CHAPTER II

The Search for Identity

When the people of a country living under an autocratic or oppressive rule, very often foreign, want to throw off that rule and establish a new political set-up of their own choice, the people of that country are said to have been imbued with the spirit of nationalism.\(^1\) In their zeal to show that they are by no means inferior to their rulers, they then make a search for their own identity and try to affirm it. It is thus that the people of a country roused by nationalism make their efforts to distinguish their manners and customs, religious and social institutions, and culture and civilization.

In Indian nationalism also, the same process was at work. Barring a few wise and learned ones, most of the British officials in India sometimes openly scorned, sometimes tacitly hated, and always under-rated everything 'native'. This attitude of the rulers, which was the result of their superiority complex, incited the Indians to assert themselves; and the Indians, educated in the new system of Western education through the medium of English, started eulogizing Indian tradition and culture. There are very fine reflections of this kind of self-assertion in Indo-Anglian literature. In Indo-Anglian fiction in particular, there are two groups of novels and stories where this aspect of Indian

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nationalism has found adequate expression. These two groups are: the documentary novels and stories depicting Indian life and traditions, and manners and customs; and the collections of Indian folk tales, mythological tales and legends.

Coming to the first group of these novels and stories documenting Indian life and traditions, we find that these were mostly written towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth. After this period also such novels were written; but they were few and far between.

The first novel of this category is Govinda Samanta\(^2\) by Reverend Lal Behari Day, published in 1874. It was Lal Behari Day's maiden venture and was written when "early in the year 1871 Baboo Joykissen Mookerjea, of Uttapara, a zemindar in Bengal, offered a prize of £50 for the best novel, to be written either in Bengali or in English, illustrating the 'Social and Domestic Life of the Rural Population and Working Classes of Bengal'\(^3\). That the novel won this prize shows that even the zemindars of the time were interested in the social and domestic life of the peasants of their country though they generally exploited them. At the same time, the winning of such a prize by the novel also shows that the novel has an extra-literary or extra-artistic purpose, too - that of illustrating the rural life of Bengal. A reading of the novel also makes one see that the main purpose of

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3. ibid. Preface.
the novelist here was to depict realistically the life and manners of Bengal peasants, their beliefs and superstitions, woes and weals. It is for this that the novel had been sub-titled in its first edition *History of a Bengal Ralyat* and it had been renamed later in 1878, *Bengal Peasant Life*. It is for the same reason that in the first chapter of the novel, the author addresses his readers directly and writes that in his novel, there is nothing marvellous or wonderful, no thrilling incident and no love-scene. There is only "a plain and unvarnished tale of a plain peasant, living in the plain country of Bengal ... told in a plain manner." 4

Here we have the story of a Bengal peasant family headed by Badan. The story is set in a village called Kanchanpur. Badan, Manik and Gayaram are the three brothers living in a joint family, Badan being the eldest. The other members of this typically Indian joint family are Badan's mother, his wife, his daughter Malati and Gayaram's wife. Manik, the second brother is still unmarried, he being dark in complexion and ugly in appearance, besides being oddly gigantic in size. A son is born to Badan and he is named Govinda. At the age of five, Govinda is sent to school. Badan sends his son to school which is rather uncommon for the villagers of the time, because he thinks that he and other peasants of his village are harassed so badly by their zemindar only because of their illiteracy.

Badan's daughter Malati is given in marriage when she is eleven. The bridegroom is a nineteen year old boy Madhava of Durea-

nagar which is twenty miles away from Kanchanpur. About this
time, a calamity befalls the family of Badan; their paddy fields
are flooded and Gayaram is bitten by a snake fatally. The worst
sufferer for this death in the family is Govinda who is now seven.
Giving up his study, Govinda has now to take charge of the duties
of Gayaram, especially that of tending the cattle.

In time Govinda is married. His grand-mother dies on
her return from a pilgrimage to Puri. Then dies Badan which makes
Govinda the master of the house, Kalamanik, his uncle being rather
of poor intelligence. The observance of the two successive fu-
neral rites in the family worsens its economic condition. And then
an officer comes to Govinda and informs him of the levy of a spe-
cial tax on the raiyats on the occasion of a marriage ceremony in
the zemindar's house. Refusing to pay that tax, Govinda says that
if he has to pay at all he would pay only when his financial con-
dition improved. Soon he has to face dire consequences for such
a refusal. He is not only compelled to pay the tax but is also
beaten by the zemindar with his slippers. Govinda bears that in-
sult silently; but Kalamanik is intolerant. He rouses the fellow
peasants against their oppressive zemindar. However, the number
of peasants thus roused is small compared to the number of peasants
who are still loyal to the zemindar. Besides, Kalamanik and his
group are no match to the organized band of the able-bodied club-
men or lathials of the zemindar.

One night two of the zemindar's club-men set fire to the
house of Govinda. Kalamanik sees them in the act; but he cannot
catch them. The case is referred to the village constable who is already under the influence of the zemindar. Thus, this offence by the zemindar has also to be borne silently by Govinda and Kalamanik. They become poorer still because they have now to borrow money for the reconstruction of their house. The zemindar, however, is still not satisfied. He soon gets Kalamanik killed by his club-men and Govinda has to remain a silent spectator. Then a false charge is brought against Govinda by the zemindar. Govinda is alleged to have been in debt to the zemindar and he has been ordered to pay it off soon. Govinda is unable to repay the sum which he had never borrowed. As a result, the cruel zemindar confiscates all the property of this poor, innocent peasant.

Ruined thus, he has to borrow money again for his re-establishment. Then an epidemic breaks out; and Govinda's mother along with many others of the village die. The funeral rites cost Govinda a huge amount. And then the Bengal famine of 1873 comes and reduces Govinda to a day-labourer. He thus has to leave his village for the estate of the Maharaja of Burdwan. Emaciated to a mere skeleton now, Govinda dies there quietly and away from his family.

Along with this story, there is a similar sub-story of suffering and torture in the novel. The innocent, passive sufferer in the sub-plot is Madhava who had married Govinda's sister Malati. The oppressor in this story is not an Indian zemindar as in the main plot, but a British indigo-planter Mr. Murray. Mr.
Murray gave some money in advance to Madhava's father as the indigo-planters generally did at that time for getting regular supply of indigo-plants for their factories. Though Madhava or even his father could have easily paid off that debt, Mr. Murray like other indigo-planters did not accept their offer so that Madhava could be kept in perpetual debt to him as Madhava's father was kept. When Madhava is found too much insistent on paying off the debt for his own benefit, the indigo-planter threatens Madhava with serious consequences. Other raiyats also unite with Madhava at this stage; and besides deciding not to accept any more money in advance from the planter, they are determined to resist any attack on them by him.

Mr. Murray engages his club-men to attack the raiyats. Most of the raiyats are soon arrested and they are forced to show their loyalty to the planter. Madhava, too, is arrested; but he is not released with other raiyats. Cruelly treated and tortured, he ultimately dies in his captivity.

The story of Madhava is thus not much different from the story of Govinda. Both are stories of unrelieved suffering, none holding out in the traditional manner or even by implication, any hope for a better future here or hereafter. The two stories together narrate the sorrow of a whole people through certain representative characters. And one of the achievements of the work is that it has been able to convey so nicely the mood and temper of the native life. And then, though the book was written
for a competition, the author seems to have acquired here an emotional identity with the characters he has depicted. It is for this that besides the social milieu which the author has described rather in minute details in the book, it has also shown faint signs of resentment and rebellion of the Indian people against oppression which soon laid the foundation of the Indian national movement.

It is, however, the description of the social milieu which has made this novel an important work from the point of view of Indian nationalism. In the minute descriptions of the manners and customs, tradition and culture of the Indian people in Bengal, the author's purpose of asserting the identity of the nation has been evident. It is for a search for identity that in the simple and rather brief story of Govinda, the author has brought in the descriptions of Bengal households and villages, cultivations of paddy, sugar-cane and indigo, village markets where peasants assemble for their commerce, and river-ghats where village-women gather together for carrying water. It is also for the same reason that the author has lost no chance in the book to describe the manners and customs of the Bengalis. How the horoscope is made ceremoniously after the birth of a child in a Hindu family, what are the customs a Hindu widow

has to observe, the Hindu caste system, the custom of taking rice of the newly harvested paddy in the season, the ceremony of initiating a child into rice-taking - all come up for detailed narration here. It is again for the same reason that the novelist is driven to depict the religious beliefs, and even the superstitions of the people of India. How the Hindus in Bengal believe that on the sixth day of the birth of a child, the child's destiny is fixed by Viśhātā Purusha, the creator, and how the goddess Shasthi is worshipped by the members of the family on that day, the Vaishnava religion founded by Chaitanya Deva in Bengal; the story of the foundation of the temple of Lord Jagannath by king Indradyumna at the command of god Vishnu; the famous Car Festival held annually in the temple of Jagannath - all these have found detailed descriptions in the novel.

That the author brings in all these rather tedious details into his story for the purpose of depicting a distinct racial character, is clear from the fact that he narrates all these with a sense of respect for them - though sometimes they may be only some superstition or some social evil in the name of custom. Sometimes Reverend Day seems even to justify them by comparing them with some corresponding Western superstition or custom. For example, in Chapter Lvi, while writing

14. ibid. pp.149-150. 18. ibid. Chap. xxxiv
about the Vishwakarma Puja observed in the author's time generally by the Hindus belonging to the castes of blacksmith, carpenter, weaver, barber etc., the author writes:

Though the caste system does not allow a blacksmith to dine with a carpenter, it does not seem to us to impede the flow of brotherly kindness between members of two different guilds. There is no country in the world where the spirit of caste is not to be found in some shape or other. In India, caste is practically based on occupations, people who pursue the same trade forming one caste by themselves; in England it is based chiefly on money, the richer class forming the Brahmans, the poorer the Chandals of English society. In its practical working, though not in its theory, the Indian system of caste is hardly worse than the English. In England, though a rich goldsmith dines with a rich cotton spinner, he does not admit to his table a very poor member of his guild; in India a rich goldsmith does not dine in the company of a rich cotton spinner, but cheerfully admits to his table a very poor goldsmith. In our opinion, this particular phase of the English system of caste is a good deal worse than that of the Hindu system.21

What is worth-mentioning here is that this is written by an Indian who was converted from Hinduism into Christianity.

21. ibid. p.53.
and owed his education and career (teaching job in a college) to the benevolent efforts of the Christian missionaries.

Govinda Samanta is thus a novel with a nationalist purpose, its story showing covertly how the oppressions of the native feudal lords and the tyrannies of the foreign indigo-planters let loose by the foreign Government has reduced the peasantry into abject poverty; and its digressive details asserting overtly and emphatically the national identity of the Indians. Of course, in order to show the identity of the Indians, Day has taken only a section of the country's vast and varied population. It is the rural Hindu section of Bengal, this section forming the majority of the Indian population, and Bengal being the author's native state.

The Younger Zemindar by Sochee Chunder Dutt is also a major novel of the same category. In so far as the plot construction and the technique are concerned, Dutt's novel is an improvement upon the novel by Lal Behari Day. But this, too, does not seem to be a work written exclusively with a literary purpose. That it has some extra-literary purpose has been revealed also in the full-title of the book given in the title-page. It runs thus: The Young Zemindar; His Erratic Wanderings and Eventful Return: Being a Record of Life, Manners and Events in Bengal of from Forty to Fifty Years Ago. As in Govinda Samanta, here too elaborate

22. It is interesting to note that the prize won by the novel which is so strongly critical of the oppressions of zemindars was awarded by a man who himself was a zemindar.

ethnic and social descriptions dominate the story; and so the story element is sparse, especially in the middle. In this part, the author's purpose of describing the sacred places and temples of India with which ancient Indian traditions are inseparably connected, becomes too prominent. The novel abounds not only in the description of sacred Hindu places and shrines but also in that of Hindu Shastras, Hindu legends connected with different temples, gods, goddesses and rivers, Hindu and Muslim religions and festivals etc. This leads us to the conclusion that the author wrote this novel with the purpose of making the Indians and the foreigners conscious of the great Indian heritage - which is also a means of national self-assertion. This attitude of national self-assertion comes to the surface in many places of the novel, one amongst them being towards the end in Chapter Liv where the priest of the temple of Naggesur Mahadeva and the Sunyasi are debating on the British rule which has replaced the earlier Muslim rule. The Sunyasi says here in a self-asserting tone, "The English Government is constantly interfering with our habits and customs, and usages, notwithstanding our protests and their own denials." 24 The emphasis in the background of this novel is, however, on the Indian religious tradition: whereas that of Govinda Samanta was on Indian manners and customs.

This novel differs from the earlier novel in another aspect also. It has a political motive twined into the main purpose of national self-assertion. This political aspect will, of

Another point of difference here is the inclusion of the Muslims in the story with their separate religion and tradition. However, they, too, with their separate identity have been shown as a part of the Indian nation. In other matters, *The Young Zemindar* is akin to *Govinda Samanta*. The descriptions of manners and customs, traditions and cultures, religious beliefs and superstitions are too elaborate and almost digressive in both the novels; and in both of them these digressions themselves seem to form the most important aspects of the novels.

The story of the novel is that of a zemindar family of Bonaghat in Bengal known for their benevolence to the tenants since the time of Muslim rule. The founder of this family of Brahmin landlords came as an anchorite from Kanouj; but his son being unscrupulous and pugnacious in nature, amassed vast wealth and property by unfair means; and presenting a part of it to the Nawab of Murshidabad, became the lawful owner of these usurped property. His successors went on adding much to the wealth till the time of the Battle of Plassey during which the zemindar fled in panic. But the zemindar is restored after the battle; and the story begins sixty years after the restoration.

It begins with a fair celebrated in great pomp and grandeur with generous aid from the zemindar Monohur, who himself has joined the merry-making. But the festivity is marred by a stabbing incident in a nearby Muslim Muktab. Urged by his mother, the young zemindar Monohur goes with his estate-manager.
to enquire into the incident and meets there an aged and learned anchorite looking like a Muslim Fakir. At the advice of the Fakir, the dispute between the contending parties is amicably settled by the zemindar. But this out-of-the-court settlement is not liked either by the manager or by Monohur's mother.

Anyway, after this settlement, the Fakir leads Monohur to the thickest part of the nearby mango-grove where a secret consultation is held. Monohur who has just attained majority, wants to seek his mother's advice about his future course of life suggested by the Fakir secretly. But the Fakir directs him to the most sacred and universally respected temple of Naggesur Mahadeva where the god is believed to speak through the priest. On being approached by Monohur, the deity advises him through the priest not to marry now according to his mother's wish but to go out and fight for his country as advised by the Fakir. He can marry after the fight for the country is over.

On his return home, Monohur is shown certain important documents containing conditions laid down by the British Government under which only a zemindar can rule his estate. He then understands how a zemindar has been reduced to a stooge at the hands of the British. After this disillusionment, he has no hesitation in going out with the Fakir to fight for his country and freedom, and he disappears from his house.

The Fakir advises Monohur to join the Ferazees in their rebellion against the British. He explains to Monohur how these
erstwhile anti-Hindu Muslim rebels have now felt the need for Hindu-Muslim unity for the realization of their common cause; and how thus a Hindu willing to fight against the British rule in India should not now hesitate to join the Ferazee Movement. Monohur agrees to join the Ferazees; and assuming the name Kharga Bahadur, he goes to the Ferazee camp with the Fakir.

The Ferazee rebellion which started with plundering of some districts and in which the Fakir and Monohur took active part showed some signs of success in the first encounter with the British army; but it was finally put down. Then the Fakir and Kharga Bahadoor shave off their beards and plan to go on a pilgrimage for fear of being arrested. It is now revealed that the Fakir is actually a Hindu who left the fold of Hinduism because of the evils of caste-system. The Fakir then becomes a Sunyasi and assumes the name of Babajee Bissonath. Monohur also takes his own name again and the two arrive at the shrine of Lakshmi-Narayana near the sacred confluence of the Gunga and the Brahma-pootra. From there they come to a little town called Comercolly where they are met by a half-masked man who delivers a letter to Babajee Bissonath and goes away. The letter conveys news of another plan for a new uprising against the British in another part of the country. Babajee persuades Monohur, who has now grown homesick, to accompany him to the area of the new uprising.

They soon arrive at a place called Dhulbhoom. Here the British interference in the succession of the zemindar is resented by the subjects who have started a scuffle with the British.
Being defeated by the British force, the rebels take refuge in the nearby hills. At the advice of the Sunyasi then, the Dhulbhoom fighters join the Koles of Kolehan who also bear a grudge against the British who have upheld the authority of the Rajputs over them. At the instigation of the Dhulbhoom chief, the Koles soon make a common cause with the people of Dhulbhoom. But their united venture, too, is utterly frustrated by the British. The Sunyasi and Monohur then leave these rebels behind and resume their pilgrimage.

The two Hindu pilgrims move towards Pooree. But on their way, they are met by another mysterious emissary who solicits their help for another uprising at Banpore against the British. The Sunyasi does not comply with the emissary's request immediately this time, and the two pilgrims proceed to Pooree. After watching the Car Festival and having a look at the image of the Deity in the temple of Jagganath, they are met again by the same emissary from Banpore and urged to go to that place. Babajee and Monohur then go to that place, but not before visiting the Chilka lake.

Reaching Banpore, they join the battle of the Rajah and the chiefs of the region against the British. In the first encounter, the rebels win here. But when they proceed to Pooree against the advice of the Sunyasi and fight the British force there, they are almost crushed. Babajee Bissonath and Monohur, however, escape to safety. They arrive at a camp of some tribesmen known as the Bediya Domes. Here Monohur takes leave of...
Babajee for a few days and proceeds homewards. He finds his house deserted, his mother dead. He then comes back to Babajee again, whom he meets at Satgaon, a village in Hooghly. As the Sunyasi comes to know of the death of Monohur's mother, he proposes visits to different holy places for offering Pinda.

They visit Deogurh or Byjanath and then proceed to Gaya where Monohur offers Pinda to his departed mother. He visits the different places of religious importance in and around Gaya including Buddha Gaya with its hundred-year-old fig tree under which Sakya Muni sat in meditation for five years. From there, they first go to Benares and then to Ayodhya, the capital city of the legendary Ramachandra and see its ruins. On the journey back home, they stay for the night in the house of a Vaishnava in Patna and watch the Muharram of the Muslims. Leaving Patna they reach Echapore, a village in the district of Hooghly.

The zemindari of Echapore which belonged to Monohur's maternal grand-father, has no successor now. The tenants of Echapore want Monohur as their zemindar. Monohur, who is afraid of feeling the absence of his mother too much if he goes back home, decides to remain here. Accepting the situation reluctantly, Babajee Bissonath wants him to retain the zemindari of Bonaghat as well. Babajee himself makes arrangements for this to the great jubilation of the people of Bonaghat.

Finally, the Sunyasi arranges the marriage of Monohur with a girl whom he first saw in the Ferazee camp and is still eager to marry. After the marriage, he returns to take charge of his father's estate in Bonaghat.
This being the story in outline, it is apparent that the character of the *Sunyasi* here seems to be the personification of what the Indians having national consciousness at that time regarded as Duty for them. The call of the *Sunyasi* to Monohur to join the revolts against the British and to visit different places of India and know their importance is the call of Duty. Thus, when Monohur, the young man much attached to his mother and his estate, is led away by the *Sunyasi*, he is only led away by Duty. It is for Duty's sake that Monohur has left behind his mother and estate and come forward to fulfill the two most important missions of his life at that stage - that of fighting the foreign rule, and learning about the rich heritage of his country. When he fulfills these two missions in his youth, the *Sunyasi* the Duty incarnate, himself is keen on settling him in his life and estate.

To teach the need of liberating the country and that of respect for its rich heritage is thus the prime motive of this novel. And it must be said to the credit of our nineteenth century nationalist Indo-Anglians that they very rightly laid equal emphasis on the need for freedom from political bondage and the awareness of their common national heritage. The importance of such a national consciousness cannot still be over-emphasized.

A comparison between the themes of *Govinda Samanta* and *The Young Zemindar* will not be out of place here. The central character in *The Young Zemindar* is a zemindar, and not a commoner as in *Govinda Samanta*. The author of *The Young Zemindar* is also not concerned with the common people and their sufferings as in
Govinda Samanta. The young zemindar in S. C. Dutt's novel is engaged in fighting the foreign rule which encouraged oppressions of the common people like Govinda and Madhava in Day's novel. From this point of view The Young Zemindar may be treated as a reply to Day's Govinda Samanta. Through the passive sufferings of Govinda and Madhava, Day showed the miserable plight of the country under the British rule. And through the activities of the Sunyasi and the young zemindar, Dutt has shown what the Indians should do under those circumstances. Know your own heritage and fight the foreign rule - these are the two suggestions given by Sochee Chunder Dutt in his novel for getting rid of the oppressions and sufferings of the people of the country like Govinda and Madhava of Lal Behari Day.

We shall discuss the second of these suggestions in a separate chapter. As for the first - know your own heritage - we may point out how the Sunyasi led Monohur to various places of religious and cultural significance and enlightened him on the tales and legends connected with those places. Through their visits to the ancient places connected with the Indian religious and cultural tradition, the author brings in detailed and very often digressive descriptions of Indian manners and customs, facts of contemporary life in villages and towns besides the religious and cultural significance of those places. However, the emphasis in The Young Zemindar is invariably on the religious tradition as a cultural heritage. In this context, it is to be noted that in Govinda Samanta, the emphasis was on the manners and customs of the people.
In *The Young Zemindar*, Babajee Bissonath and Monohur are shown as visiting one sacred place after another during the intervals of the fightings against the British rule in which they engage themselves. In the later part of the novel, however, they devote themselves exclusively to their pilgrimage. It is thus that they visit the confluence of the Gunga and the Brahmapootra, Pooree, Deogurh, Gaya, Benares and Ayodhya, to mention only a few of these famous places. As they visit these places, the ancient legends and stories connected with them are retold either by the Sunyasi to Monohur, or by some men belonging to the places of their visit or by the author himself to his readers. Thus the legend connected with the three sacred rivers of the Indian sub-continent - the Brahmapootra, the Gunga and the Sindhoo, the legend of Prahlad and Hiranya Kashyapa, the tale behind the construction of the temple of Jagganath at Pooree and of the making of the idols in the temple of Jagganath by king Indradyamna of Oujein, the story about the wisdom of Buddha, the stories of Dakshya Jagya and Pisach Mochan connected with Mahadeva, the story behind the Mohurrum, and many other lesser-known tales and legends all connected with some aspect of Indian culture, come to the novel.

25. ibid. p.81.
27. ibid. p.244.
33. ibid. pp.161-165.
34. ibid. pp.261-265.
The story of the *Ramayana* is retold canto by canto and its importance referred to in Chapter xxxix. Similarly, the story of the *Mahabharat* is also retold canto by canto and its importance as a great Hindu 'cyclopaedia of traditions' discussed in the Chapter xli. The Chapters xxix, xxx, xxxi are rather an elaborate dissertation on Hindu religion, mythology and philosophy.

From such elaborations of Hindu tradition and culture, and from the descriptions of manners and customs which also abound in the novel, though in a lesser degree than in *Govinda Samanta*, we can easily conclude that the author through this novel wants to assert the national identity of the people of India in the sphere of religious tradition. The country has been shown here as the home of three religious communities, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Buddhists - all living in unity and harmony.

Lastly, one thing has to be pointed out. In the subtitle to the novel, the author has called the wanderings of the zamindar "Erratic Wanderings", and his return at last to his home "The Eventful Return". This is no doubt to escape the rage of the British Government and to save the book from being proscribed as seditious. The author's real view in spite of this subtitle is quite clear.

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40. *ibid.* pp.311-318.
Sarala and Hingana \(^{42}\) by Khetrapal Chakravarti was published as one volume of fiction, though in reality this volume is a collection of two long stories or two short novels. They were originally published in the columns of New India and were later published in book form in 1896.

This volume also abounds in descriptions of Indian manners and customs, culture and tradition and the like. For example, the author has given elaborate descriptions of the way of living of the people in Bengal villages,\(^43\) of the Durga Puja as celebrated in Bengal on community basis,\(^44\) and of Tantrism,\(^45\) a form of Hindu religion. Yet it differs from the earlier two novels in the sense that here the story element is more prominent and the documentary purpose is not as conspicuous as in those two novels. This is so inspite of the facts that the sub-title of the story of Sarala is - A Story Descriptive of Bengal Village Life, and the author has described elaborately and almost digressively the peculiarities and characteristics of the Indians wherever he has been able to do it. However, there can be no doubt about the fact that in writing this novelette, too, the author had the purpose of asserting the self of the Indian nation. This purpose of the novelist has sometimes found direct expression in the novel. In Chapter III, for example, a character of the novel is made to speak thus:

\(^{42}\) K. Chakravarti, Sarala and Hingana, Basu, Mitra & Co., Calcutta, 1899 edn.
\(^{43}\) ibid. pp.10,11; 26,27.
\(^{44}\) ibid. pp.25-28.
\(^{45}\) ibid. pp.37-38.
Your sahebs ought to respect the feelings of their Hindu friends and not talk of things which they have not studied. ... By copying some European you belie both your birth and intellect.\textsuperscript{46}

Coming to the detailed study of the novelette \textit{Sarala}, we see that in technique this is not faultlessly a novel; neither is it a faultless short story. To some extent, it is rather a fairy tale that depends much on dreams, superstitions and supernatural elements.

The story is about a Bengali youth Hem Chandra. Wise, honest and sober, Hem Chandra works in a Calcutta firm on very low wages. In his distant village home, he has his typically Indian joint family consisting of his miserly uncle, third young aunt (his earlier two aunts being dead) and his mother. Hem Chandra lost his father when he was a child. He and his mother since then became dependent on his uncle. After having matriculated, Hem Chandra has to become a clerk in a Calcutta firm since his uncle refuses to bear any expenses on his education. By this time, Hem Chandra's uncle would have married again had it not been for the villagers' protests against this marriage. The villagers want Hem Chandra to be married before his uncle marries again. When Hem Chandra's uncle thus chooses a bride for Hem Chandra, Hem Chandra obeys his uncle silently. He keeps his wife at his village home after the marriage and resumes his service life in Calcutta, meeting his wife twice a year at his village home.

\textsuperscript{46} ibid. p.15.
Once Hem Chandra has a dream where a venerable aged man advises him to go to Pareshnath Hill giving him the hope that the wishes of his mind would be fulfilled there. Hem Chandra is tempted and soon leaves for Pareshnath. The story then takes the turn of a fairy tale and Hem Chandra is amidst the Kapaliks or Tantriks at Pareshnath.

Indumati, a very beautiful woman and the wife of the chief Tantrik makes advances to him. Disgusted with her, Hem Chandra wants to quit that place. But he hears from the Kapaliks about a Siddhapurusha (a religious adept) in a nearby ashrama. Thinking that his hopes would be fulfilled there, Hem Chandra goes to that ashrama. He is indeed rewarded there with many jewels and valuables.

He then goes back to Calcutta, a rich man. He soon buys a house of his own in the city and takes his wife and mother there to live happily together.

In such a story, it is apparent that the descriptions of the customs and traditions will only be out of place. But they are there, and in no small measure. This is certainly done with the spirit of discovering the identity of the nation and asserting it. It goes without saying that for discovering the identity of the Indian people, Chakravarti, too, has taken only the majority community, viz. the Hindus.

Hingana, the second novelette in the volume is, however, more satisfactory as a novel in technique that Sarala. Here there
is no preponderance of supernatural elements. On the other hand, here is a conflict, though only external, which was absent from the earlier novelette. Hingana seems to be without any propagandist purpose as well. But there are grounds to suppose that Chakravarti wants to show here the life and manners, tradition and culture of the Gonds, a tribal community of Central India. This will be understood from the outline of the story.

Hingana is a beautiful Gond girl, innocent and simple. She tends cows in the field sometimes alone and sometimes with her friend Aruna, another Gond girl who is not as beautiful as Hingana. Once Hingana meets a handsome youth in the field when she was tending the cows and playing on her flute. The youth, who praised her music, seemed to be poor; but Hingana loves him. Since then the two lovers very often meet each other in the field and on the hills until at last they want to get married.

Hingana's father, however, wants to marry her to another youth, Udoy. But Hingana sets her father's wish at naught and brings her lover to their house according to the Gond custom. Her angry father then gives all sorts of menial works to Kumar, her lover, almost like Prospero putting Ferdinand to test by such menial works. Kumar does all these without any grumbling while Aruna grows jealous and plots to ruin her.

A bad news from home suddenly forces Kumar to leave behind his beloved and go home. Udoy is brought in the meantime by Hingana's father to their house to marry Hingana. Udoy learns about the girl's love and declines to marry her. At the same time,
he, too, grows jealous like Aruna. The weather that year turns out to be inclement and the crops fail entirely. Aruna attributes it to Hingana's witchery, declaring Hingana a witch. She bribes the priest of the village and gets the rumour spread by her confirmed. All the villagers including even Hingana's parents are convinced that Hingana is a witch and a day is fixed by them for her trial and execution.

Meanwhile Kumar on his way back to Hingana's house hears about the new development in the village; and he makes a device to save the girl. On the trial day, all the villagers assemble before the temple when the girl is dragged there and put inside an enclosure. Suddenly Kumar appears there, riding on a superb mare with a crown of diamonds on his head, a string of pearls around his neck and a naked sword hanging by his side. He is followed by five chosen horsemen. They set the girl free and take her away on horse back. Before quitting the place, he declares his identity as a Rajput prince to the consternation of the whole crowd assembled there. The prince also exposes the vice of the priest and the dark-motive and conspiracy of Aruna. The crowd is then full of sympathy for these two lovers. This high caste Hindu then marries his beloved tribal bride according to the Gond custom to the delight of all the villagers.

The story is thus romantic in nature. But even with this romantic story, the author has shown the Gond social customs, their ways of living, their beliefs and superstitions and the like wherever he has had the slightest occasion to do so. It is thus
that the description of the Gond woman's dress and ornaments has come to the novel. It is thus, again, that the author has taken the liberty of showing in detail the Gond custom of marriage contrasting it with the Hindu custom. These pages seem to be pure pieces of ethnography of the Gonds.

The manners and customs, and the beliefs and superstitions of these tribal people add, no doubt, a separate dimension to the identity of the Indian nation. And Khetrapal Chakravarti has pointed to this dimension through this short novel.

The Dive for Death by T. Ramakrishna Pillai is the next novel that deserves consideration here. It is a romance based on a mediaeval South Indian ballad; and thus the author has rightly sub-titled it An Indian Romance. Though the basis of this novel is a mediaeval Indian ballad tale, in writing it out in the modern form, the author has attained a success which could not be attained by the Indo-Anglian novelists discussed so far.

Besides the main story, there are a few sub-stories also in this novel. One such sub-story is that of the merchant's wife in whose memory the annual Festival of Blood and Fire is shown as celebrated by the people of Vellipaliyam. Another such story is that of the Dive for Death of the Chieftain of Bangarupaliyam and his successors. These sub-stories have fitted so very well into

47. ibid. Hingana, pp.51-52.
48. ibid. pp.61-64.
the main story of the novel that all the stories together have formed one organic whole.

This novel, too, like the earlier novels discussed in this chapter, depicts the manners and customs, and tradition and culture of the Indian people; but the story of this novel being mediaeval, these are typically those of the mediaeval Indians. Through such a story, the author emphasizes not the manners and customs but the rare bravery and chivalry of the mediaeval Indians. He reveals a brave past of which the Indians can be proud.

Another aspect which the author wants to assert here is that of the peculiar spirituality of the Indians - the peculiar Indian way of finding peace and happiness amidst sorrows and sufferings, and a peculiar spirit of endurance in the midst of trials and tribulations of the worldly life.50

The story in brief may help us to understand these points clearly. Devamani is the only child of the Chieftain of the South Indian state of Vellipaliyam. Born with all the good qualities expected of a girl, she has a wart on the left side of her nose. It is predicted by the family astrologer that she would become as famous as Akbar who had also a wart on his face. As she grows in years she comes to be considered as the most beautiful woman of the country; and the sons of powerful Chieftains seek her hand in marriage. She possesses two valuable stones - one emerald and another sapphire. These are believed.
to have had talismanic virtues and their possessors are believed to have their cherished hopes fulfilled. She wears the sapphire setting it on her ring and the emerald on her forehead.

One day a maina bird takes away Devamani's emerald from her forehead as she was resting. A young man called Samban happens to be the culprit behind this. Another young man, Vijia has great admiration and affection for Devamani; and he challenges this Samban to a fencing match in the typically mediaeval Indian way. Samban accepts the challenge; and the condition laid down is that if Samban is defeated, he would have to express his contrition before Devamani's father. In the same manner, if Vijia is defeated, he would have to exile himself to a distant land never to set foot in his own state again.

When Devamani hears about this young man who has risked his future for her honour, she is very much impressed. She sends to him a maid with the offer of her invaluable sapphire for his safety and triumph in the match. She also sends to Vijia a fine stick and a plait of her hair - a gift which was the highest mark of honour in those days. The young man accepts them gratefully and promises never to part with them.

The match takes place on a very dangerous spot situated on the rock of a very steep hill-top. Beside the rock there is a chasm, the depth of which none dared to fathom. In the combat, Vijia had almost won. But just then, both the combatants fall down the precipice into the chasm. Samban, however, is saved by Vijia while Vijia himself vanishes into the darkness of the
bottomless chasm. It was naturally a great shock to all the spectators; and more so to Devamani.

After the supposed death of Vijia, Devamani spends a very isolated and rigorous life with the realization that in this life there is no happiness of any sort. She has still a fond hope, however, that in future she may meet Vijia and be his life's mate. Her father, too, was told by an astrologer that his daughter would ultimately marry the man of her choice and be happy. The same astrologer is later appointed by Devamani's father to teach her the Indian Shastras and classics so that she may know the doctrine of karma to be happy in life under all circumstances.

From these studies, the girl develops a great love for literature. It is at this time that she receives a poem from a stranger. Devamani loves the poem so much that she loves the unknown poet, too. Her love for this man whom she has not even seen grows so intense that she decides to marry him after finding him out. Her father then comes forward to find that poet out. It is soon found out and invited to the palace of Devamani's father. But Samban once again stands in the way. The poet narrowly escapes death when Samban makes an attack on him as he is about to reach the palace. As the writer of the poem reaches the palace, it is soon revealed that he is none other than Vijia. He was not dead as it was supposed when he fell into the chasm. He had a miraculous escape and was later given shelter by a blind poet. Under the shelter of this blind poet, Vijia, too, turned.
a poet; and thus he had the chance to come to Devamani again.

It is further revealed that Vijia is no other than the posthumous son of the real Chieftain of Bangarupaliyam. Vijia's mother, in the traditional festival of the Dive for Death, dived into the bottomless tank in order to secure the throne for her son who was then in her womb only. This was necessary according to the tradition of the state. The brave and ambitious lady came out successful in her dive; but the throne was not secured for her son who was still to be born. It was usurped by Samban's father on the day of the coronation of the child.

After this unexpected revelation, Vijia and Devamani are married. Vijia is installed on the throne of Bangarupaliyam; and thus Vellipaliyam and Bangarupaliyam get united.

With this mediaeval romantic story, the author has mainly stressed the adventure and chivalry of the Indians of the Middle Ages, as it is already mentioned. It is for this purpose that the story of the age-old traditional festival of the Dive for Death after which the novel is named, has been fitted into the main story of the novel. This traditional festival is described elaborately in one full chapter.51 The story of the Festival of Blood and Fire has also been introduced into the novel for the same purpose for asserting the bravery of the Indians of the past. This story has been told elaborately in three

chapters\textsuperscript{52} for the sake of the same emphasis.

But besides showing the proud mediaeval past of India when Indians were strong, robust and adventurous, the author has also narrated a part of the country's history in the first chapter of the novel. It covers the period when,

\[ \begin{align*}
... & \text{before the advent of the British, Southern India became divided into a number of small states, called \textit{palliyan}, and the chieftains who were the masters of these \textit{palliyan} were subjected to the Mussulman who held the suzerain power, but only in name.}\textsuperscript{53}
\end{align*} \]

The long historical narrative of this period covering one full chapter comes to the novel for the same purpose of glorifying the country's past.

The next works that deserve our attention after T. Ramakrishna's novel are those by Dwijendra Nath Neogi. Dwijendra Nath Neogi has three books to his credit, viz. \textit{Sacred Tales of India}, \textsuperscript{54} \textit{True Tales of Indian Life}, \textsuperscript{55} and \textit{Anecdotes of Indian Life}. \textsuperscript{56}

All these works differ from the earlier ones in the sense that these are tales or stories whereas the books discussed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} ibid. Chapters III, IV, V. pp.34-40.
\item \textsuperscript{53} ibid. p.1.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Dwijendra Nath Neogi, \textit{True Tales of Indian Life}, Macmillan & Co., London, 1917.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Dwijendra Nath Neogi, \textit{Anecdotes of Indian Life}, S. K. Lall & Co., Calcutta, 1920.
\end{itemize}
earlier in this chapter are novels, as well as in the sense that these are not Neogi's original works. Sacred Tales of India is a collection of tales which are handed down from generation to generation and told in connection with certain rites and rituals of the Hindus. The author in this book has only retold them in his own words without inventing anything of his own. As for the other two books by Neogi, they are not even tales or stories. They are the collections of life-episodes of some great men - episodes that are so familiar and spoken about that they had attained the quality of stories before the author wrote them out in story-form.

Through these, too, we see the revelation of the Indian national spirit. The author wants to assert the Indian religious tradition through Sacred Tales of India, and the distinctive qualities of head and heart of the Indians through True Tales of Indian Life and Anecdotes of Indian Life.

For detailed study let us first come to Sacred Tales of India, which contains twenty tales all connected with "our ceremonial lore which consists of an immense stock of curious legends transmitted from mouth to mouth for ages past."57 About the characters and occasions of these books, the author himself writes:

During the Pujahs which consume so much of our means, women are left in the background. Their special province is these ceremonies. Each has a Katha or tale tacked on to it, which

is piously recited by the most elderly of the assembled female worshippers. Each story is illustrative of the might and glory of the particular god or goddess that is being honoured and in itself forms a highly interesting part of the ceremony.  

How these tales illustrate the devotional quality of the hearts of the Indian women has been mentioned by the author directly thus: "They are extremely interesting also for the light they throw on the recesses of the Indian woman's heart." And then, again:

The compilation, it is hoped, will give an insight into the domestic life of our women in one of its highest bearings. There is not a week in the year which does not bring with it some holy festival. The orthodox Hindu life is, indeed, one round of ceremonies, observances, fasts and festivals; and this is emphatically true of Hindu women. Married life and widowhood abound in such duties, and they form the tendrils that hold together the ancient faith inculcated by Puranic Hinduism.

The tone of the author's words here is that of pride in this characteristic of Indian women.

In writing out these tales, the author has first given an idea about the ritual or Puja in a paragraph within bracket,
connected with the tale narrated. A few of the twenty tales that have found place in the collection are from ancient epics or the Puranas. For example, we may mention the tales *Snatched from Death* connected with the Savitri Ceremony and *Chand the Unbeliever* connected with the Padma Pujah Ceremony. Some other tales are there which are not taken from any ancient religious book, but are only folk-tales. The tale of *By Itu's Favour* connected with the Itu Ceremony, and that of *The Gift of the Ascetic* connected with the Sankata Ceremony are the examples.

The twelfth tale of the book deserves special mention. It is *The Pir's Power* connected with the ceremony Satya Pir Pujah. It is a Hindu ceremony connected with a Muslim tale. Thus this tale and the ceremony show very nicely how in India the Hindu and the Muslim cultures have amalgamated together; and how sometimes even the two religions have influenced each other. The author himself has noted in this respect:

> The fact is that the Pujah came to be in vogue at a time when Islam had attained great proportions in India, and when everything Hindu, even religion itself, had been tinged with the faith of the conquerors. 61

The next book, *True Tales of Indian Life* has altogether sixty-six stories each revealing a certain trait of some great Indian through some real incident of his life. The sixth and the tenth stories are, however, exceptions since they depict two

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61. *ibid.* p.94.
episodes of two great men who are not Indians. In all other stories, the author has made it a point to mention that the man, about whose greatness of heart the story is told, is an Indian. There are two stories in the collection in which the author has referred directly or indirectly to Macaulay's derogatory remarks on the Bengalees. Through these stories, the author wants to prove how Macaulay was wrong in his observations of the Bengalee character. One of these two stories is the twenty-seventh one, called *A Bengalee's Gratitude* and the other is the last or sixty-sixth called *Bengalees and the Famine*. Whereas in *A Bengalee's Gratitude*, the author has directly referred to the remarks by Macaulay, and has gone to refute his charge by telling his story of an obscure Bengalee office employee, in *Bengalees and the Famine*, he has not mentioned anything about Macaulay's remarks directly. Indirectly, of course, he has refuted the same charges by Macaulay by showing how the Bengalees at the time of the famine of 1913 proved the rare strength of their character.

Other stories are not written with any such specific purpose; but still in some of them the author's hidden purpose of

62. Macaulay has written about the Bengalees:

"What horns are to the buffalo, what paw is to the tiger, what the sting is to the bee, what beauty, according to the old Greek song, is to woman, deceit is to the Bengalee. Large promises, smooth excuses, elaborate tissues of circumstantial falsehood, chicanery, perjury, forgery, are the weapons, offensive and defensive, of the people of the Lower Ganges." - "Warren Hastings" (October 1841) in Critical and Historical Essays (2 Vols.), Vol. I, arranged by A. J. Grove and Introduced by Douglas Jerrold, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London, 1963, p.562.

Macaulay has also written about the Bengalees:

"Whatever the Bengalee does he does languidly. His favourite pursuits are sedentary. He shrinks from bodily exertion:
asserting the greatness of the Indians has come to the surface. The twenty-sixth story, for example, called *A Mahratta Judge*, begins like this:

You have read perhaps of Prince Hal and Judge Gascoigne in the annals of early England, and have admired the judge's boldness in the performance of his duty. In the present story is given an instance of the same virtue in a man of similar station, which occurring as it did, in India, is more likely to make a deeper impression on Indian minds.63

While some of the stories in this book are about unknown, obscure Indians as the two we have referred to already, some others are about eminent Indians like Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jamsetji Tata, Guru Govinda, Muthuswamy Aiyar, and so on. Some stories deal with certain life episodes of eminent Indians of the distant past like Chaitanya Dev or Guru Govinda while the others deal with the great Indians of the recent times, e.g. the stories dealing with the life-episodes of the men like Dwijendra Nath Tagor.

This book shows a very important aspect of the development of Indian nationalism, i.e. the conception of all the peoples of India living in different parts of the country as one nation. In this book by a Bengali writer, we see the author revealing the

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and, though voluble in dispute, and singularly pertinacious in the war of Chicane, he seldom engages in a personal conflict, and scarcely ever enlists as a soldier ... There never, perhaps, existed a people so thoroughly fitted by nature and by habit for a foreign yoke." - "Lord Clive" (January 1840), pp.cit., p.503.

life-episodes of rare greatness of the Marathas (e.g. Consideration for others: A Mahratta Judge), the Sikhs (e.g. A Great Sacrifice: The Lost Purse), the Rajputs (e.g. The Death of the Reconciler: The Raiput’s Protection), the Tamilians (e.g. From Poverty to Fame), the Parsis (e.g. Tata the Parsi) and the like. And all of them are shown as heroes of the same nation - the Indian.

The author has also shown very well here how both the Hindus and the Muslims are all Indians and how men of both the religions can be equally great. He also shows a bond of unity between both the communities. For illustration, we may point out to the story called The High Standpoint which is about a Muslim Deputy Magistrate, Muhammad-ul-Nabi of Pandua who had asked a fakeer where the latter had met the largest number of holy men. The fakeer replied that it was at Hardwar. The Muslim Magistrate was angry at this; because Hardwar was only a Hindu sacred place. The fakeer then told him, "My son, take a lofty view of things and you will see that the differences as great as they seem to you, between Hindus and Mussulmans will disappear." 64

The tale called The Fakeer's Answer also belongs to the same category. Here Sitaram, a Bengali Hindu who lived in the seventeenth century, is stated to have rebuked a Muslim fakeer for sleeping at night with his feet sacrilegiously extended towards the idol of Mahadeva. Chand Shah, the fakeer, then explains to

64. ibid. pp.5-6.
Sitaram how God is everywhere and at all points of the compass. The story concludes thus: "It is said that Sitaram, afterwar's placed himself under the spiritual guidance of this faakeer, and at his advice named the capital of his Hindu state Muhammadour."

There are many other stories in the collection showing the greatness of the Muslims of India. They are The Sick Stranger: Tipu Sultan and His Sons; Returning Good for Evil, Keeping His Word; Loyalty to the State: Charity in Secret; and A Man in a Million.

Dwijendra Nath Neogi's third book, Anecdotes of Indian Life is also of the same category and of the same pattern. This collection has been divided into two parts, the first part containing sixty-six tales and the second containing sixty-four. Here, too, the author has included the life-episodes of the great Indians of different parts of the country. The author has included here the life-episodes of the great Indians of the Assam region, too, viz. a life-episode of the great Assamese scholar Anundoram Barooah (Paper Brides), and a life-episode of Raja Abhoyananda of Bijni (A Prudent and Conscientious Raja).

Coming now to Humayun Kabir's Men and Rivers, the last novel in this category, we find that here at last in this novel which came out seventy-one years after Lal Behari Day's Govinda Samanta, there is a fine blending of propaganda and art. Unlike

65. ibid. p.111.
in the works of Lal Behari Day and Sochee Chunder Dutt, in this novel the propagandist purpose comes hardly to the surface, and the pure literary urge with which the novel is written is revealed throughout. This is, however, not to say that Humayun Kabir had no conscious purpose of propagating anything nationalistic here. He had, and this is clear from his Prefatory Note where he has written: "India still lives in her villages and to understand India the world must learn (sic.) her villages."

The story of this novel depicting Muslim life and manners in India is placed in East Bengal, a part of India at the time when the novel was published, a part of Pakistan later, and an independent sovereign republic—Bangla Desh now. Through the actions and incidents, talks and speeches, beliefs and superstitions of the villagers of this part of India then, the author has drawn a very fine picture of the rural India, especially the Muslim rural India. The people in this India of the villages, living far away from towns and cities and from the light of modern civilization as well, are poor and illiterate, simple and unsophisticated with their beliefs and superstitions deeply rooted in the soil. In order to have an idea about how this has been done in the novel, let us know the story in brief.

It is set in a village called Dhuldi which stands on the river Padma. Nazu Mia is a prosperous cultivator in this village and a leading man among the villagers. His son is Malek, a little boy who lost his mother when he was only a baby at her breast. Since then the baby was brought up by his grand-mother.
Ayesha. Nazu Mia's bitter rival as a prosperous and leading cultivator of the village is Asgar Mia. But it is learnt that the two were formerly fast friends.

In course of time, Nazu Mia is drowned in the river Padma. This is too rude a shock to his mother; and soon she, too, dies. Malek is thus left to the care of the servants of the house who think that the orphan will have better care in the house of Asgar Mia who has been showing an affection for Malek since he had become an orphan. Malek soon finds himself in the house of Asgar Mia who has also taken over the landed property of Nazu Mia for better management.

A devastating flood washes away the village Dhuldi, and Asgar Mia moves to the jungle of Byanchar with his family and his villagers who survive the havoc. They erect their houses there and turn the wood into a new village. Malek and Asgar's daughter Nuru are now in their youth and they love each other. Their love deepens and Malek proposes to marry Nuru. But Asgar Mia stands against this marriage revealing to the surprise of the two lovers that his wife Amina, Nuru's mother was first married by Nazu Mia, Malek's father. From their very childhood, Amina and Asgar were, however, in love and their marriage was almost settled. But Nazu Mia was also in love with Amina and Asgar had no inkling of that, though Asgar and Nazu were then fast friends. At last Nazu and Amina were married. And thus was Malek born. But gradually Amina began to hate Nazu Mia and was inclined towards Asgar again. She was so much repentant then that she entreated Asgar to marry her. Asgar...
declined, though Nazu Mia turned out to be his bitter enemy then. Soon, however, Nazu Mia also developed hatred for Amina who was at last divorced by him. It was then that Asgar married her and Nuru born.

After hearing this, Malek understands why Asgar Mia is against their love and the idea of their marriage. In deep anguish, Malek has the feeling now that he cannot live in the same place any more. And soon he disappears mysteriously for ever.

In this story, we come across nice rural Indian scenes like the scene of a village market, the description of the busy daily life of a Muslim peasant, the description of community feasts given on special occasions, the scene of killing crocodiles by the villagers in the river Padma, and so on. We also meet here village people having great respect for religious mendicants or fakirs, and having blind belief in their supernatural power. The author has brought all these to his novel in his search for the identity of the Indian nation, as it can be understood from his Prefatory Note also. And it must be said to the credit of the author that the depiction of these rural scenes and characteristics does not seem to be extrinsic to the novel.

It is with the spirit of asserting the tradition and culture of the country that about the same time, a section of the

68. ibid. pp.100-101.
69. ibid. pp.147-148.
70. ibid. pp.9-10.
71. ibid. pp.18,39.
educated Indians engaged themselves in collecting the folk-tales of India as well as in rewriting the mythological legends of the country. The purpose behind this creative effort in English was to show that as the European countries have a brilliant vast pregnant with myths and folk-tales of their own, India, too, has one.

Lal Behari Day was the first compiler of folk-tales of India in English. The first volume of his folk-tales was entitled *The Folk-Tales of Bengal* 72 published in 1883. It contains twenty-two tales told from generation to generation amongst the Bengalis. Lal Behari's second collection of folk-tales was *Tales of Bengal*, first brought out in 1926. This was subsequently renamed *Folk-Stories of Bengal*. 73

Next to Lal Behari Day, we should mention the name of Cornelia Sorabji who wanted to glorify Indian culture through the same kind of attempt. A writer of social novelettes with a propagandist bias, she has one collection of nineteen stories entitled *Indian Tales of Great Ones*. 74 These stories are borrowed from the *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas* and from the Hindu and Muslim periods of the Indian History.

*Chandi or the Great Plan* 75 by Purnendu Narayan Sinha is in a different key, though a story book that belongs to the same

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category. The book contains only one story, the story of Maha-
maya or Chandi as told in the Markandeya Purana. It is a free
translation of the ancient Sanskrit story. Sinha's book is
essentially a Hindu religious book. But at the same time it
asserts, though indirectly, the potentiality of Hindu religion
and philosophy.

The last book that should be brought under this cate-
gory is Hindu Fairy Tales by Dewan Sharar. It is a collect5on
of thirty-five tales. Some of these are fables of ancient Sans-
krit literature, some others are folk-tales of different provin-
ces, while the rest are legends from the Ramayana, the Maha-
bharata, and the Puranas. The author's purpose of glorification
of Indian culture has been revealed in the Foreword of the book
where he writes:

Most of them, incredible as it may seem, date back to the
year 300 B.C. when they were first collected and set down
in the Sanskrit book called Panchatantra. Even before that
Indian mothers used to tell them to their children, while
Indian story-tellers also related them to the assembled
village folk when the day's work was over, just as they
have been doing ever since.

In this way, we find that all these novels, stories and
collections of folk-tales and mythological legends do one thing -

76. Dewan Sharar, Hindu Fairy Tales, George G. Harrap & Co.,
London, 1936.
they reveal a search for national identity of the Indians. It is done sometimes by depicting the manners and customs, and totems and taboos of the people of India; sometimes by emphasizing their tradition and culture, beliefs and superstitions; and sometimes by showing how from very ancient times they were the inheritors of a very rich folk-lore. But in whatever way it may be done, it is done always with the same spirit - the spirit of national self-assertion or self-identification.