REVISITING THE PAST

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Chapter - I

REVISITING THE PAST

When totems are abstracted from the life of one community and introduced into the life of another community they acquire different and unforeseen functions and significance.

G.N.Devy

At a very fundamental level, literature emerges as an ideology of a particular, dominant social class, a class which desires to uphold its superiority over other classes; a class which holds control by imposing this ideological form over the other passive and less powerful classes. At any point of history, a close examination of the evolution of the relevant "literature" of the period and a study of the nature of literature would lead to the observation of the emergence of "literature" belonging to the more dominant of the existing social classes to be utilized for confrontation of and ultimate assertion over smaller social groups. The very purpose of this medium hence appears to be to hold the classes together, to bind them, "thus distracting the masses from their immediate commitments, nurturing in them a spirit of tolerance and generosity and so ensuring the survival of private property" (Eagleton, 26). Thus they refer in the end not simply to private taste, but to the assumptions by which certain social groups
exercise and maintain power over others (Eagleton, 16). It is after this stage of a literature gaining supremacy and ensuring its perpetuation that the apparently aesthetic features of this "ideology" emerge -- that of establishing itself as an institution to be revered, to be aspired, to be enjoyed. It is to be noted thus that not any random form of expression of art acquires the entity of a literature. Rather, it is only the form of expression which represents the views and values of a higher class that gains recognition and identity as literature per se. Through the identity of the popular literature of a particular period, the superior class thus utilizes this form to reaffirm its supremacy in society. Terry Eagleton in Literary Theory traces the formation and development of the literature of England as a case in point to elucidate this principle.

In a nutshell, the threat of collapse faced by the powerful bastion of religion in eighteenth century England, with the impending fear of the ideology of religion losing its control over society, shifted the focus to "English" which was adjudged the fitting alternative to continue the hegemonic mission undertaken so long by religion. English not as a language but as a "literature" then took up the reins of holding together a difficult and troubled class society by very methodically and systematically working on the emotions, beliefs and feelings of the working class. English literature was advocated as the true reflection of the noble and enriched culture of the nation, a literature whose values one would do well to imbibe. ... in the drive to reconsolidate a shaken, social
order, the neo-classical notions of reason, nature, order and propriety, epitomized in art, were key concepts (Eagleton, 17).

One ought to note that at this juncture, English as a subject was found fit only for the working-classes, to convince them into accepting the class structure and its consequent division between the haves and the have-nots as agreeable and correct.

Literature would rehearse the masses in the habits of pluralistic thought and feeling, persuading them to acknowledge that more than one viewpoint than theirs existed -- namely, that of their masters. It would communicate to them the moral riches of bourgeois civilization, impress upon them a reverence for middle-class achievements, and since reading is an essentially solitary contemplative activity, curb in them any disruptive tendency to collective political action.(Eagleton, 25)

In Universities, English was looked down upon by the classical languages of Greek and Latin. Comparatively, the study of English was found suitable only for workers and women. The latter is a pointer reflecting the social condition that existed in England then, where women were barred from striving for higher education. English as a language befitted a recognition at par with the classical languages by the Oxbridge only by late nineteenth century. But much before this period the British imperialists had
experimented the teaching of English as a literature on Indians, falsely affirming its sublimity as a literature.

By the mid-Victorian period, the powerful hold of religion was on the verge of collapse under the joint onslaught of the developments in the fields of science and technology which in turn had its own social repercussions too in the emergence of a new class in society. It was this class which in due course toppled the supremacy of the upper class and established what we recognize today as the various genres of English literature or the literature of England. It is to be noted that at the point where literature takes over as an ideology replacing religion, it has a deeper mission to accomplish rather than to merely be a form to be assimilated and appreciated. Therefore the nineteenth century Romantic poetry of Blake and Shelley primarily represents certain conscious socio-political treatises and only secondarily becomes romantic as such. Eagleton elaborates: Its task is to transform society in the names of those energies and values which art embodies. Most of the Romantic poets were themselves political activists perceiving continuity rather than conflict between their literary and social commitments (Literary 20).

The path adopted for the beginning and growth of literature in England had a parallel in the growth and development of English in Britain's prime colony, India. Just as literature took over from where religion left in England, in India too, in Bengal, the English language and literature took over from the state of near-
total disintegration of and disbelief in religion in general and in Hinduism in particular. The only difference was that in India, it was her English masters who very consciously, very subvertly built cracks at certain sensitive points in the edifice of Hinduism to confirm a welcome entry for English as a language and a form of literature into India. As Devy states in his essay "Troubling Inheritances", "English literature was accepted in India, as a viable mode of linguistic production and expression primarily because it was the literature of the dominating culture, not because it was inherently superior to literature in Indian languages" (JEFL 108).

A study of nineteenth century Bengal that focusses on the prevailing socio-political and cultural atmosphere presents a multi-dimensional picture, a stark feature of which exposes the cultural denigration, the low social ebb, the "stagnant, degraded and corrupt state into which our society had fallen" (Sarkar, Renaissance 5). Bengal had sunk into the nadir of degeneration. In social usage, in politics, in the realm of religion and art, we had entered the zone of uncreative habit, of decadent tradition, and ceased to exercise our humanity (N.S.Bose, 27).

One of the key citizens who played a very active role, be it apparently in association with the British colonialists, in pulling Bengal out of this mire and in creating a resurgence, a reawakening, a rebirth for Bengal was Raja Rammohun Roy.

Roy was born in a highly religious Kulin Brahmin family which conformed in all ways to the rites of his caste, a factor
that proved extremely advantageous for his future. He was well-versed in the Hindu scriptures, the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*; he was taught Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian; he learnt Bengali by himself. He was the first man to translate and explain *Vedanta* in Bengali though he mainly propagated the non-dualism of Sankaracharya (N.S.Bose, 33). His aim was to instil a belief in the minds of the people in just one formless god which was the epitome of worship given in the ancient scriptures. Roy firmly believed that it was "the image worship and polytheism of the later Puranic religions" which brought about the breakdown of Hindu society (N.S.Bose, 33). It was argued by many that Roy used the strategy of propagating *Vedanta* as a mere facade whereas in reality he was against Hinduism and hence encouraged the arrival of Western education which he felt might enlighten the society to a certain extent. Actually Roy was not up in arms against Hindu religion as such but against theism and idol worship which he considered fit for "those who are incapable of elevating their minds to the idea of an invincible Supreme Being (*The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy* 41). . . . a comprehensive study of the Hindu, Western and Christian scriptures convinced Rammohun that the core of religious truth, comprehending the unity of God as spirit, his worship in spirit and in truth, the immortality of the soul and ethical discipline as the basis of spiritual life, formed the central teaching of the canonical scriptures of the historic religions (Panikkar, 29).

Roy was one of the earliest products of Western learning. Being equally well-informed in both the Oriental and
Occidental tongues and being well-grounded in the Hindu philosophy helped him foresee the doom that society would inevitably be led to if it were allowed to continue to follow certain abject dogmas of the day. It is impossible in the present day to realize the tumult of feelings and the array of opposition that met the Raja (Dae, 171). Aware of the tenacious grip of the religious and social doctrines on the society, Roy had to tread cautiously. He made an appeal to the good sense of society basing his arguments on the very religious scriptures that people swore by.

During this phase of history, to borrow D.D.Kosambi's evocative phrase, Indians were engaged in creative introspection, which meant not only exploring the vitality of the indigenous, epistemological tradition, but also assessing it in the context of the advances made by the West (Panikkar, vii). It was at this juncture that our imperial masters prodded the society in Bengal to rethink their values. The conquest of Bengal by the British was not merely a political revolution. It ushered in a greater revolution in thoughts and ideas, in religion and society.

The search therefore was for a regeneration of the national culture, adapted to the requirements of progress, but retaining at the same time its distinctiveness. The attempt is deeply contradictory. 'It is both imitative and hostile to the models it imitates . . .' It is imitative in that it accepts the value of the standards set by the alien
culture. But it also involves a rejection: 'in fact, two rejections, both of them ambivalent; rejection of the alien intruder and dominator, who is nevertheless to be imitated and surpassed by his own standards, and rejection of the ancestral ways which are seen as obstacles to progress and yet also cherished as marks of identity.' (Chatterjee, 2)

This was the most primary impact created by colonialism - the inner struggle involved in fulfilling one's social responsibility. A desire to get attuned and to learn to acclimatize oneself to the values and principles of the colonialist but at the same time a refusal to recognize the superiority of the colonialist was a difficult situation to adapt to, but which one eventually did. The society in Bengal identified itself with the ideals of the colonialist, the levels of development, the progressive thoughts of the colonialist, while at the same time it refused to accept the hegemonic attitude of the colonialist. To distinguish and separate such two related factors, to find a solution to equate these factors was not simple.

Bengal had many firsts to its credit. The British first entered India through Bengal. They built their bourgeois economy first in Bengal. Their imperial ideology resulted in an ambivalence in the attitudes of the society which made itself explicit first in
Bengal. The duality caused by the opposing pressures of resistance and acceptance was also first experienced by the society in Bengal. At this point there existed two chief forces that ignited the dormant spark in the minds of the Bengali community: Rammohun Roy's exhortation for reform in all fields and the Western impact. The hitherto dormant desire for change fanned into a fast-spreading flame even while a certain section of the community was held back firmly by conservatism.

A deeper examination of the inner struggle of the society demonstrates that Bengal at this stage was gripped by two streams of thought, two forms of isms, two concepts, two opposing ideas: Occidentalism versus Orientalism. The unending orthodox and bigotted features of the day victimised mainly women. They indeed formed a very downtrodden sector of the community, inflicted with the harsh practices of bride-burning, child-marriage and polygamy to name a few. Yet another downtrodden class was that of the untouchables - a man-made class justified by certain despicable principles of casteism. Still another unspeakable practice followed was that of "plunging a dying person into water in the hope that the soul purified by the Ganga may ascend to Heaven" (N.S.Bose, 60). These evils had through centuries become so deep-rooted as to be recognized as a natural, normal state of being. They were taken for granted and accepted as a part of life. This complacence was now finally cracking, bringing a rethinking in its wake, causing a requestioning of practices so far blindly followed.
The social practices and religious beliefs of nineteenth century India were thus seen as features of a decadent society characterized by constraint, credulity, status, authority, bigotry and blind fatalism, . . . sought to be replaced by freedom, faith, contract, reason, tolerance and a sense of human dignity (Panikkar, 8).

A very remarkable outcome was the emergence of a new class of people, "the middle-class intelligentsia", a class ready for the change. This chain of events reiterates the dismal ebb reached by the society, a degeneration created by a vicious cycle wherein one class fed on religion and social orthodoxy, encouraged the propagation of all types of social evils onto a class which so long very passively took in this treatment. The latter now envisaged a turn in fortune's cycle and very eagerly looked forward to the change, to the rejuvenation it envisaged in the concept of Western learning, Western impact and liberalism.

Mahasweta Sengupta, in her essay "Literature for the Empire: Rabindranath Tagore Reads English", describes the highly romantic but unreal ideas this class held about the English:

To a large extent, the popular construction of the identity of the English in the colony was based on two stereotypes of the romantic: the revolutionary fighting for justice and equality, and the spiritually
blissful calm of prophet -- the two aspects exemplified by Byron and Wordsworth. . . . the British were conceived as always on the side of liberty, equality and fraternity; they were taken as the torch-bearers of liberal humanism in the world, and were given credit for the imaginative achievement of poets like Shelley and Byron, who were actually social outcasts at home. (JEFL 120)

As a natural conclusion it seems that it was the idea of learning English that motivated the society. Sarkar stresses that:

The Bengal renaissance received its original impulse not from ancient India but from the alien modern West. But as our awakening came within the straitjacket of a foreign semi-colonial regime the scope for the development could not have been but limited. (Renaissance 150)

The reason was that the British impact created a desire, a possibility for a new class. To firmly establish their bourgeois economy, the colonialists had to "destructure" and then "restructure" the socio-economic framework of the native society. Abdul JanMohammed says in his essay "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature" that, "the perception of racial difference is in
the first place, influenced by economic motives... The European desire to exploit the resources of the colonies... drastically disrupted the indigenous societies." (Critical Inquiry 61) This manner of economic exploitation formed the basis of "colonial" ambience, it was the first step towards the restructuring of the society.

At this point, it was Rammohun Roy, who with his efforts to strike a golden mean between the East and the West, succeeded in setting in motion a huge wave of reform. The reawakening in the minds and hearts of people led to tangible changes in the religious and social spheres, which in turn put an end to many a shameful practice of the day. This was due to the pioneering work of Rammohun Roy, he being "the first of those who have worked and thought and written under European influences" (Dae, 171). The Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness (Naik, 23). Rammohun Roy pleaded for the cause of English education, because, to keep abreast of development in Western learning and science, a knowledge of the English language was essential. Complementing this, "under colonization... the suppression of vernacular languages in favour of English was used as an instrument of imperial rule (Boehmer, 207).

The changes being registered in the socio-cultural set-up of the society were a result of the dual, parallel forces at work,
the foreign imperial force of the colonialists and the indigenous reformatory one of Roy and his concentrated efforts. A natural consequence of these reforms was the sweeping changes that came into the cultural face of the society due to the basic determination to change, to learn, to imbibe the new learning as in Western principles. It was a change in the old for the new in the realm of education, heralding the onset of Western culture in India. The pangs of dichotomy experienced by this society, the social and cultural ambivalence of this society formed the ground, the subject of colonial writing.

There were many new entrants in the field to fight for the cause of Western education in India. The contribution of each of them towards creating an atmosphere to inculcate Western learning was starkly different. The reason was that the motivation behind this contribution differed and consequently their influence on the students and on the community as a whole differed. Unknowingly all of them formed links of an inter-connected chain of events. Chatterjee's observation is of relevance here:

In fact, the entire tradition - modernization dichotomy served as a cover under which the grosser facts of imperialist political and economic exploitation (were), very often quietly tucked away in a cover... The argument was therefore that while there were elements of modernity in the new
cultural and intellectual movements in nineteenth century India, these cannot become meaningful unless, they are located in their relation, on the one hand, to the changing socio-economic structure of the country, and on the other, to the crucial context of power, i.e. the reality of colonial subjection. (Nationalist 24)

In the initial stage, Rammohun Roy's efforts resulted in stirring the minds of the people towards desiring an English education. Rammohun Roy was "a friend of Dr. Duff and Christian missions" (Dae, 171). As a result of the combined efforts of David Hare, Rammohun Roy and Sir Edward Hyde East, the Chief Justice then in 1816, the Hindu College came into existence on January 20 1817. Sarkar explains: David Hare had come to India in 1800 and after retiring from the watch trade in about 1816, devoted the remaining quarter of his life and all his energy, time and fortune to the furtherance of modern education and upliftment of the people of his adopted country (Henry Derozio: Poems xii). About David Hare it has been said that "he nursed the Hindu College through all its early trials, sent up to it the cream of his own school boys and watched over it as a daily visitor (Sarkar, xii). He was an organizer and a staunch believer in the freedom of thought and worked for it all his life.

Firmly sharing this belief and working with Hare for this sole cause was the Eurasian poet, Derozio, who was not only
one of the early writers but also the principal mentor, tutor, friend and guide of the other poets of the age. It was Derozio's influence which brought about a rethinking in the minds of the young students. According to his biographer, "neither before, nor since his day has any teacher, within the walls of any native educational establishment in India ever exercised such an influence over his pupils" (Poems iii).

A brief survey of the deep-rooted impact of Derozio on his students - - the boys of Hindu College - - shows how it led to the evolution of the next stage of development in the field of education. At a very fundamental level, Derozio sought to create in his students a desire to think freely. He released the fetters of their tender minds and invited them, exhorted them to discuss and debate on any subject with absolute liberty. He created among them a thirst for truth which would thus induce them to question any vice. He appealed to the students to renounce all forms of double standards.

Oh Freedom! there is something dear
    E'en in thy very name,
That lights the altar of the soul
    With everlasting flame,
Success attends the patriot sword,
    That is unsheathed for thee!
And glory to the breast that bleeds,
Bleeds nobly to be free!
Blest be the generous hand that breaks
The chain a tyrant gave,
And, feeling for degraded man,
Gives freedom to the slave. *Poems 18*

This was Derozio's impassioned plea for freedom. He always strove to hold high the flag of liberty and equality. He devoted all his leisure to the works of West-European thinkers - Rousseau, Diderot, Berkeley and Hume -- and, of course to the poems of the English poets - - Shakespeare, Milton, Thomas Moore, Keats, Shelley and Byron, under whose impact his philosophy of life was formed (Kalinnikova, 9).

Derozio's youth, magnetic personality and his ability to promote the students to widen their knowledge with the new English learning cast a deep impression in the minds of the students. In her essay "Derozio: English Teacher", Manju Dalmia delineates the reason English as a language and literature became increasingly appealing to Derozio's pupils:

Notably, literature and history were taught in one composite unit, and in this case, by a man whose strengths were literary rather than historical. From the reactions of Derozio's pupils, it would appear that the study of both together tended to historicize, so that the heroism perceived in the works cited captured the imagination and became
desirable norms of behaviour in a social system very different from the one in which the works originated. By placing the history of Greece, Rome and England together - the syllabus gave England a parallel status as a global civilizing influence . . .

(The Lie of the Land 52-53)

A spirited band of Derozio's pupils rallied around their tutor to form the Young Bengal Movement. The Young Bengal - - the name by which the Derozians were hence known - - was held by the bond of brotherhood and love created by their mentor Derozio. The doors of Derozio's house were thrown open to the Young Bengal group - - who were exhilarated by the new learning and the free-thinking it offered. Though a victim of adverse criticism in the days to come, there is no denying the role this movement undertook in creating a dawning awareness among the people to the social and cultural ills ailing the society. Their desire for the liberalism of Western ideology emerged out of the basic desire to improve the society, to direct it towards a progressive track. It fired the students' enthusiasm and emboldened them to openly question issues which were hitherto held taboo by the society. Obviously, the basic subjects of discussion happened to be the existing social and religious structure of Hindu society. One cannot rule out the sense of social responsibility possessed by the members of the Young Bengal and which actually made them lash out against the existent social ills of the period like child-marriage, polygamy and bride-burning. Simultaneously there arose an increasing emphasis on the
necessity of science for the upliftment and advancement of the country. In 1833, the members of Young Bengal published a bilingual monthly, *Bigyan Sar Sangraha*, which dealt exclusively with scientific matters (Panikkar, 13).

Derozio's own approach to the bright young men around him has been preserved in his lines still fondly recalled by his college:

Expanding like the petals of young flowers  
I watch the gentle opening of your minds,  
And the sweet loosening of the spell that binds  
Your intellectual energies and powers,  
That stretch (like young birds in soft summer hours)  
Their wings, to try their strength,  
O, how the winds  
Of circumstances and freshening April showers  
Of early knowledge, and unnumbered kinds  
Of new perceptions shed their influence;  
And how you worship truth's omnipotence.  
What joyance rains upon me, when I see  
Fame in the mirror of futurity,  
Wearing the chaplets you have yet to gain,  
And then I feel I have not lived in vain. (*Poems 43*)

One of his pupils, Radhanath Sikdar, said of him: "He has been the cause and sole cause of that spirit of enquiry after
truth, and that contempt of vice - which cannot but be beneficial to
India (Sarkar, *Introduction* iv). The Academic Association started
by Derozio and his pupils in 1828 was no doubt a pioneering
organization of its kind.

Thomas Edwards in his biography on Derozio, points
out how the philosophical works and their analysis of certain typical
factors existent in society, as studied by Derozio, struck a chord
within his pupils' heart.

Free-will, fore-ordination, fate, faith, the sacredness
of truth, the high duty of cultivating virtue, and the
meanness of vice, the nobility of patriotism, the
attribute of God and the arguments for and against
the existence of deity as these have been set forth by
Hume on the one side, and Reid, Dugald Stewart
and Brown on the other, the hollowness of idolatry
and the shame of the priesthood were subjects
which stirred to their very depths - the young
fearless, hopeful hearts of the leading Hindoo
youths of Calcutta. (*Henry Derozio* 32)

It was once again with Derozio at the helm that the
students started a magazine, *Parthenon* (*Athenium*, according to
some) on February 15, 1830. It was a foregone conclusion that such
a magazine yet again bearing a first to its credit, would surely have
to die an early death through suppression by the college authorities. It is clear that Derozio entered the cultural scene of Bengal at a very crucial stage of its revival, when the society was till then at its conservative best. What he basically did was to light up the potent ember of inquiry within his intelligent students into a fast-catching flame.

The master's enthusiasm egged the students onto extremities. The intellectual revival ignited by Derozio had unfortunately severe, wild repurcussions. The long-suppressed force of rebellion burst forth and the newly gained freedom to think and conduct free-for-all eye-opening arguments proved too powerful for them to handle with caution. They resorted to excesses in society which they probably felt was the only effective manner to hit against conservatism and thus quench the fire within. . . . the valuation of one kind of literary work implicitly took place at the expense of other kinds, in this case the religious texts of the Hindus (Sunder Rajan, 54). Intake of wine leading to intoxication, going vehemently against their religion by eating beef, denouncing scriptures, casting away the sacred thread, mocking Hinduism absolutely, taking to licentiousness and committing crimes hitherto unthought of were just some of the atrocities committed. As the Oriental Magazine put it, "they were cutting their way through ham and beef, and wading to liberalism through tumblers of beer". The youth of Bengal believed this to be an essential part of the new learning, the new culture.
The reformer Rammohun Roy himself was not in favour of this ultra-radical movement. It was Rammohun who heralded the New Age and drew the attention of people towards Western ideas and Western learning. But while welcoming the new ideas he never totally denounced the old. A synthesis of the old and new, of East and West was the characteristic of the Raja's life (Bose, 74). He was among those intellectuals who affirmed the importance of mass education for national regeneration (Panikkar, 14) The Derozians made the most flagrant attacks on the orthodox Brahmin community. What followed was a cyclic reaction. The deeds of the Derozians sent shock waves through the entire orthodox section of society. The reaction of this section was a volte-face for they resorted to forming orthodox associations like the Dharma Sabha which regarded the Derozians as ultra-radicals, as "atheist beasts" who followed the vagabond firingis. In such a tense situation came the government regulation against Sati in 1829 as a reward for Roy's ceaseless efforts. This redoubled the alarm and fear of the society which experienced the first of a series of tremors which would soon break apart the very foundation of their orthodoxy. It brought them closer and the Dharma Sabha increased its clamour against the radical changes. Thus the conflict, the clash between the Old and the New reached its zenith.

In retrospect, one would apparently judge the Derozians as a young band of bright and zealous students who were
caught in the fascinating web of free thought but in reality created nothing beyond empty sound and fury. They were so taken by the external trappings of a socio-cultural revival that they failed to grasp the content, the essence of this rebirth. But despite the fact that the Young Bengal movement attracted a lot of flak and outright condemnation, there is no denying the fact that this movement contributed in its own way to the cultural, academic and religious revival of the nineteenth century. For it led to a reformatory revival of religion wherein the conservatist theories and practices of the religion of the old were shed, its rough edges smoothened enough to generate a better awareness in the society as opposed to its earlier passive acceptance of all the ills.

In between these two extremes groups of the society there existed a certain section who strove to absorb the new Western ideas and apply it to its own native culture and heritage.

. . . finding himself despised and rejected of Anglo-Indian men, the Indian was thrown back upon himself. The historical spirit returned. He began to value his own past and to find his dreams refreshing. The revival of oriental studies in England and Germany pleased him . . . driven into his own territory, he discovered that it was a desirable land. (Kotoky, 4-5)
It was in such an exciting phase of the revolt and consequent rebirth of culture and religion that the missionaries entered the academic scene. In fact in the endeavour for "the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India" (Bhattacharya, 4) the Western educationists and the missionaries vied one another.

There is a convergence between the great geographical scope of the empires, especially the British one, and universalizing cultural discourses. Power makes this convergence possible . . . to be in far-flung places, to learn about other people, to codify and disseminate knowledge, to characterize, transport, install and display instances of other cultures . . . and above all to rule them. (Said, 130)

The responsibilities of imparting knowledge and converting people to Christianity were taken by the missionaries of the following generation, the most prominent among them being an extraordinarily talented man - - Alexander Duff, a missionary from St. Andrews. Duff came with this purpose to Calcutta on May 27, 1830. He witnessed the social arena with mixed feelings of joy and fear. Duff is just one example of the whole set of missionaries and teachers who had set forth from imperial Britain to her colony, geared up to instil into the native's mind an affirmation of the latter's inferiority, in stature (suppressed), colour (dark), knowledge
(confused and fundamentally wrong and evil), nature (dishonest, ill-mannered and unthinking) and bring the native to acknowledge the impending urgency to change and improve his lot by of course in no lesser manner than of looking up at his imperial master, agreeing to improve his lot by getting "civilized" and Westernized by willingly getting subordinated, suppressed and subjugated. Lalbehari Dey writes in his *Recollections of Alexander Duff* : "He witnessed the revolution which the minds of the intelligent youth of the city were undergoing, the wildness of their views; the reckless innovations they were introducing, the infidel character of their religious opinion and the spirit of unbounded liberty or rather licentiousness, which characterized their speculations (N.S.Bose, 66). Duff foresaw the inculcation of European learning by the Indians as the best instrument to control Hinduism. He believed that his chief task of preaching Christianity had been made easy because of their loss of faith in their own age-old religion. Simultaneously, a certain degree of doubt also entered his mind as to the extent to which he could carry out this task because the extreme elements among the student community had abandoned faith not merely in their own religion but in the overall belief in God itself. The crisis which the Indian society was fast heading to has been very aptly put in the following statement by Nabar in her essay "The Past is Before Us : The Colonial as Postcolonial" :

In the colonial perspective, British culture loses nothing and gains something through its acquaintance with many aspects of Indian thought.
and practice. The Indian on the other hand, is always in danger of losing whatever it has in order to accommodate the British factor. (*Post-Colonial Perspectives* 8)

A sizeable lot of this community was high on the road to scepticism and atheism. On the other hand, William Adam, a Unitarian missionary declared that the best way to spread Christianity was not by attempting to convert a few people but by preaching rationally while imparting good and sound knowledge, thus enthuising "the masses and putting the masses into a state of fermentation" (Bhattacharya, 4).

Duff set his mission rolling into motion by beginning a school on July 13, 1830, called General Assembly's Institution with a strength of merely five pupils. He was assisted in this venture by none less than Rammohun Roy. Bengal found itself in the throes of change. Slowly but surely English was gaining ground and getting an edge over the hitherto well-established Sanskrit.

It is imperative to bring our attention at this point, once again to the fact that it was the totally diverse and opposing desires of our own reformer Rammohun Roy on one hand and of the Western reformers on the other that together established the stronghold of the English language to Bengal.

The British had absolutely no intention of "educating" Indians in the actual sense of the word. The English literary text functioning as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most
perfect state, becomes a mask for economic exploitation, so successfully camouflaging the material abilities of the colonizer... (Viswanathan, 20). There was no question of there existing a similarity in the patterns of education followed by Britain in its native place and in India. Once again, the reason given was that the Indian frame of mind was so underdeveloped that even the adult had a long way to go, had a vast study of English to undertake before he could be comparable to even a mere schoolboy of England. But in reality, the purpose of educating only to a certain degree and not any further was to get such educated Indians to work for the British, because the latter foresaw that being subservient as they were, they would not even dream of rising in revolt against or disagreeing with the British bosses at any point of time.

In yet another shrewd move, the colonialists aimed at creating a divide between two classes of society: those knowing or desiring to learn English and the less fortunate ones. They chose to offer their education to the upper, intellectual class, for they saw no future in spending their time and energy even attempting to coach the lower classes, "whose circumstances did not permit them to acquire more than the basic elements of knowledge and who were in subjection to the higher classes", (Viswanathan, 117). The hierarchical ordering of societies on 'a scale of civilization' reflected not just the classifying enthusiasms of the Enlightenment, but was a way to reassure the British that they themselves occupied a
secure position, as the arbiter of its values, on the topmost rung (Metcalf, 34). Thus, a select, elite group was initiated in English language, and in this group the colonialists envisaged a positive perpetuation of their culture and their ideology in India.

This section of the society was first treated to a fearful though false picture of its country, where all bestial and inhuman principles held sway. In Metcalf's words:

As Europeans constructed a sense of self for themselves apart from the old order of Christendom, they had of necessity to create a notion of an 'other' beyond the seas. To describe oneself as 'enlightened' meant that someone else had to be shown as 'savage' or 'vicious'. To describe oneself as 'modern', or as 'progressive', meant that those who were not included in that definition had to be described as 'primitive' or 'backward'. Such alterity, what one might call the creation of doubleness, was an integral part of the Enlightenment project (Ideologies 6).

Thus the Westerners took the axiom of literature being a mirror of life, applied it to the traditional literature of India and contorted the role of women depicted in these epics. Sita being driven away to the forest, Draupadi having to marry five princes,
Sakuntala, being exploited and denounced by Dusyanta, were just a few of the many mangled images that the colonialists exhibited to the community. The suppression and the abominable treatment meted to the Indian woman during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was for the foreigners, a very fortunate coincidence. They exposed the plight of women to be a result of the conservative, uncivilized literature of the country. In a nutshell, the colonialists were very shrewdly attacking the epics of our country from various fictitious angles. Our society was so hopelessly bound by a sense of inferiority that it willed itself to cast away, without any second thoughts, the rich heritage as garbage; our society moulded the minds of the people to believe the false images of its own traditions portrayed by foreigners and the superior culture of Europe.

As a stark contradiction, it was noted that while Europeans of all ages could enjoy and appreciate exotic tales, romantic narratives, adventure stories and mythical literature for their charm and even derive instruction from them, their colonial subjects were believed incapable of doing so because they lacked the prior mental and moral cultivation required for literature -- especially their own -- to have any instructive value for them (Viswanathan, 5). They were thus made to believe that this abject plight was an expected consequence of the age-old scriptures and ancient tales of the country.
A play like Kalidas 'Shakuntala', which delighted Europeans for its pastoral beauty and lyric charm leading Horace Wilson . . . to call it the jewel of Indian literature, was disapproved of as a text for study in Indian schools and colleges; sweeping judgements that "the most popular forms (of Oriental literature) are marked with the greatest immorality and impurity" held sway (Viswanathan, 5-6). These were in turn traced to the ultimate source -- the Hindu religion which created such literature. It is indeed ironic to observe that while Oriental tales were regarded worthy of discussion in the nation of the colonialist, the colonized people, whose ancestors had actually created these legends and tales, were not considered to possess a level of development mature enough to grasp or understand these tales.

The colonialists declared that the colonized Indians first needed a guidance for an extensive reading of good English books to instil in them the habit of reading and assimilation, the ability to derive an enjoyment and a pleasure out of reading. In short, the necessity, the compulsion of an English system of education was thrust onto a society which was unaware of the basic motive behind the entire step, so deep was their mental subjugation. Devy very aptly remarks:

It is worth noting that the Indians did not accept the cultural superiority of Western knowledge after examining the intrinsic worth of that knowledge.
On the contrary they started studying Western ideas because they had already accepted the superiority of British culture. (Amnesia 21)

In essence, the teachers of English were, in a two-pronged treatment, making the very concept of English and its knowledge increasingly tempting to the natives by inducing them to believe that the Hindu religion was basically degrading in all aspects religious, moral, social and economic. Fanon's description of the degradation of the Negro in the hands of the colonialist reveals the similarity in the method adopted by the colonialists in India to break down the religious structure of the native society:

Colonialism . . . has never ceased to maintain that the Negro is a savage; . . . For colonialism, the vast continent was the haunt of savages, a country riddled with superstitions and fanaticism, destined for contempt, weighed down by the curse of God, a country of cannibals -- in short, the Negro's country. (The Wretched 170)

Mehta in his essay "Khuswant Singh's I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale: A Study in Colonial Consciousness" describes this state as "a total subjugation of 'the native' a denigration and dislocation of his culture . . ." (Colonial Consciousness 154). They stressed upon the education of women, apparently, for the benefit of
the society. They reminded the natives once again that the deprived lot of women in Indian society was due to their illiteracy which was in turn due to the social restrictions banning them to study. These restrictions were finally a result of the sensuousness of our literature.

Interestingly, it needed Gandhi to give a fitting retort to the Western world for their deliberate and malicious distortion of the Hindu religion and its tales bringing in untrue sensuous and immoral overtones within them.

It has remained for our Western visitors to acquaint us with the obscenity of many practices which we have hitherto innocently indulged in. It was in a missionary book that I first learnt that Shivalingam (a Hindu phallic symbol) had any obscene significance at all and even now when I see a Shivalingam neither the shape nor the association in which I see it suggests any obscenity. It was again in a missionary book that I learnt that the temples of Orissa were disfigured with obscenities. When I went to Puri, it was not without an effort that I was able to see those things, but I do know that the thousands who flock to the temple know nothing about the obscenities surrounding these figures. (Viswanathan, 126)
One cannot help but be shocked at the staggering difference in the goal of the colonialists as against our misled Indian reformers, for the cause of the development of society, for the betterment of the downtrodden and finally for an English education.

Having caught the attention of our group of intellectuals by presenting this horrifying spectacle of the indelible harm done to the society through the Hindu religion, the colonialists next brought into the focus of this group, the literature of England. "A literature so full of all qualities of loveliness and purity, such new regions of high thought and feeling . . . that to the dwellers in past days it should have seemed rather the production of angels than men" (Viswanathan, 87). This literature was no doubt a surrogate for the Christian religion and which consequently reflected the qualities of love, purity, serenity, peace, truth and all things good. The colonialists were so over-enthusiastic about preaching their religion as to declare that the English literature is so "imbued with the spirit of Christianity" and "interwoven with the words of the Bible to a great degree", that "without even looking into the Bible, one of those Natives must come to a considerable knowledge of it merely from reading English literature" (Viswanathan, 94). In fact, their superiority in every sphere of knowledge, be it scientific or historic was declared to be a direct result of the purity of Christianity.

What had in reality occurred in our society was a willing suspension of belief, a "misplaced emotional affinity with
Western and Sanskrit ideas" (Devy, 49). It was in the throes of being torn into two. It was experiencing the tension of being drawn inexorably towards an alien, idealised culture which had successfully worked towards upsetting the impact of the indigenous culture for the worse and consequently building a distaste and contempt for the native culture. This alien, worthless stream of thought had caused a "cultural amnesia" in the colonized society, a period causing a willingness to forget the past which brought a false sense of embarrassment and indignity in its wake, and instilled an unwanted sense of shame in the mind by the superior alien culture. Projecting static images of the past, inaccurate and inflexible concepts of literary traditions and history and non-productive affinities with remote but idealised traditions - all are symptoms of this disorder (Devy, 50). It is an organized, cyclical process beginning with creating a sense of inferiority in the colonized culture, moving the people to seek the superior culture of the colonialists. Colonized people were seen as lacking history, culture, religion and intelligence and thus it became clear that it was a European duty to fill this void (Pennycook, 56). Elleke Boehmer describes this phenomenon as an attempt of natives across a large cross-section of the colonized world in becoming more correct, more colonialist, more English in fact than the real item; but always falling short of it (Colonial 116).

There was definitely an ambivalence in the attitude of the society towards discarding their religion for an alien one. While a part of their minds voluntarily believed the evils caused by
Hinduism as shown to them, the basic, inner self held back at the point of actually changing religions. This conflict expressed itself in the attitudes towards all facets of life. It was also observed in their acceptance of the role of Western influence towards the development of the native culture. The entire system of colonization was, in their minds, split into two: the right and the wrong, the benign and the malign. Accordingly, the activities and changes wrought by the colonialists in the political sphere were absolutely wrong. But their offer and aid to socially and culturally promote the society was benignant (Devy, 32).

Their indecisiveness prevented them from progressing further enough to realize that colonialism, in toto, stemmed from one fundamental root. This dialectic, this tension was one major result which came as an aftermath of colonialism.

The intentions of the colonial reformers are very much apparent in the following observation made by Tharu:

Bureaucrats, missionaries, journalists and Western commentators of various kinds filed sensational reports about Indian culture, and made authoritative analyses of Indian culture, which was invariably presented as irrational, deceitful, and sexually perverse. The thrust of these descriptions was usually quite clear: the situation in India was so appalling that it called for intervention by an ethical and rational power. The British quickly
persuaded themselves (and the huge profits remitted to imperial coffers no doubt hastened the process) that India was the white man's burden and their government essential to its salvation. (*Women Writing* 9-10)

Duff addressed the first of a series of lectures on Christianity. Naturally this created an uproar in the society. The students of the Hindu College were prevented from attending any meeting or lecture specially those on religion. Eating and drinking in classrooms were banned. Despite such prohibitions, the Derozians continued to meet in the house of Derozio and their meetings and discussions continued as before. As a result, all fingers pointed accusingly towards Derozio to be the cause of it all. The college ultimately declared him to be "the root of all evils and the cause of public alarm," (N.S.Bose, 67) and decided to take measures to dismiss him from the college. The Calcutta Presidency College (into which the old Hindu College was transformed in 1855) still preserves a volume of manuscript records containing the proceedings of the special meeting of the Directors of the Hindu College on 23 April 1831. Three principal charges against Derozio were: 'Do you believe in God? Do you think respect and obedience to parents as part of moral duty? Do you think inter-marriage of brothers and sisters innocent and allowable?' Derozio's reply to his dismissal remains one of the masterpieces of this wonderful
teacher's writings and gives an insight into the mind of the inspirer of the Young Bengal Movement.

Entrusted as I was for sometime with the education of youth peculiarly circumstanced, was it for me to have made them pert and ignorant dogmatists, permitting them to know what could be said upon only one side of grave questions? Setting aside the narrowness of mind which such a course might have evinced, it would have been injurious to the mental energies and acquirements of the young men themselves. And (whatever may be said to the contrary), I can vindicate my procedure by quoting no less orthodox authority than Lord Bacon:— "If a man," says this philosopher, (and no one ever had a better right to pronounce an opinion upon such matters than Lord Bacon), "will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubt." This, I need scarcely observe, is always the case with contented ignorance when it is roused too late to thought. One doubt suggests another and universal scepticism is the consequence. (N.S.Bose, 68-69)

Derozio's contribution to the spread of English education in India was very significant. It was basically his inspiration, patriotism and zeal for freedom that spurred the youth
community of Bengal towards English education. Rammohun Roy's *A Defence of Hinduism* had already been published in 1817 and earned the prestigious position of being "the first original writing" (Nair, 4). The beginning of journalism by John Marshman with the publication of a paper called *Darpan* in 1818 (Panikkar, 57-58) and the press in Bengal gave an added impetus to the development of English. The free press introduced for the first time in Asiatic Society and managed principally by the common offspring of Hindus and Europeans, was a new and powerful agent of reconstruction (Marx, 68). It prodded more and more students to learn the language.

The Western influence in the society as a whole in Bengal was remarkable. Gradually, as the new powers staked their claims over the land and over the minds of the people, not only individual works but whole literary traditions were delegitimated and marginalized (Tharu, 11). It is to be noted that while native traditions and native culture did not disintegrate as it were, the basis for subjugation was set here, a neocolonisation of the natives took place as they got influenced and swayed towards Westernization.

A destructive impact of colonialism was "the psychological dissonance and alienation experienced by colonized peoples" (Boehmer, 188). As their tutors sought to give the pupils a thoroughly complete English education, their aim was to lift England with all its qualities, its ambience, its manners and ways of life and implant it in an alien atmosphere. As a time capsule for
English culture, India provided an ideal setting (Viswanathan, 116). The English culture was of course imbibed through the English books prescribed for reading and study, books leaning heavily on Christian tenets. The result of this venture, this experiment was that a certain class of society, represented by the educated Indian, spoke in English, dressed in the style of the English, behaved like the English, adapted English mannerisms and took great pains to learn and speak the language as would befit a native Englishman.

Editors of Calcutta journals and newspapers deliberately wrote in an Addisonian style under names like "Candidus", "Verax", Oneiropolus" and "Flacus" and on subjects not having the remotest bearing on Indian life, such as the fashions of the day in England and on imagination, etiquette and morality (Viswanathan, 116). The educated class had taken to studying English poets like Milton, Dryden, Pope and Gray. Positive attempts were being made to grasp and absorb the writings of Gibbon, Defoe and Johnson. The result was not merely a further marginalization of the already cast-aside native literature, but a redoubled earnestness on the part of this class of society to win the acclaim of the colonizers.

The influence on the Bengali writers of the age was a double-edged one, where though they were indebted to Sanskrit, they were simultaneously gaining an awareness of the West. The works of the budding Bengali poets of the age like Rangalal Banerjee (1827-1887), Hemchandra Banerjee (1838-1903) and Nabin Chandra Sen (1837-1909) thus adopted Western techniques
while retaining the national spirit and content. That is they wrote heroic and long narrative poems drawing material from *Puranic* tales, historic legends . . . on the model of Scott, Byron, Moore and others (N.S.Bose, 280). Developing under the patronage of the colonizers, feeding voraciously on the English literature of the period and reading the poetry of the Romantic poets of England conglomerated in an eagerness to prove the results of the new learning. Modern Bengal prose began with the work of William Carcy and his pandits Ram Ram Bose and Mrityunjaya Bidyalankar (Panikkar, 57-58). In brief, though the English tongue and the native works in the English language were still at the nursing stage, the Western mind had already commenced bringing changes in the vernacular literature. The beliefs, the principles, the attitudes and the modes of Western culture had been absorbed and assimilated by these writers. The change in the style of writing prose and poetry as witnessed at this point was the external manifestation of their internalization of Occidentalism. Thus Tharu observes:

> On the face of it, Orientalist scholarship, which "retrieved" and put into circulation many classical Sanskrit and Persian texts, would appear to have reauthorized Indian literature and reaffirmed the significance of an Indian tradition. But . . . it was a highly restructured version of the past that emerged in the orientalist frame work. (*Women Writing* 11)
The attitude of the society was, interestingly, different in various presidencies. It was thus that in Maharashtra, due to the high level of education in the vernacular, comparable to even certain places in England, the people had no desire to opt for an alien, English system of learning. In this one feature, they were even supported by the English officials themselves like Sir Thomas Munro and Mountstuart Elphinston (Devy, 35).

Bengal presented a totally different scenario. The aristocratic intellectual class of Bengal actually wanted the English system of education, hoping to improve their standards even more and hence, here, the colonialists had no difficulty at all in introducing the Western system of learning. The sheer fact that the Hindu College which started functioning in 1817 had, by 1842, as many as ten thousand students enrolled for various lines of study (Devy, 36) shows the demand for English in Bengal.

New art forms had begun developing as in theatre and poetry in which the progression and awareness of the society were clearly visible. The name of Dinabandhu Mitra springs instantly in the mind for he was the pioneer in theatre. His Nil Durpan, the first, best known and the greatest of his works, describing the tortures inflicted by the European indigo planters of the time on the native cultivators, caused a striking effect on the society, to such an extent that when this drama was translated into English by Reverend James Long, he was imprisoned for his 'heinous' deed.
This dramatic turn of events, causes one to look anew at the cause and effect relation of the introduction of the English language. The various dimensions of the society were intricately connected to each other through the turbulent current of development where the changes in the social environment led to uncontrollable, associated changes in the religious and then to the cultural realms. There were no strict lines of demarcation between the various milieu, with the result that the multifaceted resurrection of the society with all its crises and cross-currents often overlapped. Hence this moment experienced the establishment by the colonialists of "English" as a language and as a literature worthy of study in India. This moment also envisaged the beginning of the Indian-English literature in India.

The historical moment which saw the emergence of "English" as an academic discipline, also produced the colonial form of imperialism (Ashcroft, 3). To elucidate this, a reference to what was mentioned earlier in this chapter is called for. Though the common aim of introducing English education in India was shared by the Indian reformers as in Rammohun Roy and the Western reformers as in Duff and others, they were motivated by diametrically opposite causes. While Rammohun Roy nurtured a fond dream of a better developed, educated and progressive India, the colonialists thought otherwise. Observing the growing power of the missionaries and also the possibilities of an upheaval by the natives, the colonialists saw in English education an answer to their current dilemma. English education came as a solution for
them to extend imperialism. They "discovered an ally in English literature to support them in maintaining control of the natives under the guise of liberal education (Ashcroft, 3). That is, in a shrewd moment they realized that an adoption of English would reaffirm their dominance in India as in other colonies. Mehta, in his essay "Khuswant Singh's I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale: A Study in Colonial Consciousness", describes the British colonial rule in India as "an actualization of the institution of colonialism, an actualization that led to a virtual emasculation of the 'natives' " (Colonial Consciousness 156).

The beginning of the history of Indian - English literature in general is to be traced back to the times when the actual impact of the conquest was gradually being felt (Kotoky, 1). This impact once again carries us to Bengal as this was the first province to cognizably encounter the experience of colonization. Keeping this study confined to the early years of nineteenth century leads to the observation that the cultural map of India of this period, concentrating in Bengal, was dotted with several remarkable events which might have together forged the beginning of Indian Writing in English in Bengal. In the academic arena, this period witnessed the opening of several schools. The prestigious Hindu College started functioning in 1817. Alexander Duff's missionary school started functioning in 1831. More significantly, in 1835, Macaulay in his famous Minutes laid the foundations of the modern Indian educational system, with his decision to promote
European science and literature among Indians through the medium of the English language. (Paranjape, Indian Poetry 2) Thus the English language in general and the English literature in particular came to stay in India. It was in this initial period itself of the introduction of English language and literature that this subject was placed in a platform of prestige, whence it became a matter of pride in Indian society to acquaint and familiarize oneself with this subject. The inclination for acquisition and mastery of this language and literature was observed chiefly in some of the upper-class aristocratic families in Calcutta, as also the members and the student-community of the new middle-class in Calcutta. Right from its onset, it was established that English was an upmarket symbol, a class symbol revolving round the higher strata of society.

Obviously the privileged class of the intellectuals, the aristocrats, were deemed most suited for absorbing the new learning. The colonial intellectuals were not 'organic' to a developing bourgeois order, but were those struggling for the requisition, dissemination and acceptance of bourgeois ideas and values in a period of transition from a feudal society to a stultified and dependent form of capitalism under colonial domination (Panikkar, 33). What followed was, in the words of Said, a "process of conscious affiliation under the guise of filiation (Empire, 4). The intellectuals as the chosen class sought to identify with the colonialists. Having been classified into an elite group, the desire to be recognized, to be accepted was utmost in the minds of this class, willing themselves to temporarily suspend their beliefs,
their roots in the midst of their struggle to become "more English than the English" - - the consequences of the "Macaulayian system" which was creating a group of emasculated people alienated from their national culture and from their own countrymen (Panikkar, 17).

Out of this stage evolved the next stage, that of a national literature. A fact first realized in America and then accepted by the other colonies was that their sheer aping of British forms was in reality incongruous when placed over native themes. When English was brought to a totally different culture and people than the British, it could not be adopted as such into the local environs. A certain degree of change had to be brought into this "English" to make it acclimatized to the native colony. English was thus gradually "colonized" to a degree enough to be recognized as a distinct form from the Received Standard English - - the form in which it had first made its presence felt in the colonies. These distinct forms have today been accepted as the Indian-English, the American-English, the Canadian-English and so forth. All these literatures come under the single classification of "post-colonial literature".

Among all forms of art, literature as a whole (and hence Indian English literature too) has been the chief decisive medium to endorse the fundamental and primary impact of colonialism right up to the finer nuances experienced by the colonized community. Being a victim of colonization, the literature, rather all the art forms of India, since the moment of colonization,
in other words all the "post colonial" art forms till date (for the process of post-colonialism continues) are evolved knowingly or otherwise from the very experience of colonization, of the subjugation, the revolt, the crisis with the imperial powers and finally an assertion of the independent identity of the native, the colonized. It is this identity which expresses itself as the post-colonial literature, the Indian English literature. In this one aspect, Indian English literature shares its quality with all the rest of Commonwealth literature.

The beginning made by Kashiprasad Ghose, Henry Derozio, Toru Dutt and Madhusudan Dutt to write on Indian themes in the English language was the actual point of evolution of Indian poetry in English. Ghose, Dutt and Madhusudan hailed from aristocratic Bengali families, representing the *bhadralok* of the Bengali community. Derozio, the friend, philosopher, tutor, mentor and nationalistic poet served as a major link between the East and the West. They were the first poets to create Indian poetry in English at a time when the only others in this field were some English writers themselves. The first collections of such poetry was published in a 46 page supplement to what was probably one of the first textbooks of English literature anywhere in the world, David Lester Richardson's monumental *Selections from the British Poets from the Time of Chaucer to the present Day with Biographical and Critical Notices* (Paranjape, *Indian Poetry* 3). It is a point to be
noted that this first book of "British-Indian" poetry contained poems of Derozio and Ghose.

To sum up, as S.K.De points out, "literary movements in Bengal had perforce been closely bound up with political, social, religious and other movements . . . Every great writer of this period of transition was of necessity a politician, a social reformer or a religious enthusiast (Bose, 263).

Ultimately, the concepts which highlight Indian poetry in English, the factors that come to prominence in Indian poetry in English of the early nineteenth century Bengal is the poet's sense of creativity, the nascent sense of achievement in the successful blending of the native theme in a newly acquired foreign tongue. The poetry of this age has been declared to be romantic. Romanticism was in the air. The rejuvenation of the society, as of art, the renaissance of the era, the desire to regain and rebuild strength and confidence as evidenced in the social, cultural and political background of Bengal was naturally impressed upon the poetry of the period.

"Post colonial" seems to be the choice which both embraces the historical reality and focusses on that relationship which has provided the most important creative and psychological impetus in the writing. It shows the rationale of the grouping
in a common past and hints at the vision of a more liberated and positive future. (Ashcroft, 24)

The self-esteem, the self-confidence, the positive tone of the poetry, which, overcoming all odds, was looking towards a promising future, the exuberant spirit of the age get expressed in the following lines of Iqbal:

Thou didst create night and I made the lamp.
Thou didst create clay and I made the cup.
Thou didst create the deserts, mountains and forests,
I produced the orchards, gardens and groves;
It is I who makes glass out of stone,
And it is I who turns a poison into an antidote.
(Kripalani, 71)