindus.
8. People believed in revelations, prophets and miracles, the seeking of salvation through ‘bathing in a river and worshipping a tree or being a mark and purchasing forgiveness of their crime from a high priests’ and the hundreds of useless hardships and privations regarding eating and drinking, purity and impurity, auspiciousness and . (See, Sarkar Sumit, 1975: 50)

9. In reply to Rev, D. Schmidt’s attack Rammohun published An Appeal to the Christian Public in defence of the Precepts of Jesus followed by Second Appeal to the Christian Public in reply to Dr. Marshman who wrote his point in the Friend of India. Rammhun’s Final Appeal to the Christian Public came out in January 1823 and then following to consistent attack from missionaries Rammohun gave his points in Brahminical Magazine in 1823.

10. He was persuaded that British rule, unlike the despotic and tyrannical rule of the Mughals or the Rajputs provided security and other civil liberties to the Indians. He was conscious that his countrymen were too superstitions and ignorant to run a self – government. More over, he felt that the introduction of capitalist norms and principles by the British were contributing to Indian’s economic prosperity. (see, Majumdar, 1967 : 27-28, Pantham, 1986: 43-46)

11. The letter was addressed to Lord Minto, Governor General of India on 12th April, 1809. To access the full letter, see Biswas D. (1992), The Correspondence of Raja Rammohun Roy, Saraswati Library, pp. 1-6


13. When the Press Censorship of 1799 (imposed by Lord Wellesly) was abolished in 1818 by Hastings, soon a good number of vernacular journals and papers enriched with the liberal democratic spirit were published which too caused a democratic
ambience in nineteenth century. Some of those were *Bangadut, Jnananveshan*, Bengal Spectator, Hindu Patriot, *Tattvabodhini, Somprokash* etc. For detail, see Kaviraj, N. 1984: 162-66.

14. The next Governor Generals were Lord Bentinck, Charles Metcalfe, both of whom took liberal policy towards press and enfranchise if from all bondages.

15. The main Language conducted in the proceeding of the Court was Parsi, the Court language of the former Muhammedan rulers.

16. The Jurors of Panchayat were not regular in their meetings, had no power to compel the attendance of witness, had no judge to preside and direct their proceedings etc. Infact they were only the arbitrators appointed by the court with consent of the parties. For detail, see Roy (1977), “Judicial System of India: Questions and Answers” in Selected Works of Raja Rammohun Roy, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, Pp. 18-20

17. In the appeal to the King-in Council regarding Press Ordinance Rammohun expressed this view. For detail, see Roy (1977), “Appeal to the King-in-Council”, in Selected Works of Raja Rammohun Roy, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, P. 113

18. Such an idea of law was nothing but the impact of Plato over Rammohun as the latter was highly moved by the Greek Political Philosophy. See, Majumdar, B., B., 1967: 32.

19. The Anglicist-Orientalist controversy was one of the important trends in early nineteenth century. Both schools threw challenge to each other with their contrary set of arguments. While the Anglicists presumed the intrinsic superiority of Western knowledge and distrusted the moral and practical value of Oriental learning, the Orientalists, on contrary were highly concerned of their traditional values and system.
20. David Hare and Rev. Adam were associated in the management of the school and Maharshi Debendranath Tagore was among the distinguished students of the school. (see Tagore, 1966:29-30.)

21. Prior to the settlement, about one-third of the cultivable land in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa lay waste. The British Government felt that by giving permanent land tenures in return for a system to fixed revenue, private individual could be induced to extend and improve cultivation. As a consequence, the area under cultivation really increased to a considerable degree. (see Sen Asok, 1975: 110-20, Pantham, 1986: 44.)

22. For details, see Roy (1947), “Settlement in India by the Europeans” in Nag and Burman edited *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy* (Part-III), Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, Kolkata.

23. In the reference Canada can also be cited as a proof. For details, (see Roy, Part-III, 1947: 84.)
Chapter IV

The Young Bengal Movement And The Articulation of Democratic Ideas And Principles In Bengal In Post-Rammohun Era (1830-1860)
FOURTH CHAPTER

The Young Bengal Movement and the Articulation of Democratic Ideas and principles in Bengal in Post-Rammohun Era (1830-1860)

By the first three decade of the nineteenth century Bengal witnessed a gradual but remarkable growth of liberal democratic intellectual ambience through the vigorous and multifaceted activities of Rammohun Roy and some of his like-minded associates, which the previous chapter has explored to some extent. By the second half of nineteenth century the cultural ambience for modern liberal democracy took a more prominent shape through the illustrious thoughts and activities of some of the liberal thinkers; namely Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, Lalbehari De, Asutosh Mukherjee, Manmohan and Lalmohan Ghosh, Jyogendranath Vidyabhusan and Akshay Kumar Dutta. Unfortunately, most of those social reformers and activists of renascent Bengal had suffered an undeserved neglect in the contemporary writings on the Bengal renaissance and modernity. Though Rammohun took the earliest epoch-making role in building the intellectual and cultural ambience for liberal democracy, his subsequent modernizers, the radical followers of Derozio, better known as ‘Young Bengal’ played a significant role in building the liberal political consciousness in intellectual as well as material issues. More specifically, from the third to the sixth decade of the nineteenth century these radical modernizers took remarkable role in the modern awakening of Bengal. Some of them were Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhayay, Tarachand Chokrabarty, Rashikkrinsa Mallik, Ramgopal Ghosh, Peary Chand Mitra and a host of others. All of them were the students of Hindu College which was the most significant centre of imparting Western education and liberal culture. Among many contemporary thinkers and reformers particularly these five thinkers have been selected to focus in this chapter because, among them, they played most prominent and vivid role in the process of incarnating liberal democratic
ambience. Moreover, it is quite impossible to explore all of the contemporary reformers in such a limited scope of study.

The existing writings on Derozio and Derozians have tried to focus on their illustrious socio-political and economic activities to some extent. Despite a number of literatures the main impediment connected with the history of Bengal in the first half of nineteenth century has been the paucity of original source materials in chronological order. Nevertheless, much work has been done on this period by eminent scholars both English and Bengali among whom some of the notables are Thomas Edwards, Andrew Sartori, C. Bayly, Sibnath Shastri, Sushobhan Sarkar, Binoy Ghosh, Goutam Chattopadhyay, Asok Sen, J. C. Bagal and a host of others. Among the earliest biographers of Derozio it was Thomas Edwards who authored *Henry Derozio: the Eurasian Poet, Teacher and Journalist* (1884) which has given us deep insight into the mind and works of Derozio. Andrew Sartori’s recent book *Bengal in Global Concept History* (2008), though written on a long cultural tradition of Bengal deserves a special mention as it has explored the socio-political and economic activities of the Derozians and their Young Bengal movement from a different view. Sartori has projected the emergence of newly educated Bengali middle class and their distinct socio-political and liberal culture as a part of global post-enlightenment modern democratic tradition during the nineteenth century throughout the world. He made an explicit connection between the emergence of modern culture since early nineteenth century in Bengal and the growth of liberalism and capitalism as a part of colonial modernity. Bayly’s recent work *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (2012) has explored the liberal tradition of Bengali thinkers during colonial era.

Among the existing works on Derozio and Derozians, written by Indian scholars both in English and vernacular languages, Shibnath Shastri’s *Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Bangosamaj* (1904) is an example of classic work which has explored the remarkable role played by those eminent modernizers in kindling the political consciousness in post-Rammohun era. Another important biographical work is *Bidrohi Derozio* (1980) written
by Binoy Ghosh who also compiled and edited the famous *Samayik Patre Banglar Samajchitra* enriched with original contemporary newspapers with which the Derozians were associated as either editor or contributor. Partha Chatterjee’s eminent work *Bangla Sambadpatra O Bangalir Nabajagoron (1818-1878)* is an important work which has focused on the varied range of print media connected with the Derozians in contemporary Bengal and explored the significance of such newspapers in modern awakening of Bengal. Dr. Biman Behari Majudar’s two books *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas* (1967) and *Indian Political Association and Reform of Legislature* (1965) are of crucial importance as both of these books have focused on the role of Derozians in political awakening in Bengal. The first one deserves a special mention because of perhaps it was the first work which tended to explore the liberal tradition of thought in the nineteenth century Bengal.

Goutam Chattopadhyay’s two important books: *Awakening in Bengal in Early Nineteenth Century* (1965) and *Bengal: Early Nineteenth Century* (1978) are very important as both of the books are enriched first-hand documents of the first half of nineteenth century. While the first one has dealt with the original papers and discourses presented by the Derozians at meetings of the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge (SAGK) (estd. in 1938) on relevant socio-political issues, the second one has offered the readers an opportunity to access the leading papers and journals of the early nineteenth century, edited and contributed by those modernizers namely, ‘Kaleidoscope’, ‘Bengal Spectator’, and the ‘Reformer’. Asok Sen’s significant book *The Educated Middle Class and Indian Nationalism* (1988) has also offered a detailed history of that period focusing on the contribution of Derozio in the modern awakening of Bengal as well as India. Two biographical works on two Derozians—Manmathnath Ghosh’s *Raja Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhyay* (1982) and Ngendranath Dasgupta’s *Pearychand Mitra: Samajchinta o Sahitya* (1989) are also important works in this respect.

The main problem related to these existing works is that most of the scholars have projected the Derozians from some certain predispositions among which some
undermined the role of them. These scholars, while assessing the role of the Derozians have contemptuously hurled slanders with a number of phrases, among which some were unhistorical, distorted and baseless. For example, Biman Behari Majumdar (1967:97) assessed Derozians as “aristocratic Indians who failed to rouse political consciousness even among the limited circle of educated men in Bengal.” Sushobhan Sarkar (1970: 119-21) also accused them for being retreated from their own early radicalism. Tarashankar Banerjee (1985: 291-92) accused their role with phrases like “tall talk and low performance” and ‘a fruitless intellectual jugglery”. Apart from such criticisms they were often accused for being detached of the common masses and for being failed to build up a sustained movement and developing ideology. Above all, they were often criticized for their love to West and intoxication with English and for declining Indian culture and tradition.

In response to these opinions and charges against the radical youths of Hindu college it may be argued that most of these criticisms have no connection with the realities of that age and were based on unhistorical-biased account which Goutam Chattopadhyay (1965: xlviii) has rightly declined as “heresy, myth, half-truth and distortions.” This is because the vast data including newspapers, proceedings of the associations formed by them, such as ‘Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge’, ‘Deshaitishunee Sabha’, ‘Bengal British India Society’ are remained untouched by the scholars, which it may be claimed, is the most important reason of negligence of the role of Derozians in political awakening of Bengal as well as making national feelings and democratic ambience during the thirties to sixties of nineteenth century. Courtesy to Goutam Chattopadhyay who in three volumes of Awakening in Bengal in Early Nineteenth Century has published the proceedings and papers read by Derozians At SAGK it has become easier to gain proper knowledge about Derozians like Krishnamohan Banerjee, Rashikkrishna Mallick, Pearychand Mitra Digambar Mitra, Tarachand Chakraborty and Gobindo Chandra Bysak who to a great extent have been remained unexplored in existing writings.
The primary question that may be raised here: Did these members of Young Bengal champion the ideal of liberal democracy? Or, what was their contribution to the making of liberal democratic ambience in nineteenth century Bengal? To answer such questions we have to venture into their multifaceted socio-political activities, through which they not only stirred the contemporary orthodox Hindu society, simultaneously they brought about a remarkable liberal and rational culture in the society. Any attempt to assess the contributions of those modernizers would be incomplete without a proper exploration of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, one of the makers of Bengal Renaissance in the first half of nineteenth century. Derozio, the gifted teacher and philosopher succeeded to mark a great influence over his students both in and outside the classes by explaining them the supreme value of truth, justice, philanthropy and self-abnegation.

When Derozio joined Hindu College in 1826 as a teacher the process of modern awakening of Bengal was already initiated through the vigorous activities of Raja Rammohun Roy and some of his like-minded associates, namely- Dwarakanath Tagore, Prasannakumar Tagore and many. What Derozio did within such a short span of time (1826-1831) was of crucial importance in the history of nineteenth century because he, through his rational cognitive thinking inspired his students to have free-thinking; to live and die for truth; to cultivate and practice all the virtues and shunning vice in every shape (Bose, 1976: 70). In the subsequent decades of the premature demise of Derozio (1831) these students made enormous contribution to the creation of modern liberal ambience in their respective spheres of activities: political, social and economic.

The radical thought and activities of Derozio and his followers, mostly against the irrational socio-cultural dogmas, idolatry and orthodox conventions in the name of religion were never confined within the Hindu College simultaneously; they religiously met and participated in various debates at Academic Association (founded by Derozio in 1828), one of the earliest and remarkable centers of civil society in the then Calcutta where various contemporary issues were debated (Shastri, 2007: 69-70). In the initial years the meetings of Academic Association were arranged at the residence of Derozio at
Lower Circular Road. Soon it was transferred to the residence of Sri Krisna Sinha, the principal of Hindu College. Eminent reformers and modernizers like Krisnamohan Banerjee, Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Pearychand Mitter, Radhanath Sikdar, Ramtanu Lahiri and David Hare used to attend its meetings and debates consistently. Apart from these members the principal of Bishop’s College Dr. Mill, Justice of Supreme Court Sir Edward Ryan, Governor General Lord Bentinck’s private secretary Cornel Benson often with huge curiosity visited the debates of the association (Bagol, 2010: 153). The contribution of Academic Association is rightly explained by Thomas Edwards, one of the earliest biographers of Derozio. He wrote,

“Free ordination, fate, faith, the sacredness of truth, the high duty of cultivating virtue and the meanness of vice, the mobility of patriotism, the attributes of God… the hollowness of idolatry and the shams of the priesthood were subjects which stirred to their very depths the young, fearless, hopeful hearts of the leading Hindoo Youths of Calcutta.”(Edwards, 1884: 32)

Soon, like Calcutta Town Hall the Academic Association became one of the important centers of early anti-absolutist civil society movement in Bengal. It appeared as a debating club where discussions on various topics such as – rights and duties of an individual in society, truth, justice, existence of God, patriotism, free-will, vice of bigotry and idolatry, the philosophy of Hume, Reid, Stewart Brown were debated. The method of discussions in the Academic Association was free from all customary in comparison to other contemporary civil associations. All subjects, such as historical political, religious, scientific and metaphysical were debated in the association. Alexander Duff, one of the contemporary Scottish missionaries and close-witness of the method of discussions of Academic Association claimed that the members of the association used to fortify their arguments by oral quotations from English authors. He wrote:

“If the subject (of debate) was historical, Robertson and Gibbon were appealed to; if political, Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham; if scientific, Newton and Davy; if religious, Hume and Thomas Paine; if metaphysical, Locke and Reid, Stewart and Brown…” (Quoted in Ghosh, B. 1980: 59)
The radical way of discussions and debates in the Academic Association worked as an effective mean of civic engagement by the late 1820s and 1830s of nineteenth century. In 1839, before the decline of Academic Association a good number of Sabhas and Samities were established by contemporary modernizers, most of whom were the pupils of Hindu College. Some of those were: Epistolary Association founded by Ramgopal Ghose, one of the direct students of Derozio, Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge (1838) (Roychoudhury, 1993: 51). It is important to note here that Partha Chatterjee, in his recent books ‘Janapratiniidhi’ (2013, 31-39) and “The Black Hole of Empire” (2012: 155-57) has claimed that the growth of these debating clubs, sabhas and samities in the early nineteenth century took enormous role in enhancing civic engagements and promoted anti-absolutist liberal ambience through various political activities, such as agitation for a free press, freedom of speech, claiming civil rights for education, claiming equality in Jury system and civil services etc. In the subsequent decades, the members of Young Bengal established ‘Hare Prize Fund Committee’ (1844) which used to give rewards to the best book for having vivid role in social welfare and reform. In 1851 a renowned association familiar as Bethune society was founded by the eminent students of Hindu College. Pearychand Mitter, one of the leading members of Young Bengal was the first secretary of this society. The Vidyotsahi Sabha (1853) set up by Kaliprasanna Sinha was another significant civil association of contemporary Bengal. The main object of the sabha was the cultivation of the Bengali literature (Mukhopadhyay, 2005:152-53). By the fifties of the nineteenth century some renowned civil-societal associations in Bengal grew in quick succession, which took remarkable role in promoting civic engagement of common people. Some of those were Preserverance Society (1847) under the presidentship of Gourdas Basak, an alumnus of Hindu College, Sarbasubhakari Sabha (1850), set up by some senior students of Hindu College, Deshitainnushi Sabha (1851), The Bengal Social Science Association (1867) and many.

The Hindu College, by the second quarter of the nineteenth century became one of the main centers of early-modern civil-society, which rendered a remarkable role in the anti-absolutist movement mostly against social and religious bigotry. Derozio, within a very short time succeeded in enabling the students of the Hindu College to develop a liberal and rational approach to each of the social issues by measuring everything through the yardstick of rationality and cognitive mind free from any pre-determined psychological construction. He succeeded in awakening the young avid minds of his students by citing references from great history of ancient world and developed ideals like value, justice, self-abnegation, and truth. Needless to say, the flock of critical men, known as ‘Young Bengal’ was the product of Derozio’s unique teaching, who tried to bring everything— old customs, institutions, ideas, beliefs before the bar of reason (Sarkar, 1979: 70). This quest for rationalism based of western values of humanism and rejection of traditional bigotry were the basic elements of the nineteenth century Bengal Renaissance.

The rational cognitive ideals and liberal value of humanism led them revolt against the age-old social and religious constructions of the Hindu society. The Derozians, being stirred by the new education at Hindu college rouse a spirit of questioning against authority and tried to strip Hinduism by denouncing its dogmas. The Brahmin members of Young Bengal declined to accept the ritual of investiture with the holy or sacred thread, the distinct mark of the Brahmins⁹. Even, as a mark of emancipation from traditions of centuries they shouted publicly—“we take beef”, “we drink wine”. (Sashtri, 2007: 71). Rashik Krisna Mallick, one of the renowned Derozians publicly announced in the Supreme Court (Dec 19, 1834), “I do not believe in the sacredness of Ganga” when he was asked, as per ritual to take an oath by touching it during the hearing of a case where he turned up as a witness. (Mukhopadhyay, 2005: 138; Sastri, 2007: 86)
As a consequence of these radical socio-cultural movement known as the ‘Young Bengal Movement’ a strong reaction came from the orthodox Hindu society which brought some undesirable perils to their personal as well as social life. Derozio was made to resign from the Hindu college on 25th April in 1831 in response to the charges brought against him by the authority of the college. Most of the members of the Young Bengal had to face vehement humiliation from the conservative Hindus.  

Radical Derozians like Rashik Krishna Mallick, Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee had to leave their parental houses in quick succession. The late twenties and early thirties of the nineteenth century became most restless but creative due to this confrontation between the liberals and the conservative bigots. It was restless, from one hand, because the rebellious activities of the radical youths alarmed and broke the traditional texture of society. The patrons of the conservative Hindus as well as the over-jealous Christian Missionaries posed vehement attack to those newly emancipated minds and on the on the other hand, it was creative because, despite being a mere fraction of total population they hold aloft the torch of social, political and cultural awakening enriched with the ideals of modern liberal democracy.

Besides rebelling against the religious bigotry the Young Bengal Movement played significant role in the sphere of social reformation. Their liberal and rational spirit never hesitated to challenge the age-old socio-cultural practices like child-marriage, polygamy, subjection of women and prejudices. Tarachand Chakraborty, Pearychand Mitter, Ramgopal Ghose and Rashik Krishna Mallick were the chief protagonists of imparting modern education in contemporary society. Tarachand Chakraborty, the senior-most Derozian as well as one of the close associates of Rammohan Roy emphatically advocated for the introduction of moral education besides the mere temporal education of Hindu College. He argued that it is the essential function of the Government to render education to the subjects. To him, maintaining peace and order may be the primary duty of the government but at the sometime it is the noble responsibility of the government to
lead the governed to live a better life which is impossible without proper education. To establish his opinion about education he, in ‘Bengal Spectator’ (Nov 15, 1842) wrote:

“An enlightened government ought likewise to direct their (governed) attention to the dissemination of sound and useful knowledge among the rising generation of their subjects. The general enlightenment of the people is undoubtedly the best guarantee of a good government. While it checks the commission of crime, it contributed to the preservation of peace, and by promoting the interest of commerce; it strengthens the resource of the government.” (Quoted in Majumdar, 1967: 59-60)

Pearychand Mitter, Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee and Ramgopal Ghose too had taken significant role in promoting modern education. Pearychand Mitter, in order to impart modern education established a number of schools to create a spirit of enquiry among his countrymen. Being an active member of the ‘School Book Society’ he played an important role in promoting education both in English and in vernacular languages. He emphatically advocated for mass education. During late 1860’s when in various meetings of Bethun society and Bengal Social Science Association speakers like Raja Joykrishna Mukherjee and Shyamacharan Sarkar argued against mass-education it was Pearychand Mitter who strongly opposed their views. To him, in a country like India in order to have overall development of all strata in society the introduction of mass education is desperately needed. Otherwise, the lower classes and the Riots would become unable to access the laws, administration and the judiciary. (Dasgupta, 1986: 417-418)

On the question of education the Derozians were highly influenced by the education policies taken and implemented by the three Governor Generals, namely- Bentinck, Makley and Travellan who tried to impart modern western education based on the ideals of utilitarianism and liberalism. It is quite pertinent to note that in spite of identifying the importance of English they were conscious enough about the spread of vernacular too. They firmly believed that only the spread of modern education can take the proper role in reforming the various forms of socio-cultural evils in terms of superstitions, bigotries and moral degeneration into which the Hindus had fallen in the
name of religion. Like Tarachand, another Derozian Rashik Krishna Mallick argued that the proper diffusion of knowledge is the best mean of reforming the character of the people and therefore, the paramount duty of the Government is to secure proper policy for education for the subjects (Bhattacharjee, 1986: 115).

The Derozians, being highly influenced by the liberal ideals of John Locke, David Hume and Thomas Paine were fully conscious of the rights of an individual and the duties of the government to its subjects. Derozians like Tarachand and Pearychand regarded the duty of the government in diffusion of education should not be limited only to mere theoretical but also in vocational. Through the columns of Calcutta Review (1846, July) Pearychand appealed to the government to teach agriculture and other forms of vocational education through governmental institutions. Most of the members of Young Bengal, as a part of social and cultural reformation founded many educational institutions and took significant role in diffusing modern liberal education through both—English and vernacular languages. Among those some of the notables are: Hindu Free School established by Rashik Krisna Mallick and Hindu Benevolent Institution founded by Pearychand Mitter (Mukhopadhyay, 2005: 140- 41).

The question of women emancipation was one of the most significant issues in social reformation movement led by the young Bengal. The women-question though was initiated by Rammohun Roy in the second decade of the nineteenth century, was farther enhanced in favour of equal status of women in contemporary Bengali society. These liberals, being imbued with the ideas of liberty and equality of the historical French Revolution and English Radicalism became ardent supporters of equal status of women in so-called patriarchic Hindu Society.

They, being the editors and contributors of most of the leading newspapers and journals which took tremendous role in modern awakening of Bengal in the early nineteenth century exposed the harsh reality of subjugated status of women in contemporary Hindu society. Through the different newspapers particularly
*Jnananneshan*, Bengal Spectator, The Hindu Intelligencer and associations like ‘Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge’ they tried to uplift the wretched condition of women and vehemently attacked the dogmatic and male-dominated conservative Hindu Society. In a letter to Govinda Chandra Basak, a well-known Derozian Ramgopal Ghose, the founder of the Bengal Spectator, while stating the main object of the paper, wrote: “The magazine is to keep up a spirit of enquiry amongst the educated natives… to discuss subjects such as, female education, the re-marriage of Hindu Widows etc. (Ghosh, 1976: 166)

‘The Society for Acquisition of General Knowledge’ (SAGK) had taken most significant role in social political and economic reformations of the country. This society, established by the Derozians used to meet regularly, where oral and written papers were delivered with distinct outlook in socio-political and economic matters of the country. Among various discussions made on condition of women the most noteworthy was Krisna Mohan Banerjee’s paper entitled “Reforms: Civil and Social.” It was a remarkable document which reflected accurately the throbbing pulsating minds of Young Bengal on social issues, particularly on subjugated status of women. Krishna Mohan strongly advocated in favour of equal status of men and women. Advocating against child marriage he argued,

“The father who gives away his daughter without waiting until the dawn of reason in her, and the husband who marries her, are both culpable— in as much as they act upon a maxim that can never be defended, and poison in too many cases, the happiness of their unhappy victim for life… This therefore among others is a matter which it is the paramount duty of the educated Hindoos to turn their attention.”(Banerjee K. M, 1965: 189- 90)

Despite the fact that the question of nationalism or national feeling was at a mere initial stage by their time the Derozians could anticipate the importance of equal development of men and women as an indispensable part of nation-building. Krishna Mohan Banerjee (1965: 90), in the said paper argued:
“It is impossible that a nation can take rapid strides to civilization while half the members that compose it are sunk in ignorance and degradation… can the nation then make any high progress towards refinement?”

Thus, Krishnamohan gave paramount importance to the equal status of men and women. He, quite ardently pleaded his countrymen to “treat daughters with the same care as the sons…We must attach same importance to their instruction and training that we do to that of our sons” (Banerjee, 1965: 191)

Another remarkable paper read by Mahesh Chandra Deb in January 1839 at Society of Acquisition General Knowledge (SAGK) on Condition of Women in Hindu Society, Mahesh Chandra claimed:

“Nothing can be more strikingly deplorable than the wretched situation of the companion of man… they (menfolk) suppose women were born only to minister to their comforts and luxuries and consider that men is absolute lord not only over the fishes of the sea, the flows of the air and the beasts of the forest but over the female world (too). They, therefore, look upon their wives as household slaves and treat them with a degree of superciliousness which even the Sultan of Turkistan does not show towards his meanest serf.(Quoted in Chattopadhyay, 1965: xxxv)

By the second quarter of nineteenth century the Young Bengal Movement took remarkable role in social reformation, which was never confined only within the women-question but bore a wider range in all spheres of socio-cultural, political and economic realm of the country. They, being true liberals were the staunch supporters of Western liberal tradition and ideals of French Revolution but simultaneously, being true patriots they tended to revive the past-glory of the country.

**Political Activities of the Derozians: the Articulation of Democratic Ideas**

The Young Bengal Movement, apart from crusading against the socio-cultural bigotries of so-called Hindu society played a significant and vivid role in political issues, which, it may be argued took important role in building the intellectual ambience for
modern liberal democracy in the mid-nineteenth century in Bengal as well as in India. They were highly influenced by the modern and temporal education of Hindu College and the writings of contemporary European thinkers like Hume, Reid, Stewart, Brown and Thomas Paine. The liberal tradition from Becon, Locke, Berkely and Adam Smith marked too impact over their young mind to compromise with any of the conservative prejudices how much dominated or deep-rooted may it be in society (Sen, 1974: 328). By that time the works of these liberal thinkers began to be imported to Calcutta Gazette, Morning Post, and Calcutta Chronicle. Among those the Rights of Man and the Age of Reason authored by Thomas Paine became most popular to the Derozians.\textsuperscript{16} Even, the Age of Reason which was translated in Bengali and Published in Pravakar was like the Bible to them (Banerjee, T., 1985: 285, Edwards, 1884: 32-35). The political activities of the Young Bengal were highly moved by the revolutionary philosophy of French Revolution. ‘Liberty’ and ‘equality’, two ideals of French Revolution intoxicated their young minds so much that some of them aspired for the outbreak of a similar revolution in India. (Sen, 1988: 24-25) The Industrial Revolution, American war of Independence and the July Revolution of 1830 played a significant role in creating the democratic consciousness among the members of Young Bengal.

Among Western school of thinking three distinct political philosophies had marked a profound influence over the minds of those newly educated middle class Bengalis. These were—the liberalism, the utilitarianism and the positivism. Since James Mill assumed the India House Office in 1819 the political ideas of Mill caused huge impact over Indian Administration for some years. The utilitarian ideas in India were farther strengthened when John Stuart Mill was appointed as a junior clerk at Examiners Office in India House under his father (Srokes, 1959: 48-49). When carry and Marshman, the well-known Christian missionaries translated James Mill’s famous book on Indian history in Bengali the ideal of utilitarianism with its notions of the ‘greatest good of the greatest number’, individualism and good government evoked favorable response from the new intelligentsia in Bengal. Though moved by the liberal notion of utilitarianism
they did not accept him entirely and blindly. J. S. Mill’s criticism of Hindus in the book on Indian history was severely criticized by Kashiprasad Ghosh, a member of Young Bengal. They also criticized James Mills support to centralization and merge of executive and judiciary. Moreover they also criticized the utilitarian concept of good government without any provision of self-government (Sen, 1988: 25-27). Like Rammohun they could realize the importance of separation of power between executive and judiciary for the protection of political rights of the subjects. The inimical probability of the centralization too was anticipated by them which show their liberal democratic consciousness. The latter one, the ideal of positivism grew and moved the new intelligentsia from the 70s of the nineteenth century.

Despite the fact that the Young Bengal Movement, during the initial years of the second quarter of nineteenth century confined itself within social, more specifically within religious reformation movement gradually took significant role in political activities. From late thirties to the late sixties of the century they played tremendous role in political activities. Though their activities towards Hindu religion was quite radical and aggressive but in political activities they were found restoring the legal and constitutional methods which took tremendous role in creating modern liberal political ambience in India. Broadly, the political activities of the members of the Young Bengal can be identified in two distinct spheres of their public life. The first one is their close and direct association with newspapers and journals, either as editor or contributors. And another one is their significant role in establishing and running various civil-societal associations. These two public activities, it may be claimed were the indispensable tools of modern awakening of India throughout the nineteenth century.

**The Print Media and the Young Bengal Movement: the Diffusion of Liberalism**

The nature, role, intensity and complexities of Young Bengal Movement, it may be claimed can be best judged by the contemporary news papers and journals as almost all of the members of this new intelligentsia were closely associated with the print media
either as editor or contributor. Like their predecessor Rammohun Roy they took journalism as an important tool to give vent to their socio-political and economical ideas. The main newspapers published by the Derozians between 1830 and 1854 were the Parthenen (1830), The Hindu Pioneer (1830), The Enquirer (1831), Jnananneshan (1831), Jnan Sindhu Taranga (1832), The Bengal Spectator (1842), and The Quill (1854) (Sen, 1974: 328-34). Needless to say, all these papers during these three decades took spectacular role in spreading rational and liberal ideals of them.

The liberal political view of the Derozians was first seen in their earliest journal Parthenan, an organ of Academic Association only one issue of it could be published on the 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 1830 and it was made to stop by the management of Hindu College. (Bosu, 2011: 187). The one and only issue of the journal bore vivid liberal writings on female education, on neutral judiciary, and advocated in favour of colonization (Banerjee, 1985:282). The Hindu Pioneer, started in 1830 was one of the important newspapers which published many articles regarding duties of the government towards its subjects, and gave paramount importance on freedom. The article “India under Foreigners” was of crucial importance in terms of advocating liberal role of the ruler to its subjects. It claimed that the government of India under the British was purely aristocratic as the people of India have no voice in the council of legislature. Such a liberal democratic demand in early 1830s refers to the liberal democratic consciousness of the Derozians. (Bosu, 2011, 187) Another renowned paper published by the Derozians was the Enquirer, an English weekly (Started on 7\textsuperscript{th} May, 1831) edited by Krishna Mohan Banerjee was a radical journal against orthodox Hindu religion. The expulsion of Krishna Mohan from his parental house (as a consequence of Beef-eating case by his radical friends) and the ouster of Derozio against various unjust charges by the conservative’s patrons of the managing committee of Hindu College made Krishna Mohan more aggressive to his relentless criticism\textsuperscript{17} against Hinduism. In spite of being the helpless victims of gigantic social or religious domination the Derozians never went beyond the liberal sentiments of resistance. They were too liberal to be intolerant against the vehement wrath of Hindu
bigots. The last issue of July (1831) of the Enquirer proves the level of tolerance of these liberals against the vehement attack of the Hindu bigots. Krisnamohan wrote:

“The rage of persecution is still vehement. The bigots are up with their thunders of fulmination. The heat of the Gurum Sabha is violent, and they know not what they are doing. Excommunication is the cry of the fanatic. We hope perseverance will be the liberal’s answer… Let the liberal’s voice be like that of the Roman knows not only to act but to suffer.” (The Enquirer, July 25, 1831: 7-8)

‘The rage of persecution’ mentioned by Krisnamohan was led by a host of vernacular newspapers of conservative Hindus, among which Samachar Chandrika edited by Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay18 (since 1822) was most reactionary in terms of its nature of vehement attack on the liberals (Bose, 1976: 369). In response to such a wrathful publication of Samachar Chandrika (on behalf of Dharmasabha) Krishnamohan wrote in Enquirer (15th August 1831)

“The Chandrika’s triumph (in having popularity) would be very short if the Hindoos could see their own faces. The friends of humanity will, we trust, lose no time in enlightening the minds of the Hindoos and making them perceive the deceits practices upon them. The ill-liberal papers are indeed very great obstacles to improvement… venality is very strong in the orthodox; if therefore the influencial sons of civilized England have any sincere wish to ameliorate the condition of the natives, they should render liberalism…” (The Enquirer, 15th August, 1831: 7-8)

The Jnananneshan edited by Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhyay at a teen-age of seventeen (in May, 1831) was one of the radical papers having vivid introspection in politics. It continued to appear till 1844 and during this span of almost one and a half decades the paper consistently focused on contemporary socio-political issues. It served a tremendous role in amelioration of liberal sentiment in society by crusading against any form of inequality and unjust practices. During the 1830s the paper published a number of articles on issues like Kulin polygamy (23rd April, 1836), Women Trafficking (17th June, 1837), Widow Re-marriage (21st October, 1837), Marriage system and the
condition of women (16th Dec, 1837). Despite such articles on social issues the Jnananneshan earned great reputation for articles against political matters. Since right to criticize is most important ideal of liberal democracy, it may be claimed that Jnananneshan rendered an important role in building the liberal democratic ambience in the thirties and early forties of nineteenth century. It never compromised with any form of unjust governmental policy and severely criticized the function of government at a time when corruption had become rampant. It raised voice against the evils of permanent settlement and corruption related to the salary of Munsifs in the Judicial System. In the article Pulish Darogaar Upori Aav (in Bengali) it dared to criticize the police system and urged the government to protect the life and property of the people against the arm-holders (Jnananneshan, December 31, 1836). Rashik Krishna Mallick, who was closely associated with Jnananneshan condemned that the British administration was incapable of administering fair justice to the people and promoting welfare of the governed, as it was conducted in the interest of the rich merchants. He, through the columns of this paper also pleaded to the British government for the inclusion of eligible Indian into various executive and judicial posts as he believed it was nothing but an indispensable civil-right of the governed (Jnananneshan, April 12, 1833). Such a view of Rashik Krishna, not only initiated the just demand of Indianization of services, which in the second half of the century became an important issue in political agitations but also built the political consciousness in contemporary Bengal.

In 1832 Rashik Krishna Mallick started another vernacular paper named Jnan Sindhu Sadhana which rendered significant role in building political consciousness among the people. This paper advocated for promotion of good education through the agencies of government among the common people. Perhaps, the most familiar bilingual monthly journal brought out by the Young Bengal was Bengal Spectator which embraced socio-political and economical views of the radicals. In a letter to Gobinda Basak on 10th January 1842, Ramgopal Ghose the chief initiator of the journal maintained that it would focus on issues like female education, re-marriage of Hindu Widows,
arbitrary policies of government and civil-political rights of the Indians\textsuperscript{20} (Re-printed in Sanyal, 1976: 165-67). Started in April 1842 The \textit{Bengal Spectator} became a fortnight from September of the same year and subsequently, since March 1943 it was converted into a weekly. The journal ceased to exist after November 20, 1843 (Chattopadhayay, 1978: 181). Leading contemporaries like Tarachand Chakraborty\textsuperscript{21}, Pearychand Mittre, Krishna Mohan Banerjee contributed articles to Bengal Spectator on various socio-political issues in regular intervals. Though it lasted for barely two years, the Bengal Spectator, for its tremendous role in political affairs as Shibnath Sastri (2007: 1018) rightly observed, became the chief ‘political organ’ of the Young Bengal Movement.

Among the various articles published in \textit{Bengal Spectator} on political matters the most important was the advocacy of Indianization of civil service. It emphatically argued in favour of including eligible Indians into the executive posts of civil services. It argued: The English civil servants cannot be good administrators as they were not conversant with the language, manners and customs of the land” (Quated in Banerjee, 1985: 284). On this issue of opening services for the Indians the Bengal Spectator on 1\textsuperscript{st} December, 1942 criticized the government for not abiding by the Charter Act of 1833 (\textit{Bengal Spectator}, December 1, 1942: 3).

The \textit{Bengal Spectator} freely criticized the unruly and unjust governmental practices and voiced any form of inequality or public grievances. Among those one of the notables was the famous case of Radhanath Sikdar (another radical Derozian) vs. Mr. Vansitart. Radhanath, while working at the Survey of India emphatically protested against the governmental officers who were indulged in the mal-practice of forced labour. The downtrodden masses, especially the Hill-men Porters were unethically tortured by many Europeans. Radhanath stood against such inhuman torture and rebelled for securing equality irrespective of white or black, which led him to a direct clash against a European who filed a criminal case against Radhanath. Despite the fact that he was defeated in the case but his fight for equality and humanity was highly praised by the \textit{Bengal Spectator}. In response to the judgment of Mr. Harvey the Bengal Spectator lamented and criticized:
He (Mr. Harvey, the Magistrate of Saharampur) was not trialng the case as between one man and another, which is the duty of the ministers of justice to keep distinctly in view in the performance of their responsible and sacred duties… but as between a powerful and high casted member of his executive order… and a Black Native whose grievances was comparatively immaterial to enquire into… The Baboo (Radhanath) was equally unsuccessful in exercising a degree of freedom in cross-examination of the witnesses. (Bengal Spectator, September 16, 1843: 13)

Thus, by explicit criticism Bengal Spectator used to expose the undemocratic and arbitrary way of governance in any form of public grievances. The Quill brought out by Tarachand Chakraborti in 1843 and the Masik Patrika introduced by Radhanath Sikdar and Pearychand Mitter in 1854 also criticized any form of inequality in society. The latter one, due to its simple and colloquial Bengali language earned huge popularity to the common people including women and children (Haldar, 2011: 70, Sen, 1974: 333). The views expressed by the Derozians through these journals rendered a remarkable service in creating and promoting social, economic and specially, the political consciousness in the contemporary society in Bengal. Especially these journals and papers brought out by Derozians played an important role in connecting people to governance. Simultaneously, the political activities of a number of political associations to which they were directly associated were also influenced the people through the columns of these papers and journals.

The Civil-political Associations and the Making of Liberal Democratic Ambience

By the second quarter of nineteenth century a good number of civil and political associations emerged in Calcutta, which despite being accessed to by a small fraction of newly educated middle class rendered a significant service to the growth of civic and political consciousness among the people in contemporary society. In early nineteenth century such association was formed by Rammohun Roy in 1815 known as Atmiya Sabha. By the thirties and forties of the nineteenth century numerous Sabhas and Samities having distinct social, political and economic objectives emerged in quick
successions, among which a number of debating societies established by Derozio and his radical liberal followers were of crucial importance in terms building civil societal movement in society. Though, in Western Europe and Northern America, this civil societal movements were highly powerful in the eighteenth century, in India it emerged only during the first half of nineteenth century in Bengal, more specifically in Calcutta due to the rigorous civic activities of the this new intelligentsia of Hindu College whom, Partha Chatterjee (2013:126- 27) rightly called “the first generation of Young Indians schooled in the anti-absolutist sprit of reason and liberty.” This ‘anti- absolutist spirit’, grew as a direct outcome of dense network of civil-societal engagement can be explained as ‘traditional modernity’ which tended to establish and protect civil and political rights of people against the arbitrary power of the authoritarian company rule. It is quite compatible to note that Tocqueville, in his ‘Democracy in America (1996:223- 39) has explored how the active civil society including various civil and political associations used to build democratic awareness and political participation in America. He analyzed that the individualistic character of the Americans make them well concerned of various affairs in civil- life and whenever they face any problem in society they use to associate in such an organized manner which led them to form civil associations.

In examining the role of these civil- societal associations, another illustrated picture has been given by Robert Putnam. In his famous work Making Democracy Work: Civic Tradition in Modern Italy, (1994) Putnam argued that people’s public life, community affairs and political participation are highly influenced and determined by their degree of civic engagement to the dense network of civil societal associations, which, in any case, is important for the success of democracy (Putnam, 1994: 94- 97). Putnam, in a comparative analysis of mapping the degree of ‘civic-ness’ or civic engagement among twenty regions of Italy argued:

In most civic regions (Emilia Romagula) the citizens are actively involved in all sorts of local associations--- literary guilds, local bands, hunting clubs, cooperatives... they follow civic affairs avidly in the local press, and they engage in politics out of
programmatic conviction... By contrast, in least civic regions (Such as Calabria) voters are broad to the polls not by issue... an absence of civic associations and the paucity of local media in Calabria mean that citizens are rarely drawn into community affairs. (Putnam, 1994: 97)

In the first half of nineteenth century Bengal where the newly emerged civil societal institutions— the Sabhas, Samities and debating-clubs with which the Young Bengal were directly associated made the growth of civic-political awareness, which, following Putnam can be mentioned as ‘civic-ness’. In Bengal these ‘Sabhas’ and ‘Samities’ were established by the both contemporary trends— liberal modernizers and traditional conservatives (Bagal, 2011: 155). While Academic Association and Society for Acquisition of General knowledge (1938), Bengal British India Society (1843), formed by Derozians represent the associations of liberal modernizers, associations like Dharma Sabha, led by Radhakanta Deb represents the latter trend (Chaterjee, 2013: 128).

The Calcutta Town Hall (estd. in 1813) as a platform of civic engagement also played a profound role in building such ambience of civic-ness. Numerous public meetings had been taken place in Town Hall, viz. agitation against censorship on press in 1823 and in 1835, meeting for the demand of free immigration of the Europeans in India which Partha Chatterjee (2013: 157) rightly described as practicing anti-absolutist movement in contemporary Bengal.

In the subsequent years numerous debating clubs, sabhas and samities were founded all over Calcutta, which, played an important role in enchanting the mode of popular participation in various political as well as social issues. Recalling the remarkable contribution of Academic Association the Hindu Patriot (25th January, 1868) published:

“What the Oxford and Cambridge Clubs are to those universities, the Academic Association was to the old Hindu College. As the greatest senators and statesmen . . . cultivate oratory in those clubs, so did the first alumni of the Hindu College, who gave in
after-life so eminently distinguished themselves, cultivated their debating powers in the Association”. (Reprinted in Bagol, 2010: 159)

In case of political activities of the Derozians the most remarkable role was taken by the Society for Acquisition of General knowledge (henceforth used as SAGK). It was set up on 20th February, 1828. Tarachand Chakraborty and Ramgopal Ghose was the President and the Vice President respectively while Pearychand Mittre and Ramtanu Lahiri were the secretaries of SAGK (Chottopadhyay, 1965: xxvii). This society played a crucial role so far as modern awakening in Bengal was concerned. Various contemporary social, political and economic issues were discussed and papers were presented by the Derozians in the meetings of the SAGK. In order to give a clear and detailed picture of the issues discussed in various meetings of SAGK Shibnath Shastri has mentioned a short list of the papers among which some of the notables are--- ‘Reforms: Civil and social’ by Krishna Mohan Banerjee; ‘Condition of Hindu Women’ by Mahesh Chandra Deb; Brief outline of the History of Hinduism’ by Gobind Chandra Sen; ‘State of Hindustan under the Hindus’ by Pearychand Mitter; and a host of others (Shastri, 2007: 103).

The very name of the society exposes the main objective of the association, i.e. the cultivation of knowledge in contemporary society. The founders of the SAGK were too conscious to include religious controversies as they anticipated that the religious bigotry of the orthodox Hindus, as well as the anti-Indian attitude of certain Christian Missionaries would polarize divisions in the Bengali society and confuse the real burning issues (Chattopadhyay, 1965: xxviii). Krishna Mohan Banerjee, an active member and co-founder of the SAGK, while presenting his first paper entitled as “On the Nature and Importance of Historical Studies” Stated the objective of the SAGK. He stated:

“I hope this association (SAGK) will prove to the world that however vicious and unworthy the state of society might have been before in our country, a change has been effected to a considerable extent… I hope this fact will cheer the heart of those who have
If we tend to have a closer scrutiny of the role of SAGK in the process of making liberal as well as nationalist political awareness particularly three among many papers deserve to be mentioned here. The first one is “The present state of the East India Company’s Criminal Judicature and Police under the Bengal Presidency” presented by Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee and the second one read by Shayma Charan Dutt is “The Duties of Man as a Subject of the State and as a member of the Society” and the third one is Krisna Mohan Banerjee’s paper entitled as “Reform: Civil and Social” (Chattopadhyay, 1965: xxxvi- xlv)

In his paper “The present state of East India Company’s Criminal Judicature and Police under the Bengal Presidency”, Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhyay directly attacked the nature of governance and judiciary of the East India Company. Since criticizing or, at least raising question against the government is most indispensable feature of modern liberal democratic ideology, it may be claimed that this paper of him is one of the earliest examples of their liberal democratic consciousness. He remarked:

“British power in this part of India had existed for four-score years… a time amply sufficient for the purification of the streams of justice, had there been a sincere despite to bestow the benefits of a just judicial and administration upon the people. This However had not been done. The courts in the interior were notoriously and shamelessly corrupt.”

(Bengal Harukuru 13th February, 1843: 5)

According to him, this ‘notorious’ and ‘shameless corruption’ had made people suffer an insecurity and made the natives repose the least confidence to the company rule. This dared act of Dakshinaranjan was countered by Capt. D. L. Richardson, the principal of the Hindu College, who interrupted him during the middle of presentation and accused, the writer (Dakshinaranjan) had “calculated to create a discontent” to the company rule and he declared that he could not permit the Hindoo College being
“converted into a den of treason and he would close the doors against all such meetings.”
(Bengal Harukuru, 13th Feb 1843)

Tarachand Chakraborty, the senior most Derozian, who was in the chair of that session rose and criticized Richardson for his arrogance and directed him to pray for apology to Dakshinaranjan as well as to the SAGK. He, being the president of the SAGK and chairman of the session directed:

“I consider your (Richardson’s) conduct as an insult to the society and that if you do not retract what you have said and make due apology, we shall represent the matter to the committee of the Hindoo college and if necessary to the Government itself… (you) possess no right to interrupt a member of this society in the utterance of his opinion”
(Bengal Harukuru, 13th Feb, 1843: 1-2)

Nonetheless Captain Richardson declined to apologize or to retract; this incident, it may be argued was of a crucial importance from two particular reasons. Firstly, it revealed the liberal democratic sense of Dakshinaranjan as well as of SAGK, who raised the question and openly criticized the omnipotent authoritarian Company Rule by labeling its administration “notoriously and shamelessly corrupt”. Secondly, the way in which Tarachand Chakraborti combated the unconstitutional way taken by Captain Richardson was significant from liberal point of view as the latter was directed to plead apology to Dakshinaranjan and SAGK as well. This daring act, a white was asked to pray apology to a native for the establishment of justice was unthinkable in contemporary India. That is why Goutam Chattopadhyay (1965: xliii) and Shibnath Shastri (2007: 103-104) acknowledged the epoch making role of SAGK for the making of political consciousness and anti-absolutist liberal ambience.

Another remarkable paper based on liberal democratic ideal was read by Shama Charan Dutt, a member of SAGK. In this Prize-winning essay (1845) he clearly demonstrated the rights of the governed to make resistance against any form of arbitrary governance. He wrote,
“As subjects of the state we should be loyal ourselves to a good king and good government and encourage loyalty to others… We should love our native country… But though we should be loyal to good kings, we are by no means bound to pay allegiance to a tyrant… on the contrary; it is our duty to rid the world of tyrannical monarchs and to subvert despotic governments. (Quoted in Chottopadhyay, 1965: xxxix)

Another insightful work based on the liberal introspection of the importance of right to conscience or right to choice of an individual was Krishnamohan Banerjee’s essay read in the meeting of SAGK, was ‘Reform: civil and social’, in which he emphatically advocated for the ideal of ‘self’ in terms of taking decision or action of an individual as a member of the society. Regarding it as a ‘holy- natural right’ for the overall development of civilization he argued,

“Civilization meets with a dead- stop when it is not allowed to make any further progress than antiquity chose to assign to it… and men live and die as if they were only capable of being led by others but were never competent for any original thought or action. It is therefore a point of peculiar importance to be constantly reminded of our natural right to think and act for ourselves… and to study non- submission to any system which we may have discovered to be pernicious to the interest of Humanity”. (Banerjee, 1965: 185)

Thus, the SAGK gradually was tending towards more and more political matters and during its course of such remarkable activities, another political organization Deshitaishani Sabha was set up by these radical liberals in 1841. This society was not less than a landmark in the creation of modern liberal democratic consciousness as it, for the first time focused on the issue and problem of political subjugation of India by the British. On the occasion of its foundation ceremony Sarada Prasad Sen, one of the direct disciples of Derozio expressed the main objective of the sabha. He said,

Ever since the commencement of the British supremacy in this country, the policy of our present rulers has been to deprive us of the enjoyment of political liberty” (Quoted in Chattopadhyay, 1965: xli)
By the 1840s the emerging civil and political consciousness got a huge momentum when George Thomsom, the renowned political agitator of anti-slavery campaign, came to India accompanied by Dwarakanath Tagore, the close associate of Rammohun, who went to England in 1842. Thompson within a short span of time succeeded in creating tremendous enthusiasm among the members of Young Bengal for his liberal mind and enchanting oratory quality (Bose, 1976: 248). Another important reason for his acceptance was his membership at British India Society (estd. in London in 1839), established by William Adam, the friend of Rammohun. Thompson suggested forming a political association similar to the British India Society of London. On 18th April, 1843 the Bengal British India Society was formed, which arguably was the first full-fledged political organization of India (Majumdar R., 1971: 282). George Thompson and Pearychand Mitter were the president and the secretary of the new association respectively and the members of SAGK Chandra Shekhar Deb, Tarachand Chakraborty and Ramgopal Ghose were the leading members of it. The Bengal British India Society though was loyal to the British played important role in building liberal political culture by drawing the attention of the government to grievances of the governed in a constitutional way.

The Unrest in the 1850s: Growth of Constitutional Political Agitation

By the mid-nineteenth century the illustrious political activities of the Derozians by utilizing the advantages of print media and a host of civil-political associations served to prepare the ground for the growth of a vivid political consciousness in contemporary society based on liberal ideals. It is true that these newspapers and associations touched a limited fraction of the masses but it was enough to stir the socio-political texture of the contemporary society. The persistent anti-absolutist political activities of the modernizers, though often faced reactionary response from the authoritarian rulers who even labeled their activities as ‘treason’ could not build enough impediment to the emergence of new political outlook which was based on distinct liberal and democratic ideals. Throughout the period these modernizers were found to follow legalism and
constitutionalism as a viable method for mitigating any form of grievances and British misrule. Even, their deep enchantment to liberal constitutionalism made them detached from violence-based uprising of 1857 and the Indigo peasant uprising of 1859-60 (Sen, 1988: 43). This ideal of liberal constitutionalism became the only potent weapon for achieving their goal. Later in the 1870s Surendranath Banerjee (1998: 40), while addressing the youth on the Italian Unification by Mazzini he said, “I want the young men of Bengal to realize their potentialities and to qualify themselves to work for the salvation of their country but upon lines instinct with the spirit of constitutionalism”.

This ideal of liberal constitutionalism as a means of mitigating misrules was found in the political activities of these modernizers on different occasions during the 1840s and 1850s, among which the notables were the demand of Indianization of services, criticizing Charter act of 1833, the Black Act controversy of the late 1840s and the Charter Act of 1853. In public sphere they emphatically championed the ideal of right to equality on the issue of public services, which scholars like Ashok Kumar Sen and Biman Behari Majumdar had rightly mentioned as the first step to Indianization of services (Sen, 1988: 63, Majumdar, 1967: 60). Following different constitutional means for the demand of more and more Indianization of services, like writing petition and sending memorials to the Court of Proprietors of the East India Company they strongly advocated for the equal status of natives and British people. Through the columns of Jnananneshan they even strongly countered James Mill’s stance about opening the scope of government services for Indian. Mill argued.

Since the scope of government services for the Indians is very limited it is better to encourage them to save their property through agriculture, business and industry rather than by governmental jobs (Quoted in Dasgupta, 1989: 205).

When Mill was asked about the problem that may arise on depriving the eligible Indians from the higher posts of government such as Tax Collection Department, the reply that Mill gave was not less that surprising. Mill was of the opinion that “the poor
feeling of being governed by foreigners is something which he believes is possessed only by the European and not by the Indians.” (Jnananneshan, March, 29, 1833: 5)

Such an opinion of Mill was severely criticized by the radical liberals who urged desperately for the implementation of the ‘clause 87’ of the Charter Act of 1833, which opened administrative posts for eligible Indians irrespective of all distinctions. It was observed by the Derozians that due to rampant nepotism and bias attitude of the Company authorities and absence of inherent competition, greater number of qualified Indians had not been appointed to higher administrative posts. It seemed utterly unjustified to them to import civilians from England for governmental post, especially in a situation when the growth of modern education in India developed to a considerable degree. So, they urged the government to the Haileybury College to arrange public competition (Sen, 1988: 64).

In a meeting at Town Hall on 5th of January, 1835 Rashik Krishna Mallick, while criticizing the charter Act of 1833 said,

“The best school for those who are to hold office in India is India itself (cheers). All the lesson they (Englishmen) receive at Haileybury school can lead them but little to a practical acquaintance with the wants and feelings of the people of India.” (Quoted in Chattopadhyay, 1965: XIII)

This, it may be argued that the claim for more and more Indianization of governmental services was not merely for the material advancement of the educated middle class, simultaneously it conformed to their political ideology of fighting for civil rights and principle of equality. The growth of liberal political awareness further strengthened by the famous ‘Black Act controversy’ which originated due to the racial discrimination between the English and the Indians in the judicial field by the mid-nineteenth century. No sooner the Supreme Court was set up in Calcutta a number of civil Courts and criminal Courts were established in different suburbs in Bengal. But the British subject residing in those mofussils enjoyed an exemption from the jurisdiction of
the criminal court and they enjoyed the privilege of trial by the Supreme Court only (Shastri, 2007: 126). As a consequence of this unjust privilege, by the 1850s a ruthless repression over natives as well as the general and judicial officials of the company became too aggressive and, in response to the increasing demand of mitigating such atrocious oppression Drinkwater Bethum, the Law Member of the Government of India, introduced four Bills with the object of bringing British-born subjects under the jurisdiction of those local courts (Shastri, 2007: 126, Ghosh, 1871: 45-49).

This attempt created a great consternation among the British-born subjects and addressing those four drafts as ‘Black Act’ they organized huge agitation and within a few days they gathered hundreds of supporters and a healthy fund of rupees thirty six thousand. The Anglo-Indian press hurled slanders and abuses against Bethun and as a part of agitation they organized meeting at Town Hall and sent a memorandum to the Parliament (Sen, 1988: 67).

The decline of such acts for the establishment of equality made the educated middle class aggrieved deeply. The Friend of India on 24th January 1850, in criticism of such unjust claim of judicial privilege wrote:

For an Englishman to find himself made to stand in the same prisoner’s dock with a native who wears a simple apparel of Dhutty and Chadar, whereas his antagonist wear Pantaloons and a broadcloth coat, may appear degrading to an Englishman, but is perfectly equitable in the eyes of reason and justice “ (Quoted in Sen, 1988: 67)

Despite the fact that an attempt of establishing justice and equality was defeated by an unjust agitation, it made a deep mark upon the new intelligentsia as they experienced how, within a short span of time the Englishmen organized political movement and collected healthy fund. They observed the various constitutional means taken by the Englishmen, viz. organizing meetings at Town Hall, sending memorial to the British Parliament and attempting to create a public opinion by English newspapers. Though the Bengal British India Society remained inactive and failed to mobilize
educated opinion to counteract the Black Act agitation, the only Indian who took remarkable role in defence of the four bills was Ramgopal Ghose. He (1871: 45-84) wrote a tract entitled ‘Remarks on the Black Act’ and gave radical speeches explaining the importance of the bill, for which he earned the name ‘Indian Demosthenes’ (Bose, 1976: 250).

The pamphlet written by Ramgopal Ghose in defence of Bethune’s drafts though was drowned by a louder protest of Englishmen but was of remarkable importance as it strongly advocated the ideal of constitutional reform and the principle of equality. Even he has to face humiliating insult at Agrihorticulture Society (Sastri, 2007: 127). This work revealed the degree of his deep love for equality, rule of law and constitutionalism. He (1871:48-76), to establish his reasoned monograph and to decline the unjust demand of the Anglo-Indians wrote with references to the statements of Charles Grant, the President of the Board of Control and others. Ramgopal (1871: 69-85) also cited the nature of corruption and discrimination in the trying of a native and white-man for same fault, and strongly advocated for the inclusion of Indians in the administration of justice as it was highly imperative that they should be allowed to perform the role of juror.

**The Birth of British Indian Association**

All these, the prevailing discriminations, ruthless humiliation and most importantly the ill-governance of the Company, as Shastri (2007: 127) noted, created a sharp need of organized political movement in Bengal by the early 1850s. The impending renewal of the charter Act in 1853 also gave fillip to the need of strong political organization in India (Bose, 1976: 250-51). The leaders of both existing political organization— the Land Holder’s Association and the Bengal British India Society expressed interest in merging these two into a single but strong political organization. On 31st October, 1851 in a joint meeting of these two organizations arranged by activists like Digambar Mitra and Ramgopal Ghose a new organization known as British Indian Association with distinct political outlook was established by the amalgamation of the
former two (Majumdar, 1965: 33 – 35). Soon, a number of branches of this association spread in Madras, Poona and Bombay (Ghosh, 2009: 59). Radhakanta Deb was the president while Debendranath Tagore, Digambar Mitra and Ramgopal Ghose were some of the distinguished member occupied different posts in the association.

The ‘Black Act Controversy’, in other words, the vicious humiliation of Ramgopal Ghose widened the existing breach between Europeans and natives and created a feeling of estrangement among the European Community who though took part in former organizations remained aloof in the British Indian Association (1851). The leading agitators against Black Act Dickens, Theobald, Turton and a whole host of free traders whom the Young Bengal esteemed as ‘liberals’ stood unmasked to them as their hypocrisy became explicit for the unethical demand and agitation for racial superiority and privilege, which, it may be argued created an explicit disillusionment among the Bengali liberals (Sen, 1988: 70). Ramgopal Ghose (1871: 56-57) in his ‘Remarks on the Black Act’ (1851) remarked,

“…men who are confessedly reformers and radicals in politics, are now attempting, in order to serve their own purposes, to throw ridicule upon the sacred indisputable principle of equality before law.” (1871: 56-57)

As a consequence of this emerging breach between Natives and British the Town Hall which had been taking most prominent role in the anti-absolutist movements in different occasions together by both of these communities became a contested place. And racially mixed meeting became a rarity (Chatterjee, 2013: 157). Against this stormy background the British Indian Association, from the very beginning started distinct political activities based on sacred principle of equality. In 1852 when the new Charter Act was under consideration for renewal the British Indian Association sent petitions to the British Parliament complaining against grievances in social and political issues. More specifically, the petition was emphatic against the perilous act of the union of executive power with the legislative and urged for establishment of a legislature not only based on distinct persons but also on those who possess a popular character representing the
sentiments of the people. It is compatible to note that in the early 1830s Rammohun Roy, their predecessor strongly advocated for this ‘separation of power’ between executive and legislature. Regarding it as a cardinal principle of a good government, he emphatically opposed the unification of magisterial and judicial power with the office of the collector (Roy, 1947:25, Part-III)

Besides the members of young Bengal, Harish Chandra Mukherjee, the turbulent editor of ‘Hindu Patriot and a liberal modernizer assisted Digambar Mitra in drafting the petition (Sinha, 1968:170). This petition was of crucial importance in terms of creating a sense of national aspiration as it clearly criticized the misrule of East India Company and demanded to make arrangements for the inclusion of eligible Indians into higher posts. It clearly demanded the constitutional rights of the natives, improvements of the judiciary, the police administration and the education of the people. But all these efforts for the democratic rights went in vain in the new Charter Act of 1853 and the association, being inspired by the organized agitation of British-born subjects against the Macaulay Proposal of Judicial Reform, dubbed Black Act (drafted by Bethun) continued agitation for the inclusion of Indians in the Legislative Council and demanded the reorganization of the principle of equality for all classes of people in the eye of law (Majumder R. C., 1971: 283). Admiring the role of British Indian Association historian Ramesh Chandra Majumder (1971: 183) noted that the constitutional demands made by the association seemed to indicate that most of the political demands of the Indian National Congress (1885) during the first decade were largely anticipated by the political leaders of Bengal more than thirty years before.

The British Indian Association led by most of the members of Young Bengal must be acknowledged for its rigorous political activities which took remarkable role in the making of liberal and democratic ambience in the mid-nineteenth century. Having a distinct political outlook based on liberal principles it established the necessity of institutional reforms on a sound-footing. Its significant role may be summed up in five remarkable activities. Firstly, the radical members of British Indian association, such as
Pearychand Mitter, Ramgopal Ghose and Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhyay tried to build a bridge between the people, society and the distant state. They, to elicit the public opinion translated various bills into Bengali and framed questionnaires on relevant issues, like indigo planting, measures of reforms and policies for mitigating grievances and circulated those extensively all over. In other words, they tended to shape the government-governed relation which was quite amorphous by then.

Secondly, they quite desperately tried to establish the principle of equality on issues like civil services and carried on agitation in favour of this Indianization of services, which in the successive decades became more significant demand in the second half of nineteenth century.

Thirdly, it fought for the introduction of fair jury system and organized movements against the discriminations in the judicial administration which preserved special status of European offenders in the eye of law and advocated for institutional reforms.

Fourthly, the association made agitations for the separation of judiciary from executive as they could anticipate the perils of institutional amalgamation of those two.

Lastly but most importantly, the liberals demanded for making the executive and the legislature a representative government and a representative council for voicing the sentiments of the people (Sen, 1988: 73). Ghosh severely criticized the proposed constitution of the Legislative council which did not represent “native views, native feelings and native feelings”. (Quoted in Sinha, 1968: 109)

**The Economic views of the Young Bengal: the Liberal Stand**

In economic ideals, from a broader perspective, the Derozians should definitely be regarded as the members of liberal school. Like their predecessor Rammohun they all were the staunch supporters of free trade or *Laissez-faire* economy. In their economic views a sharp impact of classical liberals like Jeremy Bentham, Adam Smith and David
Ricardo was found to a considerable degree, which was rightly described by Andrew Sartori (2008: 92-93):

“With respect to the question relating to political economy, they all belong to the school of Adam Smith. They are clearly of opinion that the system of monopoly, the restrained upon trade, and the international laws of many countries do nothing but paralyze the effort of industry, impede the progress of agriculture and manufacture and prevent commerce from flowing in its natural course”.

The Young Bengal members were too liberal to accept any form of monopoly in economic sphere and advocated for the opening up of Indian market to British manufactures. They not only criticized the peril of gigantic monopoly of East India Company over Indian Market but also lamented for the depressing state of manufacturers and commerce of the country and tried to encourage those (Sen, 1988: 33, 73). The British free traders, the interlopers too encouraged Indians to express their opinions freely and imbibed the radical, rationalist political and economic doctrines of eighteenth century Europe actively among these new generations of English education. When the East India Company’s privilege was established by the renewal of Charter Act in 1833 a public meeting was held at Calcutta Town Hall on the 5th of January 1835, where, criticizing the Charter Act Rashikkrishna Mallick accused the British Parliament for “looking to the interest of the East India stock and not to those of the inhabitants of the country (Bengal Harukuru, 10th January, 1835). This meeting was of crucial importance because it represented both the Bengali middle class intelligentsia and the European free traders on a common platform.

In economic views, the tradition started by Rammohun and Dwarakanath Tagore was furthered more steadily by the radical liberals belonging to Young Bengal, who, like Rammohun rightly anticipated the benefits of incorporation of Europe settlers enriched with ‘European Skill’ and ‘Capital’. They anticipated, as Rammohun did earlier, that the alliances between European men and Indian women would produce a large population of mixed blood whose loyalties would be uncertain; and a large settlers with a distinct
sense of rights could become a potent source of political opposition to the colonial government (Chatterjee, 2013: 146). They firmly believed that if the European settlers would be encouraged to engage in commerce in India they, being more aware of their rights belonging to a liberal government with enlightened public opinion, then the introduction of many improvements in the laws and the judicial system would happen; the benefit of which would definitely be extended to the inhabitants generally (Chatterjee, 2013: 151). As a consequence of this, they aspired India would developed to wealth, intelligence, and public spirit enlightened with liberal ideals. On the other hand the English free-traders too, not only built connection with the Indians business community but also looked to greater cultural and political collaboration by founding a number of Indo-European societies (British India Society) and associating Indians with their movements for constitutional rights, such as freedom of press and inclusion of Indians in the jury (Cherterjee, 2013: 61; Sen, 1988: 34). The British bourgeois, thus, tried to create an atmosphere of uniformity of interest and grievances and ally themselves with their Indian counter parts. This liberal economic stance made the young radicals advocate strongly for the opening of China trade, unrestricted settlement of Europeans in India and agitate against the monopoly of East India Company. Kishory Chand Mitter (the younger brother of Pearychand Mitter) who belonged to the school of Young Bengal criticized the narrow policy of ‘Merchant Princes’ and ‘joint stock sovereigns’, and demanded the abolition of their salt, opium and administrative monopolies so that the Indians might have a share in the benefits of commerce (Majumder, 1967: 89). Rashik Krisna Mallick in his Jnananneshan (8th April, 1833), while criticizing the Charter Act wrote, “…A body of merchants has been placed over us as our sovereigns”. Lamenting this nature of monopoly be raised the question, “How far can they frame laws and administer justice, so as to protect our rights and liberties consistently with their mercantile spirit?” (Jnananneshan, 8th April, 1833: 5)

Besides such liberal arguments the Young Bengal showed their anxiety of huge drain of Indian Wealth. Being led by such aspiration that an Industrial revolution will
happen in India they expressed their deep concern about the drainage of wealth from India, which was visualized explicitly within the first two years of the Charter Act of 1833. Rashik Krishna criticized this drainage as:

“Within the first two years of the charter, the revenue remittances to England have mounted to six millions sterling of six crores of rupees and it is likely that the two succeeding years will require as much more. But the worst feature of this Drain is that the Presidency of Bengal… is the only part that suffers… Had only the tithe of this annual loss been expended on works of improvement, what advantages would India derive, not only in the construction of public works but also in the establishment of schools and colleges for the introduction of the people. (Quoted in Chattopadhyay, 1965: xix)

This deep concern for the one-way drainage of wealth, as Rashik Krishna mentioned, later became one of the important issues of national liberation movement and thus, it may be claimed that before Dadabhai Naoroji they focused on the ‘drain of wealth’ which Naoroji popularized later in early twentieth century.

Thus, it may be argued that the basic ingredients of liberal economic doctrine—free-trade, opening up the markets, free and fair competition, free-flow of capital and goods all were present in the economic views and activities of those radical modernizers. It is true, often they were criticized, that their economic activities were guided by their vested interest of business because some of them (Like Ramgopal Ghose) were leading businessmen in contemporary society. Nonetheless, it may be claimed that they were politically and economically conscious enough to think for the cause of India and hoped that the British liberal bourgeois ideals might open the gates of their overall development and ascent to self-dignified individual. Their rigorous activities such as framing and circulating questionnaire by Bengal British India Society for gaining knowledge about the condition of the peasantry, the columns of Bengal Spectator and Jnananneshan which vividly depicted the suffering of the Bengal peasantry—in the hands of landlords and indigo planters, Pearychand Mitter’s ‘The Zamidar and the Ryot’s and most importantly
Rashik Krishna’s deep concern about the drain of Indian Wealth— all may be placed as the proof to negate such biased criticisms against them.

Conclusion

The illustrious social and political thought and activities of the Young Bengal, it may be argued, played a remarkable role in the making of liberal democratic ambience in the mid-nineteenth century, more specifically, from the thirties to sixties of the nineteenth century. During that phase of Bengal Renaissance they took to all constitutional means to mitigate any form of misrule of the alien rulers: they published tracts and pamphlets, expressed their opinions and criticized governmental policies, founded political associations, convened public meetings; wrote petitions and dispatched to the higher authorities; at general elections in England they appealed the voters to elect candidates sympathetic to Indian cause (Sen, 1988: 43) and so on. In other words, these early liberals through their vigorous socio-political activities developed and popularized constitutionalism, one of the basic ingredients of modern liberal democracy. But surprisingly, most of the existing works on them have ignored this remarkable role they played in the rise and growth of liberal ideals in nineteenth century Bengal, which took more prominent shape during the latter half of the century. Instead, most of the scholars, while assessing the role and contribution of Young Bengal have hurled slandered against them with a number of phrases and adjectives, some of which are not only half-truth and baseless but also distorted to a great extent. For example, Sushobhan Sarkar (1970: 119) accused the Derozians for being retreated from their own early radicalism in the fields of religious and political thoughts and as a result of which their contribution became “nearly very nil”. A. F. S. Ahmed (1976: 58) has observed that the Young Bengal spirit of revolt as their inability to find a place in contemporary Hindu society. Tarashankar Banerjee (1985: 291- 92) has labeled their role by phrases like “tall talk and low performance” And ‘a fruitless intellectual jugglery.’ Another scholar Anil Seal (1968:196) has commented that the “Young Bengal lived on ivory towers.” Among non-Indian scholars Charles Heimsath accused them for “Denationalizing emasculation” (Chattopadhyay,
Apart from these contempts the Derozians have generally been criticized for being detached from the common mass and for being failed to build up a sustained movement and developing ideology. N. S. Bose (1976:89) joined the same line by criticizing them as “intellectual aliens.” and according to Binoy Ghosh their activities can be described as “extreme progressivism, frivolity and recklessness”. Most of all, they were often criticized for their love of the West and intoxication with the English and for declining Indian culture and tradition.

Nonetheless such criticisms the remarkable role played by the Young Bengal can never be undermined. From a closer insight of their vigorous social, civil and political activities most of the above arguments and charges against them can be over-ruled. Contrary to Susobhan Sarkar’s argument it may be claimed that the more they became mature the more they became active in mitigating social and political grievances. Their rigorous social and political activities in SAGK in late thirties and early forties, writing petitions to British government for equality, agitating for the civil rights, Ramgopal’s remarkable stance on the Black Act issue—all may be cited to dismiss such slanders dubbed over them hyperbolically. Are these activities referring to their frivolity or recklessness? They were criticized for failure to develop an alternative ideology. Perhaps, the most common feature of them, on which all scholars irrespective of Indians or non-Indians would be unanimous, is their deep love of western liberal ideals. What kind of ideology were those critics looking for? Declining all these biased charges against them, following Goutam Chattopadhyay (1965: xlviii) it may be claimed that it was the liberal ideology which made them launch a two-fold courageous attack on dominant Hindu conservatism as well as on British misrule in India. Moreover, it was their liberal ideology which, especially from the 1850’s aided by political factors they became more imbued with national feelings and projected political unity of the country as a solution to various problems and sought more purposefully to fight for their rights and national self-respect, which, in any case was far from “denationalizing emasculation” Again, it was their deep enchantment of liberalism which made they form anti-absolutist movements.
against racial arrogance, discriminations, corruptions and oppressions by European vested interest. Radhanath Sikdar’s Case, Dakshinaranjan-Richardson controversy, Ramgopal’s tract, Chakraborty faction are some of those numerous instances which may be cited as their deep sense of national self-respect. Far from being ‘intoxicated with English’ they never neglect vernacular language and advocated the cause of the mothertongue. Krishnamohun studied Hindu philosophy on the Sastric literature; Tarachand Chakroborti translated Manu, chief journal like Jnananneshan was published both in English and Bengali, the Masik Patrika was published in colloquial Bengali in favour of the women and children are some of their activities which may be cited to dismiss such distorted criticism. Moreover, Krishnamohan Banerjees (1965:184) one dictum proves how far they were from ‘being intoxicated with English’, i.e. “If we act upon the principle of discarding everything that was ancient, society would rather retrograde than advance in point of civilization and enlightenment.” In other words, they were conscious enough to point out the link between cultivation of the mother tongue and the question of political liberation, as they took concrete lesson from American independence and French Revolution.

In their response to social issues they not only advocated for monogamy and widow- remarriage in the (one decade before of Vidyasagar would take up the issue) Hindu society through Jnanannshon, Bengal spectator and SAGK but also took secular stance while advocating for education of women and equal rights for all irrespective of all religion and caste. In short, their rational introspection made them anticipate that the progress of liberal ideals in India was to be conditioned not by isolation from the West but by healthy interaction by diffusing the treasures of Western knowledge and ideologies. All these, needless to say, gradually created an intellectual as well as material ambience for the growth of democratic ideals and national feelings which, in the latter half of nineteenth century took more prominent shape in the vigorous activities of subsequent thinkers like Dwarakanath Vidyabhushan, Ashutosh Mukherjee, Manmohan
Ghosh, Lalmohan Ghosh and a host of others, on whom the following chapter will focus as a part of this process of incarnation of democratic consciousness.

**Notes**

1. Rammohun, in spite of being one of the principal initiators of the scheme of Hindu College, voluntarily disassociated himself when he came to know that the conservative patrons vehemently opposed to include his name as its founding member and threatened to withdraw their support from the project. He was too liberal to launch any protest and spontaneously withdrew his name because, to him, the Hindu College seemed more important than his fame.

2. Some of his favourite students of Hindu College were Krishnamhan Banerjee, Rashik-Krishna Mallick, Dakshinaranjan Mukhopadhyay, Ramgopal Ghose, Madhavchandra Mallick, Ramtanu Lahiri, Mahesh Chandra Ghoah, Sivachandra Deb, Hara Chandra Ghosh, Radhanath Sikdar, Gobinda Chandra Bysack and Amritlal Mitra.

3. While most of the scholars like J.C. Bagal, Subir Roychoudhury, Goutam Chattopadhyay and N.S. Bose mentioned that Derozio Joined Hindu College in 1826, his early biographer Edwards and Sibnath Sashtri pointed that it was 1828.

4. Academic Association was the debating club set up by Derozio who was its President and Umacharan Bose was the secretary of the association, (see Sastri, 2007, 69-71)

5. A. D. Tocqueville in his *Democracy in America* as well as Robern Putham in the book making Democracy work in Italy have argued that the civil societal associations by enhancing civic engagement of the people enrich democracy by promoting civic participation of the common people in a society. (See, Tocqueville,…2nd chap)

6. The Calcutta Town Hall was the main centre of civic engagement in the 1920’s and 1930’s Historical meetings like, Protest Meeting against the Censorship of Press in 1923, Meeting on the demand of free settlers of Europeans in India in 1827 were arranged at Town Hall.
7. Though Chatterjee made an explicit distinction between this early modern nationality led by Rammohun or Derozio and the nationalist response to colonial tutelage. He is not willing to show a linear history of liberalism in India from the battles in the liberal Democratic constitutions of the republic of India in 1950. For further study, See, Chatterjee, 2012: 156-58

8. The main object of the association was to promote and development of social progress in the presidency of Bengal by uniting Europeans and Natives of all classes in the collection, arrangement and classification of facts bearing on the social, intellectual and moral condition of the people. (See, Bose, 1976:365)

9. Even if they had to enter into the holy-room (sacred room assigned for worship in every home) they always shouted the quotations from Iliad written by Homar. (See, Sastri, 2007: 71)

10. They had to face various kinds of rumors and insulting gossips which were enough to malign their public life too. None of the Hindu families gave them shelter. Rammohun Roy too had to face such types of bitter experiences. For details, see Roychoudhury, S., 1993: 59-51, Ghose, B., 1980:101-03.

11. Among various undesirable incidents during those stormy phases in the history of Bengal one of the notable was the incident at Krishnamohun’s house. The friends of Krishnamahun (the Young Bengal) used to come and discussed about various superstitions of orthodox Hindu religion. One day when Krishnamohun was absent they came and as a symbolic protest against Hindu religion they brought and ate Beef and bread. Even they threw the Beef to the Brahmin neighbour’s house. This incident caused huge humiliation to them and as a consequence Krishnamohun was made to leave his paternal house. For details, see Ghose, B., 1980:101-03.
12. Besides theoretical mode of education Tarachand strongly advocated in favour of rendering vocational education through governmental institutions. For this purpose he gave instances of France where the Government of Louis Philippe was maintaining the Napoleonic tradition of imparting vocational teaching in transforming into industrial land. (see Majumdar, 1967: 60)

13. Shibchandra Deb established three schools— An English, a Bengali and a Girls School at his birth place Konnagar. Derozians like Rajkrishna Mitra, Nabin Chandra Mitra, Taranath Mitra, Kashinath Mitra and many founded a good number of schools in different parts of Bengal, which enhanced the liberal ideals and contributed to the awakening in Bengal in early nineteenth century. (Mukhopadhyay, 2005: 140-41)

14. ‘The Reformer’ edited by Prasanna Kumar Tagore, one of the close associates of Raja Rammohun Roy was another contemporary newspaper which published a good number of articles on subjugation of women in Hindu society. (see Chattopadhyay, G., 1978: 143-182).

15. The religious matters were consciously excluded from the discussions of the ‘Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge’. Because they thought the religious bigotry of the orthodox Hindus and the anti-Indian attitude of certain Christian Missionaries tended to polarize divisions in the Bengali society and confuse real issues. For details, see Chattopadhyay, 1965: xxviii-xxxvii)

16. The demand of Age of Reason to the students of Hindu College was too high to meet. When the first thousand copies were imported to Kolkata it was sold at one rupee per copy and soon, due to its rising demand those were sold at a price of five rupees per copy. (see Bose, 1976: 73)

17. As a result it earned some wrath of the conservative Hindus. The Sambad Pravakar on 18th November, 1841 noted that Derozio was conspiring against Hinduism through the Enquirer and ridiculed him for failing to do so. (See, Sen Asok, 1974: 330)
18. Though Bhabanicharan was initially associated with Rammohun Roy but ideological differences made them separated and soon Samachar Chandrika became popular as a rival of Sambad Kaumudi and other liberal minded papers.

19. For details of these articles see Jnananneshan in Ghosh B., 1966: 795-807.


21. Shibnath Shastri believes that the real responsibility of editorship was rested on the shoulder of Tarachand Chakraborty who was the senior-most among them. (See, Shastri, 2007: 108-10)

22. The main aim of British India Society was to make improvement of the condition of the native population.

23. As Captain Richardson accused the talk of Dakshinaranjan as ‘treason’ because he criticized the contemporary court and administration of the company. (See Bengal Harukuru, February 13, 1843)

24. Drafts of the four act were— (a) Draft of an Act abolishing exemption from the jurisdiction of the East India Company’s criminal Courts;

(b) Draft of an act declaring the privileges of her Majesty’s European subjects;

(c) Draft of an act for the protection of judicial officers; and

(d) Draft of an act for the trial by jury in the company’s courts. (See Ghose Ramgopal, 1871: 45)


26. Binoy Ghosh, in a Bengali monthly Parichay published an article entitled ‘Maharshi Debendranath Tagore’ (Feb, 1965) has criticized the radicalism of the Young Bengal by these words.
Chapter V

The Rise of Nationalist Democratic School in Bengal (1850-1885)
FIFTH CHAPTER

The Rise of Nationalist Democratic School in Bengal: 1850-1885

As an inevitable consequence of the vigorous political thought and activities of Rammohun Roy, some of his like-minded liberal associates and the radical students of Hindu college (known as ‘Young Bengal’) in the first half of nineteenth century, a forward political movement, more specifically, a democratic and nationalist movement developed in Bengal in the latter half of the century. The hitherto political movements of the Indians did not go beyond the demands for social, demands for civic and administrative reforms in favour of securing more rights for the Indians, but gradually demands for more space and power in the governance in terms of democratic representation in the offices and councils were raised with distinct liberal and democratic outlook. The nineteenth century Bengal during the period between 1852 and 1885 (before the birth of Indian National Congress) witnessed rapid growth of political consciousness, the diffusion of national sentiment and the epoch of constitutional agitation. The significant factors responsible for such remarkable awakening were: the establishment of some renowned political associations including British India Association (1852), India League (1875), Indian Association (1876); the Revolt of (1857), revolts against Indigo Planters (1859-60), transfer of power from East India Company to British Crown (1858), birth of some fear-less newspapers and journals like Hindu Patriot (1853), Somprakash (1858), Amrita Bazar Patrika (1868), Aryadarshan (1878), Kalpadrum etc., Ilbert Bill controversy (1883), National Conference (1883-1885), and the birth of Indian National Congress (1885). As a result of these three decades of unrest though under the big banner of nationalism a vivid and sustained ambience for the growth of constitutional and liberal democracy was developed through the illustrious thoughts and activities of some liberal
thinkers like Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, Harish Chandra Mukherjee, Lalmohan Ghose, Manmohan Ghose, Surendranath Banerjee, Woomesh Chandra Banerjee, Jogendranath Vidyabhusan and Sisir Kumar Ghosh. But unfortunately, most of these liberal activists had suffered an undeserved neglect in the contemporary examination of the Bengal Renaissance and modernity. The socio-political activities of these liberal modernizers can broadly be divided into two groups. In the first camp there were liberals mostly journalists and educationalist who took significant role in creating intellectual liberal ambience. They were— Harishchandra Mukherjee, Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, Sisir Kumar Ghosh and Jogendranath Vidyabhusan and the second group is composed of those liberals better called as ‘men of action’ or political activists, namely— Surendranath Banerjee, Lalmohun Ghosh, Mannohun Ghosh, Woomesh Chandra Banerjee who along with their intellectual role, actively devoted themselves to constitutional political agitation and a forward political as well as civil-societal movements in the late nineteenth century. This chapter and the one that follows will explore the role of these two liberal groups respectively.

By the 1850s and 1860s the modern liberal democratic ideas in Bengal transformed into a more radical as well as prominent stance analogous to European democratic nationalism. It was generated out of an increasingly dense set of civil-societal associations, various radical newspapers, academic institutions and public debates, which have been discussed in the previous chapter to a good extent. This diffusion of liberalism, it may be argued was the major impetus to the birth of the sentiment of national self-determination. Bayly rightly observed that the liberal ideas were not only foundational to all forms of Indian nationalism but also were remarkably wider than the latter in its scope (Bayly, 2012: 1, 134). On this rising ‘self-respect’ of the Bengali elite, Ranajit Guha observed that it was the immediate source of the nationalist urge of the nineteenth century Bengal (Roy, 1999: 9). The free traffic of ideas of the newly educated Bengali middle class diffused most rigorously through contemporary political associations like Society for Acquisition of General knowledge1 (SAGK), British Indian Association, Bethun
Society and fearless journalism through *Jnananneshan*, Bengal Spectator, Bengalee, Hindu Patriot, Mookherjee’s Magazine, *Somprakash* and a host of other.

**Harish Chandra Mukherjee and the Hindu Patriot: the Diffusion of Liberal Democratic Ideas in Bengal**

In the conceptual genealogy of liberalism in the second half of nineteenth century, perhaps the most significant contribution was made by Harish Chandra Mukherjee (1824-1861), the turbulent editor of *Hindu Patriot*. His fiery pen, especially during the rebellious days of the Revolt of 1857 and Indigo Revolt of late 1850s earned him the title of “a terror to the bureaucracy as well as to white colonialists and planters in Bengal” (Moitra, 1993: 126). It was Girish Chandra Ghosh who started an English weekly ‘Bengal Recorder’ in 1849 and renamed it as ‘*Hindu Patiot*’ in 1853. Harish Chandra took the charge of *Hindu Patriot* during 1856-57 and soon Harish Chandra through his remarkable journalism imbued with a keen sense of national sentiment, not only made *Hindu Patriot* as the mouthpiece of the oppressed peasants but also made it as the first national newspaper of India.

The existing writings on Harish Chandra have also condemned him from some points. For example Chittabrata Palit (1980: 137) criticized his *Hindu Patiot* as “a mouth piece of the landlords” and also labeled him the “errand boy recruited by them from inferior ranks for their purpose”. Mohit Moitra in his *A History of Indian Journalism* (1993: 116), condemned him for bearing a keen ‘soft corner’ for the alien rulers. Dr. Biman Behari Majumdar’s *History of Indian social and Political Ideas* (1967: 94), has also criticized Harish Chandra’s stand on the Permanent Settlement which had been regarded by him as “the most powerful bond which will unite Hindustan to Britain”.

Nonetheless, the remarkable role of Harish Chandra can hardly be undermined in the history of the rise and growth of nationalistic patriotic consciousness as well as liberal democratic conditions in the early second half of nineteenth century Bengal. The basic
problem connected to the existing literatures is that most of the scholars have projected Harish Chandra from some certain pre-disposition which have hardly explored him properly. Despite the book *Selections from the Writings of Harish Chandra Mukherjee* by N. C. Sengupta, which has tended to recall Harish Chandra through his newspaper, it is really unfortunate enough that he had not been explored to the extent he deserved in the contemporary works on nineteenth century. Even scholars like Partha Chatterjee, Binoy Ghosh, Sibnath Shastri, Sushobhan Sarkar and Subrata Dasgupta who have worked in detail on nineteenth century Bengal renaissance, have surprisingly overlooked Harish Chandra and his *Hindu Patriot* in their books.

A staunch journalist as well as liberal modernist Harish Chandra bore almost all the indispensable features of modern liberal democracy such as, raising questions and criticizing freely against a despotic authority, arguing for the defense of equality and most of all acknowledging and ascribing most importance on public opinion in governance. He fearlessly raised questions against various arbitrary policies of Lord Dalhousie. Harish Chandra opposed Dalhousie’s policy of annexation and confiscation of different provinces of India like Nagpur and Jhansi. Considering the policy as ‘foolish’ he attributed it as “the source of discontent in the country”, which prepared the ground for the Great Revolt of 1857 (Moitra, 1993: 129). Under the Caption “the Confiscation of Jhansi” he wrote—

“Lord Dalhousie is determined to shame the devil and beat even Nicholas hollow in the matter of forcible appropriation of neighboring states without the shadow of a pretext to colour his grasping policy …. An Indian Governor General is chartered to destroy dynasties with a scratch of his quill and the cry of the injured is smothered in the din of the roaring waters that separate him from the land of Liberty.” (*Hindu Patriot*, May 18, 1854: 2).

Such an anti-colonial roar against a despotic ruler is one of the many he penned through the columns of his paper, which not only created a sharp liberal public opinion but also created an incisive popular national aspiration in contemporary society. It gave
the most incisive impetus in kindling up the lit of political consciousness through the constitutional battle against authority. Being an active member of the British Indian Association\(^3\) he assisted Digambar Mitra in drafting the petition it sent to the British Parliament on the occasion of the renewal of Charter Act in 1853, complaining against the misrule of East India Company and demanded to make arrangements for the inclusion of eligible Indians into the higher posts and constitutional rights of the natives (Majumdar R.C., 1971: 283). The petition was emphatic against the perilous act of the Union of executive power with the Legislative and urged for establishment of a legislature not only composed of distinct persons but also of those who possess a popular character representing the sentiments of the people. When the new Legislative Council was opened under the caption “The New Legislature Council” Harish Chandra wrote:

“The new Council differs little in constitution from the one which hitherto exercised the functions of Legislation in this country… The British Indian Association, as our readers are already aware, have moved the Governor General to take into consideration, amongst other matters connected with the formation of the new Council, the propriety of its debates being carried on with open doors and allowing parties considering themselves likely to be injured by the proposed law… The Chief defect in a Legislature constituted like the one which is now to give laws to the people of India is its total exclusion of popular element.”\(\textit{Hindu Patriot, May 25, 1854: 2-3}\).

On the demand of inclusion of Indians in the legislative Council to represent popular sentiment he, on June 29, 1854, which suggested that Prasanna Kumar Tagore should be appointed to the post of clerk Assistant to the Council which would help the members in understanding native aspirations and sentiments in a better way. Such a sound advocacy for the establishment of public opinion especially in cases connected to public interest reveals his liberal democratic mind which, it may be argued, even made him stand against any form of codification of the penal laws (Civil and Criminal)\(^4\) (Majumdar, 1967: 94). In an article entitled as “on the Penal Code” Harish Chandra argued, “Codification can only succeed under despotism, and codified law is always inimical to public liberty” \(\textit{Hindu Patriot, January 29, 1857: 1-2}\). Again, his zeal for
public opinion, political liberty and constitutional liberalism made him argue for the recognition of right to self-determination and when, after the ruthless suppression of the Revolt of 1857 the British Parliament was making arrangements for the transfer of India from East India Company to the British Crown he vigorously argued for the restoration of public opinion through the following argument:

“Can a revolution in the Indian Government be authorized by parliament without consulting the wishes of the vast millions of men for whose benefit it is proposed to be made? The reply must be in the negative.....The time has nearly come when all Indian questions must be solved by Indian. The mutinies have made patent to the English public what must be the effects of politics in which the native is allowed no voice. (Hindu Patriot, April 22, 1858: 4)

Besides ascribing most importance on the public opinion of the governed Harish Chandra, unlike contemporary newspapers, both the vernaculars and the English as well as contemporary political modernizers who even attributed the Queen’s Proclamation (1858) as “the Magna Carta of India”, magniloquently raised question, “where is the guarantee that the promises, though coming out of the Queen, will be honored?” (Quoted in Moitra, 1993: 132). Being a pure liberal he ascribed most importance on the ideal relation between government and the governed. Therefore, he condemned the British Government for breaching repeatedly the promises, which, to him was the primary cause of discontent among the Indians.

During the unrest days of the Revolt of 1857 and Indigo-revolt the Hindu Patriot became the month-piece of million oppressed Indians. Simultaneously, it took the most crucial role in bridging the rival stances of rebellions and the British authority as a mediator (Sanyal, 1976, 68) The Revolt of 1857 which broke out on 10th May of the year as an inevitable reaction of ruthless torture and wide discriminations, eventually from the very beginning drew the sympathy of the country and after ten days on 21st May Harish Chandra, in his paper for the first time among the oriental print media raised question, “How slight the hold the British Government has acquired upon the affection of its Indian
subjects events of the past few weeks have shown. It is no longer a mutiny but a rebellion.” (Hindu Patriot, 21 May, 1857: 3)

Harish Chandra, in an era when the existence of a newspaper entirely depended on the allegiance and support it gave to the alien ruler maintained autonomous, impartial and liberal role as a journalist. Even when some Anglo-Indians, some English newspapers and some conservative vernacular papers deliberately advised the Government to dispossess all the land holding classes in India of their lands and made them over to Europeans and the proposal of making extensive English colonization was sedately put forth, Harish Chandra fearlessly and impartially maintained an exemplary balance by criticizing the atrocities of the British as well as, by trying to open the eyes of the enlightened British public to the reality of discriminations and ruthless oppressions in the name of civilized and liberal governance. Acknowledging this liberal and democratic Ramgopal Sanyal (1976: 69) has rightly observed:

“The Mutiny may have inflicted upon this country a thousand losses but it has done some good to it as well. The Proclamation of 1858 which stands as an imperishable monument of the large heartedness of a conquering nation towards the conquered would not have been promulgated so soon but for this execrable rising and responsible journalism.”

Moreover, one of the most indispensable features of modern liberal democracy is to uphold the ideal of secularism or religious tolerance and in this respect Harish Chandra’s attempt must be acknowledged. During the trial of Bahadur Shah, the last of the Mughal kings, the Advocate General of the Government accused the Mahamedden press and tried to describe this ‘national’ upsurge with a communal colour. But Harish Chandra vehemently criticized the role of the British Advocate General as well as the contemporary English Press. Instead of addressing it a ‘religious war’ Harish Chandra wrote, “the nation had been roused and thoroughly prepared for revolution” (Hindu Patriot, August 25, 1857: 3). It is noteworthy that he anticipated the British trick of pouring estrangement into the hearts of Indians through a religious communal sentiment and, by using such terms like ‘nation’ and ‘revolution’ he tried to integrate a national
public opinion as well as tended to diffuse the ideal of liberal democracy, i.e. secularism in an extra-ordinary way.

Like Rammohun Roy he was a staunch supporter of the freedom of press. When a host of contemporary papers continuously expressed sympathy to the rebellions, Lord Canning⁶ who was succeeding Lord Dalhousie accused them of provoking the people to rise in revolt by pouring into their hearts a sense of sedition through misrepresenting the fact in a sedulous, clever and artful way. On this ‘The Public Press in India’, Home Department in its resolution published:

“The Governor General in Council has read extracts from certain native newspapers published in Calcutta, in which falsehoods are uttered and facts grossly perverted for seditious purposes, the objects and intentions of the Government are misrepresented, the Government itself is vituperated, and endeavours are made to excite discontent and hatred towards the minds of its native subjects” (The Parliamentary Papers, 12 June, 1857) (Bhattacharyya, 2012: 232-33).

Arguing this Canning enacted a legislation known as the ‘Gagging Act of 1857’ which prohibited the keeping and using printing presses without a license from the Government, the violation of which empowered the Government to seize and confiscate the press (Mahfadullah, 1984: 138). Harish Chandra radically opposed such despotic legislation but all went in vain. Needless to say, the main object of the Gagging Act was to put impediments to the free traffic of ideas. As a consequence soon a good number of newspapers such as Bengal Harukuru, Doorbin, Sultan-ul-Akbar, Samsad Sudhabarshan, and Hindu Intelligencer were seized to publish (Moitra, 1993: 117-120).

When the ‘Sepoy Mutiny’ (the Revolt of 1857) was suppressed huge atrocities and mass murder were committed in the name of trial under Martial Law and some of the English owned papers took horribly malicious role by encouraging the butchery in the name of retribution. The Rev. James Long in his report of Calcutta press criticized those English Papers as “The English newspapers in too many cases cherish the spirit of antagonism of race” (Quoted in Moitra, 1993: 119). When the British army ruthlessly
burnt the villages Harish Chandra (Hindu Patriot, September 17, 1857:1-2) wrote, “It would be paltry justice to set fire to entire villages and massacre innocent men, women and children…. The Martial Law is a mockery of law and is justifiable only under peculiar circumstances.”

Such an anti-British absolutist stance of Harish Chandra, it may be argued, reveals that he intended to expose the hypocrisy of the so-called British rulers who claimed themselves liberal but suppressed the free ideas arbitrarily. Moreover, through his vigorous journalism he took remarkable role in diffusing a liberal democratic ambience as well as a patriotic and nationalistic consciousness. On June 14, 1861 at an age of mere thirty seven he suffered a premature demise but left a remarkable legacy of activists imbibed with liberal democratic spirit, which had been rightly acknowledged by Girish Chandra Ghosh in his memory through the column of Mukherjee’s Magazine where he wrote, “We had only recently learnt the value of political liberty….Harish Chandra Mukherjee was the soul of this movement.”(Mukherjee Magazine, June 16, 1861: 16)

**Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan and the Epoch of National Democratic School**

The remarkable job rendered by Harish Chandra Mukherjee and his Hindu Patriot in creating an intellectual ambience for the diffusion of liberalism was radically furthered by Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan (1819-1886), perhaps the most prominent liberal thinker in the second half of nineteenth Century Bengal. By the 1860s the rapid growth of western liberal education through various English schools, establishment of Calcutta University (1857), growth of a reverential feeling of ‘Indian-ness’ effected as a result of illustrious socio-political activities of liberal modernizers, improvements in the means of communication (especially by recently set-up railways) and most of all, the indirect influence of the political movements in various parts of Europe towards reconstruction of government and society on the models of nationalism and democracy— all these helped to impart a liberal democratic consciousness in the political though and movement in the post mutiny years, which Biman Behari Majumdar (1967: 96) has rightly addressed as
“the rise of national democratic school” advocating for the reconstruction of the relations between Government, society and the governed in the light of the principles of nationalism and democracy.

Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, through his rigorous political activities as an intellectual leader, more specially as a fiery editor of Somprakash, it may be argued immortalized himself as the promulgator of this national democratic school emerged in the second half of the nineteenth Century. But it is really a matter of misfortune that he had not been explored to the degree he deserved especially in the history of the origin of Indian’s democratic and liberal tradition. The most crucial attempt in this respect was taken by Binoy Ghosh who in his Samayik Patre Banglar Samaj Chitra (volume-4, 1966) has published the various issues of Somprakash to some extent, which is serving as an important source material of contemporary studies on this period in the socio-political history of Bengal. Dr. Biman Behari Majumdar’s History of Indian Social and Political Ideas: From Rammohun to Dayanand (1967) is another important work which has explored the contribution of Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan to a good extent. Partha Chatterjee while focusing on the historical rising of Bengal through modernity and renaissance in his book Bangla Sambad Patra O Bangaleer Nabajagoran (1977) has explored the role of Somprakash between the 1860s and 1880s. One of the detailed works on Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan and Somprakash is Nandini Sen’s Deser Jagoron: Somprakasher Chokhe (in Bengali) published in Banglaar Jogoron (in Bengali) edited by Narahari Kaviraj is precious in terms of its detailed account on the role of Somprakash in the then Bengal. But unfortunately it has focused on the economic sphere too much to render a proper picture of the role of Somprakash in the broader liberal political sphere. But most of the books written on the historical nineteenth century Bengal have not been paid enough interest to Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan as well as his Somprakash.
Views on Education: The Diffusion of Liberalism

Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan, like other contemporary liberal modernizers ascribed most importance on education which he firmly believed was the main tool for the free traffic of ideas and the scarcity of which he believed was the only source of despotism. To him the government should use the public money to educate the common people, especially the middle and poorer classes who provide the stability to the government (Somprakash, Jaishthya 28, 1269 BS.:3). He vehemently criticized the British Government through the editorial columns of his Somprakash (Sravana 17, 1266 B.S.:5) on the occasion when they declined to spend money to Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar’s initiative of establishment of some Girls’ Schools in Burdwan and Hooghly. Being a staunch supporter of mass education Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan gave tremendous importance on the education of peasant and working classes of Bengal and in this respect he supported Lalbehari De’s proposal of 1868 at the meeting Bethun Society (Somprakash, Falgun 12, 1275 B.S.: 2). The proposal was to make more arrangements to educate the peasant and working classes.

Like Raja Rammohun Roy, he firmly believed that the enlightened British Government has established more liberal governance than their predecessor, the Mohammedan rulers. Under the caption “Indian Government and Higher Education” published in Somprakash (Chaitra 10, 1277 B.S.:1) while comparing the British rulers to earlier Mohammedan rulers he even argued that “it would not be an exaggeration to call the British rule in India as ‘Devine Boon’. Despite such admiration of the British rulers he never hesitated to criticize any misrule of the British. In the same editorial note he vehemently criticized the Governmental education policy in the post-mutiny changed scenario. He argued:

“It is really unfortunate that the British Government after the Revolt of 1857 and Indigo revolt is suffering from an anxiety of lack of stability and as a result they are showing reluctances in imparting more liberal enlightened education in India, because they believe that it will produce a profound challenge to their existence…. They should understand
that a more liberal and modern education will ultimately provide rationality and legitimacy to their government to overcome such forms of rebellions.” (Somprakash, 
Jaishthy 10, 1277 BS.: 2)

Moreover, he criticized the British education policy as “politicization of education” and under the caption “Politics of Education of Indian Government” (Somprakash, Jaishthya, 10, 1277 B.S.: 2-3) he raised the questions: “Should we be silent about this narrow educational policy? Should the British till claim them liberal? Do they till possess any moral right to comment on Russian policy towards Poland? …..It is really misfortune of Bengal that such an arbitrator like Lord Mayo is our secretary of India and such a stubborn like Lord Argyle continuously supporting such politicization of education. Being deeply imbued with the study of the history of Greece, Rome, England and some of the other British colonies he fearlessly criticized the education policy of British Government towards India and advocated for the diffusion of a more liberal education above all narrow political interests. When a number of public meeting were held at town hall and other civil associations opposed the politicization of education led by Lord Argyle he cordially welcomed their claim to restore the liberal education policy of Lord Bentinck (Ghosh, 1966:540-42). Thus it may be argued that Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan and his Somprakash took an important role in diffusion of liberal education in Bengal on well as in India.

**Political Ideas of Dwarakanath: Advocacy for Liberal Constitutional Democracy**

The political ideas of Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, it may be claimed earned him the name of the most important modernizer of national liberal democratic school between1860s and 1880s in the history of Bengal. The deep impact of the study of contemporary political and constitutional history of Europe made him a staunch liberal, who popularized his democratic ideas through his two distinct papers Somprakash and Kalpadrum, launched by him in 1858 and 1879 respectively (Bose, 1976: 375) among which Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was directly associated with the former one and
edited some of the early numbers of the paper himself (An Old Native Journalist, 1974: 311).

His political ideas vividly reveal his zeal for democracy. He ardently argued in favour of introducing the British form of mixed constitution in India, which, according to him “ensures the growth of democracy by making the king share power with the people (Sinha, 1968: 127). In 1870 while advocating for ‘mixed constitution’ based on liberal democratic principles he pointed:

“If we closely scrutinize the constitutional principles and nature of British political system we can find an exclusive balance of power. The queen is circumscribed by a Council of Ministers who is followed by the House of Lords and House of Common people just like Solar System where, due to this balance of order no one can dominate over another …. where autocracy or arbitration has no place” (Somprakash, Ashwin 5, 1287 B.S.: 2)

The mixed constitution, he firmly believed was even better than undiluted democracy or direct form of Democracy because the latter is “responsible for the bloody excesses of French Revolution and Civil War in America” (Quoted in Majumdar, 1967: 99). Moreover, he condemned absolutism and oligarchy as the worst forms of governance and argued that it was the rule of nobility in Rome and France, which caused degradation of Romans and revolution in France respectively. Therefore, he strongly advocated for the introduction of mixed Constitution in India for the overall welfare of the governed (Somprakash, Aswin 5, 1287 B.S.: 3).

One of the most inalienable features of liberal democracy is to recognize the ideal of liberty and in this respect he should be acknowledged for his crucial role in promulgation of anti-absolutist movement for the restoration of liberty through his rational and fiery pen-which never hesitated to criticize tooth and nail the rulers in any form of arbitration. Liberty, to him is the most indispensable pre-condition for the overall development of an individual as well as the society and it is the responsibility of the government to secure liberty of an individual. Regarding the relationship between
individual, Society and the state he was too individualist to ascribe omnipotent role to the government on individual matters and argued that the government should not interfere in any matter excepting the machinery of the government and simultaneously, the governed too should not allow the government to trespass its limit (Majumdar, 1967: 99). In the article entitled “How far should we depend on Government” published in Somprakash (Bhadra 30, 1270 B.S.: 1-2) he expressed his deep concern about the over-dependence of the Indians on the Government which, to him, was the main source of idleness and helplessness. He argued that too much dependence of the French on their rulers deprived them of their precious liberty which led them to the bloody revolution in later years. Such a view on the relation between state and individual reveals his liberal democratic mind. Especially, on the eve of Afghan and Bower war which exposed the aggression of the British imperial policy, he raised questions against their claims of being civilized and liberal. Under the caption “Udaar Engraaz Jaatir Anudarota” (in Bengali) he asked,

“Apart from British there are other nations like French and German but none is as liberal and dutiful in comparison to them . . . But it is a fact that if their freedom is challenged by any force, they, irrespective of men-women-children-old—all would combat united to secure their liberty . . . Then why are they shamelessly attacking the freedom of other nations? Is not it a pure hypocrisy on their stance of freedom? Should they still be called liberal? If they worship freedom as priceless property then why do they never respect the freedom of other nations? (Bhadra 30, 1270 B.S.: 2)”

Thus, arguing for the liberty of Afghans and Bowers he vehemently criticized the British policy towards them, which is nothing but his great passion for liberty. Such a daring and liberal journalism of him took tremendous role in creating a strong public opinion in favour of a keen feeling of national self-determination in post-mutiny era. He, through his progressive and democratic ideas published in Somprakash and Kalpadrum tended to form a rational democratic public opinion which, he believed “was of crucial importance, especially in making the ruler rule within constitutional limit and the absence of this public opinion is the only source of despotism” (Quoted in Majumdar, 1967: 99).
The presence of strong and educated public opinion, according to him not only checks the arbitrariness of the ruler, simultaneously it gives moral legitimacy to the government (Somprakash, Agrahayana7, 1291 B.S.: 1). He wanted to use the enlightened public opinion of England on various issues connected to India and tended to from a strong political movement for the overall development of India. In this regard he gave paramount importance to the role of print media in India as well as in England. He regretted that the local journalist of Calcutta of the British paper ‘Times’, a leading newspaper in terms of its wide circulation was unprofessional and biased on various political issues like Ilbert Bill agitation and condemned him for molding the real fact against Indians. To create a rational and liberal public opinion in Britain, exclusively for the political affairs in India, he wrote—

“If we really want to make healthy and progressive political reformation in India we have to enthrall the attention of British to create an enlightened public opinion by which the British parliament, the law–making institution for India uses to move on. . . . personalities like Lalmohan Ghosh, Rampal Singh are doing admirable job to create this public opinion through arranging public debates, speeches and meetings in England. . . . but unfortunately, the local journalist of ‘Times’ paper is continuously trying to create a negative ill-feelings towards India by suppressing real facts and is creating a feelings of estrangement towards India in England …. To combat this unscrupulous journalism we have to send articles illustrating the sentiments and the reality of oppression through local government to the other English newspapers like ‘Daily News’ or any other .....”

(Somprakash, Agrahayan 17,1291 B.S.: 5)

Arguing for Representative Legislature

Elaborating the interrelation between the government and the governed in an article published in his another well-known journal ‘Kalpadrum’, he firmly argued that the king is nothing special than a mere representative of the governed and his dynasty always depends on the wealth and welfare of his subjects. Such an introspection on the‘ruler-ruled relationship’ unveils his liberal democratic mind which has properly been observed by Dr. Biman Behari Majumdar as “an echo from J.S. Mills Considerations on
Representative Government (Majumdar, 1967: 99, 308). Arguments based on same proposition about ‘ruler-ruled relationship’ can also be found in his Somprakash. “If the king becomes a tyrant” he argued in Somprakash (Magh, 15, 1290 B.S.: 2), “the people shall never put up with his arbitrary rule long and shall inevitably remove him from his power. In several articles published in Somprakash he tried to slam any form of despotism and wooed the contemporary public opinion of Britain in favour of a responsible government based on mixed constitution. Simultaneously, he championed the idea of right to resistance of the governed, which he believed was most important in limiting the government within its jurisdiction (Somprakash, Magh 15, 1290: 2-3).

But it is quite compatible to note that like other contemporary modernizers Dwarakanath too was a bit ambivalent about the scope of government in social life of the people. Initially he opposed the practice of utter dependence of people over public legislation to remove any form of social abuses and tried to uphold the importance of education to get-rid-of any social problem rather than legislative interference. But his utter indignation on the practice of selling brides and people’s inability to remove social abuses made him argue for the legislative initiatives to prohibit such practices (Majumdar, 1967: 100). Since he was highly conscious of the interference of government in social life, he firmly argued that the government may undertake social reforms only on the basis of the consent of the people. Otherwise the people would lose control over social life. Such a view reveals his democratic beliefs as well as political speculation. Moreover, he tried to shape the government-governed relationship in such a liberal and democratic way which was quite amorphous by then.

Being a staunch liberal Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan emphatically advocated for the establishment of a representative legislature for the overall political development in India. Through various editorial columns in his Somprakash and Kalpadrum he tried to generate a firm public opinion in this regard with reference to some specific arguments. Firstly, he, with historical reference of some sound civilization argued that without a clear political representation of the Indians in decision making bodies like legislative Council India can
never be politically developed and self-sufficient. Political development, according to him is the most important precondition of all-round development of a nation. He vehemently criticized the British Government for depriving Indians from sharing any stake in the governance of the country and advocated for a clear representation of eligible Indians in the legislative council (Somprakash, Kartick 27, 1290 B.S.: 2). He slammed the British for making Indians politically excluded and criticizing their arbitrary rule he wrote in Somprakash:

“The existing political as well as administrative system in India is suffering from enormous shortcomings. Since the lust for power has no limit they (British) will never allow Indians to represent themselves in the legislative Council. But, an inevitable revolution in the system of governance will soon take place in India and it will definitely promote political participation of Indians (Kartick 27, 1290 B.S.: 2).

Secondly, one of the most significant points he made for the establishment of Representative Legislature was his advocacy for representation on the basis of secularism. “The office of the Governor General” he argued, “should be reconstituted on the principle (secular) of British Parliament, where equal representation of all communities irrespective of Hindus, Muslims, Eurasians and Europeans will be made participate equally and proportionally (Somprakash, Kartick 27, 1290 B.S.: 2).

Thirdly, besides the office of the Governor General he emphatically advocated for the inclusion of Indian representatives in the British Parliament to have a proper understanding about the socio-political realities of the country during the enactment of laws prejudicial to the interests of India (Somprakash, Asad 31, 1269 B.S.: 6). Being aware of the British ill-intension of excluding Indians from sharing any power together in the Parliament he suggested later that Indians should generate a monthly subscription of Rs. 3000 and send three representatives to England to explain the native views correctly to the British public, which will generate an enlightened public opinion in Britain and ultimately help enacting good laws for India (Majumdar, 1967:101). Such a view unveils his political speculation as well as love for liberal democracy.
Fourthly, “no taxation without representation” was another remarkable phrase he used to argue for the sake of representative legislature in India or at least, Indian representation in all decision-making bodies for India. He regretted that the Indians, though were paying their tax honestly to the government had never been possessed any right to raise questions on any matter concerning to expenditure. All he pioneered was to have a representative Legislature with full control over taxation and expenditure, which he ascribed as an inalienable criterion of any civilized government. He firmly believed in the democratic principle that there could be no taxation without representation. Such a principle, according to him is not only based on the ideal of the happiness of the subjects but also provides stability to the government. Moreover, since the principle is based on the consent of the people it will provide a clear and specific relation of interest between the government and the governed (Somprakash, Asad 17, 1269 B.S.: 10).

Thus, from several specific arguments Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan tried to share a stake in the decision making procedure in the office of the Governor General in India, which he ardently believed would create positive conditions for the political participation of the natives and produce political consciousness among the Indians. Without a specific participation in the governance, he believed, India will never become self-sufficient. Regarding the establishment of representative legislature in India as a British colony, he posed the question: “if representative and responsible government could operate successfully in Africa, Canada and Australia, why should it not succeed in India? (Quoted in Majumdar, 1969: 102). In support of his arguments he gave the example of British Indian Association which had been successfully hoisting the emerging anti-absolutist civil societal movement in the contemporary Bengal.

Somprakash and the Ilbert Bill Controversy: Advocacy against Racial Discriminations

Dwarakanath, through the columns of his Somprakash vehemently criticized the prevailing racial discriminations in the contemporary judicial system in India. During
1870’s and 1880’s his fearless pen had several times condemned the prevailing trial system of criminal cases, which was based on wide discriminations in favour of the British born subjects who enjoyed the privilege of trial by a judge of their own race only, on the other hand, the Indian Judges, despite having similar rank of the Magistrate or Session Judges had been deprived of any right to try any European criminal (Ghosh, 1966:440). Such an unfair system had been an integral part of British Empire since the very beginning and several contemporary modernizers including Raja Rammohun Roy\textsuperscript{14} condemned that unjust practice. Even legislative measures too were attempted to get-rid-of such racial atrocity\textsuperscript{15} in the late 1840s by Drinkwater Bethun, the law Member of the Government of India, who introduced four bills in the Parliament with an object of removing any form of racial discriminations. But the howling agitation of the British subjects who dubbed it as Black Act,\textsuperscript{16} eventually led to the withdrawal of the measure. Though the attempt of establishing justice was defeated by an unjust agitation it made a remarkable impact upon the contemporary Bengali educated middle class among whom Ramgopal Ghosh, one of the Derozians radically confronted against such unjust agitation for the protection of racial discrimination and wrote a tract entitled \textit{Remarks on the Black Act} (Ghosh, 1871:45-84).Such an almost similar Legislative measure (like Bethun) after three decades had been re-introduced by Mr.Ilbert, the law Member of the Viceroy’s Council to establish equality in the eyes of law, which is popularly known as ‘Ilbert Bill’. It tended to abolish the racial privilege of the British subjects of trialed by a Judge belonging to their own race in criminal cases. No sooner the Ilbert Bill was introduced in Parliament in 1883 a more organized and more violent agitation (than the Black Act agitation) was started by the British subjects in India (Brown J., 1985: 130, Agarwal, 2005: 72).

They took various constitutional as well as unconstitutional measures to combat such legislative attempt. In no time they united themselves by forming civil societal associations like ‘Defense Association’ with branches all over the country; organized meetings in regular intervals; generated a healthy fund of one and half lakh rupees; sent
petitions and memorandums to the British Parliament and even, quiet unconstitutionally organized campaigns of vilification against the Indian, specially who supported the Ilbert Bill from any respect. They took most unconstitutional as well as atrocious stand against the counter political associations like the Indian Association\textsuperscript{17} founded by Surendranath Banerjee and other political associations of Bengal and Bombay which fought hard for the smooth approval of the Ilbert Bill. During those unrest days of agitation and counter agitation Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan took tremendous role in creating a public opinion arguing for the approval of the Ilbert Bill on the demand of equality as well as institutional Indianization in the public affairs of the government. He, under the caption of ‘Zamindardiger Sabha’ (in Bengali) published in Somprakash (Agrahayana 11, 1290 B.S.: 4) firmly raised the question:

“Why do the Indian Jurors not given any right to try the Englishmen in any criminal suit?.... It is already well established that the Indian Jurors are performing their duties with remarkable efficiency in any criminal as well as civil suits concerning to native people. But in case of British they can only try the civil suits. Even, if they possess the rank of Magistrate or Session Judges they cannot try the European criminals. In which respect do the British subjects claim such an unjust and biased privilege for them? Indian Judges have already proved their Excellencies in their assigned jobs in the civil as well as criminal cases. Does it not a stark example of racial haughtiness of the British who claim themselves civilized and liberal?”

Such a fearless journalism particularly raising voice against any form of discrimination reveals the significant role of Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan in creating a liberal public opinion in favour of the Ilbert bill. Broadly, it may be argued that the liberal democratic stance of Dwarakanath was an indispensible part of anti-absolutist movement against the British, which already been initiated by Raja Rammohun Roy in the early nineteenth century. Simultaneously, it also proved his remarkable passion for Indianization of public offices on the basis of self-dignity. Besides arguing for Ilbert bill he severely condemned the Rent Bill introduced by the then British Parliament (Ghosh,
Comparing the dual stance of the British he tried to unmask their hypocrisy by arguing:

“The British claim themselves liberal but their two faced policy becomes explicit when they support the Rent Bill but agitate against that Ilbert Bill. A liberal can understand, without any effort that the Rent Bill Kicks out the ideal of equality by expropriating the legal owner, even ancestral owner from his entitled land and simultaneously, it may assign land to another person who is not entitled to have it. On contrary, such ‘liberals’ (!) are shamelessly creating impediments to the approval of the Ilbert bill. These duel activities of the British reveal their hypocrisy and racial insolence to a remarkable degree.” (Somprakash, Agrahayana 11, 1290 B.S.).

During the stormy days of agitation against Ilbert Bill the British born subjects assembled themselves at St. James Hall18 in England, a meeting place of civil societal movements (like Calcutta Town Hall) where a grand public meeting was organized with a demand of withdrawal of the proposed Ilbert Bill. Renowned public personalities even some of whom acquired fame of Indian well-wishers and liberal, attended the meeting presided over by Alexandar Arbuthnot, one of the important members of lord Ripon’s Council; Sir Lathbridge, former Press Commissioner; Foreign Secretary Sitankar; Mr. Branson, Bar-at-law; Cornal Kitting, the Chief Secretary of Assam; General Menn, the Advocate General of Madras and many. Most of the members hurled filthy abuses towards Indians and argued in favour of their racial privileges of the British. Dwarakanath, in an article entitled “The Grand Meeting of St. James Hall” published in Somprakash (Shravana 15, 1290 B.S.) slammed the meeting tooth and nail. He condemned:

“The Ilbert Bill agitation has helped the Indians to understand the real character of the British. Their fake mask of liberal has been removed by this unjust agitation. They have proved themselves like the Fox, who, wrapping up blue colour claimed itself Lion. But despite such camouflage it could not help its natural instinct of crying spontaneously with other Foxes. The British have done the same. It is really a matter of misfortune that
almost all the speakers of the meeting at St. James hall, England were too blind of their racial insolence to argue rationally for justice and equality.”

The Ilbert Bill, despite supported by political associations and vernacular presses in India, could not be passed unchanged as it was introduced by Mr. Ilbert. It suffered almost same consequence like the Black Act of 1849. It was not withdrawn by the government but was amended beyond recognition and served no tended purpose when it passed into law. But it is very significant to note that like the Black Act movement the agitation against the Ilbert Bill helped the cause of Indian Political consciousness. They learnt the value and strength of organized movement in political struggle, which according to historian Jadunath Sarkar (1960: 78) led them organize the Indian National Congress after two years in 1885. They observed the ignoble status of the Indians in their own country. Historian Ramesh Chandra Majumdar (Majumdar, 1971: 33) has rightly observed, “The whole agitation of the Englishmen left behind it a rankling sensation of defeat, disgrace and humiliation in the hearts of the Indians and an increased degree of racial arrogance in the minds of the Englishmen.” Simultaneously, a clear line of estrangement between Indian and the British subjects was widened through the vicious humiliation on the ground of racial status.

Despite the defeat of Dwarakanath and Somprakash on the approval of Ilbert Bill, their role in creating political consciousness as well as liberal democratic ambience must be acknowledged. Dwarakanath, through his vigorous journalism and intellectual leadership took remarkable role in creating anti-absolutist and liberal democratic political consciousness in the latter half of nineteenth century. Another significant aspect of Somprakash was its praiseworthy role in social reformation movements, like Widow-remarriage movement19. Regarding the historical contribution of Somprakash Partha Chatterjee has rightly labeled it as ‘the most powerful liberal paper’ in the nineteenth century Bengal. Moreover, its radical criticism against unjust of any form brought some undesirable perils in it publication and the paper had several times faced Press Censorship. Dwarakanath, as its chief editor had to provide recognizance to the
government on various occasion whenever it, according to the government, transgressed
the limits of legitimate criticism (Chatterjee, 1977: 69). But those perils were too scarce
to make him compromise to any ill-conceived governmental measure.

**Economical Thought of Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan:**

Regarding his thought of Indian economy Dwarakanath showed his serious concern about the huge drainage of capital from the country (Sen, 1984: 90). His consciousness of socio-political as well as economic condition of the then India made him try to create a sound public opinion by exposing the repressive character of the British in the name of good governance. Being a true patriot he could easily understand the importance of economic independence of India, which made him argue for the sole-entitlement of the peasant over his own land. Despite admiring the positive aspects of the Permanent Settlement he never hesitated to criticize it for the poor conditions of the peasant class. He slammed the idea of those British who claim that in post 1858 (Proclamation of the Queen) era the economic condition of the country had been radically developed. He argued:

“Can it really be claimed that the economic prosperity of the country has developed remarkably. On contrary I think day by day India is becoming the most important source of raw-material for the jute Industries of England. …..those who think that India is getting economically prosperous are asked to refer statistically how many Indians have really been benefitted…. We think that the above claim can only be made when England will depend on us for garments and not for raw-materials. But unfortunately, in contemporary India we are made to believe that a programme of economic prosperity is going on, which I believe is not right but actually, a huge drainage of capital and labour from India to England is taking place in the name of economic development.”

*(Somprakash, Boishakh 28, 1290 B.S.: 6)*

Dwarakanath, was perhaps the earliest promulgator of the idea of ‘Drainage theory’, which has been popularized by Dadavai Nauroji later in the early twentieth century. His numerous articles on the poor conditions of the farmers; the atrocities of the
Indigo Planters; the dangers of utter economic dependence on British and most significantly, the importance of economic self-sufficiency had contributed to create a firm and rational public opinion to a remarkable degree, especially in economic sphere. Being an ardent liberal he firmly connected the importance of economical self-dependence with the overall political development of the country. Ascribing most importance on the liberal mass-education he clearly compared the emerging educated middle-class with the contemporary European bourgeois middle class imbibed with liberal democratic ideology (Sinha 1968, 128). He firmly believed that through self-reliance and the spread of liberal education the people could be made to overcome themselves from their degrading economic and political condition. Considering the social, political and economic thought of Dwarakanath over various contemporary issues, it may be argued that he was the most prominent thinker in the tradition of liberal thought in the nineteenth century Bengal. In other words, he may be rightly regarded as the chief exponent of the proposition that economic prosperity and self-reliance are the basic pre-conditions for bourgeois democratic as well as national liberation movement. Acknowledging the remarkable role of Dwarakanath and his Somprakash the Amrita Bazaar Patrika, one of the most renowned papers of the nineteenth century edited by Sisir Kumar Ghosh, has addressed the Somprakas has ‘the Father of the vernacular press in Bengal’ (Sen, 1984: 85).Again, recalling the remarkable role of Somprakash Pandit Sibnath Shastri (2007: 190) observed, “the Somprakash successfully refined the moral air of Bengal which had been polluted by conservative papers like Prabhakar and Bhaskar. People anxiously used to wait for Monday every week to have a look of the Paper.”

**Sisir Kumar Ghosh and the Making of an ambience for Modern Liberal Democracy**

Sisir kumar Ghosh, like Harishchandra Mukherjee and Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, was one of those important modernizers who rendered tremendous service in the process of building a positive ambience for the growth of the ideals of modern liberal Democracy in the latter half of nineteenth century in Bengal. His illustrious political activities as well as fearless and democratic journalism earned him the fame of
‘a true political Saint’. He popularized his radical as well as liberal political ideas through the *Amrita Bazaar Patrika* founded by him in 1868, in which almost all the essence of modern liberal democracy, viz. advocacy for representative and middle class democracy, ascribing huge importance on local self-government, arguing the civil liberty of the governed and giving most importance on freedom of press—all can be accessed between 1860s and 1880s.

Like other liberal modernizers explored in this chapter Sisir Kumar Ghosh too had been remained unexplored to the deserving extent in the contemporary literatures of contemporary Bengal, broadly of India in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, two noteworthy biographical works on Sisir Kumar Ghosh can be found. The first one is *Mahatma Sisir Kumar Ghosh* authored by Anath nath Basu (1921) and the second one is *Life of Sisir Kumar Ghosh* written by Wayfarer in 1946. While the former book has focused mainly on the role of Sisir Kumar in social reformation movement and the revival of Hinduism through Vaishnavism, the latter concentrates on the political activities besides socio-religious spheres of life. But the basic limitation of both of the works, it may be claimed that none of the books have explored the remarkable contribution of Sisir Kumar Ghosh in the building of a liberal democratic spirit as well as political consciousness among people. Rather, they tended to locate Sisir Kumar Ghosh only in the tradition of the rise and growth of national feelings in the contemporary Bengal. The book *Freedom Movement in Bengal: 1818-1904* compiled and edited by Nirmal Sinha has contributed a praiseworthy chapter on Sisir Kumar Ghosh. One of the most important works in this regard is *History of Indian Social and political Ideas* authored by Biman Behari Majumdar, which has contributed enough to focus on the historical role of Sisir Kumar Ghosh as one of the significant makers of modern India.

Two important works on the history of the Indian journalist in the nineteenth century, i.e. *Bangla Sambad patra O Bangaleer Nabajagaran*(1977) written by Partha Chatterjee and *A History of Indian journalism* (1993) authored by Mohit Moitra, may be regarded as important source in this regard. The basic problem connected to the existing literatures on
the contribution of Sisir Kumar Ghosh is that, most of the writers have projected him from some certain angles, i.e. either as social reformer or as journalist, which have scarcely explored his remarkable role in the creation of an intellectual ambience for the rise and growth of modern liberal democracy in contemporary Bengal as well as India. As a consequence, a vast area related to Sisir Kumar’s contribution in this regard has been remained in dark, which the present study aims to focus on.

**Zeal for Liberty: The Promulgation of Anti-absolutist Movement**

Being an ardent supporter of Western liberal and democratic ideas Sisir Kumar Ghosh ascribed most importance on the liberty and self-dignity of an individual. Like other contemporary liberal modernizers he used journalism as one of the important liberal weapons to shape an anti-absolutist movement against unjust absolutism of the foreign government as well as the aristocratic Zamindars and Indigo Planters. Hardly in his early twenties had he, as the Jessur correspondent of the Hindu Patriot from 1859 to 1866, stung the conscience of the British officials by his explicit reports on the massive oppression exercised by the European Indigo Planters and their Bangali Dewans over the ryots in Jessur and Nadia (Dasgupta, 1977: 26). This short but eventful association with Hindu Patriot caused an immense interest of fearless journalism in him, which subsequently made him an intellectual anti-absolutist and a true democrat from every respect. In 1862 he launched with his brother Basanta Kumar Ghosh’s assistance a fortnightly journal Amrita Prabhini (the latter was the editor), which was in circulation from December 1962 to December 1963 (Bandyopadhyay, 1408 B.S.: 11, Vol-86). On February 20, 1868 he established his esteemed newspaper Amrita Bazaar Patrika which became a bi-lingual on February 25, 1869 with the inclusion of English articles in it²¹ and later from 21ˢᵗ March 1878, the paper was converted into an entirely English weekly to avoid the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 (Chatterjee, 1977: 73, Bandyopadhyay, 1408 B.S.: 14-16, Vol-86)
By the 1960s and 1970s the socio-political movements in Bengal were gradually wrapping up a rising national consciousness with a broader anti-absolutist outlook. But none of those movements directly aspired or claimed entirely self-rule free from British bondage. Rather, the alien system of governance was cordially welcomed by the newly educated middle class who were really benefitted by the new system, especially after the political disorder and instability of the preceding Muslim Empire. Though some protest movements were made against atrocities of the British but those were too un-integrated and scattered to dream of a free nation. Even most of the contemporary vernacular newspapers show their full content and confidence to the British rule.\textsuperscript{22} Contrary to that trend of allegiance, Sisir Kumar Ghosh, through his radical \textit{Amrita Bazar Patrika}, openly criticized the British rule in any ill-conceived arbitrary measure and tried to build a clear demand of free India. He was so critical that even reformer like Ramtanu Lahiri labeled his paper as a ‘seditious paper’ (Chatterjee, 1977: 72).

His great zeal for liberty and self-dignity made him denounce the Criminal Procedure code, the Dramatic Performances Act, the Press Act and the Arms Act for the restoration of civil liberty of the natives. Such measures, he believed, gave “the magistrate absolute control over the rights of the people”, which was not only unjust, but also “menace to the civil liberty of the people” (Quoted in Majumdar, 1967: 137). Unlike Raja Rammohun Roy he urged for not to codify the laws to make civil liberty of the people Secured. He vehemently protested the proposed measure of codification of the laws in 1877 by Mr. Whitley Stokes and simultaneously, he slammed the Civil Procedure Act of 1859, the Criminal Law (Act XLV of 1860), the Evidence Act-I of 1872 and the Criminal Procedure Act-X of 1872 on the charge that those have entirely failed to give any satisfaction to the people (Sinha, 1968: 275). Though he admitted the importance of codification of laws, he showed his utter reluctance in entire codification, as to him it was not safe to entrust the task entirely to the foreigners (\textit{Amrita Bazaar Patrika}, 28 June, 1877).
Sisir Kumar, being a true individualist took remarkable role in creating an anti-colonial public opinion during the unrest days of Indigo movement. He condemned the unjust statement of Mr. Forlong to the Indigo Commission that the ryots in the Indigo districts were satisfied, safe and prosperous and in his letter to the Hindu Patron on 22 August 1860, he claimed, “even one percent of the actual oppression had not been reported to the Commission. To quench their thirst of revenge and lust they burnt the houses of the ryots, stripped of their women and forced to work….. Messrs, Oates and Oman were the most oppressive among the planters, who were given full protection by Magistrates like Molony and Skinner”. (Quoted in Sinha, 1968: 270).

Such a fearless criticism against the local Magistrates reveals his uncompromising sense of self dignity as well as his praiseworthy role in creating an anti-colonial public opinion in the most rebellious decade of nineteenth century through his radical journalism. Besides giving an intellectual leadership with his pen he, being an activist moved from village to village in Jessore and Nadia, the most unrest districts, sometimes by boat, encouraging the ryots to unite themselves against cultivation of indigo anymore on their lands (Bandyopadhyay, 2009 [1415 B.S]: 8, Vol-86). He urged the Indigo Commission to visit the Indigo districts physically to fetch an empirical knowledge about the gravity of the situation that had arisen there. The denouncer of any form of atrocities Sisir Kumar tended to create a liberal public opinion against any form of danger to civil liberty. Therefore he, from 3rd December 1874 began to publish a weekly special edition of Amrita Bazaar Patrika to draw the enlightened public opinion of England by exposing the summery of reports published in other contemporary Indian newspapers revealing the persecution and grievances of Indians.

Since the most important safeguard of civil liberty of an individual, according to Sisir Kumar, is the fair and impartial administration of justice, he, like Rammohun Roy suggested some remarkable reformations in Judicial System in contemporary India. One of the most notable incident, in this regard was the ‘Wright controversy’ of June, 1868. Sisir Kumar published two back to back articles entitled Ghor Atyachar (June 12,
1968) and Pathakgoner Proti (June 26, 1968) exposing the lustful behaviour by Mr. Wright, the sub-divisional officer of Jhenada, towards a woman Witness of a case and asked the British Government to take panel action against the officer. This Stirred the European community and Mr. Wright having active support by Mr. Munro, the District Magistrate of Jessore and his associate Mr. Oakline25 filed a libel suit against Sisir Kumar Ghosh (the editor), Raj Krishna Mitra (the Head clerk) and Chandra Kumar Ghosh (the Printer) of Amrita Bazaar Patrika at the Criminal Court. Though Sisir Kumar Ghosh was acquitted by Mr. Lawford, the District Judge but the latter two were sentenced imprisonment of one year and half year respectively (Chatterjee, 1977: 72). An appeal against that verdict was made to the High Court but went in vain. Moreover, Mr. Wright was transferred to Midnapur after the case had been finally decided in his favour. Sisir Kumar, despite presenting enough evidence was defeated and humiliated by the unfair English System of justice and through the editorial note of Amrita Bazar Patrika (31 December, 1968) he declared fearlessly, “My countrymen would no longer be persecuted or intimidated into submission by the British officials.” Like Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan he warned the British with prophetic vision, “the greater the anger of the people the briefer becomes the life expectancy of their empire” (Amrita Bazar Patrika, July 29, 1869).

In spite of such penal action he and his paper never got indifferent in any humiliation and unjust against his countrymen. “We are we and they are they” was the famous phrase he used to explain that the English are radically different from the Indians and the assimilation of these two can never be happened(Amrita Bazar Patrika, March 17, 1870). Aspiring Parliamentary form of democratic system in India he condemned the British imperialism to such an extent that even in early 1870s he encouraged his countrymen to unite themselves nationally and use all possible means, whether constitutional or unconstitutional in the political liberation movement to make British out of the country. His turbulent pen fearlessly declared:
“Don’t give tax, don’t file case in the courts, don’t use currency inscribed the name of the Queen….you may suffer for that but be careful to sacred duty….Crusade like the Wahabi; be armed with bullet and fight against the British till you become successful in kicking them out…. Don’t stop from the unknown fear that it will bring disorder and anarchy…” (Amrita Bazar Patrika, December 8, 1870: 2)

The most striking point in this article is that almost all the means he insisted his countrymen to take for the sake of emancipation have exclusively been seen in the national liberation movement featuring of passive revolution, boycotting the governmental institutions and most of all extremist movement led by Indian National Congress in the early twentieth century. That is why Dr. Biman Behari Majumdar (1967: 126) has rightly called him, “the first exponent of the extremist school of Indian politics”.

Sisir Kumar Ghosh, thus, took tremendous role in creating an anti-absolutist as well as democratic ambience in the second half of nineteenth century Bengal. He could anticipate the inevitable future of British-raj when he declared that any form of atrocity exercised by the British rulers would not only create innumerable rebels against them in India, Simultaneously, would also wash away the merits of all their previous good deeds (Sinha, 1968: 271). All this, it may be claimed reveals Sisir Kumar’s deep urge for the absolute equality of law between Indian and the Europeans, which be firmly believed could be materialize only by introducing Parliamentary democracy in India.

Arguing for Parliamentary Democracy: The Champion of Middle class Democracy

Sisir Kumar Ghosh was one of the most notable liberal modernizers, who directly argued in favour of establishing a Parliamentary form of democratic Government in India. Having a keen interest on International Relations he was deeply moved by the various constitutional movements in the British colonies at different parts of the World and through the columns of his Amrita Bazar Patrika, which, by then became the mouthpiece of newly educated Bengali middle-class intelligentsia, he preached the omnipotent power of constitutional and democratic movements in the material world of
politics to the people of India. It is significant enough to note that the educated middle class, by the second half of the nineteenth century was deeply moved by the establishment of constitutional government in Italy, the liberation of slaves as a consequence of American civil war, the liberal Policy of Alexander-II in Russia and the enormous role of nationalism in Germany and Italy (Majumdar, 1967: 128). Making references to such contemporary political milestone the Amrita Bazar Patrika tended to create an enlightened public opinion in favour of constitutional and Parliamentary form of political system. Sisir Kumar, under the title “Parliament in India” published in Amrita Bazar Patrika on November 10, 1870, firmly argued in favour of establishing a Parliament in India. It is noteworthy that Harish Chandra Mukherjee, Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan and some contemporary liberal modernizers discussed in the preceding chapter, viz. Ramgopal Ghose, Pearychand Mitter, Rasikkrishna Mallick and Dakshinaranjan Mukhapadhyay have made such demand of representative legislature and institutions in different occasions. But none of them gave any mean and reason on which the representative legislature would be established and it was Sisir Kumar Ghosh who attached a philosophical reason behind such demand. To him, the origin of a common peoples representative lies in the increase of members in a particular community, who was given all rights to negotiate the confronting views of that community and as a consequence that arbitrator was entitled to have tax from the people. Subsequently, that arbitrator became responsible to protect the rights of the subjects and to render all civic needs to them as well (Amrita Bazar Patrika, 8 September, 1871).

Describing democracy as the best form of Government Sisir Kumar Ghosh cordially appreciated Great Britain’s attempt to grant autonomy to Canada and Australia and simultaneously, argued that it would be the noblest duty of the British to introduce a full-fledged representative democracy in India before leaving the country (Sinha, 1968: 274). The British he believed may set up the best form of good governance for the people of India but it would hardly enough to substitute the urge of autonomous representative legislature of the people. He claimed that the drastic differences between the Indians and
the British would never let them assimilate into one nation with identical objectives and therefore, the British should inevitably drive out even by using violent measures to have an independent Parliament, which if they allowed to have one for India as a measure of administrative reform, it would positively lighten the burden of the British Government (Amrita Bazar Patrika, December 8, 1871). Moreover, he emphatically claimed this demand of Parliament as a responsible one, since the Legislative Council did not represent the Indian in any respect and as a consequence that has measurably failed to represent the problems and sentiments of the native peoples. With this demand of Indian representation in the important decision making bodies, Sisir Kumar Ghosh criticized the British Indian Association for its Zamindar members who could not represent the interests of the common mass and regretted for the absence of representatives among the peasant class wrapped up in ignorance. In an article entitled “The Representative Ryots” Sisir Kumar, for the inclusion of educated middle class in decision making bodies argued:

“The Zamindars are unable to represent the myriads of the people of Bengal properly…. They are culpably neglectful of the duties and obligations…….with many bright exceptions, the majority are sunk in sensuality and sloth, mindful of their ease and comfort, and indifferent to the interests of those dependent on them. The masses composed of peasant class plunged in deep ignorance, unconscious of their own powers and unable to exercise then. It is impossible to find a representative amongst them. The gentry’s class is the most important of all, but unfortunately the existence of such a class in not even so much acknowledged by the Government.”(Amrita Bazar Patrika, September 11, 1873)

Thus, he ardently urged the Government to discuss with and give importance to the views of the educated and politically conscious middle class, who by then, exercised remarkable influence over the common people through their associations and various political organizations all over Bengal as well as India. This view of Sisir Kumar unveils his deep love to democracy, which according to Dr. Biman Bihari Majumdar (1967: 126,133) earned him the titles like ‘political Guru28 of the middle class’ and ‘a staunch advocate of the middle class democracy’.

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It is needless to say that Sisir Kumar Ghosh echoed the voice of emerging educated middle class Bengali who due to despotic British ruler remained excluded from responsible posts of the administration despite having all eligibility conditions to hold such office. Criticizing Sir George Campbell’s policy of excluding educated Bengalis from responsible post of administration like Deputy Commissioners and Judicial Commissioners, he firmly advocate for the inclusion of eligible Bengalis to such posts and argued that it would not only be justice in the eye of law but also it would save public money since the high-paid English officers claim at least ten times than a native officer (Sinha, 1968:274). Such a demand made by Sisir Kumar Ghosh was nothing but one of the most significant issues of the second half of nineteenth century, i.e. Indianization of services. He raised his voice against the reluctance of the Government which was impeding Indians from entering into civil services by lowering the age limit to mere twenty-one, as well as reduced the marks allotted for Sanskrit. (Chakraborty, 1976: 180)

He ascribed huge importance to the Indianization of administrative posts because he strongly believed that the time had come to entrust them with governmental responsibility, which would inevitably build a sense of self-reliance in running representative institutions among the Indians. Sisir Kumar Ghosh, being a staunch liberal firmly argued that India would never be satisfied until she adopts liberal principles in governance, which, he believed will come through an inevitable evolution of government-governed relationship. Despite the fact that India was enjoying privileges of civilized governance than China or Persia, he argued, “it is far from having a representative Parliament of its own” (Amrita Bazar Patrika, oct 7, 1875). He maintained an evolutionary approach of constitutional development by comparative analysis of the great historical civilizations, viz. Greece, Rome, Italy and England and tried to apply that general principle of political growth to the case of India. This universal principle of political growth had been designated into three stages—rudimentary, centralizing and confederating. The first stage, i.e. rudimentary stage is characterized by small territories governed by Republican Monarchical systems like ancient Greece or Italian city states.
The second stage, which he pointed as centralizing period is characterized with merging of scattered tribes into nations and isolated lands into provinces or Kingdoms. The empires of Queen Elizabeth in England and Louis XIV in France were the instances of this stage. The centralizing stage is followed by the third stage, the Confederating stage which is the confederation of political authorities, i.e., better known as democracy. This stage, according to Sisir Kumar Ghosh is the prelude to democracy; since it was developed following the second stage where the innate dignity of man gets alleviation to aspire a share in the sovereign power and sets a challenge to the despotic Monarchical government. This transition from despotism to democracy is nothing but the huge confrontation between Monarch and the subjects as evidenced from the history of England in late Eighteenth century (Majumdar, 1967: 130). Championing this general principle of political growth, he firmly believed that India would become a democratic nation inevitable after the despotic British rule (Amrita Bazaar Patrika, Oct 7, 1875).

There are so many points, particularly two specific points where Sisir Kumar Ghosh has evoked Raja Rammohun Roy almost after four decades through his vigorous arguments for the inclusion of Indian representative in the decision making institutions as well as the Indianization of significant administrative posts of the Government. Firstly, Rammohun Roy, being aware of the difficulties connected in making liberal legislation for a distant land, suggested the king-in-Parliament to appoint “Commissions of inquiry from time to time” to ascertain the opinion of the Indians by investigating the condition of their Majesty’s faithful subjects personally and physically” (Roy, 1977: 116). Sisir Kumar Ghosh, in the same direction under the caption “Legislation by foreigners” published in Amrita Bazaar Patrika (July 6, 1876) argued that the foreigners from a distant land could never make good laws for an ancient diverse civilization like India and therefore they had been enacting and repealing legislations time to time. Criticizing strongly the British reluctances of inclusion of Indian representatives, he argue, “Since India is a civilized country with people drastically different from that of the Britain, they
cannot understand the spirit of Indians. It is impossible to them (the British) to come and properly understand the manner, customs, civilization…. of India and its people.”

Secondly, Like Raja Rammohun Roy, he too wished the European to settle in India permanently, which would accelerate the economic and political progress of India. Rammohun emphasized the need to allow Europeans of ‘character and capital’ to settle freely in India, by which an enlightened public opinion be developed. Consequently, he believed, if the Indian would develop to wealth, intelligence and Public spirit by the settlement of numerous liberal minded Europeans a mixed community so formed would consequently emerge as the United states of America formerly did against the British and attained freedom and later emerged as a sound democracy (Roy, 1947: 84). Sisir Kumar Ghosh, like Rammohun Roy wished, “if we had a large body of European resident here, we might have, perhaps, by this time had a Parliament’ (Quoted in Majumdar, 1967: 131) Such a view of Sisir Kumar Ghosh reveals the extent of his enthusiasm for a political system based on Parliamentary democracy.

Championing Local Democracy: the Revival of Old Panchayati-Raj

One of the remarkable milestones in the history of constitutional developments in the second half of nineteenth century Bengal as well as India is the very introduction of local self-government with which the names of Lord Ripon and Sir Richard Temple are closely associated. It is really interesting as well as remarkable to note that long before them, it was Sisir Kumar Ghosh who emphatically argued in favour of the introduction of municipalities on the basis of election (Sinha, 1968: 272-273). In response to the ‘Bengal Municipal Bill (1871) introduced by Sir George Campbell, he claimed, “….. if these Municipalities were allowed to have elected Chairman in place of appointing the Magistrates as ex-officio Chairman of District Boards the people ….. will definitely not grudge the imposition of fresh taxation.”(Amrita Bazar Patrika, May 25, 1883)

His liberal democratic mind could easily anticipate the enormous significance of the local self-governments in the building of political consciousness and self-reliance
among the common people, which will make them able to govern themselves in future. Through the article entitled as ‘Bengal Municipal Bill’, he pointed out, “Let the people have their own commissioners, let them spend their own money, squander away if they choose and nobody except themselves will be losers by their folly…. experience is the best teacher.” (Amrita Bazar Patrika, Magh 20, 1278 B.S ). Moreover, Sisir Kumar Ghosh emphatically argued that the very introduction of local democracy will inevitably become the central medium of political socialization of the people and subsequently, it will “form the nucleus of political freedom of the nation” (Amrita Bazaar Patrika, April 15, 1875). Simultaneously, he believed that the direct attachment with the local decision making institutions will take tremendous role in overcoming the overall dependence to the Government in every issue. Even this over-dependence in social issues like polygamy, widow-marriage, battle over lands etc. will be replaced by a force of local materialistic and rational decisions through local government. This over-dependence to the government, he argued had been the main reason of their helplessness which can only be removed by allowing local democratic institutions develop unhindered and the materialization of it will teach the people not only to manage their own affairs within their limited resources but also resist atrocities of all forms—— social, political and economic (Sinha, 1968: 273).

Another reason he cited in support of local self-governing institutions was too crucial to overlook. He firmly believed that the village Panchayat alone can administer justice as a powerful agent for the protection of life and liberty of the subjects by acting as local courts to remedy the various socio-political and economical evils (Majumdar, 1967: 137). For this reason he urged to the government to revive the old Panchayat courts with an elected head by the villagers empowered by legislation to deal with all offences, like simple violence, assaults, abuses, cattle trespasses and debts of a certain sum. Referring to the ‘County Councils’ of the England under which the local police force was placed, he wanted to transfer the control of the police to the local District Boards for the successful materialization of the juridical role of the village Panchayat.
His introspection about the illustrious as well as multifarious functions of local self-governing institutions has revealed the degree of his great zeal for democracy. Even in a society circumscribed by authoritarian British rule in nineteenth century he could rightly anticipate the remarkable role of decentralization of power to the grass-root level and emphatically argued to ascribe enough power to the local government not only to handle local education, sanitation and their civic duties but also to render important service in the administration of justice. The most remarkable thing about his view of local government is that he wanted the members of those institutions must be elected. Such a view unveils his significant role in the creation of modern liberal democratic intellectual ambience in the second half of nineteenth century.

**Sisir Kumar Ghosh and Amrita Bazar Patrika: Advocating for Freedom of press:**

Like other liberal modernizers starting from Raja Rammohun Roy of early nineteenth century to his contemporaries like Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan and Surendranath Banerjee, he ascribed most importance on the unhindered freedom of press which he regarded as the most powerful apparatus of creating political consciousness among the people. He was closely associated with two newspapers: Hindu Patriot and his *Amrita Bazar Patrika* among which he started his career at just eighteen as a journalist with the former one during the revolutionary days of Indigo revolt. Believing firmly that the chief purpose of the Indian press was to promote and represent the interest of the people by opposing ill-conceived government measures, he emerged as one of the important intellectual leaders of anti-absolutist movement during the seventh and eight decades of the nineteenth century-Bengal.

Like Rammohun Roy, Sisir Kumar Ghosh was of the opinion that the freedom of Press is the most important guarantee of good government as it can fetch the factors responsible for popular discontent and helps the government to adopt good policies to cope up with the desires and interests of the governed (Sinha, 1968: 275). He was always aware of the absolute freedom of newspapers, which made him stand against any sort of
ill-conceived governmental measures regarding any undemocratic censorship to the print media. Dawarakanath Mitra, one of the reputed Judges of the Calcutta High Court once expressed his anxiety that *Amrita Bazar Patrika* due to its virulence in criticizing the government may influence the masses by spreading discontent and disaffection in the Country. Sisir Kumar Ghosh, quite boldly and categorically replied him, “the mission of the paper is to awaken the people and to kindle in them the fire of patriotism. They are now more dead than alive and need to be aroused from their slumber and therefore our language has to be louder and penetrating” (Quoted in Moitra, 1993: 144). The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, due to its fearless criticism of any reactionary Governmental measure, drew some perils to its smooth journey and its turbulent editor, instead of giving his allegiance to any sort of repression, used his fiery pen more strongly to create a politically conscious public opinion in contemporary Bengal. With the enactment of the Vernacular Press Act on 14th March, 1878 he, in order to evade the restrictions aptly converted his paper from a bi-lingual one to a purely English newspaper. Partha Chatterjee (1977: 73) has argued that the undemocratic Press Act of 1878 though was promulgated by Lord Lytton to stop all contemporary Vernacular newspapers criticizing against the Government but its chief target was nothing but the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. But its overnight conversion to purely English paper made Lytton’s attempt in vain and subsequently, in a series of articles Sisir Kumar Ghosh criticized the arbitrary Act tooth and nail and ultimately, succeeded to convince the Government the utility of having a free Press, which was realized by Lord Ripon who repealed the Act in 1882.

**Sisir Kumar Ghosh and the Civil Society Movement: Creating liberal Consciousness**

One of the most remarkable factors in the process of building a nationalistic democratic as well as anti-absolutist movement was the historical emergence of civil societal associations—both socio-political and religious, which have already been discussed in the preceding chapters to a good extent. Though the origin of modern political association, i.e. the Land Holders Association and Bengal British Indian Association can be traced back to 1837 and 1843 respectively but it was only in the
second half of nineteenth century when the emphasis of the contemporary political associations were shifted from collaboration to criticism. In other words, against the prevailing discriminations and the ill-conceived measures of East India Company a desperate need of organized political movement was felt in Bengal by the early 1850s (Shastri, 2007: 127) and a number of political associations, namely British Indian Association (1851), Indian league (1875), Indian Association (1876) and the Indian National Congress (1885) were emerged back to back in the subsequent decades with a more sustained spirit of opposition to the British than those of the first half of nineteenth century. Among these associations Sisir Kumar Ghosh was directly and dedicatedly associated with British Indian association and the Indian league among which he was the founder of the latter.

From his teenage Sisir Kumar Ghosh was closely associated with the British Indian Association (formed in 1851) which took remarkable role in raising of liberal voice against all institutional discriminations as well as serious democratic reforms by sending memorandums to British Parliament, such as—claimed an Indian legislature; proposed to constitute a legislative Council entirely separate from the Council of Governor-General on the basis of the theory of Separation of power; emphasized on the independence of the legislative Council; demanded for making the executive and legislature a representative government and a representative Council for voicing the sentiments of the people; criticized against the over centralization in India, advocated for separating the Judiciary from the Executive, protested the salt policy and stamp duty of the Government and most surprisingly, pleaded for the establishment of secular state in India (Seal, 1968 :208-214, Majumdar, 1965 : 40-46, 51). It is needless to say that Sisir Kumar, being a staunch supporter of democracy paid significant interest in almost all of these liberal and democratic activities of the British India Association.

But being an exponent of middle class democracy Sisir Kumar Ghosh never put up with the Zamindar based charter of the association. Even in the first year of its emergence it prayed for the exemption of certain section of the people from the liability to appear
before judicial court in order to give evidence (Majumdar, 1965: 74), which in any respect was not in consonance with the democratic principle of equality of all before the eye of law. Again despite claiming to be an organization of all classes of people the Zamindar members of British Indian Association were stuck to such a high membership fee (Rs.50 per Annum) that the people belonging to middle class could not afford to be enrolled as its member (Seal, 1968: 209). Sisir Kumar Ghosh, in order to make British India Association an organization of middle class people tried to increase its members to a great extent and therefore he urged through his Amrita Bazar Patrika (July 6, 1870) to reduce its membership subscription from Rs.50 to Rs. 5 to win a larger membership. He also pointed that a correspondent from Dhaka also suggested this reduction of subscription so that they can join the association gladly and that the British Indian Association should organize a branch of the association in every populous town of Bengal (Amrita Bazar Patrika 6 July, 1870: 2-3). By this reform proposal of expanding branch office of the association all he wanted was to include educated men as representatives from the districts into the Central Committee to make the Zamindars a minority in the Central Committee (Seal, 1968: 210). He also wished to include representatives belonging to educated and politically conscious men from Bombay, Madras, Oudh, Punjab and the North Western Provinces (Majumdar, 1965: 139). Such an argument to make British Indian Association a democratic as well as all India based association was really remarkable not only for enhancing its membership but also for creating a national feeling through a civil societal association. But all this proposals of structural reformations of the British Indian Association went in-vein since the aristocratic leaders of the association turned down such reform proposals without a second thought (Roy, 1984: 86). But it could not stop Sisir Kumar advocating for the representation of the emerging middle class in India.

During the early 1870s Sisir Kumar and his brother Hamanta Kumar Ghosh extensively travelled district to districts with pinning hopes to organize district level political organizations to enhance the mass contact and succeeded to from some such
associations like Dhaka People’s Association, Associations in Burdwan, Murshidabad, Santipur and Ranaghat between 1872 and 1875. Subsequently, on 25th September 1875 Sisir Kumar Ghosh established the ‘Indian League’ as a consciously designed middle class organization (Chakraborti, 1976: 182), which included distinguish contemporary personalities like Shambhu Chandra Mukherjee (the editor of Rais and Ryot) as President; Kalinath Das as the elected Secretary; Durgamohan Das, Ananda Mohan Das, Narendranath Sen, Nabagopal Mitra, Surendranath Banerjee and some other nationalists as honorable members (Bose, 1976: 268). The aims and objectives of the Indian League were published in detail by Akshay Chandra Sarkar, the eminent editor of Sadharani. It aimed “to impart a more rational political education and consciousness of political rights as well as to stimulate the spirit of nationalism among the people” (Quoted in Majumdar, 1965: 140).

These aims and objectives of the Indian League reveal the reason of his grave dissatisfaction to the oligarchic character of the British Indian Association as well as his passion to the middle-class democracy. To make Indian League a true political organization of common man he, on the auspicious occasion of its origin declared in his Amrita Bazar Patrika (30 September, 1875), “This (the Indian League) is the first instance of a political body formed by public announcement and a call upon the nation to attend it and mould it to their likings”. Though the Indian League suffered an undeserved premature demise its contribution to the creation of nationalistic and modern liberal ambience cannot be undermined. Specially, the direct attachment of Surendranath Banerjee (1998: 39) who, in his autobiography acknowledged the Indian League for its useful contribution to the advent of national democratic consciousness in India was encouraged to setup Indian Association on 26th July 1976.
Sisir Kumar Ghosh and the Socio-cultural Regeneration: The Liberal Democratic Stand

Besides rigorous political activities Sisir Kumar Ghosh rendered a tremendous service to the social reformation movement by trying to emancipate the individual from the gigantic socio-cultural dogmas and age-old taboos. Being a true liberal he ascribed most importance on the inter-relations between the government, society and the individual, which, by then were so amorphous as well as suffocating for the individual. He did not hesitate to strip the arbitrary intention of the Government regarding any welfare activities connected to the individual and society as a whole. Mass education, especially middle class education, to him was the most important condition for the improvement of society-individual relationship as well as political status of the country and therefore, he ascribed most importance on education through vernacular language rather than English because he believed that the former one could easily touch the common mass while the use of the latter was limited only in mere educated elites of the society (Majumdar, 1967: 140). Such a view of Sisir Kumar Ghosh, it may be argued, reveals his socio-political speculation that the true emancipation of mind of the majority of people could be done only by diffusion of modern education through vernacular language, especially in a time when a good number of modernizers including Raja Rammohun Roy advocate for English language as the medium of higher education throughout the nineteenth century.

Moreover, he firmly believed that the proper growth of national and patriotic feeling as well as the diffusion of liberal democratic ideals can only be done by educating people through the language of the majority. Nonetheless, he was never against the teaching of English language in schools. But since foreign language cannot be rooted in the national mind for the awakening of political consciousness he wanted the practice of English teaching should be limited only as a foreign-language subject in educational institutions (Amrita Bazar Patrika, March 27, 1884).
Sisir Kumar Ghosh, being a liberal social reformer gave most importance on the emancipation of individual, specially the socially excluded women from the age-old socio-cultural prejudices. Simultaneously, he was conscious enough in keeping the self-dignity of an Indian from imitating all British customs in social life. He, like Vidyasagar was a great advocate of widow-remarriage, which to him was not only just in the eyes of law (Widow Remarriage Act XV of 1856) but also an important tool for securing the ideal of socio-cultural equality between men and women. In the editorial column of March 11, 1869 of Amrita Bazar Patrika he argued “If a man did not lose his caste by visiting brothels, then there was no possibility of losing his caste, either, by marrying a widow (Quoted in Sinha, 1968: 277). He also strongly argued for imparting proper education to women and allowing them to come out from their seclusion.

Regarding his economic views it is very important to note that he could rightly anticipate the need of industrial revolution as well as technological up-gradation in the then India. Being a true liberal he gave most importance on the process of industrialization as he firmly believed that the diffusion of liberal and democratic ideals could never be successful unless a proper industrialization and vivid economic prosperity as well as technological modernization in a country. It is quite compatible to note that such a view regarding the need of industrialization and economic prosperity have recently been endorsed by Sudipta Kaviraj (2011:2) that a proper growth of “industrialization, presence of strong bureaucratic state, the secularization of society and relative economic prosperity” are some of the inalienable preconditions for the existence and success of democracy in any society. Regretting the poor economic prosperity as well as lack of industries he vehemently criticized the British policy of making India only a source of raw-materials and laborers for their industries in Manchester. Therefore, with the noble mission of making India a industrial country with self-reliant economic prosperity he published a Series of articles suggesting the introduction of new industries of India (Majumdar, 1967: 142).
But in his economic views some ambiguities are seen on his view of free-trade or Laissez-faire economy. Despite possessing almost all ideals of liberal democratic ideology he, unlike the pioneers of liberal democratic ideals entirely opposed the idea of free-trade policy of Laissez-faire doctrine and supported governmental intervention in matters of trade. Against free-trade he wished to have governmental protections to the traders for the intended development of industries in India (Sinha, 1968: 277).

Sisir Kumar Ghosh, through his turbulent journalism and active political activities had rendered a great service to the modern awakening of Bengal as well as whole India. He tried to build a national feeling by his radical conviction in any issue against the current. Even when a host of English as well as vernacular newspapers were continuously providing intellectual support to various governmental policies he, almost in every ill-conceived policies taken by the government vehemently and openly criticized and marked a tremendous role in the rising anti-absolutist movement as well as modern liberal and national consciousness. His wholehearted support to the Income Tax Bill and trenchantly oppose to the Lytton’s Press Censorship Act are some the examples of his remarkable political activities. Even at a time when due to his radical and liberal journalism his paper faced considerable difficulties he, quite boldly stood by what a believed to be right for the interest of India. Inscribing identities like Nabin Chandra Sen acknowledged the inspiration he received from Sisir Kumar Ghosh before writing his Palasir Yuddha (Sinha, 1968: 278) and extremist leader like Bal Gangadhar Tilak while revoking the remarkable contribution of Sisir Kumar Ghosh and his Amrita Bazar Patrika acknowledged:

“Independent and free Journalism was not an easy task in those days…. He stood alone and his conscience was his stand …. I know with what enthusiasm and eagerness the Patrika was awaited in many provinces every week 40 years ago. I know how people were delighted to read his sarcasm, his pithy and critical notes written in his racy style, simple but at the same time effective. How people longed to see the paper on day it was due by post. How people enjoyed it I know it personally “ (Quoted in Chakraborti, 1976: 183).
Jogendranath Vidyabhusan and the Rise of Modern liberal Democratic Consciousness

Among other contemporary liberal modernizers who look tremendous role in the making of positive conditions for the rise and growth of liberal democratic intellectual ambience in the second half of nineteenth century Jogendranath Vidyabhusan was the most notable. Like other contemporary modernizers explored in this chapter he too was a liberal journalist who has been remained neglected and unexplored in the existing literatures connected to the history of nineteenth century Bengal. Despite such paucity of source materials the illustrious social and political activities of Jogendranath Vidyabhusan have been found in a scattered manner in the literatures of the modern history of nineteenth century Bengal. The volume 31 of Sahitya Sadhak Charitmala edited by Brejendranath Bandyopadhyay has explored the life and works of Jogendranath Vidyabhusan to a good extent. Biman Bihari Majumdar’s (1967: 108-110) History of Indian Social and political Ideas and Nirmal Sinha’s (1968: 326-29) Freedom Movement in Bengal have also focused Jogendranath Vidyabhusan to some extent. Apart from those works the primary and most important source is, of course, the ‘Arya Darsan’ Patrika edited by Jogendranath himself. Nevertheless, it may be claimed that the vigorous political activities of Jogendranath Vidyabhusan in the history of national awakening as well as rise of liberal democratic ambience in the second half of nineteenth century have been suffered an expected negligence in the contemporary literature of that most formative period of the history of Bengal as well as India.

Jogendranath was born at Simhat in the Ranaghat Subdivision on 12th July 1945 (Bandyopadhyay, 1988: 5). From his student hood he was deeply moved by the liberal democratic ideas of John Stuart Mill and among Indians, of Bankim Chandra’s considerations of equality. Being imbibed with liberal thoughts of Western Philosophy he became an ardent individualist, who apart of trying to impart his liberal intellectual views through the editorial columns of his newspaper Arya Darsan (established in 1878),
became a social and political activist with a mission to enfranchise the individual from omnipotent social pressures and community- based oppressions.

**Jogendranath and Social Regeneration: The Advocacy of Liberal Ideas**

A fervent supporter of John Stuart Mill he, with great zeal tried to emancipate the individual from social-cultural bondages of all forms, which it may be argued made him a pure individualist. He, even in those days when the Brahmins enjoyed exclusive power over social and cultural life vehemently unmasked their fraudulent character to make people aware of their equal rights in social life. Being a passionate individualist Jogendranath quite radically denounced the systems of marriage and divorce, both of which he believed were nothing but useless impediments to the free will of an individual (*Arya Darsana, Shravana* 1284, B.S: 62-68). Such a radical view of the relation between individual and society reveals his liberal views free from all socio-cultural dogmas.

Jogendranath Vidyabhusan took remarkable role in social reformation movement like widow-remarriage movement initiated by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar who marked great influence over the former. Sibnath Shastri, another remarkable personality of nineteenth century Bengal in his autobiography ‘*Atmacharit*’ (1983: 75-85) has elaborately explained the great enthusiasm of Jogendranath in the movements for the emancipation of individual from social odds like widow-remarriage movement. Shastri claimed that it was he who encouraged Jogendranath to marry a widow named, Mahalakshmi, the sister of his friend Ishwar Chandra Roy. No sooner Jogendranath gave his consent to marry Mahalakshmi, it was Sibnath Shastri who himself took the news to Vidyasagar and it was the latter who bore all the expenses of the marriage. Not to the great surprise of Jogendranath Vidyabhusan and Shastri that Jogendranath’s family and all relatives made him out of the family but it was too inadequate to make Jogendranath detract of his great zeal of reconstructing the individual-society relationship.

The high priest of equality Jogendranath believed that the all forms of prevailing inequalities in terms of caste, wealth or sex are the primary reasons for the social and
political degeneration of India. With the mission of social inclusion of all religious
groups he advocated for the diffusion of secular ideals and therefore, he urged to rename
the ‘Hindu Mela’ as ‘Bharatmela’. He pleaded all other religions other than Hinduism,
especially the Muslims to take part in the Hindu Mela for overall social and political
development of India (Chatterjee, 1977: 241). Since the ideal of secularism is one of the
most primary ingredients of modern liberal democracy, it may be argued that
Jogendranath’s attempt to include all religious communities in the national awakening
was really remarkable in the creation of liberal ambience in contemporary society.

Political Ideas of Jogendranath : The Diffusion of liberalism in India

Through his illustrious political activities, specially through liberal journalism
Jogendranath took tremendous role in the political advancement of the country by making
people politically conscious about the governmental measures as well as the various
political uprising, movements and achievement throughout the European nations in the
nineteenth century. Almost all of the major features of liberal democratic ideology can be
found in the varied political ideas of Jogendranath. He firmly believed that the existence
of a limited government based on certain liberal principles was the best form of
governance as well as suitable for the protection of civic liberty of the people. In his
paper Aryadarsan he extensively tried to diffuse liberal ideas to make people aware of the
most desirable government-governed relationship. In an article entitled ‘Who Gave
Power to the Government’? (Aryadarsan, Jaishthya, 1287 B.S: 85) he emphatically
argued:

“The Government is nothing but a mere representative of the people. The Praja (the
people) gives power to the king (Government) to rule over them on the condition that the
latter will protect the most precious right of the former … the empire of the king will
inevitably face impending collapse if the governed, in anyway, goes against him and
form revolutions.”

What he wanted was nothing but a people-centric government responsible to
ensure a better life of the governed whose discontent to the government ultimately brings
perils to the existence of the government. Simultaneously, he ascribed serious importance on the moral and politically conscious people for the smooth running of the democratic government (Arya Darsana, Jaishthya, 1287: 86-87). Like Sisir Kumar Ghosh and Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan he also argued in favour of a representative form of government. By the 1980s when an effective representation of Indians in all decision making bodies was strongly argued by the educated new middle-class intelligentsia the Arya darsana tried to strengthen such democratic demand by making a keen public opinion in favour of the issue. In a meeting of East India Association, in Landon in 1980 Sir David Wadarban, an M.P of British Parliament argued in favour of establishing representative form of Government in India. But to the great surprise of the house some Indian members opposed the very idea of introducing representative form of Government on the ground that it has yet not been in a position to adopt such a form of governance but the natives of India were eligible enough to suggest the government in governance. Regretting such argument of the fellow Indian members of the East Indian Association the Arya Darsana labeled the act as a matter of misfortune (Arya Darsana, Jaishthya, 1287 B.S: 97).

Jogendranath, being a staunch liberal could easily anticipate the desperate need of building national feelings among his fellow countrymen. He therefore tried to create a sense of belonging and fellow-feeling among the Indians by giving examples of the remarkable unification of Germany and Italy in the nineteenth century. Surendranath Banerjea in his autobiography A Nation in Making (1998: 40) has claimed that it was he who persuaded Jogendranath36 to translate into Bengali the life and works of Mazzini to kindle up a sense of national feelings among the Indians who did not understand English. Moreover, like Surendranath he could anticipate the significance of one single national language for the unification of people into a nation. He regretted that India was too diversified in terms of language, religion and caste to unify themselves into an integrated nation. Perhaps he was one of the earliest Indians who firmly argued to have a single language, i. e. Hindi as national language for the unification of India. To make his
mission true he, apart from writing extensively in a serious of articles in Arya Darsana he took active interest in the establishment of Indian Association (by Surendranath Banerjea) on 26th July, 1876 and dubbed that day as ‘the day of Indian’s rebirth (Sinha, 1968: 328). He believed that the association would be able to unify all religious groups and therefore, he wished to expand the association in different important cities of India to kindle up a spirit of self-reliance and national feeling.

Conclusion

The mid-nineteenth century, witnessed a constant intellectual confrontation between the despotic British imperial government and the emerging middle class liberal intelligentsia who experienced a sense of disenchantment of the so-called British rule through a series of arbitrary imperial policies, such as – enacting Vernacular Press Acts(1878); introducing Rent Bill; failing to enact Ilbert Bill unchanged as drafted by Mr. Ilbert and most importantly, inequality in services and Judicial System. In other words, the Indian liberals had bitterly experienced the explicit hypocrisy of the British who, in one hand used to claim themselves the most devoted worshippers of liberal ideals, on the other hand denied the gift of political freedom to the colonies. Even they had taken ill-conceived governmental measures to suppress any form of resistance brutally. These three decades, it may be claimed were the most remarkable phase in the history of nineteenth century Bengal as well as India from five specific reasons. Firstly, an explicit spirit of disillusionment to the British had been originated due to two important uprising– the ‘Sepoy Mutiny’ and the ‘Indigo Revolt’ during the late 1850s, which unveils the liberal mask of the foreign rulers to a great extent. Secondly, this period of the nineteenth century took tremendous role in creating political awareness among people. While in the first half of nineteenth century a mild breeze of constitutional liberalism was blowing featured with appealing, petitioning, giving speeches and publishing articles in newspapers expressing opposite but humble reasons, in the second half, especially in post 1857 revolt it was converted to an unrest storm featured with criticizing arbitrary governmental policies tooth and nails and tended to mitigate those ill-conceived measures
through a more profound resistance. Thirdly, the most radical role in this regard was taken by the print media—the newspapers and the journals, such as Hindu Patriot, Somprakash, Kalpadrum, Amrita Bazaar Patrika and Arya Darsana edited by the four liberal modernizers discussed in this chapter. Fourthly, besides newspapers the various political associations, viz. British Indian Association, the Indian league also rendered a great service to build political consciousness among people by promoting mass-participation into political activities which had never been found in hitherto social and political associations. By promoting mass participation they tried to make people out of age-old slumber, simultaneously, to make people understand the enormous importance of associational life. Lastly, but most importantly, this unrest phase of nineteenth century had witnessed the rise of a national consciousness in Bengal, broadly in India as an inevitable consequence of illustrious political activities of these liberal modernizers. The constant criticism of the Government, meetings of all India political associations and the liberal democratic political activities of these modernizers—all these gave birth to a national consciousness in place of old provincial and sectarian one (Morrison, 2015: 43). The cumulative effect of all these, it may be claimed gave birth to a liberal democratic intellectual ambience due to a wide range of arguments and liberal constitutional practices, such as raising questions and criticizing the arbitrary legal measures, trying to create an anti-absolutist public opinion through liberal democratic journalism, initiating constitutional agitations by sending petitions and memorandums to British Parliament and advocating in favour of more and more autonomy and representation in the decision making institutions. This rise of liberal democratic conditions, following Narahari Kaviraj (1984: 157-159) was nothing but an integral part of worldwide rise of bourgeois liberal democracy. The birth of Indian nationalism too is a part of this overall emergence of liberal democratic ambience throughout the nineteenth century, which has rightly been argued by Christopher Bayly (2012: 1) as “Indian liberal ideas were foundational to all forms of Indian nationalism and the country’s modern politics. Yet Indian liberalism was both wider in scope, and more specific in its remedies, than what is commonly called
nationalism …..By 1880, Indian liberalism has become a normative legal political theory with a matching way of life.”

The most crucial effect of this rise and growth of liberal democratic ideas between the 1850s and 1880s was that the liberal ideas became more and more institutionalized through constant criticism of the government in the native press, the meetings of various political associations and through modern education. Nonetheless, it must be admitted that the gear of this institutionalization of liberal democratic ideas were still very slow and could not kick out the allegiance to the foreign ruler but the remarkable role taken by Harish Chandra Mukherjee, Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, Sisir Kumar Ghosh and Jogendranath Vidyabhusan must be acknowledged. The process of creating anti absolutist and democratic ambience initiated by them were given tremendous acceleration by Surendra Nath Banerjee, Ramesh Chandra Dutta and Lalmohan Ghosh and Woomesh Chandra Banerjee, a subject explored in the following chapter.
Notes

1. Though the primary objects and nature of SAGK were not political but its nature of works, debates and proceedings took a significant role in creating modern liberal democratic ambience in the nineteenth century Bengal. (For details see the Chattopadhyay, 1965: xxvii-xlvii)

2. In his *Black Hole of Empire*, Partha Chatterjee and in his *Awakening: the story of Bengal Renaissance* and *The Bengal Renaissance: From Rammohun to Rabindranath*’ Subrata Dasgupta though presented detailed account of Nineteenth Century Bengal have neglected Harish Chandra and his Hindu Patriot. (See, Chatterjee, 2013, Dasgupta, 2011 and Dasgupta 2007.)

3. For details on British Indian Association see Fourth chapter of this thesis.

4. It is important to note that Raja Rammohun Roy had pleaded for the codification of civil and criminal laws but Harish Chandra opposed it.

5. Addressing it as a religious war the Advocate General of the government accused: “If we now take a retrospective view of the various circumstances which we have been able to elicit during our extended inquiries, we shall perceive how exclusively the Mohameddans are attached to it.” (for further details see Moitra, 1993: 117)

6. Lord Canning said, “I doubt whether it is fully understood or known to what audacious extent sedition has been poured into the hearts of the native population of India within the last few weeks under the guise of intelligence supplied to them by the native newspapers. It has been done sedulously, cleverly, artfully. Facts have been grossly misrepresented—so grossly that, with educated and informed minds, the very extravagance of the misrepresentation must compel discredit…. (Quoted in Mahfadullah, 1984: 138-39)

7. Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar proposed the scheme of the paper and helped Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan to run the paper from all corners. (see Bose, 1976: 375)
8. According to Dr. Biman Behari Majumdar his love for mixed constitution was nothing but the result of conflicting influence of his orthodox leaning and the liberal education.

9. Dwarkanath believed that the English constitution is the best for not only introducing mixed constitution but also copying from Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Portugal and Italy (see, Majumdar, 1967:99).

10. Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan started *Kalpadrum*, a monthly magazine in 1879. It published exclusive articles connected to contemporary socio-political issues in the latter half of nineteenth century.

11. He argued that the main reason behind the paramount development of ancient Greece, Rome and India is the political consciousness as well as political development of those nations. (See Somprakash, 27 Kartick, 1290 B.S.)

12. For detail on the British Indian Association see the last chapter.

13. Partha Chatterjee has repeatedly used the phrase ‘anti-absolutist movement’ to point out the remarkable role of the growing civil social associations in various part of Bengal, (broadly in India) by the first half of the nineteenth century in his book *The black hole of Empire* (2013)

14. Rammohun Roy firmly fought against such discriminatory practice and advocate for the Indianization of the Judicial System. (For detail see Roy, 1977: 39)

15. The form of racial discrimination of that occasion was a bit different. No sooner the Supreme Court was set up in Calcutta a number of civil Courts and criminal Courts were established in different suburbs in Bengal. But the British born subjects residing at those *mofussils* enjoyed an exemption from the jurisdiction of the criminal court and they enjoyed the privilege of trial by the Supreme Court only. As a consequence of this unjust privilege a ruthless repression over natives as well as the general and judicial officials of company became too aggressive which was attempted to combat by legislative measure.
16. It was labeled as ‘Black Act’ by the Englishmen because it tended to establish equal status of British and natives in the trial system, which the British subjects found degrading to them. (To see those four Acts see, Ghosh Ramgopal, 1871: 45)

17. The Indian Association founded by Surendra Nath Banerjee in 1876 was one of the most important centres for civil societal movement.

18. St.James Hall of England was like the town hall of Kolkata where almost all significant public meeting were arranged. Such a meeting during the Ilbert Bill agitation was organized presided by Alexandar Arbuthnot, one of the important members of Lord Ripon’s Council.

19. Partha Chatterjee has noted that Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, the chief prophet of Widow-remarriage movement was directly engaged with Somprakash. After the demise of Dwarakanath (1293 B.S.), his Son Upendra Kumar who was the then in-charge of the paper handed over it to a Trustee Board, the chief patron of which was Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. (For further enquiriy, see Chatterjee, 1977: 67-72)

20. Sisir Kumar Ghosh was the third son of Harinarayan Ghosh, a successful pleader. He was born at Palua Magura in Jessore in 1840. For biographical details see Bose, Anathnath, 1921, [1327 B.S.].

21. Sisir Kumar had to migrate with his family to Calcutta due to some natural calamity. But it could not make him stop Amrita Bazar Patrika. Here he restarted the paper from 21 December 1871. (see, Bandyopadhyay, 2009, Vol-86 for further details).

22. The Sulabha Samachar published by the Indian Reform Association claimed that the British were not only the king of the natives but also the rescuer from the deplorable condition of the Muslim empire. They should be acknowledged for teaching us English as well as modern western education. It raised the question, “Is it not so foolish to think of a British-free India? (See Chatterjee, 1977: 72).
23. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was another eminent modernizer who suggested some important reformations for the judicial system in India. To him, the cost of having justice was really too high to the poor peasants. (See Majumdar, 1967:137)

24. Unlike Raja Rammohun Roy and Bankim Chandra, Sisir Kumar Ghosh emphatically championed the idea of village Panchayat courts, which he believed would be an important remedy to the various problems which the people suffering from in law courts. (see Majumdar, 1967: 137)

25. Mr. Munro and Mr. Oakline were close friends of Sisir Kumar Ghosh. But their friendship could not make Sisir Kumar detracted from his democratic and impartial Journalism. (For details, see Chatterjee, P, 1977: 72)

26. He was not blessed with the opportunity of having University education but was a self-taught man with keen knowledge on International Relation.

27. Sisir Kumar Ghosh was too aware of the fact that the demand might seem to be a premature one and therefore he argued “We have great faith in the destiny of our nation, which has outlived the Muslim oppression and Anglo-Saxon contact. (Quoted in Majumdar 1967: 131).


29. Rammohun Roy and Bankim Chandra were two among the modernizers who were seriously concerned about the judicial System in contemporary India. But none of them did suggest that the revival of the old Panchayat courts would remedy the local multifarious evils but Sisir Kumar Ghosh did it in a remarkable way (see Majumdar, 1967: 137).

30. Raja Rammohun Roy and his associates expressed almost the same view on the freedom of press in the appeal to the King-in-Council against the reactionary measure of press censorship.
31. The Black Act controversy (1849) on the issue of racial discrimination made a clear feeling of estrangement and as a consequence the native and British subjects’ relations got degraded (see Shastri, 2007: 120–130).

32. During 1880s there were 88 associations in Bengal with headquarters in Kolkata of most of the societies. (See Seal, 1968: 206).

33. It was humble attempt by Sisir Kumar who remained contented with the office of the Assistant Secretary of the Indian League.

34. Biman Behari Majumdar thinks that the Indian League was extinct about the early 1880s before the birth of Bengal National League in 1983 by Woomesh Chandra Banerjee and Girija Bhusan Mukherjee. Unfortunately, protesting the high handedness of the president of the Indian League some members like Durga mohan Das, Bhairava Chandra Banerjee, Jay Gopal Sen, Beni Madhab Basuand afterwards Surendra nath Banerjee, Narendranath Sen, Ananda Prasad Roy, Ananda Mohan Basu and some others seceded from the Indian League which made it weakened and bifurcated (for details see, Majumdar, 196 : 141 ).

35. *Hindu Mela* was one of those most significant factors of the nineteenth century Bengal, which took remarkable role in the rise and growth of national feelings and unification of India. (For details see: Bose, 1976: 262-267)

36. Besides Jogendranath Vidyabhusan he persuaded Babu Rajani Kanta Gupta to translate into Bengali the life and works of Mazzini to place it within the reach of those who did not understand English. (for details see: Banerjea, 1998: 40)
Chapter VI

Ideas into Action: The Role of the Liberal School in Bengal
Ideas into Action: The Role of the Liberal School in Bengal

The previous chapter has explored the emergence of a new era in the political life of Bengal with the advent of national democratic school during the mid-nineteenth century (1850s –1870s), which gave birth to a liberal democratic intellectual ambience due to a wide range of arguments and liberal constitutional practices, such as—raising questions and criticizing the arbitrary legal measures of the government; trying to create an anti-absolutist public opinion through liberal democratic journalism; initiating constitutional agitations by sending petitions and memorandums to British Parliament and advocating in favour of more and more autonomy and representation in the decision making institutions. In other words, the imbue ment of national sentiment and the liberal thought in the pre-1985 (the birth of Indian National Congress) became more and more institutionalized through the significant role of the native press, viz. Hindu Patriot, Somprakash, Kalpadrum, Amrita Bazar Patrika and Arya Darsana, and the political associations like British Indian Association and the Indian League. Subsequently, during the last quarter of nineteenth century Bengal this process of creating anti-absolutist democratic ambiance got tremendous vigor by activists like Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, Surendranath Banerjea, Lalmohun Ghosh and Manomohun Ghosh, the political activities of whom are explored in this chapter. Their vigorous political and civil-societal movements in terms of constitutional agitations, turbulent journalism and associational activities accelerated the process of diffusion of constitutional liberal atmosphere in the late nineteenth century. Another reason which has made this last quarter of nineteenth century more interesting is the changed policy of the British-raj towards the advent of national democratic feelings in comparison to the first half of the century, which has rightly been observed by Ashis Nandy (2009: 26) as ‘political paradox of the Raj’. While in the first half of the nineteenth century the rulers supported the
political participation of the peoples as it was advantageous to the regime (for the role of the pro-British Hindus), in the second half, more specifically in the last quarter of the century they imposed various impediments to discourage it because of emerging nationalism. As an inevitable consequence of this political as well as ideological confrontation between the rulers and the ruled a new epoch in the history of the rise of liberal democratic conditions in India appeared.

**Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee and the diffusion of liberal Ideas in Bengal**

By the last quarter of nineteenth century, as an inevitable consequence of the advent of national democratic school a keen political consciousness imbued with a nationalistic reverential feeling of ‘Indian-ness’ blew in the air with more profound demand of legitimate share in the governance by the Indians. In addition to the demand of hitherto political movements in the second half of nineteenth century a clear demand for representative and responsible government was put forward by the contemporary political modernizers, among whom the most prominent name was Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, (1844-1906), the first President of the Indian National Congress. The forth Indian barrister\(^1\) of the Calcutta High Court Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee son of Girish Chandra Bonnerjee was born at Kidderpore on 29th December, 1844. He took his education at the Oriental Seminary and the Hindu School, and later received the ‘Rustomji Jamsetji Jeejeebhai Scholarship’\(^2\) and he sailed for England to study law. Returning to Calcutta he joined the Bar of Calcutta High Court in November, 1868 and his eminent service to his profession made him the first Indian Standing Counsel to the Government of India. In 1884 he, on the recommendation of the then Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University, was selected as a member of the Senate of the university and later became the chairman of law faculty. In those days, on the basis of the ‘Lord Cross Reforms’ the Calcutta University used to enjoy the right to send a representative to the Bengal Legislative Assembly and contesting Raibahadur Rajkumar Sarbadhikari he became the first elected representative of Calcutta University and worked together with another renowned Bengali Ramesh Chandra Dutt during 1894 -1895 in the Bengal Legislative Assembly.
Woomesh Chandra became the first President of Indian National Congress in 1885 and subsequently he practiced in the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England from June 1902 to 1906 (Sinha, 1968: 320). The illustrious activities of Woomesh Chandra came to an end at the age of sixty-two at Croydon in England on 21 July 1906.

The scarcity of existing literature on the role of Woomesh Chandra in the political affairs of late nineteenth century has always been a primary problem as he was undeservedly ignored in the main stream literature of that period. Among the handful of existing biographical works on Woomesh Chandra the earliest was *W.C. Bonnerjee: His Life, Letters and Speeches* (1923) authored by one of his correspondents and cousins Krishnalal Bandyopadhyay, which has explored his socio-political activities to a great extent. In 1944 two eminent biographical works on Woomesh Chandra were published by Sadhona Bonnerjee, the granddaughter of Woomesh Chandra and by Manmathanath Ghosh, the grandson of Girish Chander Ghosh who, according to a letter of Woomesh Chandra treated him as his own child (Roy, 2010). While the first book, *The life of W. C. Bonnerjee* (1944) written by Sadhona Bonnerjee has given a detailed account of the multifarious life of Woomesh Chandra the second one, *W.C.Bonnerjee: The First and Eighth President of Indian National Congress* (1944) has kindled up the important role of Woomesh Chandra in the Congress movement as well as emerging national movement in India. The book, *W.C.Bonnerjee: In the Horizon of life* (2010) is another important work written by Sukhendu Sekhar Roy. Apart from these works Ramgopal Sanyal’s monumental work *A General Biography of Bengal Celebrities* (1976) is another book which has explored the life and role of Woomesh Chandra to a good extent. The basic problem associated with these literatures is that most of the work have focused chiefly on the role Woomesh Chandra as a barrister and as the counsel of Bengal Legislative Council, but the remarkable role of Woomesh Chandra in the broader field of political arena, more specifically in the creation of liberal democratic consciousness in contemporary society has remained unexplored.
Advocacy for Responsible and Representative Government

The most remarkable contribution of Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee to the advent of liberal democratic consciousness was his advocacy in favour of popular, responsible and representative government in India. Being highly moved by his contemporary John Stuart Mill, the most prominent nineteenth century British liberal thinker, he regarded representative and responsible government as the only way through which people of India could ‘emerge from darkness to light’ (Bonnerjee, 1944: 60-61). Specially, in a time when the ‘Mill-Stephen Controversy’ over ideology of the British Raj to their colonies was high in the air, Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee ardently argued in favour of responsible and popular government based on liberal ideals in India. The controversy started with the brutal colonial policy of the then Jamaican Governor Edward Eyre towards a small group of rebels, the slave cultivators of Mordant Bay of West Indies, who rose in protest against their desperate economic condition in 1865 just after few years of almost similar unrest movements in India, i.e. Sepoy Mutiny and Indigo revolt in late 1850’s. The way it was ruthlessly suppressed by Edward Eyre was vehemently criticized by John Stuart Mill who denounced his colonial policy as ‘the abandonment of the rule of Law for that of arbitrary power’. But it was James Stephen the most outspoken exponent of ‘authoritarian liberalism’ openly, in his Liberty, Equality, Fraternity (1873) supported Eyre’s policy since he maintained that “force was not an evil but a necessary element in the creation of a civilized social order” (Metcalf, 1994: 57). Like Bentham and unlike Mill he firmly believed that the British were the representative of a belligerent civilization whose ‘rule over India’ found its justification in the superiority of the conquering race and every progress that had been made in India had been forced upon it as a direct result of British power (e.g. prohibition of the practice of suttee and infanticide) (stokes, 1959: 303). However, Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee and other contemporary liberal modernizers like Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan and Sisir Kumar Ghosh, while arguing for more representation of the Indians in all decision making institutions from legislative council to local administrative institutions, the two opposite
policies of British Government became more explicit in their policies towards white-colonies and black-colonies during 1860’s. Such contrasting policy by the ‘liberal’ British rulers, it may be argued, led the Indian reformers disenchanted to them from that of the first half of the century. This opposite stand of the British Empire has been explored by Metcalf (1994: 54) who pointed:

“The process had begun in the 1840s with the publication of Durham report, which awarded responsible government to Britain’s Canadian colonies. By 1867 Canada had been confederated and responsible government extended to Australia, Newzeland and the cape. Such a process of encouragement to colonial self-government was of course implicit in the liberal ideas…. By contrast, whether in Jamaica or India it was the empire of Rome which had imposed upon it the ‘duty and task’ and high privilege of extending the rule of law…. around the globe”.

In almost same time 1867 (25th July) Woomesh Chandra delivered a remarkable speech on representative and responsible government and emphatically argued in favour of introducing such system of governance of India. Despite being an admirer of the liberal enlightened British ruler he never hesitated to denounce it in any occasion where they showed any form arbitration towards India. Through the speech he firmly argued – “My opinion is that there ought to be a representative assembly and a senate sitting in India, with a power of veto to the Governor General ….. as exists in America, with perhaps an absolute power of veto to the Crown” (Journal of East India Association, 1868: 176)

In Britain, he tried to create to strong public opinion in favour of representative and responsible government by vehemently criticizing the unrepresentative character of the duly passed ‘Council Act of 1861’. Through almost all the leading associations whether it was town hall in London or the London Indian Society, Woomesh Chandra whenever asked to participate in any meeting or debate tried to uphold the political and administrative grievances of India to the British people. At a meeting of London Indian
Society he strongly argued for the introduction of representative and responsible government in India. In that meeting (25th July, 1865) he eloquently argued:

A popular government alone could help the Indian Community to emerge from darkness to light; and to pave the way for the advent of this popular government, it was desirable that Indians were entrusted with great responsibility in the administration as well as in the Council of India”. (Quoted in Sinha, 1968: 320)

Being a pragmatic political activist he honestly confessed that the mode of education of his countrymen was not only defective but also far from the level of those Western societies where parliamentary democracy based of liberal norms prevails. Nonetheless, he argued that the common people can easily accept and cope-up with the responsible and representative government in India. In the Journal of East India Association he claimed:

“To understand the people, you must go to them direct; you will then find that they possess remarkable degree of intelligence….. I do not mean to deny that their education is very defective. In fact, they might be said to possess no education at all, if we measure education by a European standard. But compared to their richer countrymen, they are, there can be no doubt, thoroughly capable of appreciating Representative Government, they are not a whit less educated than the lowest householders compared to the educated classes in this country.” (Journal of East Indian Association, 1867: 176)

W.C. Bonnerjee’s ardent desire for the positive reform of the existing bureaucratic form of Government in India, which was appeared in the late 1860’s when he was a student in England, long before he took leading role in the Congress movement during the late nineteenth century, was remarkable. Specially in a time when the contemporary modernizers in India like Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan and Sisir Kumar Ghosh through their rigorous political activities, were trying to shape the demand of more and more share in the governance by the Indians, Woomesh Chandra tried the same through the columns of the journal of East India Association. Needless to say, his strong arguments along with other political activities were gradually shaping an enlightened public opinion
in England. In the Same meeting Woomesh Chandra firmly argued in favour of establishing popular government based on universal franchise. He argued:

“….. Unless the government be popular, can a political community, not duly constructed emerge from darkness to light? From the ignorance of political science which is the principle cause of misrule, to the knowledge of political science which were the best security against it, I see no reason whatever why the people of India are not capable of understanding and exercising the functions which naturally in here in Subjects possessing a representative Government.” (Journal of EIA, 1876: 178)

Thus Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, in his illustrious political activities ascribed most importance over representative and responsible government where it is the governed, the common people who use to possess the central position. Later, in course of his speech in the second session of Indian National Congress held at the Town Hall in Calcutta on 28\textsuperscript{th} December, 1886 he strongly argued to have a representative form of government in India. During 1888 while he was in England in a meeting of London Agency at the Town Hall, Northampton sharing the panel of speakers along with Mr. Bradlaugh, M.P. and Dadabhai Naoroji, he tried to create a powerful public opinion by condemning the retrograde, unrepresentative and irresponsible character of the Legislative Council in India. He, in the course of his speech pointed out:

“My task is to lay before you the grievances of that country in order that you may consider them, and see for yourselves whether there are no means by which you redress them. Now the first grievance that we labour under is that there is no responsible government in India at all…..” (Indian Mirror, 13th September, 1888).

Again during the early twentieth century when he was in England practicing in the Privy Council he delivered a speech at the Westbourne Park claiming Indian representation in the ‘executive Council’ in India, so that the native grievances could be remedied in a proper manner (Ray,2010: 62).

Such introspection about the enormous significance of the responsible government has revealed his rational democratic mind where it was the governed that always occupy
the central position in his political thought. Being an staunch admirer of Western liberal and democratic ideas Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee ascribed most importance on the responsible government based on proportional representation of the governed whose voice could be placed in a democratic manner in the decision making process, unless what, according to him ‘a political community could never be emerge from darkness to light.’(Sanyal, 1976:41)

**Associational Life of Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee: Pioneering Anti-absolutist Liberal Movement**

The rising civil-societal movement, both in India as well as England was one of the most remarkable factors in the process of building a nationalistic, democratic and anti-absolutist movement. Though there were a handful of civil societal organizations emerged in the first half of nineteenth century, it was only in the second half of the century when nature, role and emphasis of the newly emerged civil societal associations and political associations, viz British Indian Association (1951), Indian League (1875), Indian Association (1876), the National Conference (1883), Indian National Congress (1885) have been shifted from collaboration to criticism; from the centers of Bengali zamindar elites to the centers of mass participation in public issues against the various ill-conceived measures of the East India Company (till 1858) as well as of the British Government (in post 1858 era). In other words, these civil and political associations emerged during 1870s and 1880s with headquarters in Calcutta took most significant role in creating a more sustained anti-absolutist spirit of opposition to the British in the second half of nineteenth century (Seal, 1968 : 206). Needless to say, Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee took significant role in the promotion of such spirit through various associations in India as well as in England.

Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee’s first associational activity can be traced back to his student-hood in London where he, with other Indian students worked hard to establish “The Indian society” in London in 1867 in order to bring the socio-political and
administrative questions of India under the scanner of the enlightened British public opinion. In course of time Dadabhai Naoroji and he himself became the President and the secretary of that organization respectively (Ray, 2010: 20). In 1884 Woomesh Chandra on the recommendation of Justice Peggott, the honorable Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University, was selected as a member of the Senate of the University and the chairman of the Law Faculty.\(^7\) His contribution to these institutions was remarkable which brought him the opportunity to be elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly.\(^8\) During 1888, while Woomesh Chandra was in England he met Messrs Digby and Dadabhai Naoroji, and with both of their assistance he started the London Agency and took the responsibility to raise fund in India for the support (Sanyal, 1976: 41). During this short period of only eight months he extensively went to different centers of intelligence and socio-political associations in order to create a strong public opinion in England for the overall development of India.

Among his numerous public speeches delivered in different associations the speech delivered in a meeting at the Town Hall in Northampton was remarkable as it, for his great oratory skill drew the attention of almost all the leading English daily in England. The most significant ingredient of his speeches was that he never hesitated to raise questions against the arbitrary measures of the government and vehemently denounced almost all the lacunas connected to the governance in India. In that meeting of Northampton he, after the speeches of Mr. Bradlaugh, the distinguished member of the House of Commons and Dadabhai Naoroji vehemently criticized the irresponsible and unrepresentative charter of the government in India (Sinha, 1968: 321). Pointing this grievance to the house he claimed:

“The Government of India is in the hands of one of her Majesty’s Principal Secretaries of state, called the Secretary of States for India, who is assisted by a Council, but would you believe it that this gentleman, the Secretary of State and his Council are sometimes ignorant of things which private members of Parliament are in full possession of?..... When any question asked in the House of Commons of the Under Secretary the answer
invariable is – “the secretary of state has no official knowledge of the matter” (*Indian Mirror*, September 13, 1888)

Besides such criticism against the shortcoming of the British governance in India, Woomesh Chandra elaborately pointed out the nature of ill-governance prevailed in the Country. “In India”, he argued, “the supreme rule is in the hands of the Viceroy and his Council. They act from the information which they receive from the District Officials….. and it is the officials who are entrusted with the charge of this districts who have the weal or Woe of the country in their hands, and when you appeal against any action of theirs (the District Officers) to the Viceroy, you do not get any reply for months, and as a matter of fact the only reply vouchsafed is that the Viceroy sees no reason to interfere” (Quoted in Sanyal, 1976: 42). Thus, condemning the nature of governance and the role of District Officers he urged the Viceroy to seek any form of information from the people directly in order to gift the country the blessing of good governance. Ascribing most importance on the common people he regretted that “the Officials, instead of seeking any information from the governed used to seek it from those native persons of their choice, who are not responsible to anybody, and they may give such answers as may chime in with the views known to be held by the District Officer, and instead of getting good advice from responsible persons, the District Officers generally gets advice that leads him to take action not in accordance with the will of the Country.” (*Indian Mirror* Sept. 13, 1988)

Thus, criticizing the system of governance tooth and nail, he tried to create a strong public opinion in England so that intended administrative reformations could be introduced in India. All he intended was to have people-oriented governance where the feelings of the people could be reflected through governmental policies, which it may be argued, led him condemn the unpopular character of the Secretary of the State and his Council in the following manner:

“The Secretary of the State for India monopolized all power, yet he, together with his Council, was completely ignorant to the true state of things in India. For his knowledge
of Indian affairs he was dependent on information from the Viceroy whose own source of information was nothing better than the European District Officers, who never judge any problem from the Indian viewpoint.” (Quoted in Sinha, 1968:321)

His great zeal for the introduction of representative institutions in India was reflected through all the organization he was associated with. Regarding the unrepresentative character of the Viceroy’s Council as “responsible for the sorry state of things in India” he firmly argued: “What we want and have a right to get is that our countrymen should have the opportunity of really representing to the Government the views of the people of this country. What we want is that there should be a responsible Government in India.”

Such an advocacy for the sake of having an opportunity to raise voice at the decision making institutions, it may be claimed, unveils his deep love to the liberal democratic ideals. This is why he regarded the prevailing of representative institutions as the basic precondition for the “happiness and well-being of the people in any civilized country” (Indian Mirror, 13 Sept. 1888). Apart from these associational activities, both as an intellectual leader as well as an activist his political views were vividly reflected by his close association with Indian National Congress, which took a significant role in the building of national reverential feeling as well as liberal democratic ambience in India during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

**The National Congress and Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee: The Advent of Liberal Constitutional Movement**

In any history connected to the liberal constitutional movement in modern India, perhaps the most significant incident was the establishment of Indian National Congress in the late 1885 as a remarkable embodiment of the combined action and energies of the newly educated intelligentsia to ameliorate the political and Social problems of India, with which the name of Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee is directly associated as its first and eighth President and a life-member. The Credit of organizing the National Congress
belongs to Alan Octavian Hume who, according to Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee conceived the idea in 1884 that it would be great advantage to the Country if the leading Indian politicians could be brought together once a year to discuss social matters. Hume did not desire that the political matters should from part of their discussion because the contemporary political bodies of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras might suffer in importance if Indian politicians from different parts of the Country come together and discuss politics. Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee also claimed that it was Lord Dufferin (the successor of Lord Ripon), who came to know about the Hume’s plan at Simla, suggested the latter to include politics also as its part of discussion and convinced him that “it would perform functions similar to those of Her Majesty’s opposition in England” (Bonnerjee, 1944: 68-69). However, the historical inaugural meeting at Bombay were attended by seventy two invited members among whom there were only three out of Six invitees from Bengal namely – Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, Narendra Sen, the then editor of Indian Mirror and Girizabhusan Mukherjee, the editor of the *Naba Bibhakar* (Banerjee, 1998: 92-95) were present and it was, perhaps the most remarkable event in Woomesh Chandra’s life that he was elected, quite unanimously, the first President of the National Congress which according to Hume would work as “the Safety Valve” (Grover, 1963: 132, Chandra, 2009: 209) for the Indians for canalizing the leading and progressive Indian public opinion along constitutional lines. Here again, at the auspicious moment of the inauguration of this National Congress Woomesh Chandra in the brief Presidential address clearly emphasized on the importance of forming and expanding local government in provinces on the basis of representation, which was echoed invariably from almost all the platforms of civil and political association he was connected with.

It is important to note that from the very incipient phase the National Congress tried to build a constitutional movement based on liberal democratic ideas. Among the nine resolutions passed at the first session of Indian National Congress the most significant in terms of its liberal and constitutional aspect was the third one which
intended “the reform and expansion of the supreme and existing local Legislative Councils by the admission of a considerable proportion of elected members”, which was given supreme priority by the President Woomesh Chandra in his speech at the inaugural session at Bombay. He also advocated that India should be given self-rule like the Canadian type and detailing the primary objectives of the Indian National Congress he from liberal democratic point of view argued that “the basis of the Government should be widened and that the people should have their proper and legitimate share in it.” (Bandopadhyay, 1923: 72)

In the second Session of the National Congress held at the Town Hall in Calcutta (on and from 28th December, 1886) Woomesh Chandra, in course of his Speech gave most importance to particularly two issues, viz. criticized the prevalent jury system and proposed to form standing Committee in each province, so that the leaders could maintained unhindered contact among themselves (Sanyal, 1976: 48).

One of the most important ideals of modern liberal democracy is the ideal of liberal tolerance and secularism. It was Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee who took tremendous role in promoting such ideals during the third session of National Congress in 1887 held at Madras. By the time the Muslim society was a bit suspicious over the true motive of the foundation of National Congress, which was rightly anticipated by Woomesh Chandra. Therefore he proposed the name of Badruddin Tyabji, one of his old friends as the President of the Congress and tried to promote the liberal secular motive of the Congress through his renowned speech at the session. He argued:

“I am very sorry, indeed, to say it, but there is no disguising the fact, that in Bengal, in some quarters, amongst our Mahommedan friends, some misapprehension as to the scope and objects of our National Congress still exists, and it is absolutely necessary that misapprehension should be removed, and that we should in fact, as we are in thought, one community and one country owing allegiance to one sovereign. The misapprehension under which those Mahommedan gentlemen, some of them at least labour, who do not cordially sympathized with us, is due, I believe, to an apprehension that the question of
“Representative Government”, which was presented to the Congress of the year 1885, which was again press by the congress of the year 1886…..will practically prove to be conducive to the interest of the Mahommedan population of his country” (Quoted in Ray, 2010: 49-50).

All he ardently desired was the equal representation of all creeds and sects of India and tried to create a liberal and secular consciousness through the biggest national platform, i.e. Indian National Congress. His liberal introspection could easily anticipate a fatal outcome of such misapprehension among the Muslim community and therefore, he earnestly tried to promote a liberal and secular ambience in the third session of the National Congress. In the same address he pointed out:

“There is nothing in the objects and scope of this National Congress, which can, directly or indirectly be in any way inimical to the interest of our Mahommedan fellow countrymen, or of any other section of the community. We want a representative Government in its truest and best sense…. And I am speaking, on behalf of every community in the country, so that the whole of India may be perfectly represented to the governing authorities—so that their grievances may be remedied. (quoted in Ray, 2010 : 51)

Thus, session by session\textsuperscript{14} Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee through his illustrious political activities took remarkable role in creating a liberal democratic political consciousness in the late nineteenth century. In the fourth session of Congress held at Allahabad on 29\textsuperscript{th} December1888 he ascribed enormous importance on the appointment of a Parliamentary Committee consisting of representative belonging to both England and India. (Majumdar, 1974: 64-65, Ray, 2010: 51-52) In the eighth session of National Congress held at Allahabad in 1892, Woomesh Chandra was re-elected as President, which was remarkable in terms of the initiation of liberal constitutional movement as he directly and vehemently criticized the prevalent Jury system of the country as well as denounced the undemocratic character of the Legislative Council and local bodies. In course of his Presidential speech he, addressing the prevailing system as ‘modus operandi’, argued:
“The Secretary of state thinks that a particular measure ought to be passed and that it may be taken that he honestly believes that the measure would be for the benefit of the country. He invites two or three Indian gentlemen of eminence, with whom he is acquainted to see him. He speaks to them in private, and gets their views, which unfortunately, in the case of these gentlemen, generally coincide with the views he himself holds (Laughter). The measure is passed. There is a great cry of indignation in the country. The answer of the Government is—‘Oh, but we have consulted the leaders of your society! and it is with their help this measure has been passed.’” (Presidential Speech of W.C.Bonnerjee, 8th session of National Congress, 1892)

All he wanted was that the views, aspirations and grievances of the people should be represented in a proper manner. He firmly believed that it was the Officials (and not the viceroy or the Governor General) upon whom the ‘weal and Woe’ is depended because they, while administering the justice come in contact with the people directly. Arguing for governed – oriented responsible system he did not hesitate to condemn—

“I repeat that those who placed over us, our Viceroy, Governors, Lieutenant Governors and others of better degree are more or less equated by the desire to do us good, both for their own sake as well as for the people of our country; but the system under which they work is a vicious one, and the result is no good is really done.” (Quoted in Ray. 2010:101)

He never bothered to raise questions against the omnipotent British Government which, it is praiseworthy to note took remarkable role in the promotion of liberal democratic political consciousness in the late nineteenth century. In the same manner he criticized tooth and nail the existing judicial system which it must be noted, have been criticized throughout the whole nineteenth century by different liberal modernizers like Rammohun Roy, Ramgopal Ghose and Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan in different form and different occasions.
A Critique of Judiciary: A Democratic Stand

The Legislative initiatives for judicial reformation to abolish the prevailing racial discriminations among the British-born subjects and the natives, and the unjust howling agitation by the British subjects against such attempts widened the line of estrangement between the Indians and the British to a great extent. Among those Legislative attempts two noteworthy attempts were ‘the Bethun’s Draft’ labeled as ‘Black Act’ by the white agitators in 1849 and the ‘Ilbert Bill’ of 1883 drafted by Mr. Ilbert, the law member of the Viceroy’s Council. While in both of the issues the unjust but organized agitations made government either withdraw or modify the legislation in favour of the agitators, it left a rankling sensation of defeat, disgrace and vicious humiliation among the Indians who supported such attempts to uphold the liberal ideal of equality, which, according to historian Jadunath Sarkar (1960: 78) taught the Indian leaders the power of an organized movement and led them establish the Indian National Congress in 1885.

Like other contemporary modernizers the Ilbert Bill controversy of 1883 acted as an eye-opener to Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee since it unveiled the hypocrisy of the British who claimed themselves liberal but agitated for their racial privileges in the judicial system. This revealed the deplorable political status of the Indians as well as racial haughtiness of the British towards Indians. During those unrest days of 1883 he defended Surendranath Banerjea in a contempt of Court Case. But he was well aware of the fact that the latter could not escape punishment at the hands of the European Judges of the High Court (Sinha, 1968:322).

Being professionally connected with the prevailing judicial system he could easily locate the point of lacunas in the system which, in fact, used to pose the chief impediment to the true administration of justice. At the Northampton meeting in 1888 he utterly criticized Sir James Fitzjemes Stepen’s (the law member of the Viceroy’s Council) ‘The Amendment of the Criminal Procedure Code’, which to him not less than the ‘Draconian’ in its severity, because it took away “the finality from the verdict of the
jury and left a convicted person completely at the mercy of the judicial officers” (Sanyal, 1976: 44). He, quiet indignantly regretted, “in a country like India where people basically abide by the law as any people of the Earth – yet the criminal procedure code has been made the severest of any in the civilized world” (Quoted in Sanyal, 1976: 44). The unfortunate consequence of that amendment of ‘Criminal procedure Code’ which degraded the power of trial by jury was described by him with the following instance -----

“A man was tried in one of the districts in Bengal for murder. The trial took place not before a jury, but before what are called Assessors (who hardly know vernacular) – two assessor and a Judge. The Judge found the man not guilty of murder but found him guilty of manslaughter, and sentenced him to hard labour for five years. He appealed against his conviction…. The case came before the High Court of Calcutta. He was a poor man and could not be properly represented. The Judges upset the conviction as regards manslaughter, found this man guilty of murder, sentenced him to be hanged, and not withstanding petitions for mercy from nearly the whole country that man was hanged. (Loud cry of shame!) (Indian Mirror, September 13, 1888: 03)

In the Northampton speech in another occasion he indignantly criticized Sir James Stephen’s Evidence Act of India, which made a provision that at a criminal trial the previous conviction of any prisoner may be given as evidence at any stage of the trial. Such an irrational and perilous clause was condemned as well as ridiculed by him as a man’s conviction in 1830 for bigamy might be cited as evidence against him when he was charged before the court of law for his guilt of pick-pocketing in 1888 (Sinha, 1968: 322)

In his Presidential speech at the Allahabad Congress in 1892 he ardently advocated for trial by jury which to him was “the most essential safeguard against injustice” (Bonnerjee, 1944: 77). In this regard he vehemently criticized the ‘Jury Notification’ of Sir Charles Elliott, which virtually throttled the jury system in Bengal. The problem of understanding the language of a native witness, or of the convict in a trial of criminal case had been an integral impediment for the better administration of justice since the very beginning of the British Empire. In those days, in any civil cases the
evidence was used to taken down in the native language of the witness by an officer specially appointed for that purpose but in criminal cases the witness is, as a rule taken down by the presiding officer from England, who according to Woomesh Chandra tried much to learn the language of the people they are sent upon to govern, but the circumstances in which they placed and the circumstances in which the people of India were placed were such that they were compelled to live in entire isolation from one another (Ray, 2010: 104). In this connection Woomesh Chandra argued:

“You may read the books of a country, you may know its literature well, but unless you have a familiar acquaintance with the people of the country…. It is impossible for you to understand the language of these people speak…. Jurymen being drawn from the people themselves are better able to understand the language in which the witnesses give their evidence better able to understand and appreciate the demeanor of witnesses, the twists and turns of their heads, and various other contortions of their physiognomy which witnesses go through to avoid straight answer to straight questions… (Bonnerjee, 1944: 84-85).

Thus, Woomesh Chandra strongly argued for the expansion of jury system so that the administration of justice may be properly established and advocated for the Indianization of judicial system by appointing more and more Indian jurors. In his speech at Poona Congress of 1995, he again argued “a judge, translating in his mind the vernacular of a rustic witness, was too engrossed with the language to attend properly to the witness. Indian jurors, on the other hand, could not only understand the language of the witness but also distinguish the truth from the false in his evidence.” (Sinha, 1968: 323)

Such anti-colonial stance of him against the shortcoming as well as ill-conceived measures of the Government was seen against the ‘Law of Sedition Bill’, better known a ‘Chalmers Bill’ passed on the back drop of an unrest late 1890s circumscribed with the Poona Plague riots, the trial of Balgangadhar Tilak and other eminent editors of newspapers and the Chapekar case. But the intension of such arbitrary measure, i.e. to
proscribe the voice of protest was easily unmasked by Woomesh Chandra, who identified it asperilous to empower District Magistrates to try of seditions and argued to try such cases with help of Indian jurors because no European jury would understand a sedition speech or article of any vernacular newspapers (Sinha, 1968: 323). At the Amraoti Congress, being cordially imbued with the liberal democratic ideals he strongly advocated for the rescue of freedom of speech and of the press, which, to him was essential for the political progress of the country (Bonnerjee, 1944: 88).

Since 1902 Woomesh Chandra was in England but had always been closely connected with the Congress movement which has been revealed from his letter written to his cousin Krishnalall Bondopadhyay on November 3, 1905. He wrote:

“I keenly sympathies with the Swadeshi movement. It shows that the spirit of rationality still animates us and I am sure, if properly persisted in it will end in doing great good to us.” (Bandopadhyay, 1923: 78; Bonnerjee, 1944: 112)

In those days in England besides practicing in the ‘Privy Council’ he, in 1904 took preparation to contest the Parliamentary election in England as a candidate from liberal party for Waltham tow. But his decorated health condition as well as eye-sight compelled him to step back from the contest. In 1906 he breathes his last at Croydon England. (Sanyal, 1976: 51)

Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, it may be claimed, took significant role in promoting the liberal democratic political ambience in the last quarter of the nineteenth century through his vigorous political activities— championing the principle of governed-oriented responsible administration; having legitimate share of the people in the governance through the principle of representative government; advocacy for Indianization of judicial system by expanding it through jury system; advocating for freedom of speech and press and so on. He was closely associated with the Congress movement which, Surendranath Banerjea, in his A Nation in making acknowledged as: “In his (Woomesh Chandra) time it would be no exaggeration to say he was the leader of
the Congress movement in Bengal. He was not an agitator in the ordinary sense…. But his words stink in the nostrils of some of our officials. His association with the movement gave it a dignity” (Banerjea, 1998: 161)

Surendranath Banerjea and the Advent of liberal Constitutionalism:

‘The Man of Political Agitation’ Surendranath Banerjea was the most prominent reformer as well as activist who took significant role in the process of diffusion of the ideals of liberal constitutionalism and the national reverential feeling of ‘Indian-ness’ in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in India. He was a political leader of towering stature who, through his restless effort for the amelioration of deplorable socio-political conditions of his countrymen fought for the restoration of all rights throughout his entire life.

Among the existing literature on the life and works of Surendranath Banerjea the most authentic as well as primary source is his autobiography A Nation in making which provides a detailed account of his vigorous political activities. Another precious work done by Surendranath Banerjea is his The Trumpet Voice of India which has emerged as a vivid first hand source edited and compiled by Ganesh Publishing House in 1961. Apart from these two the most notable biographical work is S.R.Bakshi’s Surendranath Banerjea: His political Ideology (1991). Ramgopal Sanyal’s A General Biography of Bengal Celebrities (1876) is an important book which has focused on Surendranath Banerjea to a good extent. There are also a good number of books written on the historical nineteenth century Bengal as well as India, which has explored Surendranath’s remarkable role in the historical rising of India in the nineteenth century. But the basic problem associated these works is that most of the books have projected Surendranath from a certain predisposition, i.e. a unique champion of the rise and growth of nationalism or national feelings in the contemporary Bengal. But it is really a matter of misfortune that his remarkable role in the advent and growth of democratic ambiance in contemporary Bengal as well as India has not been explored to the deserving extent.
Pre-political Life of Surendranath Banerjea: The making of a Liberal Mind

Surendranath Banerjea, the son of Durgacharan Banerjea who was a physician and was also known for his progressive liberal views was born on 10th November 1848. Blessed with good quality education from Parental Academic Institution and Devotan College he, after the completion of his graduation from Calcutta University Sailed to England in 1868, together with Ramesh Chandra Dutt and Biharilal Gupta to compete in the open competition Examination for the Indian Civil Services (Dutt, 1981: 133). Though he qualified the Examination but he had to appeal to the judicial authority in England as he was declared disqualified on the ground of age. Winning the case he was reinstated in the panel and passed the final examination in 1871. In the same year, after returning Calcutta he was appointed as Assistant Magistrate at Syllhet.21 (Banerjea, 1998: 1-9)

As Assistant Magistrate at Syllhet he was victimized for the racial arrogance of the European Magistracy, more specifically of Mr. Sutherland, the District Magistrate and Posford, a senior colleague of him. The racial atrocity started with a departmental examination in which though Surendranath succeeded Mr. Posford was failed and as a consequence it brought some perils in the newly started service life of young Surendranath (Banerjea, 1998: 26)

The cold atmosphere got its climax with a theft case of a boat in which the name of the accused was entered in the ferari list on the direction of Surendranath though the man was not an absconded.23 In that particular case inexperienced Surendranath was innocent as it was the Peshkar (ministerial servant) who delayed the disposal of the case and Surendranath along with a heap of other paper signed the order without knowing the significant of the case (Banerjea, 1998: 26). Without wasting the opportunity Sutherland asked for the explanation of Surendranath and was alleged with fourteen charges. The whole matter was assumed as serious as a state trial and ultimately led the High Court to
form a Commission of Enquiry consisting of three members all of whom were belonged to European Community.\textsuperscript{24}

The three-man commission started enquiry in 1973. Though Surendranath prayed for the arrangement of the hearing in Calcutta, it was nullified by the Government and after several days of trial at Syllhet the Commission Submitted its report finding Surendranath guilty of the charges brought against him. As a result in March, 1974 he was dismissed from service with a compassionate allowance of Rs. 50 a month (Banerjea, 1998:27).

The punishment not only stirred the Indian community but also exposed the racial atrocity of the English bureaucracy who, according to A. O. Hume, a civilian and Sir George Campbell, the Lieutenant-Governor were jealous of the entering of a native into the Sacred pale of the covenanted Civil Service\textsuperscript{25} and labeled the whole trial as a ‘wicked proceeding’ (Banerjea, 1998: 27). Writing an article\textsuperscript{26} in his India (1893) Hume maintained that a suspension from promotion for a year would have been an adequate punishment for such a trivial offence.

Surendranath, before the order of dismissal was passed again sailed for England in March 1874 to fight his case but he reached in April, 1874, which was too late to represent his interest as the order was passed on 31\textsuperscript{st} March, 1874. He communicated with the Indian office and tried his chance at the Middle Temple for qualifying himself to the bar in 1875, but all went in vein and had to return back to India in June, 1875 (Banerjea, 1998: 27-30). However, the expulsion of Surendranath from civil service was historical one in terms of his public life, more specifically, political life in the subsequent decades, which was started at the age of mere 27 (in 1975) at a public meeting held in the theatre of the Medical College, to promote the Temperance movement and the audience moved by his oratory power and deep introspection in his speech. (Bakshi, 1991: 3)
Social Regeneration: Articulation of Democratic Principles

Like other contemporary liberal modernizers Surendranath Banerjea took important role in the social reformation movement which had been revealed through his remarkable role in the promotion of modern education, the abolition of early marriage and most of all, advocacy for widow remarriage. He could easily anticipate that the reformations of all socio-cultural dogmas are disparately needed for the growth of political consciousness and the achievement of political agitation. After returning from England he was offered an appointment as Professor of English in the Metropolitan Institute where he used to “kindle in the young the beginning of public spirit.” (Banerjea, 1998: 32) Since he was highly moved by the life of Joseph Mazzini (1805-1872) he tried to inspire his students Mazzini,s ideals of self-reliance, the immense capacity of self-sacrifice and enduring of sorrow and sufferings, which he believed were foundational for the political advancement of the country.

He, apart from regular lectures tried to impart his liberal political views from every possible platform he was engaged with. In 1875 he delivered a lecture at the London Missionary society’s Institution in Bhowanipur on Sri Chaitanya’s message of social upliftment and emancipation from all taboos and tried to imbibe the true spirit of liberalism among his students (Sinha, 1968: 374). In the same year he, after joining Ananda Mohan Basu’s ‘Students Association’ gave an enchanting speech on Mazzini’s ideas of political unity, national emancipation and tried to imbibe the ideals of Mazzini’s patriotism and self-abnegation to achieve national unity and political freedom through constitutional methods (Banerjea, 1998: 33). Among the students who, with keen interest attended his classes and lectures in all public platforms some of the notables were Swami Vivekananda, Nanda Kishore Bose, S. K. Agasti and others. Condemning the revolutionary methods in achieving the goals he ascribed most importance on constitutional method and tried to show his students the enormous power and potentiality of liberal constitutional methods, which in other words took important role in the impaction of liberal democratic ambience in the late nineteenth century.
Ascribing most importance over constitutional method of agitation he, through his lectures on ‘Indian Unity’, ‘Study of History’, ‘Rise of Sikh Power in Punjab’, and ‘Higher Education in English’ denounced the Brahmanical domination and caste system, the oppression of the Mughals and the arbitrary rule of the British. Needless to say, his powerful oratory made the young minds spell bound and kindled up a sense of political consciousness in them. His first radical criticism against British oppression was found in his lecture held at the ‘Hindu School Theatre’ in 1876, where he praised the enormous devotion of the Sikhs to their Khalsa (Commonwealth) and of their great vigor against the British forces at Chilianwala and Gujrat in 1849, and intended to teach his students the enormous power of united movement and national unity (Moitro, 1993: 145-146).

Thus, almost half a century before Ambedkar he denounced prevailing caste system and Brahmanical domination in the Hindu Society, and imbibed the youths with Sri Chaitanya’s message of Social freedom and the emancipation of the individual from gigantic socio-cultural dominations. At the same time he emphasized on the need to do away with all the religious distinction between different sects for the sake of social cohesion, which unveils his liberal secular values as well (Sinha, 1968: 374-375). With the full concurrence of Vidyasagar, who appointed him in the Metropolitan Institution, he joined City School (later renamed as City College) and in 1881, leaving the former institution he joined the Free Church College. In 1882 he, with a mere hundred students on the roll started his own School at Bow Bazar, which only in a short span of seven years grew remarkably and converted into a college- the famous ‘Ripon College’.

The Political Views of Surendranath: The Diffusion of Democratic Ideas

Being imbued with liberal democratic ideals Surendranath ascribed most importance over the need of strong public opinion which he firmly believed, acts as the fundamental safeguard to the democratic rights, rule of law and constitutional or limited government. His liberal political views had been shaped by the rigorous study of the writings of Burks, Milton, Harrington, Locke and Macaulay, from whom he recognized
the remarkable significance of Puritan Revolution, Glorious Revolution and the ideals of constitutionalism and liberal individualism as the basis of democracy (Banerjea, 1998: 186; Verma, 1978: 179).

He attributed his humiliation, expulsion from civil service and the sufferings for the racial arrogances of the British authorities to the absence of strong public opinion and the political consciousness among the people in India. He recognized the great lesson of British constitutional history was the concept of liberty, based of public opinion, a disregard of which, he believed, would be fatal to the common good of the both—the government and the governed. Simultaneously, ascribing huge importance over the contributions of Valmiki, Vyasa, Buddha, Sankara and Panini he intended to glorify the noble idealism enshrined in Indian culture and tried to shape the rising political opinion in India on the basis of religious values and deep moral idealism (Palit, 1891.: 21-24 ‘Banerjea’s speeches’). Thus he tended to reconcile the principle of Parliamentary constitutionalism with that of the moral idealism to shape the liberal political consciousness and nationalistic reverential feelings as well.

By the early second half of nineteenth century, gradually the process of political consciousness and constitutional agitation was initiated by a host of contemporary modernizers starting from Rammohun Roy to Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan. But it was only in an amorphous and incipient phase, or, in other words it laid only the foundation on which the colossal superstructure of national as well as democratic consciousness was remarkably built up by Surendranath in the last quarter of the century through his illustrious political activities such as-establishing and being connected with various political associations; delivering vigorous speeches through various popular platforms; traveling from one part to another part of the country to preach the ideals of liberal democracy and by publishing fiery articles condemning any short of arbitrary rule of the government through the column of various papers including his own one i.e., ‘Bengalee’. To imbue the democratic aspirations among the people or, in other words, to create a
keen public opinion imbibed with liberal ideals he traveled extensively throughout India which Ramgopal Sanyal (1976: 116) has rightly observed –

“From Madras in the south to Multan and Rawalpindi in the in the North-West; from Dacca in the East Puna, Ahmedabad and Surat in the Western Presidency there is hardly a town of any note where Surendranath has not been, like the Apostles and Monks of the middle ages, to preach the lessons of political unity and the national effort for political enfranchisement”.

Like Woomesh Chandra Banerjea, he also ascribed importance to representative government in India based on liberal democratic principle at the same time he was also conscious about the possible problems of party-politics as a challenge to the representative government. On the auspicious occasion of the publishing of the second edition of his autobiography A Nation in Making the then President pointed out:

“A Nation in Making, Surendranath’s autobiography, written during the last years of his life, reflects his deep awareness of the problems of Nation Building in India. It is a moving record of very stirring times in our national history and justified the epithet ‘Rashtra Guru’ for Surendranath. The autobiography expresses his political philosophy and thinking in building up a democratic representative government through parliamentary sovereignty in free India….The interest of the nation and the interest of the party may coalesce or contradict and when it contradicts, the interest of the nation should have the priority over the interest of the party.”

The political philosophy of Surendranath can be fetched broadly from two inter-related public activities the rigorous associational activities through Indian association, National Conference and Indian National Congress; and through fearless journalism as the proprietor and editor of the Bengalee.

**Associational Activities of Surendranath: The Indian Association**

With the cordial intentions of creating a democratic public opinion and aspiration of national unity Surendranath, after returning from England in 1875 engaged himself with a number of students associations, public organizations and even some of the secret
societies in Bengal which worked as the centers of the impact of modern liberal democratic ideas and inspiration of national unity. He tried to inspire his students with the ideals of national feelings preached by Mazzini and Garibaldi in the process of unification of Italy (Banerjea, 2009: 12-20). By the time in imitation of Italian Carbonaries, with which Mazzini was directly associated, small secret societies were formed in many parts of Bengal and Surendranath became President of many of such societies (Pal, 1970: 90-93). Among the leading contemporary political associations the British Indian Association (established in 1851) and the Indian league (established in 1875) were most active in upholding the popular interest under the leadership of Kristo Das Pal, the then Secretary (Banerjea, 1998: 37) and Sisir Kumar Ghosh, (Sadharani, 25 September, 1875) respectively. But none could quench the thirst of Surendranath as, the former one, the British Indian Association, in his own words was “essentially an association of land-holders”, which could not make “an active political agitation, or the creation of public opinion by direct appeals to the people” by any recognized programme (Banerjea, 1998: 37) while the latter one, the Indian League stumbled at the very first meeting for the alleged high handedness of the President and specific charges against the authority by some of the renowned members such as Durga Mohan Das, Bhairava Chandra Banerjee, Jay Gopal Sen, Surendranath Banerjea, Ananda Prasad Roy, Manmohan Ghosh and many, all of whom resigned from membership and got seceded and weakened it within only three months of its emergence (Sadharani, 2nd January, 1876).

All these incidents ultimately made a vacuum in the public sphere and led Surendranath recognize desperate need for another political association on a more democratic basis, which was indeed recognized by some of the members of British Indian Association, such as Kristo Das Pal and Maharaja Narendra Krishna who were present at the inaugural meeting of the Indian Association on 26th July, 1876 in the ground floor of the Albert Hall (Banerjea, 1998: 37). It was emerged as a voice and an organ of the educated middle class and to have a wider scope its originators named it
'Indian Association’ instead of ‘Bengal Association’ already planned by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Justice Dwarkanath Mittar to from another such association.\textsuperscript{34} Such a wider view unveils Surendranath’s deep introspection of national feeling as well. It is also compatible to note here that on the inaugural day, i.e. 26 July, 1876 Surendranath’s son had died but it could not stop him perform his national duty\textsuperscript{35}.

However, within one year of its foundation, the Indian League had been superseded by the Indian Association which was described by the \textit{Hindu Patriot} (July 31, 1876) as an organization ‘by our younger and well educated countrymen’. Ananda Mohan Basu was elected as its first Secretary and Akshay Kumar Sirkar, the editor of \textit{Sadharani} became the Assistant Secretary and Rev. Krishna Mohan Banerjee was elected as the President of the Association\textsuperscript{36} (Bose, 1976: 270; Banerjea, 1998: 39). The basic objectives of the Indian Association have revealed the democratic outlook of Surendranath to a great extent. Those were—

(1) The creation of a strong body of public opinion in the country;

(2) The unification of the Indian races and people upon the basis of common political interests and aspiration;

(3) The promotion of friendly feeling between Hindus and Mohamedans; and lastly;

(4) The inclusion of the masses in the great public movements of the day (Banerjea, 1998:39)

Almost all the basic ingredients of modern liberal democracy can be fetched from these objectives of newly established association such as— ascribing huge importance over public opinion; unification of heterogeneous political interests and aspirations of defferent racial communities; Secular ideas of diffusion of healthy and compassionate reverential feeling among different religious sects and most remarkably, ascribing importance over the promotion of political participation of the masses in public affairs.
All these, activities of Indian of Indian Association, an emerging organ of civil society, it may be argued took tremendous role in the making of liberal democratic ambience in the late nineteenth century.

**The Indian Association and Surendranath: Championing the Anti-colonial Movement**

The remarkable role of civil societal associations in promoting popular participation in public affairs have been recognized by thinkers like Tocqueville (1996: 223-39) and Robert Putnam (1994: 94-97), and in view of Surendranath’s remarkable role in different student associations and Indian Association, from where he ardently tended to promote mass participation in various popular movements, it may be claimed was of crucial importance in the creation of anti-absolutist civil societal movements.

From the very beginning Surendranath tried to promote the mode of mass political participation through different platforms. He, like Mazzini who created profound impression over his mind wanted to harness the energies of the students to the task of amelioration of the problems of the country. Therefore he urged his students not only to discuss politics but also to participate in it with constitutional measures. That is why he did not join Calcutta University Institute, because Sir Charles Elliott ruled out the discussion of politics by the students by issuing a circular (Sinha, 1968: 374).

However, the Indian Association under the vigorous leadership of Surendranath, Sibnath Shastri, Ananda Mohan Basu, Dwarkanath Ganguly soon became the chief centre of anti-absolutist protest movement encompassing various political issues such as— freedom of press, introduction of the jury System, removal of the racial discriminations between white and black, reduction of Salt Tax, grievances related to all India Services etc (Bose, 1976: 271, Majumdar, 1965: 143-44, Banerjee 1998, 40-44). The Indian Association convened a public meeting at the Albert Hall in Calcutta on 16th September, 1976 to ventilate the grievance of third class Railway passengers regarding some of their essential amenities like lavatories problem and as a consequence, lavatories
were provided soon afterwards (Majumdar, 1965:143). The Association vigorously opposed the Dramatic Performance Bill (1876) and organized meetings, against it. The most popular as well as largest in terms of its degree of participation was the public meeting held at the Town Hall on March 27, 1877 presided over by Maharaja Narendra Krishna Bahadur, was participated by representatives from whole Bengal, not only from Calcutta but also from remote provinces as well. Though it was a protest meeting against lowering the age limit of the Indian civil service from 21 to 19, the underlying true aim of the meeting was much broader, as Surendranath (1998: 43) claimed.

“This meeting was one of the biggest public demonstrations held in Calcutta it was destined to be the fore runner of similar and even more crowded meeting held all over India. The agitation was the means; the raising of maximum limits of age for the open competitive examination…. But the underlying conception, and the true aim and purpose of the civil service agitation was the awakening of the spirit of unity and solidarity among the people of India.”

Apart from agitations against ill-conceived governmental measures this meeting took another remarkable resolution, i.e. to appeal to the whole India and bring the various Indian provinces upon a common platform, and unite them through a sense of a common grievance and the inspiration of a common resolve (Banerjea, 1998: 41). In fact, by then a clear need for connecting different provinces of Bengal, as well as of whole India with a sense of national and political consciousness was felt desperately and Surendranath as the key patron of Indian Association was appointed as a ‘special Delegate’ to visit different provinces of all over India. But the task of uniting such a vast heterogeneous and culturally diverse society like the Indian one was not an easy deal. The leaders of one province, due to diversity in language and culture could not address the public of other provinces in their mother tongue; while English as a mode of communication could touch only a few educated people. All these problems led the leaders plan a network of branches covering all Bengal as well as extending all over India (Seal, 1968: 220). In fact it was one of the basic objectives the Indian Association to promote the mode of mass participation in political issues to the maximum extent and unlike the contemporary
political associations it did it in such a remarkable manner that soon branches of the association came in existence in different parts of the country. During 1876-1877 Surendranath toured extensively in different provinces and tried to kindle a new spirit of ‘Indian-ness’ and later during 1881-1882 Surendranath along with Kali Shankar Sukul, Krishnakumar Mitra, Sibnath Shastri, Dwarkanath Ganguli and Dwarkanath Ghosh did this by convening huge meetings where, in some places, a mass gathering of at least twenty five to thirty thousand people attended (Fifth, Annual Report of IA, 1881: 05). Various sub-committees and regional branches were made in the districts of Howrah, Nadia, 24 Parganas, Midnapur followed by a number of political associations like Dacca People Association, Barisal People’s Association, Bogra People Association, Mymensingh Association and Associations in Chittagong and Rajshahi (Bose, 1976: 272).

With an intention of making a vibrant public opinion imbued with issues of national interest Surendranath organized public meetings at Patna, Agra, Lahore, Amritsar, Merath, Allahabad, Delhi, Lucknow, Aligarh and Varanasi. Subsequently, in most of these places branch associations on regional basis were formed in quick successions. Surendranath, on behalf of Indian Association undertook his second propaganda tour to create a keen public opinion for the forward political movements in December, 1879 and visited different provinces of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab (Majumdar, 1965:144-148). As a consequence of these extensive political activities soon, within 1884 Indian Association formed forty-four new branches followed by thirty six new branches all over India to undertake a more systematic action in public issues (Eighth Annual Report, Indian Association, 1884: 5). The enormous importance of his extensive tour was even acknowledged by Sir Henry Cotton who in his book ‘New India’ pointed out claimed:

“The educated classes are the voice and brain of the country. The Bengalee Babus now rule public opinion from Peshawar to Chittagong; and although the natives of North-Western India are immeasurably behind those of Bengal….. They are gradually
becoming as amenable as their brethren of the lower provinces, to intellectual control and guidance. A quarter of a century ago there was no trace of this; the idea of a Bengalee influence in the Punjab ..... Yet it is the case that during the past year of the tour of a Bengalee lecturer….. Surendranath Banerjea excites as much enthusiasm among the rising generation of Multan as in Dacca (Quoted in Sarkar, 2012: 27; Banerjea, 1998: 48).

The Civil Service agitation as an anti-establishment movement got tremendous acceleration all over India within a short span of time and in its meeting held on 24th February, 1879 Lalmohun Ghosh was deputed as a delegate of the Association to place the ‘All India Memorandum’ on the Civil Service question to the House of Commons and to make propaganda in England in favour of raising the age limit from 19 to 22 (Banerjea, 1998:48). Lalmohun Ghosh got phenomenal success in creating a public opinion in favour of the memorandum of the Indian Association in England.

As an integral agenda of the Indian Association mass participation in political issues was given much importance by Surendranath Banerjea who tended to incorporate issues of peasant rights as matters of concern of the association, which ultimately made the Association distinctly ahead than that of the British Indian Association (Seal, 1968: 222). Question of local self-government was another issue which was given tremendous priority by the Indian Association which from 1879 included such demands in its plan of action. Infact, Surendranath being highly influenced by the liberal John Stuart Mill rightly anticipated the tremendous importance of local self-government for the political participation as well as democratic consciousness of the grass-root people. Therefore, during his tour around various provinces all over India he earnestly tried to create a public opinion in favour of it. In 1880 the Indian Association urged the common people to join the association in petitioning for the introduction of elective system in the municipalities and District Boards. Subsequently in 1884 during the Ripon-era, when new local-government rules came into force the Indian Association organized many meetings at rural areas to appeal the educated people to take part in the elections (Eighth Annual Report, I.A, 1884: 2-5).
Needless to say, such political activities of the Indian Association kindled up the contemporary society with a new spirit of public life, which took significant role in making a liberal democratic political consciousness among the people. Committed to the goal of unifying Indian races to create a national democratic public opinion it fought for almost all issues connected to the welfare of the masses and promoted the degree of mass participation in every political issues (Suntharalingam, 1983: 88). The most noteworthy character of the Indian Association movement was that, it was blessed with public figures like Surendranath Banerjea, Ananda mohan Basu and Lalmohan Ghosh who tried to incorporate common people into politics even almost a half century before than Gandhi. Gandhi himself acknowledged the remarkable role of these liberal democrats who tended to make people aware of their civil rights as well as to make them understand the omnipotent power of united mass-movement (Bayly, 2012: 345), specially through the historical civil service movement and most importantly, in the stormy days of Surendranath’s trial of Court contempt Case and of Ilbert Bill agitation.

Surendranath as a Journalist Politician: The Bengalee and the Indian Association

One of the distinct features of nineteenth century re-awakening in Bengal was that most of the liberal modernizers took journalism not as a mere profession but also as a useful tool to popularize their liberal views and to create a keen political consciousness which was so amorphous in contemporary society. The process had been started with Raja Rammohun Roy edited ‘Sambad Kaumudi’ and continued throughout the century by different liberal modernizers whose role in the making of democratic awareness have been explored in the preceding chapters. But it was only during the second half of nineteenth century when journalism emerged in a ‘new avatar’ as the chief engine of the vehicle of anti-absolutist movement. Some of those papers were ‘Hindu Patriot’ edited by Harish Chandra Mukherjee and later by Kristo Das Pal, ‘Somprakash’ edited by Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, ‘Amrita Bazar Patrika’ edited by Sisir Kumar Ghosh and a host of others. Surendranath Banerjea took the same role by taking the charge of ‘Bengalee’ by buying its proprietary right from Bacharam Chatterjee on 1st January,
1879 during the most challenging days in the history of press in Bengal as well as in India on the backdrop of Vernacular Press Act of 1878 enacted by Lord Lytton.

Needless to say, the basic objective of Surendranath in venturing into the realm of print media was nothing but creating an active public opinion, as an extra support to what he intended to carry out through the Indian Association. When the Vernacular Press Act was enacted the educated middle class was alarmed for such reactionary arbitrary measure. Being disheartened with the indifference of the British Indian Association (Banerjea, 1998: 56), the Indian Association under the leadership of Surendranath roused to protest and tried to repeal as early as it could be. Despite the fact that some of the significant Brahmo leaders declined to help Surendranath in that anti absolutist protest movement there were some Christian people like Rev. Krishna Mohun Banerjee and Rev. K.S. McDonald who whole-heartedly supported the movement and subsequently, a big meeting was arranged by the Indian Association at the Calcutta Town Hall (the main centre of civil society movement) which Surendranath (1998: 57) described as “the first great political demonstration of the middle class community in Bengal”.

In spite of some anxiety for the possibility of criminal prosecution against the gathering⁴², immense enthusiasm of Surendranath made the meeting a big success. It was Anandamohan Basu who, being advised by some of his Lawyer friends of the Bar Library suggested Surendranath to postpone the Town Hall meeting. Because the news of a possibility of an outbreak of war with Russia was received in Calcutta, in view of which it was the fear that a criminal prosecution against the gathering at Town Hall might be executed by the Government. To this Surendranath (1998: 58) argued:

“It is one of the first great demonstrations of the Indian Association and of the middle class party in Bengal, and that if it were to be postponed, it would never again be held. The people would lose faith in us, and it would mean the beginning of the end..... Nothing serious needs to be apprehended, so long as we are moderate and will keep within constitutional bound”
The public demonstration against the reactionary Vernacular Press Act was a big success, which according to Surendranath was “sounded the death-knell of the Vernacular Press Act” (Surendranath, 1998: 58). A letter drafted by Surendranath himself was sent to Mr. Gladstone by the Indian Association against Lytton’s Press Act and Arms act of 1878. Though during the Ripon’s administration the Vernacular Press Act was repealed, the Arms Act was retained by the Government (Sinha, 1968:376). The Indian Association continued on criticizing the Government’s arbitrary policy of retaining the Arms Act which, according to Surendranath was mischievous and was creating a sense of mistrust and distinction between European and Indian on the ground of racial line (Banerjea, 1998: 54). However the agitation led by the Indian Association was of crucial importance in terms of creating a public opinion in favour of such a democratic right like ‘freedom of speech’.

Surendranath’s Trial and the Unrest 1883: Three Significant Co-incidents

The year 1883 may be marked as the most formidable year in the history of the rise of liberalism or development of democratic political consciousness in India for three remarkable political co-incidents, namely—the conviction of Surendranath for a contempt of Court Case; Origin of national conference by him and lastly, the introduction of Ilbert bill in the Legislative Council, all of which gave a tremendous impetus to the acceleration of political awareness.

The first stirring incident was the contempt of Court Case of Surendranath for publishing an article in the editorial column of his Bengalee on April 2, 1883 criticizing Justice Norris of the Calcutta High Court, which brought some perils in the journalistic career of the former through a contempt of Court Case and was sentenced of imprisonment for two months from May 5 to July 4, in the same year (Banerjea,1998: 70-74). While trying a case it was Justice Norris who already earned vehement criticism of Amrita Bazar Patrika and Bengalee for vilifying Indians as liars and unjustly showing his sympathy to the European subjects agitating against Ilbert Bill, ordered to produce
‘Salgrams Sila,’ the family deity (the Stone Idol) of a contesting party in Court to examine whether it was a hundred years old or not. This act of Justice Norris was criticized tooth and nail in the paper ‘Bengal Public Opinion’ by Durgamohan Das and Bhuban Mohan Das (the father of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das). The paper argued:

“There have been very many cases both in the late Supreme Court and the present High Court of Calcutta regarding the custody of Hindu Idols but the presiding deity of a Hindu household had never before this, had the honour of being dragged into Court…. It does seem to us that some public steps should be taken to put a quietus to the wild eccentricities of this young and raw Dispenser of Justice” (quoted in Moitra, 1993: 159-60).

The intensity and the language of criticism published in Bengal Public Opinion moved Surendranath to a massive degree of indignation against Justice Norris and broadly against racial discrimination of the white men. Bhuban Mohan Das was a practicing solicitor of the Calcutta High Court and a man of good reputation. In fact, there was no contradiction appeared in any newspaper regarding its authenticity in the following days (Sanyal, 1976: 117). These made Surendranath inspire to publish an article based on the article of Bengal Public Opinion in the editorial of Bengalee which argued:

“The Judges of High Court have hitherto commanded the universal respect of the community. Of course, they have often erred, and have often grievously failed in the performance of their duties …. We have now, however amongst us a judge, who if he does not actually recall minding the days of Jeffreys and Scroggs, has certainly done enough…. To show how unworthy he is of his high office and how by nature he is unfitted to maintain those traditions of dignity ….. “ (Bengalee April 2, 1883: 01).

Such a fearless criticism did not make him prosecuted on a charge of contempt of Court for two months. The most striking fact about this punishment was that neither the editor nor the writers of the Bengal Public Opinion was prosecuted or, at least asked for a show cause. Such a discrimination of punishment for committing same act reveals the
fact that it was Surendranath Banerjea whose role as a public figure, and the degree of influence over the students and youths in those days really became a matter of concern for the reactionary white men.

Needless to say, the imprisonment of Surendranath caused profound impression not only in Calcutta but throughout whole India, which ultimately gave an impetus to the rising national feeling and democratic consciousness among the people. Apart from Surendranath’s imprisonment there were particularly two significant issues which gave acceleration to the level of indignation among the people, specifically the Hindus. Firstly, it was related to religious sentiment of a particular sect whose ‘idol’ God was dragged to the court of law, whatever the legal merit of the case might had been (Banerjea, 1998: 74) and secondly, the name of Justice Norris was already connected to the Ilbert Bill controversy and was severely contemned by leading papers like Amrita Bazar Patrika and Bengalee in recent past days for having sympathetic to the European agitators of Ilbert Bill.

The Indian Association organized a huge protest meeting on 16th May, 1883 but having failed to have the permission of conducting public meeting at Calcutta Town Hall for obvious reason, it organized it at the Beadon Square in the open air attended by at least twenty thousand people, (Majumdar, 1965: 152) which in fact, added a new epoch in the history of Bengal since an open air protest meeting had never hitherto been happened. Soon the mode of protest became anti-absolutist as, in following days shops were made closed, business suspended not by order or by organized effort but under a spontaneous impulse that moved the whole community including the students (Banerjea, 1998: 74) Besides Calcutta huge meetings were held at Ferozabad, Amritsar and Lahore, which was described in the Eighth Annual Report of the Indian Association (1883: 5) as “the universal outburst of grief and indignation clearly proved that the different Indian provinces had learnt to feel for one another.” In short, the trial of Surendranath brought a new epoch in the advent of liberal democratic consciousness among people who started
rampant political agitations within the constitutional boundary. While describing the nature of the mass agitation Surendranath, in his autobiography wrote:

“In the whole course of my public life, I have never witnessed …. an upheaval of feeling so genuine and so wide spread as that which spread through Bengal in 1883. Public meetings for sympathy for me and of protest against the judgment of the court….. in almost every considerable town (Banerjea, 1998: 75).

The controversy over Ilbert Bill was another noteworthy incident in 1883, which worked as an eye-opener to the Indians. In defense of their racial superiority in the Judicial system the Englishmen through a violent, unjust but united agitation made the Government compromise with the white-agitators’ demand. Though the Indians put up an agitation in support of the bill which intended to recover the racial equality among Indians and the British community, it could not be passed un-amended and brought utter disappointment and disillusionment about the British who claimed themselves ‘liberal’. As a result the social relations between Indians and British deteriorated in an unprecedented manner and caused a wider line of estrangement between them (Brown, 1984: 129) But this united agitation taught Indians the enormous power of united movement by showing how the agitators organized themselves by ‘Defense Association’ and by raising a healthy fund within a short span of time. Likewise, during the days of agitation against Surendranath’s imprisonment on the proposal of Tarapada Banerjee, a lawyer of Krishnanagar a National Fund was formed by the Indian Association. Surendranath, after the release from prison made extensive tour in Bengal and upper India to collect contribution to a fund called National Fund to devote to a new political propaganda. The collected amount was about twenty thousand which was given to Indian Association for the promotion of political works (Pal, 1970: 116-18). It paved the path to organize ‘National Conference’ in 1883, the third significant event in the year.

As a cumulative reaction of all these—the Ilbert Bill controversy, the Saligram Idol Case followed by Surendranath’s contempt case helped the cause of political advancement by unifying people of different provinces, specially the youth and students.
to attend all protest meeting convened by different organizations, specially by Indian Association, which ultimately toughened the fiber of Indian Public Opinion and national feelings-through unprecedented public agitation.

The third significant incident of the year 1883 was the National Conference which, according to Surendranath “was the reply of educated Indians to the Ilbert Bill agitation” (Banerjea, 1998: 80-81). The agitation politics, starting from the Civil Service agitation to the injunction of Surendranath united India in a strong sensation of brotherhood and National feelings and soon a need for united and organized National organization was felt by Surendranath and broadly by the members of Indian Association. In the meantime the Government arranged an International Exhibition in Calcutta, to which visitors from all over the country came (Majumdar, 1971: 333-34). Fetching the opportunity of this occasion the Indian Association inaugurated its first National Conference in Calcutta for three days from December 28 to 30, 1883. The National Conference, it may be argued was an attempt to materialize the vision and mission of the National fund to continue a country wide constitutional agitation for the secure of democratic rights of the people.

The object of the National Conference, as claimed by Surendranath reveals how crucial it was in terms of diffusion of liberal constitutional political consciousness throughout Indian. He claimed:

“The object of National Conference was neither sectional, nor regional but truly national. We have met to talk, to consult, and if possible, to arrive at a common programme of political action. Too often our energies were frittered away in isolated and individual efforts. One Association, for instance, might be agitating for the reform of the Civil Service, a second for the Reconstruction of the Legislative Councils, a third for …. Our idea is to bring the national forces, so to speak in a focus …. Such I conceive to be the prevailing idea of the Conference. (Bagol, 1953: 80-81)

The National Conference, it may be argued was of crucial importance in terms of the development of liberal constitutional and associational agitation in the 1880’s. It caused an epoch in the development of political consciousness as it was attended more
than hundred delegates belonging to different religious sects from Bengal, Bombay, Madras, Lahore, Allahabad, Cuttack, Jabalpur, Nagpur and from many other provinces (Majumdar, 1971: 334-35). The agendas discussed in the conference, it may be claimed revealed how important it was in the process of creating a liberal and democratic ambience in India. Some of those were— separation of Judiciary from the Executive functions, representative Government, a National Council, agitation for Ilbert Bill and protest against Arms Act. The most crucial contribution of the first National Conference was that it tried to impart a reverential feeling among the members coming from different provinces of India. In course of his opening speech Ananda Mohan Basu, a close associate of Surendranath labeled the Conference as “the first stage of National Parliament.” Among the two well-wisher British attended the meeting it was Mr. Wilfred Blunt who firmly argued that it was ‘the first National Parliament and ascribed huge importance’ over the introduction of the process of election to the Legislative Council as well as sending representative in the English Parliament and finally, on the Home Parliament on the model of self-governingcolonies (Banerjea, 1998: 81, Majumdar 1965: 154-155)

In comparison to the first one the second National Conference held on 25th, 26th and 27th December 1885 was more important in terms of the level of participation, enthusiasm and most significantly, the impact of the discussions over public life in India. More than thirty political associations from all over Northern India, the central Mohamed an Association and even the British Indian Association which kept itself indifferent in the first session sent their representatives and made the session a remarkable success in creating a national political consciousness and advent of democratic conditions.

All these significant incidents in the public life of nineteenth century India such as— agitation for the unhindered approval of Ilbert Bill, United agitations against Surendranath’s imprisonment, rise of national feelings among the Indians of different provinces and finally the historical National conference marked an unprecedented impact in the political life of the country. It was the first half of 1880’s which may be described
as the most formative years’ in the advent of democratic consciousness in India. Years of sincere political effort of Surendranath, his Indian Association and other like-minded liberals made people more and more conscious of their political and civil rights. Issues like the urge for representation in the Legislative Council as well as in British Parliament which were the most common demand made by almost all contemporary leading political associations and leading newspapers made people aware of their right to legitimate share in the governance by sending representatives in all decision-making bodies. As a consequence a vivid ground was prepared supporting all constitutional political rights and reshaped the ruler-ruled relationship in an unprecedented manner.

**Surendranath Banerjea and the Indian National Congress: Arguing Constitutional Democracy**

The National Conference organized by the Indian Association was contributing tremendous Service to the imbuement of liberal democratic ambience in the public life of India. During the second session of National Conference from December 25 to 27, 1885 in Calcutta almost similar attempt was taken by Hume in Bombay in the name of Indian National Congress on Simultaneous objectives as well as simultaneous days. Since the Civil Service Agitation of 1876-77 to the first National Conference of 1883 Surendranath after having released from injunction of two months earned a nation-wide fame by his eminent oratory power in different provinces through extensive tour seeking to build a vibrant public opinion in favour of national cause. In fact, the National Conference for its nation-wide participation was not unfamiliar to the leaders of Bombay, Madras and other provinces as well. Here the question that may be raised: How did the dates of National Conference and the inauguration of Indian National Congress were coincided despite having similar objects and similar aspirations? Even leaders like Surendranath and Anandamohan were not informed earlier. Though W.C. Bonnerjee invited Surendranath but it was too late to abandon the National Conference and the latter had to decline the invitation (Banerjea, 1998: 92). In those days Surendranath was the soul of all civil societal movements throughout the country but the way Hume and Dufferin arranged the
inaugural meeting of the Indian National Congress was severely criticized by scholars like Bipin Chandra Pal, B.L. Grover and Lala Lajpath Rai. Even thinkers like B.L. Grover (1963: 131) raised questions: What was Hume’s real motive? And, was the Indian National Congress a Product of Dufferin’s Machiavellianism or Hume’s liberalism or a by-product of their conspiracy? He directly claimed that it was a conspiracy against the growing national movement in contemporary India and ultimately made National Conference stop for obvious reason. Lala Lajpath Rai was of almost similar view that the hidden object of Hume-Dufferin conspiracy was to make ‘an innocuous and loyal political organization to serve as a ‘safety-valve’ for the escape of mounting dangers that beset the British Empire (Grover, 1963: 131).

Ascribing enormous importance over Surendranath’s tremendous effort and contribution to the National Conference Bipin Chandra Pal (1970: 115-16) condemned the Indian National Congress with the charges that it had made the National Conference face a premature demise and as a consequence the emerging public opinion was hindered to a great extent. With its possessions of wealth and power headed by ex-official of the Government (because of the men it was connected with) it easily superseded and consumed the National Conference in a short span of time. Bipin Chandra Pal further accused the Hume-Dufferin agenda of Congress for keeping secrecy and kept Surendranath out of it intentionally for some pre-determined purpose (Pal, 1970: 115-116). In his autobiography Surendranath (1998: 92) himself claimed,”neither party knowing what the other was doing until thieve of the sittings. It was only in the second session of Congress in 1886 Surendranath was given importance as Hume rightly anticipated that without his active participation a successful session of Congress could never be possible (Majumdar, 1965: 189).

Nonetheless, Surendranath threw himself into the Congress movement with full spirit and enthusiasm though it was regarded as his suicidal attempt by some of the leaders holding more militant views (Sarkar, 2012: 28). Apart from the inaugural session and Karachi Session he never missed any session or programme of it and made himself
an integral part of it. Subsequently, he became the President of Congress twice at Poona Congress and Ahmadabad Congress in 1895 and 1902 respectively. Needless to say, Indian Association though still existed was confined its activities chiefly in social welfare related matters. The National Congress, due to its all India character had shown reluctance in upholding local or provincial matters. In order to meet the regional and provincial challenges of Bengal Surendranath, in a quiet parallel line to Congress initiated ‘Bengal Provincial Conference’ in 1888 which added a new chapter in the history of civil society movement. Surendranath rendered so tremendous role in this Provincial Conference that even the Provincial Conferences in some occasions attained even more participation than that of the National Congress. Following its praiseworthy role in the socio-political regeneration of the country some other Provincial Conferences were emerged in quick succession in difference part of India (Banerjea, 1998: 95-96).

Being the President of the National Congress Surendranath rendered tremendous service to the modern liberal and constitutional movement in India. He took significant role in the anti-absolutist movement led by Congress in its third session held in 1887 at Madras against the twin arbitrary measures of Lord Lytton’s Government, ‘the Arms Act’ and ‘the Vernacular Press Act.’ The Congress session of 1887 in Madras was remarkable from another reason, i.e. it tried to diffuse a secular and liberal tolerant ambience by including the Mohamedans in every possible aspect. Surendranath took important role in establishing this secular ideal of Congress and by negating the opposite propaganda of some that it was a ‘Hindu Congress’ Surendranath and his associates tried to secure a secular ambience in Congress. Surendranath (1998: 102) claimed.

“We were straining every nerve to secure the co-operation of our Mohamedan fellow countrymen…. We decided if any resolution affecting a particular class or community was objected to by the delegates representing the community, even if they were in minority, it should not be considered by the Congress.”

Among his multifarious political activities contributing to the process of impaction of democratic ideals one of the most notable was his vehement criticism and agitation
against the introduction of reactionary Calcutta Municipal Bill by then Viceroy Lord Curzon, which, according to Surendranath “threw Calcutta in the vortex of agitation” (Banerjea, 1998: 157). Another reactionary measure of Lord Curzon was the historical ‘partition of Bengal’ which was strongly protested by Surendranath who fought against it heart and soul and through a series of anti-partition demonstrations he built a healthy public opinion against the ill-conceived measure. In a press conference in England Surendranath while giving an interview was asked by Mr. Stead, the hoist “If you were under sentence of death Mr. Banerjea, and the headman’s axe was to fall in two minutes, what is the message which you would wish to address to the British public as the last words you were able to utter on behalf of your motherland”? The reply of such unexpected question made by him unveils his uncompromising sense of self-respect as well as patriotism imbibed with liberal democratic ideals. He, without a moment’s hesitation replied:

“I would say this: (1) Modify the Partition of Bengal; (2) release the deported patriots and repeal the Act which annuls Habeas Corpus in Bengal; (3) amnesty to all the Political prisoners; (4) give the people of India financial control over their own taxes; and (5) grand India a constitution on the Canadian model. This is what I would say; and having said that, I would go to my doom.” (Banerjea, 1961: 105-106)

Thus, Surendranath, through his rigorous and vigorous political activities earned the names like ‘Rashtraguru’, ‘Surrinder-not’, ‘the Public Agitator’ and most importantly, ‘liberal democrat’ (Bayly, 2012: 330) labeled to him by his fellow countrymen whom he taught the enormous significance of liberal constitutional movement which he firmly believed was not less omnipotent than those of the unconstitutional revolutionary means. Being imbibed with the liberal and moral ideals of Western philosophers, especially of Mazzini he kindled up the youths of Bengal as well as of India with an enormous power of united constitutional movements, and proved how perfect was the anticipation of the paper Bharat Mihir which, unlike Somprakash and a host of other contemporary papers claimed that Surendranath would render remarkable
Service to the country more by remaining outside of the Indian Civil Service. (Sinha, 1968: 372) His dismissal from the coveted civil service, it may be claimed was a matter of ‘out of evil cometh good’, which was proved by his tremendous service to the imbuenment of liberal ideas in India through his multifarious political activities.

**Manomohun Ghosh and Lalmohun Ghosh: The Liberal Brothers**

Among the leaders and activists belonging to the liberal democratic school in the second half of nineteenth century the Ghosh-brothers, Manomohun Ghosh and Lalmohun Ghosh rendered remarkable service to the erection of liberal and democratic political consciousness among the common people by their diversified social and political activities. Their father Ramlochun Ghosh was an educated self-made man who was known for his liberal benevolent activities and a close associate of Raja Rammohun Roy, especially in the social and religious reformation movements. Possessing such a rich parental background Manomohun and Lalmohun were born at Krishnanagar in 1844 and 1849 respectively. Having sound education both of them moved to compete for Indian Civil Service and sailed to England in 1862 and 1866 respectively but could not manage for different reasons. Manomohun Ghosh was the wretched victim of the vagaries of the Civil Service Commission which, just before the examination reduced the full marks of vernacular subjects. This attempt of the commission made him write a pamphlet “The Open Competition for the Civil Service in India” condemning the glaring defects in the system of examination and recruitment of Civil Service (Sinha, 1968; 303). Nonetheless, both brother’s after completing education in England earned renowned fame as barristers and subsequently joined the bar of the Calcutta High court. During 1870’s they started taking significant role in the political activities of the contemporary Bengal as well as India and subsequently rendered remarkable service to the social and political regeneration of the country.

This is really a matter of misfortune that the role of these liberal brothers has not been explored enough in the existing literature focusing political history of this most
formative era in the history of Bengal as well as India. Among a pity few it was *A General Biography of Bengal Celebrities* (1876) written by Ramgopal Sanyal, a close friend of Manomohun Ghosh has spent a bio-graphical chapter on Manomohun Ghosh only but Lalmohun Ghosh remained unexplored. Biman Bihari Majumdar’s *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas* (1967) is one of the most important books to fetch knowledge of the rise of liberalism as well as nationalism in India, in which Manomohun Ghosh and Lalmohun Ghosh have been focus to some extent. Another book *Freedom Movement in Bengal (1818-1904)* is one of the most extensive works on nineteenth century Bengal, in which biographical works on Ghosh brothers have been done. Among vernacular works Sibnath Shastri’s (2007) monumental work *Ramtanu Lahiri o Tatkalin Bango Samaj* is an important book to fetch informations related to socio-political activities of Manomohun and Lalmohun. But most of the books connected to the history of nineteenth century have surprisingly neglected the role of these two liberals in the modern awakening in Bengal.

**Role in Social Regeneration: The Advocacy of Liberal Democratic Ideas**

Social reformation or diffusion of liberal ideas in social and cultural sphere is one of the distinct features of reascent Bengal, which they tried to do by their rigorous social and political activities. The enfranchisement of individual from the bondage of gigantic socio-cultural prejudices was the basic object which made Manomohun argues in favour of European idea of ‘self’ and liberation of mind from the yoke of traditions and religious dogmas. Simultaneously, he, being a staunch supporter of the rich cultural heritage of India, firmly condemned the blind imitation of European vices and self-centrism as contemptuous of Indian culture (Morrison, 2015: 54; Sinha, 1968: 303). Being an ardent supporter of the ideal of equality among men, he tried to over-throw the curse of gender-biased society. Ascribing enormous importance over female education which he believed would help them emancipate from all bondages he tried to establish various educational institutions for the promotion of female education in Bengal (Sanyal, 1976: 240). He helped Dwarkanath Ganguli, one of the distinguished members of Indian Association and
a close associate of Surendranath, to establish Hindu Mahila Vidyalaya in Calcutta on 18th September, 1873. Being the Secretary of Bethun School Committee he took significant role in the promotion of women education by all means (Shastri, 27: 232). Manomhun and Lalmohun both denounced the curse of early marriage in Society and ardently supported the ‘Age of Consent Bill’ in 1891, for which they were severely criticized by some of the Vernacular papers belonging to conservative School.

Political Views of Ghosh Brothers: Championing Democratic Constitutionalism

Like Surendranath Banerjea and Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee the Ghosh brothers rendered splendid service to the diffusion of liberal-democratic political consciousness among people by associating directly with the anti-absolutist movement led by various political associations like Indian league, Indian Association and Indian National Congress, as well as contributed articles to the leading journals and delivered lectures at various public meeting.

Manomhun Ghosh, during the unrest days of Indigo movement in 1959-60, along with Harish Chandra Mookherjee51 took up the cause of helpless Ryots by contributing illustrated letters to Hindoo Patriot describing the story of ruthless torture over the Ryots in Krishnanagar (Shastri, 2007: 231). After the premature demise of Harish Chandra Mookherjee he started his own fortnightly paper Indian Mirror in 186152 with financial assistance from Devendranath Tagore. About the basic objectives of his Indian Mirror he, in its inaugural issue wrote, “The Mirror is intended for all classes and communities; it will reflect faithfully the condition of this country in its manifold varieties, advocate political and social as well as religious and moral reforms, while in its mild and catholic tone will, it is hoped, not fail to render it acceptable to all classes and communities …. It will favour not parties and fear not antagonists, but tell the truth and do justice to all classes …..” (Quoted in Moitro, 1993: 139-40)

The objectives of Indian Mirror written by Manomhun Ghosh vividly unveil his deep introspection and zeal towards equality justice and responsibility to the people.
Soon, in a short span of times owing to its turbulent journalism it earned praiseworthy position among the journals used to circulate throughout Bengal and took excellent role in making a politically conscious public opinion in contemporary society.

Manomohun Ghosh won high reputation as a criminal lawyer as well as a public figure, who according to Surendranath Banerjea (1998:113) “recognized that the public press was the bulwark of popular freedom, and whenever he was engaged in an important criminal case, he was care full to take with him a newspaper reporter so that the proceedings might be fully reported. He thus became a terror of wrongheaded mofussil Magistrates.” Thus Manomohun Ghosh took tremendous role in prevarication of the mofussil Magistracy. Another distinguished aspect of his political view as well as zeal to liberal democratic ideals was his profound advocacy in favour of separation of power between executive and judiciary, which had always been regarded as one of the integral ingredients of modern liberal democracy. Possessing a bitter experience as a criminal lawyer he rightly anticipated the importance of separation of judiciary from executive functions in the administration of criminal justice, which led him write a book “Desirability of Separating Judicial from executive and police functions of Magistrates in India (1884).” (Banerjea, 1998: 113; Sinha, 1968: 305)

The demand of ‘separation of power’ of these two branches of government had been one of the most constant demands of both the Indian Association and the Indian National Congress, with which both of the Ghosh brothers associated directly. Sibnath Shastri (2007:232), in tribute of him argued, “the importance of the ideal of separation of judicial and executive functions was one of the most important agenda of Indian National Congress. Now it is given importance by the statesmen who are going to implement such policy. But Manomohun Ghosh advocated for such principle53 in such a time when most of them could not even think of it. This anticipation for the preservation of democratic rights proves his visionary power and great patriotism.”
The younger brother Lalmohun Ghosh, a close liberal associate of Surendranath Banerjea and Anandamohan Basu, was one of the activists, who through his soul-association with Indian Association, its National Conference and the Indian National Congress took remarkable role in the agitational but constitutional movements led by these political associations. In those days when the agitation against “the Civil Service Examination Rules of 1877” was connecting India with a National consciousness Lalmohun Ghosh took important role by delivering public speeches through different platforms and in 1879, the Indian Association unanimously54 deputed Lalmohun Ghosh to England for the submission of Civil Service Memorandum to the British Parliament (Banerjea, 1998: 48). His Speech delivered at a meeting held under the presidency of John Bright at Wills’s Rooms in London on 23rd July 1879 was not only won admire of the British audience including the great orator John Bright but also surprised the leaders of Indian Association for the eloquence and arguments he focused in support of the memorandum and other constitutional demands. In course of his speech while he was advocating for the introduction of constitutional government argued:

“Nor can England, without being utterly false to all her traditions, to history and to herself, continue to refuse to us that boon of a constitutional government which it is the proudest boast and the greatest glory of this country to possess” (Quoted in Majumdar, 1967: 107-08).

Such a view of constitutionalism or constitutional government unveils his deep introspection and zeal for the principles of liberal democracy, which he believed as a divine boon and worthiest treasure which England possessed. While remarking on the profound impact of his speeches in England Surendranath Banerjea (1998: 49) pointed out, the effect of that meeting was instantaneous. Within twenty four hours of it, there were laid-on the table of the House of Commons the rules creating what was subsequently known as the Statutory Civil Service. Thus Lalmohun Ghosh proved how justified was his selection as a delegate by winning a phenomenal success in his mission
to England, which according to Surendranath Banerjea (1998: 50) was a new epoch in the history of creating public opinion in England as well as in India.

During the historical agitation against the atrocious Arms Act (1878) and Vernacular Press Act (1878) enacted in the Lytton-era, he again deputed by the Indian Association in England. Accompanied by Sir Devid Wedderburn, Hadgson Pratt and F.W.Chesson he led a deputation to Lord Harrington for the abolition of these undemocratic measures (Sinha, 1968: 392). Apart from agitating against these two arbitrary measures of Lord Lytton he urged for the desperate need for raising the maximum age limit of the Indian Civil Service and ardently argued in favour of the introduction of the representative Legislatures in India. He argued that the basic pre-condition for the successful implementation of people-centric responsible governance is the introduction of representative system in the Supreme as well as Provincial Legislatures through which it can ascertain the real wants and opinions of the people, and therefore he suggested that two, or three Indians nominated by the local Government should be appointed as members of the Council for that purpose (Majumdar, 1967: 107).

During the howling agitation of the British-born subjects against the proposed Ilbert Bill in 1883 both Manomohun Ghosh and Lalmohun Ghosh took tremendous role in developing counter agitation by the Indian Association. In order to uphold the liberal principle of equality before law they fought heart and soul for the unhindered approval of the Ilbert Bill. Lalmohun Ghosh delivered several speeches in different provinces, among which the most notable was his speech at Dacca which completely targeted Mr.Branson who had earlier given a very abusing and offensive speech at the same place for the abolition of Ilbert Bill. Besides such activities the Ghosh brothers expressed their indignation against the abolition of the jury system by the Jury Notification of 20th October 1892. While Lalmohun delivered speech criticizing the Jury Notification at a meeting of 20th December, 1892 it was Manomohun Ghosh who showed up the Government of India how defective was the decision. As a result of continued public pressure the Government had to withdraw of the Jury Notification in March 1893.
Conclusion:

The last quarter of nineteenth century, as we have seen above was the most formative period in the articulation and institutionalization of liberal ideas and democratic principles through the introduction of local governance in India. Added to it was the effort to take part in the general election of House of Commons in England in order to ventilate Indian grievances through constitutional means, which created an ambience of liberal and constitutional democracy in Bengal. The increasing disillusionment of the Bengali middle class liberal intelligentsia towards the British rule through a number of ill-conceived arbitrary measures, such as – enactment of Vernacular Press Act and the Arms Act in 1878; reduction of the age limit for the Civil Service Examination to create impediments for the Indian students; modification of Ilbert Bill by compromising with the unjust demand of racial superiority by the British subjects; abolition of Jury System in Bengal and most importantly the unjust removal of Surendranath from Indian Civil Service. In other words, a sense of disenchantment as well as estrangement to British were felt in the public life of Bengal, which created a profound dissatisfaction to the British government, and led the Indians claim more and more representation in the decision-making bodies from Legislative Council to local government. The sparkle of anti-absolutist movement which was started with the Mutiny of 1857 and Indigo Revolt of 1959 transformed into a howling fire in the last quarter of the century, especially in 1880s. Moreover, the last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed a historical transformation of the nature of leadership from the landed magnates to the newly emerged Bengali middle-class intelligentsia-famously known as Bhadralok. The top three casts of Bengal viz, the Brahmins, the Kayasthas and the Baidyas. Through Indian League, Indian Association and National Conferences, a trend which had been discussed by Rabindranath Tagore in his article entitled ‘Mukhije Bonam Barujje’ (in Bengali) by discussing how the political leadership transferred from Raja Peary Mohun Mukherjee, a well-known Zamindar to public figures like Surendranath Banerjea (Ray, 1984: 86). In other words, from an aristocratic, sectoral or
provincial stance the fire of anti-colonial but liberal constitutional agitation transformed into a nation-wide movement with a sense of national feelings through the various political activities from Civil Service agitation to agitation against the imprisonment of Surendranath for Court Contempt Case. As a result of this historical emergence of national reverential feelings and united movements, a more oriented democratic political consciousness imbibed with liberal ideas was shaped. Another distinct feature of this historical period of nineteenth century was the advent of such Political Associations which tended to promote the political participation of the people in whole India with a single ideal and single orientation by establishing numerous branches. To be more specific the role of Surendranath and Indian Association was really an epoch-making in this regard, which was rightly acknowledged by Gandhi when he remarked of Surendranath and other liberals of nineteenth century that even if they were out of date their democratic ideals and constitutional struggles should not be derided and dismissed (Bayly, 2012: 345). “The bad rulers”, as Surendranath claimed, “are often blessings in disguise. They help to stir a community into life”, and it was the state of things at the end of Lord Lytton’s reign: the ill-stirred measures and reactions, police repression, Gagging Act tended to choke the voice of the people—all these, as a cumulative effect, gave birth to a democratic intellectual ambience through a wide range of political and constitutional activities such as: raising questions and standing against arbitrary measures, trying to build an anti-absolutist political consciousness and public opinion through remarkable associational activities, liberal journalism and public meeting, representing India in British Parliament, sending petitions and memoranda to the Parliament and advocating in favour of more and more legitimate share of the governed in the decision-making bodies.
Notes

1. The first three Indian barristers of Calcutta High Court were Gyanendra Mohan Tagore, Manomohan Ghosh and Michael Madhusudhan Dutta. (see, Roy, 2010: 27-28)

2. ‘Rustomji Jamsetji Jeojeebhai Scholarship’ was a Scholarship of three lacs donated by Mr. Rustomji to the Government for three Indian students to enable them to study Law in England. It was Girish Chandra Ghosh the turbulent editor to ‘Bengalee’, who inspired Woomesh to apply for the scholarship as it was decided to offer to three native students from Calcutta, Bombay and Madras each from one place. (See Ghosh, Manomathnath (1911), The Life of Girish Chandra Ghosh: 109-110.)

3. James Fitzjames Stephen was the legal member of Viceroy’s Council who strongly believed the Benthamite philosophy and ultimately the Hobbsian. Unlike J. S. Mill he believed in the ‘Greatest happiness of the greatest people’ principle. (for detail, see Metcalf, 1994: 56-60)

4. In contemporary Bengal, both Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan and Sisir Kumar Ghosh took remarkable role in creating a liberal public opinion in favour of introducing representative and responsible government through their liberal journalism and associational activities in the various civil societal political organizations viz. British Indian Association (1851) and Indian League (1875) which have been explored in the previous chapter to a good extent.

5. In the first half of nineteenth century as Partha Chatterjee in his “the Black Hole of Empire” (2013) claimed some important civil societal associations emerged in Calcutta and two remarkable political associations, namely ‘Landholders
Association’ (1837) and ‘Bengal British Indian Association’ (1843) were established. (See Chatterjee, 2013, Majumdar, 1965).

6. Some of those issues which, breaking the illusion made a clear feeling of estrangement were the ‘Black Act Controversy’ on the issue of racial discrimination, Press Censorship Act etc. (See Shastri, 2007: 120-30)

7. By then he also became the first Indian who was appointed to the Standing Council where he worked for four terms.

8. In those days, according to Lord Cros’s reform the Calcutta University enjoyed the privilege to send a representative to the Bengal Legislative Assembly. In the election he contested Raibahadur Rajkumar Sarbadhikari. While Woomesh Chandra’s name was proposed it was Maharaja Narendra Krishna Dev Bahadur who supported Rajkumar Sarbadhikari. However, it was Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee who became the first Indian representative elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly and worked together with Ramesh Chandra Dutt, the nominated member in the Legislative Assembly. (See Roy, 2010: 29-30).

9. In course of his presidential speech delivered at the 8th session of the Indian National Congress, 1892 he firmly advocated in favour of introducing representative and responsible government in India (Roy, 1892: 97).

10. It was originally named as ‘Indian National Union’ and was dubbed the new name Indian National Congress at the inaugural session on Monday, 28 December 1885 in the Hall of the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College and Boarding House in Bombay. (For details see Ray N.R, 1985: 1)

11. Dr. Biman Behari Majumdar did not accept W. C. Bonnerjee’s claim that Lord Dufferin came to know the plan of establishing National Congress from Hume at Simla and convinced him to incorporate political issues also along with Social
problems. (For detailed account of Majumdar’s arguments, see Majumdar, 1965: 186-87)

12. Surendranath Banerjea and other contemporary renowned political figures were absent in the inaugural session of the National Congress as the second National Conference was being held at Calcutta at the same time. (see Banerjea, 1998: 92)

13. W. C. Bonnerjee’s name was proposed by Hume and Seconded by S. Subrahmaniam Iyer and T. K. Talang. The proposal read, “Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, Standing Counsel Bengal is invited to assume the office of the President of the Congress.”

14. Woomesh Chandra, though never missed any session of the Indian National Congress could not attend the sixth session due to the premature demise of his third son Saral Krishna Keats. (For details, see Bonnerjee, S., 1944: 68-72)

15. To have a detailed account of the nature of racial discrimination and the Black Act Controversy in favour of this, see the fourth chapter.

16. The nature of racial discrimination and the Legislative attempt of Mr. Ilbert have been explored in the previous chapter.

17. The British born subjects, from the very beginning enjoyed the privilege of trial by a judge of their own race only, on the other hand, the Indian Judges, despite having similar rank of the Magistrate or Session Judges had been deprived of any right to try any European criminal. (See Ghosh, 1966: 440)

18. Apart from Surendranath Banerjea he also fought for Swami Vivekananda and Bhupendra Nath in court for the rescue of their ancestral property against the conspiracy of some of their relatives after the sudden demise of their father Narendranath Dutta. (see Ray, 2010: 33)
19. ‘Draconianism’ refers to a system of cruel Laws introduced by the King of ancient Athens Drako.

20. While arguing in favour of the bill Chalmer pointed out that such a bill was essential for India since it was a country of diverse races and sects.

21. Syllhet was one of the districts now under the jurisdiction of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, but then it was under the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal (see Sanyal, 1976: 109).

22. Since Sutherland had a very bitter relationship with the joint Magistrate Anderson, a good friend of Surendranath, the atmosphere became worse to an extent where Surendranath, apart from racial discriminations had to suffer the problem of professional vengeance.

23. According to Surendranath the object of the order, which bore his initial was to avoid giving an explanation of the long delay of the case. (See Banerjea, 1998: 26 Bakshi, 1991: 2).

24. The three members were Mr. Prinsep as President, Mr. Reymond then Magistrate of Mymensing and Major Holroyd, then Deputy Commissioner of Assam. (see Sanyal, 1976: 109-110)

25. Another Lieutenant-Governor Sir Edward Baker told Mr. Gokhale, “I have a soft corner in my heart for Surendranath. We have done him grievous wrong.” (see Banerjea, 1998: 27-28)

26. See the full article of A. O. Hume in the Appendix-1 in Banerjea, 1998)

27. The Metropolitan Institute was founded by Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Surendranath was given only Rs. 200 per month as salary which, though was almost

28. In a lecture on ‘Sri Chaitanya’ delivered at the London Missionary Society’s institution at Bhawanipur in 1875 he analysed the message of Chaitanya to the young students (see Sinha, 1968: 374-75).

29. In the year 1886 and 1887 Surendranath established two new branches of the Ripon College at Khidderpur and Howrah respectively.

30. Kamal kumar Basu the President of Indian Association commented this while writing the ‘forward’ of the second edition of Surendranath’s autobiography ‘A Nation in Making’. (see ‘forward’ of Banerjea ,1998)

31. Many secret societies were emerged in Calcutta, Broadly all over Bengal which worked secretly against the atrocious British government and Surendranath was directly associated with many of such associations like Russian, and Italians used to have . (Pal, 1970: 88-91)

32. The detailed account of the Indian League is discussed in the previous chapter.

33. Kristo Das Pal was the originator of one of the most renowned papers of nineteenth century, i.e. Hindoo Patriot which was subsequently popularized by Harish Chandra Mukherjee. (see the previous chapter for detailed access)

34. Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Justice Dwarkanath Mitter decided to form such an organization of the middle class intelligentsia but at that time it did not get much support and had to give up the plan. They planned to name it as ‘Bengal Association’. But Surendranath and Anandamohan wanted their new organization to have a wider scope and decided to name it ‘Indian Association’, an all India political association. (For detail see Banerjea 1998: 38).
35. In another occasion he performed his public duty above his personal sorrow. On 23rd December 1911 his beloved wife passed away and despite his personal sorrow he attended the meeting of 26th December, 1911 of the Indian National Congress.

36. According to Surendranath he kept himself in the background in terms of holding significant chair of the Association because he was recently removed from the Government Service. But he worked for the association with full dedication (Banerjea, 1998: 39).

37. Even Keshab Chandra Sen, who according to Surendranath Banerjea never attended any political meeting, was persuaded to move the election of the President. (Banerjea, 1998: 41)

38. The intension of such measure was obvious to the Indians that it aimed to make impediment to the entrance of Indians into the dignified civil service.

39. The reason behind selecting Lalmohan Ghosh instead of Surendranath was the latter’s previous bitter experience in England while he was struggling there to keep his service secured. (see Banerjea, 1998: 48)

40. Lalmohan Ghosh fought tremendously in England to build a public opinion in favour of the memorandum. He, in support of his argument pointed out that between 1863 and 1876, only eight Indians managed to qualify the Indian Civil Service examination and none was below the age of nineteen. His profound oratory power made his mission so successful that the Indian Association in its meeting on 3rd September, 1879 decided to setup a permanent deputation there in England. (For details see Majumdar, 1965: 148)

41. The Bengalee was started under the management of Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee. Girish Chandra Ghosh conducted the journal for a period of nearly eight years. Then Babu Bacharam Chatterjee became its proprietor. (see Sanyal, R. 1976: 114)
42. Surendranath and Ramkumar Dey, the editor and the printer of Bengalee were asked to show cause why they should not be punished for contempt of Court. But the latter was left off since Surendranath took the entire responsibility of the article on his own shoulders. (see Sanyal, 1976: 118)

43. The controversy over Ilbert Bill has been discussed in detailed in the previous chapter.

44. Even it made the students go into a frenzy of protest, which sometimes went beyond constitutional limits. They met in protest meetings, threw stones at Europeans against the imprisonment of Surendranath (Seal, 1968: 216-17).

45. According to Surendranath the genesis of the National Conference can be traced back to the occasion of the Delhi assemblage in 1877, where the Princes and the rulers of the land met for the purpose of a great show and the idea of such gathering of the representatives from different provinces to discuss matters of national importance came in the minds of some of the leaders (see Banerjea, 1998: 76-81).

46. Even when the First Indian National Congress was inaugurated in Bombay only Seventy-two delegates attended the session from different part of India.

47. In 1884 Surendranath undertook another propaganda tour to Northern India, the fruit of which was seen through the praiseworthy and satisfactory level of participation in the second National Conference.

48. When Surendranath was terminated his service almost all vernacular papers condemned the role of British Government as a case of racial animosity. Somprakash, edited by Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan editorial on 20November 1876 claimed that the Government should celebrate Queen’s assumption of the Imperial title by re-admitting Surendranath into the civil service, while contrary to this view the Bharat Mihir of 30 november 1876 claimed that Surendranath would render
better service by remaining outside of the India Civil Service. (see, Sinha, 1968: 372)

49. Murali Mohun Ghosh was the third and youngest son of Ramlochun.


51. Harish Chandra Mukherjee’s role has been explored in the last chapter to a good extent.

52. While Sibnath Shastri (2007: 231) claimed that Manomohon Ghosh started the paper ‘Indian Mirror’ in 1861 jointly with Keshab Chandra Sen, the beloved disciple of Devendranath Tagore, Mohit Moitra (1993: 138) is of the view that Manomohon in his soul effort founded Indian Mirror and Keshab Chandra Sen took the change of it later.

53. On the day Manomohon was preparing to start for Calcutta on his way to Madras, to see his only son, a member of the Madras Civil Service. On the very morning he unfortunately engaged himself with a heated discussion over Sir Charles Elliotts article on separation of judicial and executive functions, appeared in an English review, which made a huge impact upon his mind and worked him up into a pitch of unusual excitement, and in this state of mind during his bath he was seized with an apoplectic fit that proved fatal and he died (For details, see Banerjea, 1998: 119)

54. Since Surendranath had a bitter experience in England while he was fighting to save his own job in Civil Service he deliberately kept himself out and proposed Lalmohan’s name for the deputation as the fittest candidate.
CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION

This work has aimed to examine the formation of a liberal democratic intellectual thought which was articulated in Bengal in the nineteenth century. The basic objective of the present study was to analyze the intellectual lineage of liberal democracy in Bengal. With the introduction of new social and political culture, liberal elements, modern Western education, drastic change in the means of communication, emergence of educated middle-class Bengali bhadralok, origin of press and political associations combined to pave the basis of a new intellectual ferment in the nineteenth century. As an inevitable consequence of these socio-political and economic changes a keen political awareness and public opinion closely tied with the anti-colonial movements arose and certain egalitarian demands and concerns were articulated which formed the bedrock of the liberal democratic intellectual tradition in Bengal.

Most of the thinkers of our study were thinker-activists in the sense of engaging in social and political change in Bengal and India. This served to add a different trajectory of political thought. This suggested that a mere textual focus would be incomplete without reference to the context in which they articulated their ideas, to which they respond and which they also sought to change. The main focus of the study was a wide range of arguments, confrontations of ideas and practices in the nineteenth century Bengal, which from a broader view can be called as ‘liberal’. This liberal and democratic turn was not as consistent as one would consider normally. Those were in many occasions ambiguous, dogmatic and ambivalent. But nonetheless the efforts proved foundational to all form of nationalism as well as democratic constitutionalism in India in the nineteenth century and beyond.

Summary of Findings

Since we concern ourselves in this study with democracy and democratic tradition of thought in Bengal, this necessitates a prior understanding of the democratic intellectual
tradition in the West in order to locate our study in the appropriate genealogy of democracy, globally speaking. This constitutes the subject matter of chapter one which aimed to provide a critical outline of democracy as a concept and practice, and its consequences since the time of ancient Greeks. We also sought to examine briefly contemporary crisis in democracy with reference to the issue of representation through democracy. In this respect we have utilized the thought of Hannah Pitkin’s. It has been found that the root of Western tradition of democratic thought can be traced back to ancient Greece, more specifically to ancient Athens. In the conceptual genealogy of democracy Athens is considered generally as the first Greek city-state where direct form of democracy was established although the limits of this democracy have recently been pointed out. It was followed by the republicanism in ancient Rome and Italian city-states in the middle-ages. Though the Athenian democracy was drastically different from modern Parliamentary democracy, it was the original point where ideas like equality before Isonomie or law (despite some exceptions), justice, liberty, representative Boule (council), proportional representation by demes (local constituencies or electorates) and independent Heliaea (judiciary) were recognized to a great extent and nurtured the principle of ‘rule of law’. The successor of Greek ideas, the ancient Rome and the Italian City-states too had a direct form of democracy. In this historical evolution of democracy the idea of indirect or representative form of democracy emerged during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the West as a tool to transcend the underlying diversity in society having larger territory. Despite some controversies over its emergence it has unanimously admitted by the scholars that representative democracy was emerged as the most important tool, especially in a place where direct democracy was impossible in terms of huge territory and large population. But this democracy failed to represent which meant in effect more exclusion than inclusion that representative democracy was supposed to bring about. This was pointed out by Hannah Pitkins (2004: 335-342) who advocated for the expansion of the mode of participation from the grass-root level, which may be called as ‘republicanism within the framework of representative democracy.’ Thus, in the conceptual genealogical evolution of democracy it has been found that a
transformation—from direct democracy to indirect representative form of democracy and presently again a move towards direct democracy at the grass-root level is seen in different parts of the world. The specific message this chapter brings forth for our study is that the democratic tradition in Bengal as well as in India in the initial days was more concerned about the issue of representation—the absence of representation of the Indians in the governance of the country.

The basic object of the second chapter was to explore the cultural bedrock for the advent of modern liberal democracy in the nineteenth century in Bengal. The basic ingredients of liberal democracy viz., individuation and secularization of society, relative economic prosperity and industrialization, mass-literacy, principle of political tolerance and consciousness of ‘self’ were relatively absent in India, while, in contrary the society was characterized with omnipotent social dominance over individual and the factors like caste, creed, gender and other community based issues were more active in the society. In such a society where individual had no distinct place or empowered enough to overthrow the socio-cultural prejudices it was the Renaissance and modernity in the nineteenth century in Bengal which kindled the society up with new aspirations, new consciousness and liberal democratic ambience. It has been found that there were particularly five historical landmarks which as a cumulative effect caused this historical emergence of liberal democratic ambience in Bengal as well as in India. Those were firstly, the introduction modern Western and English education which gave birth to an educated middle-class Bengali intelligentsia, famously known as Bengali Bhadralok belonging to three castes of upper stratum—the Brahmins, the Kayasthas and the Baidyas. Being imbued with the liberal doctrine of Western political thinkers and philosophers they took crucial role in diffusion of liberal democratic ideas. The initiation of modern Western philosophy and science through Asiatic Society (1784), Fort William College (1800), Serampore Mission (1800), and the Hindu College (1817) was of crucial importance in the making of liberal democratic conditions in India.
Secondly, the nineteenth century Bengal witnessed various radical and historical movements against age-old socio-cultural and religious dogmas which were started quietly successively by some of the Christian Missionaries and was followed by *Brahmo Samaj* movement and Young Bengal movement. The primary object of these societies was to expand Western pragmatic education in order to expose the falsehood that had been nurtured by Hindu priestly class in the name of religion. The liberal and rational atmosphere created by the vigorous social reform movements and debating societies like the Academic Association vehemently denounced the Hindu religion as vile, corrupt and unjust, which was really important for creating a liberal and just society and for democratic conditions.

Thirdly, another reason which has made the nineteenth century remarkable was the historical emergence of print media in Bengal as well as India. It has been found that most of the liberal modernizers of the nineteenth century took journalism not only for their profession but also for the diffusion of their liberal ideas to form a keen public opinion in India. Though there were a good number of papers emerged during the first half of nineteenth century, it was only in the second half of the century when print media became the chief engine of the vehicle of growing political consciousness and constitutionalism in India. Among those some of the most notables were *Hindu Patriot, Somprakash, Amrita Bazar Patrika, Kalpadrum, Indian Mirror* and *Bengali*. The impact of these newspapers as the mouth-piece of liberal modernizers was too significant to ignore. Even the British government could not stay indifferent to their activities and tended to impose arbitrary legal measures against newspapers time to time, which ultimately led the Indian to be conscious of their civic and political rights.

Fourthly, one of the most effective and democratic achievements of the Renaissance in the nineteenth century India was the historical emergence of the civil societal and political associations in the form of various *sabhas* and *samitis*. It was a unique trend which was felt in Calcutta as a response to emerging religious and socioeconomic issues which has been rightly recognized by Partha Chatterjee as ‘traditional-
modernity’ for having two opposite ways (Chatterjee, 2013; 13). The first one which was seen in the late eighteenth century was state-oriented that intended to impose sovereign power of state, while in contrary the second trend was more challenging against the colonial arbitration that tended to defend the civic and political rights of the people. The incarnation of the Calcutta Town Hall as the chief centre of this civil society movement was remarkable. From Rammohun Roy of early nineteenth century to Surendranath Banerjea of late nineteenth century—all, in different issues rendered tremendous service to the growing civil society movement by participating in different meetings at Town Hall. The origin of Landholders Association (1937), Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge (1938), Bengal British Indian Association (1851), Indian league (1975), Indian Association (1976) and most significantly the Indian National Congress (1985)—all took remarkable role not only in making people aware of their civil and political rights but also in creating a positive condition for the growth of liberal and democratic ambience throughout the nineteenth century.

Finally, as an inevitable consequence of all these vigorous social and political activities a keen sense of right to self-determination imbued with national reverential feelings emerged historically in the last quarter of nineteenth century which was foundational to all form of liberal aspirations in India.

The third chapter aimed at exploring the role of Raja Rammohun Roy, the promulgator of modern India, and some of his like-minded associates. The rigorous social and political activities of Rammohun Roy, it may be claimed, made him the pioneer of the Renaissance and modernity in India for his multifarious activities almost in all sphere of society, viz. religious and social reformation movement, radical but liberal views on rule of law, separation of power, freedom of press, civil liberty and modern education. Unlike most of the existing works on Rammohun, which tended to project him as a staunch supporter of the British rule as it was to him a ‘Divine Boon’, it may be claimed that he never faced direct British Government and it was a mere Company rule (East India Company) against which he fought in different occasions whenever the Board of
Directors of the Company tried to impose any ill-conceived measure towards education, press, judicial and revenue system. Rammohun’s advocacy for religious tolerance and his emphasis on unity through *Vedantic* learning helped to uphold India’s community-conscious liberalism which, he and his associates (Dwarkanath Tagore and Prasanna kumar Tagore) tried to profess by their social and religious reformation movements. Such a notion of equality which he tended to establish through his profound knowledge of Hindu Scriptures led him persuade Bengali Hindus to give equal status and respect to women and to abandon organized socio-cultural barbarism like ‘widow burning’. Despite being a ‘high class’ Brahmin his liberal as well as rational mind never hesitated to attack vehemently the corrupt practice of the Brahmmins in the name of religion. His great zeal for individual and personal liberty made him struggle even in his early family life and throughout his public life he nurtured this love for liberty in an uncompromising care which made him the earliest spokesman of Indian liberalism. His paradigmatic as well as multifarious life bore almost all the fundamental ingredients of liberal democratic ideals like reform movements based on reason, tolerance and humanity, giving importance over liberty, freedom of press, rule of law, separation of power and religious tolerance built the basic structure of the liberalism in early nineteenth century over which the rest of the century witnessed the sound footing of liberal democratic ideas. His cordial zeal for liberty made him criticize the political subjugation of one country by another and therefore he became overjoyed for the national uprising in South and Central America or parts of Europe and on the other hand he, on the fall of Neapolitan constitutionalism to Monarchical reaction in 1821 made him too distressed to attend the private appointment with James S. Buckingham, the turbulent editor of the *Calcutta Journal* (Bayly, 2012: 47).

Rammohun and his associates, though often condemned even by the mainstream literature for their admiration to British as ‘Divine boon’, it cannot be said that they were anti-democratic. In fact, even as early as the early nineteenth century Rammohun rightly anticipated the inherent truth of liberal democracy, i.e. the freedom of mind and freedom
of expression which built the base of liberalism in India. In some cases, Rammohun emerged with some hesitations and ambivalences but such ambiguities should be understood in terms of the socio-cultural context in early nineteenth century where the consciousness of ‘self’ or ‘individualism’ was entirely suffocated by omnipotent social dominance. If he admired the British rule in any extent it must be claimed that it was not for colonization but for the free-flow of liberal ideas and enlightened public opinion in making legislations for his countrymen who were dipped in the age-old bondages of pre-modern society, culture and tutelage. The causes of such relative ambivalences has been rightly described by Ashis Nandi (2011: 61) who argued that to be rational and logical throughout whole life is simply impossible because people live by their feelings, emotions and institutions. Rammohun’s liberal mind could easily anticipate the batten truth that the advent of liberal ideas in India could be materialized into action not by mere isolation from the West but by healthy interaction with the treasures of modern Western education and ideologies which built the base of liberalism in India.

In chapter four, we explored the role of Derozians. In the lineage of liberalism in India the Derozians, popularly known as ‘Radical Liberals’ or ‘the Young Bengal’ in the post Rammohun era in Bengal took tremendous role in the advent of liberal thought, more specifically in the making of democratic political consciousness between the third and six decades in the nineteenth century. In the mainstream literature connected to the nineteenth century Bengal, the Derozians and their ‘Young Bengal movement’ have often been contemptuously hurled slanders with a number of phrases like ‘aristocrat Indians’ ‘retreated elites from early radicalism’, ‘tall-talk and low performance’ ‘a fruitless intellectual jugglery’ and most all, their deep love of the West, intoxication with the English and the means they took to make their ideas into action brought them allegations like ‘Denationalizing emasculations’ and ‘Intellectual Aliens, and their social and political activities were criticized as “extreme progressivism, frivolity and recklessness.”

Nonetheless the present study has argued that most of these allegations were half-truth, distorted, mythical and baseless to a great extent. The paucity of original source
materials and undue neglect of the vast data including their mouthpiece journals, proceeding of the associations like ‘Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge,’ ‘Deshahitaishinee Sabha’ has made the scholars’ ill-present the remarkable role of those young liberals of the Hindu College. Despite some ambiguities in making their ideas into action the radical youths of the newly educated intelligentsia took all constitutional means to preach their liberal views and to mitigate any form of ill-conceived arbitrary measures of the alien rulers: they published pamphlets and tract, convened public meetings engaged in civil Society movement, dispatched petitions to administrative authorities and most of all, in general elections in England they earnestly appealed to the electors to elect those candidates who were sympathetic to Indian cause so that they could raise voice in the House of commons for better and liberal governance in India. Their rigorous civil societal and political activities in SAGK (Society for Acquisition of General knowledge), petitioning to British Government for the restoration of civil rights and their remarkable role in the ‘Black Act’ controversy have made such allegations baseless to a great extent. Despite a lot of controversies the point where unanimity among scholars has been seen is on their deep enchantment of Western liberal ideas which made them fight against racial arrogance, discriminations, corruptions and oppressions by European officials. Apart from these, another remarkable factor which proved how far they were being intoxicated from English and blindly following the West was that they studied Hindu philosophy on the Sastric literature⁶ and also published their mouth-piece like Jnananneshan in both English and vernacular.

The fifth chapter has aimed to explore those democratic thinker-activists who articulated a democratic intellectual space in the second half of nineteenth century. The figures chosen for detailed exploration were: Harish Chandra Mukherjee, Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan, Jyogendranath Vidyabhusan and Sisir Kumar Ghosh. They with their turbulent but liberal journalism and other political and civil societal activities took remarkable role in making an intellectual ambience in favour of liberal democracy and the advent of national democratic school in the early second half of nineteenth century in
This phase, the third quarter of nineteenth century witnessed the epoch of forward anti-colonial movement imbued with liberal democratic principles like constitutional agitations and rise of national self-respect among the Indians as a response to the arbitrary and repressive colonial policies and racial atrocities of the white-men.

The early second half of nineteenth century also witnessed an ambivalence or, to be more specific as Ashis Nandi notes “a political paradox” of the Raj (Nandi, 2009: 26) that while in the first phase it (the British) tended to promote the political participation of the educated Hindu middle-class as it was advantageous to their regime, in the second half of the nineteenth century they discouraged it and imposed various impediments against such political activities of the Hindus because of the emerging national consciousness which they incarnated as a profound challenge against their authoritarian regime. It was the historical context in which liberal journalist politicians like Harish Chandra Mukherjee, Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan and Sisir kumar Ghosh emerged with their mouthpiece Hindu Patriot, Somprakash and Amrita Bazar Patrika.

Harish Chandra raised many questions and criticized freely despotic British ruler. He defended the cause of free traffic of ideas and the importance of democratic public opinion for the sake of civil rights and equality. His fearless pen remained most vocal against the repressive government during the unrest days of the Revolt of 1857 and Indigo Revolt of 1859-1860. The policy of Dalhousie towards the annexation and confiscation of different provinces of India made him understand the source of discontent in the provinces like Nagpur and Jhansi, which was criticized by him tooth and nail. He took important role in drafting the petition complaining the perilous act of the union of executive power with the legislature and urged for the separation of power along with the establishment of legislature on the principle of representation of popular will and sentiment. He vehemently criticized the codification of the penal laws which he believed, “could only succeed under despotism and was always inimical to public liberty” (Hindu Patriot, January 29, 1857). His great zeal for public opinion, political liberty and constitutional liberalism made him argue for the recognition of right to self-
determination. It is compatible to note that in a time when the existence of a newspaper entirely depended on the allegiance and support it provided to the ruler Harish Chandra maintained an autonomous, and liberal democratic journalism which never hesitated to raise question and condemned any short of ill-conceived measures of the alien rulers.

In this chapter the contribution of another prominent but almost entirely ignored Bengali liberal Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan has been explored to some detail. He through the columns of his liberal mouthpiece ‘Somprakash’ took notable role in the creation of liberal democratic awareness in contemporary society which was foundational to all form of nationalism in the emerging political life of the reascent India. During the ‘reactionary’ regime of Lord Lytton, Dwarkanath maintained the most prominent role in raising questions against his various arbitrary measures like Afgan policy, the degraded state of education in various provinces, especially in Punjab and about the ill-measured economic policies to the colonies of the Raj. His fiery articles on ‘Politicization of Education’ (Somprakash, Jaishthya 10, 1277 B.S); ‘Mixed Constitution’ based of democratic principles (Somprakash, Aswin 5, 1287 B.S); ‘Hypocrisy of Liberal Englishmen’ (Somprakash, Bhadra 30, 1270); “How far should we depend on British Government?” (Somprakash, Bhadra 30, 1270 B.S)— are some of the instances which unveiled his liberal democratic ideas. His arguments in favour of representative government under the caption “No Taxation without Representation” was in fact an epoch-making in the lineages of liberal democratic demand in the nineteenth century, which was later vigorously advocated by Sisir Kumar Ghosh, Woomesh Chandra Bonerjee, Surendranath Banerjea and the Ghosh brothers. Apart from these, the role of Somprakash and its proprietor Vidyabhusan took tremendous role in making a liberal public opinion during the ‘Ilbert Bill controversy’ and the ‘racial discriminations’. He condemned the British policy of making Indians politically excluded and tried to unmask hypocrisy of their ‘liberal’ face by criticizing their stance on the ‘Rent Bill’ which intended to kink out the ideas of equality by expropriating the legal owner, even the ancestral owner from his entitled land.
Sisir Kumar Ghosh, the owner of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was a staunch advocate of representative democracy, local self-government, civil and political liberty and freedom of speech, which contributed significant impetus to the forward political movement and the epoch of national democratic consciousness. Contrary to the contemporary trend of showing full allegiance (except a very few like *Hindu Patriot* and *Somprakash*) to the alien ruler Sisir Kumar Ghosh openly criticized the British rule in any arbitrary measure and tried to build a clear demand of free India even in early second half of nineteenth century. His great zeal for liberty and self-dignity made him denounce the Criminal Procedure code (1872), the Dramatic Performance Act, the Vernacular Press Act (1878) and the Arms Act (1878) for the restoration of civil and political liberty of an individual. He argued ardently for the fair and impartial administration of justice and fearlessly warned the British with prophetic vision, “The greater the anger of the people, briefer becomes the life expectancy of the empire” (*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, July 29, 1869).

Such an anti-colonial stance unveils his role in the creation of political awareness and democratic condition in the renascent Bengal. Being highly moved by the establishment of constitutional government in Italy, the liberation of slaves as a consequence of American Civil War, the liberal policy of Allexander-II in Russia and the role of nationalism in Germany and Italy he firmly advocated for the establishment of Parliamentary democracy in India. It was the phase, the mid-nineteenth century in Bengal that constantly witnessed an intellectual confrontation between the despotic British imperial policies and the newly educated liberal intelligentsia. As a consequence of this intellectual confrontation especially the racial arrogance and deliberately created impediments for the exclusion of Indians from important administrative and judicial posts a keen sense of humiliation was felt by the educated middle-class, which inevitably deepened the line of estrangement with the British rule.

This estrangement and disillusionment became widened in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, which gave birth to the historical national reverential feelings among the Indians. The sixth chapter aimed to focus on the articulation of liberal ideas in Bengal
by exploring the significant role of some of the prominent liberals like Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, Surendranath Banerjea, Manomohun Ghosh and Lalmohun Ghosh. The historical context that paved the way for the articulation of liberal democratic conditions was the rising anti-colonial movement and the disillusionment to the British rulers which was started in the late 1850s through the historical Revolt of 1857 and the Indigo Revolt of 1859-60 reached its climax during the last quarter of the century, especially for the racial haughtiness of the white, Surendranath removal from civil-service for a trivial offence (1974), Ilbert Bill agitation (1883), Surendranath’s imprisonment (1883) for the contempt of court case and the atrocious Vernacular Press Act (1878) and Arms Act (1878) by reactionary Lytton Government.

It seemed to us that the last quarter of the nineteenth century was the most formative period in the lineage of liberal democracy in India since it witnessed the articulation of liberal democratic sentiments, ideas and practices connected with the national anti-colonial movement. It is quite compatible to note that their ideas and activities created a space for the rising civil societal movement in the contemporary society which provided some of the conditions for the emergence of democratic consciousness in India. The ideas of equality and national self-determination imbued with a keen reverential feeling of ‘Indian-ness’ were emerged through the rigorous political activities of the thinker-activists explored in this chapter. Moreover, this phase witnessed an articulation of democratic ideas like equality, secular values and legitimate share in the governance of the country, by the political activists who espoused such democratic sentiments and liberal values in response to the emerging political context of the contemporary India. In other words, while in the first half of the nineteenth century at the very incipient phase a mild breeze of constitutional liberalism featured with appealing, petitioning, giving speeches and publishing articles in the newspapers in a humble passion was blowing, in the last quarter of the century, due to a varied series of constant intellectual confrontations and disenchantment to the British rule a more stormy political movement featured with condemning arbitrary government policies tooth and nail,
making profound political agitations and a national democratic aspirations were emerged which founded the positive conditions for the rise and growth of liberal democratic ambience in the contemporary society.

The most crucial effect of this change in the political context and action of the rising Bengali ‘Bhadralok’ in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was the articulation and institutionalization of liberal ideas and democratic principles through the introduction of local government. The incarnation of various political associations through their vigorous political activities, constant criticism and agitations against the various arbitrary governmental policies rendered remarkable service to the unification of different provinces of India and tended to articulate democratic conditions by creating a democratic public opinion in India as well as in England. The role of the rising Bengali intelligentsia in the articulation and formation of such public opinion was crucial as they apart from organizing public meetings and creating civil societal and political awareness tried to draw the attention of the enlightened British public opinion through organizing public meetings in England and sending copies of their mouth piece journals there. Moreover, they contributed significant role in taking part in the general election in House of commons in England in order to ventilate Indians problems or grievances through constitutional means. In many cases they organized public meetings in England in favour of the candidates sympathetic to Indian causes in the general election of British parliament to represent India’s interest in the House of Commons.

**Evaluation**

We sought to focus on the cultural backdrop of India’s relatively successful experiment with democracy and its remarkable resilience despite lacking almost all the basic pre-conditions for the emergence and survival of democratic governance. Among those the important preconditions that India did not possess while it started a new journey with a new constitution and a democratic form of government in 1950s, as Kaviraj (2011: 13) argued, were the presence of mass literacy, high capitalism, industrialization,
secularism and individuation of society. Moreover, unlike most of the Western democracies, the democracy in India was introduced and was survived without a prior tradition of liberal thought which in fact, was a unique feature as well as peculiarity of Indian democracy.

Nonetheless, the post-independent India has witnessed to the surprise of many, the regularity and high percentage turn out of voters in elections; long term regime changes both at the centre and the states and most significantly, the level of popular participation and people’s deep urge for democracy, which have remarkably nullified the anticipation of many liberal as well as Marxist thinkers that the democracy in India will face an imminent demise for having so many historical and cultural anomalies or peculiarities. These peculiarities have made any study related to the origin, nature, survival and experiment of democracy in India more puzzling as well as interesting for its underlying problems and strengths which are unique in comparison to European and Western democracies. Despite endless controversies for years, over the question that whether a successful democratic political system in India is possible or not, the unquestionable fact is that democracy in India has survived and is getting more and more deeply rooted.

Yet the Indian liberals have often been condemned as wretched ‘mendicants’, ‘self-centric group of elites’, ‘Political beggers’ and ‘office-seekers’ by various Swadesi radicals and extremists in the early twentieth century. This tradition of undermining their role has also been found in contemporary political history of national liberation movement. Nevertheless, the remarkable service they rendered in the diffusion of democratic conditions in contemporary society was of crucial importance as it built the foundational structure on which the democratic dream in independent India had been materialized and has been successfully survived for almost seven decades. They ascribed most importance over democratic ideals like liberty and equality enshrined in Parliamentary government and their political activities, it may be argued, provided some of the pre-conditions for the emergence of liberal democracy in India through a series of their political activities: raising questions and openly criticizing the arbitrary policies of
the government, agitating for the restoration of civic and political rights; attacking colonial economic policies and gross inequality; intending to ameliorate the subservient condition of Indians in the public services, representing India in British Parliament, trying to build a public opinion through press and associations, emancipating the consciousness of ‘self’ from age-old barriers of castism and religious taboos. All these, gradually but remarkably formed and articulated liberal democratic values based on liberal constitutionalism, tolerance and Secularism.

Liberal democratic ideas, thus emerged historically only in colonial India with the introduction of Western liberal education, pragmatic change in the ruler-ruled relationship and radical impact of the writings of Western liberal philosophers like Mill, Spencer, Comte, Locke, Montesquieu, Green and Paine, with whom the Indian liberals sometimes drew analogies while articulating their political ideas into actions. This historical fact provides the clue why, despite having a longer history of hereditary Monarchy and tutelage the democracy in India remarkably survived from decade after decades. In fact, many other countries went through anti-colonial liberation movement but unlike India they experienced imminent expiry and transcended into authoritarianism. This very truth provides the clue why such a study for the search of the root of the liberal democracy in India is so relevant in today’s context.

The post independent India has witnessed the remarkable resilience of democracy featured with regularity and high percentage voters’ turn out in elections. Moreover long tern regime changes, both—at the centre and at the state level with the minimum or no violence, while in other regions large scale violence occurs in any regime change. Here lies the relevance of the present study since it provides to clue what has made liberal democracy in India so persistent. It also intends to fill the gap of studying the root of such relative success of democracy despite lacking all postulated pre-conditions. It disapproves the argument of Sunil Khilnani (2004: 5-6) that the liberal democratic ideas ‘stood in a lonely corner’ in India by the 1930s and 1940s. It also disagrees with Sudipta Kaviraj’s (2011:15) dictum that “it is a case of democracy without a prior tradition of
liberal political though”. Rather the present study argues that the liberal democratic ideas and conditions had been remarkably developed in the womb of Renaissance and modernity in the nineteenth century Bengal, where constant intellectual confrontations and articulation of liberal ideals and activities under the big banner of nationalism emerged historically by the Indian liberals who created positive conditions for democracy while making their ideas into actions.

The liberal democratic context created by the rising Bengali Bhadralok till the end of the nineteenth century paved the way for taking the step to the next and formal institutional level by participating or sharing posts in the legislative Council, not to create any law because such bodies did not enjoy such power. The Bengal legislative Council just used to ratify the laws already passed by the British Parliament. Nonetheless, the new generation of liberal democrats in Bengal made full utilization of the available space in such bodies to ventilate their grievances and the platform for training in the decorum of Parliamentary democracy—a subject which belongs to another study due to barriers of time and scope in the present study.
Notes

1. Though it recognized the ideal of rule of law and equality before isonomie (law), the Athenian democracy was highly criticized on the ground that it excluded women, resident aliens and slaves from democratic processes. Moreover, it was run by a ‘lot’ system almost in all hierarchical levels of institutions. (see Barker, 1967: 167-175; Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2005: 42)


3. Rammohun himself used the phrase ‘high Class’ in a letter to Mr. Gordon of KolKata, which is regarded as his Autobiographical sketch published posthumously in Anthenium and in the Literary Gazette.

4. He was highly influence by the writings of Locke, Hume, Blackstone and Voltaire which made him a great worshipper of liberty. (see, Kaviraj, 2011: 39; Palit, 1974: 11)


6. Krishnamohun Banerjee studied Hindu Philosophy on the Sastric literature, Tarachand Chakraborti translated Manu and their mouth-piece Jnananneshan was published in bi-lingual versions and the Masik Patrika was published in Vernacular language only.

7. For details see, Majumdar, 1967: 128)

8. The both school of thoughts—Liberal and Marxists jointly anticipated that due to lacking almost all the immediate preconditions and prior tradition of liberal thought, and for possessing deep historical and cultural anomalies the democracy in India will face an imminent demise. But was proved false by the remarkable resilience of democracy in India. (for details, see Kaviraj, 2011: 2-14)
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