

**India at the End of the British Raj: Autobiographical Perceptions of
Nirad C Chaudhuri**

PhD Thesis submitted by

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Session: 2011-2012

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Dhaka University**

May 2015

**India at the End of the British Raj: Autobiographical Perceptions of
Nirad C Chaudhuri**

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Humanities
of
Dhaka University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English

by

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Reg No: 82, Session: 2011-2012

Dhaka
May, 2015

Certificate

It gives me immense pleasure to certify that the Thesis entitled **India at the End of the British Raj: Autobiographical Perceptions of Nirad C Chaudhuri** is a genuine research work undertaken and completed by Asma Chowdhury as a full time research student under my supervision. I have carefully and thoroughly examined the Thesis, found it satisfactory and up to the standard, and I am pleased to recommend the submission of the thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Dhaka University.

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Professor, Department of English
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Declaration

I hereby declare that the Thesis entitled **India at the End of the British Raj: Autobiographical Perceptions of Nirad C Chaudhuri** is my original research work. I also declare that I have not submitted this Thesis either in part or in full or in any other form to any other University or any other Institution for any degree or for any other purpose.

(Asma Chowdhury)

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Session: 2011-2012

To
PROF DR LIAQUAT ALI
MY LIFE-LONG INSPIRATION

Acknowledgements

I express my deep gratitude to my Supervisor **Prof Dr Syed Manzoorul Islam** for guiding me throughout the research period and for providing me with continuous inspiration and support in my works. I am also indebted to him for exposing me to a wider view of literature and for creating a higher aspiration in my mind regarding academic and intellectual life.

I fondly remember my late Mother-in-Law **Mrs. Hamsha Uddin** for helping me to devote my time in the field of knowledge during all the thirty years we lived together.

I would also like to thank my sister **Dr Selina Chowdhury** for her constant inspiration in the completion of the work.

Ms Hasna Alam of Shucharoo Desktop Publishing Ltd. deserves thanks for final preparation of the Thesis and for offering her constant help in every possible way.

Finally, I thank all the other members of my family, especially my daughter **Drishty Tonmoy** and my son **Nibir Anuvab**, for their prolonged patience and cooperation throughout the period of my study. It was very important for the completion of the work.

Asma Chowdhury

Abstract

The decades before the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 are specifically significant in the history of the subcontinent as this period shaped the future political, cultural and economic course of the region the legacy of which we are still in presence. The period though has been analyzed from historical, political, sociological and purely literary and cultural viewpoints; there is still need to further reconstruct and understand this vibrating time, in a more comprehensive manner, through other approaches. In the present Thesis an attempt has been made to apprehend some of the complex interactions of the sociopolitical and cultural elements which led to the partition, with its accompanying devastations, through the analysis of an autobiographical book written by Nirad C. Chaudhuri – *Thy Hand Great Anarch! India: 1921-52*.

I used neo-historicism as my Research Methodology here in pursuing my research work. The span of my work covered the social life in Calcutta, Bengal Renaissance and Indian Nationalism, political movements like the Bengali resistance movements and other crises, literature and culture of Bengal, and the human devastation at the aftermath of the partition. In the present Thesis, in each of these areas, a background along with observations of other major authors has been given. It followed the perceptions of Nirad C. Chaudhuri on those issues. In the third section of each chapter I have communicated my own reflections on the perceptions of Chaudhuri.

Though the general notion about Nirad C. Chaudhuri lies in depicting his deep antagonistic feeling about his own race Bengalee and also Bengal but analyzing his autobiography we sense in him a deep feeling for his motherland East Bengal. He never liked the disorganized, relatively self-centered, and unclean way of life of the Calcutta based people. He has equally appreciated many things of the Bengali life like their habit of reading books and also their trying to elevate the library culture. About literary areas Chaudhuri was little conservative and he thought that the peak of the Bengali literature has been reached by writers like Rabindranath Tagore and Sharatchandra Chattopadhyay. Chaudhuri never appreciated the importance of Modernism in Bengali literature. In fact he considered it as a symbol of decadence. Chaudhuri could not support the spirit of Indian Nationalism and hence he could not see eye to eye with Gandhi also because he believed that the change of the Master would not only make everything ok rather the inefficient administrators would make things worse. He was also correct in his evaluation of the time because in the aftermath of the Partition we see the serious crises of humanity during the migration and displacement of the Hindus and the Muslims. Actually the western educated political leaders became enriched in their human values and longed for the liberty of their land at

the end of the colonial rule. But to tell the truth no proper plan no systematic approach were undertaken till then by them. We perceive it immediately in the events that occurred after the Partition. According to him a large part of the responsibility for these catastrophe lie with the narrow minded and mostly communal political leaders of the subcontinent. However, Chaudhuri equally blames the British Rulers in India for committing criminal activities and inciting atrocities in their own interest of power and exploitation. He is by heart a liberal democrat in the tradition of European Renaissance and thus he is undoubtedly a fan of British tradition and culture which, in fact, is a torch bearer of liberal democracy in their own country. But, at the same time, Chaudhuri points out their double standard in the context of the colonies like India.

To conclude we can say that Nirad C. Chaudhuri is a controversial writer particularly among the people of the subcontinent, and in most cases he is blindly thought to side with the British people and ideas. However, a deeper reading of his autobiography may reveal a sensitive person with nostalgic emotion and also a person who speaks what he feels with strong conviction. Through his humanistic but sometimes conservative approach he has observed his time and he has specially focused on India during 1921-1952. Many people may disagree with his perceptions, but those are undoubtedly invaluable elements in reconstructing the inner dynamics of that time and society.

Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter-1 Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1897-1998)	7
Chapter-2 The Bengal Renaissance and Indian Nationalism	25
Chapter-3 The Social life of Calcutta	92
Chapter-4 Political Movements and Crises	128
Chapter-5 The Literature and Culture of Bengal	174
Chapter-6 The Bengal Resistance Movement against the British	197
Chapter-7 Partition and its Aftermath	234
Conclusion	246
Works Cited	259

Introduction

Thy Hand Great Anarch! India 1921-1952 is the second part of Nirad C. Chaudhuri's autobiography. Its 1st part titled *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* a sequel to the second part was written in the 57th year of his life. The first volume is dedicated "to the memory of the British Empire in India . . . because all that was good and living within us was made, shaped quickened by . . . British rule." The same anglophile approach is maintained in the second volume also. He critically speaks of Mahatma Gandhi Jawaharlal Nehru and the entire nationalist movement that led to independence.

Chaudhuri's real concern however is the loss of Bengali influence on Indian affairs. Himself the second son of a well-to-do cultured East Bengali family, Chaudhuri witnessed the decline of his region's as well as Bengal's prestige and its ultimate partition and then separation from India to become part of Pakistan and then Bangladesh. It hurt him deeply. Chaudhuri was a centenarian. So he was lucky to have witnessed the most important events of the sub-continent directly and closely. Especially he portrayed the entire process of decolonization of India against the backdrop of his own life in these two books mentioned above. *Thy Hand Great Anarch! India 1921-1952* begins with his failure to attain his Master degree in 1920 and traces his efforts to earn a living as a government clerk, journalist, and secretary to a renowned political leader, a war commentator on radio, and above all a writer. He wants to say that his own fortune too in a way declined because his ambition of becoming a university teacher had not been fulfilled because of his failure to finish his Master's examination. Whatever might be his opinion he maintains about himself he later stood out as an outstanding and controversial intellectual of the region. Chaudhuri also regards his age as the falling dusk of European civilization. The book's title comes from the closing lines of Alexander Pope's *Dunciad* in which the poet laments for the cultural decay, the collapse of the western culture. The ending lines of his poem:

Thy Hand, Great Anarch! let the curtain fall;/ And Universal Darkness buries All.

My thesis *India at the End of British Raj – Autobiographical Perceptions of Nirad C. Chaudhuri* is done on the basis of the two parts of his autobiography. I find his autobiography really fascinating. Though there is a under tone of pessimism about certain issues I find his observations about Indian history and culture shed an unconventional light on Bengal as well as the whole of the subcontinent. By using the socio-historical methodology I wanted to construct the period at the end of the British Raj by exploring its rich, cultural and historical background and thus marking its significance in our life.

The dissertation consists of altogether seven chapters. Each signifies a particular issue. The first chapter Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1897-1998) is a pen-picture of the author's life.

The title of the second chapter is Bengal Renaissance and Indian Nationalism. Among the views of Chaudhuri it is one of his crucial issues. Chaudhuri terms it as a period of cultural movement mingled with several components like literary, humanistic, religious and ethical aspects; each appearing one after another like advancing waves pounding on the shore of the society of Bengal and awakening the Bengali intelligentsia.

By the beginning of the twentieth century all the reform movement had attained maturity and created an environmental situation where all the elements of modern India had almost equal importance. Culture seemed to attain a national look bearing multi-dimensional fullness. But Chaudhuri confirms that his movement did not reach the whole population though it was quite inspiring and full of creativity. Chaudhuri condemns the poor intellectual level of the general people behind this failure.

In his book *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* in chapter “Enter Nationalism” Chaudhuri reminisces about the Swadeshi Movement days he spent at the Eastern part of Bengal which is now Bangladesh. He remembers that the Governor General of British-India Lord Curzon once went to Mymensingh and spoke about partition of Bengal which the elders did not welcome whole heartedly. Here he did not miss the chance to comment sarcastically about the double standards of the Bengalees. He said that in 1905 the Bengalees became mad for the annulment of the partition while in 1947 they supported it without any hesitation. He never forgot the emotional state of the Bengalees during the first anniversary of the Bengal partition. On that day a man visited their house with a bundle of Rakhis, a kind of cotton strips tied around the wrist as a symbol of brotherhood. Chaudhuri also mentions the optimistic approach of educated persons of the time towards the history of contemporary political revolutions. They were inspired and influenced by the doctrine of Burke and Mill and also of Gladstone and Lincoln. They also became emotionally awakened by the ideology of Rousseau and Mazzini. The methods of political actions suggested by the leaders of American Revolution, Garibaldi the hero of the Unification of Italy and the Irish Nationalists inspired the young generation as a whole. Actually Chaudhuri views the Swadeshi movement as an expression of nationalism of the Bengali Hindus based on common culture and common race with the Bengali Muslims. But the Muslims of East Bengal were opponent to the issue because the Bengal partition of 1905 offered them a separate homeland where they were the majority. However, Chaudhuri never became influenced by German Nationalism or Nazism which is an extreme form of nationalism based on ethnic cleansing. He and his friends could realize that the nature of that was not same as Italian or Irish nationalism. Nor was it like the nationalism of the Indian people, colonized under the British imperialism. The Indians actually idealized political freedom with a representative form of

government without any monarch to rule over, Chaudhuri of course believes that they were more swept away by the emotional fervor of the ideology rather than its rational aspects.

The fourth chapter revolves round “The Social Life of Calcutta”. Chaudhuri stayed in Calcutta from his early teens and it contributed a great influence in shaping up his personality. During the British Raj Calcutta became very important because the industrial establishment were concentrated around it. From the navigation point of view it was important for the communication of the shipping transports through its port. Moreover, the vast hinterland around it was used for the cultivation of the cash crops like tea, coal and jute. It was the meeting place of the Eastern and Western cultures. The starting of English education also started from here. So an English educated middle class community first emerged in Calcutta which later led the rest of the sub continent. So Calcutta became the cultural capital for the whole of India.

Chaudhuri admired the city and was grateful for the education and opportunities it provided him, it is in this city he learned to speak standard Bangla and came to appreciate many new things. At the same time from the core of his heart he could not wipe out his East Bengal identity. A sense of awkwardness prevented him from becoming free with Calcuttans. He hated its crowd and avoided getting on the bus or trams. He was there at a time when Calcutta was witnessing a very significant moment history. For example, at that time Tagore to the peak of his literary career; in 1913 he was awarded the noble prize for his “Songs Offerings”. Chaudhuri did have great fascination for literature and considered himself an active Tagorian but did not take any initiative to get introduced to Tagore until by chance he saw him in 1927 and had first and last conversation with him which was quite formal.

Chaudhuri acknowledges that though he had literary ambitions he avoided the company of literary circles unless he was forced to join in by one of his favourite teachers Mohitlal Mojumdar. He was interested in politics but did not attend political meetings. He held such self centred life in the city that he never felt like attending any of the Indian National Congress sessions held in Calcutta 1917, 1920 and 1928. Many prominent political leaders of the time held from Bengal particularly Calcutta. But Chaudhuri never bothered to meet anyone or strike acquaintance with him. He mentions in his autobiography that only once he had a fleeting glimpse of Surendranath Bannerjea in the entrance of Ripon College but never heard his famous oratory. Once he went to attend a public meeting addressed by Gokhle but he stayed far away from the dias for fear of being trampled by the mob and could not hear Gokhle’s speech. He saw C. R. Das only once getting down from a car. He never met Sarat Bose or his younger brother Subhas Bose before becoming the personal secretary to the elder Bose. He writes that he was so ardent a fan of Subhas Bose that he became a political suspect and had his name in the police diary but he never tried to contact him personally. He met Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru only once on

the insistence of one of his friends. He had acquired some courage to meet Nehru at that time on some reputation as a commentator on military subjects and his friend advised him to keep up the acquaintance. But Chaudhuri was reluctant to do that. So after few years when once again he met him at the house of Sarat Bose, Nehru could not recognize him. He maintained the same approach towards Mahatma Gandhi. Chaudhuri claims a kind of detachment towards society developed in him from early boyhood.

Chaudhuri comments that during his stay in Calcutta, the city grew very rapidly. Since it was a commercial hub people from all over India flocked to Calcutta. They settled down in different parts of the city and practiced their culture and rituals. At that time Calcutta had a large Hindi speaking population. Besides the European and the Hindu Bengali communities there were Eurasians and Muslims.

The fourth chapter titled “Political Movements and crises” is about the movements in Pre-partitioned India. Chaudhuri intends to give an elaborate account of the British withdrawal from India. Since he directly experienced the situation he thought that it was his moral obligation to leave an account for others. He believes that the political events of this period between 1921 and 1947 contributed to a lot of political excitement and activity and ended with a climax which was significant for the world history too. It may be mentioned that the independence granted to the subcontinent was symbolic to the commencement of decolonization of the British Empire. India’s National Movement was the outcome of the contribution of many people. As the central political party Congress was the bargaining agent but the executive body was the cross section people of India. The militant nationalists, the revolutionaries, the Gandhi Satyagrahis and struggles, the Khilafatists, the Communists, the INA, the peasant organizations, the Sikhs through their Gurdwara reform movement, the Vaikkam Satyagrahis, the Garhwali Army mutineers, the Royal Indian Navy mutineers etc. all contributed to their optimum capabilities. They were essentially ordinary men and women who took part in India’s national movement they came from all parts of the country and from all classes. We see them facing a firing squad or mounting the gallows, suffering imprisonment, confiscation of properties – all for a common cause and that was the end of the British rule – the freedom of the country to which they belonged.

The fifth chapter focuses on the view of Chaudhuri about 1921-1930 phase of literature and culture of Bengal. Chaudhuri seems to believe that human civilization moves in three cyclical phases: rise – peak – decay. He feels the same about Bengali literature because it was a time when the two greatest names in Bengal Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and Saratchandra Chattopadhyay (1876-1938) had reached their creative peak. Chaudhuri thinks that no more development is expected in this field since the zenith has already been achieved. The writings of

the new generation did not attract him. He termed the post-Tagore writings of the time “as crude and shallow” (147).

To Chaudhuri the reading of Bengali literature offered an ethereal enjoyment and mental fulfillment to its reader that it created a self content world for him. Bengali life and Bengali literature became so closely connected that it increased ones emotional intensity and also ideological confidence. Through the interaction of life and literature the Bengalees’ attained the fullness of human existence which was only possible by a “free and abundant play of emotion, feeling and imagination” (155). The library culture began in Bengal.

Chapter six is about the revolutionary activities against British which started around 1905 and continued till 1934. It was centralized in Bengal but its echo was also heard in other few provinces of British-India like Punjab, Bombay and some other places.

Chaudhuri conforms the revolutionary trend which broke out before the Gandhian movement and reached its peak. He comments that never before a revolutionary attack of such scale had occurred. So it created a great sensation among the British residents in Calcutta. The Bengali educated class became thrilled too. Chaudhuri was anxious about the reaction of the Government and their reciprocal policy over the Bengalees. Chaudhuri a well-read person on military history treated it as a folly on the part of the revolutionaries because the British contingent in India was much stronger to intervene with by a non-formal local force at any time. Chaudhuri on this occasion briefly discusses the political background of this revolution.

Chaudhuri explains his aversion for political assassination explicitly. He cites an example to confirm his views on militarism. He says that in 1929 he once met a soldier who belonged to the 41 Dogra Regiment of the Indian army and had fought in Mesopotamia. He showed the writer a wound in his hand which he received while crawling out from his trench to save his British counterpart. Chaudhuri in reply exclaimed that he might have lost his life in doing so. The soldier told something to him which implicated that it was the duty of a living soldier to help his comrade at times of danger. Chaudhuri appreciated his remark and took it to be a proper approach of a warrior towards life. He had a feeling of being introduced to a true warrior. He compares a revolutionary whom he identifies as a terrorist with that of a murderer. He admits that he never agreed with the proposition that the end justifies means. Chaudhuri disapproves violence of the Bengalees because he considers them feeble and ineffectual. He dismisses the commitment of the revolutionaries as hysterical. Chaudhuri calls the revolutionaries as terrorists because he believes that they carried the Bengali social tradition to the political sphere. He compared them to ‘possessed men’ who developed an anti-British inertia from the very beginning of their adolescence and continued to remain vindictive through the following years. They just needed to become equipped with arms and bombs to set out for murder of Englishman.

Chaudhuri despised the involvement of the Bengali girls in the revolutionary movement from 1930 onwards.

Chaudhuri's comment about the Chittagong episode is that it was over rated by the Bengali's. He believes that after 1920 the Bengali dominance in Indian National politics was declining and after 1930 it almost disappeared except this 'terrorism'. So Bengalees' love to glorify this incident. He believes that it gives emotional consolation to the Bengalees as well as an apology for their inefficiency to lead the nation. A sort of reprimanding attitude is evident in Chaudhuri's words when he says, no other set of people in India are able to console themselves more easily with illusions.

In Chapter seven Nirad C. Chaudhuri observes the prelude of independence from his own experience. He too confirms the mass murders committed by the Hindus, the Muslims and Sikhs on one another in 1946 and 1947. He also believes that the political actors who were responsible for much of the mayhem that accompanied the Partition could not anticipate such a blood bath. It was also true that they could not prevent it because the situation went beyond their control.

The aftermath of the Partition had been a legacy of tears, agony of displacement and the deep anguish of leaving ancestral homes. I may mention here the name of Saadat Hasan Manto. He represented the right thinking, perceptive poets and writers who could understand this agony and anguish. He hated politics and politicians and compared them to birds of prey. He offered us a viable notion of secularism which stems from our culture and is not borrowed from the West. Partition is the price that the religious animosity made us pay and it was a dear price. It left one million dead and twenty-six million displaced.

So those are the issues raised by Nirad C. Chaudhuri that are examined by me in New Historicism method. Chaudhuri maintains an uncompromising attitude towards his views presented in his writings. He refused to consider any change in his views under any circumstances. This particular element proves his strength of character. In his personal life too after the publication of the first book, due to controversial dedication he was dismissed from his position with All India Radio. He was also denied his pension. This extraordinary quality of speaking the truth as he saw it renders his writing a special force.

Chapter 1

Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1897-1998)

Dhruva N. Chaudhuri, eldest son of Nirad C. Chaudhuri explores the memories of his father in his book *Nirad C. Chaudhuri: Many shades, Many Frames*. Such a shade is reflected in his vision when he remembers that one morning his father in his Oxford home was suddenly carried away with his memories of Kishoreganj while having his breakfast of cereal and milk. Kishoreganj was then a sub-divisional town of East Bengal in British-India though now it is one of the 64 districts of Bangladesh. Chaudhuri always liked to recall his East Bengal origin with a subtle sense of pride and fondness. He states that from paternal side he belonged to Banagram of Kishoreganj and from maternal side he held from Kalikutch of Tipperah. Tipperah too at present belongs to Comilla district in Bangladesh. So, Chaudhuri originally came from the Eastern part of Bengal which later became Bangladesh.

Chaudhuri was born on 23 November, 1897 or 9 Agrahayan, 1304 according to the Bengali calendar year. His father Upendra Narayan Chaudhuri had moved from Banagram to Kishoreganj to earn an independent living pursuing the profession of a muktear at the local court. Chaudhuri explicates that the lawyers of Kishoreganj at that time belonged to two groups. The first group had higher academic qualifications and professional skills. They could defend all sorts of cases if they wished but in Kishoreganj they usually dealt with the civil cases. The second group was called the muktears who were litigated to defend the criminal cases only.

According to Bengali culture the connotation of the surname 'Chaudhuri' is 'the son of a zamindar'. Zamindar in those days was a local rich land owner who occupied multiple acres of landed property under his possession. Chaudhuri's father also held from such an ancestral background but he decided to leave such legacy because his family started experiencing bad days due to the extravagant life style of their ancestors. Chaudhuri's grandmother was a lady of strong will power. She took care of her son by sending him to high school and then to study law so that he became capable of earning an independent living. Chaudhuri said that she made all these expenses by dint of a luckily found pot full of gold coins which she discovered while digging out some arum roots for cooking. The coins belonged to the era of the Mughal emperor Jahangir. Chaudhuri had seen these coins too with his father who made use of them whenever he met rainy

days. These gold coins helped Chaudhuri's father to overcome his financial crises till his last days in Benares where he died of a sudden cerebral stroke at the age of sixty-seven.

According to Chaudhuri another possible reason of his father's moving to Kishoreganj was his mother Shushila Devi's unhappiness. After the death of her two new born sons she no longer wanted to stay in Banagram. She persuaded her husband to go to Kishoreganj and start an independent professional life there.

Dhruvo remembers the morning in London when his father became carried out with the memories of Kishoreganj. He went on to describe the place to his son. He described the place as having no more than six or seven brick houses in the entire town. All houses including theirs were built with reed mats fixed with a solid wooden framework and galvanized iron sheets for roofs. And for the plinth and the floors beaten earth was used which required to be wiped with a mixture of wet clay and cow-dung cakes every day. Chaudhuri mentioned the small river that flowed from the River Brahmaputra and divided Kishoreganj into two halves. He recalled nostalgically that it became a small stream during summer and winter months but in the rainy season it became a lively water pool. Then boats of all sizes and shapes floated down the river and made its destination to and fro to Kishoreganj. These boats were the chief mode of communication for both people and the goods there. Chaudhuri and his family also visited Banagram by those boats. Banagram was ten miles away from Kishoreganj.

Modern communication system like locomotive train did not reach Kishoreganj until 1916 but that did not influence the life style or education of the thriving middle class of the sub-divisional town. Chaudhuri confirmed his father as a decent man who was fond of buying the best household items whenever an opportunity presented itself. In those days he bought non-electric light fittings for his home and introduced aluminum utensils and the kerosene stove in the family which was quite unusual for the contemporary life-style. Besides, Chaudhuri's father had deep interest in English history and literature which influenced his family too.

At a time when well-to-do families did not care much about education, Chaudhuri's father encouraged his children to familiarize themselves with a wide range of ideas in the areas of arts and science. He even encouraged his children about music though its practice was not much appreciated then in the society. Chaudhuri's father was enough concerned with his children's

regular diet and emphasized on their adequate sleep and physical exercises. These reflections were also beyond time. Chaudhuri recalls his mother's 'fierce' 'hasty' and extremely truthful nature.

The cultural environment of his family contributed a lot in shaping up his personality. His parents were fond of literary studies. His father subscribed to several literary magazines belonging both to the orthodox and the liberal schools. Chaudhuri and his elder brother read a lot from which came their inspirations to write. All these happened when Chaudhuri was about to enter his teens. Around this time he saw for the first time the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* brought to their house by a cousin of him, an advocate of Calcutta High Court.

Chaudhuri reminisces in the Kishorganj part of his autobiography about the reproductions of western paintings in the "West Hut" of his father's house. One of these pictures was on "Boer War" and the other was the coloured reproduction of Raphael's "Madonna Dell Sedia". Chaudhuri's impression was that the pictures were contrasting as well as complementary of the Empire in the sense that one being the symbol of military glory and other of aesthetic excellence of the British. The pictures might have been hung by either of his parents which implied their cultured and informed minds.

Chaudhuri also informed that he was more or less free from religious prejudices because his father was distinctly unorthodox and his mother too belonged to the reformist school of Brahmos.

All these realities made Chaudhuri's upbringing really exceptional.

Chaudhuri's formal education began in Kishorganj but the family had to leave the place for Calcutta in 1910. The decision of moving to Calcutta was due to the result of many factors including the symptoms of a grave illness that his mother was suspected to be suffering from and also the deterioration of the political situation in East Bengal. The education of the elder boys had been disturbed because of the violent turn of the freedom movement there. In Calcutta Chaudhuri's father gave up his legal profession and started a business with the help of a cousin. Before arriving to Calcutta Chaudhuri and his elder brother were sent to Mymensingh and were admitted to a school there. There they lived in a hostel. From there they went to Kishoreganj and then to Banagram before going to Calcutta. By the end of 1910 Chaudhuri left his birth place

Kishoreganj forever and started for Banagram with his father and his siblings. For Chaudhuri leaving Kishoreganj was an emotional event. As he writes in *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*:

Although I was coming to the village of all my ancestors, where Chaudhuris' lived for no one knew how many hundreds of years, I felt as if I had left home to trudge forever along on public road (299).

On their coming to Calcutta Chaudhuri's father admitted him and his elder brother to a second grade school there following a friend's advice. He agreed with his friend that his sons being coming from a peripheral place like Kishoreganj might have difficulty coping up immediately with the urban environment. But later when he wished to change their school after sometime, the Principal requested him and persuaded him to keep them in the same institution till matriculation. Mohitlal Mojumdar, the renowned writer of Bengali literature had been teaching English there at that time. He greatly admired Chaudhuri's uncommon command in English.

Soon after Chaudhuri's family had settled down in Calcutta his father became seriously ill. The doctor advised him to move to a quieter place, so they rented a small house in Ballyganj which was then a semi-rural lower middle class suburb near a railway station. Chaudhuri frequented the station and learnt all about train signals and control activities at that time.

As the illness of Chaudhuri's father incurred heavy losses in his business he went to Banagram to collect money and bought a small house in Calcutta for his family. During this time Chaudhuri's mother suffered from acute recurrent malaria and so was his elder brother so the family decided to go back to Banagram leaving the two elder children in Calcutta for studies. They stayed at a privately run hostel known as mess in the central part of Calcutta.

Later, the Chaudhuri brothers moved to the Oxford Mission Hostel. They were left under the supervision of an English clergyman called Father Carlos Edward Prior. He was also their hostel Superintendent. Father Edward took great care of Chaudhuri's mental and physical health. Chaudhuri acknowledged his kindness even in his later life. It was he who encouraged him to go through the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* regularly, a habit which he maintained till his old age. The reading of the author Mr. Roger Fry developed an aesthetic sense in him which persisted throughout his life. Thus from his influence Chaudhuri learnt to appreciate Florentine paintings

more than Baroque or Mozart more than Beethoven. A sense of selectivity guided his actions. He developed appreciation for Turgenev in the same way as he did for Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.

After the completion of his matriculation he attended the Ripon College for his first Arts examination. In this institution he came across the lectures of historian Bipin Gupta which inspired him a lot and made him study history later. The plan of reading history as his honours subject was also an expression of his pro-liberal and anti-conservative mind. Chaudhuri was a widely read person and his reading extended from Edmund Burke to the expeditions of Napoleon. He was surprised to know that Burke was a conservative and was inspired by the life of Napoleon. In fact, while Chaudhuri was in college Napoleon had a place of honour higher than Raphael, Milton, Shakespeare and Martin Luther King among the Bengalis. Chaudhuri writes:

If any whole-hearted Bonapartists were to be found anywhere in the world at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century they were to be found in Bengal. All educated Bengalis literally adored Napoleon and, not merely satisfied with mere worship, tried to understand his military campaigns (120).

The Public Library at Kishorganj contained the memoir of Napoleon's valet Constant. So it was partly due to the free academic environment of the family, partly to the deep study of Napoleon's campaigns and indeed the influence of his revered teachers Chaudhuri became inspired to study history for his graduation degree. He was a student of the Scottish Church College during this time.

Chaudhuri was a voracious reader from his early school days. His depth of knowledge on various issues made his father and others believe that one day he would become a university teacher. Chaudhuri also set his ambition to become so. In his young days the socio-economic, cultural and political scenario of Bengal was blended with the norms and values of Bengali cultural movement and the liberal humanistic tradition of western education. Government service under the British Raj was monopolized by the opportunists. A Government officer was expected to ignore the native interest and adhere to the policy of the Government. Chaudhuri being an intelligent man and an outstanding scholar from a very early age understood that it would be

better for him to take up teaching as a profession. Teaching at a university would also meet his scholarly aptitude for non-ending studies and at the same time keep him socially awake and purposeful.

He graduated with honours in history in 1918 securing the first position in the first class which definitely was a rare distinction in those days. After that he enrolled himself for the M. A. degree in the Department of History at the University of Calcutta. Eminent scholars like R. C. Mojumdar, Dr. Kalidas Nag and Prof Y. J. Taraporewallah taught him there. As a result his fascination for history never waned in his life. He sat for his M. A. examination in 1920 but as he dropped the fourth paper and never ever completed his examination could not obtain his M. A. degree. This particular failure created a deep setback in his life. For lack of one thing, it shattered his dream of becoming an academic. He started despising himself for his failure. He wrote in his autobiography that facing the examination in every subsequent public examination became a psychologically burden for him and left him in a wretched position. He became totally run down and decided to discontinue his academic studies. His parents and teachers sympathized with him and consoled him for this unfortunate situation and encouraged him to finish it the next time. He finally decided to quit it forever.

The reason for this academic failure, according to Chaudhuri himself was not difficult to guess. He had gone completely absorbed reading historians such as Titus, Livius and Albert Sorel in French, the language which he taught himself – as a result the syllabus of the university got neglected and hence it was impossible for him to cope with the entire course at the time of his final examination.

Chaudhuri's father was utmost serious about supporting the academic career of his most promising son. But Chaudhuri wasted the money received from his father for his studies in buying expensive books and clothes for himself. This was strongly disapproved by his father. When he finally returned to Kishorganj, Chaudhuri received objection from his father. Then instead of waiting for an improvement in his father's mood, he decided to try his luck in Calcutta. After a few futile and depressing weeks in the late summer of 1921, which he spent reading at the Imperial Library he finally got a clerical job at the Military Accounts Department

of the Government of India through the intervention of one of his elder cousins who held a senior post there.

Chaudhuri joined there as a clerk. The starting salary was high for those days. It amounted to a hundred rupees a month. Chaudhuri dispensed his job with utmost seriousness. His superior officer was an English Colonel. He became impressed with Chaudhuri's English writing of prose. His wonderful deliberation charmed him on as prosaic a subject. His words of appreciation spread fast and within a few months he was promoted to the rank of Assistant Superintendent. His salary was also doubled. Chaudhuri consoled himself by thinking that it was a far better start in a career than that of a university teacher.

So in 1921 at the age of twenty-three Chaudhuri also worked as a journalist besides his regular job and started to earn independently. The year was important because in this year Barrister Mohan Das Gandhi, who later became widely admired and respected as Mahatma Gandhi, started his non-cooperation movement which was a very significant turn in the anti-British Independence Movement. Chaudhuri had never supported Gandhi's ideology but this was the first time he found his sympathies with his ideas. But he was disturbed to see the violence and vindictiveness the movement borne. So when Gandhi called it off because of the rising tide of violence, Chaudhuri was relieved. But this had given rise to another problem. He realized the futility of his situation. He became absolutely bored with the routine job of his office. He thought of resigning the job but certain family responsibilities pulled him back.

Apart from doing his routine job Chaudhuri wrote articles in journals and newspapers. He first started writing in a mood of despair after his mother expired in 1924. The sad news came when he was preparing to go to Poona and take over his responsibilities in the branch office of the Ammunition Factory in Kirkee. He went to attend his mother's funeral. After it was over, one day with a heavy heart he attempted to write a story titled "A Funeral March" It took a year from 1924 to 1925, to get it finished. Chaudhuri did not start writing till 1927. He also published a sharp criticism of the book *The Heart of Aryavarta* by Lord Ronaldshay, the Governor of Bengal from 1917 to 1921. It was a controversial book on the issue of the cultural situation in India. Chaudhuri made a few comments which intensified the controversy. The review was published in *The Statesman*. In those days very few Indians got the opportunity to publish in this paper.

However, Chaudhuri could never make Calcutta his home. After leaving his birth place Kishoreganj, he could never adjust himself to the urban environment of Calcutta. A feeling of estrangement was always there at the back of his heart. The sense of open-heartedness which he experienced in East Bengal seemed to be absent in Calcutta. So his displacement from East Bengal made him belong to geographically nowhere other than his reconstructed and imaginary timeless England. So he could not conform himself to the nationalist ideology rather he seemed to observe every situation from a third party point of view. Instead of facing the realities of dislocation he seemed to blame the Bengalis for their cultural approach. He suffered from a crisis of identity.

Chaudhuri also could not adjust to Calcutta's middle class ethos which celebrated its provisional privileges over the rural non-Calcutta Bengalis. Chaudhuri recalls several incidents from his school days when he was teased by his Calcutta class mates for his East Bengal origin. These bitter experiences also prompted him to move away from Calcutta people.

According to Chaudhuri, he made his inglorious exit from the Military Accounts Department in 1926. Chaudhuri confided to Dhruvo, his son that he resigned following a clash of interest with his superior officer against a transfer order. The office paid him the arrears of his salary following his resignation. He bought a full-size Medici print of Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa with that money and framed it in expensive Mahogany wood. He then escaped to Benaras as an escort to an old widow who was a relative to his elder sister-in-law. He availed this opportunity because he was interested to see the ancient Hindu city as well as to avoid the frequent reprimands of his siblings as well his friends about his luxury hobby of buying expensive artifacts and foreign books.

In this connection Chaudhuri recalls an incident. On his return from Benaras Chaudhuri's habit of procuring his articles of fascination on credit led to confrontations and hitches with his brothers. The heated exchange one day reached a point of no return. So he wandered the whole day without food and slept in a carriage at Shialdah railway yard. He became seriously ill. On receiving the news Chaudhuri's father came to his escort and took him back to Kishoreganj.

Chaudhuri became the editor of a journal named *The Modern Review*. At the end of 1933 he left the journal on account of a new offer from a newspaper in Madras. The owner's name was

Sadananda Babu who had started *The Free Press Journal*. Chaudhuri joined the newspaper on January 1, 1934. But the paper could not take off due to different technical problems. Chaudhuri became unemployed again. Chaudhuri tried to get back to *The Modern Review* but couldn't because a new person was already recruited there.

Chaudhuri got married on 23 April, 1932 at the age of thirty-four. His bride's name was Amiya Dhar. She was twelve years younger to him. According to the tradition in East Bengal, spouses of the landlords with the title of Chaudhuri came to be known as Chaudhurani after their marriage. Chaudhuri though progressive loved to stick to the tradition. So it was decided that after marriage his wife's surname would be Chaudhurani. Amiya Dhar was born in Shillong, the capital of Assam during the British rule. Her father Rai Shahib Dinanath Dhar, was a well respected government officer of the Shillong Municipality. He had supervised the reconstruction of the Shillong town, including the restoration of the famous Wards Lake, after the severe earthquake in 1897. The earthquake took place shortly before Chaudhuri was born. Amiya received her education first to a missionary school in Shillong and then to Brahma Girls School in Calcutta. After the School Final Examination she studied at the City College of Calcutta and later did her Intermediate in Arts from Scottish Church College. From her high school days to the end of the Intermediate examination she stayed mostly in hostels and had a diverse experience of both British and Swadeshi culture. Amiya had two sisters and no brother. Her father was a prudent man. He kept apart a sum of money for each of his daughters. This became a perennial source of strength and relief for Amiya when Chaudhuri became unemployed. At such times though quite hard up, she managed to get on with her family. The couple had three sons namely Dhruvo, Kirti and Prithvi. Chaudhuri named Kirti after his great grandfather Kirti Narayan Chaudhuri. Kirti became a Professor in the Department of history at the University of London.

Around this time when he lost the job after the Madras based journal was closed his father died in Benaras. Before his death he came to know about Chaudhuri's unemployment. The dutiful father assured to help him on his return to Calcutta. As Chaudhuri recalls,

I was thirty-six then. Still, I felt as if I had been deprived of the only source of protection I had and became an orphan. The feeling did not come from

expectation of monetary help from him, for I knew that he could not do much. It was the loss of moral support which I felt was at my back that made me consider myself totally helpless. I was faced with the fact that henceforth I should have to fight my battles alone. Even then I did not realize what a support my wife would be to me. My father had complete confidence in her, and thought I was safe in her hands (371).

After that he became the acting editor of the official journal of the Calcutta Corporation. His friend Amal Home was the editor and he helped him in getting this job. Home was kind enough to install him in his own position during a leave vacancy. While working there Chaudhuri experienced the real political situation of the country. He was alarmed to see the rate of corruption in the Calcutta Corporation. In 1934, he anticipated further worsening of the situation in case the British left India for good. To quote him:

I anticipated that transfer of political power to Indians would make the Indian people victims of an insidious exploitation unparalleled even in the long history of their sufferings. I became opposed to the idea, and said to myself in the words of the cliché that India in that event would become Calcutta Corporation writ large (383).

His job was extended to another three months as he worked as an assistant to Home for the publication of a special issue on the occasion of the ascent to the throne of George V. Chaudhuri was proud to be an active part of the event and even did not mind to work without salary for a month.

He then became the editor of a journal in Bengali which ran only five issues. The journal belonged to a friend of Sajanikanta Das, the proprietor of the journal *Shonibarar Chithi*. However, the journal had to fold because of financial difficulties.

Chaudhuri then decided to work as a free lancer for *Shanibarar Chithi* which was then edited by Parimal Goswami, for him Chaudhuri maintained a great respect. In his articles for the journal he expressed his views on the life and culture of Bengalees. He maintained that up to 1937 he was optimistic about the future of the Bengalees but after that he lost his faith in them and so he stopped predicting their future.

Around this period the heir apparent of the Indian state of Sitamau commissioned him as his literary assistant. The man was interested in historical research and wrote a PhD dissertation on the rise of the Maratha principalities in Central India especially in the state of Malwa in eighteenth century. He wished to publish it as a book so he needed an editor to help him. Sir Jadunath Sarkar the renowned historian recommended Chaudhuri to him. Chaudhuri worked there for six months, and praised the courtesy shown to him by the prince. The salary he drew was also appreciable and it helped Chaudhuri to make his two ends meet.

During this period Chaudhuri was also invited to attend a literary conference in Patna arranged by the Bengalees living there. In this conference Bibhutibhshan Banerjee accompanied him.

He was then appointed by Satya Charan Laha, a member of the Laha nobility as his literary assistant. Laha, a doctorate of Calcutta University was a Councilor of the Calcutta Corporation and later became the Sheriff of the city. He worked for him as a part time job holder for five years from 1937 to 1942.

At the same time Chaudhuri also worked part time for Sarat Chandra Bose who was then a leading Barrister of Calcutta High Court and a front ranking nationalist leader. Bose was sacrificing a substantial part of his practice for politics, and could not cope up with all the routine work alone. So he needed a secretarial help. On his request to Suresh Mojumdar who was the owner of a large newspaper group, Chaudhuri was appointed there. Chaudhuri though at first showed reluctance to work with a politician because of his reservations about Indian politicians but later agreed.

As secretary to Bose, Chaudhuri observed the maneuverings of Indian National Congress leaders before they obtained power in 1947. Chaudhuri had written down these observations in his book, *Thy Hand, Great Anarch! India: 1921-1952* (1987) The significance of this book lies in Chaudhuri's mystification of the Indian independence movement. It gives us some firsthand experiences about the leading icons of Indian politics. Chaudhuri worked for Bose for three and a half years from July 1937 to December 1941. The work ended with the imprisonment of Bose for political reasons by the British Government. Though it was a trying time for Chaudhuri, he had some satisfaction because he was earning a good sum of money through his writings. At that time he was writing regularly on World War II for a business magazine called *The Capital* which

was edited by an English man called Sir Geoffrey Tyson. Chaudhuri also continued with his regular broadcasts at the Calcutta Station of All India Radio. Later due to strong difference of views with the Controller of the Radio station he left the job. Subsequently he was offered an assignment to the AIR, Delhi with a reasonable salary. Chaudhuri agreed to join.

In 1941 he left for Delhi. His family joined him there. He never came back to stay in Calcutta or anywhere in Bengal anymore. Chaudhuri felt that life in Delhi was no better than in Calcutta. In Calcutta he was hurt to experience the provincialism of the Bengalees; but in Delhi, though it was the capital of the whole of India the general spirit of the Bengalees remained the same. So he could never become close to the Bengalees there.

In 1947 India won freedom. After independence Chaudhuri critically observed the overall administrative situation of the country. He saw that everybody in the government was busy utilizing their own connections. Even clerks became secretaries in the Indian civil service. But what was a wonder to him that these people were able to keep up the administration running more or less efficiently in the earlier British model. Chaudhuri had personal acquaintances with some of the powerful leaders of the ruling Congress Party but he never went to them to get any advantage. In fact in 1946 Sarat Bose became a Minister in the Interim Government. Chaudhuri never went to meet him. Instead Chaudhuri led an aesthetic life. It was European music that kept him absorbed and made him feel free from all tensions of life. He liked Georgian chants and listened to those regularly. Chaudhuri started to write his own autobiography against the backdrop of the historical-political situation of India. He believed that since he had lived through the height of the Raj and also had seen its dissolution, his autobiography would parallel the history of the British Empire in India.

The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian (1951) made him famous among the British in India because he dedicated the book to the Raj. In this book he criticized his fellow Indians and noted down the positive aspects of the British. All through his life he had been a fan of the neo-classical poet Alexander Pope. Although Chaudhuri claimed of being misunderstood, the book irritated most of the Indians particularly the political or bureaucratic establishments. He said that the dedication was really a condemnation of the British rulers for not treating the Indians as equals. He drew a parallel with ancient Rome and said that the dedication was an imitation of

what Cicero said about the conduct of Verres, a Roman proconsul of Sicily who oppressed Sicilian Roman citizens, although in their desperation they cried out: *Civis Romanus Sum*.

Chaudhuri soon got his reward from the British Government in 1955 -- he was invited by the BBC to go to England for five weeks to deliver five lectures. He collected edited versions of those lectures in his book *A Passage to England*, which E. M. Forster reviewed in the *Times Literary supplement*. Chaudhuri published his articles in *London Times* and in Journal like *Encounter*. He was invited to work for *Atlantic Monthly* from America. Chaudhuri felt proud to be acknowledged by the Europeans. To quote him from *Thy Hand, Great Anarch! India: 1921-1952*,

What happened socially was in its way remarkable. Up to that age – I was fifty-four and my wife was forty-two – we had a very little social life; mine who confined to my very few literary friends, and my wife’s to relatives. Now it became different. For one thing, because our social life was to be among the Europeans in Delhi, my wife was invited with me and, also, this was real social life as understood by me (925).

Chaudhuri immensely enjoyed his first England trip. But discovered a great difference between the bookish knowledge he acquired so far about his imaginary timeless England and the real picture which he saw when he personally went there. To quote his impression from his book *A Passage to England*,

I had no previous idea that things which were so familiar to me from description and pictures, which I could still identify as objects in outline, could become so strange and different in their dimensions, atmosphere and personality (19).

In his own country he was almost treated like a traitor. But he was allowed to continue his job in All India Radio, but was given three show cause letters one after another by the Directorate-General of the Ministry of Information. On 5th August 1952 he received a note asking him to surrender one third of his income from the book he received to the Government while the second one of 29 August called for an explanation why he had published the book without seeking permission from the Government. The last note contained a preliminary threat of disciplinary action against him which could amount to even dismissal from service.

Chaudhury ignored all the notes because he was confident about its moral implication. In fact no legal step could be taken against him but he was blacklisted as a writer. He was also deprived of his pension. Chaudhuri's post was in the External Service Department of the All India Radio. A few weeks before his retirement, on his 54th birthday he made a courtesy call on Miss Mehra Masani who was then In-charge of the Division of the Directorate General under the Ministry of Information. Miss Masani as usual behaved cordially with him but before saying good-bye she issued him a letter saying that it was from the Directorate-General's office. To quote Chaudhuri,

When I opened I found it to be a letter of formal reprimand for not supplying the information about my previous income. The office had been lying low although it received my curt refusal long ago, and now it fixed its last shot when I was in no position to protest against the reprimand, being no longer in service. I further learned that instructions had been issued not to give me commission for talks even as an external broadcaster, although I had broadcast for All India Radio on international affairs from 1937 and was regarded as an expert on the subject (934).

Since Chaudhuri did not get any pension he was again in deep crisis for want of a dependable source of income. No other Indian newspaper except *The Statesman* published his articles. His bad reputation as an anti-Indian forced him to stay aloof from his fellow Indians.

The British representatives in India remained indifferent though his crisis had resulted from the homage he had paid to them. At a time of uncertainty and desperation the French Ambassador in Delhi Count Ostrog offered him a job. He was to look after the embassy's bulletin as a part time editor. This was a great relief for him. In 1955 the French embassy also sent him on a visit to Paris.

Chaudhuri received his first proposal of visiting England in the month of January, 1955 by the BBC. BBC financed him a six week visit to the country – where he would deliver four talks on England. Chaudhuri was very happy at this realization of his visiting his “time-less” England. He patched up his Paris visit with this England tour. He also visited Rome and visited the relics of the Roman Empire.

Nirad Chaudhuri came to be recognized as an intellectual thinker, writer and scholar only after he was awarded the Duff Cooper Memorial for literature in early 1967 for his book *The Continent of the Circe*. He received this prestigious prize from Field Marshal Auchinleck in London. At that time he made a brief visit to Tel Aviv and expressed great admiration for Israel and its countrymen. It seemed that he was always fond of giving rise to controversies on various issues.

In 1968 there was another surprise waiting for Chaudhuri and his wife. This time he got an offer from Colonel Laurens Van der Post who was then visiting Delhi and through him the Max Mueller family requested Chaudhuri to write a biography of the famous Vedic Scholar. Prof Rt. Hon. Freidrich Max Mueller. The Publishers Chatto & Windus were prepared to pay the air passage to England and the expenses for six months stay and air freight for both of them. They left for London in 1968. This time Chaudhuri spent most of his time in the University town of Oxford. The papers on Prof Max Mueller were kept mostly in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Those had been donated by his grandson J. N. Max Mueller.

Dhruva N. Chaudhuri admits that this visit was to be the beginning of his parent's long association with Oxford. Later in two years time a film on Chaudhuri was made by James Ivory and Ismail Merchant in Oxford for the BBC titled *A Brown Man's search for Civilization*.

On his return to Delhi Chaudhuri continued to write his provocative writing in various issues and appearing in Public in "flamboyant style of dresses" (*Many Shades, Many Frames*, 115). He wrote articles like "Why I Hate Indians" which was published in the *Illustrated Weekly* then edited by Kushwant Singh. There his coloured photograph appeared in the Cover Page wearing a maroon jacket with a fanny linen shirt trimmed with lace frills. It raised hue and cry all over India. However, the publicity resulted in the writing of two new books titled, *To Live or not to Live* and *Culture in the Vanity Bag*.

In January 1970 Chaudhuri received an offer from Sir George Weidenfeld, Director of Weidenfeld and Nicholson Publishers to write a book on Hinduism for their series "Religions of the World". They wanted to finance the Chaudhuris' the complete expenses for flying to the UK and also their six months stay in that country.

In June 1970 he flew to England. His relatives, friends, admirers, no one could think on that day that this plan of six months stay in England would actually be extended to the last of their lives. At that time Chaudhuri was aged seventy-three.

Towards the end of 1970 the books on Max Mueller and Hinduism remained incomplete and the Chaudhuris' became somewhat depressed in the anticipation of returning home due to lack of fund and the unfinished assignment. At this time he got an offer from Christopher Macle hose, Director of the Basic & Jenkins Publications to write a book on Robert Clive. Thus his staying in England again got a chance to prolong. After two decades later Chaudhuri in an article published in Bengali Journal *Desh* from Calcutta wrote that the liability of writing those three books made him feel guilty and he compared himself with the situation of a poor indigo farmer or a Muslim weaver of Bengal for whom advance was essential for their survival. He also boldly declared, that "I never asked for any of those writing assignment myself and nor did I seek any favour for coming and settling down in the UK as an immigrant." (*Many Shades*, 117) However, it may be mentioned that after the completion of those books again a crisis period started for him. He would have returned to India once again had not Dr. Gauhar Rizvi, then a student of Oxford gave a tireless effort and arranged a generous social security pension for life for him and his wife. So it cannot be denied that though he did not become an immigrant and carried an Indian passport throughout his life, he must had a subtle wish for staying there for the rest of his life.

Around 1971-1972 Chaudhuri was invited by the University of Chicago to deliver a series of lectures on Indian religion and culture as a visiting professor. He did another teaching assignment in USA at the University of Austin in Texas.

Chaudhuri's book *Max Mueller: The Scholar Extraordinary* was published in 1974. It got the Shahitya Academy Award in India in 1976 for its deep authenticity.

At the age over eighty years, he started to write his second part of his autobiography *Thy Hand, Great Anarch! India: 1921-1952*. After its completion it was published both from UK and the USA in November 1987 on Chaudhuri's ninetieth birthday by Chatto & Windus. This book was a well record of facts of the happenings in India from 1921 to 1952. This book was awarded Ananda Purushkar of 1988 by the Ananda Bazaar Group of newspapers. The book was also reminded for the prestigious "National Cash Register" award for non-fiction books in London. The book became a best seller in home and abroad. The Chaudhuris' were deprived of a large part of their social security benefits due to its exceptional acceptance.

Chaudhuri's three books in Bengali – *The Atmaghati Bangalee*, *Bangalee Jibone Romoni* and *Atmoghati Rabindranath* created a great sensation among Bengalis all over the world and the sale-value of these three books was also very high.

In 1990 the University of Oxford decided to award him an Honourary Degree of Doctor of Letters at its next Encaenia ceremony. In his speech the Public Orator said that the degree was conferred to him because of his interpretation of the Indian society and customs to the British with great intellectual ability and skill.

Two years later, in 1992 Chaudhuri was awarded title of an Honourary Commander of the British Empire (CBE). This award was the recognition of the outstanding services he rendered to British national life as a writer and journalist focusing on Britain's relationship with India. They mentioned that the tribute was for him as well as for his country.

Chaudhuri's last book was *Three Horsemen of the New Apocalypse*. The title the three horsemen represents individualism, nationalism, and democracy. He had interesting comments to make on all three conceptions. Chaudhuri was well versed in different languages like Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Greek, Latin, English, French and German. So he read *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius *Divine comedy* by Dante in original.

His son Dhruvo mentioned that Chaudhuri often quoted Marcus Aurelius, The Roman Emperor from the second century: 'Mortal man you have been a citizen in the great city [Polis], and what does it matter for five or fifty years.' Later the same monarch concluded: 'Leave the stage, therefore, and be reconciled for He, also, who, lets his servant depart is reconciled.' (*Many Shades, Many Frames*, (142). In the same piece of his writing Chaudhuri is said to have mentioned that he could conquer the fear of death only by surrendering to the inevitability of death. Like Tagore Chaudhuri believed that he had carried death with him all along his life. But he dissented from Tagore on the point that there was no glorious life after death and it was the final end.

In the final years of his life Chaudhuri called Rabindranath Tagore the greatest of all Bengalis though in his long span of life Chaudhuri confronted many of Tagore's philosophical ideas. But in the book *Thy Hand Great Anarch!* He wrote a whole chapter on him. He portrayed him as the epitome of Bengali culture of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Maybe on account of this Visva Bharati University of Shantiniketan decided to bestow the highest Honourary degree *Deshikottom* on him. Here too in the ceremony Chaudhuri remarked that he was a writer in English not an Indian writer in English. This comment created heated argument among the

audience. Later through magazines and newspapers many literary figures in Calcutta expressed difference of opinion with the university about their decision of honouring him.

Chaudhuri's centenary was observed in Oxford. A lunch party was arranged which was co-hosted by his two old friends Alastair Niven, Head of literature at the British Council and Sir Hugo Brunner, who as Lord-Lieutenant for Oxford represented the Queen. He read out a message from the Queen. The Queen warmly congratulated him on the occasion of his hundredth birthday. The President of India Dr. K. R Narayan also wished him good health in this occasion.

Chaudhuri died on 1 August, 1999 at the age of one hundred and one year, eight months and eight days. He was in short of only twenty-one weeks to have caught the new millennium. According to his last wishes Chaudhuri was clad in a fine silk dhoti and a kurta like a true Bengali 'bhadrolok' on the start of his eternal journey. This also confirms his belief about himself to be first a Bengali, then a Hindu and last but not least an Indian.

Chaudhuri occupies a controversial position in our life. It seems that about every aspect of life he had an independent view of himself. We may accept that or may not from our traditional or modern point of view but he had his strong reason to establish his points.

There has been an active debate about Chaudhuri's position as a writer like some people consider him as a postcolonial writer while others oppose it. It is true that he wrote about the people and their culture dominated by the experience of colonization. He criticized the British severely for their cruelties on innocent people and never hesitated to call their civilization corrupt. In his book *Three Horsemen of the Apocalypse* he writes,

There is not a single aspect of English life to which decadence is not spreading and deepening its invasion – national personality, politics, social and economic life, education and culture (76).

Still he cannot be called postcolonial writer because he does not belong to the given social, political and linguistic characteristics of the postcolonial school of thought. In this regard, we can quote H. Rashid Ashkari from his article, "Post-colonial writing and Nirad Chaudhuri: An Introduction",

Chaudhuri's criticism of the British colonial rule is not a conscious manifestation of his anti-imperial attitude. He was in fact, a self-confessed imperialist. He loved English people, their culture and civilization. What makes him occasionally carp at them is not his hatred for them, but his true love for them. He lamented their loss of imperial hegemony, their decadent values and their indifference towards national destiny. He was terribly shocked at disappearance of the British colonial rule in India and dreamt of its resurrection (28).

Chapter 2

The Bengal Renaissance and Indian Nationalism

Nirad C. Chaudhuri's *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951) and *Thy Hand Great Anarch! India:1921-1952* (1987) are nostalgic discourses written in different phases of his life. He wrote the first book when he was in his middle age with an intention to give an autobiographical account of his life against the background of the contemporary socio-political situation of the country. To quote him from his *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*,

The story I want to tell is the story of the struggle of a civilization with a hostile environment, in which the destiny of British rule in India became necessarily involved. My main intention is thus historical, and since I have written the account with the honesty and accuracy of which I am capable, the intention in my mind has become mingled with the aspiration that the book may be regarded as a contemporary history (ix).

Chaudhuri also comments on “The Torch of the Indian Renaissance” (*Autobiography*, 200), which mainly refers to the ‘Bengal Renaissance’. During this period the educated elite group was aroused by a great passion for the reformation of their society and religion. The Indian Renaissance which actually originated in Bengal is often compared to the Italian Renaissance. Scholars of the past and also of present have had often debated whether it had been logical to do so from its different perspectives like social, political and especially cultural one. David Kopf associated renaissance with a process of “revitalization” (Dasgupta, 1) or “awakening” (Dasgupta, 1) in the social and cultural arena marking a note of liberty from specific historical periods or culture. He further adds that it is applicable to any culture or any period of history. So according to him it was not necessary that it had to be same in its characteristic to the Italian Renaissance concerned or its marked appearance in other parts of Europe. Bengali Historian Tapan Raychaudhuri agrees about the renaissance component in 19th century Bengal and comments that it was a seed time with rich possibilities (Dasgupta, 2). In Europe too particularly in Italy from the late 14th century onward an exceptional cultural movement took place which revived the lost world of the Greco-Roman civilization. It gradually spread throughout Europe

from the 14th to the 17th century. Bengal Renaissance which later spread throughout India is often compared to that golden age of European Renaissance. Chaudhuri, is often called the last surviving personality of the Bengal Renaissance because he was a living spectator of the changes that took place from his early youth. He celebrates the time period because it yielded a “synthesis of the values of the East and West” (*Autobiography*, 200).

But Chaudhuri considers it inappropriate to compare it to the European phenomenon. He believes that the cultural movement of this time did indeed shake up the whole society. But the impact was limited only to the upper class and had left no impact on the lives of the grass root people of Bengal. A feeling of regeneration was there but it was confined only among the classes with western education and exposure. To quote Chaudhuri,

Our cultural movement began in the early part of the nineteenth century and reached its apogee in about one hundred years. Then it began to break up. If I were asked to specify when the signs of decay made their first appearance I should say in the years between 1916 -1918. After the end of the First World War and in the years immediately following, the change had become closely perceptible (200).

However, before we reflect on Chaudhuri’s personal evaluation of the phenomenon, we should first have an understanding of the nature of the Italian renaissance that bloomed in the 15th century.

The European Renaissance

2.1

The term “Renaissance” was first used by the Italian artist Giorgio Vasari (1511- 1574) in his book *The Lives of the Artists* (1550). In this book he wanted to show the decline of art with the collapse of the Roman Empire and also its gradual revival with the artistic creations of the Tuscan artists like Cimabue (1240 – 1301) and Giotto (1267 – 1337). But it was not until in the nineteenth century the term “Renaissance” became widely used in England to describe the popular cultural movement that began in Italy in the late fourteenth century. The French Historian Jules Michelet (1798–1874) used this word in his book *Histoire de France* (1855) to indicate the period from the time of Columbus (1451-1506) to Copernicus (1473-1543) and from

Copernicus to Galileo (1564-1642) during which all round development took place in science, arts and culture. Michelet also wanted to claim Renaissance as a French movement because its core message is one that identifies with the spirit of progress.

So “Renaissance” can be termed as a transition movement from the middle ages to the modern period. It was a combination of a lot of factors working together behind a great change. It broke through the ideas, customs and conventions of the medieval society and ushered in an optimistic change in man’s attitude towards the aspect of human existence and thus established individualism. “Individualism” was the core message of this progressive phase of human civilization. It treated human being as an object of innumerable possibilities and felt that the monastic ideology of the middle ages was too cruel, too unfair and unjust to deal with the sensitive human nature. Symonds in his book *Renaissance in Italy* views the phenomenon as the following,

The history of the Renaissance is not the history of arts, or of sciences, or of literature, or even of nations. It is the history of the attainment of self-conscious freedom by the human spirit manifested in the European races. It is no mere political mutation, no new fashion of art, no restoration of classical standards of taste. The arts and the inventions, the knowledge and the books, which suddenly became vital at the time of the Renaissance had long lain neglected on the shores of the Dead Sea which we call the Middle Ages. It was not their discovery which caused the Renaissance. But it was the intellectual energy, the spontaneous outburst of intelligence which enabled mankind at that moment to make use of them (4).

Renaissance allowed human beings to bloom in every direction they wished to move but not beyond this world as the medieval theologians taught them rather within the world. It depicts man to be the real measurement of everything.

The belief and values of the medieval people and their deeds did not correspond simultaneously. Though they believed that unethical life would throw them to the fires of Hell they never abstained from doing injustice or getting obsessed with luxury. The Pope as Vicar of Church did not hesitate to use his powers of excommunication for the advancement of his family interests and consolidation of his territorial power. The conflict between the Pope and the Emperor

reduced the prestige of both to the general people. So the Church's discouragement of trade could not prevent the growing commercial activities of the people. It helped the Italian and Flemish cities to flourish in business. Church's condemnation in this regard was not taken seriously. Earlier, the monasteries were allowed to borrow funds at interest from the wealthy Jews to build beautiful Abbey Churches. However, the opposite trends and tendencies being active in the fifteenth century suggested that the framework of medieval society was about to undergo profound changes.

To assess the background of Renaissance in European History V. H. H. Green in his book *Renaissance and Reformation: A Survey of European History between 1450 and 1660* shows that Europe experienced economic depression in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries partly because of depopulation caused by the plague. Though its result was detrimental for the feudal and the mercantile classes it helped to raise the general living standard of the peasants and the serfdom. Scarcity of labourer and relatively stable wages brought about a change into the lives of these poor people.

But this economic recession did not affect the commercial development and sophisticated economic enterprises of all over Europe. In rich cities like Ypres, Florence or Venice the root of modern capitalism was already in progress. There were wealthy merchants in control of these commercial activities. Increase of wealth encouraged the investment in landed property as well as in shipping sector and various industrial projects. According to Greene this focus in shipping business was the foundation of the acquisition of future European colonies in Asia, Africa and America.

All these things had its reflection in Church also. The less conservative priests realized the advantages of trade and commerce. The earlier notion of the theologians about usury being immoral became insignificant. The productivity and monetary reward of business was brimming over economic life by the end of the fifteenth century.

The total situation mirrored in political life too. The decline in Imperial and Papal supremacy paved the way for the ensuing political changes. By the fifteenth century the political bankruptcy of the feudal system was fully significant. In France the nobles exploited the situation and took hold of the power. The strong government of Valois Louis XI was installed in France. In

England through the War of Roses the Tudor King Henry VIII acquired the power and ruled the country by developing a dependent class of advisers, the artillery force, usage of gunpowder and a sound economy. So a new system was emerging which in company of Reformation and Renaissance broke the unity of the Medieval Christendom.

As a result a lot of changes took place which also played role in the background of Renaissance. One such major change was the decline of the importance of Latin which was so far treated as the medium of diplomacy and the growth of vernacular literature as its replacement. Another important characteristic was the growing secularism. Religious wars were there but that was used as a disguise or garb for material interest. But very little change occurred in the countryside. The tradition of service to the feudal lord existed for centuries to come. There were changes in land ownership due to the increase of the price of the landed property and the growth of a new class of nobility but in the root level the situation remained the same.

Literally “Renaissance” implies rebirth and renewal. It indicates the revival of ancient learning which began in Italy. Emmeline. M. Tanner in his book *The Renaissance and The Reformation: A textbook of European History 1494-1610* maintains the rediscovery of the classics and the presence of a group of scholars to interpret the spirit of the ancient Greek and Latin authors who awakened the minds of men to what had been felt and done in the past by pagans. Their enjoyment by the beauty of the world and their creations by the free exercise of their human faculties reflected in the words and deeds of the later generation. With this knowledge thus came an increase of self-esteem in men and a realization of the dignity of man as well as a passionate interest in worldly matters and not merely as a soul to be saved. Their curiosity was aroused; they had an insatiable craving for knowledge. They realized the beauty and interest of the world and felt they had a right to use and enjoy the earth in which they lived.

So intellectually by the revival of ancient study of bygone day men’s outlook widened and there was the spread of education. The manufacture of paper and the invention of printing press made the multiplying of the number of texts and their circulation possible.

The re-adoption of scientific methods was closely connected with the intellectual renaissance. At this time men returned to the study of nature and by observation and experiment laid the foundation for all scientific work that had been accomplished so far. The collection and

comparison of observation enabled Copernicus to develop his new astronomical theories. Galileo invented the telescope to examine the galaxy. The invention of compass affected the discovery of America and of the Cape route to the East. This invention paved Europe of becoming economically stronger in future.

Renaissance bloomed in Italy first because from the Middle Ages this place was the home of a society who was much secular in character comparable to the rest of Europe. They studied law and medicine extensively. These men, especially the lawyers were for long interested in the literature of ancient Rome and the History of Roman Law. By and by the intellectual environment became so responsive that before the middle of the fifteenth century individual Greek teachers were invited to come over to Italy to teach language. In 1453 a lot of Greek scholars flew to Italy after the occupation of the Constantinople by the Turks. This served a great impetus in the learning of Greek literature.

Another reason lay in the contemporary socio-political environment of the country and that was in around 11th century speedy urban growth became inevitable in Italy because of increasing mercantile prosperity. The towns became the target of the migrating population of the rural areas. As a result the city-life became more structured but the relation between the urban and the rural area had not been separated. Italian-city-folks rarely relinquished their ties with their native areas from where they had sprung. The successful tradesmen or other professionals generally invested some of their profits to their family farms or other extended family enterprises annually. Again the rural nobles too did spend part of his time inside the city- walls with his town settled family. In Italian towns, knights, merchants, skilled craftsmen etc. lived and worked side by side fought in the same militia and married in to each other's families. There was social hierarchy system but they remained busy in fighting with their neighbours. The unequal distribution of wealth and the greed of power were the main reasons behind the strife. The presence of ideological difference was also there. They bore their loyalty to different authority rather than to a common one. Some of them showed loyalty to the Pope, others to the German Emperor; while the Knights were reluctant to give up their old feudal power structure. In Central and Northern Italy this feudal lordship merged with the traditional commune system and as a result the situation of Renaissance was created in some of the city-states soon. In reality there was no fixed condition for the

creation of the Renaissance situation. In the Tuscan cities of Florence, Siene, Pisa and Lucca the republican communes ruled longer. In these cities the nobles were excluded by law from political participation though in opportune moments their disguised or open lordship shadowed over the community. The maritime state of Venice increased the power of its councils; it had no feudal nobility from the very beginning. It had a merchant aristocracy that deemed itself noble and they jealously guarded its hereditary power ignoring the revival tendency from below. Since no longer the states were in control of the Papal States or the Emperor oriented hegemony, the stronger states started to dominate the weaker ones and gradually a regional power centre originated. Especially those states which became successful to bring its domestic conflicts under control, wanted to impose greater domination over the peninsula, like Milan. Milan became much powerful under the rule of the Visconti family. Around 1380-90s the ruler Gian Galeazzo Visconti expanded the territory of Milan to eastward as far as Padua and to southward to the Tuscan cities of Lucca, Pisa and Siena and also Perugia in the Papal territory. But Visconti died in 1402 leaving behind a divided inheritance under confusion. Had he not died then he might have been able to unite Italy for the first time in history by winning Florence the last outpost which gave resistance to him.

In fact Renaissance city-states were the blending of the new and the old. The changes wrought in the economic and the political situations of the city-states affected an evolution in the government while the affect of such changes spread a note of humanism in every sphere of the society. The most important aspect of the renaissance was this spirit of Humanism. Humanism is a European concept which is more a worldly philosophy as well as a secular one. Its mission is to dignify man. Humanism inspired man to concentrate on the perfection of a material life rather than on the preparation for an eternal and spiritual destination (Cuddon, 432). Every humanist was a poet but most of them were classical scholars. The humanists believed that “To will the good, one must first know it, and so there could be no true eloquence without wisdom” (*Britannica*, 634). To quote *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,

Classical Scholarship consisted of a set of related, specialized techniques by which the cultural heritage of antiquity was made available for convenient use. Essentially, in addition to searching out and authenticating ancient authors and

works, this meant editing – comparing variant manuscripts of a work, correcting faulty or doubtful passages and commenting in notes or separate treatises on the style, meaning, and context of an author's thought (635).

Most of the ancient authors were known in the middle Ages but the basic difference between that period and the Renaissance was that in the earlier period the classical studies and all sorts of intellectual activities were carried on by churchmen. They jealously guarded these materials as their prized possessions in the monasteries and did not permit any public access. In the Italian cities this tradition was breached by a group of humanists among whom there were mostly language teachers and lawyers. They felt the necessity of the revivals of classical antiquity (*Britannica*, 634-635).

One effect of this classical revival was the neglect of Italian language in which Petrarch (1304-1374) Boccaccio and Dante (1265-1320) had written their literary creations. For nearly a century the scholars were obsessed with Greek or Latin and it continued until the last part of the fifteenth century when Lorenzo de' Medici, the virtual leader of Florence patronized the return of the vernacular. He was one of the finest poets of his time. Influenced by Petrarch his poems epitomize the renaissance message of the many-sidedness of man.

The Renaissance scholars were thought to have searched the libraries of Europe in quest of works by such authors like Plato (428/427-348), Cicero (106 B.C-43B.C) etc. Moreover after the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Islamic moors, numerous Greek and Arabic works were captured from different education institutions like the library of Cordoba which claimed to have 400,000 books. The works of ancient Greek and Hellenistic scholars such as Plato (428/427 BC-348/347 BC), Aristotle (c. 384BCE- c. 322 BCE), Euclid (c. 365BC -- c.275 BC), Ptolemy (85-165) and Muslim scientists and philosophers such as Avicenna (980-1037), Averroes (1126-1198) were once again introduced to the European world with all their scholarly materials. Besides Spain knowledge was also gathered directly from the Greek and Arabic speaking world. Mathematics was flourishing in the Middle East and it was brought from there by the crusaders in the 13th century. Leonardo of Pisa (1170-1250) was an Italian mathematician; he was considered by many as the most talented mathematician of the middle Ages.

In the case of religion new ideals of humanism developed with its secular aspects against a scenario of unquestioned Christianity. So the Renaissance had a profound effect on contemporary theology particularly the people perceived the relationship between man and God. The period's foremost theologians were the followers of humanistic approach. To name some of them are Erasmus (1466-1536), Zwingli (1484-1531), Thomas More (1478-1535), Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564).

The humanist learning and the growth of individualism eradicated feudalism of the medieval period but it had not become a democratic or a classless society. The autocratic princes demanded undisputable allegiance from the mass population and in case of disobedience punished the so called offender with death instead of showing any proof of sympathy in their actions. For example, the Renaissance philosopher Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) was a great exponent of humanism but because of his positivistic attitude he was not spared by the Emperor Henry VIII when he denied recognizing the King's desired divorce from his first wife Katharine of Aragon and this action certainly acknowledged the deplorable Act of Supremacy. During this period the existing relationship between the ruler and the ruled had been interdependent on each other. The Renaissance scholar Machiavelli (1469-1527) wrote in his famous book *The Prince* that the ruler might be autocratic but his power depends on his dutifulness to the people. The Renaissance writer wished the execution of power by the monarch on his subject should be with a carefree mind.

Greene comments from a narrow perspective of view that Renaissance was never more than a minority movement of a few scholars and artists who were patronized by princes and rich merchants and whose views gradually circulated throughout Europe by means of the newly invented press. But from a broader spectrum although the term implies the revival of classical learning it indicated a new mode of living which ultimately influenced a lot to the shaping up of the modern world.

The Bengal Renaissance

2.2

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) in his letter to his daughter Indira Nehru writes,

Apart from the political field, there had been other reactions from contact with the West. The religious ideas of the new middle classes (but not the masses) were influenced, and new movements arose like the *Brahmo Samaj* and the *Arya Samaj*, and the caste system began to lose its rigidity. There was a cultural awakening also especially in Bengal. Bengali writers made the Bengali language the richest of India's modern languages, and Bengal produced one of the greatest of our countrymen of this age, the poet Rabindranath Tagore, who is happily still with us. Bengal also produced great men of science: Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose and Sir Prafulla Chandra Ray. Two other great Indian scientists whose names I might mention here are Ramanijam and Sir Chandrashekhar Venkata Raman. India was thus excelling in science, the very thing which had been the foundation of Europe's greatness. (*Glimpses*, 623-624)

The term "Renaissance" was first applied by the eminent Brahmo Shibnath Shastri (1847-1919) to the emerging social situation of 19th century Calcutta which was significant for the development of humanism and modernity. This term was later used by historians such as Sushobhon Sarkar and Marxist and Subalternist historians; but most of them objected to its use for a comparison with the European phenomenon. Some of them tried to dismiss Bengal Renaissance as intellectually meaningless because they thought it an "elite construct" or an upper middle class-oriented awakening, closely related to the British identification of progress which had no immediate impact on the mass population. It is true that the nineteenth century Bengal population was already divided into two major religious sections – the Hindus and the Muslims (though it is frequently claimed by various intellectuals that the division between Hindus and Muslims was totally a British construct, it is not true because the strife between the two communities started much earlier during the Muslim rule).

The last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar (1775-1862) was still wearing the Crown, though already reduced to a symbolic ruler by the East India Company when Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833) a man of extraordinary universal vision was delivering his various reforming speeches. The history of Bengal in the 19th century is characterized by Hindu reformist

movements in the areas of religion, society and thought. The remarkable changes that they brought about are described as a Renaissance.

Still there is a debate among historians as to the appropriateness of the usage of the term “Renaissance” in the context of the situation in Bengal. In the introductory passage of Sushobhon Sarkar’s *Note on the Bengal Renaissance* which first came out as a booklet in 1946 and later included in his book *Bengal Renaissance and other Essays* tries to clear the connotation of the term:

The impact of British rule, bourgeoisie economy and modern western culture was first felt in Bengal and produced an awakening known unusually as the Bengal Renaissance. For about a century, Bengal’s conscious awareness of the changing modern world was more developed than and ahead of that of the rest of India. The role played by Bengal in modern awakening of India is thus comparable to the position occupied by Italy in the story of European Renaissance (3).

Subrata DasGupta in the prologue of his book *The Bengal Renaissance* writes that Renaissance signified a particular kind of socio-cultural progress which is associated with ‘modernization’ or ‘revitalization’ or ‘awakening’ and thus a notion liberated from any specific historical period provided the essential overall enthusiasm present in the society. Rabindra Kumar Dasgupta confirms that the Renaissance phenomenon was undoubtedly associated with ‘intense intellectual activity in literature and the arts, and this in turn influences religious, social and political thought’. As such there was a ‘Renaissance phenomenon’ in nineteenth-century Bengal – even though, in his view, it was ‘an incomplete and deficient Renaissance’ (2).

Raja Rammohan Roy had a pioneering role in spreading the message of Bengal Renaissance. The other personalities behind the “core work” were David Hare (1775-1842), Henry Derozio (1809-1831), Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824-1873), Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1890), Bankim Chandra Chattopaddhay (1838-1894), Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858-1937), Prafullachandra Ray (1861-1944), Sri Ramkrishna (1836-1886), Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). These intellectuals contributed to creating an intellectual milieu. The common factor that worked actively was their cross-cultural mentality,

their creativity and attitude of universalism. However, a significant part was also played by those who were known as “British Orientalists” (Dasgupta, 22).

According to David Kopf the Bengal Renaissance was the outcome of the interaction between the Bengali intelligentsia and the British Orientalists. This intelligentsia was a group of people living in Calcutta between 1800 and 1830 very optimistic by nature who wished to reform the indigenous traditions in the light of western values and ideas. They established relationship with selected British personalities to achieve material gain as well as to get the insight of the west through them. Since the distance between Calcutta and Britain had already sufficiently Indianized those British with whom they associated they could explore that particular privilege. In his book *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (1969) David Kopf views that the Orientalists in Bengal initially contributed to the modernization of Indian tradition. He believes that long before Derozio came to the scene and the Young Bengal movement occurred and long before Bentinck and Macaulay appeared in the background a renaissance had started in Bengal. It was a modernistic approach shaped by the Orientalists who understood that mere imitation of the west by the Indians would not bring any real change in the society. So they helped to establish the primary infrastructure for the development of the Indians. To quote Kopf,

The Orientalists served as avenues linking the regional elite with the dynamic civilization of contemporary Europe. They contributed to the formation of new Indian middle class, and assisted in the professionalization of the Bengali intelligentsia. They started schools, systematized languages, brought printing and publishing to India, and encouraged the proliferation of books, journals, newspapers, and other media communication. Their impact was urban and secular. They built the first modern scientific laboratories of India and taught European medicine. They were neither static classicist nor averse to the idea of progress; and they both historicized the Indian past and stimulated a consciousness of history in the Indian intellectual (275).

The first Governor General of Bengal, Warren Hastings (1732-1818) inspired a group of historians to research and study on the socio-cultural history of India. Hastings was interested in this project because he believed he needed to know the people and their history for administering

them better. The researchers and historians published the outcome of their research which was mostly celebratory of the Indian past. Their positive findings gave fresh confidence to the elite class of the colonized nation.

These historians were known as the “British Orientalists”. Here the word “Orientalist” is a debatable one because since the publication of the book *Orientalism* by Edward W. Said (1935-2003) in 1978 Orientalism has become a seminal discourse on its own merit. But there is a difference between Said’s view of Orientalism and its pre-Saidian view. According to Said, Orientalism is a discourse about the East which has been invented by the West. This very interpretation carries a smell of an artificially structured knowledge imposed on the Orient by the Occident. Historian David Kopf speaks of Orientalism as a field of scholarship where the domain is about the Orient and the scholars happen to be from the West. William Jones is the first of the Orientalists Kopf mentions who enhanced our knowledge of the Orient; but Said evaluates Jones’ mission as a design to gather knowledge about the Orient to use it as a weapon for domestication and domination of the Orient (Dasgupta, 21).

Sir William Jones (1675-1749) was the most famous of these Orientalists. He arrived in Calcutta as a judge in Supreme Court in 1783, a decade after Hasting’s appointment in India. In 1784, he founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal which became a centre of Indological studies by the Orientalists. Besides Jones other famous Orientalists were the Sankritist Henry Colebrook (1765-1836), Nathaniel Halted (1751-1830), author of the first Bengali Grammar; Charles Wilkins (1749-1836) Sankritist and translator of *Bhagabad Gita* into English; and James Princep (1799-1846) who deciphered the ancient Brahmi script. Kopf remarks that these men were imbued with the liberal ideology of European Enlightenment. Ideologically they believed in universalism and sought unity in cultural diversity. They were cosmopolitan, classical and rationalistic. They were sympathetic to non-Europeans, non-Christian cultures, including those of Asia.

The Orientalists discovered the intellectual, creative and cultural riches of India’s past. Their discovery of India – its Vedic literature, Sanskrit grammar, mathematics, astronomy, jurisprudence, customs, philology and literature brought into being the concept of Indian “golden age.” (37) William Jones believed that the structure of Sanskrit was more perfect than Greek, “more copious” (35) than Latin and more exquisitely refined than either. In fact he discovered a

strong affinity of Sanskrit grammar to both Greek and Latin which he believed could not be produced by chance.

Among the most consequential discovery in literature which testifies to India's creative past was the Sanskrit drama *Sakuntala* or *Abhigyan Sakuntala* composed by Kalidasa (fourth century AD). Sir William Jones translated the play first in Latin and then in 1789 into English. In 1795 Orientalist Henry Colebrook showed in an article published in Asiatic Society's journal that the custom of Sati, the burning of a Hindu widow along with her deceased husband in the same pyre was not justified by the Vedic precepts. Historian Kopf points out that the basic contribution of the researches done by Colebrook was his discovery of monotheism in basic Vedic India. Colebrook's concept of the golden age also included the vast mathematical knowledge developed by the Hindus of that classical age. There are also criticisms in refutation to this idea of Golden Age. For example, the view of one of the eminent historians of India Romila Thapar, a veteran scholar in the field of early India is skeptical about the idea of "golden age." Thapar observes that in the sense that every aspect of life reaching the highest level of excellence was a state of affairs that scarcely prevailed in any culture in history. Thapar believes that if ever there was any golden age, it coincided with the Gupta period (300-700 CE).

However, what is important to note here is that we are concerned with the values that the eighteenth and nineteenth century scholars believed in and the kind of perceptions and beliefs they held. The concept of Indian golden age constituted a basic belief among the British Orientalists according to their engagement with the different aspects of Indology; and their achievements found their way among the newly awakened Bengali intellectuals like Raja Rammohan Roy and his contemporaries and also their followers. British Orientalists thus had a great contribution in preparing the background of the Renaissance in Bengal. Kopf maintains that Hasting's policy of promoting an understanding of Indian languages and literature, culture, and history also contributed hugely to the awakening of Bengalis and it paved the way for the appearance of a newly created elite class.

Rammohan Roy (1772-1833) was the first person who bore the "renaissance spirit" significantly among his contemporaries. Sumit Sarkar reiterates in his book *A Critique of Colonial India* that in Rammohan's time a break-through towards modernity took place and the large part of this

change occurred through his thought and activities. Rammohun's writing and works do signify a kind of a break with tradition which was inherited by his generation. This break was a contradictory kind of break. The change came mainly on the intellectual plane and not reflected at the level of basic social transformation. Sarkar believes that the Renaissance culture which Rammohun inaugurated was confined within the Hindu-elite class against a colonial background. It is generally agreed that the original contribution of Roy towards the making of Bengal Renaissance lay in his effort to synthesize the Hindu, Islamic and Western cultural traditions together. But the question remains alive that prior to him this approach was followed by the Mughal rulers and also to some extent by the British Government. They too tried to be tolerant with the orthodoxies in the interest of the government. To understand the rare vision of Rammohun we can recall the background of the foundation of Hindu College. At that time the conservatives too tried to educate their children through English medium for practical reasons but what was exceptional about Roy was that he spoke for the modern subjects to be taught to the latest generation so that they become equal with the colonizers. He proposed for the study of Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, and other useful sciences. However, due to financial crisis his suggestion was not materialized. A literary syllabus was installed by Macaulay instead in 1835.

From the point of religious view Rammohun was the first to attack the double standard activities of the Brahmins which was so common in those days. It almost became a religious and philosophical tradition. Roy vehemently criticized their habit of exploitation for promoting personal interests. In his generation it was only Rammohun who could support the demand for the abolition of the rite of Sati and compose the deeply moving discourse in the article "First and Second Conference between An Advocate For and An Opponent of The Practice of Burnings Widows Alive" (Quoted from Calcutta, 1818, 1820. EW III, pp.91. 111.) Saying "thus... dependent and exposed to every misery, you feel for them no compassion that might exempt them from being tied down and burnt to death" (Sumit Sarkar, 15).

In intellectual power Rammohun though stands far above his contemporaries is sometimes criticized for his inconsistencies in several issues like his conformity on many of the caste rules through his published pieces, no hesitation in wearing the sacred thread to the end of his days.

His concentration only on the single Sati issue among so many social obstacles and the rumour that he made Vidyasagar's Sati abolition movement a little difficult by hunting passages in various religious books on behalf of the glorifying widowhood adds to his inconsistencies. While in 1819 in the private meetings of Atmiya Sabha, the organization set up by Roy held discussions and criticism on "the absurdity of the prevailing rules respecting the intercourse of the several castes with each other...the restrictions on diet... (and) the necessity of an infant widow passing her life in a state of celibacy" (18).¹ However, if we consider these matters against the socio-political pictures of the nineteenth century India we will be able to understand the limitations of Roy.

Rammohun left a permanent legacy in the shape of Brahmo Samaj which was a reform approach against the orthodox Hinduism. It never gained an absolute reformed religion status because of various reasons. It criticized the idol-worship rite against its professed scripture of monotheism but the caste system was not attacked till 1860 and the fundamental belief on Karma, the doctrine of bestowment of the consequences of sins and holiness practiced during life-time in the after world by The Supreme Ruler was taken for granted. Kalikinkar Dutta remarks that the Samaj also failed to link up with the lower-caste monotheistic cults of Bengal like Kara Bhaja, the Spashta dayaka and the Balarami sects who were numerous in 18th century Bengal particularly in the Nadia Murshidabad region.

Rammohun worked for the progress of the vernacular too. His translation of various Shastras in Bengali, promotion of Bengali journalism by publishing *Sambad Koumudi*, and inspiring the members of the Atmiya Sabha and the students of the Hindu College to bring out Bengali version of English scientific and literary texts.

Rammohun's achievement should be judged from his personal stature which was certainly outstanding – the limitations and inconsistencies which we mark was the reflection of his time – which was the beginning of a transitional period from the feudal strata to a bourgeoisie modernity but under the full subjection of the British colonial authority.

Roy identifies with the European concept of the 'Renaissance man.' The concept was developed in Renaissance Italy from the notion of one of its most accomplished representatives Leon Battista Alberti (1404-72) which suggested a man can do all things if he will. It was the message

of the Renaissance Humanism which considered man the centre of universe, limitless in capacities for development and led to the notion that man should try to embrace all knowledge and develop their capacities as fully as possible.

The introduction of western education in Bengal was began by Lord Macaulay (1800-1860) under the augmented pressure of the prevailing elite class which also included Rammohan Roy for the emancipation of the younger generation of Bengal. The intention of Macaulay was to create a new generation who was “Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect! (83).” Such imperial arrogance instigated him to bring about changes in educational sphere.

Long before Macaulays intended changes found their way, there was a group of young students in Bengal who echoed his ideology in their lives. These students were collectively known as the “Young Bengal (83)” These young men were mostly Calcutta based students and studied in the Hindu College, a privately funded and managed institution founded in 1816 in response to the desire of the Hindu elite class who wanted to bring up their sons in the English way.

Hindu College, later named Presidency College in 1855 when it became a public funded institution, had a great intellectual influence in the history of modern India.

The elite Hindus, who sent their sons to the college, must have repented for pursuing such a decision a decade later; because their sons became more westernized than had been expected. And at the heart of the “Young Bengal” movement was Henry Vivian Derozio (1809-31), a Eurasian of Portuguese-Indian parentage. Derozio studied English literature especially poetry very seriously. He had a wide exposure of European philosophical thought. After completion of his studies in 1826 at the age of seventeen he became a teacher at Hindu College. He was extremely popular there with his students. He tried to develop their minds and helped them become free from every superstition. But he could teach there only for five years because at the insistence of Ramkamal Sen (1783-1844) the college authorities removed him from his position on 25 April, 1831. They accused him of ruining the character of his students by encouraging them to debate freely and raise questions embarrassing to the authority. The students had a free access in his house and contained no reservation for forbidden food and drink. After his dismissal Derozio started an Academic Association with a monthly publication titled *The*

Athenium. His disciples were almost as old or as young as their mentor. Under his guidance the lads of the Hindu College met in the evenings and read, discussed and debated on poetry and philosophy. In his classes Derozio taught the history of Greece, Rome and England, the Greek epics and Roman Classics and also Milton and Shakespeare. Derozio helped his students to grow a passion for English literature, and simultaneously tried to encourage them to speak against the evils of idolatry and other superstitious religious rituals. The outcome of all this was that a generation of bold and outspoken students developed in the society. One of his pupils of his study circle Madhav Chandra Mallik, in an article proclaimed his hatred against Hinduism. However, Derozio lived a short life; he died of cholera a few months after he was dismissed from the college.

The Derozians attracted public attention for several years more. They continued their two publications *The Enquirer* and *the Gananneshawn* for some time. A few of them like Rashik Krishna Mallik (1810-1858) attracted public eye by delivering impressive speeches on the issues like the revision of East India Company's Charter and the freedom of press. Their inherent contempt for the Hindu religion influenced their successors. Several of them became converts to Christianity. Of them was Michael Madhusudan Datta (1824-1873), then a promising student of the Hindu College, and later a versatile genius of the Bengali literature and Gyenendranath Tagore, the only son of Prasanna Kumar Tagore. They were known as later Derozians. They bore great fascination for hard drinks and used it as a symbol of emancipation from all orthodox beliefs. This earned them a bad reputation. The Derozians also ate beef and hurt the religious sentiments of their families.

But the Derozians also pursued a positive approach towards society. They showed concern for issues like the treatment of Indian labour in distant Mauritius, the extension of the right of trial by the jury, the introduction of English as court language, freedom of the press and forced labour among coolies employed by government departments.

Later the Derozians shifted more towards politics than purely social reforms and cultural practices. In 1842, the Derozians started a new paper named *The Bengal Spectator*. It focused more on politics and economics than on the pursuit of culture. Their organized forum "The

Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge” became a platform for political as well as social and cultural discussion.

In April 1843 the Derozians formed the first political association of India. This was “The Bengal-British India Society”. Its object was to protect the legitimate rights of the subjects and its membership was open to all. *The Bengal Spectator* as well as “The Bengal-British Society” both ended quickly. Their real achievement was that for the first time in the society there was awareness about politics and political rights.

There was a group of reformers who drew inspiration from Rammohan Roy but remained eclipsed by the extravagant activities of the Young Bengal. They remained somewhat passive during the first decade of the Bengal Renaissance. But after 1843, they became fairly active. During this time they found a leader in Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905) and during 1850s in Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar (1820-1890).

The Rammohan tradition was maintained by his associates Dwarakanath Tagore (1794-1846) and Prasanna Kumar Tagore although the earlier passion was not there. The Brahma Samaj Church was maintained with great struggle by Pandit Ramchandra Vidyabagish who also wrote *Nitidarshan* (1841), a book on patriotism and civic virtues.

Dwarakanath Tagore too went abroad like Rammohan Roy. He took the first batch of medical students to England for their professional training. The feud against Rammohan gradually died out after his death, in spite of reefs between the Dharma Sabha and the Brahma Sabha.

Debendranath Tagore, the son of Dwarakanath Tagore became the main contributor in revitalizing the moderate group. He maintained a sharp difference from the temperamental attitude of the Young Bengal. He was a deeply religious man who maintained a fine balance between tradition and the new thought. He possessed the Rammohan Roy’s the tenacity of purpose but he was not so versatile and liberal like his predecessor. He founded Tatvabodhini Sabha in 1839 along with his kindred spirits. The society held a significant position in the intellectual life of the mid nineteenth century Bengal. The members of this association had lofty ideals about life, dignity of expression and boldness of character.

In 1840 Tatvabodhini Sabha started a school and in 1843 it introduced its journal *Tatvabodhini Patrika*. It was a progressive periodical of its time and acknowledged a new school of thought far more concrete than the ideological background of the Young Bengal.

Debendranath with his twenty faithful associates joined the *Brahmo Samaj* of Rammohan Roy on 7 Poush, (late December). The date is still religiously observed in Viswabharati University, Santiniketan, the University founded by his son Rabindranath Tagore. Debendranath Tagore revived Roy's *Brahmo Samaj* but with a sharp emphasis on traditional culture, rejecting the old Anglican approach of the Young Bengal.

Debendranath was strongly criticized for his intended reforms in *Brahmo Samaj*. In 1845 when he went to organize protests against the immoral activities of the Christian missionaries, he met with the Derozians' contempt. Krishnomohan Banerji wrote an article in protest of the anti conversion activities of the Tatvabodhini group. Ramgopal Ghosh (1784-1867) called the reformers hypocrites. Ramtanu Lahiri (1813-1898) proclaimed freedom of choice for everybody. Only old conservatives like Radhakanta Dev (1783-1867) supported Debendranath Tagore.

Akshoy Kumar Datta (1820-1886) was one of the closest associates of Debendranath (1817-1905) to edit the *Tatvabodhini Patrika*. Datta was one of the successful editor's who attracted everybody's notice by his intelligent essays. He also protested against what he termed orthodoxy in the Brahmo Samaj.

After 1850 there was again another effort to revive the Brahmo Samaj. Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) played a significant role in the revival. Sen joined the Brahmo Samaj in the next few years and proceeded to stir it up from the stagnation into which it had fallen after the great days of Tatvabodhini movement. Because of his exceptional organizing power, which not only turned the Samaj to a real power but also it drew youths in large numbers into its fold. He started a Brahmo Vidyalaya or school in 1859 and ran a Sangat Sabha for religious discourses from 1860. He took up the editorship of the *Indian Mirror* founded in 1861.

With Sen as the centre, radicalism within the Brahmo Samaj began to take shape and directed its criticism against the old leaders. Under him the younger Brahmos demanded the Brahmo preachers who had not discarded the Brahmin symbol of the sacred thread should be denied

access to the pulpit, women should join the church services and that inter caste marriages should be encouraged.

Sen organized the Brahmo youth in a council and the Brahmo women in a society. A split became unavoidable and, in 1866, he broke away from the original church and founded the Brahmo Samaj of India. His fame as an orator spread and he was honoured and acclaimed in England in 1870.

In 1872, he ran a commune with his band of co-workers. He helped secure a Civil Marriage Act in 1872 to legalize unorthodox casteless marriages. A daily paper was launched and Sen issued stirring calls to workers to wake up and assert their rights. His associates ran night schools for working men.

Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1894) drew round him fiery young men who soon began to outstrip him in forward thinking. They included the scholar and men of letters Shibnath Shastri (1847-1919), the social reformer Durgamohan Das (1841-1897) from Barisal; Dwarakanath Ganguli (1844-1898) from Dhaka, an ardent champion of woman emancipation and downtrodden people and Anandamohan Bose (1847-1906) from Mymensingh. The young Brahmos grew more and more critical of Sen's leadership and his alleged high-handedness in running the church.

The young Brahmos revolted and set up the Sadharon Brahmo Samaj in 1878. This was given a democratic constitution and its Bengali organ solemnly declared in 1882 that the Brahmo ideals included not merely religious radicalism but also the universal liberation of all people under the banner of democratic republicanism.

The Young Brahmos threw themselves whole-heartedly into the political movements of the day; national leaders like Surendranath Banerji (1848-1925) were their close associates. As early as 1876, a band of them under Shibnath's leadership proclaimed their faith in independence refusing to join the service under alien government, but promised to work in a peaceful way in view of the circumstances of the country. Their organ, the *Brahmo Public Opinion*, took its full share in the political agitation of the day.

The other towering personality of the moderate reform period was Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar (1820-1890). He was educated in Sanskrit College from 1829 to 1841. From the

Head Pandit of Fort William College he rose, step by step, to the Principal of Sanskrit College in 1851.

Vidyasagar devised a technique of teaching Sanskrit more easily to the beginners and wrote a series of primers in the Sanskrit language. He also wrote a primer in Bangla which is still a household use in Bengal. He invented an elegant style of writing in Bengali that impressed everybody.

Vidyasagar, besides being a scholar of wide learning was also a keen educational reformer. He opened the Sanskrit College for non-Brahmin boys and provided them some English education as well. As a government inspector of schools he successfully organized 35 girls' schools and 20 model schools. He was a pioneer in woman education and served as the secretary to Bethune School for some time.

Vidyasagar did not belong to the Brahmo Samaj but was close to the Totvobodhini group. He revived many of the issues which deeply moved the society after Rammoham Roy's death. He kept waging the social crusades of Rammohan. He raised his voice against child-marriage in 1850 and polygamy in 1871-73. The most crucial fight he did against the prejudiced society concerned remarriage of the widows. Like Rammohan he too wanted to convince the society by explaining the issues with the help of the religious scriptures. He too was deeply moved by the wretched conditions of these unfortunate women. The Young Bengal's publication *The Bengal Spectator* took a stand point in support for the widow marriage in 1842, but it was Vidyasagar's agitation that made it a real issue and legislation was passed by the government for necessary reforms to be adopted in this perspective.

In response to the public opinion many changes took place at the government level in 1833-57. In 1835 the controversy between Lord Bentinck, the 1st Viceroy of India (1774-1839) and Lord Macaulay (1800-1860), a member of the Supreme Council in India ended as they decided to introduce western education in India. The Young Bengal hailed the decision because they held that European education was far more superior to the Sanskritized one. During this period Lord Metcalfe, a British colonial administrator conceded full freedom of press. The first medical college in Calcutta was established in the same year. In 1853 the two organizations "The British-

Indian Association” and “The Landholder’s Association” were united, and played a new role for safeguarding Indian’s rights and privileges.

Bhabani Bhattacharya in his book *Socio-Political Currents in Bengal: A Nineteenth Century Perspective* comments,

It was inevitable that Western learning would increasingly bring to light the contradictions inherent in British despotic rule...The new political ideas conveyed to Indians were not a menace by themselves. But political ideas nearly always tend to seek a receptacle in the form of a party. An organized party as it grows in strength may threaten the foundations of a state. This was the historic process in India, as elsewhere (25).

So Bengal Renaissance of nineteenth century was a primary phase in the process of the nationalist awakening in which the ideas crystallized. It was the background of a political struggle which was to begin after two decades.

Bhattacharya further says that Nationalism and democracy were the two basic ideas over which half the Europe fought in that century. At the inception of English education those ideas inspired the Indian elite class too. Indians came to learn the usage of the printing press and used it for the purpose of agitation. They availed the privileges of railway and telegraph to that purpose. And also the knowhow of making bombs by getting the opportunity of studying Chemistry.

The history of next thirty years of Bengal Renaissance saw an increase of politicization. In 1857, the first uprising for India’s freedom took place. The British quickly termed it Sepoy Mutiny, and dealt with the leaders and organizers extremely harshly. It was put down quickly. But it is ironic to see how the mutiny was seen by the Indians themselves. The newly western educated elite class did not support the Sepoys. In fact, it is known that so strong a personality like Vidyasagar did not support the mutineers. He was said to have allowed the British soldiers to take shelter in the premises of his College in Calcutta to control the upsurge.

The most circulated paper *The Hindu Patriot* took the side of the elite class and started a campaign of reassurance, strongly supporting the middle path of Lord Canning (1812-1862) the first Viceroy of India, disowning the mutiny on the one hand and resisting the European fear for vengeance on the other. It defended the new Bengal of the middle classes.

In Bengal the situation soon turned different because of agitation against indigo plantation. The agitation had begun in Rammohan's time but failed to gather strength. In the beginning, poor growers of indigo benefitted from the crop, but soon their situation deteriorated as planters became greedy. Their agents took more and more land for indigo cultivation, depriving peasants of the land needed for food cultivation. By the middle of the century, the tyranny of the planters became unbearable. They forced the peasants to cultivate indigo.

This cruelty provoked an upsurge among the cultivators in 1859. Hundreds of thousands of peasants refused to plant indigo under compulsion. But in the villages the European planters went on applying physical force on the cultivators through their retainers. Eventually they revolted.

The rising bourgeoisie class of Bengal responded to the struggle of the cultivators and the peasants. *The Hindu Patriot* supported the peasant's movement. Dinabandhu Mitra (1830-1873), then a government official, wrote a drama titled *Neel Darpan* which reflected the real picture of the exploitation by the Europeans of the poor peasants. The play moved the public with such strong emotion that still today it is recognized as a landmark portrayal of the tragic fate of the indigo growing peasants. Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824-1873) helped Mitra in this pursuit. He immediately translated the play into English to depict in public of the horrors committed by the English over the peasants. Repressive Measures were adopted against Bengalee Public opinion by the Government. Manju Chattopadhyay in her book *PETITION TO AGITATION: BENGAL: 1857-1885* mentions that the patriotic theatre in Bengal had become troublesome to British rule so it had to be controlled effectively. On 29 February 1876, the Government of India proclaimed an Ordinance "to empower the Government of Bengal to prohibit certain dramatic performances"²) Chattopdhyay points out that it was interesting to note that it signified that not only producers, directors, and actors defying such a prohibitory order would be punished under the law, but also spectators and owners or occupiers of the theatres. Within a fortnight of this Ordinance came the *Dramatic Performances Bill*. The primary object of this Bill was to empower the Government to prohibit native plays which were scandalous, defamatory, seditious or obscene. Hobhouse wrote, "The necessity of some such measure has been established by the recent performance in Calcutta of a scurrilous Bengali drama, to prevent which the existing law

To All this turmoil ended on a positive note. The indigo Commission took steps to address the peasants cause and the policy of official restraint increasingly proved effective. The Bengal Renaissance was the outcome of all these different awakenings and each awakening was touched by the preceding one.

The post indigo-revolt era of the history of Bengal is marked by the development in literature and the studies of science. Like the European Renaissance this period also saw an upsurge in poetry, drama, and prose. Colourful personalities like Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824-1873), Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838-1894), Jagdish Chandra Bose (1858-1937), Prafulla Chandra Roy (1861-1944), Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), stand out at this phase of Bengal Renaissance.

Dutta was totally absorbed with his arena of literature. He contributed to enrich his mother tongue and its literature. In the prime of his life he was obsessed with the Romantic poets of English literature but later his attention switched on to the classical ones like Shakespeare, Milton etc. Initially Dutta was a student of Hindu College. During this phase of his life his fascination towards western mode of life became so strong that he did not even hesitate to become a convert to Christianity. But this change of religion made him unwanted in his educational institution Hindu College because there only the upper class boys of Hindu families were welcome. So he had to take admission at Bishop's College, an Anglican seminary situated in the suburb of Shibpur, next to the Indian Botanical Garden. Here he was taught Sanskrit and Bengali literature besides the European course curriculum. A seed of cross-cultural mentality developed in his personality here. In 1862 Dutta published his celebrated epic poem *Meghnadbadh Kabya*, the first Bengali poem in blank verse. Dutta lived in Madras from 1848 to 1855. During this period he composed some English poems on Indian themes like *The Captive Lady*, an Indian tale in two cantos. It was published in a Madras periodical in 1848. He received positive responses from its readers so he decided to publish it in a book form. He wished to publish this poem from London. Dutta went through *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and discovered its poetic antiquity. This feeling inspired him to write other English poems on Indian themes but till then he was reluctant to write in Bengali, his own language. He wrote a play

Rizia: the Empress of India in blank verse. It was published in a periodical of which he was an editor.

Dutta started to write in Bengali out of dissatisfaction. After he returned to Calcutta from Europe once he was commissioned to translate a Bengali play into English and there he realized the substandard quality of the contemporary Bengali plays.

The name of his first Bengali play was *Sharmishtha*. He confided to his friend Basak that he used resources from continental Europe to confirm its originality. He wanted to break the traditional Sanskritized norms and indulge in new experiments. He wanted to create an atmosphere of free flow of ideas and thoughts in his plays. His adoption of western forms like blank verse was marked with Indian style. He attached Bengali names to various forms of his experimentation like blank verse is known as *Amitrakkhar Chanda*. *Tilottoma* was his first poem in Bengali composed on blank verse. In using this particular form he was inspired by Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Dutta was attracted by another European poetic form called sonnet. He introduced it in Bengali literature. While he was staying in Versailles he experimented with the Petrarchan model in writing sonnets and intended to bring out a volume in that new style of poetry. Dutta wrote some one hundred sonnets during his stay in Versailles. He was enchanted by the poet Torquato Tasso (1554-95) and called him the "Kalidasa of Europe (102)" and read him in Italian. He read Petrarch too in Italian. On the occasion of the six hundredth birth anniversary of Dante (1265-1321) Dutta sent him tribute as the predecessor of writing sonnet by writing a sonnet in his own mother tongue Bengali.

Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay is still remembered as an eminent man of letters in his time in Bengal. He infused novel as a literary form in the minds of the Bengali people. *Anandamath* is his most celebrated novel in Bengali literature. He developed the issue of nationalist consciousness through this book. The development of Indian nationalism owes a lot to Chattopadhyay's contribution towards literature. The actual message of Chattopadhyay was that he respected western rationalism but believed in the philosophical superiority of his own people in comparison to the British. He wanted to tie his countrymen symbolically as the son of the same territorial landscape that is India. He was the first Indian intellectual who harboured the

concept of nationhood in his mind. In his writing he symbolized one's own country as one's own mother. This symbol was quite powerful and within the strength of understanding of the common people.

In the Introduction of his book *Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth Century Bengal: Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay* M. K. Haldar writes that Bankim inspired the Hindu extremist, revolutionary and conservative nationalists. As a revolutionary he obviously spoke about the people though in a different vocabulary from that of the conservative. Haldar identifies the usage of expressions of Bankim in his writings like “the sanctity of life”, “the will of the people is the will of God or history”, “the progressive class which will liberate the people from bondage” and “the panacea for all evils the revolution”. To quote Haldar,

The romantic element in him also glorifies the past; and he derives confidence for his cause from such glorification. His sophistry vacillates between the opportunist adroitness of a self-centered life, on the one hand, and an irrational, emotional fervor for self-sacrifice for the cause of the revolution on the other. Populistic adoration of the people is the common denominator between the revolutionary and the nationalist (136).

Chattopadhyay was a man of strong lyrical capacity. He composed the memorable hymn “Vande Mataram” in 1872-75 and developed it to a complete piece of 27 lines in 1881-82. This hymn later became the national anthem of India in 1947. Initially he used it as a battle cry in the mouth of one of the principal characters of *Anandamath*. Throughout the novel different fragments of the composition was sung by different characters on various occasions. The epithet kept the vigour of the Sanyasis in their conflict with the British soldiers. It is an “emotionally-charged” (122) symbol of nationhood affirmed by him. It implies the sense of motherhood! Mother India! Chattopadhyay in his novel *Anandamath* portrayed the Sanyasis as the children of Mother India who were in battle with the army of the East India Company. The composition of this very song could claim an immortal position for Chattopadhyay in literature. He wrote it in highly Sanskrit influenced Bengali language. It was translated in other Indian languages. The English translation was done by the Cambridge-educated scholar and Indian nationalist Aurobindo Ghose (1876-1950). Rabindranath Tagore later applied music to the composition and turned it to a song.

Chattopadhyay was the first person to invoke Indian nationalism in Bengali literature. He was also a serious proponent of Hindu revivalism and asserted great importance on the Hindu culture and tradition. His great achievement was the invention of a prose style which stood between the heavy chaste form of Vidyasagar and the local colloquial language of Tekchand Tagore (1814-1883). He was the editor of famous cultural periodical *Bangadarshan*. It was first of its kind in Bengali literature.

During the Renaissance besides the traditional Hindu religion and Brahmoism there revived another doctrine of neo-Hinduism. The difference between the old and the new Hindu religion was that the later was reformed and devoid of many conservative rituals and ideas. Both types of Hindu religion were active among various fractions of Hindus. The proponent of neo-Hinduism was Ramkrishna Paramhangsha (1836-1886) and his disciple Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). Ramkrishna was not an aggressive social reformer rather he laid stress on service for the welfare of the people. Ramkrishna's original name was Gadadhar Chattopadhyay. He was a village Brahmin and did not have much formal education. Since Ramkrishna was not a formal scholar he did not leave any writing behind him. What we can know about his beliefs and knowledge has come from his conversations and utterances as recorded by his devotees and witnesses, in particular, Mahendranath Gupta. According to him Ramkrishna believed that God or Brahma was both with and without form. So Ramkrishna deliberately distanced himself from the anti-idolatrous Brahmo Samaj. His view was that God could be realized through all paths, all religions. The Vaishnavas, the Saktas, the Vedantists, and the Brahmos the Muslims the Christians – all could realize God.

Ramkrishna appealed to the plurality of languages as a source of analogy: what the Hindu called jal, the Muslim called pani, and the Christian water but they all denoted the same thing. So also what some called Allah, others called God, still others called Brahman – they all denoted the Supreme Being.

After his death his disciples mainly Narendranath Datta, who later took the name Swami Vivekananda constituted the monastic Order of Ramkrishna. When at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, seven years after Ramkrishna's death, Swami Vivekananda said that all religions were taken to be true he referred to his Guru's Brahmo doctrine. Swami Vivekananda

did not simply spend his brief life only by transmitting Ramkrishna's preachings. He rather moulded his Guru's doctrine in more effective way.

In his third Chicago lecture published as *Papers on Hinduism*, delivered on 19 September 1893 Vivekananda said at one point that when a soul became purified and concrete it became one with Brahman. However, his great achievement was institutional. He established the monastic Order of Ramkrishna by laying Ramkrishna Sevashrams in many parts of the country for carrying on the tradition of service of the weak and the poor. Vivekananda preached the ideology of Nationalism eloquently. Many foreigners too became his ardent fan. Irish woman Margaret Noble (1867-1911) later known as sister Nibedita was one of his fans. She was the first woman to be accepted in an Indian religious order. Vivekananda himself ordained her.

Tagore was a contemporary of Swami Vivekananda, Jagadis Chandra Bose, and Prafulla Chandra Ray. The situation of Tagore was totally different. Like Milton who on his arriving at the age of twenty-three moaned that his life was mature enough but he could not show any sign of worthy creation, Tagore too on his twenty-seventh birthday confessed that he had not really made much progress in the field of creative literature. This might have been modesty on his part because at that time he had poured forth a significant number of fictional, musical, dramatic, autobiographical, philosophical, critical and, finally, painterly works. Tagore's creative output began in, but went well beyond, the historical period we associate with the Bengal Renaissance. It spanned his whole life.

Tagore's family became associated with the awakening time of Bengal Renaissance through their association with the Adi Brahma Samaj. The Brahma Samaj founded in 1928 by Rammohun Roy was renamed Adi Brahma Samaj in 1866 when Keshab Chandra Sen founded the Brahma Samaj of India. Tagore's Grandfather Dwarakanath Tagore was one of the Trustees of the Original Brahma Samaj. In the following generation Tagore's father Debendranath Tagore gave the leadership. Debendranath's book *Brahmo Dharma* served as a Bible for the Adi Samaj which preached Brahmaism as the reformed version of Hinduism. Debendranath commissioned Nabagopal Mitra as the editor of the *National Paper* in 1865 and from 1867 this paper went on propagating Hindu Brahma nationalism against the ideology of universalism of Keshub Chandra Sen among the western-educated elites in Bengal. Tagore's elder brother Dwijendranath Tagore

was one of the chief contributors in this paper. His articles defended both the Adi Samaj and the national culture. He viewed that a modern man primarily identifies his own culture and then takes effort to vitalize it.

Though Dwijendranath was a formidable intellectual opponent of Keshub Chandra Sen but his younger brother Rabindranath Tagore continually vacillated between universalism and nationalism.

Tagore's reinterpretation of the Adi Brahma idea of Hindu modernism as a key member of the Bengali intelligentsia was his most important intellectual gift to Bengal and to India. David Kopf in his article "The Universal Man and the Yellow Dog: The Orientalist Legacy and the Problem of Brahma Identity in the Bengal Renaissance" writes that though it is difficult to tread on the intellectual conscience of Tagore it would be wise to discover the relationship between Hindu modernism and his acknowledged commitment to a Hindu Brahma identity.

It is believed that the earliest formative influence on Rabindranath was Keshub Chandra Sen. Tagore was born in 1861, when the relationship of Debendranath Tagore and Sen was going on very strong. S. N. Hay in his book *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and his Critics* relates the fact that when Tagore was born at the very time Sen fled his house to live in the Tagore's house. Hay quoted Tagore "He was fortunate enough to receive his [Keshub's] affectionate caresses at the moment he was cherishing his dream of a great future spiritual illumination" (*Aspects of Bengali History and Society*, 66).

But within five years the friendship of Sen and elder Tagore turned into foe. The family leadership was passed into the hands of Dwijendranath Tagore and Jotirindranath Tagore both of whom were strong opponents of Sen. Later, in 1884 Tagore became the secretary of Adi Brahma Samaj. Ramananda Chatterjee met him for the first time around this period. Chatterjee remembers that Tagore was shocked at the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's article "Defence of Hinduism" in the issues of *Prachar Nabajuban*. Chatterjee evaluates him as a reactionary stricken man with Orientalist approach. In this regard S. Debi in her book *Ramananda Chhottopdhyay o Ordho Shotabdir Bangla* comments that it might be a misconception of Chatterjee who himself had been going through a radical student phase at that time.

To trace out the root of his ideas the influence of his personal life is also very important. The decade of 1880 was very unsettling for Tagore. In the very first year his sister-in-law Kadombori Debi, Jotirindranath's wife committed suicide. It was such a remorseful incident that he bore throughout his life. Five months before that his father had married him off to an eleven year old girl with little education, the daughter of an employee of the estate. Hay writes that it was a time that Tagore moved wearing a coarse sheet and rarely used shoes. So we see that Tagore undoubtedly suffered from psychological crises. On the other hand Kopf mentions in his article the significant privileges of Tagore's life that he never bothered for pursuing any regular job like other members of the family and the Brahmo Samaj. In 1882 at 21 years he had no worldly responsibilities to limit his intellectual development. He had enough scope to confirm his intellectual position. In this phase Tagore was critical against narrow traditionalism, revivalism, and aggressive - nationalism. But he was respectful to the ethics of Adi Brahmo Samaj to which his father was deeply attached. He hated the mixing of traditionalism and nationalism. Because of this he never hesitated to criticize Bankim Chandra and Nobin Chandra Sen.

In 1890 Tagore went to England with his elder brother Satyendranath for a holiday. This was the beginning of his western exposure. However, after returning from England he spent most of his time to the rural East Bengal supervising the zamindari and keeping distance from the selfish Calcutta intelligentsia. Between 1898 and 1906 we observe the political conscious personality of Tagore when he became an active supporter of Swadeshi movement. He began to believe in the contribution of Adi Brahmo Samaj in the Indian Nationalism and its refusal to sway down to vague nationalism. This was also the period of his life when in defiance of Brahmo social reformism he married off his daughters aged eleven and fourteen in the traditional Hindu manner.

But the uncommon sensitive and intelligent mind of Tagore could sense the optimistic message of universalism soon and thus he touched the chord of Renaissance. He resolved all the dilemma of his mind by writing the ever powerful novel of Bengali literature *Gora*. Kopf comments, "It may be seen as a brilliant soul-searching exploration of the dilemma of Hindu modern identity the polarity of nation and world." (*Orientalist Legacy*, 71) Evidently after brooding in the doctrine of modernism of Adi Brahmo Samaj along the nationalistic line Tagore began to acquire

the larger tradition of Brahma universalism. In fact the foundation of Vishva Bharati University was his way of implementing the ideal of Brahma universalism. He desired to create an institution which would bring home all the existing cultures of the world. Initially Keshub Chandra Sen started it at his home through the study of the major religions by his disciples from primary sources in original languages. Thus Tagore kept the highest contribution in Bengal Renaissance through his versatile vision.

However, the political and cultural awakening was arousing intense pride and self-confidence among the people of Bengal. In view of the backwardness of the Muslim population it naturally tended to take on a Hindu garb. Patriotic writers invariably glorified not merely the ancient Indian culture with its predominantly Hindu structure they also began to dwell upon the struggles of the Rajputs, the Marathas the Sikhs as instances of the freedom urge. As it so happened that since all these people had as their adversaries the Muslims, and the Hindu trend of the national sentiment was intensified it was not a very happy consequence.

In the pre-colonial period the extent of religious and social thinking was confined to the conversation of the age-old beliefs, usage of customs and traditions. But with the establishment of British colonial state the conservative tradition received a rude shock. Unemployment, poverty and decadence consumed the fading Mughal aristocracy. Consequently the control of the aristocracy on the society was slackened. An emerging middle class, a direct outcome of the colonial rule, gradually assumed the position to dominate both in urban and rural areas. It was the feeling of that middle class that age-worn social and religious institutions must be reformed. The first quarter of the century had witnessed the initial phase of the new reformist mind in the persons of Haji Shariatullah, Titumir (1782-1831) and their contemporaneous Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905) and others. Reform movements among the Muslims and Hindus commenced nearly simultaneously. It may be mentioned that in Bengal the reform movements were village based while in northern India these were city based. Another point to be noted is that the Muslim movements were primarily against the Hindu zamindars who dominated the economic condition of society by playing the role of Mahajans (money-lenders) to the relatively poor Muslim community.

Thus it is interesting to note that the early waves of nationalism in India in the nineteenth century were religious and predominantly Hindu. The Muslims naturally could take no part in this Hindu nationalism. They kept apart. Having ignored English education, the new ideas affected them less, and there was far less intellectual ferment among them. It was not many decades later that they began to come out of their shell, and then, as with the Hindus, their nationalism took the shape of a Muslim nationalism, looking back to Islamic traditions and culture, and fearful of losing these because of the Hindu majority. But this Muslim movement became evident much later, towards the end of the century (Nehru, 437).

In Bengal the Muslim reform movements began with Haji Shariatullah (1781-1840). He was influenced by three Islamic thinkers. They were Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab (1703-1787) of Arabia, Shah Waliullah (1703-1763) and Syed Ahmed Shahid (1786-1831).

Shariatullah was against the prevailing superstitions of the Muslim society and also various unlawful orders of the Hindu zamindars to their Muslim Rayats like subscription for Durga Puja, Kali Puja etc. But Shariatullah followed a pacific policy in implementing his ideas. Shariatullah died in 1840 and was replaced by his son Mohsinuddin Ahmed alias Dudu Miah (1819-1862). He abandoned his father's policy and became resistant towards the British though he could not become successful over them.

Another courageous man who stood against the British was Mir Nisar Ali alias Titumir. He hailed from the 24-Parganas of present West Bengal. He engaged himself in religious preaching on the model of Syed Ahmed's (1817-1898) religious reforms to re-awaken the Muslim society. He adopted aggressive measures against the British in Narikelbaria where he built a bamboo fort and died while fighting against them.

Titumir's movement aimed at solving the socio-economic difficulty of rural Bengal, to defend the natural rights of the common man, regenerate society on the basis of pristine Islam and engage in deadly struggle against the newly established indigo-planters and zamindars created by the British rulers.

There is no doubt that though the religious reform movements had made the Muslims of Bengal religiously and politically conscious, yet in the absence of capable leaders, these eventually

became divided away into numerous doctrines which divided the Bengali Muslim society in hierarchical groups and sub-groups creating a social condition of great difficulty.

European Renaissance and the Bengal Renaissance

2.4

Much disagreement is noticed among the scholars in identifying the elements of Renaissance in the reawakening of the nineteenth century Bengal and other places in India. But they believe that it began in the first part of the nineteenth century. Some scholars call it Bengal Renaissance but it was quite different from the cultural, social, and intellectual aspiration of the European Renaissance.

In Europe from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries the discovery of arts and letters of classical models became a perennial source of inspiration for the Europeans. Gradually this message of reawakening spread in other parts of Europe and a tumultuous change occurred in all aspects of life. On account of these changes the Medieval Europe paced towards modernity. So European Renaissance could also be evaluated as a period of transition from the medieval period to the modern period. But for Bengal Renaissance we see that in the early part of the nineteenth century a few western educated elites whose humane nature, patriotism and love for their own countrymen wanted to remodel the Indian society and civilization after western ideals and philosophy. They wanted to follow the western path of dynamic progress and bring reforms in the social religious and ethical spheres of their country. These Indian intellectuals were primarily inspired by the notion of ‘Golden Age and its past glories’, a notion invented by the Pre-Saidian Orientalists through their research in Indian culture and heritage. The idea of ‘golden age’ was not so transparent and concrete like the bygone days of the Greco-Roman; rather it was believed to be a ‘constructed’ idea by the British in order to dominate their colonial subjects. Some historians are also in view that because of colonial situation at that time India had socially, religiously and culturally degenerated and deviated from its original status so a stagnant situation had arisen and it lead to decay and decline.

However, irrespective of acceptance of such ideas or not, it is beyond doubt that Bengal renaissance differed from the European one in its originality and characteristics.

Medieval Europe was under the strict supervision of the Papacy but still due to some inevitable reasons like the spread of mercantile activities, economic growth, the discovery of different sea-routes to unknown lands which later made colonialism possible, gathering of Greek scholars in Italian city-states due to the fall of the Ottoman Turks, increasing confidence in the spirit of individualism by men and the birth of a few genius in the field of art, literature and statesmanship was responsible for the culmination of the Renaissance in Italy. But the Bengal Renaissance was of indigenous nature based on religious and social reforms. There were a few socially conscious secular men with western education who played active roles in bringing about changes in different spheres. Their activities included protestation and petitions to the British Crown besides organizing active religious forums aimed at elimination of various unethical practices. They worked for emancipation of women, prohibition of the practice of Sati and child-marriage, championing widow's remarriage and women's education and crusade against polygamy.

Another difference was that some indigenous form of liberalist strategy of political representation was noticed in India while it was absent in Europe.

Movements were organized with humanitarian concern for the plight of men and women in traditional Hindu society like improvement of the condition of ryots, the rented farmers, prohibition of cruel practices like hook-swinging, Antanjali, the Hindu rite of keeping drowned the lower part of the body of a dying person in a holy river etc. Such situation was not present in the European Renaissance. At that time India was colonized by the British while in Italy there was no such domination by a foreign power.

During the advent of the Renaissance there were unceasing strives among the Italian city-states. These clashes were mainly between the prevailing feudal structured power and the commune system. In nineteenth century India no such power-clash was observed except the Sepoy Mutiny of the year 1857. But that was the very first venture of the Indians to become independent from the yoke of an alien power.

In India the presence of two religions based communities – the Hindus and the Muslims – their influences contributed to extended social and political conflicts. But such conflicts were absent from the European scene.

But there were similarities between European Renaissance and Bengal Renaissance. Both the civilizations were stirred up by the spirit of liberalism. Liberalism is always opposed to despotism. It asserts much importance on the rights of the subjects over the authority. In India freedom of exchange of views was facilitated by the development of English language and the introduction of the printing press. In European Renaissance also we see that the first printing press was set up in Germany and through it the precious medieval manuscripts which were originally guarded in the monasteries were circulated in public by printing multiple numbers of copies. In this way in both the civilizations distinguished men of letters communicated their scholarship and their mode of learning and also philosophical thoughts to common people. This paved the way of nationalism.

In both situations education was greatly encouraged. The emergence of new types of social, economic and political functions offered opportunities for different types of vocations. Education was the only path to reach the competence for the chosen vocation. So information of education especially in India was important.

The Indian leaders of the Renaissance welcomed new developments in the west and wanted to have similar developments in their own country.

Nirad C. Chaudhuri on Bengal Renaissance

2.5

In the second chapter of his book “Torch Race of the Indian Renaissance” of *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* Nirad C. Chaudhuri comments on Bengal Renaissance of which he was a living spectator. Chaudhuri claims that those who were born after 1900 would not be able to produce any firsthand experience of the particular period. He reasons that this invigorating period started in the early part of the nineteenth century and reached its climax in about one hundred years. According to his observation its decline became clearly perceptible between the year 1916 and 1918 just after the end of the First World War.

Chaudhuri terms it as a period of cultural movement – mingled with several components like literary, humanistic, religious and ethical aspects; each appearing one after another like

advancing waves pounding the shore of the society of Bengal and awakening the Bengali intelligentsia.

By the beginning of the twentieth century all the reform movements had attained maturity and created an environmental situation where all the elements of modern India had almost equal importance. Culture seemed to attain a national look bearing multi-dimensional fullness. But Chaudhuri confirms that this movement did not reach the whole population though it was quite inspiring and full of creativity. Chaudhuri condemns the poor intellectual level of the general people behind this failure. His own words,

The whole community, child and adult alike, was rustic, primitive, naïve. It was incapable of receiving any idea without diluting it and bringing it down to its own level. If, therefore, even after the unavoidable stepping down our ideas are still found to retain some of the original civilized values, then I should be allowed to hold that despite the decline which has overtaken it today the new culture was not weak either in inspiration or in creative power (*Autobiography*, 202).

According to Chaudhuri humanistic influences reined supreme; so he chooses to begin with Bengali humanism. He writes that the new literary and humanistic movement started with the foundation of Hindu College in 1817, though he comments that its earliest creative achievements could not be felt before another forty years.

Chaudhuri acknowledges that among the Young Bengals Michael Madhusudan Dutt was most illustrious personality of the age. Chaudhuri confirms the uncommon writing career that Dutt pursued in order to become immortal in the history of Bengali literature. Chaudhuri expressed his deep fondness for Dutt's *Meghnadbodh Kabya*; Dutt's experimentation reveals that whenever a modern author treated an old and a traditional theme, the introduction of some element of his own age was inevitable in his creative work. The example of Dutt's life also proves that the worthiest thought of human being is best expressed in one's own mother tongue no matter how strongly one excels in a foreign language.

Chaudhuri relates that though his practical acquaintance with humanism began with reading Dutt. Its strength did not die down from his feelings even thirty years after Dutt's death. Dutt left a permanent impact on Chaudhuri.

His primary introduction to Bengali humanism began much earlier at home with his mother's help. In fact his mother was much learned in comparison to other women of that time. She subscribed to progressive magazines and occasionally talked to her sons about different literary issues.

Chaudhuri ruminates that after finishing reading Michael Madhusudan Dutt he and his brother took up Shakespeare. Chaudhuri remembers that during the Bengal Renaissance scholars and students became acquainted with Shakespeare through the two celebrated teachers of English literature Derozio and Richardson.

Chaudhuri expresses his belief in the propagation of the European Orientalists' discovery of the Sanskrit "golden past" of India. In his words, "The new Sanskrit learning gave to the modern Indian view of Hindu antiquity which was historically truer and at the same time more intelligible." (215) He maintains the same view with the "Orientalists" that the modes of thought and mental attitudes of ancient Hindu India were different to those of the traditional, pre-British Hindu India of the late eighteenth century. He goes on to say that Bengali humanists approach to Sanskrit was quite different from that of the Hindu priests and who followed the path of hereditary learning. He compared the two approaches to the difference between the spirit of Medieval Latin learning and the spirit of classical learning of the Renaissance. Orientalists and Humanists he maintained sought to revive Sanskrit as Renaissance scholars sought to revive Greek. He mentions Ronsand who aspired to go back to the original Greek literature instead of becoming satisfied with the revival of Latin; because he did not want to become the imitator of imitators. Chaudhuri seems to accept the reasoning that what drove the Orientalist scholars to prefer the new Sanskrit learning to the old one was just the same that inspired the Roman scholars to go for Greek literature. Chaudhuri in talking about Bengal Renaissance is however silent about the Islamic Reformation Movements. It is quite surprising that when Chaudhuri had been staying in Kishorganj the news of these movements did not reach him. Most of these movements were based in East Bengal and Chaudhuri being the son of an educated family had the opportunity to read newspaper and magazines. He writes in his autobiography, "Of Islamic culture we knew nothing, although it was the spiritual and intellectual heritage of nearly half the

population of Bengal and we in East Bengal came into intimate and daily contact with Muslims” (215).

According to him the character of the nineteenth century Indian culture was such that it showed no hostility to the Muslims but at the same time did not bear any connection with Islam after the end of the Muslim rule. Chaudhuri doubts whether other than Rammohun Roy any significant Bengali writer, religious reformer or political leader had any direct knowledge of Islam. But Chaudhuri’s liberal family did not have any inhibition in acquiring any sort of knowledge. In this connection he remembers his father who once became interested to learn Persian language and in order to do that bought Sheikh Sadi’s book *Gulistan* and *Bustan* and a reading stand. He could not progress much because of his professional responsibilities but he inspired one of his sons to pursue it though the son too could not manage to give time because of his studies.

Chaudhuri acknowledges that they were more acquainted with Hellenic civilization than the Islamic one.

In his autobiography Chaudhuri also comments on the religious reformations of this period. He too confirms the religious controversies that raged ever since Rammohan Roy settled down in Calcutta in 1814 and which continued till the end of the century. He also mentions the Brahmo Samaj being founded in 1828 by Roy and the Hindu counter-reformation movements that appeared around 1860. Chaudhuri did not miss to report us about the vivified religious conflict between the groups for next 40 years from 1860 to 1900.

Chaudhuri comments on a particular trend of the time – the attempt to justify every Hindu custom and taboo by scientific reasoning. We have observed its presence in the philosophical thought of Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda read science subjects in his graduate class so he had exposure to science and was intelligent enough to tag religion and science together. Chaudhuri explains it with examples.

“At times even the science of bacteriology, new at the time, was invoked. It was proclaimed that if a Hindu kept a pigtail it was only as an electromagnetic coil; if he bathed in the Ganges it was because an unspecified European (for preference, German) scientist had demonstrated that Ganges water killed bacteria instantaneously” (225). Chaudhuri seems to have reservation about

such attitude so he mentions Bankim Chandra Chatterji and says that Chatterji though a Hindu of strong faith did not encourage such interpretations.

Chaudhuri documents the result of the continuous conflict between traditional Hinduism and Brahmoism. He writes that Hinduism seemed to have won because of some situational changes at that time. Lord Curzon divided Bengal as in two separate provinces in 1905; but the Bengalis of West Bengal started strong agitation against the move claiming it to be an attempt to divide the Bengalis and making them weak. They demanded its annulment by saying that Bengalis of both the parts belonged to the same culture. They maintained that the Hindu religion is culture-oriented and many of its rituals were practiced by Bengali Muslims too. Therefore, there were no major differences between the cultures and religions of the two communities. So when in 1911 Lord Curzon annulled the partition and Bengal again became one -- the traditional Hindus won and as a result the Brahmoism died down.

Chaudhuri recollects that he grew up in an atmosphere of moral awareness which was a contribution of Bengal Renaissance. He believes that he has been able to shed all the traces of religion after he attained adulthood. But in his autobiography we notice grains of his positive attitude towards the values of Hinduism. According to him, Hinduism has been able to safeguard the operative part of its morality through a method which is very much its own. Its main concern is not so much to control the impulse of its morality rather the capacity to commit it. He gives examples,

For instance, it has kept its widows, whom it does not permit to remarry, on a diet of semi-starvation in order to preserve them from the urges of the flesh. It has discovered an intimate connection between vice and animal protein, but has no inkling of the connection between that organic product and the more positive virtues. Thus, sapping vitality with a good conscience, Hinduism has guaranteed a certain standard of moral conduct among its followers (239).

Chaudhuri goes on to comment on the moral preaching of Brahmoism and its creation of new awareness in the society. Brahmoism called for abolition of immoral activities from its constituted components and chalked out its practical programme. Its members known as Brahmos began to attack the vices of society like sensuality, drunkenness, dishonesty, and

falsehood. So when New Hinduism was revived it had to curb out these negative vices from its practice. In point of time, Brahmoism preceded New Hinduism. The latter can also be considered as the ideological outcome of the first one; because in general the common people did not support Brahmoism because of its anti-idolatrous stand but the preaching of Brahmoism alerted them to the malpractices of the existing Hindu religion which they tried to avoid. So the Hindu revivalist could not afford to ignore these demands and had to restructure its system. New Hinduism was as sincere and serious about morality and moral conduct as Brahmoism could claim to be. In later years New Hinduism became more active of the two. According to Chaudhuri due to the annulment of partition of Bengal the Bengali Hindus were swayed by the emotion of cultural unity and this at last eradicated the reformist zeal of Brahmoism from their mind. As a consequence New Hinduism, with its emphasis on reformation, became strong.

About his own family Chaudhuri writes that it was nowhere between pantheism and monotheism. So it seems that his family's view tended, to some extent, to New Hinduism. Earlier we have explored the views of Ramkrishna Paramhangsha, a proponent of Hindu revivalism and found that he deemed both paths to be proper. It depended on the reflective capacity of the individual. Ramakrishna considered both the approaches right in a religious Hindu's life because some of the worshippers were not able to reach the Supreme Being by heart. So Ramakrishna negates neither the approaches. To quote Chaudhuri,

We were not however wholly truthful when we said that we believed only in one God. For in addition to the one God we believed also in the more important gods of the Hindu pantheon, although not in the minor ones, of course, never in the animistic horde. I have already said that we were conscious of no great gulf between monotheism and polytheism, and we stuck to this innate latitudinarianism in spite of the immense and almost fanatical efforts made by Brahmoism to make the two mutually elusive (230).

Chaudhuri also narrates the religious activities of his family. In those days many household maintained religious rituals very strongly. He mentions Vivekananda saying that he gave much importance to the need for strict regime, daily exercise, and regulated routine of living. Chaudhuri admits that his family was liberal about such routine rituals but still there was a

feeling of tranquil religious atmosphere in the family. The expression of it came through music. They sang devotional songs which reflected deep philosophical meanings of life. The family especially his parents practiced devotional songs regularly. They sang Classical Raga Lalit in the morning, Sarang in the mid-day, Multan in the afternoon, Puravi, Khambaj and Iman in early evening, and Behag at night. The family seemed to express its thankfulness to the Supreme creator through their songs.

Chaudhuri further informs that his family was particularly adhered to Brahmoism but when he grew up he morally accepted many of the teachings of New Hinduism. But as he attained adulthood he shook all sorts of religious beliefs and suffered from a spiritual crisis because he seemed to deny this world with anything to replace it.

It is evident from his autobiography that the significant aspects of the Bengal Renaissance especially the socio-religious reformation in all strata of the society had resonances in his writing. He focused on the existing religious situations of the society and documented some of the idiosyncratic progressive attitudes of the Young Bengal. He was very sympathetic about the semi-tragic life of Michael Madhusudan Dutt and considered him one of the icons of Bengali literature. He was also an admirer of Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the first Indian writer to arouse a nationalist consciousness.

Chaudhuri concludes the chapter by saying that the moral preaching of Brahmoism and new Hinduism was not only justified, but also successful. According to him, perhaps there never was any period in last two hundred years of the history of the Hindu middle class in which it showed greater involvement in public and private affairs, attained greater happiness in family and personal life, enjoyed greater fulfillment of cultural aspirations and contributed greater creativity in every field, than the span of fifty years between 1860 and 1910 being dominated by the moral ideals of Brahmo and new Hinduism (243).

Nationalism

2.6

At the root of nationalism is the word “nation” which originates from the Latin verb “nasci” which means “to be born” and originally meant a group of people born in the same place,

whether the place was thought of as a few dozens or many thousands of square miles. To the French radical writers in 18th century a nation meant the people of a given country, without distinction of rank and often in contrast to the ruling monarch.

Nationalism in its modern form is not an absolutely new phenomenon rather it is a revival and fusion of older trends. It existed in the cruder form in the tribalism of primitive peoples.

From anthropological point of view the tribalism which existed among primitive peoples before the dawn of recorded history is also a kind of nationalism. Each tribe deliberately had a distinctive speech and dialect, a particular kind of social organization and cultural and religious observances. Rafia Nisar a scholar on Nationalism in her PhD dissertation titled, “Nationalism in India During the Early Twentieth Century: A Study of Muslim scholars’ Response” explicates that it also denotes “a special set of oral traditions and a particular manner of initiating its youthful members into the full life and lore of the tribe and of inculcating in them a supreme loyalty to it”.

Nisar quotes the view of Maulana Iqbal Lahori expressed in his book *Kuliat-i-Ashar* (Farsi) that from historical point of view it is evident that from approximately from 5000 BC to 1700AC in the advanced mode of civilizations the earlier and the primitive tribal nationalism became submerged. In most cases it ceased to command the supreme loyalty and patriotism of civilized men. The factor which made it submerged was one or another or a combination of four historical developments which created new types of human groupings and settled new object of human patriotism. One was the advancement or spread of the agricultural and industrial know how; the domestication of animals and plants; the multiple usage of copper, iron and boats and through these activities the development of interdependence of various tribes. Another was the conquest of the Egyptian, the Assyrian, the Chinese the Persian, the Roman and the Arab civilizations. Third was the consolidation of different religions such as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam among the inter tribes. Fourth was the development of literary languages such as Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Chinese and their application by intellectuals to the several dialects of the illiterate.

According to scholar Ashish Nandy patriotism is an emotional state which is non-specific, and based on non ideological territoriality. Nationalism denotes an identifiable pattern of contents which reflect in the attitudes, beliefs, and values of human beings who usually share the same

kind of ideological stance. It is essentially a group feelings which posses some reservations towards the outsiders. Often nationalism is based on some consequent sense of loss and up rootedness which is the result urbanization and development.

Nationalism stemmed much earlier among the English people because of their successful venture in maritime trade with a wide network of distant countries. This factor also paved out the opportunity of interactions for the English people with different cultures, philosophy and thoughts. As a result, besides the growth of a strong economy, the early emergence of democratic and nationalist ideas also developed. The previous feudal conceptions of state, society and the position of the individual were disappearing. By the 18th century England due to her geographical expansion and historical circumstances had experienced all these developments much explicitly than other contemporary countries of Western Europe. So nationalism which was first born in Europe was the ideological expression of complex political economic and social developments (Nisar).

The messages of the French Revolution stirred the English people and the creation of a truly national state was made possible. Political and social institutions were set up to meet the purpose of a national state. The national feelings and consciousness inspired the other people of Western Europe like the Italians, Poles, Germans, Greeks and Slavs. Around 18th century nationalism crossed the limits of north-western Europe and North America and spread all over the earth. By the middle of the twentieth century it became a universal ideal esteemed by almost every progressive person.

Rabindranath Tagore like an ancient sage lauds the spirit of western civilization though deplores its spirit of nationalism. As a humanist he expresses his deep love and great respect for the British race as human beings. He acknowledges in his essay “Nationalism” that in the West Britain has produced great writers, great thinkers and other great-people. The British literary men whom he met personally roused his admiration not only for their literary expression but also for their sense of great humanism. But the idea of the British as a mighty and powerful nation stifles his feelings. He believes that the law and order enforced by the British government had been so organized that it had made possible for the general people of India to come closer; he deems it to

be a blessing for the people of different races and customs for it enables them to interact their common aspirations. In his own words,

But this desire for a common bond of friendship among the different races of India has been the work of the spirit of the West, not that of the Nation of the West. Wherever in Asia the people have received the true lesson of the West it is in spite of the western nation. Only because Japan had been able to resist the dominance of this western Nation could she acquire the benefit of western civilization in the fullest measure. Though China has been poisoned at the very spring of her moral and physical life by this Nation, her struggle to receive the best lessons of the West may yet be successful if not hindered by the Nation. It was only the other day that Persia woke up from her age-long sleep at the call of the West to be trampled into stillness by the Nation. The same phenomenon prevails in this country also, where the people are hospitable, but the nation has proved itself to be otherwise, making an Eastern guest feel humiliated to stand before you as a member of the humanity of his own motherland (41).

1.6 The Emergence of Indian Nationalism

The study of the emergence of Indian Nationalism is important in many ways as it did not exist in the pre-British period. In the pre-British India the essential pre-requisites like common economic, social and state existence and the conscious aspiration for the emergence of the spirit of nationalism was absent. The cultural aspect was considered to be equally important because it integrated a community into a nation. The acceleration of economic development resulted into a national culture because the growth of sufficient production and division of labour habituated a community into a single system of exchange relation and rapid transport system. In this process by the lapse of time they became not only economically but also socially and politically united. This common life also gave way to a common language which was also a very important tool of consolidating the community into a nation. However, the nation in its different stages of development aspired to have a single state existence. It expressed its longings through songs, sculpture, painting and literature which were remnants of its cultural life and thus developed an

inner wish for a richer social, cultural and economic life. The national culture was hostile to all sorts of domination be they local or international.

A. R. Desai in his book *The Social Background of Indian Nationalism* asserts that the Capitalist mode of reforms which brought into existence various modern nations also unified India as a modern nation by restructuring its social and economic frame. Desai believes that the existing social modules of India in pre-British period also had structural characteristics of its own. It was composed of the feudal class like princes and semi-feudal class like zamindars etc. These classes were transformed to new social classes like sections of bourgeois, the peasantry and the proletariat as a result of new national economy. These classes experienced the pressure of reactionary feudal people as well as the imperial in the course of their development. To quote Desai,

The culture of these new national classes, which had different and even conflicting class interests, in proportion as they developed group consciousness, became national in form though class in content, e.g., the culture of the class conscious workers which became socialist in content and national in form. These growing cultures of the new classes, namely the national bourgeoisie, the national proletariat, the national petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry, formed the totality of national culture in India, which also included the cultures of awakening nationalities in different territorial zones of the country such as the Bengalis, the Gujratis, the Maharashtrians, the Karnatakis and others.

Anil Seal in his book *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Conception and Collaboration in the Late Nineteenth Century* assesses the elements that gave rise to Indian Nationalism. According to him the tracing out of the root of Indian Nationalism and its gradual development is a complex process. It is because the structural basis of the pre-British Indian society was unique in many ways. Then India was a vast country inhabited by a huge population, who spoke many languages and had faith in different religions. Socially the Hindus, comprising two-thirds of the population were divided into various castes and sub-castes. Again from the point of religion they belonged to different cults and thus were divided into a number of castes. In fact these extreme social and religious divisions of the Hindus in particular gave rise to a queer type of nationalism in India.

Another important point to be mentioned here is that in India the spirit of nationalism emerged under British colonialism. The advanced British nation to preserve their self-interest radically changed the economic structure of the society, initiated to establish a centralized state by introducing modern education, modern means of communication and other necessary institutions. This gave birth to new social classes who bore new social forces and held new visions.

Desai in his book *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* presents a comprehensive study of the transformation of Indian society, through a century and a half and consequential rise of Indian nationalism in various forms – social, cultural, religious, economic and political.

Desai believes that to understand the various political nationalist movements of India, a concrete understanding of the structural transformation of Indian society during the British period is essential.

Seal has suggested that while the economic and cultural life of the village was stationary, stereotyped and scarcely transcending the boundary of village, that of the town was mobile, rich, relatively progressive and constantly in touch with the outside world. There was relatively a prosperous economic life in urban areas because the greater portion of the wealth of the kingdom was spent here. The elite classes like merchants, the government officials, architects, philosophers, astronomers, physicians etc. lived there. The infrastructure of the towns was also rich and magnificent. Beautiful monuments, palaces were erected in these places.

Desai shows that in towns in contrast to the poor and restricted life of the village a highly developed cultural and economic life flourished. In fact it was in towns that great philosophic and artistic movements started and got patronized. The aristocratic and wealthy merchants were the patrons of these movements.

The Indian nationalist movement was the product of the pressure exerted by British interests on the free evolution of the Indian people and the various social classes composing it. This was done by subordinating the interests of such free and normal development of Indian interests, by obstructing or restricting Indian industrialization, by distorting its agricultural production to meet the raw material producing colony of Britain and as a market for British industries. Indian nationalists, while admitting the progressive role of Britain in India in the initial stages also

criticized it for basically retarding the free, healthy, historical, economic, social and cultural advance of the Indian people.

Shekhar Bandyopadhyay in his book, *From Plassey to Partition: a History of Modern India* maintains that the Indian Nationalism that confronted British Imperialism in the nineteenth century, and celebrated its victory in the formation of the Indian nation-state in 1947, was a product of colonial modernity. As the self-professed mission of the colonizers was to elevate the colonized from a state of decadence to a desired state of progress towards modernity, it became a challenge for the latter to contest that stamp of backwardness and assert that they too were capable of uniting and ruling themselves within the structural framework of a modern state. So the challenge of nationalism in colonial India was twofold: to forge a national unity and to claim its right to self-determination.

Bandopadhyay supports Partha Chatterjee's argument that nationalism in India, which was given most privileged preference by its western educated political leadership, was a "different", but a "derivative discourse" from the West. In the same book Bandopadhyay mentions Ashish Nandy's view about Indian Nationalism as a response to Western imperialism. The alternative version of universalism rooted in Indian civilization and propagated by men like Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi was rejected by Western educated middle-class India. While the alternative vision could unite India at a social level rather than the political one by accepting and creatively using its special characteristics, the Indian nationalists accepted the western model of nation-state as the defining principle of their nationalism.

The most important factor behind the change in this context was the introduction of Western education and political representation. These new opportunities dissected the traditional Indian social divisions and created a new status group – the western-educated elite which drew its members from the existing privileged local communities such as the bhadrolok in Bengal. The backward regions or the under-privileged groups that remained outside this limited political nation had no access to the modern institutional life of colonial India. So they were least exposed to the message of early Indian nationalism. The situation went on until the end of the First World War when Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the scene opened the era of constitutional politics to initiate the era of mass nationalism.

The Background of Indian Nationalism edited by the three scholars, namely W.E. Duffet, A.R. Hicks, G. R. Parkins deny to accept the emergence of Indian Nationalism as a late development dependent on the activities of a few leader such as Gandhi and Nehru. They believe that on the contrary it had its roots in the nationalist movement which arose during the last half of the nineteenth century. The Indian Mutiny of 1857 developed an element of suspicion into the relations between Indians and the British at a time when the spread of education in India and accommodation of Indians into the civil service ought to have been bringing the two groups together. The British officials could not acquire a feeling of mutual friendship towards their educated Indian associates rather they were adept in maintaining a paternalistic “affection” (*The Background*, 71) towards the uneducated Indian masses. So it soon became clear to the educated Indians that through pressure they could only achieve a very limited responsibility from the English. They decided to get involve in direct political action. The moderate section of the nationalists formed a political party – the Indian National Congress in 1885. They pressed the Government for the increase of Indian representation in the policy making. At one stage Congress became so powerful a force that the British had to meet many of their demands. However, from 1905 onward Indian nationalism became the most important factor in Indian affairs and one which the British Government was unable to ignore.

The nationalist leaders thought that the absence of a nation-state was the main reason for India’s backwardness. They believed that it was the English medium education that would enable the Indians to build up a harmonious political and cultural community. But around 1920 some of the icons like Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi became skeptic about its effectiveness and began to dissent. Tagore the main dissenter was the proponent of a universal civilization concept which naturally developed through the tolerance of various traditional ways embedded in a highly pluralistic society. Others too refused to accept the western idea of nationalism as being an inevitable concept of the contemporary time. Ashish Nandy points out Tagore’s perspective on the issue of nationalism. Tagore believed in patriotism. His view stems out from his impression about the cultural unity of India. He insisted that although the canonical texts in India – the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Bhagabat Gita* were at the centre of the India’s nature, they did not constitute the heart of Indian unity or provided the basis for it. On this point he differed

radically from the lives of Rammohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Sir Aurobindo and other eminent nineteenth century thinkers who believed that the canonical texts of Hinduism defined the basis of Indian unity, which Tagore insisted was built on thoughts and the practices of the medieval mystics, the poets, and the religious and spiritual figures. Like Kabir, Nanak, Bulleh Shah and Lalon, they could simultaneously belong to more than one religious tradition. Tagore maintained that what was dangerous for a country was not the imitation of the outer features of the West, but acceptance of the motive force of the western nationalism as her own.

Gandhi also shared Tagore's belief that Indian unity was primarily a product of medieval, not classical India. His dismissive comments on iconic nineteenth century religious reformers like Rammohan Roy and their religious reform movements, all of which advocated a return to the canonical texts reflect that agreement. Gandhi was always keen to define his nationalism as a part of his universal struggle for justice, equality, and he made it clear that the other name for armed nationalism was imperialism which he considered to be a curse.

Tagore and Gandhi were on friendly terms, and in many ways Tagore was a precursor of Gandhi. It was Tagore who gave the title "Mahatma" to Gandhi, and in return Gandhi dubbed Tagore "Gurudev". Yet Tagore and Gandhi never saw eye to eye on the way towards India's future, as Tagore stubbornly refused to support Gandhi's nationalist movement against the British rule. Unlike Gandhi, Tagore believed that political freedom and attainment of a nationalist identity by driving the British out was not the right solution for India's problems, "I am not thrusting off Western civilization and becoming segregated in our independence. Let us have a deep association" (*Sources*, 106). Tagore took the view that what India needed was not a "blind revolution" (Dutta, 240) or the miracle of political freedom built upon social slavery. (*Sources*, 115) "but steady purposeful education" (Dutta, 240) or an evolution from within; What India most needed was constructive works coming from within herself. Tagore tried to imagine and articulate an alternative modernity – not a Eurocentric one but a parallel Indian or Eastern modernity that would necessarily involve inter-cultural dialogue and exchange. Both Gandhi and Tagore were lifelong crusaders against this practice of social discrimination and fought fiercely against it in their respective ways.

Revolutionary Activities in Bengal (1902-1910)

2.7

Armed resistance to the colonial rule, which the colonial administration termed “terrorism”, was largely a Bengali phenomenon. Bengal was generally quiet during the Great Revolt of 1857-58; though, as Ratan Lal Chakravarty shows in his book *Peasant Movement and Insurgencies*, there was some sympathy with the revolting soldiers, and minor outbreaks in Chittagong, Dhaka and other places. But by the end of the nineteenth century the government of the Raj was firmly established in all parts of the Bengal Presidency. The educated Bengali Babu occupied a large share of available subordinate posts not only in his home province but throughout British India. The situation had another side. The same Bengali Babu, British observers complained, had a knack for giving speeches and forming public bodies. In 1876 the Indian Association was founded in Calcutta. Its leader, Surendranath Banerjee, became the mouthpiece of an informal constituency of students and middle class gentlemen. The Association sponsored the Indian National Conference (1883, 1885), which later merged with Indian National Congress. Some of the same students that attended the meetings of these associations were also devoted followers of so-called secret societies dedicated to the cultivation of physical strength and nationalist feeling. According to Bipin Chandra Pal such clubs almost honeycombed the Calcutta student community of the 1870s. While such groups were not, as sometimes is claimed, the origin of the later revolutionary samitis, they were remarkable as the beginning of interest in physical movement and the development of national spirit among young Bengalis. The spirit became amplified by the writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and later by the speeches of Swami Vivekananda. The outraged Bengali had begun to take the lead in verbal opposition to the British democracy.

Scholars distinguish two sorts of violent opposition to the existing authority: “traditional” and “moderns”. The first is “pre-political” issuing from the peasantry in reaction to specific grievances. The second introduced by the upper classes, has a conscious political ideology. The rural uprisings like the Sanyasi Rebellion of northern Bengal (late eighteenth century) the Bakerganj insurgency (1790), the Indigo Rebellion (1859-60) etc. are classic cases of traditional

violence. Organized violence of the modern type first emerged in Bengal around the turn of the century.

Calcutta was at this time both the capital of British India and its most vocal centre of nationalist politics. But it should be remembered that this “politics” was simply organized by public opinion, there being no responsible bodies in which Indians held a share of power. Articles in the newspapers, resolutions at Congress sessions, motions in the legislative assemblies: these were the boundary-stones of the political life of the country. Within this limited scope, men like Banarjee and Motilal Ghose put their stamp on the educated public of Bengal. One of the first voices to be raised against the inbred and inactive world of Indian politics was that of Aurobindo Ghose. In 1893, just returned from England, he wrote that the Congress, which represents not the mass of the population, but a single and very limited class could not honestly be called national. The young man was asked to tone down his criticisms. He preferred to drop political journalism for a decade. Aurobindo came to believe that India’s real need was a militant revolutionary movement, like the American, French and Irish movements he had studied in England.

Around 1902 he made contact with men with similar views in Western India, where he was then living, and helped a young Bengali named Jatindranath Banerjee to get military training in the army of the Maharaja of Baroda. Around 1902 Banerjee went to Calcutta to try to interest young men in physical training and revolutionary propaganda. At this time a few clubs or samitis were still active in the city. Perhaps the best known of them was directed by Sarala Devi Ghosal, a grand daughter of Debendranath Tagore. Another, the Anushilan Samiti, was founded in 1902 by Satish Chandra Bose.

For several years after its founding, the Anushilan Samiti, as well as other Calcutta groups made little impact. A small number of youths were recruited in the capital and outlying districts, who took part in some other innocuous activities. In 1903 Aurobindo sent his brother Barindra Kumar to help Jatin Banerjee. The two young men soon quarreled and Barin went back to Gujrat. The movement might then have died a natural death had not political events intervened. In 1905 government announced that it was going ahead with its controversial plan to partition Bengal. Unprecedented popular resistance gave birth to swadeshi-boycott movement. Huge protest meetings were held in every part of the province. Groups of volunteers were organized to enforce

the boycott. The Muslims maintained aloofness because they had less reason than the Hindus to oppose the new arrangement.

The agitation and excitement that gave vent to the swadeshi movement hastened to radical approaches soon. Speakers and writers like Bipin Chandra Pal and Brahmanbandhab Upadhyay became prominent as the exponent of the fast growing fraction that believed that Surendranath Banerjea and his Congress allies were not aggressive enough. By the end of 1905 these men formed a New Party. They called themselves Extremists and their rivals to be Moderates.

From the start extremist politicians and revolutionary samitis had a symbolic relationship. The young men received material support and recognition from the leaders. They acted as the leaders' strong aid. In November 1905 Bipin Chandra and P. Mitra visited Dhaka and called for volunteers ready to sacrifice their all for their motherland. Among the eighty who came forward was a Wari resident named Pulun Bihari Das. He was appointed head of what grew to be the most active centre of the Anushilani Samiti. Under his leadership it spread throughout the province very quickly. More than five hundred branches were opened and were closely linked with Pulin's headquarters. The Dacca Anushilan soon crossed its parent body and absorbed many smaller groups in East Bengal. Within a span of two years it developed into one of Bengal's two main terrorist organizations. Early in 1906 Aurobindo Ghose left his post in Baroda and came to Calcutta. His brother Barin came there at the same time. Aurobindo's first task was to help set up the new Bengal National College. He also helped Barin and others start a newspaper that would put a revolutionary programme before the country. The name of the newspaper was *Jugantar*. Its first issue came out in March. After an initial slow period, it caught on. The general feeling of excitement created by the swadeshi movement, augmented by the revolutionary message of the *Jugantar* made it easier to recruit young men and instill them with revolutionary feelings. A cluster of groups that got their start at this time later became linked with others under the name of the journal that had been their inspiration. In the summer of 1906, Barin, tiring of editorial duties, accepted the offer of one of the Calcutta backers of his samiti to finance an assassination attempt to kill Sir Bamfield Fuller*. They started from Midnapore, traced Fuller from Guahati to Barisal and from Barisal to Rangpur without making any attempt. In the last place Bari planned a robbery to get needed funds, but aborted it when he heard the police were in the neighbourhood.

These two planned “action” were probably the first of its kind in Bengal, the precursors of dozens of attempted or successful political assassinations and hundreds of robberies for claimed political purposes. They thus may be said to mark the beginning of active terrorism in Bengal.

In 1907 Barin and Hem Chandra attempted in different ways to get more professional. Hem went to Paris where for some time he studied revolutionary politics and bomb-making with anarchists living in that city, some of whom were Russian. Barin turned a garden house his family owned in Maniktala, suburban Calcutta into a revolutionary school and small time arsenal. It was from here he organized his first revolutionary actions: attempt to derail the train carrying the lieutenant governor of Bengal in November and December 1907, and attempts to assassinate Douglas Kingsford, magistrate of Calcutta and later district judge of Muzaffarpur, in January and April 1908. The Muzaffarpur action, carried out by Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki, is one of the most famous events in the occurrences of Bengal Revolutionary activities. Like all other actions planned by Barin, it was a failure. Two innocent English ladies were killed instead of Kingsford. This outrage brought the existence of revolutionary activities more prominently before the public than the two successful attempts carried out in December 1907 by other samitis; a robbery in Chingripota (24-Parganas), by a group led by Narendranath Bhattacharya, and the shooting of the district magistrate of Dacca B. C. Allen, by members of the Dacca Anushilan. However, the revolutionary activities were part of the political scene in Bengal. The ideology of the revolutionary publicist: Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and others had three major components: political independence or swaraj, economic independence as expressed in the swadeshi boycott movement and the drive for cultural independence by means of national education.

There remains the problem of the place of religion in the ideology of the revolutionaries. Aurobindo, BipinChandra, Brahmanbandhab Upadhyaya and other Hindu publicists frequently used religious imagery in their writings and sometimes spoke of the movement as a religion. As a result, contemporary British observers and later historians have accused them of mixing up politics and religion or even of promoting communalism. The old cultural divide between the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal began to become politicized during the anti –partition agitation. Swadeshi volunteers and Muslim activists found themselves on opposite sides and a mutual

distrust was born. Pamphleteers and journalists indulged in provocative rhetorics. Serious communal riots broke out in Comilla, Mymensingh and other places in 1907. Calls for self-defense became mingled with cries for revenge.

In the midst of this degenerating situation the religion of patriotism preached by Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra, sometimes using the language of popular religion, may have helped the movement towards polarization. But both Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra considered Muslims as much a part of the Indian nation-in-the-making as Hindus. Both called for the increased participation of Muslims in the national movement and regretted attempts to drive the two communities apart. Both men felt however that separate Muslim representation in legislative councils, introduced by the Morley-Minto reforms of 1910, would have a disastrous effect on the integrity of the movement – as indeed it did.

Communal thinking had no part in the ideology of the major publicists of revolution in Bengal. But it certainly entered in at a lower level. Some samiti members came to regard pro-partition Muslims as their enemies. Samiti members as well as Muslim activists took part in communal riots. A few Muslims became members of the revolutionary party but were barred from membership in the Dacca Anushilan, though samiti members were forbidden in principle to show hostile feelings against the Muslims or deal unjustly with them. The antagonism between the two communities unquestionably weakened the movement. For example, it prevented East Bengal samitis from gaining needed support from the Muslim peasantry. All this served the interests of the government; but while the British may have in some cases exaggerated the communal division, they certainly did not create it.

The movement leaders such as Aurobindo were aware of the need of involving the masses in the movement as early as 1893. The Extremists broadened the area of participation without altering their elite bias. Efforts were made by Anushiloni and other revolutionary groups to recruit lower caste Hindus, without notable success. The lack of peasant support, like the lack of Muslim support, was a factor that weakened the movement.

Like revolutionaries of all periods and places, most members of the Bengal revolutionary groups were young many of them were mere boys. The average age of the 36 Alipore convicts was 22.

The activities of the revolutionary societies may be divided into two broad classes: (1) preliminary activities and (2) actual revolutionary actions. Preliminary activities included recruitment, propaganda, training, cover activities, collection of arms, and collection of money. Most prospective members were recruited from schools and colleges.

Recruits accepted into the two organizations had to take elaborate oaths of initiation and secrecy. They had a strict screening process for keeping out security risks. This was specially done by the more disciplined Anushilan organization. These were in the form of religious rituals. Physical training – exercises, lathi play, bicycling, etc. was a major pre-occupation of new recruits. These activities helped establish the samitis cover and taught useful skills. Trainees also spent a good amount of time studying revolutionary and religious literature.

Besides education, the primary ostensible aim of the samitis was social service. The young members of the samitis built up a lofty reputation for service in the rural districts. Such groups were unconnected with revolutionary activities but provided a model for organization and action that revolutionary groups drew upon. The stated aims of the original Anushilan Samiti included social service, and the claims were not altogether false. Members did invaluable volunteer work – during the Damodar flood for example – and helped manage public events, such as political rallies and melas (fairs). In this regard we can remember one of Chaudhuri's boyhood reminiscences where he writes about the district political conference held in Kishorganj. In which conference the President of the occasion and his companions were clad like military commanders and their followers – a group of young volunteers also dressed in "khaki" (Autobiography, 284) garbs. They seemed to maintain a military air in their activities. To quote Chaudhuri, "To my surprise, however, there appeared at the gateway, not Gurkhas, but a group of Bengali gentlemen-our president and his companions, and behind them a very smart column of volunteers in khaki giving the salutation "Vande Mataram." . . . They were only the volunteers from the Sadhana Samiti, a physical culture club of Mymensingh town" (284). . . "On the afternoon of the same day we were shown a display of military drill and swordsmanship by the volunteers from Mymensingh. It was a spectacle which seized me with immense power" (285). The British observers were struck to see how efficiently the young Bengalis did their work, but did not fail to note that the uniforms and badges they wore and the lathis (sticks) they sometimes

carried lent a military air to the operation. As time went on, such activities became more covers and training ground for revolutionary activities.

Revolutionary bombs were introduced to India by the Maniktala society. The early experiments of self-trained chemists like Ullaskar Dutt were soon replaced by professional devices manufactured by Hem Chandra and others. The literature on the making of explosives that Hem brought back from Europe was widely disseminated. At one point copies were sent anonymously to students of dozens of district schools.

The basic patterns laid down during the formative period persisted throughout the four decades of freedom-movement-era revolutionary activities in Bengal. The immediate result of the first burst revolutionary activity was a period of government repression during which the samitis were outlawed and many revolutionaries were imprisoned or deported. During these years the Jugantar organization began to take shape, while the now-illegal Anushilan Samiti regrouped. The imperial government's annulment of the Partition of Bengal did not have the desired result of stopping the violent revolution. When the Viceroy Lord Hardinge made his ceremonial entry into the new capital of Delhi in December 1912, Bengali revolutionaries came close to killing him in a well-planned bomb-attack.

The activity and the influence of the Bengal revolutionaries led to the passage in 1924 of the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance, extended as an Act next year. This again gave the police extraordinary powers, and between 1924 and 1927 almost 200 suspects were imprisoned, among them was Subhas Bose. Acts of terrorism in Bengal dropped off; but an Anushilan-linked group in the United Provinces grew to some importance. Founded in Benaras in 1923 by Shachindranath Sanyal and Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, the Hindustan Republic Association (as it became known) soon had branches from Calcutta to Lahore. A series of successful robberies in UP culminated in an ambitious train robbery in Kakori. This resulted in two trials that crippled the organization. The HRA did much to radicalize North India, however, and several years later it was reborn as the Hindustan Socialist Republic Association.

In 1927 the Indian National Congress came out in favour of complete independence from Britain. The recognition of the goal that Aurobindo, Tilak and other Extremist politicians had put forward twenty years earlier was to some extent made possible by the pressure exerted by the

militant revolutionary groups. Owing to the relative calm in Bengal, the government released most of those interned under the Act of 1925. There was an attempt, ultimately unsuccessful, to forge a Jugantar-Anushilon alliance at this time. Some of the younger radicals struck out in new directions, while many, young and old, took part in Congress activities, such as the anti-Simon agitation of 1928.

As the tempo of the national movement picked up during the early thirties, some former revolutionaries became influential Congressmen. For example, Jugantar leader Surendra Mohan Ghose, while many Bengal Congressmen maintained link with revolutionary organization. In January 1930 Congress celebrated “Independence Day” for the first time, and in the months that followed, important steps were taken to make independence a reality. In March Gandhi inaugurated the Civil Disobedience Movement with his Salt March; In April Surya Sen and his associates raided the Chittagong Armoury.

The four-year long Civil Disobedience Movement corresponded with the most vehement period of revolutionary activities in Bengal. Dozens of successful actions and a few assassinations were carried out during the first half of the decade. But this was a last flare before the fire was extinguished. The revolutionary movement in Bengal may be said to have ended in 1934.

The indirect pressure exerted by the revolutionaries on the freedom movement was their primary contribution to success. Another point was to show that freedom was something worth dying for. The martyrdom of Khudiram Bose, Surya Sen and Jatindra Nath Das was a powerful influence on the mentality of the generations that came of age between 1908 and 1938.

Nationalism: Perceptions of Chaudhuri

2.8

In his book *Three Horse men of the New Apocalypse* Chaudhuri identifies Nationalism as the second apocalypse. To define the word “nationalism” he takes help from the interpretations provided in the three authentic dictionaries, the Oxford International Dictionary, Webster International and the American Heritage Dictionary. He notes that according to OED the word “nationalism” is not a primary word rather a derivative one. It is a derivative of the word “nation” through the derivative adjective “national.” He also points out the long interval

between the first usage of the word “nation” and its usage as “nationalism.” According to OED nation occurred for the first time in AD 1300 while nationalism did not appear until 1836. The Webster Dictionary offers several interpretations but Chaudhuri agrees with only the last two where it says that it is a phase of socialism, and theologically the doctrine believes that the people of a certain nation or nations are God’s chosen people. Chaudhuri says that from modern perspective these two views are relevant. He also maintains that the definitions are too explicit and might cause confusion with other terms like race, people and state. These words are in no way synonymous with “nation.” Chaudhuri affirms that “race” is chiefly an anthropological term which implies the distinctive characteristics of the physical types; while nation is a political term with several figurative connotations. “It signifies the inhabitants or more narrowly, the citizenry, of a sovereign state, or any body of persons who have been united under one independent government long enough to have acquired a distinct identity.” (53) However, nation and state is not the same. A state may break up but the nation holds together. Chaudhuri quotes J. R. Greene to further explain his view. Greene wrote, “A state is accidental, it can be made or unmade, but a nation is something real which can be neither made nor destroyed” (53). Chaudhuri quotes Webster to explain the meaning of “people” which says that the term, “designates an aggregate of persons who, irrespective of their individual racial origins or ancestral rationalities, have through close and long emotional association achieved a common cultural interest and ideal, and a sense of race or kinship” (53). In this way Chaudhuri alerts us to be cautious about the meaning of nationalism and thus prevent us from confusing it with other synonymous terms.

In the course of his narration of the historical progression of nationalism Chaudhuri tries to specify nationalism more accurately by showing its difference from imperialism. He maintains that in reality nationalism and imperialism both originate from the same political urge. But nationalism becomes imperialism when a nation becomes so powerful that it wants to bring other nations under its domination. It does not stop to practice nationalism but tries to apply it in the highest powerful manner over its domain.

The great Indian thinkers of the nineteenth century starting from Raja Rammohan Roy to Bankim Chandra Chatterjee had a positive approach towards British Imperialism. Although they critiqued their subject hood status they believed that it was good for India.

In his book *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* in the chapter “Enter Nationalism” Chaudhuri reminisces about the swadeshi movement days he spent at the Eastern part of Bengal which is now Bangladesh. He remembers that the Governor General of British-India Lord Curzon once went to Mymensingh and spoke about partition of Bengal which the elders did not welcome wholeheartedly. Here he did not miss the chance to comment sarcastically about the double standards of the Bengalees. He said that in 1905 the Bengalees became mad for the annulment of the partition while in 1947 they supported it without any hesitation. He remembers the emotional state of the Bengalees during the first anniversary of the Bengal partition. On that day a man visited their house with a bundle of Rakhis, a kind of cotton strips tied around the wrist as a symbol of brotherhood. His father asked them to become clean by taking a bath before tying the knot. They observed the day as a day of national mourning and fasting. They also put away their English clothes and wore the traditional Indian dhotis which were coarse, thick and heavy. He also mentions the optimistic approach of educated persons of the time towards the history of contemporary political revolutions. They were inspired and influenced by the doctrine of Burke and Mill and also of Gladstone and Lincoln. They also became emotionally awakened by the ideology of Rousseau and Mazzini. The methods of political actions suggested by the leaders of the American Revolution, Garibaldi, the hero of the unification of Italy and the Irish Nationalists inspired the young generation as a whole. Actually Chaudhuri views the Swadesi movement as an expression of nationalism of the Bengali Hindus based on common culture and common race with the Bengali Muslims. Though the Muslims of East Bengal were opponent to the issue because the Bengal Partition of 1905 offered them a separate homeland where they were the majority. For the first time they got the opportunity to shape up their lives. However, Chaudhuri never became influenced by German Nationalism or Nazism which is an extreme form of nationalism based on ethnic cleansing. He and his friends could realize that the nature of that nationalism was not same as Italian or Irish nationalism. Nor was it like the nationalism of the Indian people, colonized under the British imperialism. The Indians idealized political freedom with a representative form of government without any monarch to rule over. Chaudhuri of course believes that they were more swept away by the emotional fervor of the ideology rather than its rational aspects.

Chaudhuri records his various reflections on the Swadeshi movement. He writes that in his early youth he read Valentine Chirol's book *Indian Unrest* with his friends. At that time they were taught to hate the book. But in his later life when he read it again he found that Chirol had been wholly correct in his evaluation of the Swadeshi movement of Hindu revival. To quote Chaudhuri,

It was not the liberal political thought of the organizers of the Indian National Congress, but the Hindu revivalism of the last quarter of the nineteenth century – a movement which previously confined to the field of religion which was the driving force behind the anti partition agitation of 1905 and subsequent years. The outcome of this movement was the clash which occurred at Surat in 1907 was only superficially a quarrel between the Moderates and the Extremists; in essence it was the manifestation of the irreconcilability of liberal nationalism and Hindu nationalism (249).

Chaudhuri says that nationalism in his youth maintained a conservative character. His feelings were that even the songs composed by Rabindranath Tagore at that time began to carry conservative messages of Hindu nationalism. Even his family which was intellectually quite advanced and much ahead of its time seemed to change its track. His family members stopped reading liberal newspapers like *Shanjiboni* and started reading *Basumati* which was the organ of orthodox Hinduism. But his family was not totally caught by the conservative whim. There were many who burnt their foreign possessions like clothes from England etc. His parents were rational enough to put away their foreign materials and use only the locally made ones.

Chaudhuri comments about the relationship of Hindu and Muslim communities. He rejects the view that the British were responsible for these communal problems rather he believes that the difference between the two communities were always present the British exploited it only to their advantage.

Chaudhuri says that it became a tradition to treat the Muslims as the “other” for a long time even much before the Swadeshi movement. As a result, the Muslims' indifference towards the Hindus became quite natural while the Muslims resented reasons behind it, the economic and other

advantages enjoyed by the Hindus and their domination of the Muslims. The Hindus too had a historical suspicion of Muslims as invaders and persecutors.

Chaudhuri recollects that from the very prime of their life they were told by their guardians that the Muslims had oppressed them. They invaded India. He writes that in the nineteenth century in Bengali literature the Muslims were referred to as the Yavanas by the Hindu writers. He mentions Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Romesh Chandra Dutta's glorification of the Hindus and their religion in their fictional romances. Chaudhuri recollects that by reading those romances their young minds were filled with enthusiasm and they nurtured silent feelings of hatred towards the Muslims.

Throughout the nineteenth century the Hindu mind traced its culture to its earlier Sanskrit tradition and beyond that it sought only European culture. It longed for an East-West tradition. Prominent writers and thinkers of the period, from Rammohan Roy to Rabindranath Tagore, talked about this East-West fusion; they seemed to be indifferent about the other significant fraction of the population.

Chaudhuri deals at length with the new dimension given by the Nationalist Movement to the Hindu-Muslim relationship. He maintains that the Hindu nationalists were highly selective in correlating the political history of India with their present issue of nationalism. Chaudhuri quotes Bipin Chandra Pal whom he terms the theoretician of the swadeshi movement.

If the Moslem leaders tried to wipe out the memories of Sikhs and the Mahrattas, the Hindu nationalist leaders sought to revive them. It was no doubt supreme psychological need of nationalist propaganda and so far these memories were revived to recreate the self-confidence of a people suffering from a state of hopeless and listless inertia, they did only good and no harm (255).

Chaudhuri says that the adversaries of Hindu-Muslim relation became a reality because on the question of transfer of power to the locals by the British since it was not clear to whom they would hand over power and how this would be affected.

Chaudhuri remembers that in those days communalism was more significant in Calcutta than in East Bengal. He recollects his boyhood days living in Calcutta when he did not have a single Muslim friend, and what is more important did not care to have one. "There I found an arrogant

contempt for the Muslims” he writes “and a deep seated hostility towards them, which could have been produced only by a complete insulation of the two communities and absence of personal relations between their members (256).

In comparison, the situation was much more cordial between the two communities in Kishorganj. In his own words “We began without much hatred” (265). In his school he had as many as Muslim classmates as Hindus. Religion never came in their way of friendship.

Chaudhuri focuses on the relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims in the days following the partition of Bengal. He gives a detailed description of the preparations of both the Hindus and the Muslims to take revenge on each other. At that time no place was safe. To quote Chaudhuri,

Very thorough preparations had been made by the Hindus to meet possible Muslim attacks. Trunk full of pistols and Chaudhuri attached more information about the communal relationship ammunition had been passed from house to house; swords, spears, and even bows and arrows had been collected in large quantities. Every Hindu house would have been defended by men practiced in arms, and blood would have followed had there been a clash (260).

However, the clash could be avoided in that year but the communal harmony was never fully restored.

In the summer of 1908 the arrangement of the district political conference in Kishorganj gave him an opportunity to get a glimpse of the political agitation that was sweeping over the Bengal. The conference was addressed by great political leaders of the time such as Aurobindo Ghosh of Pondicherry, Suresh Samajpoti, the grandson of Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar, Raja Subod Chandra Mollik, and Pandit Satyavrata Samarami. It was an unforgettable experience for Chaudhuri to be able to come across such illuminating personalities.

In this conference he met for the first time the members of the Sadhana Samiti and the Shurid Samiti. These two were physical culture clubs which were actually institutions for giving training in patriotism, with the ultimate object of raising a national army to overthrow British rule. At this time Chaudhuri’s thoughts too proceeded in the same direction. He also joined a similar club run

by his maternal relatives in his mother's home town Kalikutch. He informs us that these activities were carried out under a shade of disguise.

In his autobiography Chaudhuri appraises us about the situation of the revolutionary movement of Bengal from his own experience. He could get its real nature from his intense observation. Chaudhuri notes that the Government was considering to engage contingent of soldiers in the districts of East Bengal including both Mymensingh town and Kishorganj to control the revolutionary activities. The internal civil police seemed to lose its morale.

Chaudhuri also confirms the information that the teenage boys were recruited to conduct those fierce actions. He relates that one of his brothers then 14 years old became involved in one of those groups. Chaudhuri describes the mode of activities of these young followers through his brother. He left home at odd hours and came back after an hour or two extremely unwilling to communicate where he had been. Usually a senior member whistled nearby and the boy became restless to meet him and later disappeared with him. These boys were ideologically manipulated to sacrifice themselves for the country. Chaudhuri remembers that his brother's revolutionary acquaintance wanted to influence him also. One day he invited Chaudhuri to a walk. While walking, the boy complained about the moral decline of the students. He also advised Chaudhuri to read the writings of Swami Vivekananda. The boy soon understood that Chaudhuri would not be his desired potential recruit. Chaudhuri also mentions the helplessness of these boys in case they wanted to leave these societies when their illusion had broken. According to the constitution of these societies if anybody wanted to return to his previous normal life they were usually killed secretly. Chaudhuri also informs how it was finally controlled by the Government. Soon Lord Hardinge promulgated The Defence of India Act. It succeeded in stopping the movement. Under this Act quite a large number of young men were interned by the police and many boys were blacklisted. The families and relatives of these suspects were continually harassed and quizzed. Consequently the revolutionary spirit merged with the National Movement. It corresponded under the leadership of Gandhi with his Civil Disobedience Movement and The Salt March led by him. Finally The Bengal Revolutionary Movement extinguished in 1934 leaving an indirect impact on the freedom movement of greater India.

Chaudhuri in the initial days supported the revolutionary activities. Then he considered the strategy being justified but later he changed his mind observing the futility of the destructive attempts that led to death and misery.

Conclusion

2.9

Chaudhuri in his centenary life was lucky to experience the direct contact of the Bengal Renaissance which eventually gave way to the emergence of Indian Nationalism. He thinks that this 19th century reawakening attained its full glory in the following five decades after 1880. He points out how the economic prosperity of a certain section of people due to the commercial attachment with the East India Company contributed to the making of a successor elite class who became aroused by the great passion for reforming society and religion. Their vision of life created a Renaissance situation in Bengal. This era signifies the development of humanism and modernity. It was also characterized by the Hindu reformist movements in the areas of religion, society and thought. Intense intellectual activities in literature and arts were perceived at this time. Foundation of science following Western approach was also laid at this time. The British Orientalists too contributed to the growing up of the Bengali intelligentsia. Besides introducing new things in India like printing and publishing, founding schools and systematizing education they historicized the Indian past and stimulated a consciousness of history among Indian Hindu intellectuals. The colonized nation seemed to have invigorated in the course of time.

Chaudhuri through his Autobiography insisted his indebtedness to the canonical Renaissance figures-- like Rammohun Roy, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Swami Vivekananda for representing the aura of modern liberal Hinduism along with the European literary heroes like Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Homer and Virgil who were a great source of enrichment for him. He believes that these figures did speak to Europeans as their equals.

Much to Chaudhuri's regret, this spirit of Hindu liberalism acquired from the European cultural heritage was later ignored or despised by the wake of Indian Nationalism. In this connection Chaudhuri opines Mahatma Gandhi as a problematic figure whose saintly politics were often misunderstood and abused by his numerous claimed followers. In Chaudhuri's view Indian

Nationalism had taken wrong turns virtually since the beginning of the twentieth century. This he felt a perpetual source of deep anguish. He sympathizes against his fellow Indians who are wrapped up by this pain. He seems to follow in the footsteps of Swami Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who also castigated their contemporary Indians in order to rouse them to patriotism and sacrifice for the nation.

Chaudhuri's book originates in despair. He was not pleased with the rise of Indian Nationalism or the immediate withdrawal of the British from the subcontinent it had ruled since 1757. He realized that both developments would put an end to the time of Babus – his fellow intellectual Bengalis centred in Calcutta who had reached out to European civilization and who he thought should be the political and cultural rulers of modern India.

He saw himself as the last survivor of the Bengal Renaissance, the vital and creative cultural movement that was initiated by Rammohun Roy in the nineteenth century and that ended with the death in 1941 of Rabindranath Tagore.

The Bengal Renaissance was flawed from the outset. It failed to involve regeneration of ancient literature and institutions. Besides, the educated community in Bengal reaped the immediate benefits of the English education overlooking the exploitations of the English. The protagonists of Renaissance failed to comprehend the needs of the toiling masses that lived in the suburbs and hinter lands with their age old Hindu rituals and traditions and also the limitations of the Muslim citizens. Another setback of this Renaissance was that the colonial rule let loose political and economic forces which led to the birth of middle class bourgeoisie. The ideology accepted from the West directly or indirectly led to the growth of Nationalism. Rammohun Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore were aware of the economic exploitation of the English. But they understood that it was not wise to resist the economic revolution which would later become beneficial for a transition from medievalism to modern. Actually three classic factors are responsible for a Renaissance situation. Firstly, cultural growth; secondly, sound economic infrastructure; and thirdly free capitalism. At that time cultural growth was developing in the society but the economic situation was on the verge of decline. Almost all enterprises were debasing. In 1906 we find the mention of Jamshedji Tata's venture that was rising. Other than that as compared to Medici merchants and bankers of Florence we didn't find any good

example of free capitalism. According to several Marxist critiques, the historical process enlivened by Rammohun Roy, Bankim Chandra and Rabindranath Tagore was not a progressive one. They had invited western intrusion.

However, whether we appreciate or not, there was a wide spread turmoil and alteration occurred in the Indian society in the nineteenth century that paved way to this transition. Whether or not it was a Renaissance is questionable but it did open up the avenues to the progress of Indian society so that India itself had moved to recapture its own heritage and culture. Though the path was not strewn with roses – the Bengalis had to pursue radical approaches – had to accept optimum sacrifices but finally they were able to evoke the spirit of nationalism among the Indians. The Hindu-elite Bengali's inspired the majority Hindu Bengalis through Swadeshi movement and finally merged with the Freedom Movement of India. In the broad spectrum the main object was same for all – to end the colonial rule.

Chapter 3

The Social Life of Calcutta

Overview

3.1

Once Bengal became the main centre of English colonialism in the subcontinent and Calcutta became the nuclear for serving British economic interests. Suranjan Das, a Reader in History at Calcutta University, writes in his essay “The Politics of Agitation: Calcutta 1912-1947” that the conspicuous position the city started to enjoy under the British Raj was because of the concentration of the Industrial establishments there and the operation of the shipping vehicles through its port and also the use of its vast hinterland for the procurement of cash crops like tea, coal and jute. Das terms the city as the “melting pot” of Eastern and Western cultures. The Raj chose Calcutta to be the primary site for imparting English education. So an English knowing middle class community first emerged in Calcutta later which provided leadership to the rest of the subcontinent. Thus Calcutta developed as a cultural capital for the whole of India. (*CALCUTTA: The Living City*, Vol. II, 15.)

In 1772, Calcutta formally became the capital of British India, a decision made by Governor General Warren Hastings. On January 29, 1780, *Hickey's Bengal Gazette* or the *Calcutta General Adviser* became the first newspaper to be printed in India, and is an invaluable chronicle of the social life of Anglo-Indian society in Calcutta. Contemporary memoirs such as those of William Hickey's recorded the life-styles of those people in those days. Their habits of consumption of enormous meals, washed down by copious quantities of claret, port, Madeira and other wines, followed by the smoking of Hookahs were noted in it. After the death of his English wife Charlotte, who is buried in Park Street cemetery Hickey married a Bengali girl called Jemdane. She too died in childbirth in 1796. This sad incident prompted him to write in his journal that “Thus did I lose as gentle and affectionately attached a girl as ever man was blessed with”. Such unions between Europeans, English, French and Portuguese, and local women, both Hindu and Muslim, were common throughout the 18th century in Calcutta, and are the origin of the city's majority Anglo-Indian or Eurasian community to-day.

Calcutta's intellectual life received a great enthusiasm in 1784 with the foundation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal by Sir William Jones. He received great encouragement from Warren Hastings, who was himself an oriental scholar. Jones worked closely with the Pundits of the Kalighat Temple, together with the local Ulema, in translating and producing new editions of rare and forgotten texts. His study of Sanskrit with Pandit Ramlochan at Nadiya led him discover the existence of the Indo-European family of languages. Many distinguished scholars both English and Bengali, such as Henry Thomas Colebrooke, James Princep and Pandit Radhakanta would grace the society's meetings enriching the knowledge of India's culture and past.

Researchers and historians at different times have written about the multi-faceted social, educational, commercial, cultural and political aspects of the city.

Dominique Lapierre in his book *City of Joy* reminisces about the "prestigious past of this metropolis" (33). We come to know from him that Calcutta from the date of its foundation in 1690 by the merchants of East India Company until the departure of its last Governor General Lord Mountbatten in June, 1948 "epitomized" (33) the beautiful earthen constructions of public buildings, monuments and residences.

Raj Bhavan, the 137-room building in which the Viceroys of the Empire were lodged became the residence of the Indian Governor of Bengal after Partition. In pre-partition days, the Viceroy hosted "gala evenings" (34) "surrounded by a whole retinue of aides-de-camp and officers in dress uniform. Two turbaned Indian servants gently wafted fans of scarlet silk to refresh him while soldiers armed with silver-encrusted lances provided him with a guard of honour" (34). Lapierre mentions the erstwhile stadium building of Calcutta in which in 1804 Robert Walpole, the grandson of the then British Prime minister lead the Calcutta team and opened batting in the inaugural match ever played in India against a team of old Etonians. In this way he writes also about other structures which serve as mementoes of those past days of Calcutta. Among those were mainly Fort William – built in the enclave situated beside the river Hoogly to protect Calcutta from external foes; Victoria Memorial named after Her Majesty Queen Victoria was built to commemorate her sixty-three year reigns in India. The relics of the past are preserved there for the exploration of the present generation like,

statues of the Empress at all the various stages of her splendour together with all the royal envoy's who succeeded each other here; a portrait of Kipling; sabres with pommels inlaid with gold and precious stones, worn by British generals

during the battles which gave India to Britain; parchments confirming these conquests; manuscript messages from Victoria conveying her affection to her 'peoples beyond the seas' (35).

Kaliprasanna Sinha in his book *Hootum Panchar Naksha* depicted the nineteenth century Calcutta from various perspectives. During this time the city started to take its modern shape. Since 1820 Bengal started meeting the changes in the shape of new land settlements, introduction of English education, indigo cultivation and reform movements were among other things. A new class of educated Bengalis too had emerged at this time. Most of them originated from the landed gentry but at the same time a new urban professional class in Calcutta became increasingly visible. Assertion of a new confident personality among the subordinated subject race was also perceived around this time.

Only five years before Sinha's book was published an unforgettable event took place in Barrackpore which turned the situation in a new more and the Sepoy revolt of 1857 was triggered. In April that year, the Sepoy Mongol Pandey refused to bite on cartridges greased with animal fat. His obstinate attitude was soon to have wider reactions among the Sepoy community as well as the general people in India. But what was surprising that it did not touch the elite class in Calcutta. The educated Bengali pledged his loyalty to the British Empire but with a new kind of values and identity of a self-respecting community. They ridiculed the Europeans in Calcutta for their fear of the revolt and for exaggerating the news of atrocities committed by the rebels. In an article published in the *Hindoo Patriot*, Girish Chandra Ghosh scorned European writers as a class who maintained that the Indians had no civilization, no public opinion or national feeling. They were on the British side but with an essence of equal race.

In 1861, in the year of the 'Blue Mutiny' in Bengal the farmers rose against the forcible cultivation of the unprofitable indigo crop. This offered a chance to the educated community in Calcutta to come closer and protest against the tyranny of the Indigo planters. It was in this context that Dinbandhu Mitra wrote *Neel Darpan*, but soon a lively literary culture came to dominate the city as poets, novelists and journalists enthralled it through their creativity. In 1873-74, Bankim Chandra Chatterji published the *Bangadarshan*, a literary journal reflecting the new cultural identity. At the same time a subaltern culture as opposed to high culture continued to thrive.

It was also a time when the rigid caste system became relaxed by the new urban situation. The new class held mainly from the Kayastha community because they were prudent enough to take the advantage of the British rule by learning English. They now took a new leading role in social religious movements that weakened the caste rules or at least deviated from the caste orthodoxy. The outcome of which was Brahma Samaj.

In this connection Sinha gives a description of Upendra Kishore Raychowdhury's father's ascendancy to prosperity. We know that Upendra Kishore was a noted children's writer and father of his equal illustrious son Sukumar Ray and grandfather of Satyajit Ray. The family originally belonged to the Kayastha community but later became the followers of Brahma Samaj. Upendra Kishore's father had great linguistic talent. He was expert in English and Persian languages and in the traditional Indian and British Indian legal systems. He became a topmost expert for interpreting old land deeds written in Persian and in helping the landowners to get the best deal from the newly introduced British legal system in India. In this way he became affluent and in due course the family was able to afford two elephants.

In the nineteenth century then, several factors such as Christianity, Brahmoism, more frequent sea-voyages, inter-dining, widow remarriage, inter-caste marriage and tensions in the joint families were causing all kinds of strain within the society.

Hootum Pancher Noksha being an ethnographic sketch of nineteenth century Calcutta depicts the various sections of the society like dissolute Babu and his mistress and grog shops, the charlatan priests and gossains, the servants seemingly obedient in absence mocked their masters, the labourers and peddlers and their festivals.

The following was the description of a city street: "When the rains stopped from the woodworks – pedestrians, hawkers, fishwives, and their men, outcaste Brahmins went around singing and begging for alms carrying the image of the goddess Sitala on a tray, Vaisnava mendicants wondered about singing, playing their ektaras and tambourines, migrant Brahmins went around begging for alms crying, there were opium addicts, sweepers in the grogshops buying ram after work was over, drummers, cremators, pig-rearers, palki-bearers too emerged. (*The Observant Owl*).

In the above description there existed much satire and underlying humour. In the amalgamation of different trends of the time humour served as an essential ingredient. It mixed too many eras – old and new ever changing but tradition bound. The comment which eminent scholar and linguist

Suniti Kumar Chatterji made in *Hootum* about the twentieth century is applicable to its prior period too. Of student life in 1912-13 in Calcutta, Suniti Kumar Chatterji wrote, the life then demonstrated the mind of civilized man in its various stages. The 20th century mingles with the eighth or 12th century, mid Victorian England and 18th century France with 16th century Bengal. Actually many exposures interacted at the same time. It was an important characteristic of the time.

Pantomime shows or songs were popular during ‘Charak’ festival. Those items were used effectively to ridicule the higher classes. They teased the rich baboos as well as religious hypocrites through this medium. A procession of jesters was known to have mocked the neo-rich by depicting an old man covered with flowers with foot swollen by elephantiasis. Another song was sung worshipping his foot with all the piety of a devotee. All these incongruous pictures of the then urban society of Calcutta came to us through Sinha’s *Hootum Pancher Naksha*.

The Babu culture was a product of Calcutta’s encounter with the west. The term in the 1850’s came to refer to the lavish and extravagant life-style of the city’s newly rich, i.e the absentee landlords, the new mercantile class or agents of the British and others who made good fortunes in such times. But the newly western educated Bengali did not like the word “Babu” because the British shahib’s applied it to Indians in a derogatory fashion, whereas in the days of Nawabs it was a title of honour.

Bankim Chandra Chatterji once wrote a satirical essay titled, “Babu” to demonstrate the relation between the Babu and the brown shahib on one hand and the black Babu and white nawab on the other. To quote,

“The word babu will have various meanings. To those who will be installed as the rulers of India, known by the name of Englishmen, babu will mean clerk or shopkeeper. To the poor, the word Babu will mean a richer man. To servants, babu will mean master. Different from all these, some few men will be born who will be desirous only of living as babus and it is these whom I am praising. Those who contest this will listen to the Mahabharata in vain. Reborn as cow they will become food for babus” (*CALCUTTA*, VOL. 2)

It was this last class of Babus was a popular phenomenon in the nineteenth century Calcutta. The wealth of these Babus was mostly ill gotten and it is believed that it was also short lived. Many stories of them echoed in contemporary Calcutta. One such story belonged to Babu Padmalochon Dutta.

Story goes on like this that bad luck befell him the day he was born. He was disinterested in studies. His family consequently lost all their landed properties by the time he reached his adolescence. So he was compelled to go to Calcutta to serve as a cook cum errand boy in order to sustain himself. As a cook he was successful and he earned much reputation as loaf maker. However, from cook he joined a ship where he held better responsibilities and finally he rose to the post of accountant. His fortunes also steadily improved. In the meantime many fortune mongers flocked around him. He became flattered and spent money extravagantly on them.

However, he headed towards bankruptcy soon -- but suddenly he became very religious. He began to believe in rituals and superstitions. He gathered around him hordes of unscrupulous Brahmins. The deceitful priests made him believe that Dutta was a man of super human power. So he went to build a house for himself and at the age of fifty got a mistress.

Dutta was a representative character of the Babus of the time. Other Babus did much the same. Some built monuments for their mistresses and there were many who spent the night with their mistresses and returned home quietly having paid off their loyal servants. The lonely wife slept next to a Tulsi leaf.

Although Babu Culture was Hindu dominated, the Hindu elite were greatly influenced by the Persianized Nawabi culture. Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century the Hindus and the Muslims participated in the common elite culture but later the Muslims bore negative response to the Western education and Western culture.

A. F Salahuddin Ahmed points out in his book *Social Ideas and Social change in Bengal: 1818-1835* (2003) that while the Hindus had welcomed English rule with enthusiasm, the Muslims regarded it as a calamity. The establishment of English rule brought new ideas from the West which produced a deep stir in Bengali society. The Muslim response was largely negative because they bore contempt towards the British for snatching the power out of their hands. So the Muslims were losing their centuries old privileges during this time.

Satiric approach was the trend of the time because to depict the chaos and the change all around the existence of irony, humour and seriousness went on side by side. In the early part of the twentieth century Sukumar Ray formed an informal association called the Monday Club which was actually also a practicing pun to the word relating to the day of the meeting where the special sweetmeat Manda was served as refreshment. That was also a great attraction for the

participants. This special type of gathering is known as 'adda' and in fact adda was started around this time.

Such satire was institutionalized more forcefully through another medium in Calcutta – its folk art known as 'pat' paintings of Kalighat. The European's termed these as bazaar paintings. Through these paintings many sides of the contemporary society emerges before us. Like, the presentation of special kinds of dancers known as "Khemta wallis" in that society come to us through paintings on the pat. From those painted scenes we come to know that they performed at night or secretly during the time of important festivals. The khemta dance was a popular form of dance favourite among the lower classes but the Babus did not have any hesitation to patronize them.

In the nineteenth century the community pujas' became a kind of flattery to the ruling British personnel in order to improve relation with them and materialize one's own interest. So during the Durga Puja Instead of feeding the Brahmins they offered wine and rice to their dear acquaintances among them there were ladies too. Imported articles were burnt before the image and one was allowed to tread on the sacred place with shoes on. The image was decorated with finery brought from England. The Mother Goddess wore a bonnet instead of a crown and took sandwiches instead of fruit as offering. Such superficiality in attitude and the vice of exploitation entered into the people of Calcutta at that time.

Shibnath Shastri's non-fictional book *Ramtonu Lahiri O Totkalin Bongo Samaj* (1904) also reflects the same situation. He writes that Calcutta spread a moral infection too. Men did not hesitate to further their interests by telling lies, cheating, taking bribes, and committing forgeries and similar aims and instead of being looked down upon they were praised for their cleverness.

But there were a few positive sides too in this century. The most significant was the effort exerted by the British Raj to emancipate the Indian womenfolk. In this connection we can remember the name of Captain N. Augustus Willard who was the chief philanthropist behind this object. He was helped by the English educated bhadrolok class of the time. They played a leading role in implementing a model of female education in Bengal that was primarily fashioned by contemporary English missionaries, educationists and administrators. The Bengali bhadrolok's concept of the emancipation of women was derived from these new teachers but was, at the same time, considerably modified by the patriarchal norms of traditional Hindu society. It was a concept shared over time by the women of their families.

The urban life of Calcutta was considerably comfortable because the British ladies who resided there at that time recorded it positively in their memoirs. They were foreigners so their opinions might not have been prejudiced. The lives of these memshahib's were taken up with running the household – providing food and clothing for the family, furnishing their home, controlling the servants and raising the children.

Lilian Ashloy, who was born in India, as were her mother and grandmother, wrote at the end of the nineteenth century, “British families even after several generations of Indian residence, persisted having the same courses which might have been served in any London home: soup, roast and pudding. Native dishes were seldom included, although indigenous vegetables and fruits – plaintains, mangoes and others – found their places.”

For those at the very top of Anglo-Indian society, the illusion of a transplanted world was nearly perfect. In the 1840s when the Governor-General and his household moved from Calcutta to Barrackpore back each week, all was “very well managed” wrote Emily Eden, sister of Governor General Lord Auckland.

The early growth of most cities is largely impelled by a number of high-born or socially distinguished families. This is true of Calcutta as well. But these families were not the founders of the city rather they flourished through their connections with British colonialism.

Before the British entered here the Sheth and the Basak's families were most powerful because they were wealthy. They were merchants of yarn and cloth. They traded at Sutanuti market. After the British came they flourished more. Janardan Sheth acted as the trading agent of the British and Shobharam Basak (1690-1773) became a millionaire by supplying textiles to the East India Company. But from the mid-eighteenth century they began to decline when Calcutta began to develop as an urban settlement. Then other families began to appear as respected houses. In 1823 Raja Radhakanta Deb of Shobhabazar prepared a list of such families. From that list and government documents the names of twenty-three reputed families were obtained. There were other lists too but what is important that from these we can form an idea of the extent and influences of the Great Houses of Calcutta in that century.

Sumanta Banerjee in his article, “The World Of Ramjan Ostagar: The Common Man of Old Calcutta” shows that traditionally skilled craftsmen, who had been lured away from the villages of Bengal to the new city gradually sank into poverty by the middle of the nineteenth century

because of unequal competition with the European tradesmen who came and occupied their professions. In Banerjee's words,

The same *Samachar Darpan* lists the occupations and names of indigenous practitioners who were thrown out of work by the arrival of European tradesmen. We hear of Ajuddin chand mistri, a master mason; the Pals, well-known carpenters; and Shib Mistri, a famous goldsmith. They were replaced by European retail proprietors like the tailoring company of Ranken, Hamilton's the jewelers, and Monteith's the boot and saddle makers....By the last quarter of the nineteenth the once-prosperous artisans and craftsmen had joined the ranks of the lowliest labourers – the barbers and washermen, the servants and scavengers (77).

Raana Haider in her book *India: Beyond the Taj and the Raj* terms Calcutta as the “City of Enlightenment and Learning” (255) She notes the popular phrase: “Whatever Bengal thinks today, rest of India thinks tomorrow”. She asks that how many cities in the world have a street named after a book. She answers in affirmative about Calcutta. She explicates that in 1886, Nagendranath basu (1866-1938) assumed the editorship of the 22 volume Bengali encyclopaedia *Bishwakosh*. He spent twenty long years to compile it. In recognition, the street where he lived was renamed Bishwakosh Lane.

Haider further mentions that Calcutta established itself early as a “City of Learning.” She adds that the Christian Calcutta School Book Society founded in 1817 produced Bengali textbooks. Books in English, Hindustani, Persian, Sanskrit and other languages were also published. The Hindu College in Calcutta was established in 1817. It was founded as the first institution for modern higher education and the spread of the English language. Christian missionaries established the first elementary school for girls in 1820. The Frenchman Claude Martin of Lucknow bequeathed in 1835, La Martiniere School in Calcutta as a “gift to the children of India” However those children did not include Indian children who were only admitted as late as in 1935 – a century later. India's first higher centre for learning was the Calcutta University founded in 1857. By 1904, it had teaching and research organizations with numerous affiliated schools and colleges.

The Hindu College emerged as the Presidency College in 1855 and was affiliated to the Calcutta University in 1857. “For the foundation of Hindu College with alien rulers playing no role in its 18 years ahead of Macaulay's Minutes negates the colonial historiographers that modern Indian

education was a blessing of British rule” (257) is the clarification offered by A.K. Mukhopadhyay, a former Principal of Presidency College. Calcutta in the field of medicine had an Ayurvedic College by 1824. Set up by the East India Company, it dealt with traditional medicine. A year later, the first medical college to train Indian doctors in western medicine appeared in Calcutta. The year 1890 saw Miss B. Bose and V.M. Mitter graduate from Calcutta Medical College – the first Indian medical graduates.

There are some places in Calcutta which contribute a lot to its social life. New Market commercial area is one such place. Its official name is Stuart Hogg Market. This New market was also a specimen installed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. According to John Barry where everything was available in the shortest period of time. To quote from his book Calcutta: 1940,

Surely there is no such market in the world where, in an hour’s shopping, one can buy fruits from Persia, Iraq and Afganistan, yes, and from California, Tasmania and Spain too,--from wherever fruits are grown; buy textiles from Lancashire and Yorkshire; footwear from Northampton; rugs from Bokhara; Aluminium ware from America; silks and curios from china and Japan; tobacco from Virginia, cuba and Egypt; jams and tinned fruits from Australia and Newzealand; potted delicacies from Europe; hardware and cutlery, toilet requisites and stationery,ebony and ivorywork, in fact almost anything from anywhere (*India: Beyond the Taj*, 247).

Another characteristic of the nineteenth century social life of Calcutta was the existence of famous clubs like Bengal club. Bengal club is a social club in Calcutta. It was opened in 1827 as the Calcutta United Service Club. The club’s first President was Lt. Col. Hon. J. Flinch. The club house was in a building in Esplanade West, erected in 1813. It was designed in the colonial style. It serves the tradition of Bengal and British culture with a blend of ethics and vision. At the site of present Bengal club was the residence of Thomas Babington Macaulay.

Another contemporary club of colonial India was Tollygunge Club. Richard Johnson came to Calcutta as a Writer – a clerk with the East India Company in 1769. At that time the post of Writer was a very lucrative post among the British residents. One needed the best of connections to obtain these posts. Johnson made enough profit as a merchant, landlord, indigo planter and auctioneer. He acquired landed property from the descendants of Tipu Sultan of Mysore. In the

1780 he constructed a “Blue House” in that land and later converted it to a club naming it to be Tolleygunge Club.

A few streets of Calcutta also play important role in the lives of its inhabitants. Park Street is such a prime location. It dates from 1767. Its name was derived from the Park which surrounded Sir Elijah Impey’s residence. John Barry writes in his 1940 account of Calcutta about the fashionable existence of the Park Street. “Park Street boasts of many stately buildings, elaborate motor-car showrooms, alluring hair-dressing and beauty-saloons, important business houses and attractive residential quarters.”

There were shops in Calcutta which influenced the life-styles of its inhabitants. Flurys was such a shop situated on fashionable Park Street in Calcutta. It was set up in 1927 by Mr. and Mrs. J. Flurys from Switzerland. Since it presented fine European traditional confections, it soon became a popular meeting place for all ages. It introduced the city and many generations to authentic Swiss and international delicacies. As the only tea room of the prosperous British and the affluent Indian alike, the place was known far and wide for its exotic cakes, creamy pastries, rich puddings and perhaps the best Swiss chocolates outside the European continent, and in no small measure to the relaxed and cheerful atmosphere that it provided. In 1965, the ownership was transferred to an Indian company. Flurys is now open with a fresh design that recalls the 1930s, yet retaining a sense of timelessness. The old world charm of a European café is given a contemporary touch to create a new, homely and calming trouble free and relaxing space. In Raana Haider’s words,

Any fan of Flurys will enjoy turning the pages of labour of love that Bachi Karkaria has produced. A life-long customer, Flurys of Calcutta : The Cake that Walked (2007) is her homage to this Calcutta old world tea-room. In the early years ...both street and tea room nurtured and were nurtured by the wealthy families – Bengali, Jewish, Armenian and Parsi – whose magnificent residences sprawled in the leafy vicinity of this avenue. Most of the Bengalis were the westernized scion of the landed gentry and merchant princes who had found the conventions of their North Calcutta ‘baris’ too stifling, or they were the eminent barristers and doctors who had developed a taste for European life-style when they’d got their degrees abroad...Flurys was the icing on the cake of a Calcutta which was the ‘Second City of Empire’ and continued to be India’s scintillating

centre of gravity and fun – long after the political capital of the Raj shifted to New Delhi in 1911”(241).

Some of the families influenced to shape up the social life of Calcutta with new humane values. The Tagore family was such a reputed family in Calcutta which carried its legacy for three hundred years. The Tagore’s life style and broad outlook created much impact over the society as a whole. Their family environment was much conducive towards the enrichment of culture and values besides other humane faculties.

They exercised the greatest influence in reawakening the spirit of Bengalees. Rabindranath Tagore was the brightest star of that family who shaped up the identity of the Bengal and the Bengalees for centuries to cum. It is debatable that how far his family influenced his genius in this regard but there is no doubt that his family environment of liberal humanism played a very important role in his life.

The environment of Jorasanko was filled with literature, music, painting and theatre. They had many new exposures which was unusual in those days. Like, the female children of the family had their own education system. They did not attend formal school. They were taught at home with the help of a governess. From the book, *By the side of Jorasanko* by Abanindranath Tagore and Rani Chanda we come to know that Swarnakumari, the eldest daughter of Debendranath Tagore and her sisters received education at home. Their governess would write them something on the slate and they would try to copy it. One day their father discovered it and did not like this mechanical method of teaching. So he stopped her and appointed Ayodhyanath Pakrashi to instruct them. Pakrashi was a much better teacher but it was also a new approach adopted by Debendranath Tagore at that time. No male teacher was allowed in the women quarter in those days. So certainly it was a new thing and it took women liberation one step forward in that society.

There were many new things adopted for the first time in the Tagore family. The home theatre was set up for the first time by Tagore children Ganendra, Gunendra and Jyotirindra. At the beginning the male actors acted the female roles but very soon the girls of the family stepped in the stage. In this field too they pioneered in the society.

In the article, “Literature and Literary Life in Calcutta : The Age of Rabindranath” Tapobrata Ghosh writes about the dramatic Club formed by Abanindranath and his friends at Jorasanko. After it ceased its activities Rabindranath and Gaganendranath proposed another forum named

khamkheyali Sabha in 1897. Besides the Tagores it was attended by Jagadishchandra Basu, Dwijendralal Ray, Priyanath Sen, Atulprasad sen and Chittaranjan Das. Monthly sessions were held in rotation at each member's house with the reading of poems or stories, short dramatic performances or music recitals. Rabindranath wrote songs for every session.

There are many more examples of such progressiveness of the Tagore family. Debendranath was conservative and had put many restrictions in certain type of activities outside the house but he did not made objections to bring the outside world inside the house where everybody including the women and children of the family could participate. Two small examples are noted to illustrate the family environment.

From Abanindranath Tagore and Rani Chanda's writings it is known that once a famous Baiji named Saraswati came from Kashi, Benaras. The children of the family wanted to listen to her songs. On approaching her she demanded six hundred rupees for a single night performance. The family attendant Shyamsundar was set to bargain with her. It was fixed to the amount of three hundred rupees and two bottles of brandy. On hearing about brandy the children were taken aback because they thought that their mother might object to it. But it was confirmed that without brandy her temperament did not come up. It was also related that she will sing only two songs. However, after getting everything ready Saraswati entered into the gathering. She was so simple looking that some of the audiences became offended. One of the acquaintances of the family named Natore accompanied her with playing Mridangam. One hour passed to finish one song. It was eleven at night. Natore became numbed being placed with the Mridangam at his lap for so long time. The wonderful tune of Sarawsati enthralled the hall. After rendering one song she asked for requests from the present audience. Everyone became too emotional to respond her. Then someone from the family requested for a bhajan which was very famous in kashi at that time. Sarwasati rendered a bhajan and everybody became charmed at her fine singing.

Another remembrance from that book was the appearances of a perfume seller who was known as atar wallah. He visited the Tagore household. The children addressed him as Gabriel shaheb because he was a Jew. "It was as Shylock from Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice had come alive and travelled all the way from Istambul to sell atar on the Southern verandah of the Jorasanko house" (*Jorasankor Dhare*). In fact many types of people came to that house and many things happened.

Pradip Sinha in his article, "Calcutta and the Currents of History 1690-1912" writes that by the beginning of the twentieth century, Bengali aspirations sought new outlets through the Swadeshi Movement. Its early phase was marked by an optimism of new horizons being opened up by merging Calcutta with the rest of Bengal and with India. Yet frustration lurked beneath the surface. Committed to create a new India, Calcutta was itself threatened by an emerging communal division, a new stage of politics exploiting locality, province and nation (35).

After the second partition of Bengal a legacy of violence followed by refugee crises continued in the social life of Bengal. A massive migration started as soon as the partition was declared. Millions of Hindus went to India from East Bengal. In Bengal violence was there but the migration of Bengal in both sides became a continuous process and it went on for several decades. In pre-Independence period the environment was communally charged. So the wealthy class of both communities migrated first. The Government post holders were offered options to choose their services in India and Pakistan. The educated urban upper and middle class, the rural gentry, traders, businessmen and artisans left for their aspired homeland soon after the Partition. But the poorer Hindus in East Bengal, most of whom belonged to lower castes like the Namashudras found it much more difficult to migrate. Their only property was immovable land holdings. Many of them were shared croppers. Most of them did not have any skills other than farming. So they decided to stay in their ancestral places in East Bengal. The political climate of Pakistan was not stable as it had been expected. Around 1950 several riots took place in Barisal and other places in East Pakistan. Jogendranath Mandal a cabinet minister from the minority group Namasudra who initially supported Muslim League as his ideological protest against the upper caste people of his own religion for their domination of the lower castes. The catastrophic situation created by the communal riot was extendedly reported to the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali Khan by Mandal. That was not all. Mandal fled to India and resigned his ministerial post. Throughout the next two decades whenever communal tension flared up the Hindus left East Bengal.

Muslims in post-independence West Bengal faced discrimination too. The nature was different from that in East Bengal. There was no government involvement there but the Muslims were disliked by the majority community. There the Muslims were able to stay but over the years they became ghetto concentrated. They became the victim of social and economic segregation. In West Bengal Hindus and Muslims live separately in separate defined blocks in cities and rural

areas. Muslims are behind the Sikhs and Christians in almost all social aspects like literacy and per capita income.

Partition left its deep shadow over Calcutta by the resettlement of the main two communities and also strongly influencing the gender issue of the society. The post-partition women were a new phenomenon in the society.

Regarding Gender emancipation in postcolonial India Bharati Ray writes in her essay “Women in Calcutta: The years of Change” that a change occurred when the new ideas brought by western education emancipated the women in the society. The family in the postcolonial times was “patrilineal in descent, patrilocal in residence, and patriarchal in authority” (34). The women then were deprived of the right of inheritance of ancestral property and proper employment by being denied the right of getting educated and maintaining veil. The Brahmo Samaj became the pioneer of social reforms and was soon joined by enlightened reformers from orthodox Hindu society like Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar. Within the span of a century the widow burning in the husband’s pyre became forbidden (1828), widow marriage became legalized (1856) and marriage before twelve years of age was prohibited (1891). Around this time the movement for female education started forcefully (*CALCUTTA: Vol. II, 34*).

Ray writes through education the women acquired an awareness of their situation both individually and as a social group. Kailashbashini Debi (1837-?) in *Hindu Mohilagoner Hinabastha* (The Degraded Condition of the Hindu Women) (1863) bears the testimony to such sufferings. Educated Brahmo women for the first time began to step outside their traditional roles although in veils.

If we perceive the situation from a historical point of view we will see that the English education gave birth to a new urban class in Calcutta known as the bhadrolok who required active support from home for participation in the progressive European society. So they needed educated wives and this colonial connection entirely changed the position of women and gave them a new status comparable to that of women of Victorian England.

Jasodhara Bagchi in her essay, “Women in Calcutta: after Independence” shows that in 1947 the situation took a new turn; the so called average educated Bengali bhadromohila who till then preferred private lives inside their homes had to come outside. The bitter gift of partition split their lives. It was the women who bore the main burnt of displacement – the burden of day to day living as the outcome of the partition based on communal lines. Over and above the man-made

famine of 1943 made families survive on the streets and railway platforms of Calcutta. To quote Bagchi,

The same stroke that brought this flood of uprooted marginalized women to Calcutta also opened the door to many opportunities for Bengali middle-class Hindu women. They came out of the private domain of domesticity and child rearing to take up public duties. The lives of women in Calcutta entered a new phase of complexity. The Constitution guaranteed equality of opportunities and the women seized this right, however feebly at first. Their journey was not smooth. Caught between the private and public worlds, the women underwent unforeseen dimension (*CALCUTTA*: Vol.2, 42).

When the British decided to hold public trials of 20,000 INA captives the situation took a turbulent turn. Subhash Bose was very popular among the Bengalees at that time and it coincided with the general economic crisis of Calcutta which was also accompanied by inflation and unemployment. The unrest of the poor labour class found its expression in the strike threats of railway workers, postal and government employees against raising prices and ration cuts.

The situation became intense as cultural personalities lent their support to the labour movement. According to Suranjan Das, the Calcutta intelligentsia immortalized them: Sukanta Bhattacharya (1926-47), Subhash Mukherji (1919-2003) through their poems; Manik Bandopadhyay (1908-57) and Tarasankar Bandopadhyay (1898-1971) through their novels and Salil Choudhury through his music. Calcutta also hosted a number of conferences of the Anti-Fascist Writers and Artist Associations. The participants in these forums were determined to fight fascism and all kinds of reactionary moves.

But the secular and anti-imperialist spirit of the common people suffered a setback when the city was gripped by the communal hysteria of August 1946. The immediate reason of the Great Calcutta Killing from 16 to 19 August was the failure of the Cabinet Mission to bring about a broad agreement on India's "constitutional issue" and the Muslim League's for a "Direct Action" to achieve Pakistan (Das, 26).

Das comments that from a historical point of view the Great Calcutta killing and the series of violent actions upheavals and acts of lawlessness somehow matured the social life of Calcutta and stamped it as a city of protest. Strikes, riots, agitations had continued to be a recurrent event of the life of Calcutta. Its restiveness became its essential characteristics. Das writes, "Calcuttans

have continually upheld the belief that ‘when order is injustice disorder is the beginning of justice.’ Much of the political life of Calcutta has been notified by an alternative world view. Enthusiastic Calcuttans draw sustenance from their creative force in the city’s political culture. Others, perhaps, have nightmares that the nation might think tomorrow what Calcuttans think today (*CALCUTTA*, Vol. II, 26)

The press in Calcutta played a great role in advancing its social life. Arani Basu in the introductory passage of her article, “History of media in Bengal: A chronological Overview” writes,

Bengal always had a strong legacy of intellectualism and a rich cultural heritage that had its reflection in all spheres of social life in the state such as art, literature, science, politics and journalism. The state enjoyed a deep scholarly tradition, courtesy, the pool of Bengali middle-class intelligentsia. Even before the British could instill the spirit of western scientific education in the minds of Indians, Bengal was already bestowed with man of letters and visionaries who were critical of the then British rule in the country, and also saw through the weaknesses and malpractices of the Bengali society and community in their times (Palmer, 1976).

In her research paper Basu also notes that till 1880, Bengal was the hub of newspaper publication. A survey of the Indian Language Press by George Campbell in 1876 showed that half of the total number of thirty-eight newspapers was published from Calcutta. She also writes that the end of 1890s and the beginning of the 20th century saw some remarkable newspapers and journals coming out from Bengal including *Sulava Samachar* (1870) by Keshab Chandra Sen and *Harishakar Patrika* edited by Kishori Mohan Ganguli. The first Bengali daily to adopt modern methods of production was *Basumati* (1880), founded by Hemendra Prasad Ghosh and edited by Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya. Basu mentions Surendranath Banerjee published *Bengalee* (1900) which was the first vernacular paper to subscribe to Reutar’s foreign News service. An Associate of *Bengalee* was *Nayak* (1908) published by Panch Cowri Bannerjee. Basu states that through *Bande Mataram*, another important newspaper of this period, Aurobindo Ghose proclaimed his philosophy and the “New Path” which meant passive resistance as an instrument of political action. In 1922 came *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, started by Mrinal Kanti Ghosh, Prafulla Kumar Sarkar and Suresh Chandra Mojumdar. Together with its English

counterpart, *Hindustan Standard*, it played a glorious role in the freedom movement. Another daily named *Jugantar* was started in 1937 by the management of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, which scaled great heights under the editorship of Vivekananda Mukherjee.

After Gandhi took over the leadership of the national movement, *Bengalee* and *Nayak* which were the organs of the Moderates lost ground immediately in spite of official support because of the tremendous pressure exerted by C. R. Das who was the undisputed Congress leader during the resistance movement.

However, Bengali newspapers suffered after the Partition in 1947 as they lost a significant part of readership to East Pakistan – now Bangladesh.

Cultural life has long been a mark of higher social status in Calcutta. It is perhaps the most important cultural centre in India. The city is the birthplace of modern Indian literary and artistic thought and of Indian nationalism, and its citizens have made great efforts to preserve Indian culture and civilization. The blending of Eastern and Western cultural influences over the centuries has stimulated the creation of numerous and diverse organizations that contribute to Calcutta's cultural life. In addition to the universities, these include The Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Bengal literary Society (Bangiya Sahitya Parishad), The Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, The Academy of Fine Arts, The Birla academy Art and culture and The Maha Bodhi Society.

There are many museums and libraries in Calcutta. Greater Calcutta has more than 30 museums which cover a wide variety of fields. The Indian Museum founded in 1814, is the oldest in India; the archeology and numismatic sections contain valuable collections. The exhibits at Victoria Memorial Hall trace Britain's relation with India. The Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art in the University of Calcutta has exhibits of the folk art of Bengal among its collections. Science City, a large Science Museum and entertainment complex was among the first of its kind in Asia. Valuable library collections are to be found in the Asiatic Society of Bengal, The Bengal literary Society, and the University of Calcutta; the National Library is the largest in India and contains a fine collection of rare books and manuscripts.

Calcutta remains at the vanguard of artistic movements in the country, and several artists' society present annual shows.

Calcutta is also a centre of traditional and contemporary music and dance. In 1934 Tagore inaugurated the first All-Bengal Music Conference in Calcutta. Since then, a number of classical

Indian Music conferences have been held every year. The home of many classical dancers, Calcutta was the location of Udayshankar's experiments at adapting Western theatrical techniques to traditional dance forms. The school of dance, music, and drama founded by him has been in the city since 1965.

Professional drama got its start in Calcutta in the 1870's with the founding of the National Theatre (later replaced by the Minerva Theatre). Modern dramatic forms were pioneered in the city by such playwrights as Girish Chandra Ghosh and Dinbandhu Mitra. Calcutta now Kolkata is still an important centre of professional and amateur theatre and of experimental drama. The Indian People's Theatre Association is based in Calcutta. It offers some excellent theatrical performances and musical shows.

Calcutta – in its larger sphere in Bengal contributed a lot in the history of Indian cinema. The first full length feature film of India was *Raja Harish Chandra*. It was a silent film. After six years of its production the first black and white Bengali film of silent mode was *Billwamangol*. Its director was *Rustomji Dhotiwala* and was produced by Madan Theatre Company of Calcutta. It was released in November, 1919 at Cornwallis theatre in Calcutta. Hiralal sen was the most significant director of silent movies Bengal.

The talking film was introduced in early 1930. The movies were then made in Urdu and Persian to accommodate the specific elite based market. One of the earliest known production houses was East India film Company. The first Bengali film to be made in talkies was *Jamai Shashthi* released in 1931. It was the peak period of the early heroes of Bengali film industry. Pramathesh Barua and Deboki Bose. Barua was an important director of the time. Debaki Bose too directed a film named *Chondidas* in 1932. This film was noted for its special sound effect. Sound director Mukul Bose made some important progress in dialogue throwing and frequency modulation.

Rajyeswar Mitra in his article "Music in Modern Calcutta: Bengali Songs" writes that despite the disturbances generated by the Partition of Bengal, and the subsequent development of the National Movement, the first two decades of the twentieth century were on the whole a peaceful and stable period culturally. According to him, most of the major varieties of music stream at the beginning of the century continued to flourish. Like, tappa; devotional songs like Kirtans, Ramprasad, Shyamasangeet or songs in worship of Kali, and Agamani or songs at the advent of Durga Puja; the Brahmasangeet and also delightful songs of Jatra. There was a large repository of songs written for theatre. Girishchandra Ghosh composed a lot of such songs. Besides, The

songs of Rabindranath Tagore, Dwijendralal Ray, Rajanikanta Sen, and Atulprasad Sen. Patriotic song was another type of song which was very much in the air from the third decade of the twentieth century till the Partition in 1947.

The first Bengali records were made in Hanover, Germany from recordings made in India. In Calcutta, H. Bose's Talking Machine Company was followed by the founding of the Gramophone Company's work in 1907. To quote Mitra,

The earliest popular 'record artistes' included a widespread company: Gaohar Jan, Pyara Saheb, Malka Jan Agrawali, 'Miss Das' (Amala Das), Mouzuddin, the leading exponent of Khyal, and Lalchand Baral, who introduced such innovations as Bengali classical-based or Ragpradhan songs. . . It is through gramophone records that Lalchand Baral (1870-1907) has gone down in the annals of music, as was later largely the case with Munshi Muhammad kasem (1888-1959), who sang Hindu devotional songs under the name 'K. Mallik'; so too with krishnachandra Dey (1893-1962), Pankajkumar Mallik (1905-78) and Shachin Deb Barman (1908 75). Among the early women singers, Indubala (1898-1984) won distinction. Himangshu kumar Datta (1908-44) the 'Sursagar' or 'Ocean of Music' –was the most outstanding composer of tunes, and Hemendrakumar Ray (1888-1963) supplemented his fame as a popular fiction-writer by his success as a lyricist (*CALCUTTA*, Vol. II, 277).

A few remnants of Raj culture still exists in Calcutta. Like the dapper waiters of Calcutta's (Kolkata) fabulous coffee houses serve up delicate blends of coffee and cucumber sandwiches seven days a week. Similarly Esplanade is the one-stop place to find the core of Calcutta's colonial past and the Calcutta Race Course is also a site of such colonial decadence.

There were other aspects of Calcutta too. Calcutta bore a cosmopolitan nature because of its citizens of various origins. Beside the Bengalees and the people from different areas of India even as far as Afganistan there were people of foreign origins like the Parsis, the Chinese and the Anglo-Indians who made it their own home.

Cyrus J. Madom in his article "The Parsis of Calcutta" writes extensively about them. The Parsis were one of the farming communities who became entrepreneurial during the British period. The earliest known and recorded history of a Parsi in Calcutta dates back to 1707 with the arrival of Dadabhoy Behramji Banaji from Surat. He was a flourishing trader and was generously helped

by John Cartier who was then Governor of Bengal. Cartier knew Banaji from earlier days when he was in charge of commercial interest in Surat.

Many Parsi families flourished alongside the Banajis on following their footsteps. Seth Jamshedji Framji Madan's rise is one such shining example of the Parsi spirit of adventure and philanthropy. (*CALCUTTA*, 62, 63)

The other foreign community which made Calcutta its home was the Chinese. They arrived much later compared to other foreign communities. The first Chinese to arrive in Calcutta was Yong Atchew, a village named after him by the bank of river Hugli.

Jawhar Sircar in his article, "The Chinese of Calcutta" mentions that Warren Hastings granted Atchew some 650 bighas of land at an annual rent of Rs 45 to start a sugar plantation and sugar mill. One hundred and ten Chinese men came from China to work with him.

Sircar writes, Sixty-five years after Atchew's death. Colesworthy Grant observed that the twenty-five Chinese shoemakers of Kasaitola (Benetinck Street) manufactured with much taste and at moderate charges'. Moreover, 'all carpenters attached to our ships in the country service are Chinese', and in matters of skill and ingenuity the Chinese mechanics and artisans may claim precedence of all other orientals'. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Calcutta Chinese had established them a skilled, industrious, sober, honest, and above all a clean people. The only charge brought against them related to their 'fearful addiction to opium smoking . . . which leads to occasional midnight brawls, mainly over gambling . . . with serious consequences' (*CALCUTTA*, Vol. II, 65).

The other community which holds a unique position in South Asia is Anglo-Indians. During the British East India Company's rule in the late 18th and early 19th century, it was initially fairly common for British officers and soldiers to take local Indian wives and have Anglo-Indian children. The British ladies were rarely available in India at that time. By the middle of 19th century the scenario changed as the families and relatives of British officers began to arrive at India. The number of inter marriages decreased and after the 1857 rebellion such incidents were discouraged. Even certain laws were enforced to prevent it. As a result the Anglo-Indian offspring was neglected from both sides – the Indians and the British.

Regarding the next generation the Anglo-Indian families preferred marrying within their own community and developing a culture of their own. The Anglo- Indian culture which included their food, dress, mode of conversation, religion was as a whole different from the native Indian

population. They established schools which focused their culture more. They bore strong fascination for English language and Briton culture. They formed social clubs and associations to hold functions like dance parties on occasions like Christmas and Easter.

Kuntala Lahiri Dutt in her essay, "The Anglo-Indians in Calcutta" writes that till the late half of the eighteenth century, there was little difference in position between Anglo-Indians and the Europeans. Members of the community were given generous allocations of posts in defense sector and administration. The Anglo-Indians prospered rapidly in wealth, social power and status. They also outnumbered the British in India. Being well versed in the English language and at home with western ways, they became indispensable in every branch of the company's service.

Apparently the Anglo-Indians were different from the Indians. The former bore psychological affinities to the ruling British. Dutt writes, "The attachment probably grew through oral traditions handed down the parental line, and led to an emotional dependence on the British that would greatly handicap the community later on" (*CALCUTTA*, Vol. II, 68).

Over time Anglo-Indians were specifically recruited into the Customs and Excise, Post and Telegraphs, Forestry Department, The Railways and teaching professions. Besides they were employed in many other fields as well. The Anglo-Indians held a strong sense of community feeling among themselves. The English language school system, their Anglo-centric culture and their faith in Christian religion strengthened their bond of fraternity.

During the Indian Independence Movement, the Anglo-Indians supported the British rule. That is why the Indian Nationalists did not trust them. They felt psychologically close to the British race though most of them did never visit Britain and had little chance of being accepted there socially. *Bhowani Junction* (1954) a touchy novel by John Masters portrayed the identity crisis of the Anglo-Indian community during the independence struggle before Partition. They felt insecure in India at the advent of the departure of the British.

Most of the Anglo-Indians left the country in 1947, hoping to start a new life in the United Kingdom or other commonwealth countries like Australia or Canada. In the 1950s and 1960s the flow of migration continued and at present the remaining people are staying with an aspiration to leave.

Perceptions of Chaudhuri

3.2

Nirad C. Chaudhuri lived continuously in Calcutta for thirty-two years from June 1910 to March 1942. He attended school and college there. He felt as if he was owned by Calcutta through his close attachment to the city. To quote him, “In all, of the thirty-two years between 1910 and 1942, not more than three and a half were spent by me outside Calcutta, counting all absences. Thus by the criterion of domicile, Calcutta can claim me as her own, and to belong to Calcutta is not be just anybody.” (*Autobiography*, 182) He admired the city and was grateful for the education and opportunities it provided him; it is in this city that he learned to speak standard Bangla and came to appreciate its unborn ethos. At the same time from the core of his heart he could not wipe out his East Bengal identity. A sense of awkwardness prevented him from becoming free with Calcuttans. He hated its crowd and avoided getting on the bus or trams. He writes that he never ceased to feel himself a stranger in the city. He was there at a time when Calcutta was witnessing a very significant moment of history. For example, at that time Tagore rose to the peak of his literary career; in 1913 he was awarded the noble prize for his *Songs Offerings*. Chaudhuri of course had great fascination for literature and considered himself an active Tagorian, but did not take any initiative to get introduced to Tagore until by chance he saw him in 1927 and had first and last conversation with him which was quite formal. Chaudhuri acknowledges that though he had literary ambitions he avoided the company of literary circles unless he was forced to join in by one of his favourite teachers Mohitlal Mojumdar. He was interested in politics but did not attend political meetings. He led such a self-centred life in the city that he never felt like attending any of the Indian National Congress sessions held in Calcutta in 1917, 1920 and 1928. Many prominent political leaders of the time hailed from Bengal particularly Calcutta. But Chaudhuri never bothered to meet anyone or strike acquaintance with them. He mentions in his autobiography that only once he had a fleeting glimpse of Surendranath Bannerjea in the entrance of Ripon College but never heard his famous oratory. Once he went to attend a public meeting addressed by Gokhle but he stayed far away from the dais for fear of being trampled by the mob and could not hear Gokhle’s speech. He saw C. R. Das only once getting down from a car. He never met Sarat Bose or Subhas Bose before becoming the personal secretary to the elder Bose. He writes that he was so ardent a fan of Subhas Bose that he became a political suspect and had his name in the police diary but he never

tried to contact him personally. He met Pandit Nehru only once on the insistence of one of his friends. He had acquired some courage to meet Panditji at that time on some reputation as a commentator on military subjects and his friend advised him to keep up the acquaintance. But Chaudhuri was reluctant to do that. So after a few years when once again he met him at the house of Sarat Bose, Nehru could not recognize him. He maintained the same approach towards Mahatma Gandhi too. To quote him,

My first sight of Mahatma Gandhi dates as late as 1934 or 1935, and that too was a blurred vision, for he was passing in a car along the road in front of my house. I did not repose till 1937 but did not even then care to attend any of his prayer meetings which were being held daily on the roof of the house I was working in (*Autobiography*, 284).

Chaudhuri claims that a kind of detachment towards society developed in him from early boyhood.

Chaudhuri comments that during his stay in Calcutta, the city grew very rapidly. Since it was a commercial hub people from all over India flocked to Calcutta. They settled down in different parts of the city and practiced their culture and rituals.

At that time Calcutta had a large Hindi-speaking population. Besides the European and the Hindu Bengali communities there were Eurasians and many more Muslims.

When he came to Calcutta with his family in his early teens he felt that Calcutta was a vast city but it had an essence of compactness. In 1910 on their arrival they stayed in a four-storied house. When he went to the roof of the house he saw that the houses were situated quite close to each other but no two house-tops were alike in shape, height, colour or arrangement. He describes the scene, “If one had a parapet, another had a wooden or iron railing, and a third nothing. The levels were nowhere uniform, nor even rising or falling in any discernible pattern of tiers, banks or terraces” (288). He also remarked on the interior room management of the people of Calcutta; they dumped all their junk products from broken furniture to smashed earthenware, pieces of torn canvas or sack and waste products on the roof of their houses. So the rooftops of Calcutta seemed more disharmonious because of the irregular edges of these objects.

Chaudhuri observes that the Western part of Calcutta, which had government buildings in the Esplanade and Dalhousie Square had some architectural harmony. In Chaudhuri’s own words,

The line began with copulas, small and big, of the new building of White ways and ran through the tower of the High Court, the flat dome of the Government House, the square tower of the old central Telegraph Office, the high dome of the General Post Office, the leads of Writer's Buildings and the statues on its cornices, to the steeple of the Church of St. Andrew (288-289).

According to him, this part of Calcutta offered some relief from the clumsiness of the rest of the part.

Chaudhuri observed Calcutta from different angles. Once he saw the Chowringee from the river Hoogly while he was going to the Botanical Gardens at Shibpur in one of the Port commissioners' ferry service steamers. He became enchanted by the beauty of the buildings of the Army and the Navy contingent in White ways. He believes that the eastern part of Calcutta though devoid of much tree shade maintained more homogeneity.

Chaudhuri remembers the chimneys and church spires – in abundance in the city in those days. The church bells rang distinctly and the people of Calcutta were very much used to the sound. In those days no mosque or temple were built as high as churches. At that time another landmark of Calcutta was the group of five cranes used for the construction of the Victoria Memorial. Chaudhuri appreciated the scene very much. To quote him,

These impressive ancillaries were not less decorative and monumental than architecture itself, and for many years these magnificently arranged objects, imprinted as they were on the southern sky of Calcutta, created the illusion of a vast Brangwyn etching overhanging the city or some colossal ghost ship working its derricks in the upper air (289-290).

Chaudhuri's poetic mind is evident in this description.

Chaudhuri also glorifies Fort William which stood facing the Indian Museum across the Maidan. He says that no one can deny the correlation between the Fort and the Museum. He maintained that the Museum preserved the past of India, while the Fort guarded the present. He also mentions that in 1911 the government's plan to transfer the capital from Calcutta to Delhi began to take shape. The citizens of Calcutta opposed. Chaudhuri remembers that one of his father's friend commented that the British were going to Delhi only to get themselves buried there. Everybody present their ridiculed the opinion. No one could for see then that the burial would take place only after thirty-six years on that day. The end of the British Raj occurred in 1947.

Chaudhuri comments about the architectural design of Calcutta. He compares Calcutta to other parts of India. He says that Calcutta was an immense maze of brickworks cut up by lanes and streets. It was not densely inhabited like some parts of northern India where people especially the newcomers felt suffocated for the stifling congestion areas. Calcutta was not certainly as dusty as the dry areas of upper India. But what hurts him was the architectural simplicity of the city. He regretted that there was no fine building, or a spacious square, or colourful bazaar, or an open space which could offer its citizens a pleasant recreation. Calcutta appeared to him downright shabby. There was no harmony or symmetry in the layout of its streets. After every hundred yards the skyline abruptly descended from sixty to ten feet and changed its outline from that of the flat-roofed brick house to that of the sloping roof of mud-walled houses -- “three or four incongruous patches: a gaping shed, a solidly built wall pierced by small windows, an unglazed shop window or, rather, a mere opening, and a house with Venetian blinds.” (297). Chaudhuri felt that typical Bengali houses lacked attractive entrances. In many house he found the interior décor to be luxurious but the outward façade was quite shabby. He believed that legacy continued from the days of Muslim rule when rich people did not want to give any outward expression of affluence because of the fear of tax collectors.

Chaudhuri speaks of other urban establishments of Calcutta. Chowringee was like a city-centre at that time. He writes that his yearning for fine architecture was never met – he walked down to the Maidan as far as the Victoria Memorial or to the Eden Gardens or to the riverside between Outram and Princep’s Ghat. According to him during the British Raj the buildings were devoid of aesthetic presentation rather those were imitations of palatial buildings of Great Britain. To quote him,

The High Court was a copy of the Cloth Hall Ypres, the government of Kedleston Hall; Writes’ Buildings and the Revenue Office were passable imitations of the style of the French Renaissance; certain other buildings were pseudo Greek-Doric, Ionic or Corinthian. The cathedral which had a western window of stained glass after designs by Burne-Jones, was in very pinchbeck Gothic. The Military Secretariat built for Kitchener, although ambitious, was to devoid of true character that in the medallions on its façade the heads of Venus could hardly be distinguished from Mars. Nowhere was there any authentic and original (305).

Chaudhuri mentions that there were some big mansions in Calcutta which looked like Buckingham Palace. Chaudhuri describes the architectural design and the utilities of these structures elaborately in his autobiography. He writes that in few of these buildings in the entrance there was a wide porch and after that a long passage with a hall with high arches at the end which was usually used as a worship hall. Then usually there was a corridor directed towards an entrance hall. The walls were prepared or richly painted. The most spacious and decorated room in these houses were the drawing room. In the old houses these rooms were built for Indian ballet dance but in the latter part of the nineteenth century these were converted into drawing rooms in accordance with the European style.

Finally the author comments that in these mansions the women stayed behind the eyes of third person male characters so the author was unable to comment about them. From the writings of Tagore he could assume their condition. Since Tagore was a member of a very advanced and progressive family of Calcutta of the later nineteenth century his experiences in this regard are treated with special value. Chaudhuri relates that Tagore in his reminiscences has described the back garden of their ancestral home as a place where no gardening was done nor anybody frequented except the women of the family who went there in search of some sour fruits, and passing their time in leisure among themselves which they were not allowed to have anywhere not even in their large furnished drawing rooms.

The author gives an intimate picture of the middle class Bengali household of Calcutta. He writes that the middle-class houses were small, sometimes even as small as twenty five square feet. The rooms of these houses generally contained two colours the white painted walls and the ceilings and the grey cemented floor. If any other colour was seen it was the scribbling of the colour pencils by the small children or the wiping of the fingers of the elderly members of the family after taking the betel-leaves in the mouth.

These houses did not have any living room in the modern sense of the term. There was no drawing room either. In some cases an outer room which usually contained a bed or a table with few chairs or both bed and table-chairs to receive occasional visitors. In these rooms the full time helping hands slept at night. They slept on the floor over some mattress. In the day time the bedding was rolled up in a part of this room. The rest of the habitable rooms were used as bed rooms and the rooms which were not habitable were used as kitchen, store-room, and lumber room. The bedrooms were assigned according to the structure of the Bengali family. The typical

structure was one to the master and the mistress and the younger children, one to the grown-up girls and the widowed mother and the other to the younger boys. In case of joint families the best room was allowed to the married brothers and their children, the others were occupied by the rest of the family, the widowed mother and the marriageable girls, the older boys and the dependants. In most of the houses there was no existence of the dining room. The meals were taken at the kitchen or any superfluous space and also in bedrooms. In joint families this practice of taking meals in bedrooms were quite normal because in these families the brothers who earned more money were not interested to raise their common contribution in the family so they had their meal with their family in their respective bedrooms with adding sweets and other delicacies in their regular menu because they thought that their better economic condition entitled them to such luxury of life of which they did not want to share with other members of the extended family nor they wanted to sacrifice it for the sake of others. Even in families which were not joint families the master of the family thought that he had a right to special privileges which he did not want to share with his wife and children.

Chaudhuri comments about the unhealthy physical environment of Calcutta. He writes that the immediate outskirts of the city was densely populated by low waged people. The houses in which these people lived were so closely built that they created a congested atmosphere. There were dusty roads and small lanes in between the houses. These shabby settlements were called the 'bustees'. In these places the bigger roads were also sided by drains in both sides. These drains were actually part of the open sewerage system, so bad smell continuously hung around. These drains had to be crossed every time the inhabitants wanted to come out and get in their houses or shops. This was the situation through the suburbs around Calcutta.

Chaudhuri comments about the social life of Calcutta. He mentions about the lack of civic sense among the inhabitants of Calcutta, although the sanitation department of the Calcutta municipality was quite efficient. It cleaned the roads and dustbins by six o' clock in the morning. But the domestic servants and others threw their household wastes onto the streets from quarter past six to three o' clock in the afternoon. As a result there heap of waste products piled up. He says with a tinge of amusement that the garbage became a refuge for the small naughty boys who wanted to escape the punishment for their activities. Nobody would go near the garbage as it was considered unholy.

The Bengali dialect of West Bengal was appreciated by both sides of Bengal equally. The literary atmosphere of the western part was more vibrant than it was in East Bengal. Like its political and cultural life Calcutta was the hub of literary life too. Towards the end of 1911 magazines preaching liberal doctrines were circulated in Calcutta. The young men of educated families read Bengali and English novels extensively. The love songs of Tagore were referred to as miscellaneous and in print also those were subtitled by the same word. It was due to the society was not open enough to accept the outpourings of such emotional sentiments openly.

The young men's craze for going to England was a social trend of the time. Many of the youths aspired to go to England to try their luck there. In order to do so they did not hesitate to marry girls from rich families provided their fathers were ready to meet the son in law's maintenance expenditure in England. On the other side the father of the bridegroom were interested in these matches to save his son from getting involved in unwanted relationship there.

The natives of the city were very conservative. They believed in superstitions more than the people of East Bengal. They had faith in numerous deities like the "Goddess of No Prosperity" and the "Goddess of Prosperity". Both the negative and the positive forces existed in their lives simultaneously. Their men folk were extremely afraid of going to bathe in the water without tying their hair in knots at the end because they believed that evil-spirit would overtake the place if he dipped down the water without raising it up by the closet. The Calcutta people bore extreme purity mania. Sometimes it became so acute that the ladies when they worked they did not hesitate to cast off their wearing apparels like sarees. They did such things especially when their attire came in contact of food particles because they believed that it would contaminate them mortally. The home wear sarees in Bengal are usually made of cotton. So like all other cotton garments these were treated to be conductors of dangerous disease'. In such cases partial or complete nudity was preferable to the risk of pollution. Chaudhuri writes, "I have seen this spectacle without any effort on my part, for the elderly women do not really care who or how many bear witness to their devotion to purity. The demonstration is always more embarrassing to the beholder than the beheld (403).

Chaudhuri affirms that the natives of Calcutta were opposed to all kinds of reformation. They did not hesitate to oppose the reform activities of Raja Rammohan Roy or the progressive attitude towards life of the versatile genius Rabindranath Tagore. On the top of everything they were sternest denouncer of slightest religious reform or emancipation of the womenfolk. They

criticized the activities of the Brahmo Samaj. They teased the Brahmo ladies from a distance because these ladies were not afraid at all to face this kind of people who ridiculed them for their ideological differences. However, since Calcutta was the hub of all the reforming activities of the reformers and all great thoughts of nationalism and independence had its starting from Calcutta. Chaudhuri feels that the natives of Calcutta deserves natural acknowledgement from the people of other parts of India.

Chaudhuri comments about the British part of the community. He seems to be rather frustrated about these people. These people usually ignored the new culture of modern India and accidentally if they came in contact with it they reacted towards it with greater hostility than did the natives. They hated the locals especially those who showed interest to assimilate the English culture. They called this type of people the Baboos. The so called Baboos did not have any reservation against wearing European dresses like suit and tie. Chaudhuri remembers that at that time serious racial discrimination existed in Calcutta. A part of the Eden Garden was kept reserved for the British community. Chaudhuri seems frustrated with the moral standard of the English people in Calcutta. He despised them and felt that they proved themselves as the “nation of shopkeepers” through their activities. From his autobiography we come to know that while staying in Calcutta he never went to the European part of the city because he found it very unwelcome by the British inhabitants. But Chaudhuri remembers that there were natives who still hanged about those places but he believes that they did so in order to trigger their sense of injury and replenish their self pity.

Chaudhuri says that even after so many years he didn't want to change his opinion about the behavior of those Englishmen because though an ardent supporter of the English civilization he thought that the British residents in Calcutta contributed a lot in the downfall of the British Empire. Since the decolonization process of the Empire started with India it was a significant point. Chaudhuri's belief was that the English people entered India with many fine qualities but the vices from the people of this country entered into them and contaminated them to such an extent that all good qualities disappeared from their heart and as a result the Indo-British relation worsened. After the Partition it was thought that those who remained here became better but Chaudhuri did not support the idea. According to him their outward behavior was superficial. It was just the replacement of their past arrogance and “power intoxicated” snob attitude. They were the same self-interested English people in Calcutta.

Chaudhuri was a lover of art and culture and believed that these aesthetic elements placed people far above simple things like prejudice. His belief corresponded with the English people of Calcutta and also who were fond of such things. To quote Chaudhuri,

But at one time of my life I had an opportunity for seeing a side of English life in Calcutta which was not coloured by the prejudices of the local English against us and our prejudices against them. I saw it in the 'thirties in the concert hall of the Calcutta Symphony Orchestra. I went there in the Bengali dress, and though not stared at certainly looked conspicuous in that evening dressed crowd. Of ours there I had to maintain my aloofness. I do not remember to have been addressed or even greeted there by persons except on two occasions, once by Mr. P. I Griffiths, who at one time was the leader of the European Party in the Central Legislature, and on the second occasion by Dr. Bake, the Deutch musicologist, and his wife. But even that insulated contact helped me to form a juster conception of English life in Calcutta and I came to see that there was an amenity in it whose existence I had not suspected before, and indeed could not, by merely seeing Englishmen in the streets and shops and hearing about their behavior in their offices (406).

Chaudhuri talks about class division of Calcutta too. According to his perception there consisted three classes: the upper class who were remarkably wealthy, the lower- middle class from the point of view of economic condition, and the intermediate class who rose or fell to the two other classes on account of their monetary weakness. The writer informs that at a later period another class had sprung up in Calcutta who was different from the earlier rich class and the new poor class of the city. However, in the initial years of the nineteenth century the wealthy class had already shed its newly acquired feature and became settled in every way.

Chaudhuri goes on to describe the physical feature of the wealthy class. He says that their distinctive features marked their difference from other social classes of Bengal especially East Bengal. He opines that this special feature was due to the arranged marriages between the selected parties which resulted in good breeding. These children were also very well and comfortably brought up. So they were developed into impressive looking men and women.

Chaudhuri praised the cordial manners of the people of Calcutta but also expressed the impression of the people of East Bengal towards the people of Calcutta. The people of East

Bengal thought that the guileful manners of the people of Calcutta might deceive the people of the Eastern part. Chaudhuri personally disliked the outward harshness of the colloquium of the people of East Bengal. In his own words, “I used to remonstrate that it was not after all not so very bad to have honey somewhere, even if not everywhere, since we of East Bengal had both poison in our hearts and on our lips” (409). The natives of Calcutta were also very prone to humour in comparison to the people of East Bengal. They would never miss the chance to use it if ever such occasion occurred. But the Bengalis of this part took it as an action of frivolity and the author too confirmed that the intellectual level of the people of West Bengal in this respect was not much sharp. Chaudhuri, however, found the westerners’ easy manners much agreeable. Chaudhuri pointed a few practical aspects of Calcutta Bengalees. The Calcuttans were much practical than the settlers of the East Bengal. The Calcutta people never became indifferent of their own interest; even in the most self abandoned moments they were conscious about their personal safety and interest. Chaudhuri, himself a migratory from Kishoreganj sometimes could not help from becoming emotional in respect of some real causes, but he felt that the Calcutta boys were very much worldly.

Chaudhuri complained about the insensitivity of the Calcutta locals. He said that the Calcuttans though extraordinary polite in their outward behavior to somebody, would not hesitate to make a rude remark behind one’s back as soon as one left.

Chaudhuri focuses on the living-style and life-style of the early twentieth century Bengalees. According to him, the mansions or houses situated in Calcutta belonged to three types of people – the higher, the lower and the intermediate. Chaudhuri amusingly comments that the intermediate category is very important in the Bengali society and this particular intra flexible class is not available in any part of the world. The Bengali society is initially divided into two classes – the gentlefolk and non-gentlefolk. There is no easy passage of transition from one condition to the other. Those who belonged to the gentlefolk were known in Bengali as “bhadrolok”. This class was created absolutely on the basis of occupation and family heritage. It had no fixed criteria because despite of the infinite gradation of wealth and standard of living their economic capacity ranged from extreme poverty to extreme luxury. The intermediate group constituted the space to this transition. Actually the middle class within the middle class afforded the required strength to the Bengali bhadrolok to sustain and survive meaningfully. Chaudhuri held an intense eye sight for observing everything and could quickly link one issue to the other.

He exclaims that it was curious to note how the social fact found recognition in the railway transport. He expresses his curiosity on how the railway companies of Bengal could realize the practical necessity of introducing an interclass compartment between the first and the second class on the one hand and the third on the other.

Chaudhuri observes that Bengali's social life was very dull and typified. They had no dinner, no dance or no tea-party. So they found opportunity for communication in their working place. There they entertained gossip while doing their assigned task. So they extended their time outside home for their psychological healthiness too. Chaudhuri notes that this gregariousness was attached with a kind of disinterestedness too. In this connection he goes on to tell us about the origin of the Bengali adda. He writes, "Outside working hours the true native would always be roving in search of company, and his very striving for it often defeated its purpose" (428). Chaudhuri explicates that after office every healthy man after having a hurried cup of tea rushed out to meet his friends and these friends if on the same pursuit it occasionally happened that everybody missed everybody else. Chaudhuri says that the adda originally formulated to avoid these misadventures of looking for each other. Rather a rendezvous was fixed which might be the outer sitting room of a wealthy member of the adda or an office after office hours, and very rarely tea-shops. In these gatherings the fixed attendees who usually attended regularly started turning up from half-past five in the afternoon to about an hour time. It was not compulsory for the host to be present everyday though initially he did so but at one phase he became the least conspicuous member in the company. The visitors felt free in the house and did not feel shy to order anything they required to the servant of the house.

The nature of this adda or daily get together was simple; no refreshment was generally served in these meetings other than one or two cups of tea. This tea was generally prepared by the servant of the house. The Calcutta women in those days never attended in these addas and the tea preparation for this addas were beyond their jurisdiction. As a rule the venue of these addas were fixed in that part of the city where majority of the frequenters lived. But there were also sometimes such persons who lived in rented house and had to change it often. This kind of men had to travel sometimes a few miles regularly to join the adda. But in very rare occasion one would like to change the fixed adda he was attending for a long time.

Chaudhuri views that the collective life of the Bengalees was also at stake. There were constant experiments being made to cultivate the spirit of cooperation in management of all the spheres

like cultural, social, educational, civic, business, and political affairs but these attempts did not become successful. The Bengalis did not want to work through any committee or council; they had their own set of friends who backed them and when in power they practiced autocratic rule dominating others and opening up new vistas of petty fractions.

Chaudhuri discovers the fascination of cliques in the nature of the Bengalees of Calcutta. He says that it is found in all the fractions of the Bengali society. He says that there is hardly any branch which is not infected by this special quality. He observes that the municipalities, universities, learned societies, political parties, public offices, business concerns, clubs and schools were all infected by cliques. Like today, at that time also to be in good terms with the ruling power assured all kinds of advantages and to be in the opposition meant decline of every facility. Even intellectuals activities were hampered if the ruling power did not have good impression about somebody. Then one may not be able to read from the library an indispensable old book or manuscript to carry on a meaningful research.

Conclusion

3.3

During the British Raj Calcutta was almost a mirror of Bengal and it pioneered the intellectual and political life of India as a whole. The nineteenth century social life of Calcutta can be summarized around the evolution of Anglo-Indian community, creation of the 'Baboo' culture, generation of the 'bhadrolok' class coupled with a Victorian ideologue inspired women folk who initiated women liberty in Calcutta, the socio-religious revolution led by the Brahmo Samaj, reorganization of social groups in various classes (including some influential families), development of social gatherings in the form of clubs, addas, musical programmes, restaurants, pastry shops etc. and overall social turmoil due to anti-British political struggles complicated by Hindu-Muslim communal tension.

These issues have been touched by a fairly large volume of fictional and non-fictional literatures, but what makes Nirad Chaudhuri's observations unique is his impassionate and impersonal accounts of the time and events. His 'cold' and 'detached' views tend to simulate the objectivity of social scientists in reconstructing the life of that time and it may help to reveal causal connections in the later evolution of the society and politics in Bengal. As Chaudhuri has

acknowledged that he lived for a long thirty-two years in Calcutta but still he felt like a ‘stranger’ there. With his generally ‘disinterested’ personality he could observe society from an angle which an emotionally involved person could have never done. Partly due to this reason Chaudhuri pointed out issues which others have not seriously touched at all.

One of the so far untouched issues which Chaudhuri has elaborated is the architectural poverty and chaotic urban planning of Calcutta. Many people may feel antagonized by his comments but the non homogenous and disharmonious buildings and streets as well as crowded housings still plague Calcutta and that probably influenced planning in other major cities in Bengal. His observations on the management of roofs of the houses and garbage are still very unpleasant truths of Bengali social life.

Though Chaudhuri had admiration for the British society and culture his estimation of Chaudhuri regarding the Indian Britons and Anglo-Indians was quite low. He pointed to the ‘shopkeeper’ nature of the British residents in India and also the lower level cultural exposure of the Anglo-Indians. He made them responsible for the role they played in the downfall of British Empire in India.

Chaudhuri’s appreciation for Rabindranath Tagore as well for the Tagore family as a whole was immense – his acknowledgement of the positive contribution of the Brahmo Samaj and other social platforms including women liberation pioneers reveal his deep inclination towards the humanist liberal ideas which rested beneath his profound likings of pro-British and pro-European culture.

He also mentions about the antagonism towards these liberal movements of Bengal from the mostly conservative communities of Calcutta. In this connection it is interesting to note his keen observation of the basic shortcomings of people of Calcutta (or West Bengal in general) and East Bengal. Although he disliked the relative characteristic harshness of the East Bengal people (from where he originally came from) he could sense the superficiality and complexity in the nature of West Bengal people which to many people is still an issue of intense discussion and may be a topic of social science research.

Chaudhuri has a very noteworthy observation about the origin of addas in the Bengali society. He traces it to the relative lack of regularly organized events like dinner and drama or tea parties in the social aura and hence it to be a sort of psychological relief for the Bengali man. So they practiced adda in their life through a habit of gossiping in work places or in any other fixed

locations. In spite of differences of opinions among the participants of adda these observations certainly provoke some thoughts on many deeper social issues.

Finally, the views of Chaudhuri on organizational and political nature of Bengalees are sharp and bold. He acknowledges the guiding role of the Calcuttans in the freedom movement of India but at the same time he correctly points out to the weakness in our collective life and organizational capability. The habit of not working through any committee or council and the domination of all organizations including highest public offices of the country by 'families and friends' and 'autocratic power' are the main feature of politics in our country.

His reflections on the role of 'cliques' in Bengali political and organizational culture deserves deeper attention.

We may conclude that Chaudhuri has some in-depth and original observations on social-life of Calcutta during the British Raj which can provoke literary discourses as well as scientific research on the evolution of socio-political and cultural events in both sides of Bengal.

Chapter 4

Political Movements and Crises

Overview

4.1

The people of India drawn from different classes and communities fought against the British Raj for the freedom of their country. The most significant period in the history of this Independence movement is perhaps the years between 1919 and 1946. According to P. N. Chopra,

Gandhi launched five movements of all-India character against the British rulers during his stewardship of the Indian National Congress from 1919 to the attainment of Independence in 1947. These movements are known as the Non-Cooperation Movements of 1919 and 1921, the Civil Disobedience Movements of 1930 and 1932 and the Quit India movement of 1942 (7).

But these popular movements of non-cooperation received its impetus from many a political, philosophical, revolts and rebellions from different fractions of the country and expedited its division. There were also crises like the Great Calcutta killing and Noakhali Carnage in 1946. The merging of the following group disobediences soon became the driving force of the mainstream Independence movement and shaped the cultural, religious and political unity of a diverse nation:

1. **The Gurdwara Reform Movement (1920-25):** It began with the attempts of Sikh reformers to liberate their religious places from the traditional clergy which became very powerful and ritual oriented. A large number of Akali Jathas participated in this movement so it is also known as Akali Movement. In the beginning of the 20th century a number of Gurdwaras were looked after by the Mahants or managers appointed by the British Governors.

In 1921 the Akalis turned their focus to the Gurdwara at Nankana Shahib, the birth place of the first Sikh Guru Nanak. The Gurdwara was under the control of a Mahant called Narain Das, who was accused of allowing immoral activities in the temple premises. When the Akalis tried to take over the Gurdwara on 20 Feb, 1921 the Mahant Das and his guards killed 130 people which came to be known as the Nankana massacre. Two days after the tragedy Mahatma Gandhi and the Governor of the Punjab province visited the site, accompanied by a number of Sikh and

Hindu leaders. Gandhi sympathized with the Akalis and said that the Mahant crossed the action of General Dyer in Jalianwalabagh in cruelty. Mohinder Singh in his article “The Gurdwara Movement” comments,

What began as a purely religious movement turned out to be a major force for India’s liberation at the provincial level, for the British administration in the Punjab lent its support to the mahants and the congress and other nationalist forces came out in open support for Akali Reformers. As a result of the alliance with the nationalist forces the Akali leadership was about to broaden the scope of the movement and launch a two pronged struggle – directed against the corrupt Mohants on the one hand and the British administration in the province on the other (105).

He also maintains that during their five years struggle in Punjab the Akali reformers succeeded not only in winning the control of their historic shrines but also in strengthening the nationalist forces in the country through their passive sufferings.

2. **Vaikkam Satyagraha:** Vaikkam Satyagraha was at the beginning an organized agitation in the Indian state of Kerala against the traditional and orthodox Hindu set up in the society. For the first time the protest brought forward the question of civil right of the people of low caste into the forefront of Indian politics. No mass protest in Kerala gained so much awareness and significance in the twentieth century as Vaikkam Satyagraha. It started in 1924 and continued for a year. The entire movement was led against untouchability in the Hindu society. The protest or Satyagraha was aimed at the freedom of movement of all sections of society through public roads leading to the Sri Mahadeva Temple at Vaikkam.

Rajmohan Gandhi in his book *The Man, His people and the Empire* writes that Mahatma Gandhi backed Satyagraha which began in the town of Vykam (Vaikkam) in the princely state of Travancore against a longstanding denial to untouchables of the use of public roads adjacent to a temple and to Brahmin homes. The Satyagrahis were forced at times to stand in waist-deep flood water still they kept up their opposition for months by peacefully entering the forbidden streets and picketing barriers. Visiting Vykam, Gandhi proposed a referendum of caste Hindus on the question – he was certain that only an orthodox minority would defend the prohibitions (278).

The demand was rejected but in June 1925 prohibited roads on three sides of the temple were thrown open to the untouchables. The victory was incomplete for the road to the temple’s east

was still closed to the untouchables but it was really a blow to the Christians and Muslims as they lost their previously enjoyed freedom to have complete access on all the roads around the temple. Since the gates remain closed the members of the Temple management Board and other inmates of the temple were also denied the opportunity. This incident offered a great opportunity for the Indian National Congress Party to grow in Kerala. Before this agitation the Congress in Kerala included only a limited member of Upper caste and Upper class people of Malabar. The non-caste Hindus like Avarnas were indifferent about the Congress because the Congress leaders did not show any enthusiasm for the eradication of social inequalities. But when the party undertook to lead the agitation at Vaikkam the Avarnas changed their minds. T. K. Madhavan inspired the Avarnas to join the Congress. Thus Congress swelled from being a class party to a mass party.

Another achievement of Vaikam agitation is communal harmony. Progressive minded Savarnas and Avarnas came together with Christians, Muslims and even Sikhs. It is to be remembered that many Savarnas played the role of active leaders till the withdrawn of the Satyagraha. And this has demonstrated the basic unity of people. Moreover, the Vaikkam Satyagraha was the testing ground for the Gandhian principles of Satyagraha. It was proved as the most effective means of protest for the first time. The Vykam Satyagraha became a milestone in the battle against untouchability.

3. Bhagat Singh and his comrades: The revolutionaries of Bengal were subjected to severe repression during the First World War. After they were released from jails around 1919-1920 they did not resume their old activities instead they joined Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement and worked seriously under his leadership to make it a success. But when Gandhi suspended the movement after the fierce incident of Chauri Chaura the young members could not accept it because the movement then had already gathered a strong inner force. So this young group decided to opt for a violent overthrow of the colonial government and free the country. They became inspired by the success of the Russian Revolution. These boys decided to adopt the strategy of the erstwhile revolutionaries of Bengal.

Bhagat Singh was such a dreamy young boy. After the Non-Cooperation Movement had started the call came to students to leave the government or government recognized schools and colleges. Bhagat Singh left his D.A.V School in Lahore and joined the National College set up by Lala Lajpat Rai and Bhai Paramananda. In the College Bhagat developed an all round

personality and took a keen interest in studies and politics as well as in the extra reading of the history of revolutions. It may be mentioned here that the brute humiliation suffered by the Indian people in Jalianwala Bagh massacre created a deep pore in his heart in his school days.

Bhagat was also a member of the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) which changed its name after its 'Kakori Expedition' to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). The HSRA decided to participate actively in the Simon boycott demonstration. On arrival of the Simon commission in Lahore on 30 October, 1928 a huge procession led by Lala Lajpat Rai moved into the Lahore Railway Station. Bhagat Singh was also a part of the procession. To control the mob the police ordered a lathi charge and Scott the Superintendent of Police struck a stick on Rai's head as a result of which Rai died on 17th November. The HSRA decided to avenge Rai's death by assassinating Scott. On 17 December Bhagat Singh and his comrades Azad, Sukhdev and Rajguru mistook J.P Saunders another police officer for Scott and shot him dead. The HSRA now decided to propagate their politics and popularize their programme among people by throwing bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly. Bhagat Singh was again a chosen person in this action because of his capability of presenting statement and delivering them in the court skillfully. B. K. Dutta was directed to accompany him.

After the throwing of the bomb no one was injured seriously and Bhagat Singh and his Comrade did not make any attempt to escape. The leaflet they threw into the Assembly proclaimed their object of drawing attention of the authority. The two were arrested in the Assembly Bomb Case and was sentenced for transportation for life in Andamans. In the meantime the police discovered Bhagat's role in the killing of Saunder in Lahore Conspiracy Case and sentenced him to hang along with his two other comrades. The entire country went into mourning heavily after their execution. Before the execution was done Gandhi and Motilal Nehru pleaded for him to the government but to no effect. Bipan Chandra writes,

Angry condolence meetings and demonstrations were held in cities and towns, in which many who had earlier stood aside participated. In many places demonstrators clashed with the police and faced firing and lathi-charges in which over a hundred people died. Hundreds of schools and colleges observed hartals; lakhs fasted on that day (147).

4. The Bardoli Peasants Struggle – 1928: During the British Raj, in the state of Gujarat, Bardoli Satyagraha of 1925 was a major episode of civil disobedience. In that year the taluka of

Bardoli suffered from heavy floods and severe famine affected the crops very badly. This situation led the farmers to great financial troubles.

The government of the Bombay Presidency had raised the tax rate by 30% that year, and despite petitions from the civil groups, refused to cancel the rise in the face of the calamities. The situation for the farmers was so grave that they barely had enough property and crops to pay off the tax, let alone for feeding themselves afterwards.

The activists of Gujarat such as Narahari Parikh, Ravi Shankar Vyas, and Mohonlal Pandya had a talk with the village leaders and sought the help of the prominent Gujarati freedom fighter Vallabhbhai Patel. Patel had earlier helped the Gujarati farmers in the Kheda Peasant struggle. He also served as the Municipal President of Ahmedabad. He was respected by the common people of the state of Gujarat.

The request made by Patel to reduce the taxes was ignored by the Governor of Bombay. Instead of reducing the tax he announced fresh dates for the collection of the taxes. So Patel instructed the farmers of Bardoli not to pay the taxes.

Patel along with Parikh, Vyas, and Pandya divided Bardoli into several zones each under a leader and volunteers. Patel also took the help of some activists of Gujarat who were close to the Government in order to know the movements of the Government officials.

He instructed the farmers to maintain non-violence and not to respond in aggressive manner to the police and officials. He reassured them that the struggle would not come to an end until the cancellation of all the taxes for the whole year and return of all the seized properties and land to their owners.

The Government decided to crush the revolt. In order to terrorize and seize the property of the villagers, bands of Pathans from the North-West India were gathered. The Pathans and tax Inspectors intruded into the houses of the farmers and took away their properties including cattle. The Government started to auction the houses and the lands of the farmers. But no one from Gujarat came forward to buy them. Only some rich people from Bombay came to buy some lands and there was also a village in Gujarat that paid tax. A complete social boycott was organized against them, where in relatives broke their ties to such families in the village. Social boycott was enforced against the landowners who broke with the tax strike or purchased seized land. The village people refused to take their fields as rent or to work as labourers for them.

The appointed volunteers of Patel in every village kept watch on the movement of the officials. Whenever they came to auction the property of the villagers they found the village empty because the villagers left their homes before they arrived. So they could not trace out the owners of the houses.

The people and the members of the Legislative Councils of Bombay became very angry at this terrible treatment to the farmers. The Indian members also resigned from their offices and extended support to the protest of the farmers. Finally, an agreement took place by the initiative of a Parsee member of the Bombay Government. According to it, the Government agreed to restore the confiscated property and cancel the revenue payment for the existing year and the raise of 30% until the following year.

The farmers celebrated their victory, but Patel continued to work to ensure that all lands and properties were returned to every farmer, and that no one was left out. When the Government refused to return the auctioned lands to the owners many wealthy sympathizers from Bombay bought them out and helped returning the lands to the rightful owners.

The Bardoli victory helped in the resurrection of the nationwide freedom struggle. In 1930, the Congress would declare Indian Independence, and the Salt Satyagraha would be launched by Gandhi. While Patel credited Gandhi's teachings and the farmers' undying resolve for its success people across the nation recognized his vital leadership. The women of Bardoli bestowed the title Sardar on him which means 'chief' or leader of the clan.

5. The Indian National Army (INA): The Indian National Army was originally founded by Capt. Mohan Singh in Singapore in September 1942 with Japan's Prisoners of War in the Far East. Singh belonged to the 1/14th Punjab Regiment in the British Army. This formation of Army went along the concept of expatriate nationalist leader Rash Behari Bose. He headed the Indian Independence League. He and his party supported INA.

The first INA was however disbanded in December 1942 after the disagreement between Hikari Khan and Mohan Singh, because the latter's belief of the Japanese High Command's usage of INA as a mere propaganda tool dismayed him. Mohan Singh was then taken into custody and the troops returned to the Prisoner of War Camp.

During the outbreak of war in Europe, Subhash Chandra Bose saw an opportunity to explore on Britain's weakness. In January 1941, Bose went to Russia from Calcutta via Afghanistan. He tried to secure support for an army expedition in India. Russia sent him to Berlin where he started

having discussions with the Foreign and Propaganda Ministries. For the next six months, Bose and his assistants led an intensive recruiting campaign among the Indian Prisoners of War. The plan that had failed during the First World War was reopened by the Indian Independence League. After taking over its charge Ras Behari Bose promised the people that he would open second war of Independence and set up a Provisional Government of Free India under whose banner three million Indians of South-East Asia would fight the enemy. In July 1943, at a meeting in Singapore, Ras Behari Bose handed over control of the organization to Subhash Chandra Bose. On August 8, 1943 Subhash Chandra Bose assumed office as the Supreme commander of the Azad Hind Fauj. The Government was founded on October 21, 1943. The Government of Azad Hind had its own currency, court and civil code, and in the eyes of many Indians its existence gave a greater legitimacy to the independence struggle against the British. But while it possessed all the nominal requisites of a legitimate government, it lacked large and definite areas of sovereign territory until the Government assumed control of Andaman and Nicobar Islands from Japan in 1943 and the occupation of parts of Manipur and Nagaland. Throughout its existence it remained heavily dependent on Japanese support.

Bose was able to reorganize the army and organize massive support among the expatriate Indian population in South-East Asia, who lent their support by both enlisting in the Indian National Army as well as financially in response of Bose's call for sacrifice for the national cause. The INA had a combat strength of 40,000 troops. It owed its allegiance to the newly formed Provisional Government recognized by nine Axis states. The INA was also proud of an exclusive women's combat unit named the Rani of Jhanshi Regiment. In contrast to Mahatma Gandhi's ideology Bose advocated a more aggressive confrontation with the British authorities. Subhash Chandra Bose engaged his great oratory skills to inspire the troops of Indian National Army.

As the Japanese troops launched a major offensive through Burma, the Azad Hind Fauj soldiers fought alongside them in the frontlines and contributed in many victories. Previously in December, 1943 the Azad Hind Government had established its rule in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and renamed them who died while fighting as Shaheed (Martyr) and the occupied land as Swaraj (Self-rule). On 18 April 1944, the INA troops captured the town of Moirang in Manipur and in a glorious display of patriotism, raised an Indian tri-colour flag.

However, the INA's total dependence on the Japanese troops for arms and logistics support proved to be its undoing and as the might of the Japanese began to wane the INA too was forced

to retreat. With the subsequent surrender of Japan the INA resistance collapsed and a number of officers and troops were captured by the British. The Government brought these officers to the Red Fort in Delhi for Court Martial but eventually had to relent in the face of nationwide protests and in the rise of incidents of mutiny in the various ranks of British Indian Army.

Thus Indian National Army thus rose to power under the strong leadership of Bose. Though it was ultimately disbanded, its heroic attempts at forming an army and taking a radical step towards Indian Independence marked a significant step in the Indian Independence Movement.

British Prime Minister Clement Atlee cites INA activities as one of the influential factor in British decision of leaving India. The political effects of the INA trials was enormous and were felt around India as late as 1948 much to the then newly formed Indian Government.

The INA fighters were not invited to join the Indian Army after India's Independence. A few of the ex INA members later had seen prominent positions in Independent India.

6. R.I.N Mutiny: Royal Indian navy Mutiny in 1946 was another landmark in India's struggle for independence. Before the outbreak of the Second World War the Royal Indian Navy was formed being separated from the British Navy. The English officers of the Navy always ill-treated the Indian junior officers. So the condition of the Indian soldiers was miserable. They wanted to express their discontent on various issues.

The chance came in February 1946. On the seashore of Bombay, some Indian naval personnel attached to the warship 'Tulare' were receiving training. The poor food supplied to them and the high handedness of their officers led them to protest it and they expressed it by displaying posters on the barrack walls containing the slogan ' Hindustan Sindbad', 'Englishmen leave India' etc.

The British Officers suspected the Radio operator data and imprisoned him. This led the navy personnel in the barracks to strike. Just by that time the I.N.A Trial in the Red Fort had accused certain officers and soldiers. These naval personnels wanted to relieve immediately the officers and soldiers of the I.N.A.

The mutiny soon spread to other barracks. M. S. Khan became the head of the National Centre Strike Committee. The Mutineers demanded better food, equal pay for English and Indian naval officers and soldiers, release of I.N.A officers, soldiers and political prisoners etc.

The Hindus and Muslim soldiers ruled out the differences between them and joined hands to make the strike a success. The tricolor, crescent and hammer and sickle – flags were together

raised on the mast heads of the rebel ship 'Talwar'. When they returned to their barracks, they found them surrounded by the British soldiers on 21 Feb, 1946, when the rebelling Indian navy personnel wanted to break the cordon, fighting took place between them and the British soldiers. At this juncture, the civilian population of Bombay offered favourable response to the mutiny. They supplied food and other requirements to the Indian navy personnel. The Communist Party of India in Bombay gave a clarion call of general strike. Congress socialist leaders Aruna Asaf ali and Asyut Palwardhan supported it with utmost vigour.

However, the Congress and the Muslim League did not support it. The leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Jinnah and several others persuaded the mutineers to surrender when they sought the guidance of the leaders. Actually the Muslim League and Congress did not want to start a fresh misunderstanding with the Raj so they avoided supporting the mutineers. The mill-workers fully supported the cause of R.I.N mutiny and a street fighting took place between them and the police. By the repeated appeal of Patel and Jinnah the mutineers finally surrendered on 23 Feb, 1946.

With their surrender, the R.I.N Mutiny came to an end. It failed largely due to the desire of the British Government and some Indian leaders who immediately wanted to stop it. The net result was that the British Government now took precaution not to flare up mutiny against His Majesty's government.

The wide support to this mutiny by the public in Bombay clearly showed that a sense of hatred had developed fully in the mind of Indians towards the British rule. When one thinks about R.I.N ratings, one remembers the words of the Naval Central Strike Committee – Our strike has been a historic event in the life of our nation. For the first time the blood of men in the Services and in the street flowed together in a common cause.

Clement Atlee, the British Prime Minister reflecting on the factors that guided the British decision to relinquish the Raj in India, is said to have cited the effects of the I.N.A and Bose activities on the British Indian Army and the Bombay R.I. N Mutiny as being the most important.

6. Rani Gaidinlieu and Zeliangrong Movement: Gaidinlieu joined freedom struggle with Jadonang when she was thirteen years old. At sixteen years of age, she made a leader of the women wing to give guidance to the religious activities and to impart directions on traditional mannerism and discipline.

After the execution of Jadnang on 29.08.1931 by the British Government, she shouldered the responsibilities of the Zeliangrong Movement against the British, for the development of the social customs of Zeliangrong. She was about seventeen years of age at that time. Characteristically she was known for her moral integrity, stubbornness and rigid conviction.

Her revolutionary activity was reported by the Assam Government to the British in the early part of 1932 for she and her troops were moving in and around Naga hills of Monipur and North Cachar Hills.

Mr. J. P. Mills, the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills received the threat of Gaidiliu and ordered the British troop to arrest her. She went underground with her trusted followers.

Gaidiniliu and her trained followers attacked the convoy of Assam Rifles in North Cachar Hills in February 1932. They attacked Assam Rifles outpost in March 1932 at Hungrum Village in the North Cachar Hills with daos and spears only. In reiteration the British burnt down the Hungrum and Bopungwemi Villages in Naga Hills.

She was arrested in 17 October, 1932. She was convicted for life imprisonment on the charges of murder and waging war against the British crown in 1933. She was made free by Jawharlal Nehru after he became the Prime Minister of India in 1947. J. B Bhattacharjee comments, “It began as the autonomous, local movement of a group of tribal communities to preserve their indigenous traditions and culture, but as it progressed it came to be guided by the spirit of the national leader of the movement in the rest of the country” (239).

The Popular Movements:-1. Non-Cooperation Movement 1919 and 1921: Non-cooperation ideologically started from the days of Gokhale in 1905 and Lokmanya Tilak in 1907 because the continuous negligence of a Government to meet the grievance of the people made them furious and frustrated. But formally, in history Satyagraha organized by Gandhi in 1919 is treated to be the commencement of Non-cooperation Movement in India. Gandhi had previous experience of similar kind of movement in South Africa where he practiced it to improve the position of the migrated Indians of the colony.

In fact Gandhi drew his Satyagraha programme in protest of the Rowlatt Bill in February, 1919 at Ahmedabad. – The Rowlatt Bill was actually passed to control the anti-British revolutionaries of the time. It restricted the liberties of the people. This legislation “gave great powers to the government and the police to arrest, keep in prison without trial or to have a secret trial of any person they disapproved of or suspected. A famous description of these Bills at the time was: na

vakil, na appeal, na dalil” (Nehru, 713). This Act came into effect on April 6 in the same year. It was a Sunday and Gandhi declared it to observe it as the Satyagraha Day all over the country, irrespective of towns and villages. It was a novel kind of approach in Indian politics. For the first time the town and the village workers spontaneously became prepared for a massive political demonstration.

In order to publicize the Satyagraha campaign Gandhi toured in the United Provinces and the Madras. From Madras he sent a letter to press in which he suggested the second Sunday after the publication of the Vice regal assent to Bill NO. II of 1919 may be observed as a day of humiliation and prayers. Moreover he advised the following content – “A twenty-four hour fast counting from the last meal on the preceding night should be observed by all adults unless prevented from as doing by all adults unless prevented from as doing by consideration of religion or health. This fast is not to be regarded in any shape or form in the nature of a hunger-strike or designed to put any pressure upon Government. It is to be regarded for Satyagrahis as a necessary discipline to fit them for the civil disobedience contemplated in their pledge and for all others as some slight token of the intensity of their wounded feelings.” (Chopra, 55)

The suggestion of fast was responsible for the Delhi riots on Sunday the 31 March, 1919. It occurred because the food vendors were prevented from selling their wares after the news of the Vice regal assent to the Rowlat Bills had been received. But according to Jawaharlal Nehru,

A week before April 6, Delhi, mistaking the date, had observed the hartal on the previous Sunday, March 31. Those were days of an amazing comradeship and good-will among the Hindus and Muslims of Delhi, and the remarkable sight was witnessed of Swami Shradhdhananda, a great leader of the Arya-Samaj, addressing huge audiences in the famous Jame Masjid of Delhi. On March 31, the police and the military tried to disperse the great crowds in the streets and shot at them, killing some people. Shwami Shradhdhananda, tall and stately in his sanyasin’s garb, faced with bared chest and unflinching look the bayonets of the Gurkhas in the Chandni Chowk. He survived them, and India was thrilled by the incident; but the tragedy of it is that less than eight years later he was treacherously stabbed to death by a Muslim fanatic, as he lay on his sick bed (714).

On April 6, strike and agitation took place all over India. In this movement, people participated in large numbers, irrespective of caste and creed. Due to this protest a new situation developed at

Amritsar in the Punjab, and on April 11, the charge of that area was given to an army brigade under the command of Brigadier Dyer. In spite of all these, the meeting which was called at Jalianwalabag on April 13 to protest against the Act was prohibited by Dyer. But when tens of thousands of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs both men and women, joined the rally at Jalianwalabag on the day defying the prohibition. Dyer went to the spot himself and without batting an eyelid unleashed a wanton attack on the peaceful rally killing over a thousand men, women and children and wounding many more (Tarachand, 479-480).

According to Badruddin Umar, the agitation and protest rallies which broke out all over India in the wake of this ruthless killing at Jalianwalabag, largely prepared the ground for the subsequent mass movement of 1920—22. He also maintains that there was a possibility in the prevailing situation for turning the anti-British mass movement which started in 1919 into a movement of the workers, peasants and middle class against the imperialists and the local exploiting classes which compromised with them. The Assam-Bengal Railway strike, the ‘no tax’ movement in Midnapore, the Mopla peasants rebellion Malabar, movement of the Akalis against the rich mohants who had been sheltered by the Punjab Government etc. taking place one after another as part of the mass movement along with the advancement of the non-cooperation movement in 1921, was indicative of this possibility. (82)

M. Aslam Islahi in his article “An Insight into the khilafat Movements” comments that as a matter of fact, the Hindus were skeptical about the Muslim’s intention behind their enthusiastic participation in the khilafat Movement which largely reflected their extra territorial loyalty. On this same ground, they were afraid that sometime in future, the Indian Muslims will cross over to any Islamic country especially Afganistan and will join their hands with an Islamic power to drive out the British from the Indian sub-continent and to re-establish the Muslim rule in India. Despite of these facts the Hindu leadership came forward to exploit this opportunity to realize their own objectives.

Islahi explicates that hence the participation of Gandhi in the Khilafat movement not only brought Hindus and Muslims very close to each other but it also infused a new life in the anti-British struggle of Indians. The Hindus soon after launching their anti-British movement realized that the English have started favouring the Muslims for sustaining their rule in India. They increased the Muslim recruitment in Government services. On the other hand the educated Indian Muslims following the advice of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan left the path of rebel and mutiny and

started adopting themselves with the changing circumstances and thus reconciled their relationship with the English (51). In fact at this time Gandhi as a universally accepted leader of the Congress was in favour of a limited autonomy instead of complete freedom on the one hand, and on the other he was opposed to any militant political movement of the workers and peasants. By co-ordinating the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements and by placing religion in the forefront he very tactfully organized this opposition at a very difficult phase of Indian politics. (Umar, 83)

In the mean time in January 1920 the Congress leader Maulana Abul Kalam Azad met Gandhi for the first time in Delhi. Azad maintains that at that time there was a proposal to send a deputation to the Viceroy to acquaint him with the feelings of Indian Muslims regarding the Khilafat and Turkey's future. Gandhi participated in the discussions and expressed his complete sympathy and interest in the proposal. He declared himself ready to be associated with the Muslims on this issue. On 20 January 1920, a meeting was held in Delhi. Apart from Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak and other Congress leaders also supported the stand of Indian Muslims on the question of the khilafat. (9)

Since the situation went beyond deputation and memorandum a meeting was held in which Mr. Mohammed Ali, Mr Shaukat Ali, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Maulavi Bari of Firangimahal, Lucknow, were also present. Gandhi presented his programme of Non-cooperation before them. Gandhi believed that the withdrawal of all support from the Government would persuade the government to come to terms. He suggested that all Government titles should be returned, law courts and educational institutions should be boycotted, Indians should resign from the services and refuse to take any part in the newly constituted legislatures. (Azad, 10)

After a few weeks, at the khilafat Conference in Meerut Gandhi for the first time preached his Non-Cooperation programme among the public. Azad ensured his "unqualified support" (11). To quote Aazad,

In September 1920, a special session of the Congress was held at Calcutta to consider the programme of action prepared by Gandhiji. Gandhiji said that the programme of non-cooperation was necessary if we wished to achieve Swaraj and solve the Khilafat problem in a satisfactory manner. Lala Lajpat Rai was the President of this session and Mr C. R. Das one of its leading figures. Neither of them agreed with Gandhiji. Bipin Chandra Pal also spoke forcefully and said that

the best weapon to fight the British Government was to boycott British goods. He did not have much faith in the other terms of Gandhiji's programme. In spite of their opposition, the resolution for the non-cooperation movement was passed with an overwhelming majority (11).

Gandhi travelled extensively throughout the country to prepare the country for the implementation of the Non-co-operation Programme. Most of the times Maulana Azad accompanied him and at times Maulana Mohammed Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali were often their companions. In December 1920, the annual session of the Congress was held in Nagpur. By this time the whole country became enthusiastic with the Non-co-operation programme.

Durga Das writes,

Gandhi dressed in loin cloth and carrying a handspun toga, presented an odd figure amidst the elite in formal costumes. With complete self-confidence and sense of purpose, however, he carried all before him. He persuaded the Congress to adopt a new constitution, which declared the attainment of swaraj (self-rule) by "peaceful and legitimate" (replacing the word "constitutional") means as the aim of the congress, and spelled out his programme of non-violent non-cooperation (75).

According to Das, the atmosphere of the country was filled with excitement. The common people treated Gandhi as a saintly man sent by God and thus followed him with blind faith. The mass upsurge and revolt touched even the remotest part of the country. Hundreds of lawyers including Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das suspended their judicial practice and joined the movement. Thousands of boys left their schools. The whole of India seemed to be stimulated. (77)

The government pursued policies of rife to widen the gap among the different communities but that could not lessen the overall public discontentment. Gandhi's name became a household name especially among the rural population in India.

Simla was the summer capital of British India so Simla experienced its first major stir when Gandhi came to meet the Viceroy on 13th May 1920. The Viceroy's main purpose on seeing Gandhi was to create a congenial atmosphere for a warm welcome for the Prince of Wales. He wanted to understand Gandhi's view of Swaraj and non-violence.

The meeting was fruitless. It widened the gap between Gandhi and the Government. The Non-Cooperation Movement received fresh impetus. Gandhi's followers thought that to intensify the movement was the only way to achieve the promised Swaraj of Gandhi within a year.

The Government declared a resolution on Non-co-operation Movement on 6th November in 1920 revealing its policy towards this new movement which it did not know how to handle. It prohibited the people to take part in such a movement which would only create widespread disorder in the country.

The Government's fear of disorder soon became true. The worst incidence was the Moplah rebellion of August 1921. A large number of demobilized soldiers, many of them Muslims, had returned to their homes on the Malabar coasts from Mesopotamia. It is alleged that a speech of Maulana Mohammed Ali in South India inflamed their communal passion and becoming fanatic they raped, looted, and murdered the Hindus. There was also allegation of conversion of the Hindus to Islam against them. These people were known as Moplahs. They were the descendants of the Arab traders. (Das)

After returning from Simla, Gandhi travelled as far east as Dibrugarh, in the north-eastern province of Assam, and as far south as Tinnevely, in Madras Presidency. His visit to Bombay was marked by a huge bonfire of foreign cloth.

Gandhi announced finally that Civil Disobedience would begin on 17th November when the Prince was due to land in Bombay. Shekhar Bandopaddhyay relates that on that day Bombay witnessed the outbreak of the first violent riot of the movement, targeting the Europeans, Anglo-Indians and the Parsis in the city. Gandhi was stunned; full-scale civil disobedience or a no tax campaign was postponed; it was decided that an experimental no revenue campaign would be launched at Bardoli in Gujarat in February 1922. To quote him,

The venue was carefully chosen, as it was a rayotwari area, with no zamindars and therefore no danger of a no-revenue campaign snowballing into a no rent campaign tearing apart the fragile coalition of classes. But this never happened, as before that the Non-cooperation movement was withdrawn (302).

The last phase of this movement was that the masses often crossed the limits of Gandhian creed of non-violence. Bipan Chandra maintains that this mood of struggle was soon transformed into retreat. On 5 February, a Congress procession of 3000 peasants at chauri Chaura, a village in the Gorakhpur District of Uttar Pradesh, was fired upon by the police. The angry crowd attacked and

burnt the police station causing the death of 22 policemen. Other incidents of violence by crowds had occurred earlier in different parts of the country. Gandhi was afraid that the movement might take a violent turn at any moment. He believed that without the maintenance of the norms of non-violence civil disobedience would not be a success. He therefore decided to suspend the nationalist movement. To quote him,

The Congress Working Committee met at Bardoli in Gujarat on 12 February, and passed a resolution stopping all activities which would lead a breaking of laws. It urged Congressmen to donate their time to the constructive programme – popularization of Charka, national schools, temperance, removal of untouchability and promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity (291). A nationalist revolution in Turkey abolished monarchy or Khilafat in 1924. So the symbol itself around which Muslim mass mobilization had taken place lost its significance (Bandopaddhay, 304).

The resolution offended many nationalists and there was mixed feelings among them. Although many historians and Indian leaders of the time defended Gandhi's decision -- they believed, if he had not stopped the movement then India could have descended into a state of anarchy and then the general public might have become alienated from the destination of freedom and only the revolutionaries would have become encouraged. A similar type of movement was introduced in 1930 identified as Civil Disobedience Movement. The difference between the Non-Cooperation Movement and Civil Disobedience Movement was that the latter one introduced a policy of violating the law.

2. Civil Disobedience Movement 1930-1934:- The Civil Disobedience Movement started in the year 1930 and continued till 1934. The programs and policies adopted in the movements spearheaded by Gandhi reflected his political ideologies of ahimsa and satyagraha. While the Non-co-operation Movement was built on the lines on 'non violent non-cooperation', the essence of the Civil Disobedience Movement was 'defying of the British Laws'. Through his leadership to the National Movement he not only consolidated his political standpoint but also played a crucial role in the unification of the country, awakening of the masses and bringing politics within the arena of common man.

One of the main factors of the Civil Disobedience Movement was the Simon Commission. It was formed by the British Government in November, 1927 to draft and formalize a constitution for India. The commission was formed by the members of the British Parliament. Sir John Simon, a

well known lawyer of the time and a statesman was appointed chairman of the commission. Since the commission did not include any Indian member it was rejected by all political and social fractions of the country. In Bengal a hartal was observed throughout the province on February 3, 1928 in protestation of Simon commission. Demonstration was observed in Calcutta on the occasion of Simon's arrival. In the book *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin: 1926-1931* S. Gopal claims,

The 1919 Act was therefore amended in 1927 to require the appointment of a commission within ten years. In selecting the personnel of this commission it was decided to restrict the choice to members of Parliament, as it was felt that the authors of the 1919 reforms had had in mind a quasi-judicial inquest carried out for the information of Parliament. The natural consequence was a wholly English commission; the two Indian members, of whom one was a Communist, could not be chosen merely for their race. Exclusion of Indian politicians would also carry the advantages of excluding the controversies with which Indian politics were riven and precluding the possibility of Indian and Labour members joining together to incorporate in the report ambitious aspirations which might prove embarrassing to Government (19).

The other factor was The Nehru Report –Representative of the Congress, the League, the Liberals, the Hindu Mahashabha, and a number of smaller groups representing labour, business and other interests met in an all parties conference between February and May 1928. A select committee was appointed there for the actual drafting of the constitutional scheme. Motilal Nehru, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Ali Imam, Sardar Mangal singh and Subhas Chandra Bose were its members. The Nehru Committee's Report as it was called was submitted on August, 1928.

The Nehru Report stated that the next immediate step for India must be 'Dominion Status'. The report was approved by the congress at Calcutta in December 1928. Gandhi sponsored a resolution agreeing to 'Dominion Status' so longer as the British accepted the Nehru constitution in its entirety, and which should happen within one year. If they did not Congress would organize a campaign of non violent non-cooperation. The failure of the government to comply with the Nehru Report finally made the Congress to launch Civil Disobedience Movement under Gandhi.

S M Burke and Salim Al-Din Quraishi in their book *The British Raj in India: An Historical Review* states that soon after the Lahore Congress, most Congress members walked out of the Central Assembly and the Provincial Councils. The All-India Congress Committee delegated to Gandhi its authority to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement and the country awaited the Mahatma's next move anxiously. 'In spite of the enthusiasm shown at the Congress session,' wrote Jawaharlal Nehru, 'no one knew what the response of the country would be to a programme of action. . . To give a start to the campaign, and partly also to judge the temper of the country, January 26 was fixed as Independence Day when a pledge of independence was to be taken all over the country' (278).

The pledge drafted by Gandhi was a long one. Independence Day was observed with great enthusiasm. Gandhi understood that the time was appropriate for taking necessary action.

According to Bipan Chandra, the Lahore session of the Congress gave voice to the new, militant spirit. It passed a resolution declaring Poorna Swaraj (complete independence) to be the Congress objective. On 31 December 1929 was hoisted the newly adopted tri-colour flag of freedom. 26 January 1930 as the first Independence Day, which was to be so celebrated every year with the people taking the pledge that it was "a crime against man and God to submit any longer" to the British rule (304).

But Gandhi's closest colleagues were taken aback when he decided to start the struggle by manufacturing salt, thus contravening the salt-law. Burke and Quraishi quoted Jawaharlal Nehru's expression – 'We were bewildered, and could not quite fit in a national struggle with common salt'. They write that the Mahatma had made a shrewd choice. The tax on salt was especially unpopular among the poor, who regarded salt as bounty from nature. It affected Hindus and Muslims alike and the making of salt was something in which everyone old, young, man, woman, villager and city dweller could participate. On 2 March 1930, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy, 'I regard this tax [salt tax] to be the most iniquitous of all from the poor man's stand point. As the independence movement is essentially for the poorest in the land, the beginning will be made with this evil (278-279).

In India, the salt tax dates back to the very earliest times. It was levied by the Mughal Emperors who made so much profit out of it that the duty was more than double the cost of production. In the time of Emperor Akbar salt cost was two and a half times as much compared with the prices of the principal food grains and it was same at the beginning of this century. After the Mughal

Emperors the salt tax continued in one form or another down to the time of British rule. So the British were not responsible for the introduction of this tax rather they accepted it as an existing source of revenue and updated it and regularized the whole system. They secured an even distribution of edible salt throughout India by dint of scientific management (Government of Madras, G.O No. 691)

David Hardiman in his book *Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat: Kheda District 1917-1934* notes the inception of Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Movement. From his observations and comments we become acquainted with the perspectives of the British Government which was also very important. He writes that meanwhile Gandhi had announced that he would open the movement by marching to the sea and manufacturing salt. The collector Master sent a telegram to Bombay on 11 March, requesting the government to stop the march. The request was refused. The Commissioner Northern Division, Hugh Garret, believed that Gandhi's arrest would provoke riots in Ahmedabad and perhaps Nadiad. The Home Secretary for Bombay, G. F. S. Collins, realized that the march would cause much excitement, but the Government of India was firm that no action to be taken. Instead extra police were moved into Ahmedabad, Kheda and Surat Districts, and natural deposits of salt were cleared from the sea-shore in a feeble attempt to hinder Gandhi's plans (193).

On 12 March, Gandhi set out from Ahmedabad with seventy eight followers on his march to the sea. The march lasted twenty five days and covered 388 kilometres. The attention of India and the world was soon riveted on the villages of Kheda, Broach and Surat through which Gandhi passed. To quote Hardiman,

Every detail of the march was covered by the newspapers. Even midday and evening bulletins were printed to satisfy the insatiable demand for news. The march was grueling, and several of the party had to give up through exhaustion. Huge crowds flocked from miles around to see the march. As they came, the onlookers stirred up clouds of dense choking dust through which Gandhi and his followers had to pass. Everywhere, there was a carnival atmosphere, with cymbals clashing, drums beating, and bhungal, the long folk trumpets of Gujarat, blasting out a raucous chorus as Gandhi entered each village. Famous politicians could be seen at different stages of the march. As it took place during the dry months of blue skies and scorching sunshine, the major part of it had to be completed each

day during the cool hours immediately after sunrise. After the early morning march, food was taken in the village reached and a meeting was held. During the heat of the day, they rested. They then walked for about an hour to the next town or village, where they spent the night. Wherever possible, Gandhi chose to stay in dharmashalas attached to temples. People flocked to these dharmashalas for Gandhi's darshan. Another meeting was held in the evening. . . On 6 April, Gandhi arrived at his destination at Dandi, stooped down, and picked up a lump of salt from the sea-shore. This was the signal for the start of the salt Satyagraha throughout in India (194).

Dandi Salt March had an immense impact on the entire nation. Each and every corner of the country was gripped in a unique fervor of nationalism. Soon this act of violation of Salt Laws assumed an all Indian character. The entire nation amalgamated under the call of a single man Mahatma Gandhi. There were reports of Satyagrahas and instances of law violation from Bombay, Central and United Provinces, Bengal and Gujrat.

The programme of the Civil Disobedience Movement incorporated besides the breaking of the Salt Laws, picketing of shops, selling foreign goods and liquor, bonfire of cloth, refusal to pay taxes and avoidance of offices by the public officers and schools by the students. Even "women came out of their seclusions in thousands and made effective pickets outside selling these items. Prominent among them were Jawaharlal's aged mother, sisters and wife. The last named was arrested on 1 January 1931 (Burke and Qureishi, 280).

P. N. Chopra in his book *India's Major Non-Violent Movements 1919-1934: British Secret Reports on Indian People's Peaceful Struggle for Political Liberation* maintains that the situation was much aggravated by the inauguration of the Civil Disobedience Movement, which though professedly non-violent, rapidly developed into violent resistance to constituted authority. The riots that had occurred at Calcutta and Karachi, the armed outbreak at Chittagong and grave disturbances at Peshawar stood out clearly as the results of the spirit of revolution fostered by the Civil Disobedience Movement which was promoted by writings in the press calculated to incite to violent and revolutionary action (115).

Patrick French in his book *Liberty Or Death: India's Journey to independence and division* relates that the salt Satyagraha spread far beyond the coast of Gujarat. In Southern India, Rajagopalchari led a march from Tricchonopoly to Vedaranniyam and was arrested with his

band of followers. There was a large popular demonstration at Peshawar by Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan's pro-Congress group known as the 'Red Shirts'. Unrest was in Karnataka. These demonstrations were followed by the rather more aggressive Chittagong armoury raid, when a group calling themselves the 'Indian Republican Army' seized a large number of weapons from a local armoury and issued an independence proclamation (79).

In the following weeks the demonstrations intensified and which culminated in an assault on an officially run salt production plant at Dharasans. Nearly two thousand marchers including Mahatma's son Manilal and Sarojini Naidu attempted to storm the building. The police beat back with steel-tipped lathis the advancing non-violent resisters. In this incident two people were killed and 320 injured. "The Viceroy Lord Irwin responded by imprisoning almost twenty thousand protesters and Gandhi was arrested at his hut in the middle of the night and taken to Bombay by train"(80).

As Congress activists languished in prisons around the country, the British Government convened a Round Table conference in London. Gandhi refused to attend it. He announced that his intention was only 'complete freedom'. He related to the Government that he would not compromise to anything short of it. French quoted Sisir K. Bose who mentioned in his book *Subhas Chandra Bose: Fundamental Questions of Indian Revolution* (pg 6) that Subhas Bose suggested that the aim of the conference was to bring "a large number of nondescript Indians nominated by the alien Government . . . to England and make them amongst themselves for the amusement of the British People" (80).

The first round Table conference was held in London in November 1930. The delegates consisted of princes, taluqdars, members of the loyalist National Liberal Federation and various leaders of minority groups attended it. But no constructive outcome was achieved.

In late January 1931 Gandhi was released by Lord Irwin with an expectation of a mutual negotiation between the two parties – the Congress and the Government. On 5th March a joint agreement was announced. It was agreed that Gandhi would end up all the programmes of the Civil Disobedience Movements and attend the second Round Table Conference in London. And Irwin on the other hand would recognize the spirit of the Swadeshi Movement and release the imprisoned freedom fighters.

Gandhi went to attend the second Round Table conference in London the autumn of 1931. He was the sole representative of Congress though accompanied by an entourage which included his

secretaries Pyarelal and Mahadev Desai, his financier G.D. Birla, his trusted Mirabehn and various other admirers. But he was bound by the Congress Working Committee commitment of Purna Swaraj.

During this Conference, Gandhi maintained that he represented all the caste of Hinduism and congress to be the representative of the whole Indian nation. The three representative of the Muslim League present in the Conference also strongly objected to Gandhi's assertion of himself being the voice of the entire nation. (85)

The final blow to Gandhi came when at the end of the conference Ramsay MacDonald undertook to produce a Communal award for minority representation with the provision that any free agreement between the parties could be substituted for his award. Thus the second Round Table Conference proved to be futile for the Indians and Gandhi returned to the country without any positive result.

The political scene in India thereafter assumed an acute dimension. The Viceroy Lord Willingdon in the absence of Gandhi had adopted the policy of repression. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was violated and the Viceroy took to the suppression of the Congress. The Conservative Party which was in power in England decided to assume a repressive stance against the congress and the Indians. The Government accused the Congress of instigating the 'Red Shirts' led by Khan Abdul Gaffer Khan to participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement and provoking the cultivators of U.P to refuse to pay land revenue. Adding to this was the serious economic crisis that took hold of the country. Under such circumstances, the resumption of the Civil Disobedience Movement became inevitable.

Gandhi returned to Bombay in December. The Congress Working Committee took the decision to restart the Civil Disobedience Movement as the British Government was not prepared to relent. Gandhi resumed the movement in January 1932 and appealed to the entire nation to join it. The Viceroy was also informed of the stance assumed by the Congress. The police was given the power to arrest any person, even on the basis of pure suspicion. Lord Willingdon was inclined towards repression rather than negotiation so with the aid of various legal ordinances the working structures of Congress were outlawed. Sardar Patel, the then President of congress and Gandhi were arrested along with other Congress men. Though the second phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement lacked the organization that marked its first phase, nonetheless, the entire nation put up a tough fight and the movement continued for six months.

Meanwhile, the failure of the Second round Table Conference convinced Mr MacDonald to announce the 'Communal Award on August 16, 1932.

The Award was not popular with any Indian Party. Muslims were not happy with the Communal Award, as it had reduced their majority in Punjab and Bengal to a minority. Yet they were prepared to accept it. In its annual session held in November 1933, the all India Muslim League passed a resolution that reads – Though the decision falls far short of the Muslim demands the Muslims have accepted it in the best interest of the country, reserving themselves the right to press for the acceptance of all their demands.

On the other hand the Hindus refused to accept the Awards and decided to launch a campaign against it. For them it was not possible to accept the untouchables as a minority. They organized the Allahabad Unity Conference in which they demanded for the replacement of separate electorates. Many nationalist Muslims and Sikhs also participated in the Conference. The Congress also rejected the Award totally.

Gandhi protested against the declaration of Untouchables as a minority and undertook a fast unto death. He also held meetings with Untouchables leadership for the first time and tried to convince them that they were very much part of the mainstream Hindu society.

Though Gandhi managed to sign the Poona Pact with Dr. B. R Ambedkar, the leader of Untouchables demands. "The Poona Pact replaced separate electorates with reservation in joint electorates, but it provided for a primary election in which four untouchable candidates would be elected" (Omvedt, 48). The communal award was a blow to Gandhi and he finally decided to suspend and withdraw mass Satyagraha on 14 July, 1933. The movement ceased completely on 7 April 1934.

Although the Civil Disobedience movement failed to achieve any positive outcome, it was an important juncture in the history of Indian Independence. The leadership of Mahatma Gandhi had a beneficial impact. The warring factions with the Congress united under the aegis of the Civil Disobedience Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. Satyagraha was put on a firm footing through its large scale usage in the movement. India also rediscovered its inherent strength and confidence to crusade against the British for its freedom.

On the other hand, the failure and suspension of the movement engendered a feeling of despondency in the nationalist ranks. For example, the suspension was commended upon by Subhas Chandra Bose and Vithalbhai Patel who had been in Europe at the time in a joint

manifesto expressed their dissatisfaction over the issue. They said that the latest action of Mr. Gandhi in suspending Civil Disobedience was a confusion failure . . . They were clearly of the opinion that Mr. Gandhi as a political leader had failed. The time had come for a radical reorganization of the Congress on a new principle, with a new method for which a new leader was essential. This was the onset of INA for Bose. Meanwhile Gandhi resigned his membership of the Congress soon as a result of the sharpening differences between him and section of the Congress men.

4. Quit India Movement 1942: Suniti Kumar Ghosh in his book *India and the Raj: India 1919-1947* observes that the war entered a new phase when Germany broke the Non-Aggression pact with the Soviet Union and launched an attack against it on 22 June 1941. The Nazis hoped to bring the Soviet Union under their control without much effort because they had the confidence of their efficient military ammunitions and the vast resources acquired from most of Europe. Initially their invading approach was not met with much resistance from the Soviet side. But when it began – its force was beyond the Nazi’s imagination.

Soon the Soviet Union, Britain signed a treaty of alliance between them known as ‘Atlantic Charter’. Their war policy was declared thus that they would respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of Government under which they would live; and they wished to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have forcibly been deprived of them. But Britain’s Prime Minister Churchill announced in the House of Commons in September that the “Atlantic Charter” excluded India, Burma and other British colonies.

Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, an important U.S. naval base in the Pacific on 7 December and destroyed the U.S. fleet there. She declared war on Britain and the USA. An alliance was formed among Soviet Union, Britain and the USA. Japan knocked the defense bases of the U.S., British and Dutch colonies in South-East Asia easily. Ghosh writes,

The members of the congress Working Committee, which met at Bardoli from 23 to 30 December 1941, differed on the question of non-violence. Nehru, Azad and Rajagopalchari wanted to discard non-violence and participate in war efforts if the British would be persuaded by the grim war situation to make some concessions and buy their support. But Patel, Prasad and some others insisted on no participation, refusing to compromise with their creed of non-violence, which had been of a more accommodating type in July 1940 and before. Gandhi who had

offered, and insisted on, unconditional co-operation with the Raj in its war efforts at the initial phase of the war, refused to abandon non-violence “the faith of a life time.” A resolution offering conditional support to the war was adopted by the Working Committee. At his request Gandhi was relieved of the responsibility of guiding the Congress (511).

The AICC met at Wardha in mid-January 1942 and adopted the resolution with some minor additions. Gandhi declaring at the meeting that he “won’t exchange ahimsa even for independence” (511) supported the resolution and asked other ‘believers’ in non-violence to support it.

In March 1942, the British Parliament sent a delegation to India under Sir Stafford Cripps a Labour Party politician, in order to negotiate with the Indian National congress a constitution that would secure Indian support of World War II. The Indian National congress (INC) found the proposal for the proposed new constitution unsatisfactory, since the draft declaration promised India Dominion Status but not complete independence – in return for the total cooperation during the war. It also failed to address a time frame toward self-government. Leaders of congress and the Muslim League rejected the proposal. As the leader of the INC, Mohondas Gandhi campaigned against the war and increasingly called for Independence.

After the ‘Cripps Mission’ Gandhi believed that the time had come to take action. He wrote a series of articles in Harijan, his newspaper, promoting direct action and urging people to rise up. In order to give effect to his views the INC adopted the ‘Quit India’ resolution on July 14, 1942. The resolution demanded complete independence from the British Government and also threatened Britain with massive civil disobedience in the case of its failure to meet the demands. Arthur Herman writes in his book, *Gandhi and Churchill: The Epic Rivalry That Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age*,

His idea was that the British should leave India. Now. Completely, immediately, and for good. “Britain cannot defend India, much less herself on Indian soil with any strength,” he told Alexander. “The best thing she can do is leave India to her fate. I feel somehow India will not do badly then (489).

On August 8, 1942, The All India Congress Committee (AICC) – the central decision making Assembly of the INC met in a session in Bombay and voted unanimously to pass the resolution. He urged the masses to act as an independent nation, and to follow non violent civil

disobedience. Police used tear gas and a lathi charge to disperse the crowd that had gathered. Virendra, the editor of two newspapers *Pratap* and *Vir Pratap* writes in his memoir of the Freedom Movement, *Destination Freedom* remembers Quit India Movement,

Gandhiji would not have delivered a more provocative oration ever before in his life. His call to the people of India for a 'do or die' struggle was in tune with his demand that the British 'Quit India'. Each word that he uttered was an open incitement to rebellion, albeit non-violent (133).

The next morning on August 9, British forces responded by arresting eminent Congress leaders Gandhi, Nehru, Pate and Azad. Most of Gandhi's fellow leaders including all the members of the Party's Working Committee were arrested and imprisoned within 24 hours. Following the arrest of major leaders, Aruna Asaf Ali, then a young Congress member presided over the AICC session and hoisted the Indian flag. Although Gandhi specified that the campaign should only use non-violent means, there was nobody to guide the popular agitation.

To quote one of the arrested leader Maulana Abul kalam Azad,

I got into the Deputy Commissioner's car. A second car picked up my belongings and followed us. . . I saw Ashok Mehta. He also had been arrested and brought to the Victoria Terminus. . . Almost immediately Jawaharlal, Asaf Ali and Dr. Syed Mahmud appeared on the scene. Jawaharlal told me that Gandhiji had also been brought to the station and put in another compartment (88).

In the three to four days after Gandhi's arrest, The Indian National Congress INC was declared as an unlawful organization. The action, however, created sympathy for the cause among population and large scale processions and demonstrations took place. Strikes were called and many workers remained absent. In Ahmedabad, Puna and Bombay strikers shut down the cotton mills and factories. In Ahmedabad eight thousand mill workers left their jobs. In cities and towns across the country students stopped attending school to join in workers in their marches. In a minor uprising in Balia, Uttar Pradesh, locals established their own independent rule overthrowing the district administration breaking open the jail and releasing Congress leaders. All across the country, crowds severed electricity and telephone wires, and uprooted train tracks. The fighting continued the police and army shootings lead to the deaths of hundreds of resisters and innocent people. British Air Forces planes used machine guns on the unarmed Satyagrahis lying down across the tracks.

Trevor Royle in his book *The Last Days of the Raj* describes the situation,

For all that Gandhi's call to action was nipped in the bud by the authorities it was punctuated by sporadic violence in Bombay, Madras, Central Provinces, Bihar and Bengal.

For the police it was an anxious time: the lines of communication and government property had to be guarded and large crowds of congress demonstrators had to be broken up, usually with tired and overstretched forces. At Kodarma, an important mica-mining area in Bihar, Lawrence Russell and a small troop of policemen were confronted by a mob who threatened to attack the police headquarters, having already burned down the local railway station (91).

By March 1943 the campaign had largely died down. Although the Quit India movement failed to bring an end to British colonial rule in India, with many of the country's leaders behind bars, it intensified the opposition of India's population to the British. It also showed the British that no new effort on their part could establish British rule on a solid footing, and it was only a matter of time before the British government would have to announce unconditional and time-bound withdrawal from the country.

British officers released Mahatma Gandhi from prison in May 1944, due to poor health, while many of his followers and fellow leaders remained behind bars.

There were two incidents occurred in 1946 which finally made way for the ultimate religion based Partition of India. These two incidents were **The Great Calcutta Killing of 16th August** following Jinnah's call for Direct Action Day on July and its reciprocation in East Bengal through **Noakhali Carnage in 10th 1946**.

In the book *The Holocaust of Indian Partition: An Inquest* writer Madhab Godbole maintains that the call for "Direct Action" given by Jinnah on 29 July 1946 was, in a sense a watershed in the communal situation in the country. It left no one in any doubt about the future course of action which Muslim League wanted to follow.

Bakshi S. R. in his book *Abul kalam Azad: The Secular Leader* reports that when asked if the proposed Direct Action would be violent or non-violent Jinnah refused to discuss ethics. While A.N. Bali in his book "Now It Can be Told" writes that Liaquat Ali Khan, who later became a member (Finance) in the interim government from 26 October 1946, interpreted the Associated Press of America that Direct Action meant "resorting to non-constitutional methods and that can

take any form. . . . We cannot eliminate any method.” Again Sardar Abdul Rab Nishtar, who later became member (Posts and Air) in the interim government, was reported to have said that Pakistan could only be achieved by shedding blood and, if opportunity arose, the blood of non-Muslims must be shed, for, ‘Muslims are no believers in Ahimsa’.

The Direct Action agitation led to what came to be known as ‘Great Killing’ in the communal riots in Calcutta from 16 to 20 August 1946. The declaration of 16 August 1946 as a public holiday by the provincial government intensified the rioting and hooliganism. The activities of Direct action Day’ announced as a political demonstration quickly degenerated into a communal riot of the worst type. The disturbances which initially took the form of sporadic rioting, murder, looting and arson began at 7 o’ clock in the morning and spread gradually. The Pakistan Ambulance Corps operating in Calcutta during the period played a high communal role. As the report of the government of Bengal brought out, the riots “assumed the character of a civil war”(Godbole, 34).

Beg Aziz in his book *Jinnah and his Times: A Biography* relates that in his inimitable style, Mosley has written “ Between dawn on the morning of 16 August 1946 and dusk three days later, the people of Calcutta hacked, battered burned, stabbed or shot 6,000 of each other to death, and raped and maimed another 20,000. . . . But the filthy and dreadful slaughter which turned Calcutta a charnel house for seventy hours in August 1946 is important because it did more than murder innocent people. It murdered hopes too. It changed the shape of India and the course of history. The corpses of men, women, and children lay stinking in the gutters of Chouringhee Square until the only reliable garbage collectors of India, the vultures picked them. (qtd in Godbole 35)

In reciprocation to Calcutta killings tremendous riot broke out in Noakhali in October 10, 1946. Large-scale rapes, forced marriages and conversion of Hindus were the distinguishing features of this occurrence. The government had to admit in the Bengal Legislative Assembly that these forcible conversions ran into thousands. (Butalia Urvashi quoted in Godbole, 42)

One Bibhuti Bhusan Das of Topgah, Noakhali, wrote to one Sidhansu Bhusan Das on 12 October as follows “We all embraced Islam on 10th night. All villages of the locality (Chatkhil, Rampur, Dasharia, etc.) accepted Islam. A huge mob came and gave us ultimatum to embrace Islam or we

all be burnt. Their high command [directive] is to complete [the conversion of Hindus in] the Noakhali district within a week. (Carter Lionel qtd in Godbole, 43)

Arthur Herman reports that the Muslim gangs murdered Hindus in every village through which they passed, slaughtering the men like animals and raping and killing the women, then throwing the bodies down the wells. Nearly fifty thousand terrified Hindu villagers, who had lived peacefully with their Muslim neighbours for centuries, fled for their lives to neighbouring Bihar, where Hindus were a majority. There Hindu gangs, learning of the horrors in Noakhali, began hunting down and killing Muslims in retaliation. The districts remoteness and jungle like terrain made restoring order by force almost impossible. (556)

Gandhi arrived in Noakhali on November 6 on a special train provided by the Bengali government, there were still burned bodies scattered in the courtyards of Hindu homes and blood stains on the walls and floors. Seriously shocked Gandhi decided to prolong his stay in Noakhali. He was accompanied by Professor Nirmal kumar Bose of Calcutta University. They found a simple hut in Srirampur village and in the second week in December Gandhi's grandniece Manubehn joined them. In January 1947 Gandhi set off on foot to tour Noakhali's villages. With bamboo lathi in hand, he set out at dawn every morning, visiting villagers and preaching reconciliation and singing himself a poem of Rabindranath Tagore titled "Walk Alone". (558)

But Gandhi and his group did not get warm welcome from the local people. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre in their jointly written book *Freedom at Midnight* writes that

The deeper his little party penetrated into Noakhali's bayous, the more difficult Gandhi's mission became. The success he'd enjoyed with the Moslems in the first villages through which he'd passed had alerted the leaders in those that lay ahead. Sensing in it a challenge to their own authority, they had begun to stir the populace's hostility to the Mahatma and his vision. . . Gandhi trudged serenely towards his next stop. It had been a damp, humid night and the alluvial soil on the narrow path along which his party walked was slick and slippery under the heavy dew. Suddenly, the little procession came to a halt. At its head, Gandhi laid aside his bamboo stave and bent down. Some unknown Moslem hands had littered the track on which he was to walk barefoot with shards of glass and lumps of human excrement. Tranquilly, Gandhi broke off the branch of a stubby palm. With it, he stooped and humbly undertook the most defiling act a Hindu can perform. Using

his branch as a broom, the 77 year old penitent began to sweep that human excrement from his path. (54-55)

The New Statesman of London wrote on October 24 that there reached no news of any steps being taken to stop the atrocious activities of the Muslim fanatic hooligans on the Muslim minority residing in Noakhali and also there was no news of any action taken by Mr. Jinnah to restrain his followers.

Perceptions of Chaudhuri

4.2

It was Chaudhuri's intention to give an elaborate account of the British withdrawal from India that is the stories behind the decline and fall of the Indian Empire. Since he directly experienced the situation he thought that it was his moral obligation to leave an account of it for others. Moreover he strongly believed that the political events that took place during this period became entangled with a lot of myths that casted a shadow on the real story.

The political events of this period between 1921 and 1947 contributed to a lot of political excitement and activity and ended with a climax which was significant for the world history too. It may be mentioned that the independence granted to the subcontinent was symbolic to the commencement of decolonization of the British Empire.

In 1921, a new phase of the Indian nationalist movement began under the all pervasive leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, who through many ups and downs tried hard to avoid the vivisection of the country.

According to Chaudhuri, it was Gandhi's initiation of the course of the Non-cooperation Movement that quickened the end of the British rule. It was absolutely a new phase in the Indian Nationalist Movement. Its aim was to induce the Indian people to withdraw and withhold all forms of cooperation with the British administration in India and thereby paralyze it. The programme had been adopted by the Congress at the end of 1920. And it was put into effect in January, 1921, following the boycott of the elections held under the Government of India Act of 1919.

Chaudhuri maintains that the real reason behind the launching of the Non-Cooperation Movement by the Indians was their distrust of the British Government, their suspicion about the declared goodwill towards them and the loss of faith over British bureaucracy.

Chaudhuri says that to have given the name Non-Co-operation to the movement bore an attempt to hide its real intention and character. Apparently it was launched with the object of general non-cooperation with the British administration in India. In this sense it would never have become a mass movement so that the Indian people rose in revolt against the British rule in an all India scale. But Gandhi could not predict its significance and its path to violence. In India the upper class people were opportunists; actually the general people became violent in execution of Gandhi's non-violent policy.

The suspicion started with introduction of the Ilbert Bill in Lord Ripon's time and it gradually increased with the conduct of the British civil service in the decades that followed especially the obstinacy shown to the Rowlatt bill by them. In the year 1918 the Montagu Chelmsford Report could not meet the expectation of the Indian Nationalists because they felt that the British rulers backed out from their former promise of granting self-government to the Indians as it was mentioned.

The situation further deteriorated when the Rowlatt Report recommended the continuation of the emergency measures to control revolutionary activities including detention on suspicions indefinitely which was passed in the Indian legislature. The Indian nationalist members of the Assembly opposed the bill vehemently. But the Government showed obstinacy to carry the motion which contributed to the worsening of the political situation of India. The British section of the Indian Press supported the Government.

Gandhi launched a campaign of resistance in protest of the severity shown by the British Government which surpassed all other actions taken in the past. It was the Amritsar episode in which General Dyer ordered to shoot a peaceful gathering of mass people in a place which was surrounded by a wall and which had only a single gate for exit and entry. General Dyer ordered to shoot at those unarmed people and later on inflicted further humiliation to the population of the city. This incident created a great distrust between the general people and the British Government. The General was not tried for this inhuman action rather he was given an award money raised by the paper *Morning Post*.

Chaudhuri writes that Gandhi demanded the stoppage of pensions for Sir Michael O' Dyer and General Dyer and he also called the British rule Satanic. The whole of India including Chaudhuri condemned the action vehemently; he thought that it was the worst exhibition of imperial pride of power and position. Two of the most important members of the British government Sir

Winston Churchill and F. E. Smith, approved of the action. The matter was so unimportant to them that they took it as a cowardly appeasement of the Indian extremists. From available contemporary accounts Chaudhuri found that after the shooting at Amritsar some British officers had said that they heartily enjoyed the shooting down of the sweating niggers. However, the Indians could never wipe out this tragic incident from their memory. It also triggered condemnation in the West, although not as widely as it should have. The 1921 Nobel Laureate Anatole France remonstrated and at home Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore renounced the Knighthood conferred upon him by the British King in protest against the inhuman massacre. Chaudhuri mentions that Gandhi had been the first Nationalist leader whose message reached every nook and corner of India. Everyone accepted him in his or her own way. It seemed that he was treated as a symbol of something very positive in the national life. In Chaudhuri's own words,

In Indian life of those days every one of these movements of agitation created a psychological atmosphere comparable to our monsoons with their storms. There was no possibility of remaining unaware of the disturbed psychological ambience and it was not necessary to collect statistics to discover that something was on. The excitement could be felt in the air, so to speak, and was in any case visible in the movements, stances, and expressions of even those who pursued business as usual with the utmost stolidity of behavior and expression (13).

Chaudhuri writes that the excited mood of the nationalist movement was further enhanced by the contribution of the press. The newspapers both English and vernacular published sensational news and commentaries. The reports of the brutality of the police and the heroism of the nationalist volunteers made people optimistic about the ensuing independence from the British Government.

Chaudhuri criticized the brutality of British soldiers who could never stand Indians. In a mere pretext of looking at them with a mocking or frightening or even somewhat curious expression, they started charging the Indians. This fierce attitude of the British personnel was encoded by law. The Government always feared that if the general public was not controlled they might eventually be a threat to their safety. So the persons standing together made them apprehend danger. Before the Nationalist Movement started these soldiers were in duty of maintaining law and order in the country and usually maintained a low profile presence, but with the start of the

Nationalist Movement their attitude of detachment ceased. The British police officers, officials, and men all became brutal.

According to Chaudhuri the Indian public actually felt disappointed if there was no report of violence against the Government. Their hatred of British rule, with its accompaniment of a feeling of helplessness against it, made all nationalist Indians who could not join the agitation, enjoy the stories of brutality in order to amplify their sense of grievances. Chaudhuri believes that the use of force against the Non-co-operation Movement on the whole was moderate compared to the serious nature of the early defiance of the Government which had been very fierce and bold.

When Lord Reading was appointed Viceroy in England he did not take the Non-co-operation Movement seriously but after coming to India he realized its significance and reported to the Secretary of State Edwin Montagu that the situation was much more delicate than he had expected. So when soon after Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya advised him to meet Gandhi he agreed immediately though added a condition. In reality Reading was afraid of being accused by the British community of supporting the nationalist rebels; because they fiercely opposed any concession made to the Indian nationalists. So if the request of a meeting came from Gandhi Reading would be acquitted of such charges.

Chaudhuri relates the view of the other side too. The Indians did not take positively that Gandhi should apply for a meeting with the Viceroy. The newspapers raised a hue and cry. Ramananda Chatterji, the noted Bengali publicist wrote in his influential magazine of the time *The Modern Review* that the Secretary of the Viceroy could issue an invitation on his behalf. About Gandhi Chatterji wrote that he saw nothing wrong in applying for a meeting with the Viceroy but he had no right to compromise the honour of his country and people who he represented. Chaudhuri writes that at that time nobody considered how important it was to negotiate a national issue. Instead they prioritized stale issues like losing one's face. Chaudhuri's view was that at that time, "One should have thought that in so serious a matter as arriving at an understanding between the British Government and the Indian Nationalists. Such questions of form and precedence were trivial and even irrelevant" (17).

At this time Gandhi did not fail to repeat what he had said before: "the movement of non-cooperation is neither anti-British nor anti- Christian." He also wrote we are not even trying to change the British, we are trying to reform ourselves" (175-176).

Chaudhuri focused on Gandhi since he was the most illustrious leader of the pre-partition political movements. He highlights the British attitude towards him in 1921, which was hostile and contemptuous. They did not acknowledge his personal greatness. There was difference of degree in their expression of hatred him. Among them Winston Churchill seemed to have the greatest hatred for him. He regarded Gandhi as the enemy of the British Empire. Chaudhuri heard from some reliable sources that two months after Reading's appointment to the Viceroyalty was declared, Churchill invited Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India at a dinner and said to him that Gandhi "ought to be laid, bound hand and foot, at the gates of Delhi and then trampled on by an enormous elephant with the new Viceroy seated on its back (23). His description of Gandhi as a "half-naked fakir" is still remembered.

Chaudhuri however suggests that the views of Gandhi's critics were more reliable than his admirers because the latter idealized him and tried to portray him as a super human personality. Chaudhuri believed that Lord Reading's impression about Gandhi was much balanced. Reading found Gandhi's physical features unimpressive and sometimes his activities bewildered him. He could not understand Gandhi's mingling of religion with politics. In the end he concluded that there might be some dichotomy between Gandhi's political conduct and his religious life and ethical standard. In fact the other Viceroys too considered the issue in the same way. Chaudhuri in this regard does not accuse Gandhi of being playing double standard rather he points out the failure of the British people to understand him properly because it was the reflection of the Hindu religious life: He claims that Hindu religion is an overall summation of dichotomy. But Chaudhuri confirms his impression that Lord Reading must have found him interesting when he met him for the first time. Besides, his son records in his biography of his father that till the end of his life reading always remembered Gandhi with sympathy and regards.

Chaudhuri writes about the desire for Swaraj which the Non-Co-operation Movement had whipped in the general public. To quote him,

We were going to kishoreganj for the Christmas holidays, and when the train was on the point of getting into motion, four coolies pushed into two tottering young men who were crying or rather drawing attention, but at the top of the voices: Bolo Bande Mataram. (Say, Vande Mataram), and then in their English: 'Swaraj will come soon!' The coolies also repeated the cry of Vande Mataram" (25).

However, at the beginning of 1922 Chaudhuri sensed an ebbing of public passion for Swaraj in Calcutta though the peasant movement in UP continued to be strong. The various measures of suppressing especially police shootings increased the anger of the people. Mahatma Gandhi threatened the Government that he would declare the next step of agitation – Civil Disobedience and defiance of law unless the Government released all the prisoners who were already convicted or were under trial.

Chaudhuri criticizes some of the issues laid down by Gandhi as part of his Non-Co-operation Movement. First of all, Chaudhuri points out Gandhi's direction for overall boycott of all kinds of services under the British administration. It included the boycott of all schools and colleges under the existing system. This boycott of education was also disapproved by Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee who had singular contribution towards making Calcutta University a centre of excellence. Gandhi also adopted extreme measure regarding British clothes. This burning of clothes was thought unnecessary even by Tagore. The feelings became associated with the British clothes that their hatred for the British echoed with the action of its burning. They felt as if the burning of British manufactured clothes were like literally cleansing their bodies from physical pollution. The emotion of womenfolk was much stronger in this regard.

Chaudhuri feels that these demands of Mahatma Gandhi were futile by nature. He considered Gandhi's ideology to be driven by his own instinct. The core aspiration of his instinct was to forgo urban civilization and return to nature.

Chaudhuri comments on the nationalist leaders who led the masses of India. He observes that all of those leaders were from wealthy upper class families. They were urban in their manners and nature and belonged to the new professional classes. Chaudhuri's impression about this class is evident from the following,

By becoming political leaders they only gave up economic exploitation for the more satisfying business of exploiting the hartals and grievances of the common people. Even Mahatma Gandhi shared only the simple moral and religious outlook of the hindu masses and beyond that he was interested only in curing them of the moral ills. Neither he nor the other leaders knew the common people of India well (Autobiography Part II, 30).

Chaudhuri regretfully remembers that no political ideology was ever finalized before the commencement of the Non-Cooperation movement. He accuses Gandhi for this failure and feels

that he launched the movement for ending the British rule without setting any plan as to who would replace the alien government. Chaudhuri feels that at this time the Indian people became obsessed with their hatred for the British, and seemed to lose their power of rational thinking. This negative attitude was seen in the three leaders who led this movement: Gandhi, Nehru and Subhas Bose. None of them could predict what would follow after the British rule was over. Among them Gandhi was an exception because he visualized a ‘Rama-rajya’: the peaceful and prosperous life under the rule of Rama—the hero of Ramayana. Chaudhuri argues that it was not invented by Gandhi – rather it was held by the Indian people for ages and was revived in the nineteenth century by the preachers of the new Hindu Nationalism. Chaudhuri believes that Nehru and Bose the leaders of this movement did not have any clear perception about the future because they did not have extensive knowledge about Indian history, life and culture. According to Chaudhuri this characteristic made the Non-Cooperation Movement different from other revolution of the past such as the American, the French, and the Japanese Meiji revolutions. In all these cases the leaders knew what they were doing and whom they were going to put in the places of the regimes they were trying to pull down. There were specific ideologies that guided their steps; but behind the Nationalist Movements of India there was no such constructive idea or thought. These shortcomings could not evade the disastrous consequences when partition occurred in 1947.

Chaudhuri thinks that the intellectuals of the time were not much respectful to their own cultural heritage. In the era of Nationalist Movement the general feelings for one’s own landscape, literature, art and music which existed in the pre-Gandhian era seemed to have faded away. Their indifference towards music was really a significant negative aspect because during early times in Bengal music was widely enjoyed by people. Chaudhuri held the western education being responsible for this cultural decline. The leaders too being the offspring of wealthy families and trained in western education were unaware of the cultural components of the Indian civilization. In Chaudhuri’s words “The civilization of ancient India became only a subject of chauvinistic bragging” (33). Since 1920 through the strong effort of Gandhi the masses of India joined the Nationalist movement and became inspired by Gandhi’s constant appeal for achieving Rama-rajya by getting rid of the British rule.

Chaudhuri could not support the method in which Gandhi exploited the emotion of the mass people and got them involved in the Nationalist movement. Chaudhuri observed that the Indian

people irrespective of their religion bore two conflicting sides in their character. One was the pious and moral side of their nature and the other was the violent patriotic side. So Gandhi's propagation of his utopian approach of non-violent mode of Non-Cooperation Movement was bound to be a failure in the long run and it definitely did. Chaudhuri of course acknowledges that Gandhi had an extraordinary verbal command which was enough to hypnotize people and drag them into any kind of action he intended to take.

Chaudhuri was hesitant about the success of the mass movement because he rated the Indian mob to be fickle-minded. He was anticipating a Hindu-Muslim riot at any time in Bengal. From 1919 to 1932 he had faith in the mass movement as a means of overthrowing the British government but after that period he had different notions. He thought that an organized government could only be thrown by organized military operations. Chaudhuri's worst apprehension was proved in the long run because the course of the movement took turn to violent actions. Gandhi was warned about that by one of his friends in an article in *Young India*. He was also warned several times from other sources but he did not inhibit from inciting the common people. They kept on paying heed to his guidance.

Chaudhuri tries to find out and analyze the real reason behind the Hindu-Muslim communal conflict in undivided India. He says that there were some who believed that there had been immense possibilities for the reconciliation of the two communities but the leaders were not simply interested. But Chaudhuri rejects the idea and says that it was not done because under the above circumstances even the most well intentioned secular Muslim was interested for a secular identity. To take the advantage of the existing reality Gandhi supported the Khilafat Movement of the Muslims and thus created the Congress-Khilafat Alliance. Its object was to oppose the British together and force them to leave India. In this context Chaudhuri recalls the situation in 1920. At that time like the Hindus, the Muslims harboured a deep-seated antipathy towards the British. It increased farther when the allies dismembered Turkey because of its territorial provisions through the treaty of Sevres. The Muslims of India were hurt because they held Turkey in very high esteem. The Sultan of Turkey was then treated as the head of the Muslim world next to Caliph. So they decided to declare solidarity with the Muslims of Turkey and carry on demonstration.

Chaudhuri maintains that since Islam is based on a belief in an extra-territorial community united by a common religion, the Muslims of India had no problem showing sympathy towards Turkey.

They had strong support to the Islamic solidarity because they were staunch supporters of the Pan-Islamic Movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Actually this predicament was fostered by Sultan Abdul Hamid II of Turkey for his own advantages. Chaudhuri recollects that on this issue Czar Nicholas II warned the British through the residing British Ambassador at St. Petersburg.

Chaudhuri comments that extra-Indian loyalties were dangerous for national integration. So he disapproved political move of building Hindu-Muslim Alliance by supporting the Khilafat Movement. Chaudhuri thinks that by allying himself to that movement Gandhi and the Congress indirectly encouraged the worst kind of communal group consciousness. From 1923 onwards it disapproved the very sense of Islamic identity calling it a 'two nation' theory. The Congress refused to accord even a small concession to any element of separateness between their two communities. Personalities like Gandhi and Nehru could not persuade Congress or the Hindus in general to accept the legitimate demands of the Muslims so that fear of being marginalized by the Hindu majority would be alleviated. So finally Partition became a reality.

Chaudhuri while discussing the negative aspects of the Non-Cooperation Movement also explores the reasons behind the mythical admiration of the Europeans for Gandhi. He admits that in general the Europeans are very calculative and very much fact oriented. In Gandhi's case Chaudhuri believes that their appreciation towards him was not guided by their appreciation of his writings or for any particular action but for their emotional satisfaction. They wanted to cover up their weak moralities with sage-like image of Gandhi. Chaudhuri's comment about Gandhi's writings was "vague, inconsistent, elusive or evasive" (40) and his actions and behavior were puzzling. After the end of the First World War the Europeans experienced such a mental crisis that they spoke about Gandhi and his mode of protest and movement for achieving independence as a console to their frustrating lives; though Chaudhuri thinks that his non-violent mode had little to do with the achievement of Independence.

Chaudhuri explicates that the object of Gandhi's non-violence was a moral coercion and it never excluded social and psychological violence. He says that the term 'passive resistance' is contradictory in view because no resistance can be passive. Chaudhuri analyses that actually the preaching of non-violence means abstention from killing and also avoiding being killed by others. He describes this kind of doctrine as the moral refuge for cowards who want to take credit for resisting evil without taking the consequent risks.

The contradiction of Gandhi's ideological stance or his ignorance of plain facts of life led him to being labeled as cunning or a man of duplicity; especially the Bengalis considered him so. The pro-Gandhian intellectuals spoke of his one-track mind--a person who did not accept something intellectually had power to decline it morally too.

Chaudhuri reflects Gandhi's highly tactical decision after the Chauri Chaura incidence through which he tried to pull up the countrymen from going down into anarchy. He regretted his own decision of declaring the Non-violent Non-Co-operation movement because he understood that the general people had not then become so matured as to being able to control their emotion. He accused himself of committing a Himalayan blunder. In repentance of that he took to five days of fasting as an act of expiation. Following his calling off the Non-Co-operation Movement it died down in the whole of India.

The British Government punished Gandhi for his inception of the Non- co-operation Movement and the anarchy followed by its implementation. They arrested him, tried for sedition and sentenced to two years imprisonment. The British Government was surprised that no public demonstration or protest was directed against this action against Gandhi. The then British Commander-in- Chief could not control expressing his astonishment. Chaudhuri comments that the outsiders might become surprised at the unpredictable nature of the Indian people but that was natural for them. Maulana Abul kalam Azad's interpretation was different. He wrote about it in his autobiographical discourse *India Wins Freedom* that the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement on account of the Chauri Choura incident caused a severe political reaction in political circles and demoralized the country. To quote him,

Mr. C.R. Das used to discuss the situation with me almost every day. He was convinced that Gandhiji erred grievously in calling off the movement. This had so demoralized political workers that it would take many years before public enthusiasm could again be roused. Besides, Mr. Das held that Gandhiji's direct methods had failed. He therefore thought that we must adopt other ways to restore public morale (21).

The aversion towards Gandhi persisted throughout the British rule. But it became very strong during the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. Chaudhuri informs us that on 28 June of that year Archbishop Cosmo Lang wrote to Lord Irwin that Gandhi was "a perverse and danger mixture of the mystic, the fanatic and the anarchist"(24).

After the experience of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930-1932 Chaudhuri realized that the real passion that drove the Nationalist Movement was a strong hatred towards British rule. Its aim was to end this rule and until that was done to continue to fight the British in every possible way. That was why the nationalist leaders did not respond to the British Government's suggestion of reforms. Chaudhuri believes that they feared that it might raise suspicion among the general people and they might be accused by them of treading the path of compromise.

Chaudhuri has some practical observations about the general attitude of the Indians about taking Gandhi as a mythical character after his death. He says that Indians are practical minded, they try to use anything whenever opportunity knocks them. They always held him high because the common people counted him as a man-worship.

The British resisted the Nationalist Movement. The Indian nationalists were unable to challenge the British rule because they could not rouse the general people or carry on continuous demonstrations except in intervals. So the discontentment existed like an underground fire. On the other side the British though morally weak resisted the oppositional activities of the Indians because till then their administration was structurally sound.

The British people and the political leaders were opposed to each other to continue the colonial rule because by then a modern sentiment enveloped their mind. They felt embarrassed to think that an island in Europe should continue to rule a nation ten times larger in population against their will; it became unacceptable to them.

Chaudhuri points out the lack of conviction in the British also so that they could not create a new social and economic atmosphere; rather they plunged into an insatiable material interest which degraded them in the eyes of the people of this country.

Chaudhuri believes that if the British could bring about a socio-economic change in favour of the Indian masses then they would have achieved popular support and that would have restricted the pro-government activities of a class of people initially procreated by the British.

The British could not take any step in that regard because the policy of the British Raj was against it. In India they became more conservative than they were in their home country because they were afraid that here their liberal behavior might trigger revolt. The memory of the Sepoy Mutiny haunted them. The proclamation of Queen Victoria after the mutiny promised that no interference would be done in respect of religious and ancient social practices of the Indian people. But Chaudhuri's personal evaluation was that this bar eventually blocked the possibility

of any socio-economic emancipation which was more necessary at that time than political movements. To quote Chaudhuri, “Queen Victoria’s proclamation was the beginning of the end of Britain’s imperial role in India” (58).

Chaudhuri in an epilogue to the British-Indian history writes that the British were doubtful about the capacity of the Indians in running the administration after their departure. They held an imperial idea of protecting the Indian people from anarchy. Chaudhuri believes that both their doubt and their sense of duty were sincere. And from that point of view what happened after partition cannot be ignored.

Chaudhuri reflects on the second phase of the Nationalist Movement launched by Gandhi. This phase started in the early part of 1930. The movement was suspended for sometime but then it started again. The agitation continued for nearly two years but then it died down. During this period Gandhi became its whole hearted supporter. Chaudhuri confesses his emotional attachment to the movement till 1934 and claims that after that period he regained his sense of historical objectivity.

Chaudhuri points out several reasons behind the natural death of the Nationalist Movement. Chaudhuri first of all notices the dichotomy of values. He says at that time nationalistic values existed almost among every Indian but it was deep-rooted only in the heart of the middleclass society. But this class had ambivalent attitude towards the movement and suffered from a crisis of values. On the one hand the educated middle class people believed that the British should leave this land but at the same time they could not resist their passion for the so-called Indian Civil Service. It was their foremost priority. Because of such contradiction and clash between idealism and practicality the movement subsided.

Chaudhuri also pointed out that when emotion became intense it was found to be reciprocated only in about a hundred thousand hearts which was just a small fraction of the whole population. The rest of the people maintained hatred for the British rule but were connected with them through various kinds of material interests. This practical situation inhibited them from directly joining the Nationalist Movement though they sustained no guilty feelings in their minds; they considered their silent moral support also to be one kind of participation.

The cooperation of the high ranking Indians with the British was another reason for lessening of passion. These people helped the Government in every possible way to control any agitation created by the Indians for independence. Chaudhuri writes that when these Indian officials were

privately remonstrated by their friends they justified themselves by saying that a government has to govern. According to Chaudhuri, this is why at the end of each phase of agitation no tangible result was achieved and another point was that the British were shrewd enough to make any concession on their initiative at a time when it did not serve any meaningful purpose because at that time the situation might have taken a more complicated turn.

These factors created a widespread disillusionment among the dedicated workers who seriously took part in the movement and many suffered imprisonment. After they were released they went back to their private lives, earned their living with great difficulty and never again became involved in such activities. Only those who lost all their options for independent sustenance continued as nationalist workers. These men formed the regimental and NCO cadres of the nationalist movements. It was a rule that the next batch of workers were selected from fresh youths who did not have any past experiences. But such boys took eight to ten years to reach the enlisting age. These boys were recruited generally between sixteen to twenty years of their age. According to Chaudhuri's calculation the active cycle of the Nationalist Movement was as long as the intervals in between.

Chaudhuri offers his interpretation of Indian Nationalist Movement with complete confidence in his objective approach although he is little bit confused about his ambivalent position in supporting nationalist and imperialist views of Indian history. He says that he cannot ignore various shortcomings of the British in India but at the same time was not able to deny the merit of the British rule. Firstly, he regarded the British rule as the best political regime in India. Secondly, he held great admiration for English life and civilization, through which one could share the larger phenomenon of European culture. In fact he always tried to mould and enrich his character with its essential components.

Chaudhuri was very conscious about the necessity of his writing about the prelude of the partition which was being shaped by political movements. He justifies his position in this way that the Indian Nationalist movement for Independence bore a particular character of its own and who had not undergone such experiences would not be able to imagine its nature because nothing like it had happened ever before or after in India or elsewhere. The inadequacy of its account were one of the reasons because most of the real leaders and policy makers of the movement did not leave behind any personal accounts or reminiscences about the time other than Gandhi, Nehru, Maulana Azad and a few others. The movements were multidimensional and unfortunately not all the shades of the prism were caught properly by the participants and recorded for the future generation. So Chaudhuri believes that due to this fact historians cannot

come up with all the facts, some of which have never been recorded, some forgotten, and some had been deliberately suppressed.

Chaudhuri maintains that the present day historians have no other way but to depend exclusively on the official papers written during the British rule which are preserved in the record office of the Government of India and India Office Library in London. He believes that these records are incomplete and full of misleading interpretations. His view in this regard is that had the British officials been intelligent enough to read the country's real situation at that time they would not have to lose it or had to abandon it with such dishonour. Chaudhuri assumes that many of the papers which bore truthful accounts were destroyed.

Chaudhuri points out the insufficiency of other source materials like the newspapers which was said to have voiced nationalist opinions. He says that those papers did not express the real opinions and sometimes many crucial facts remained unpublished. This was due to the existing sedition laws which compelled the editors and reporters to maintain an ambiguous position. Chaudhuri says that in some countries these gaps were overcome by gaining source materials from important letters or diaries but according to him the Indians were not in the habit of exchanging letters or maintaining diaries. Of course it was also a fact that in the last days of the British rule there were also considerable risks in sending letters through the post because the letters were sometimes censored or checked by the colonial officials especially the letters belonged to or written by persons who were involved in politics. Chaudhuri also remembers that some of his own letters written to Jawaharlal Nehru were kept back by the police and from a reliable source he came to know that they were preserved in a record file of the Government. Chaudhuri also did not receive letters from an Indian Nationalist in the United States and he too did not get the ones which Chaudhuri sent to him.

Chaudhuri explains the historical connection of his autobiography. He asserts the importance of Bengal, Bengali life, and Bengali culture from the perspectives of greater India. He claims that Bengal should have been given proper importance from the political, sociological and historical point of view in India. In the political sphere of India Bengalis were the pioneers of the modern Indian nationalism. But Chaudhuri accuses the British of ignoring this perpetual fact. The British administration seemed to have disliked the Bengalis and so they removed their capital from Calcutta to Delhi. Bengal was culturally progressive but that did not help them gain appreciation from the British except from a very small number of British administrators and missionaries. The local British people did not like the adoption of their culture by the Bengalis either and all along they displayed their reservation towards them. However, according to Chaudhuri the greatest

achievement of the British rule was seen in Bengal. The Bengalis were capable of acquiring the psychological aspects of the British and also their professed civilizing mission. They also took many elements from the British culture. Bankim Chandra Chatterji was an example of the enlightened Bengali class. Hari Hara Das in his book, *The History of Freedom Movement in India (1857-1947)* comments,

At a time when Hindu ethics and religion were subjected to searching criticism by the westerners and the Anglicized Indians, Bankim provided an intellectual basis to Indian nationalism by a logical and scientific interpretation of the ethics and religion of India and their relations with life and culture of the people. He explained and reassessed the whole content of Hindu life and tradition based on the principles of criticism accepted as valid in the West (78).

Chaudhuri counts as one of the reasons of the failure of the British in this region was their refusal to adopt parts of local culture. No empire can last without practicing the culture of the conquered. He cites the example of Greek civilization of Rome. He says that the Romans are the true imperialists of the world. “They felt proud to have given peace to the Mediterranean world, but were not ashamed to confess that conquered Greeks conquered them culturally” (Autobiography, xx) The British did not adopt Bengali culture, and looked down upon those who tried to assimilate Anglican culture. The British despised the enlightened Bengalis as indecent and aggressive.

Chaudhuri writes about the first riot in Calcutta. He writes that during the visit of the Prince of Wales to India clashes took place between the members of the Congress and Khilafat organizations and the Persian and Eurasian inhabitants of the city. These atrocities developed into widespread riots which lasted for three days. These events started mostly in the European quarters. The Indians attacked the Persians and the Eurasians of the city while they too provoked retaliation. Many people lost their lives. The government declared the number of mortality to be 36. The Nationalists claimed the number to be much higher. Chaudhuri however had his reservation about the Nationalist’s view.

Chaudhuri mentions a number of deplorable incidents of the time. One of these was Moplah rebellion. This event was not directly connected with the Non-Co-operation movement but it left its deep marks over it. The Moplahs were Muslims of Arab origin and were fanatic and notorious. They became inflamed by the preachings of the Khilafat Movement and in the late summer of 1921 they revolted. They committed murder arson and looting over a wide area. Their attack was directed against the Hindus as well as the government. To control the situation

government had to deploy a very large military force. The uprising continued for months and around four to five thousand Moplahs died in the clashes. In the perspective of greater India these incidents did not primarily arouse any widespread indignation but the pathetic side of a specific incident stole everybody's sympathy. To elucidate the incident Chaudhuri writes that on 19th November one hundred Moplah prisoners sent by train to a jail at some distance. They were packed into wagons which had no ventilation. So after a five hour journey when the doors of the wagons were opened the passengers were in a state of collapse. Altogether 82 men died in the incident. A Commission was appointed by the Government which laid the blame on the railway company and held a sergeant guilty of negligence. Chaudhuri's personal observation about the incident was,

But the deaths were attributable to the British, and that made an essential difference. The Indian press denounced the inhumanity, and the Congress passed a resolution that it was an 'act of inhumanity unheard of in modern times and unworthy of a Government that called itself civilized.' It deprived the British of the right to dwell on the Black hole Tragedy of 1756. My own feeling was a sense of horror at the deaths, and of anger at the carelessness (22).

Conclusion

4.3

India's National Movement was one of the significant events of the twentieth century. But it was the outcome of the contribution of many people. As the central political party Congress was the bargaining agent but the execution body was the cross section people of India. The militant nationalists, the revolutionaries, Gandhi Satyagrahis and struggles, the khilafatists, the Communists, the INA, the peasant organizations, the Sikhs through their Gurdwara reform movement, the Vaikkam Satyagrahis, the Garhwali Army mutineers, the Royal Indian Navy mutineers etc. all contributed to their optimum capabilities. They were essentially ordinary men women who took part in India's National movement. They came from all parts of the country and from all classes. We see them facing a firing squad or mounting the gallows, suffering imprisonment, confiscation of properties – all for a common cause and that was the end of the British rule – the freedom of the country to which they belonged.

In fact I fully agree with Badruddin Umar that there was a possibility in the prevailing situation for turning the anti-British mass movement which started in 1919 into a movement of the workers, peasants and the middle class against the imperialists and the local exploiting classes

which compromised with them. The 'no tax' movement of Bardoli, the Mopla peasants rebellion at Malabar, movement of the Akalis against the rich mohants who had been sheltered by the Punjab Government etc. taking place one after another as part of the mass movement along with the advancement of the Non-co-operation movement in 1921, was indicative of this possibility. But by introducing religion in politics and associating the Khilafat movement with the Non-co-operation movement Gandhi created a situation in which the leaders who came in large numbers in the forefront held various religious views and represented different religious trends. Moreover owing to the fact that religious issues formed the basis of the movement, it could not be directed towards the solution of the basic problems and issues confronting the people of India. So this opposition of the Hindus and the Muslims to the British rule helped the social, political and religious contradictions and conflicts to intensify since 1923 rather than develop as a real anti-colonial Independence Movement.

It cannot be denied that as a universally accepted leader of the Congress, at this time Gandhi was in favour of limited autonomy instead of complete freedom on the one hand and on the other he was opposed to any militant political movement of the workers and peasants. By coordinating the Khilafat and Non-co-operation movements and by placing religion in the forefront he very tactfully organized this opposition at a very difficult phase of Indian politics.

By suggesting various reform proposals the main political objective of the British Government was to safeguard and expand imperialist interest in India by giving some share of power to the representatives of the higher class vested interest groups rather than to the toiling masses of India.

Although Jawaharlal Nehru talked a lot about his knowledge of the hunger, poverty and distress of the Muslims, in reality he and Jinnah had no headache for either the Hindus or the Muslims of the poor classes. All of them were fighting for the middle class and the class interest of the bourgeoisie, and in that fight none would concede an inch to the other. But because of the absence of any organization and strength needed for that bourgeoisie politics dominated at this stage among the Hindus and the Muslims. In such a condition feeling for separatism increased. The British Indian Government pretended to favour sometimes the Muslims and sometimes the Hindus. Thus more and more dividing and isolating the two major religious communities of India. However, through creating calculated situation by riots one after another there was no way out excepting the division of India

Chapter 5

The Literature and Culture of Bengal (1921-1930)

Overview

5.1

Bengal as a region has always been renowned for its rich literary and cultural heritage as well as for its contribution to the socio-cultural development in undivided India. In *Thy Hand Great Anarch! India: 1921—1952* Nirad C. Chaudhuri focuses on the 1925-1930 phase of Bengali literature when its literary height touched the Modernist peak of European literature. Chaudhuri seems to believe that human civilization moves in three cyclical phases: rise – peak – decay. He feels the same about Bengali literature because it was a time when the two greatest names in Bengal Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and Saratchandra Chattopadhyay (1876-1938) had reached their creative peak. Chaudhuri thinks that no more development is expected in this field, since the zenith has already been achieved. The writings of the new generation did not attract him--he termed the post-Tagore writings of the time “as crude and shallow” (147).

Though Chaudhuri has reservations towards the appearance of Modernism in Bengali literature and considers it as ineffective and superficial in our culture and has strong confidence in Tagore and Chattopadhyay to be the ultimate representative of our literary life – Ketaki Kushari Dyson argues that Bengali literature went for an “initial modernization” (during this phase under discussion) (197) and while doing so it caught the spirit of ‘modernism’ which was then in the air of post-war Europe. She tries to identify its reasons too. She maintains that the change was wrought in two consequent phases. In the first phase the discovery of English literature and also other European literatures to a lesser extent, the influence of Shakespeare, the English Romantics, the nineteenth century European novel in our lives, the discovery of the past heritage of India through the efforts of the British Orientalist scholars, the starting of the emancipation of women at the light of western theory of feminism, the development of the Bengali language to accommodate the novel themes, the creation of new genres such as novel and short story and the adoption of poetic forms from European literature such as blank verse - the sonnet – all these phenomena took place around this time. In this regard we may remember that in the history of Bengali literature Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824-1873), the 19th century poet, was the first

Bengali Modernist. He introduced 'blank verse' and wrote several epics using the 'Amitrakshar Chanda' which he formulated in his own way. He reshaped the poetic language used in the Middle Ages and incorporated the classical tone in his writings. However, Dyson confirms the second phase being the domination of the towering figure of Rabindranath Tagore (1861- 1941) from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. To quote Dyson,

His spectacular powers of self-renewal paradoxically ensuring that the first new voice was after Tagore would be Tagore himself. This new voice was audible in the prose poems of *Lipika* (1922) and in several poetry collections of the thirties, in the gradual adoption of the demotic idiom (chalit bhasha) in preference to the literary (sadhu bhasha), or in a novel like *Ghare-Baire* which generated as much fierce controversy as anything written by the next generation (197).

The Bengali poetry got into the light of Modernism in the 1930s by signifying a transitional period in Bengali literature which was also a period of turmoil because a group of young writers at this time began to write poems of revolt against the authority of Rabindranath Tagore. These new poets seemed to become restless and were keen to express their fractured consciousness and their uncertainties of the time by their created literature. They were mostly exposed to the situation by their wide reading of western literature and their constantly alert sensitive minds. They introduced the odds of life in their writings and brought such images and rhythmic styles into poetry that they were once considered to be non-poetic in the eyes of the romantic poets. They successfully employed such vocabulary that was previously avoided by Tagore and his predecessors.

The sign of first such change was seen in the works of Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976). It started with the poem Bidrohee (The Rebel). Bidrohee was a long poem in which the use of the tone, images and the rhythmic style were different from those in Tagorean poetry. Islam's poems expressed support for liberty, equality and secularism and his songs were mostly exceptionally romantic. Dyson argues that he was very popular at that time though he did not develop as a "full-blown modernist" (199). She traces the Modernist's effort as first reflected in the journals of *Kallol* (1923), *Kali-kolom* (1926), and *Pragoti* (1927) through the works of poets such as Jibananda Das (1899-1954), Amiya Chakravarty (1901-1986), Sudhindranath Dutta (1901-1960), Buddhadev Bose (1908-1974) and Bishnu Dey (1909-1982). Each of them had their

individual style but they bore an international perspective and an interest in the contemporary intellectual movements of the world in those post-war eras. Buddhadev Bose founded a literary journal *Kavita (1935- 1961)* which became an active forum of interaction among Modernists. He published it for 25 years. Datta, Bose and Dey were also major poetry translators. However, besides everything these Modernist poets though portrayed their protests towards Rabindranath Tagore they never challenged his greatness. To quote Shibnarayan Roy,

Against his intuitive apprehension of cosmic and personal harmony the accent now was increasingly on the inevitability, even the desirability of conflict and disorder; to his joy of existence were opposed passionate feelings of frustration, anguish and anger; his aesthetic gracefulness was challenged by underlining the social reality of violence, exploitation and squalor; and the mystic-religious dimension which related his love lyrics, especially of the middle period of his career, to the tradition of the Vaishnava, Bauls and Sufis, was rejected in fervor of a more overtly sex oriented secular and tormented eroticism (15).

Chaudhuri was highly influenced by poet Mohitlal Majumdar (1888-1952) in his formative years of writing. He was his direct English teacher in school. Majumdar was highly conservative in his literary pursuits. Though he belonged to the same age of Modernist poets, he disliked the innovative and experimental steps adopted by the new generation writers. Ideologically he supported the Bengali Hindu conservative school of Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838-1894) and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). Chaudhuri remembers his most revered teacher's terrible dissatisfaction if ever he came across anything that did not conform to his ideas (about the established tradition of Bengali literature) he became very much irritated. He held very strong views about literary matters because Bengali literature was the area of his deep fascination. Chaudhuri supports his teacher and relates that his own individual talent was also an extension of the existing tradition of Bengali literature.

Chaudhuri became frustrated when in the middle of the twenties a new trend of literature appeared. He felt that it was not the same to which he had been accustomed so far – which occupied the days of reaching his manhood. It seemed to him as if it was going to destroy his familiar world by forces “unknown, malign and irresistible” (157). He had the feeling that the existing literary situation was only a part of the larger phenomenon – the total modern Bengali

life and culture was at the onset of decay. The group of young writers well read and adept in English literature were the precursor of such destruction. They felt at one with the certain literary trends of the post-war Europe. Their vivification of the horrors and after effect of the First World War were deemed as superficially imposed in Bengali literature by Chaudhuri compared to the existing social context. At this Chaudhuri's impression was that they were "taking the consolidated front of Bengali literature in the rear and breaking it up" (157). He became concerned about its negative influence on the psychology of the Bengali people.

In his autobiographical writing *Thy Hand Great Anarch! India: 1921 –1952* Chaudhuri refers to the Kallol era of Bengali literature. Kallol era took place around 1930 which was a literary movement similar to the Modernist literary movement of the West. The decade between the two World Wars gave its rise to the Bengali literature. The specific awareness also came to the socio-political conscious writers of the time because of the wake of the non-cooperation movement in the political scene of the sub-continent and their wide reading of the European literature. In fact European literature at that time was gloomed with the darker message of frustration that arose out of the devastation occurred during the First World War. The futility of material life engulfed the stream of consciousness of those writers of the West and that touched the delicate sensibility of the poets of the East also. We find its emotional echo in the verses of Jibanananda (1899-1954), Buddhodev Bose (1908-1974), Sudhindranath Datta (1901-1960), Bishnu Dey (1909-1982) and others. In fact this Kallol era corresponds with the Modernist poets' era of 1930.

The most important writer of this decade was Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976). Although he was not politically committed, he was not a scholar-writer too. He did not respond to the literary fashions of the day. Chaudhuri was unable to appreciate his poetic genius. He comments that since he was regimented as a Havildar in the 49th Bengal Regiment he learnt to use some cheap military "claptrap" (148) in his poems to incite revolutionary spirit among the colonized people. "Chal Chal Chal" and "Biddrohi" are a few of such poems. Though Chaudhuri did not like these poems personally but in reality those became very popular among the revolutionaries and they breathed their hearts through those verses. These poems turned Nazrul to a celebrity poet of Independence. Chaudhuri condemns him as a poet of rage. He feels disgusted by Islam's references to torpedoes, mines and other arms and ammunitions as symbols of zeal and strength in his poems. Chaudhuri took it as a non-aesthetic literary approach.

But Chaudhuri acknowledges Majumdar's admiration for the poems of Kazi Nazrul Islam. Chaudhuri remembers Majumdar's recitation of his poems with great emotions as he did his own poems. Though Majumdar disliked a few aspects of Islam's literary creations he never ignored his other rare poetic capabilities.

The culture of publications in journals developed in Bengali literature around nineteenth century. At that time a number of journals were printed which played a great role in enriching Bengali literature. When *Kallol* (1923), the literary journal was first published in 1923 by Gokul Chandra Nag (1895-1925) and Dineshranjan Das (1888-1941) a new era of Bengali literature was ushered in. *Kallol* played such an important role at this phase that we may trace back to its root for our proper understanding of its inception. In 1921 Gokul Chandra Nag and Dineshranjan Das set up the Four Arts Club on Hazra Road, in association with Manindralal Basu and Sunita Devi to discuss and practice literature, fine arts, music and drama. The four members published an anthology of short stories in 1922 named *Jhorer Dola*. They intended to bring out a monthly journal too. This was a kind of a prelude to the adda that grew up around the magazine *Kallol* which was celebrated largely owing to Achintya Kumar Sengupta (1903-1976), Promothonath Bishi (1901-1985), Premendra Mitra (1904-88), Shailajananda Mukherji (1901-76), Tarasankar Bandopaddhay (1898-1971), Nazrul Islam (1899-1976) and others. The literary circle was also addressed as *Kallol*. The regular adda of the *Kallol* group or the literary discussion used to be held at Dineshranjan's house at Patuatola Lane, Kolkata.

There were several other literary groups centred round some reputed journals like *kallol* group of writers which spanned from 1924—30. These were Bangadarshan group of writers led by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1872—76), Bharati group in its old and new phase; Prabasi group of writers (1901—44); Sabuj Patra group of writers led by Promotho Chaudhury (1914—22); Shanibarar Chithi group of writers and Purbasha group of writers (1932—56).

The *Kallol* writers were charged with obscenity. According to Sisir Kumar Das, the contributors of *Kallol* were inspired by Freudian concepts. And because of their too much alignment towards Western culture they believed that the uninhibited projection of sex was also an essential condition of modernity.

After the publication of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1913) and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1914) the *kollolian* writers too seemed to exploit the issue especially Achintya

Kumar Sengupta, Buddhadev Bose and Probodhkumar Sanyal. All of them faced charges of obscenity – because of having a direct relationship with the treatment of sex in western literature. Soon after the publication of Achintya Kumar's *Bede* (1928) Tagore wrote a long letter criticizing the modern obsession for sex. To quote Tagore from,

The curiosity for sex predominates amongst our educated class mainly because they do not have the inquisitiveness for the diverse aspects of human life and want to deceive themselves with this addiction. They do not have the warmth of life and the vitality of the west; they have only one thing for excitement, nothing else can arouse them fully. For this reason when I see the portrayal of sex divorced from vitality of life it appears to me as an unholy disease (404).

Buddha Dev was also once accused for obscenity in literature. The literary circles of Bengal did not hesitate to recognize him as a leading post-Tagore literary personality but he achieved mass popularity when his novel *Rat bha're Brishty* was banned by the government on charges of obscenity.

Jibananda Das was dismissed from the teaching position of City College, Calcutta after six years of his joining there in 1928. Although the institutions financial cut backs might have contributed to his discharge, it is popularly held that an allegation of obscenity – a mention of 'breast' in one of his poems was at the root of college authority's displeasure. Charges of obscenity, cultural inauthenticity, abstruseness would haunt Das's work for a long time. (Victoria, Arana)

Sisir Kumar Das views all new movements in Indian literature being intimately connected with the changing perception of man-woman relationship with the urge for freedom--political as well as individual. He maintains that in all these cases sex and morality became an important issue. The inspiration of the avant-garde can be often Western as Tagore accused and it surely had helped the growth of a sub-literature of pornographic quality, but the treatment of sex by the serious readers opened a new world of experience. Das believes that lines are difficult to draw separating the serious and analytical from the tendentious and the trivial. He also points out that the writers who are condemned once for being in cheap and low taste have been also often praised later for bold and frank. (404).

Kris Manjapara in his article, "From Imperial to International Horizons: Hermeneutic Study of Bengali Modernism" writes,

A historical pattern of Bengali intellectual life that marked the period from the 1870s to the 1920s, whereby an imperial imagination was transformed into an international one, as a generation of intellectuals born between 1885 and 1905 reinvented a political category of “youth” . . . as a reactionary experiment of the middle class intellectuals, the movement drew attention to the writing of the time which, it was thought did not reflect the contemporary situation. The writers of the movement drew attention to create literature describing the ground realities, moving away from the Tagorean redemptive, integrative and normative perspective to that of angst, tension and uncertainty, revealing the inner turmoil set off by surface tensions generated by fracturing social order, urbanization and alienation, skepticism, increasing poverty and unemployment (327).

Manjapara maintains that at that time it was no longer possible to write following the ideal concept of the society as an integrated and nurturing material; nor was it possible to ignore the powerful impact of Darwin, Marx and Freud upon the mind of man. So the Kallol writers tried to give new direction to Bengali language and literature.

Chaudhuri too raised objections towards those new trend writers for their unnecessary liberal use of eroticism in their work. They treated it as a revolutionary step adopted in Bengali literature. Chaudhuri believes that they really did so to heighten the appeal of their writing to the general public but those “diluted staff” (223) was not as erotic as it was found in other contemporary literature. Chaudhuri argues that in spirit the established tradition of Bengali literature was of puritanical nature so no established journal of Bengal printed those obscene materials. Only the new ones published them and irritated the Reading public of Bengal. According to him these readers did not know much about the Sanskrit and old Bengali literature in which the expression of eroticism was frank and open and a quite common phenomenon.

We may focus to the issue of eroticism in Sanskrit Literature in this regard because Sanskrit literature is thought to be the root of Bengali literature.

According to the *Encyclopaedia to Indian Literature: devraj to jyoti*, *Kamasutra* played a significant role in the history of Indian literature particularly the Sanskrit Kavya literature in which shringara rasa (erotic sentiment) was one of the main rasas to be evoked by the poet.

Kamatanra was either a general name for the science of erotics or a treatise on the subject composed earlier than Vatsyana's *Kamasutra* which is assignable to about the 3rd or 4th century A.D.

The science of erotics grew in association with esoteric religious practices in the later Vedic period, but acquired an independent status by the time of Babhravya of Panchala region, a pre-Vatsyayana authority on the subject who traces his work to nandikeshvara and Uddalaka Shvetaketu. Babhravya's work, now lost but referred to by Vatsayayana, consisted of one hundred and fifty chapters and was arranged into seven sections. The scheme of these seven sections was retained by Vatsyayana and has formed the main contents and scope of Kamashastra literature. The seven sections are (1) general observations (sadharana) (2) Union of man and woman (sampryogika) (3) selection of the bride (kanyasampryutaka) (4) position and conduct of one's own wife (bharyadhikarika), (5) extramarital relations with wives of other men (paradarika) (6) dealing with courtesans (vaishika) and (7) secret formulae, tonic medicines, etc. (aupanishadika). Dattaka, at the request of the courtesans of Pataliputra, specialized on Vaishikam, the sixth section of Babhravya's work. Similarly Charayana, Subarnanabha, Ghotakamukha, Gonardya, Gonikaputra and kuchumara specialized on each of the other sections respectively. When the main work of the Babhravya was thus fragmented and as in itself it was too long, Vatsayayana while condensing the individual contributions of Dattaka and others retained the general scheme of Babhravya in his comprehensive work called *Kamasutra*.

Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra* became the standard and definitive work on the subject for years to come. It eclipsed the previous writings on the subject and became the basis of late kamashastras written from about the 10th century onwards. Commentaries on his work were written of which the well-known is the *Jayamangal* by Yashodhara (11th-- 12th century). Among the later texts on erotics, mention should be made of the *Ratirahashya* (10th -- 12th century), the *Nagarasarvasva* by the Buddhist monk Padmashri of about the same period who has versified in eighteen chapters the amorous life of a prince. There are many others books on this subject mentioned above.

The learning of Kamashastra was taken up seriously as that of dharmashastra and arthashastra and was incorporated into the educational curriculum in ancient India. The prince Siddhartha learnt it as one of the subjects of education according to the *Sutralamkara* attributed to Ashvaghosha, and this tradition continued in the medieval period. In an 11th century inscription

of Karnataka (Bengali), a Jaina Acharya has been proudly described as being well-versed in Vatsyayana's work. Discussions were held on the art of love and 'kamatantra' among nagarakas (men about town) in goshtis (cultural gatherings) where courtesans also participated. The knowledge of the theory and practice of the sixty-four accomplishments mentioned by Vatsyayana was considered as a qualification of a learned man.

Poets in ancient India were required to be proficient in the knowledge of erotics as well as poetics, logic, grammar and other technical sciences. The Sanskrit Kavya literature flourished under the aristocratic patronage of the court and had among its audience the cultured nagaraka and rasika (the man of taste). Thus literature reflected the artificiality and elegance of courtly life, scholastic formalism and cultivated taste rather than spontaneous expression of emotion. Literature was not an individualized expression of the poet but was a learned pursuit meant for disciplined enjoyment. The spontaneity of the poet was restricted by 'Kavi—samayas' of literary conventions and normative doctrines of techniques (1202).

Perceptions of Chaudhuri

5.2

Chaudhuri writes that in moral precept the Bengalees of the first quarter of the twentieth century were more guided by the Victorian morality. So the kind of erotic descriptions delineated by the new trend writers were treated as an obscene object in the educated society. It was not only an offence against the good taste but also against the Criminal Law as embodied in the Indian Penal Code. This code was first drafted by Lord Macaulay (1800-1859) and finally enacted in 1860. It had a number of sections that defined obscenity and prescribed punishment for it. Chaudhuri being the son of a lawyer had seen its printed copies in his father's library and had also gone through those. He could also remember that in giving the interpretation of the Code the editor discussed whether the *Judgement of Paris* by Rubens reproduced as a print from the original in the National Gallery, and the statement 'without consenting consented' in Byrons *Don Juan* came within the mischief of the law.

Chaudhuri writes that these young writers tried to draw Tagore towards them and made him support them in writing so that the writers belonging to the traditional school might have felt frustrated. Sisir kumar Das mentions that once these younger writers forced a debate on the literary community to which Tagore was obliged to join. Tagore questioned the basic premises of

the claims of 'modernity', which he dismissed as pretentious and aping of the West. He said there is one danger for our writers – when we are exposed to a particular mood of literature we become too much overwhelmed. (219)

Chaudhuri explicates that he cannot go against eroticism because he had already justified its position in literature regarding its necessity. So he defended it by claiming its proper usage. He objected to the weak and feeble usage of eroticism. Chaudhuri wrote an article in 1928 and made clear of his position. In that article he pointed out that their “calf-eroticism” (225) was more laughable than “calf-love” (225) and their claim to be revolutionaries was not right in fact they were indulging juvenile exhibitionism of eroticism which is objectionable. He makes it clear that obscenity in art is so ancient that we find it in the distant past when Homo Sapien had just appeared in Western Europe. Then Central Europe was under the sheet of ice; the elephant, mammoth, woolly rhinoceros, reindeer, bison, cave bear etc. were roaming among the hills and forests of Europe. We find our savage ancestors had drawn nude female figures in the cave walls. Chaudhuri comments that though nudity in art might have gone back to the Paleolithic age, the actual representation of sexual intercourse in art is evident much later. It is counted as the achievement of the civilized men. He cites an example from an article published in the scientific journal *Nature* that a plaque with a relief had been discovered. It was first believed to be the representation of a burial scene but Professor Verneau of the Institute of Human Palaeontology of Paris identified it as an intense picture of coitus after a careful analysis of muscles and postures.

Chaudhuri clearly explicates his conceptions in this regard. He thinks that the relation between art and morality is a “barren quarrel” (227). Sex covers a major part of human being’s life so it is “both reticent and loquacious” (227) in different ways. Not only man even among the animals there is a tendency of maintaining secrecy about the primary and the secondary features of the sexual act. The savage tribes whom we consider insensitive to so many aspects in general, they too never did such things openly other than as part of certain rituals. It is because exhibition of bare sexual activities is unaesthetic and that inactivates the stimulation even to procreate. “Therefore even birds and beasts stood in need of aesthetic extensions of the activity. A veil of mystery had to be thrown on it, and exposure offended against the very instinct of survival” (227). Chaudhuri explains that indecency and immortality are not of equal connotation. The decorum and indecency regarding sexual act is biological in origin while adultery, theft etc. hurts

our moral sense. These actions do not appear obscene when committed but goes against morality. The open exhibition of sexual activity offends our sense of decorum but not our morality.

Chaudhuri reiterates sense of indecency being of biological origin is far older than the sense of morality which is of social origin. He maintains that since prohibited things attracted more, eroticism worked as a stimulus in the writings of the younger generation. They wanted to use it for increasing the appeal of their magazine and attracting more people. But these writers ignored the fact that there is implied feeling of shame persisted in human nature that made these writings concerning eroticism inhibited from becoming acceptable. Chaudhuri declares that it is a futile effort to understand sexual life with the help of intellect because it is linked with the very root of life. It would lead only to disillusionment and sorrow. At that time Chaudhuri was highly influenced by the philosophy of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). It was his view that life offered only sorrow and so he was experiencing a profound disgust and loathing from life.

Shonibarar Chithi another significant journal of the era though no friend of Tagore's began to criticize openly the Kallol writers on this ground. They condemned its illustration of the hyper-reality. *Shonibarar Chithi* was also one of the major literary establishments of the day. Its literary feud with the young Kallol members continued for years. Tagore himself joined the debate and published a few essays in *Kallol* where he mentioned that he appreciated the new literary trend but found that the time for realistic literature had not yet come.

Tagore described the literary squabbles of the day in his novella *Shesher Kobita*, where the protagonist Amit Ray, is an ideologically modernist man who abhors Tagore's view of humanism though he recognizes its significance later.

Chaudhuri acknowledges that he wanted to be an impartial and strong critic in Bengali literature following the European ones especially the French critics. He says that circumstances so shaped up his literary career that he remained a controversialist. He regrets that if Bengali literature had remained static in its position to which it reached at the turn of the century then it would have flourished more but instead moved into a different track which he considers to be disruptive and undesirable. So he chose *Shonibarar Chithi* to be his medium of protestation. In his own words,

In fighting them I certainly gave very highbrow crisis, and paced the decks with all my orders worn on the breast like nelson, which made it easy for our enemies to shoot at me with particular malice. This was made easier by the fact that I wrote in wholly intelligible language, so that those whom I criticized understood

what I was saying and got all the more angry. This was also the result of a particular view of writing I had. I regarded it as an instrument of action, and not merely as a game of words. By themselves, my contributions would not have kept our ship going nevertheless they were certainly the top sails (221-222).

Chaudhuri became the formal editor of *Shonibarar Chithi* when Jogananda Das relinquished his position as editor. Before that Chaudhuri was a regular contributor to the magazine.

Chaudhuri loves to reflect on the days when he was connected with the journal *Shonibarar Chithi* (1924-1962). It was a literary journal. The writers of this journal continuously lashed out anybody they considered to be in the wrong. In doing so, the boundary of decency was not always strictly maintained. The journal and its editor was considered to be notorious by a large section of the reading public because he could not restrain its contributor Sajanikanta from hitting persons like Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Ramananda Chattopadhyay (1865-1943) and Subhas Bose (1897-?). He held a keen sense of the connoisseur and brought into lime light authors like Bibhutibhusan Banerji (1894-1950).

Chaudhuri writes that the *Shonibarar Chithi* was a very strong group. Despite of their inner group members it had other contributors too who held variety of ideas, manners and styles to challenge the new trends. It included among others Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951), Ramananda Chattopadhyay (1865-1943), Ashoka Chattopaddhay, Subimal Roy, Mohitlal Majumdar etc. They touched different issues from their own sensibilities, ideological sufferings and experiences. They were brilliants too. Chaudhuri maintains that their opponents too could not deny their superior strength as a literary circle.

Chaudhuri clarifies his standpoint towards the writers whom he selected for criticizing their work. He never mentioned any particular writer by name – he always addressed them as a group. Unlike Sajanikanta Das he always maintained urbanity in his deliberations. Das never hesitated to use the most ordinary homely language towards his target writers. But it was Chaudhuri's feelings that his decent approach was not reciprocated by his readers gently, rather they responded him more cruelly than they did to Sajanikanta and might be because in fear of more aggressive comments they abstained from poking him.

Chaudhuri reminiscences the impression of his well wishers like Mohitlal Mojumdar and his own father. Since Mojumdar was closely linked with him in *Shonibarar Chithi* he was aware of his literary activities. He termed his deliberation style as bearing the “French sophistication” though

at times he accused him of deviating from the style. Chaudhuri's father who was a keen reader of his writings always advised him to maintain courtesy towards fellow writers. He became hurt if he found any exception. Chaudhuri remembers that once he wrote in one of his polemics that he did indeed wish to remain unaware of the existence of the new writers. His father going through the article queried him that how one could forget the shoe nails which went on pricking one's feet. His father made him conscious that such an air of manners was not appreciable. Actually his father did not want that he should keep himself involved in polemical writings rather he wished that he should express his own views directly and independently.

Chaudhuri further adds that besides the inner circle writers of the *Shonibarar Chithi* there were other outsider contributors also. He as an editor felt inspired to have their articles because it strengthened their opposition against the new trend writers. Their ideas, manners and style enriched the content of the *Shonibarar Chithi*. They were all very brilliant and they brought out their issues with their special knowledge, particular sensibility and individual grievances. The opposed party collectively called them "The Saturday Gang".

Chaudhuri in a sub chapter titled "Crescendo of the Campaigns" enumerates his contribution to this particularly literary campaign through *Shonibarar Chithi*. The articles which he wrote at the first phase of his joining the journal were about style and diction of literary articles. In this connection he mentions about the appreciations he received from Promotho Chaudhuri (1869-1946). He writes that though he did not use Chaudhuri's dictions he made his uncle-in-law Rabindranath Tagore to use them. Promotho Chaudhuri held good impression about Tagore. Chaudhuri remembers with pride that, "One day, at a literary party, he came up to me when a friend of mine pointed me out to him and said: 'Sir, you write very well.' I naturally became elated"(223).

The main points he presents in this chapter are about the new writings which he also discussed before. He says that these new writers were artificial, immature and crude. They tried to establish certain conceptions in their writings which they might have come across in their text books in inappropriate manners. Chaudhuri cites an example, "One young write made a Bengali girl read Hydriotaphia sitting on the back of a village pond in Dacca district. Another writer brought in Vittoria Colonna. I described them as Pierrots and Harlequins, using these very two words in my Bengali articles" (223). His other point is their futile effort of using materials from Bengali folk tales unsuccessfully; He says that since most of these writers came from urban areas they did not

have much practical knowledge about the village life and hence they could not portray that life skillfully.

According to *Banglapedia*, in the history of Bengali periodicals, the *Shonibarar Chithi* occupies a very special place. Through humour, jokes and sarcastic remarks, it continued attacking the Bengali literary personalities of the 1930s and 40s. All the distinguished writers of the time who were affiliated with *Kallol* for their writings but could not comply with the existing standard of *Shonibarar Chithi* were satirized through sarcastic cartoons.

Shonibarar chithi was divided into several sections. In the section of Sangbad Shahitya, there was news on contemporary literature; in the section of Monimukta, there were sharp, sarcastic remarks on the contemporary literary tradition. Another regular section was Prosongo kotha which was written by Chaudhuri himself. He used to write about current affairs. Cartoon was printed in every issue of the magazine. Along with parody poems, stories and dramas and satirical rhymes were also published regularly.

Shonibarar Chithi printed many interesting cartoons which satired contemporary literary personalities. In an interview with Lina Fruzzetti, in the book *Calcutta Conversations* Radha Prasad Gupta notes that *Shonibarar Chithi* spared nobody from Jibananda Das to Tagore – all the great writers. They printed a cartoon in which Vidyasagar was shown in a dinner jacket and Michael was shown in a dhoti and Punjabi. One was presented as a pucca Shahib and the other was true Bengali. Such satirical things were presented there.

Chaudhuri confesses frankly that one of the contributors Sajani Das individually created his aversion to the writing which was attempting to be new. He says that his disapproval of this general trend was because he found in it “decline of taste, sensibility and sincerity as well as decline of pure technical competence (149).” It seemed to him that in all that was appearing in print from the younger writers there was an indication of the decay of the whole cultural life of Bengal. To quote Chaudhuri, “I thought that the Bengali literary effort, which was the most successful cultural enterprise of the Bengali people, was running into a channel which led only to a desert or a morass, in which it would lose itself (149)”

Chaudhuri writes that when he joined *Shonibarar Chithi* in Calcutta it had no particular office of its own. Financially it was more or less solvent because neither money making was a goal of its publication nor the contributors of the journal were demanding or particular about their remuneration. About its production Chaudhuri comments that since Ashok Chatterji was its

formal owner it could be printed in the Prabasi Press and could be paid from the sales of the paper. Since from the very beginning it had a good circulation and gradually became more demanding, its production was increased and so there was no difficulty in bringing its issues regularly. Later it became moderately profitable.

Chaudhuri wistfully remembers those days – He writes that Ashok Babu arranged proper accommodation for them in the work place. He allowed them to sit in the editorial room of the *Prabasi* after the office hours. The meeting was essential before and after each publication date. They used to meet in the evening. There they discussed the topics of the forthcoming issue. They reviewed the impact of their each issue after its publication and held a kind of celebration on the occasion of its coming out in that very day at which all the contributors read their own pieces – and Ashok Babu entertained them with tea and hot snacks.

Chaudhuri says that his friends heartily congratulated him for joining the magazine group. Their admiration and personal regards for each other were sincere and spontaneous – which was very much encouraging. Otherwise the perfect teamwork of the group would not have been possible. It was also very important for chalking out the policies of its publication. Chaudhuri humourously reiterates that without that such critical undertakings would not have been possible. They treated themselves as they were social crusaders. At first Chaudhuri was not included into the group, he was just asked to contribute articles only. Later he became absorbed with them. Mohitlal Mojumdar who was actively connected with it inspired him a lot. The column which Chaudhuri wrote was titled by Mojumdar as “Pronounced Topically” and through it Chaudhuri started commenting on the new writings pointing out the irrelevant sides of those articles. The features by Chaudhuri were appreciated by the readers. The special feature of this magazine was that though formally there was an editor, each writer was responsible for his own views. To quote Chaudhuri. “We were crusaders, not entrepreneurs, and each of us brought to the magazine his special knowledge, judgement, taste and temperament” (217).

Chaudhuri describes the remarkable personalities working behind the publication of the magazine. First of all he remarks about the regular writers whom he coined as “contributors on the staff”. They were five in number namely the editor of the paper Jogananda Das, Sajani Das, Ashoke Chatterji, Mohitlal Mojumdar and himself. Jogananda was the magazine’s editor. He was picked for political reasons and he maintained his perspectives. His style of writing was subtle and ironical but he was gentle. His approach of dealing issues was not aggressive as the

other members of the team. He also did not have much passion for literature. So within two months he decided to resign and Chaudhuri became the formal editor of the journal.

Ashoke Chatterji's irony and humour was of the Bengali liberal school. Chaudhuri drew a picture of Ashoke Chatterji also. He was a dignified personality who was fond of humour but never intended to cross the limit of decency. If he ever bore malice for anybody he never let it appear in print. Once he wrote a parody of a poem of poet Mohitlal Mojumdar. Mojumdar though was known to be a very sensitive person regarding his writings – avoided to take it seriously. Chatterji once caricatured Chaudhuri but it did not offend him. So nobody was unhappy with him. Chaudhuri informs us that Ashoke Chatterji forsook life for business.

Chaudhuri illustrates also his own role in *Shonibarar Chithi*. Ideologically he neither belonged to the traditional school of Majumdar nor did he side with the ones who stood for change for the sake of change only. He was for novelty but which grew as a new shoot out of tradition. He believed the change by itself was meaningless if it was not for progress and good. He did not agree with the new writers who argued that they were better than the conservatives. He disliked their attitude of arrogance of denying the contributions of their predecessors in enriching the stream of Bengali literature. He tried to expose the mischief inherent in these new writings which came through at that time.

Banglapedia asserts that *Shonibarar Chithi* was first closed after its 27th issue which was published in Falgun 1331 Bengali year. Again it came out in 1333 Bengali year—at that time three special issues were brought out – Jubilee issue in Jaishtha month, Biroha issue in Ashar and Vote issue in Kartik. Then it was again closed. After a gap of 10 months, it re-emerged as a monthly in Bhadra, 1334 Bengali year. At this time also Jogananda Das continued as its editor. After sometime Nirad C. Chaudhuri replaced him. But Chaudhuri had to resign, as he did not get along very well with the new publisher Sajanikanta Das. After him the publisher and its printer Sajanikanta Das became its editor. The magazine was again closed in Kartik in 1336 Bengali year. It was revived again in Aswin, 1338 Bengali year. This time it was not discontinued as long as Sajanikanta Das was alive.

Chaudhuri knew a lot about the rise of modern Bengali literature. From his own perspectives he records its evolving accounts. According to him, by 1900 the Bengali literature became five hundred years old which means it was as old as English literature. He mentions about some of its limitations like its form was narrow and the scope of its subject matter was limited. There was no

prose in its content in the beginning. The whole literature existed in the verse form. Its subject matter was mostly adopted from old Hindu myths and legends – only in a few cases with new interpretations. The numbers of high quality poetries were a few but those were as usual based on mythological themes.

Chaudhuri affirms that within this span and limit Bengali literature acquired a good deal of fullness and sophistication by the end of the eighteenth century.

Chaudhuri believes that this change was the outcome of western influence on the local writers. He calls it a comprehensive revolution because there was the creation of a new literature with new genres, new themes, new sentiments and ideas. He claims that it was brought about specifically by the knowledge of English literature that came as an aftermath of the British rule. Thus prose literature came into existence. The most successful genres of the literature stream – novels and the short stories were introduced. The old traditional poetries became backdated. The metres from English literature were accepted. In spirit this literature was the combination of both the European classicism and romanticism.

Although there was no conscious imitation of English poets, one could have the touch of the poetries of Swinburne (?-1909) or Mallarme (1842-1984) in the contemporary Bengali poetry.

This literature remodeled the Bengali mind with new ideas, feelings and sensations. Since the forms were new the conservatives tried to accuse the innovators as imitators. Chaudhuri denies this complaint. Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838-1894) was the greatest novelist of the Bengali literature who could be ranked with some of the finest novelists of the English literature.

Bankim Chandra in an article in 1876 declared that imitation was the first stage of any creativity – either it is the creation of a new civilization or a new literature. This first stage of imitation is in most cases followed by the later stage of independence and that is always encouraging.

Imitation in Bengali literature was not mere copying at the beginning. It was modeled in Bengali content and format. So it lost its strangeness. The reading of this literature produced a feeling of delight which came from an awareness of enrichment. By 1855 the Bengali literature became its own naturalized resource. In this connection Chaudhuri illustrates the example of introduction of the Blank Verse in Bengali literature by Michael Madhusudan Dutt. At that time it was completely foreign to the Bengali poetic tradition; but Dutt acclimatized both the Spenserian and the Petrarchan structure in Bengali sonnets.

By 1900 Bengali prose achieved harmonious feature. The prose works of the two great Bengali writers – Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Rabindranath Tagore emancipated a new history of Bengali prose style.

The subject matter of this literature gradually became realistic and close to everyday life. It left those tales from Hindu mythology behind. But this new portrayal of life in literature was exposed to western ideas and examples.

Chaudhuri informs us that though the educated Bengali people enjoyed reading these Bengali fictions, they did not lose their interest in English literature. They simultaneously went on reading various English and European authors available in English like Wells (1866-1946), Yeats (1865-1939), Shaw (1856-1950), Synge(1871-1909) etc. The Bengali people also talked about the Abbey Theatre and discussed the Neo-Celtic Movement. They expressed their deep sympathy for the Irish people. English literature seemed to widen their vision.

Chaudhuri writes that among the Europeans the literary Bengali people chose to read Ibsen (1828-1906), Bjornson(1832-1910), Strindberg (1849-1912); the great Russian writers namely Chekov (1860-1904), Tolstoy (1828-1910) etc. were most favourite. Among other notables Romain Rolland (1866-1944), Anatole France (1844-1924), Paul Bourget (1852-1935), Gerhart (1932-1977), Hauptman and Herman Sudermann (1857-1928) were widely read. Chaudhuri reminiscises that between 1918 and 1920 when Chaudhuri had been a student of the Presidency College in Kolkata, the works of the French writer Anatole France (1844-1924) was regarded as an epitome of immortality and was not allowed to issue it to the students from the library.

Academic minded students like Chaudhuri bore great craze to remain up-to-date about contemporary literary trends and this desire became keener when Noble Prize was introduced for literature. In those days among the young generation, not to be able to identify at least one book by a noble laureate in one's personal collection was considered to be almost as being remaining illiterate.

To Chaudhuri the reading of Bengali literature offered an ethereal enjoyment and mental fulfillment to its reader that it created a self content world for him. Bengali life and Bengali literature became so closely connected that it increased ones emotional intensity and also ideological confidence. Through the interaction of life and literature the Bengalees' attained the

fullness of human existence which was only possible by a “free and abundant play of emotion, feeling and imagination” (155). Thus the library culture began in Bengal.

Chaudhuri points out a few social implications of this situation at that time like many young men who had leisure period became busy with reading and building up libraries in every nook and corner in Bengal. The young girls of Bengal also became interested and habituated in buying new novels and by doing so tried to warm up their romantic lives. In real lives also such books meant a lot. It was treated as best wedding gifts. Chaudhuri fondly remembers that when his sister got married in 1916, a college friend of his presented her a gift of the latest novels by the most reputed novelists of the time. Chaudhuri also comments that his sister too did not prize them less than her other costly clothes and jewelry. In fact the books of fiction and poetry as wedding presents were highly preferable at that time and that became the culture of the educated people of Bengal. The book publishers also became conscious of making profits exploiting this trend. They tried to give their publications a gorgeous get up. They bound the books with red and golden silk material. Chaudhuri’s inner feelings about the literary and cultural life of Bengal were: “The compass of that mental life was not wide, nor was its perimeter large. But in its integration of life and literature it was coherent, authentic and sincere” (156).

Chaudhuri narrates that this particular situation that is the occupying of an intense part of our life by our literature was very much essential because it helped our psychological well-being by offering us an outlet for escapism from the harsh realities of everyday Bengali life.

Under the above particular circumstances Chaudhuri philosophizes his feelings. To quote him,

I only felt that I was rubbed in the wrong way, and had a growing feeling of maladjustment with the world in which I was born and brought up. But such vagueness in itself has very little significance if anyone wishes to fight trends which are harmful. When political, social and cultural evils are clearly diagnosed as such as they were always past the stage at which they can be removed. Soundness and quality in life cannot be maintained without the capacity to have presages of coming evils. In the practical management of human affairs premonition is everything. It is alien to the wild animal’s sense of danger, or the insect’s sensitiveness. But in human being this capacity is naturally weak, and when a society approaches decadence even that degree of capacity atrophied. One

trait specially developed by man is the capacity to become inured to the worst possible condition of existence without perceiving that anything is wrong (158).

Chaudhuri in his writings cites the precedents from Indian and European literature. At that time this type of reference was not common in Bengali literature. Among his predecessors only Promotho Chaudhuri used this trend of referring to European literary movements to establish links with phenomena purely belonging to Bengali literature. It was he who first started using the standard spoken form of Bengali language in his expressions. He also claimed that in doing so he followed the literary fashions of the French Romantics in the face of opposition of the French Classicist. However, Chaudhuri does not support the analogy mentioned above but he agrees that Promotho Choudhuri certainly broadened the literary approach of our Bengali language.

Conclusion

5.3

It is obvious that Nirad C. Chaudhuri although free from many oriental and conservative ideas failed to appreciate the historical significance of the 'Modern' or 'Kallol' era in the evolution of Bengali literature. He was a devoted classicist and had his admiration for western liberalism. He preferred to uphold the literary style and moral values of the old conventional schools. The Modernists of the early 20th century Bengal brought a new wave of insight, outlook, and style through their romanticism as well as their revolt against conventional ideas and social structure. This impetus added a renewed vitality to the already existing rich tradition of Bengali literature. At that time though it reached almost in its peak but without some fresh stream of air it might not have made the progress in the same pace as it did in the later decades of the century. It is mainly through the contribution of the Modernist poets that the Bengali Readers had got the first taste of the diverse schools of art and literature not only from the English world, but also from the French, Russian, Spanish and other languages and culture widely spread across the world. The tradition in fact continued till late and the influence of the Latin American and African writers in Bengali literature, can also be traced back to the Thirty's Bengali literature for its origin. Chaudhuri could not identify all these aspects in his observations. Even more notable is his failure to notify the ringing bell of these changes in the later writings of Rabindranath Tagore of which he was an ardent admirer. Tagore with his natural genius as well as his wide exposure to World literature could already sense the footsteps of an ensuing globalized literary arena which

would be able to offer later a space to the elements of social and emotional trauma and moral transcends caused by the colonial, political and cultural invasions in the East. Although he could not embrace fully the new wave writers, he never ignored them and a few of them like Kazi Nazrul Islam received his deep appreciation. Paradoxically, Chaudhuri could not even recognize the important role that was set to be played by Islam in Bengali literature. Islam was not a Modernist in the truest sense of the term and bore much traditional elements in his writings still he could not draw attraction from Chaudhuri. Moreover, Chaudhuri also missed an important trend of Bengali literature of that era which was embodied in the writings of poets and writers like Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976), Sukanto Bhattacharya (1926-1947), and Subhash Mukhopadhyay (1919-2003) who were highly influenced by the Marxist ideology.

His evaluation of the new generation writers' writings was illogical because their feelings expressed through their creative works were not superficial as he thought it to be. Bengal experienced the horrors of the two World Wars through its colonial status to Britain. India contributed massively to the British war effort by providing men and resources. So in the aftermath of the First World War, the existing situation of high casualty rates, soaring inflation, heavy taxation, a widespread influenza epidemic and the disruption of trade during war increased sufferings in India. Besides these crises, international events like the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 had great impact on Bengal's educated class. The victory of Japan in 1905, the Russo-Japanese War sped up the nationalist struggle against the colonial state. The political scene of the early twentieth century provided a new cultural awakening. So the literature produced by avant-garde writers of Kallol, Sanhati, Kali-Kalam had touched the reality of everyday life. They explored class exploitation, poverty and sexuality. These writers were also well read and well informed. In this regard we can remember Achintya Kumar Sengupta's saying, that kallol moved away from Rabindranath. . . into the worlds of the lower middle classes, the coal mines, slums, pavements, into the neighbourhood of those rejected and deceived. It was also a great failure of Chaudhuri for not being able to acknowledge the contribution of the poets like Jibanananda Das and the other great writers of Modernism in 1930.

Having said so much about the limitation of Nirad C. Chaudhuri regarding his evaluation of the new literary movements of the early twentieth century it is important to appreciate the relevance of some of his observations on that period. I agree with his view about the 'alienation' and 'sense

of emptiness' that entered into the heart of the human beings in Europe as two vital after effects of the two World Wars. But they were not present in the then Indian society and many of those emotions were super imposed in our literature by the poets of the Thirties. Those had not been natural elements in our social context. Later the socio-economic changes in Bengal during the last century and its chronology of events conforms the truth that the typical 'capitalist' economy from the Marxist point of view never developed in this part of the world, and the breakdown of social bondage, from the existentialist point of view, still remains incomplete in our society. Despite the lives of highly rich elite class revolve around the very modern urban values the traditional family feeling seem to exist and it has not still disappeared as it has been in the West. Thus human isolation and loneliness apart from their universal existence in all ages and in all societies should not be the only focus of a certain period of literature. In fact, Bengali literature before the Kallol era had also beautifully depicted human struggle and emotional despair and also had not forget to portray human love and hope in a positive sense too.

Another issue which has been rightly raised by Chaudhuri is about the depiction of human physical passion in the form of sexuality in literature. It is sometimes believed that this is a bold introduction of the Modernist writers in Bengali literature who imitated the feature from the West. When the issue is considered from the view of relatively conservative person Tagore (who maintained more openness in his younger days than the later when he became more other worldly) it is understood that he too did not like it. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's evaluation also seems to be in the same track. Actually the trace down of Bengali literature from Sanskrit through Vaishnava Padabali to modern day's literature proves that our classical writers were never blind towards sexuality -- it being an essential component of human life dealt it in its own special way. Its portrayal merged with an essence of reality. Initially one may be mistaken that Chaudhuri is against any sexual element in literature, but in reality he is not so. He only disagrees with the usage of vulgar sexuality in literature. He abhors its unnecessary treatment as central theme in any literary creative writing.

But Chaudhuri was reluctant to accept even the contextual use of obscenity in literature. His literary mind was fashioned with the exposure of the Sanskrit literature. Sanskrit literature maintained the reflection of a permissive society where sex was not treated as a taboo but an essential part of life. So he objected the explicit exploration of sex in literature by the Modernist

poets. Chaudhuri might have forgotten that life in ancient India was much more simple and easy. But post-war years were complex and multifarious. The psychological shock which the human civilization had to undergo because of the world wide devastation was beyond imagination. So the expression of sex in literature then evoked a sense reality. It could be treated as a relief from extreme suppression of life. So I cannot support Chaudhuri's uneven comparison between Sanskrit poets of ancient India and Modernist poets of the decade of 1930.

Besides, Chaudhuri we can say that throughout his life he was proud to be a member of a race to which belong the towering geniuses like Modhusudan Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore. But it would be unwise to think that Bengali literature had attained its zenith through them so no more development was expected in this field and none can contribute in its realm more meaningfully.

There are some positive things too in his enumeration of Bengali literature. Like his comment on the role of books in Bengal's cultural life during that decade is important. The growth of library culture in Bengal and treatment of book as a precious gift – comparable to jewellery are intellectually positive aspects prevailed at that time.

Chaudhuri was undauntedly ambitious too. Since the fashion of literary criticism did not develop in Bengali literature he wanted to become one following the French critics.

Chapter 6

The Bengali Resistance Movement against the British

Overview

6.1

The Bengali Resistance against the British was a prolonged affair. The revolutionary activities started around 1905 and continued till 1934. It was centralized in Bengal but its echo was also heard in other few provinces of British-India like Punjab, Bombay and some other places.

The political leaders of India became divided into two groups by 1900 – the Moderates and the Extremists. The main difference between these two wings was the difference of opinion as regards their attitude towards the problems of India and the method of its solution. They also differed in their conception of Nationalism. The groups stood for different political goals and political methods.

The Indian National Congress was the first political platform of the Indians. It was first constituted to work as a ‘bargaining agent’ between the British and the Indians for settling various political issues. Its members were mostly part-time politicians. Most of them were successful professionals in their personal lives and hence could not afford much time to devote in politics. Socially these people belonged to the Anglican educated upper class and were economically quite solvent. These men were of moderate beliefs – they never thought of demanding equality with the British; they just wanted to obtain upper class privileges from them. They expected gradual reforms in different sectors. They looked upon British administration as an Act of Providence destined to bring up the era of modernization. They believed that the Indians were not capable enough to shoulder their own responsibilities. They required more time to acquire that level of capability so they wanted to depend on the British administration till that time came. They had a few complaints about certain actions of the Government. Like they became irritated when all tariff duties had been abolished in 1879, an excise duty of five percent was re-imposed on Indian cotton goods on 1895 excluding the import of Lancashire goods totally tax free. The educated class wanted more Indians to be recruited in the Government Services. They were also unhappy with the rules and regulations of the Viceroy and his Executive Council. But they had a blind faith over the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy and expected it would be reformed

and rectified by prayers and persuasions. This Moderate wing was otherwise secular in all respect though most of the times they could not raise themselves above their class interest. They were aware of the exploitive nature of the British but still they did not want to drive them out of India totally. They longed to get a limited self-government within the Imperial framework. According to their aspiration this self-government was not meant for the mass people of India, they wanted it only for themselves -- the educated class. They wished India to be treated like other colonies of Britain like Australia or Canada. This Moderate group maintained strong confidence upon the British. They dreamt of being recognized as partners of the British Raj and decide the affairs of the empire. In due course of time their dream was to be granted full British citizenship.

The National Congress--in the initial stage became financially weak due to the lack of patronage. Only a few local Maharajas and landed proprietors economically helped Congress. The social reforms whatsoever achieved by the Moderates from the British were not accepted by the general people because those were based on Western Liberalism. They were unable to adopt with the changes of time. So dissatisfaction of the mass people increased against the colonial Government.

On the other hand, the Extremists became sufficiently organized by the end of the 19th century but till then they abstained from interfering with the activities of the Moderates. The policy of the Moderates continued as the official policy of the Indian National Congress. The Extremists became vocal for the first time in the year 1905 when Lord Curzon declared to partition Bengal in the teeth of opposition from all Bengalis. Agitation started throughout Bengal and paved the way for the growth of Extremism in Indian politics. The Extremists aimed at Purna Swaraj or complete independence from the British for India. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Aurobindo Ghosh were the main intellectual minds behind the chalking out of this extreme policy. They rejected the moderate policy of the Congress. Their chief motto was -- purification by blood and sacrifice. They believed that no colonial power willingly relinquishes its power and grant independence to the colony so adoption of policy of extremism was inevitable.

Hari Hara Das in his book *The History of Freedom Movement of India (1857-1947)* writes that besides the general trend towards the rise of extremism in politics there were certain other factors which accelerated its growth. First of all the Moderates were not satisfied with the Indian

Council's Act of 1892. Tilak and other Extremist leaders blamed the Moderates for their policy of prayers and appeals against such gross negligence to the interest of the Indians by the British Government. The constant transfer of local resources to the west was another point of strong dissatisfaction. The Indian Industries were constantly sacrificed for the British manufactures. Besides, the outbreak of 1897 famine made people deeply mortified at the attitude of indifference of the British towards them. Das notes that about 20 million people of the Indian Territory were affected by the famine. And in that crucial period ignoring the pathetic condition of the mass people, the government was making gorgeous preparations for the jubilee celebrations of Queen Victoria. Another cause of discontent was the insensitive behaviour of the British plague Commissioner Mr. Rand during the Bubonic Plague when it infested the Bombay Presidency. The anti-Indian policy of Lord Curzon added to these miseries. Curzon gave top priority to the efficiency in administration disregarding the emotional sensitivity of the people. His Calcutta Corporation Amendment Act 1899 hurt the people because it eliminated their representatives and increased the European majority in the Corporation. As a result the representative character of the Corporation was lost. In 1904 he introduced two more popular Acts – the Indian Universities Act and the Official Secrets Act. The Indian Universities Act increased the number of nominated Europeans in the Senate, Syndicate and faculties. It was an unfair interference with the autonomy of the Universities. The Official Secrets Act legalized the covering of official secrets relating to civil affairs and newspaper criticism which bore possibilities of bringing contempt for the Government. Moreover, the victory of the young Japanese nation against the Imperial Russia in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 also inspired the patriotic Indians.

Kamruddin Ahmed in his article “Bengal in the Early Twentieth Century (1900-1919)” from his book *A Socio Political History of Bengal and the Birth of Bangladesh* observes that the national movements in all Asiatic countries were inspired apart from Japan's victory by the writings of Rabindranath Tagore of Bengal, Oka Kura of Japan and Anant Coomeraswamy of Ceylon. They propagated new philosophy for Asia in the context of new national aspirations. They did not appreciate the ultra-nationalism of Europe. They argued that Asia's national movements should have its own character and with that it should face the humanity (3).

Ahmed also mentions another incident in Delhi which affected the determination of the British Raj. At that time Lord Kitchener was the Commander-in-Chief of the British-Indian Army. He

refused to accept a subordinate position under the Viceroy and insisted that he was free to take his own decisions and the Viceroy had no authority over him. Lord Curzon, the Viceroy requested a decision from His Majesty, King Edward VII on this point, but getting no clear directive he resigned. He was succeeded by John Morely. Morely confirmed civil power over military power (3-4).

Peter Heehs in his article “Revolutionary Terrorism” maintains that the reason behind the rise of the revolutionary movement in Bengal was due to the influence of the foreign revolutionary literatures on the organizers. For example, Aurobindo Ghosh one of the masterminds behind these uprisings extensively studied the revolutionary literature of Ireland, France and America. The members of the early “secret societies” drew some of their inspiration from the Italian leader Mazzini and also from the books like Thomas Frost’s *Secret Societies of the European Revolution*. Two non-Indians influenced the Calcutta circles from which the original revolutionary samitis emerged around 1902. They were the Japanese critic Kakuzo Okakura and the Irish woman Margaret Noble. Okakura inspired Pramathanath Mitra and others with revolutionary and pan-Asiatic ideas at the beginning of the movement. The Irish woman Margaret Noble known as sister Nivedita after she became a disciple of Swami Vivekananda had some contact with Aurobindo Ghosh and younger revolutionary like Satish Bose and *Jugantar* sub-editor Bhupendranath Bose. Nivedita maintained correspondence with the non-revolutionary anarchist Peter Kropotkin and is known to have had revolutionary beliefs. She gave the young men a collection of books that have had revolutionary history and spoke to them about their duty to motherland. She is said to have been a leader of the “revolutionary party” before it turned to direct actions. Apart from those shadowy influences, there was the strong connection of Hemchandra Ghosh with European revolutionaries in Paris in 1907. Ghosh explains that he was ignorant of and uninterested in the many varieties of radical politics he came in contact with. His real fascination was explosive Chemistry. This he learned quite well and brought an up-to-date explosives manual with him when he came back to India. The technological debt to the West was the major influence on the Bengali Revolutionary Movement.

Shekhar Bandyopadhyay in his book *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India* explains the significance of Swaraj which was the ultimate goal of the Extremists. It bore different interpretation to different Extremist leaders. For example, Tilak took it as Indian control over the administration but not absolute severance of ties with the British while Bipin Chandra

Pal believed in complete autonomy because he thought that no self-government was possible under the British Government. Aurobindo Ghosh of Bengal visualized Swaraj as complete political independence. But for majority of people it was a kind of political solution under the imperial structure. The radical spirit became evident in the method of agitation. It shifted from the old method of prayer and resistance to the mode of passive resistance. This meant opposition to colonial rule by disobeying its unjust laws, boycott of British products and institutions and taking effort to develop its own infrastructure of national education and Swadeshi commodities of daily use. It was also a direct encounter to the philosophy of the Moderates and the colonial logic of helping the Indians for overall development. In fact history shows that India could pride in her long heritage of cultured civilization. To quote Bandyopadhyay,

The Indian tradition was described as more democratic with strong emphasis on village self-government. The concept of dharma, it was argued, restricted the arbitrary powers of the king and the republican tradition of Yaudheyas and Lichchabi indicated that the Indian people already had a strong tradition of self-rule (250).

The British Government after much speculation with different schemes decided to form a new province of East Bengal and Assam by including within it the whole of Eastern and Northern Bengal and keeping West Bengal tied to Bihar and Orissa. The new scheme was announced in July 1905 and implemented from 16 October against all the Hindu-Muslim opposition in Bengal. To quote Rafiquddin Ahmed from the book *The Tragic Partition of Bengal* by Suniti Kumar Ghosh, “Articulate Muslim reaction to the proposals was initially equally unfavourable: Muslim and Hindu interests were seen by many to be identical in this matter. In a letter to the *Moslem Chronicle* in 1904, Maulavi Dilwar Hossain Ahmed observed that ‘political reasons must never be allowed to override natural tendencies’. ‘My contention’, he argued, ‘is that it is absolutely wrong to divide an essentially united people like the Bengalees’ Similar protests could be heard from many others” (166).

But large section of educated Muslims soon came out from their anti-partition stand because Lord Curzon and J. Bamfylde Fuller, the first Lieutenant Governor of the new province of East Bengal and Assam vigorously pursued them about their possible access to the privileges of Bengal Partition.

Ghosh maintained that Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka earlier criticized the scheme as a “beastly arrangement” (167). He became persuaded by the British to support the partition and rally the Muslims of East Bengal in favour of it. He was given advance of a loan of 100,000 pounds at a very low rate of interest. The ancestors of this Urdu-speaking family had come from Kashmir to the district of Sylhet and carried on trade in leather. During India’s war of Independence in 1857-58, they helped the British to suppress it in every possible way and were rewarded. They purchased a lot of land and bloomed out as a family of big Zamindars. The Raj gave the title to one of the ancestor’s the title of Nawab of Dhaka (167).

Among the notable Muslims who continued to support the anti-partition movement were Abdul Rasul, Liakat Hossain, Abul Kashem, Din Mohammad, Dedar Bux, Abul Hussain, Abdul Gafur, Ismail Hossain Siraji and Abdul Hamid Guznavi.

But the caste Hindus of Bengal launched a mass movement because their existence was at stake. Kamruddin Ahmed argues that the East India Company and later on Her Majesty’s Government made them the trading community, the commercial magnets, the administrators, landlords and the leading intelligentsia thus allowing them to create vested interests in the capital city of Calcutta. He further adds that the caste Hindus had their Zamindari in East Bengal but they lived in Calcutta. The writers, authors, journalists who originally came from the districts of East Bengal could not leave Calcutta though they also depended on their income from East Bengal. The lawyers of the Calcutta High Court had to depend on their clients from East Bengal. The government servants in the secretariat mostly belonged to East Bengal. Apart from these the Bengali Hindus became minority in both Bengals. Even in West Bengal, Biharis and Oriyas became majority. In Ahmed’s own words,

So it was a matter of life and death for them and they had to fight to frustrate and expose the British design. They appealed to the people – Muslims and Hindus in the name of a Bengali nation, Bengali language and literature, Bengali history and tradition, Bengali life and customs and those appeals had tremendous impact not only on common Hindus but also on some Muslims. All that Sir Salimullah could do was to confuse and neutralize the Muslims. Led by Surendranath Banerjee the opposition grew into a raging popular movement which culminated not only in the boycott of British goods but also terrorist activities. The movement was supported by Gokhle and Tilak who proposed a no-tax campaign (2).

Muntassir Mamun in his book *Bengal Partition 1905 and East Bengal* describes the contemporary situation. He states that the anti-partition movement was also carried out in East Bengal like the West Bengal. Two newspapers published from Dhaka namely the *Dhaka Prakash* and the *Bengal Times* give us the idea as to how the Bengalis over here reacted against the partition. The *Dhaka Prakash* was originally published by the Brahmos but during the anti-partition movement years its ownership belonged to a Hindu “bhadrolok” (25). The owner of The *Bengal Times* had a peculiar characteristic. He despised the local people and addressed them as “natives” (25). But what was common in those days between the two papers was that they both expressed their sentiments against the partition. The *Dhaka Prakash* published more news items on partition and the *Bengal Times* published long articles pointing out the reasons of opposition against the government decision. Mamun quotes from the *Bengal Times*,

Lord Curzons proposed delimitation is positively abhorrent, and all Bengal, Hindoos and Muhammadans except a few who will curry favour with Government because of a desire for honours and distinctions will rise in entreaty, to be spared this threatened spoliation of inherited right, which have grown into vigour and spread under a benignant paternal sway. Nor is agitation artificial (25).

Since Dhaka was the main city in East Bengal the anti-partition agitation was very strong here.

The contemporary issues of *Dhaka Prakash* show that strong sentiments against the partition prevailed in almost all the main towns in East Bengal (Mamun).

At the time of this Bengal partition the Extremist wing was more involved in the activities like manufacture of daily necessities, national education, set up of arbitration courts and village organization. They emphasized on the non-political programmes of self-reliance with importance attached to Hindu revivalism. And it was opposed to the inclusion of Muslims. Hindu religion was expected to become the bond of unity for the whole nation.

But around 1906 this trend became the object of criticism by the political extremists like Aurobindo Ghosh, Bipin Chandra Pal and Brahmanbandhab Upadhyay. They believed that without political independence the regeneration of national life was impossible. The movement here after began to take a new turn around 1908 and it was taken over by another trend – individual revolutionary attack against the British officials and Indian collaborators. Sumit Sarkar points out that it signifies a shift from non-violence to violence and from mass action to elite action (quoted by Bandyopadhyay, 257). Bandyopadhyay too stresses on the issue that the

culture of violence as a mode of political protest was always present there in India and it did not die down even after the tremendous suppression of the revolt of 1857 by the British.

David M. Laushey in his book *Bengal Terrorism & the Marxist Left: Aspects of Regional Nationalism in India 1905-1942* makes an extensive research on Bengali Resistance Movement against the British. He shows that resistance movements had special features in Bengal. Where ever it broke out it could be suppressed through criminal procedures but in Bengal it persisted for a long time with special organizational and moral support.

The partition of the province of Bengal ignited the revolutionary attacks in Bengal. The revolutionary groups originally started as a form of small youth clubs which were devoted to the aims of physical, mental and moral development of the young generation of India. These clubs were organized in Bengal in the 1890's and early 1900's. Its rituals contained militant Shakti Hinduism with physical exercises and careful study of European and Indian nationalist and revolutionary literature. The physical cultivation of these clubs was partly motivated by the desire to rid Bengalis from the notion that the Bengalis were a non-militant race as the British believed since the revolt of 1857. This idea of political opposition and direct confrontation was also held in past from the famous novel of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandamath*. This particular novel published in 1882, dealt with an order of Sannasyns who took to arms in the late eighteenth century against the Muslim rulers. The novel suggested violence among religious men for political purposes. The Bengali youths promised to take to such resorts against the British. The song *Bande Mataram* was also taken from the novel. It became the invoking song of Bengali nationalism from the Bengal partition onward. They accepted it as the title of a newspaper also.

The influence of Swami Vivekananda also worked as a source of great inspiration among the member of these youth clubs. Vivekananda traveled with his lecture tours around United States, Europe and India instilling in Hindus a pride for their religion. Vivekananda called for their spiritual development through Vedantism. He also asked them to raise their intellectual level through education and urged them to become stronger through taking regular physical exercise (Laushey).

The members of the revolutionary groups were comparatively young in age and they were mostly teachers and students belonging to various educational institutions. The Rowlatt Report suggested the same statistical report that 82 percent of them were between the ages of 16 and 30 and 45 percent were listed as teachers and students (Laushey).

The majority of the bhadroloks was not involved in revolutionary activities and intellectually did not support this kind of activities. But at that time the overall situation was so sensitive that they could not criticize openly those who resorted to revolutionary ideals ideologically. (Jaya Chatterji 10)

Sunil K Datta in his book *The Raj and the Bengali People* maintains that Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950) returned from Baroda in 1906 and took the charge of National Council of Education but at the same time he guided the revolutionary movement. At this time Sister Nivedita stood beside him. Sister Nivedita was a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. She was by birth an Irish Lady and a diehard supporter of the Irish freedom movement. Datta reiterates that in those days Bengal stood for India and India for Bengal. So many people from the West came to Bengal and felt the revolutionary fire of its young generation under the colonial government. Nivedita was one of them who inspired the revolutionary movement to liberate the country from the foreign occupation.

To stop the violent movement the Government adopted all kinds of repressive measures. The revolutionaries were simply pushed to the point of no return. They made bombs, attempted on the lives of the British officers, formed secret societies like Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar. On 30 April 1905 in such a bid to kill magistrate Kingsford, two teen age boys Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki became involved. Later, the first was hanged to death and the second one committed suicide. In another attempt at Maniktala, Calcutta, Police raided a bomb making factory and arrested Aurobindo and his brother Barin Ghosh and many others. Chittaranjan Das (1870-1924) a roaring barrister of the time got Aurobindo acquitted of the case known as “Alipore Bomb Case” (101). After this defence case of Aurobindo, Das rose into prominence and joined the national movement giving up all his wealth. He later formed Swarajya Dal and earned the title “Deshbandhu” for his great sacrifice for the country. However, the other convicts of the case like Aswini Kumar Datta of Barisal, Krishnakumar Mitra were deported outside the country and many were hanged. Barindra and Ullaskar Dutt were sentenced to death but on appeal their punishments were reduced to life imprisonment. The movement then went underground but did not die down absolutely. Revolutionary activities by then had obtained legitimacy in the minds of the people. They considered it more effective than the blunt policy of the Moderates. When the Morley-Minto Reforms were announced in 1909 many believed that it was the reflection of the fear generated by the revolutionary activities. The appointment of Lord S. P. Sinha as the law

member in the Viceroy's Executive Council was surely the outcome of that fear. Though the partition was annulled in a short span of time, there were other designs in the mind of the colonialists to push down the Bengalis. The transfer of the capital to Delhi marked the end of Bengali dominance in the national politics of India.

But the re-unification of Bengal in 1911 did not bring an end to the revolutionary activities because it was not its only reason. The centre of its activities now moved to Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, where the Bengali revolutionaries joined the Punjabis returning from North America. There the Punjabis formed the Ghadr Party. They organized dacoities throughout North India to raise funds and in 1912 plotted an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate the Viceroy Lord Hardinge. In September 1914, the stranded Punjabi Ghadrites on board the ship *Kamagata Maru* clashed with the army at Budge Budge near Kolkata.

According to Datta in 1914-15 when the First World War broke out some revolutionaries headed by Jatirindranath Mukherjee (1879-1915), Rasbehari Bose (1885-1945) and Naren Bhattacharya better known as Manabendranath Roy (1887-1954) tried to raise an armed battle by smuggling arms from Germany; but their plan failed though Jatirindranath in league with other revolutionaries like Chittapriya et al attacked the Police commissioner of Calcutta Charles Tegart on Balasore Front (Orissa) on Sept 9, 1915 and gave their lives while Rasbehari and Manabendranath fled to foreign countries. "At the death of Bagha Jatin (he earned the title by killing a tiger with empty hands) and his comrades Tegart bowed his head down to pay homage to these fistful of dare-devil Bengali youths" (101). At this time great repressive actions of the Government using the new wartime Defence of India Act 1915 made revolutionary actions more infrequent. But the terror of revolutionary violence made the Sedition Committee to draft in 1918 the Rowlatt bills which inflamed Mahatma Gandhi into action and to initiate a new phase in Indian politics, where the central focus became shifted from violence to non-violence – from elite action to mass agitation (Bandyopadhyay).

In the spring and summer of 1923 Jugantar carried out several dacoities which resulted altogether in five murders. Although seven members of Jugantar were brought to trial, no conviction was obtained. Bengal police later obtained information that a conspiracy was being planned, the principal object of which was the murder of police officers. They found, in fact, that the movement and residences of certain police officers were being watched and the police in turn placed the watchers in surveillance.

At the end of 1923, a branch of Jugantar in Chittagong led by Surya Sen robbed the Assam Bengal railway office in Chittagong of Rs. 17,000.

The event which caused serious concern was the murder of a European in Calcutta in January in 1924. In a case of mistaken identity, a British merchant, Mr. E. Dey, was shot to death by Gopi Mohan Saha. The intended victim was Charles Tegart. It was followed in April by yet another attempt on the life of the Police Commissioner in which a Mr. Bruce was shot at, again in mistake for Tegart (Laushey).

One of the novel aspects of this revolutionary movement was the participation of women. Several women organization had been formed. At the beginning they carried out little revolutionary activity but later a few of them took part in serious operations. Such an organization was Deepali Sangha. It was founded at Dhaka in 1923 by Miss Leela Nag. Its object was to emancipate women through education. Deepali Sangha through its ten to twenty branches in Dhaka operated a number of free elementary schools including two high schools for Dhaka girls. Besides education these schools also offered adult female education and arts and crafts training. The activities of Deepali Sangha were spread to Calcutta and were very active among the women students of Bethune College and Calcutta University. Miss Nag started a journal named *Jayashree Deepali Sangha* in 1930. It also circulated the necessity of physical education for women. Pulin Das, the well known Anushiloni revolutionary was engaged to train them lathi and dagger play and also Judo.

In 1924 Miss Nag began an annual women's arts and crafts exhibition in Dhaka to encourage women in handicrafts. To assist her in this programme she called on the Social Service League and Anil Roy, her former classmate at Dhaka University and her future husband. Thus the Deepali Sangha and Social Service League began a collaboration which eventually attracted women into the revolutionary Shree Sangha. This became the first revolutionary group to include both male and female membership. This was a new phenomenon in Bengal revolutionary movement because previously revolutionary organizations in Bengal used to ask its members to abstain from having girl friends or marrying and they did not allow women in the revolutionary organizations.

At that time Bethune College in Calcutta in particular was a centre of radical feminist agitation. In the 1928 Calcutta session of Congress, young women participated as volunteer workers for the first time in Congress history. Under the leadership of Latika Ghosh a Cambridge educated lady

and a niece of Aurobindo Ghosh, approximately one hundred girl students joined the Congress Volunteers, participated in the military drill and worked side by side with their male counterparts, many of whom were revolutionaries. Although Bengal police kept a close watch on the activities of these girls, the Government was not interested to bring them under preventive detention without lodging specific charges against them. This reluctance ended abruptly in the early 1930's when women began to take active parts in both the Civil Disobedience Movement and the revolutionary movement.

Thereafter came a temporary slow motion --- In 1929 Jatin Das died of hunger strike fasting for 63 days in protest against the treatment meted out to the prisoners in jails. In Alipore on April 27, 1930 Kanailal Bhattacharya whose party affiliation was never determined, shot and killed R. R. Garlick, a judge who had lately sentenced two revolutionaries to death. Bhattacharya was shot and killed on the scene. In another daring encounter Binay Basu (1908-30), Badal Gupta (1912-30) and Dinesh Gupta (1911-31) of Bengal Volunteers, with which Subhaschandra Bose was also associated, raided Writers' Building on 8 October, 1930 and shot Simpson, Inspector General of Prison to death. Binay and Badal instantly committed suicide and Dinesh was sentenced to death in 1931.

From 1930 to 1934 there was an armed resurrection in Chittagong under the leadership of Masterda Surya Sen (1893-1934). He was co-operated by Ananta Singh, Ambika Chakraborty, Ganesh Ghosh and Pritilata Wadeddar and a host of others who sacrificed their invaluable lives at the altar of their motherland. Surya Sen was hanged on 12 January, 1934 and a couple of revolutionaries like Ananta Singh and Ganesh Ghosh survived the British onslaught.

On November 30 The Bengal Emergency Powers Ordinance was promulgated giving the Government wide powers. This Ordinance was "aimed at crushing terrorism and restoring the prestige of Government and the morale of its servants in those parts of Bengal where the danger was greatest" specifically Chittagong. Undoubtedly this Ordinance was instigated by another action in Bengal. It was the incidence of a Bengali Inspector of Police who had been deeply involved in investigating and preparing the brief for the Chittagong Raid Case was murdered by a young boy under orders from Surya Sen. The Bengal Emergency Powers Ordinance gave the Government authority to combine police and military action to round up revolutionaries in the district of Chittagong. Also the District Magistrate was given extensive powers "to commandeer property, to limit access to certain places, to regulate traffic and transport, and to impose a

collective fine upon recalcitrant inhabitants.” Other parts of the Ordinance applied to the whole of Bengal and as usual, provided for trial of revolutionaries by special tribunals (Laushey).

The severity of this Ordinance, particularly the provision for use of military forces and the provision of empowering the District Magistrate to impose collective fines indicates a sense of desperateness on the part of Bengal Government. Not only British officials, the entire European Community in Bengal became highly alarmed because these attempts of assassination were not confined only to officials. On October 29 1931, Bimal Das Gupta of Bengal Volunteers, one of the two assassins of Peddie attempted to assassinate Mr. Viliers, a British businessman and President of the Calcutta European Association. The same afternoon a group of Europeans who identified themselves as the “Royalists” circulated a leaflet demanding action to crush what they called “Congress terrorism”. It shows that the British in Bengal were frightened and the moral of the militia services was breaking down (Laushey).

After the Chittagong raid the Government enacted the emergency legislation to deal with the revival of revolutionary activities in Bengal. The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1925 had expired in March 21, 1930. Under the pressure of the Bengal police, on April 1, those sections of the Act which provided for trial by special procedure were re-enacted as the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1930. It gave to the Bengal Government, again for a five year period, the same powers contained in the 1925 Act. With these powers in hand, the Government by the end of 1930 had arrested a number of leaders from all parties.

However, the Bengal Government was at this time reluctant to demand further special powers such as a new press act, because of the national situation. The Government of India was anxious to come to some kind of understanding with the Congress Party. A series of talks between Gandhi and Lord Irwin in February 17 to March 4 1931 resulted in an agreement by which the Civil Disobedience Movement was ended. All political prisoners except those convicted for crimes of violence were released, and the Congress was to be represented at the second session of the Round Table Conference. In order not to risk upsetting the Gandhi-Irwin meeting, the Government at this time did not press for further special powers. But the younger revolutionaries were uninterested in the Gandhi-Irwin talks or the Round Table Conference. Some of them were angry that Gandhi had not insisted that revolutionary prisoners be released with the Civil Disobedience prisoners. And some were disturbed because Gandhi was making deals with the very same Government which had been responsible for executing so many revolutionaries. A

little more than a month after the talks ended, the revolutionaries struck again. On April 7, 1931 Bimal Das Gupta and Joti Jibon Ghosh of Bengal Volunteers shot and killed Mr. James Peddie, District Magistrate of Midnapore. Both assassins escaped and one of them Das Gupta later participated in another revolutionary attack in Calcutta. The Midnapore assassination was followed by the murder of the next two British District Magistrates sent to Midnapore.

While Gandhi was preparing to leave India to attend the second session of the Round Table Conference in London the revolutionaries continued their assault.

On December 14 1931, two teenage girls connected with the Shree Sangha shot C. G. B Stevens, Magistrate of Comilla. Following the assassination, the Bengal police quickly moved to arrest a few women suspected of being linked with the revolutionaries, including Leela Nag, co-leader of Shree Sangha.

Though the situation at the end of 1931 was far from reassuring, the police were again armed with adequate powers. Civil disobedience Movement was calming down and they therefore, free to devote all their energies to the suppression of revolutionary activities.

Gandhi arrived back in India from London on December 28 after the breakdown of the second session of the Round Table Conference. Within five days of his return the Civil Disobedience Movement was resumed and within eight days Gandhi was back in jail. The first revolutionary attack of this phase came on April 30, 1932. Prodyot Kumar Bhattacharya and Probhansu Pal of Bengal Volunteer murdered Robert Douglas, Peddie's successor as District Magistrate of Midnapore. Pal escaped but Bhattacharya was captured and eventually executed.

The Civil Disobedience Movement after an initial surge of mass support in the spring of 1932 was losing its impetus by the summer -- but the revolutionary movement actually picked up momentum during the summer and early autumn. In July E. B. Ellison, the Superintendent of Police, Comilla was shot by an unknown revolutionary, probably a member of the Bengal Volunteers. In August, Atul Kumar Sen, whose party affiliation was unknown, attempted to assassinate Alfred Watson, the editor of the Calcutta newspaper, *The Statesman*. Watson escaped injury. Sen was captured immediately but took to poison and died on the scene. A second attempt was made on Watson's life in September – this time by four assailants. Watson was just slightly wounded. Of the four assassins two took poison and died on the point of capture while the other two escaped.

Chittagong had been relatively quiet for more than a year, but the revolutionaries were still hoping to succeed in their planned massacre of Europeans in the Chittagong Club. In September 1932, another large-scale raid on the Club was planned but had to be cancelled at the last moment due to the failure of Shaileswar Chakrabarty to appear on the rendezvous on time. Chakrabarty had been in charge of the original raid on the Club in 1930. He took full personal blame for the failure of these raids, and for which he committed suicide later in the night. A third attempt on the Club was made later in September but this time with success. About fifteen revolutionaries led by a girl named Pritilata Waddeddar, attacked the Club with bombs and pistols. About ten or twelve persons were injured and one elderly European woman was killed. The attack was carried out very swiftly and with complete surprise. In the investigation and search following the attack, the police found pamphlets issued by an organization calling itself the "Indian Revolutionary Army" (Laushey). Among other things, these pamphlets called on the youth of the district to join the party and to kill Europeans. They offered rewards for Europeans turned over to the party dead or alive.

The Bengali revolutionaries wanted to assassinate the Governor of the province John Anderson. In 1932 a girl Bina Das had shot at him during the Convocation Ceremony of Calcutta University. On another occasion in a race track near Darjeeling, Bhabani Prasad Bhattacharya of Bengal Volunteers and an accomplice of his shot at but missed the Governor.

The raid on the Chittagong Club was the last major outrage of the year 1932. From the latter part of 1932 the tide began to turn down and between September 1932 and July 1933 the only murderous outrage which the revolutionaries could carry out in British India was the attempt on Mr. Luke. There was another attack on M. Quin, the French Commissioner of Police on 10, March 1933 but that was in French Chandannagore. Quin was shot dead.

However the Government gradually controlled the situation. Plot after plot was discovered and foiled and consequently the leaders were captured. But there were a large number of individuals living abroad who were prepared to commit or take part in isolated outrages and had apparently no problem in securing arms.

Another spectacular murder of 1933 was the assassination of the third consecutive District Magistrate of Midnapore B. E. J Burge on September 2 by two members of the Bengal Volunteers. The assassins were shot on the scene one dying immediately and the other the next day. A full scale investigation followed this shooting and as a result thirteen revolutionaries were

brought under trial. Three of them were given death sentence and to two others transportation for life.

The Burge murder was really the last important successful revolutionary outrage in India until the outbreak of World War II.

The ideology of the revolutionary publicist Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and others although formed in part from a study of European history, was an indigenous and natural response to British imperial domination. Their ideology had three major components: political independence or Swaraj, economic independence as expressed in the Swadeshi-boycott movement, and the drive for cultural independence by means of national education. (Heehs)

Only the first of these components were direct interest to the members of the revolutionary groups. A circular of the Anushiloni Samiti states:

This Samiti has no open relationship with any kind of popular and outward Swadeshi; that is (the boycott of) “belati” articles of cloths, salt, sugar etc. To be mixed up in quarrels on disputes or implicated in the litigation about such affairs is entirely against the principles of the Samiti (Heehs 166).

Members of Barin Ghosh’s group termed the Swadeshi-boycott movement as “bania politics” (Heehs). The one thing they bothered for was political independence. They believed that the only way to acquire it was the use of force. Extremist political leaders differed over the question of force. Bipin Chandra Pal was opposed to it while Aurobindo was in favour of its use. It was one of the reasons why Pal was ousted from the editorial board of *Bande Mataram*. Aurobindo’s doctrine of passive resistance (1907) was one of the first of its kind used as means and remained one of the best strategies that played a central role in the course of the freedom struggle. He “never concealed his opinion that a nation is entitled to attain its freedom by violence” (Heehs 166). But what he had in mind when he encouraged Jatin Banerjee and Barin Ghosh to organize samitis was a large-scaled militant uprising master minded for over the course of two or three decades. Impatience and demands of the financial backers pushed Barin and others towards the quick implementation of terrorism. Although not really in favour of assassination and dacoity Aurobindo was certainly aware of his brother’s attempts, and approved them on realizing the practical situation. The question of violence versus non-violence persisted as a non-ending debate throughout the history of the freedom struggle in Bengal.

The place of religion was also an important point in the ideology of the revolutionaries. Aurobindo, Bipin Chandra Pal, Brahmabandhab Upadhyay and other so called Hindu publicists frequently used religious imagery in their writings and sometimes spoke of the movement as a religion. As a result, contemporary British observers and later historians of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have accused them of mixing up politics and religion or of promoting communalism. Heehs writes that the old cultural divide between the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal began to become politicized during the anti-partition agitation. Swadeshi volunteers and Muslim activists found themselves on opposite sides and a natural distrust was born. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad tells us in his memoir *India Wins Freedom* that “the revolutionary groups were recruited exclusively from the Hindu middle classes. . . The revolutionaries felt that the Muslims were an obstacle to the attainment of Indian Freedom and must, like other obstacles be removed” (5) Azad joined the revolutionary group with great difficulty. Pamphleteers and journalists indulged in provocative rhetoric. Serious communal riot broke out in Comilla, Mymensingh and other places in 1907.

According to Heehs in the midst of this degenerating situation the “religion of patriotism” preached by Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra, sometimes using the language of popular religion, may have turned the movement towards polarization. But Maulana Azad’s version about this Hindu-Muslim enmity was that the disturbance started when Lord Curzon paid special attention to the Muslims of Bengal. He wrote at that time that Bengal politically the most advanced part of India and the Hindus of Bengal under took a leading part in the political awakening. In 1905 Lord Curzon decided to partition Bengal in order to weaken the Hindus and create a permanent division between the two communities of Bengal. It was not so easy to implement as Curzon had foresighted because in reaction Bengal burst into protest and exploded in revolutionary activities. His paper *Karmayogin* became a symbol of national awakening and revolt. To quote Azad,

One other factor was responsible for the revolutionary’s dislike of Muslims. The government felt that the political awakening among the Hindus of Bengal was so great that no Hindu officer could be fully trusted in dealing with these revolutionary activities. They therefore imported a number of Muslim officers from the United Provinces for the manning of the Intelligence Branch of the Police. The result was that the Hindus of Bengal began to feel that Muslims as such were against political freedom and against the Hindu community (5).

However, both Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra considered the Muslims as an essential component of the Indian nation-in-making as Hindus. Both called for the increased participation of Muslims in the national movement and regretted the attempts of creating distance between the two communities. Both men felt however that separate Muslim representation in Legislative Councils introduced by Morley-Minto reforms of 1910, would have a disastrous effect on the integrity of the movement – as it indeed did (Heehs).

Heehs also believes that communal thinking had no part in the ideology of the major publicists of revolution in Bengal. But still it certainly entered into the lower level participants. Some Samiti members came to regard pro-partition Muslims as their enemies. Samiti members as well as Muslim activists took part in communal riots. Few Muslims became members of the revolutionary party. They were barred from membership in the Dacca Anushiloni Samiti though Samiti members were forbidden on principle “to show hostile feelings against or to deal unjustly with the Mussalmans as a nation” (rules of the membership of the Anushilan Samiti; circa 1913). The antagonism between the two communities unquestionably weakened the movement. For example, it prevented East Bengal Samitis from gaining required support from the Muslim peasantry. All this served the interests of the British Government. So it seems that the British might have in some cases exploited the communal division to extract their own benefit but certainly they did not create it.

Perceptions of Chaudhuri

6.2

Nirad C. Chaudhuri in his autobiographical perceptions focuses on the pre-partition political activities in Bengal especially in East Bengal which was his ancestral home and also of events which happened then in Calcutta because at that time he and his elder brother were studying in a high school there. Chaudhuri experienced the revolutionary activities in his adolescent period, though he tried to evaluate those after many years with his sensitive but mature feelings.

Chaudhuri confirms the revolutionary trend which broke out before the Gandhian movement and reached its peak. He confesses at that time that he was mentally absorbed with the development of the Gandhian agitation and professional duties as a journalist. However, on April 19 the news of the Chittagong Armoury attack in the newspaper attracted his attention. He remembers that it was published in the daily supplement of *The Statesman*. He became excited with the sensational

news. It reported that in the previous night a large band of Bengali revolutionaries had raided the Armoury of the Auxiliary Force (the British wing of the Territorial Army in India) at Chittagong, a large town in south-east Bengal, killed a British sergeant and made off with a large quantity of small arms. It was also reported that the news of the raid was received in Calcutta by the wireless from a ship which was anchored in the harbour almost at the same time when the raid had begun. Immediately, a contingent of the Eastern Frontier Rifles, a paramilitary force of Gurkhas who were trained exactly like the regular infantry had been ordered to move towards Chittagong. The news also contended that the force had left Calcutta following the intimation by an early train and was expected to reach Chittagong early in the next morning. Chaudhuri also read there that the Surma Valley Light Horse, a cavalry regiment of the Auxiliary Force, had been ordered to move into the Tipperah Hill Tract to prevent the raiders from trying to escape into the hilly and wooded region.

Chaudhuri comments that never before a revolutionary attack of such scale had occurred. So it created a great sensation among the British residents in Calcutta. The Bengali educated class became thrilled too. Chaudhuri was anxious about the reaction of the Government and their reciprocal policy over the Bengalis. Chaudhuri a well-read person on military history treated it as a folly on the part of the revolutionaries because the British contingent in India was much stronger to intervene with by a non-formal local force at any time.

Chaudhuri on this occasion briefly discusses the political background of this revolution. Chaudhuri is very confident about the account he gave in his autobiography. In his own words,

I do not think there is any other Bengali living to-day except myself who has seen the entire revolutionary movement from its beginning in 1907, has followed its course at firsthand, clearly remembers all the important events, and is capable of giving a balanced historical view (288).

He writes that all those who were in prison, detention, or internment had been released when Montagu- Chelmsford reforms were introduced. There were some relatives and acquaintances of Chaudhuri among those released from jail. He says that no revolutionary incident came into his knowledge from 1919 to the end of 1923. But on 12 January 1924 an English man named Day was shot dead on Chowringee Road. The assailant was a young Bengali named Gopinath Saha. He wanted to kill the Police Commissioner of Calcutta – Charles Tegart and had mistakenly killed Day who was only an employee of a mercantile firm and bore no connection with the

Government. The British administration took immediate steps and caught Saha, tried and hanged him on March 1, 1924.

Chaudhuri became very shocked at the incident. He considered it as a senseless action and also ethically condemnable. He remembers that political assassination and open nationalist agitation became common since 1897 in which a British civil servant and a British military officer were murdered at Poona. Then no political forum, not even Congress supported such cruel murders. He reprimanded such action in very strong language. He says what might have been the reason on the part of the revolutionaries in resorting to such violent actions -- the public sentiment did not sympathize with the convicts when they were punished.

But this time Bengal Congress declared its support formally on the side of Gopinath Saha. At the provincial conference held at Sirajganj a resolution was adopted on 1 June, 1924, which as a matter of form dissociated the Congress from all violence and reasserted the principle of non-violence as enjoined by Mahatma Gandhi but it also put on record that the conference appreciated Gopinath Saha's ideal of self-sacrifice. They noted that misguided though it was in respect of the country's interests still it was an action of esteem. Chaudhuri writes that the foremost Bengali nationalist leader C. R. Das was the main personality behind the adoption of this resolution. Das became an adherent of the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence in 1920.

The adoption of such pro-revolutionary resolution created stir among the British community. They accused Congress as the supporter of the political assassinations. Mahatma Gandhi was blamed for withdrawing from his non-violent mode of philosophy. So he had to speak for a new resolution before the All India Congress Committee when it met on 1 June, 1924. Gandhi regretted the death of Mr. Day and offered condolences to the bereaved family and unequivocally condemned all political murders. But Das moved an amendment by which the expression of sympathy for Gopinath Saha as embodied in the Bengal resolution was to form a part of the Congress resolution. In the voting Das's amendment was lost but the result was significant because seventy members of the All India Congress Committee voted for him and eight against. The proposal of unconditional violence won only by eight votes.

Chaudhuri remembers the sayings of C. R. Das on this occasion. Das said that if the Congress had any sympathy for the sentiment of Bengal they should all have voted unanimously for his amendment. In this Das and the Bengalis had the support of the delegations from Maharashtra, where the cult of political murder had already begun. Dr. Paranjyape, a veteran leader and one of

the first Indian students from Cambridge, once commented sarcastically that Mahatma Gandhi was indeed one of the main saints of India, but he was thrusting his saintliness forcibly on his less saintly countrymen.

Mahatma Gandhi became strongly offended at his marginal victory by eight votes and strongly ventilated his feelings. He said that those who had given support in favour of Das's amendment believed in political murder. He also said that the acceptance of violence had become the philosophy of the existing nations. He declared it to be a false philosophy to which failure was obvious. He talked even leaving of Congress.

According to Chaudhuri from that time the alienation of Bengal from the Gandhian nationalism had started which caused a lot of harm for Bengal and from which the Bengali people had to suffer immensely in the long run. The anti-Bengali feelings in Mahatma Gandhi increased gradually and made him indifferent towards them and made him behave gravely even at the hour of their need especially from 1932 onwards. The situation on the part of Bengalis was full of dilemma – they could neither accept Gandhi nor could resist him.

Chaudhuri's interpretation was that the Bengalis held an infatuation for violence. It was very deep rooted and it was given first preference in their religion. Being a Hindu Chaudhuri explained the Hindu philosophy in this regard. The Bengali Hindus belonged to two schools – the Saktas, who worshipped power in the Mother Goddess and the Vaishnavas, who were the followers of Krishna – and practiced non-violence. The higher castes of the Bengalis who were the main supporters behind nationalism were overwhelmingly Sakta and therefore approved violence. They despised Vaishnava non-violence. Chaudhuri also mentions that the Vaishnavas of Bengal though lost their Hindu faiths retained their philosophical pre-disposition. In Bengal they were the followers of Gandhi because Gandhi's doctrine matched their approach of lives.

Chaudhuri explains that in the contemporary environment their pre-disposition was combined with their psychological acquisition. The upper caste Bengali Hindus acquired militaristic outlook from their reading of European history. They were the great worshipper of the French General Napoleon. However, Chaudhuri on account of his wide reading of the war and military history finally began to condemn political murder as a degradation of military spirit and thus despised it. But he says that the Bengalis with their limited knowledge on militarism identified it with political terrorism and glorified it. The Bengali gentle-folk committed the fallacy of equating the killing in war with the killing in ambush because the Bengalis were never warlike.

The soldier kills as a matter of duty, and equally accepts the risk of being killed. The political murder does not. This made a fundamental difference between a soldier's moral position and a terrorist's.

Chaudhuri explains his aversion for political assassination explicitly. He cites an example to confirm his views on militarism. He says that in 1929 he once met a soldier who belonged to the 41 Dogra Regiment of the Indian Army and had fought in Mesopotamia. He showed the writer a wound in his hand which he received while crawling out from his trench to save his British counterpart. Chaudhuri in reply exclaimed that he might have lost his life in doing so. The soldier told something to him which implicated that it was the duty of a living soldier to help his comrade at times of danger. Chaudhuri appreciated his remark and took it to be a proper approach of a warrior towards life. He had a feeling of being introduced to a true warrior. He compares a revolutionary whom he identifies as a terrorist with that of a murderer. He admits that he never agreed with the proposition that the end justifies means. Chaudhuri disapproves violence of the Bengalis because he considers them feeble and ineffectual. He dismisses the commitment of the revolutionaries as hysterical. Chaudhuri calls the revolutionaries as terrorists because he believes that they carried the Bengali social tradition to the political sphere. He compared them to 'possessed men' who developed an anti-British inertia from the very beginning of their adolescence and continued to remain vindictive through the following years. They just needed to become equipped with arms and bombs to set out for murder of Englishman. Chaudhuri despised the involvement of the Bengali girls in the revolutionary movement from 1930 onwards.

Chaudhuri's view was that these young men and women were not aware with their practical situation. They became romantic reading European theories of political assassinations and adopted it in their life. 'Nihilists' 'Anarchists' etc. from Europe inspired them. They also began to worship the Irish revolutionaries and went on following their methods.

Chaudhuri had an impression that the Bengalis were not enough matured to take the risk of drawing a revolutionary plan at that time. The first condition before stepping into such a venture was to secure over all secrecy. It was beyond the habit of the Bengalis at that time. Chaudhuri recalls that in 1929 he was informed by his friend Gopal Haldar, about an ensuing revolutionary plan in Bengal. Haldar told him that a plan had been drawn to bring about a concerted uprising in the districts of all over Bengal and also arms had been collected for that purpose.

Chaudhuri believes that the Chittagong raid must be the part of the execution of that plan and he confirms that before that no other uprising had been reported. Chaudhuri also discussed the story of the failure at Chittagong and the suffering of the Hindus on account of it.

Chaudhuri maintains that it was absolutely a mismanaged affair because the plan was not kept secret. By the evening of the 19th when no British official could reach Kolkata Chaudhuri already came to know from one of the raider's brother that the name of the leader of the episode was Ananta Nag and also the information that after the raid he left his Baby Austin at the Armoury office. Chaudhuri was acquainted with this informer through his younger brother who was a student of Jadavpur Engineering College. After the raid he sought shelter at Chaudhuri's house which was then in North Calcutta. He was apprehending police arrest. The guardian of Chaudhuri's house was then his elder brother, an advocate but on that night due to some errand he was in Dacca so Chaudhuri being the sole decision maker of the house allowed the boy to stay with them. The apprehension of the boy was true because the police went to search for him to his hostel.

Chaudhuri wondered at the foolishness of the conspirators of doing such a thing keeping the presence of an enemy ship at the harbor – which had the strength of sending the news immediately to Calcutta through wireless system. He was further astonished when the boy told him that the hatched plot was leaked out to the police somehow so it was presumed that all the persons involved in this issue would be arrested within a short time so to avoid that and giving a last try the hatchers had to strike in advance. Chaudhuri ridiculed such a whimsical decision.

After the raid it became evident that the plan was immature – the revolutionaries did not take any decision about the following step that is what would be their next course of action after they had executed the first step. The authority and the British community thought that the raiders would occupy the town and kill them but in reality nothing so happened. Chaudhuri praised the District Magistrate of Chittagong for his courage and the presence of mind. He ordered all British women and children to the ship and found no raiders. While inspecting the Armoury he found that the Lewis Gun had not been taken away. The rifles and other ammunitions were also intact. Only they took away the 450 Webley –Scott service revolvers to which they were used to in committing revolutionary activities. Chaudhuri believed that the revolutionaries might have a plan of lying low with their stolen weapons and continue their secret activities for a long time.

Chaudhuri observed that using the Gurkha Regiment the British controlled the revolutionary activity soon. After that there occurred only one murder. The Government imposed collective fines on Hindus, posted police and arranged for strong surveillance all over Chittagong.

Chaudhuri's comment about the Chittagong episode is that it was over rated by the Bengali's. He believes that after 1920 the Bengali dominance in Indian National politics was declining and after 1930 it almost disappeared except this 'terrorism'. So Bengalis wishes to glorify this incident in various expressions by constituting mythical stories about it. He believes that it gives emotional consolations to the Bengalis as well as an apology for their inefficiency to lead the nation. A sort of reprimanding attitude is evident in Chaudhuri's words when he says -- No other set of people in India are able to console themselves more easily with illusions.

The revolutionary leader Ananta Nag went to the political police head quarters and surrendered on his own. It was known that when his name was taken in -- there created a sensation and police officers came armed. Ananta was also sentenced to life transportation but was released at the time of Independence.

Chaudhuri once asked Gopal Halder that why instead of going underground and carrying on revolutionary activities Nag decided to surrender to the police. Halder replied him that there was no available underground to dig into because the government haunted the raiders like "beats of pray" (298). The Muslims were always conscious about the entry of any strangers in their locality. The Hindus though inwardly sensitive towards them did not want to compromise their material prospects by co-operating with them. The difficulty of managing food being remaining hidden was beyond imagination. Under that crucial circumstance the custody of the British was much preferable.

Chaudhuri points out the social position of these revolutionaries elaborately by citing the conduct of his family towards the young man whom he gave shelter on the night of the Chittagong raid. When his elder brother returned from Dacca he came to know what had happened during his absence. He did not say anything to Chaudhuri but severely scolded his younger brother who brought him to their home. While returning home from work he found the young man standing on the street in tears. He told him that his brother has turned him out of their house. Chaudhuri took him back and nobody said anything to him. However, this was the mode of conduct towards the revolutionaries during the British period. People who were not involved in politics had nothing to do with the political suspects. They might have a feeling of reverence towards them

but they wanted to maintain a safe distance from them. Chaudhuri comments that this was the difference between the Irish revolutionaries and the Bengali “Sein Feins” (298) of India. Chaudhuri does not forget to mention that after the Independence the situation became altogether changed. It became equally irritating to see the eagerness of certain people to identify themselves with the so called “terrorists” (299).

Chaudhuri calls Gandhi’s ethics of non-violence as “wolf in sheep’s clothing” (294) and comments that this event of Armoury raid went morally against that norms and so it created a moral issue for him.

Chaudhuri also shows that many of these self-declared revolutionaries were not enough intellectually passionate regarding their ideology. In this point he narrates the story of a young man, his brother’s classmate whom he had given shelter on the night of the Chittagong raid. The man instead of keeping himself hidden and out of contact with everybody wrote secret letters to the revolutionaries disclosing his whereabouts. One day three girls arrived at Chaudhuri’s house and wanted to see him. When Chaudhuri asked one of them if she knew that his (the hidden person’s) brother died in the revolution, she replied quiet calmly that she did. Chaudhuri requested her to keep it within her. But she might not have done so. Chaudhuri recognized one of them as the daughter of an advocate of Calcutta High Court who was at the same time a popular novelist of Bengal. When they were let to the next room to meet the man Chaudhuri heard their noise of giggling behind the doors. He wondered how much their discussion was revolutionary and how far it was flirtatious. His comment, “The European combination of love and terrorism was being taken over, but unfortunately it has not survived” (296-297).

Chaudhuri mentions about a lady revolutionary named Priti Ohdedar. We are not sure if he had been talking about the famous Prtitlata Wadeddar. According to him it was a miserable event that “redeemed the Chittagong raid” (298). He maintains that this Priti Ohdedar was pursued to take shelter in a house near Chittagong with a young man. Soon they became surrounded by the police. Usually in such situations the Bengali revolutionaries surrendered to the police with revolver in hand. But the girl tried to fight out her way and was ultimately killed with her companion.

Chaudhuri relates that in this event of Armoury raid the British administration did not pursue strong vindictive actions against all the participators. Only an elderly revolutionary who masterminded the raid named Surya Sen was arrested – found guilty on different connections –

tried and then convicted. He was hanged. Chaudhuri comments that it was not the end of the Chittagong story. The Hindus as a whole became politically suspect and had to suffer for a long time. So psychologically they became anti-British and remained so till the Independence was achieved. But Independence made their situation even worse because entire Chittagong was placed under East Pakistan from where they had to leave their ancestral homes and migrate to West Bengal.

Chaudhuri confirms the various attempts of the revolutionaries to get rid of the British high officials on several occasions. Like, on 25 August 1930 two young men tried to kill Charles Tegart, the Police Commissioner of Calcutta by throwing a bomb at his car on the south side of Dalhousie Square. Tegart was unhurt but one of the assailants became fatally wounded and he died on the way of being taken to the hospital. The other was caught by a Sikh taxi-driver, though unarmed went after the revolutionaries. This man was tried and convicted to life-transportation. Four days later, on the 29 of the same month Mr. Lowman, the chief of the Bengal political police was shot at Dacca, where he had gone for an inspectional tour. He was brought to Calcutta but died there. Another police officer named Hodson who as a young man went to Kishoreganj, the native land of Chaudhuri was also shot but he recovered later. Hodson's assailant was not caught but Lowman's killer Binoy a young revolutionary died miserably in Calcutta later that year.

Another sensational murder occurred on 8 December, 1930 in the Writer's Building which was the Headquarter of the Government of Bengal. Three revolutionaries got into the building and killed the Inspector-General of Prisons Colonel N. F. Simpsons of the Indian Medical Service. Chaudhuri became much depressed at his death because in Chaudhuri's view his only offence was that he was in the charge of prison. Chaudhuri had a communication with him over the telephone just a few days before this incident on the issue of the release of a political prisoner.

Chaudhuri illustrated the issue in his autobiography. He conveys that he phoned the Inspector-General on the request of Satyendra Chandra Mitra, a member of the Central Legislative Assembly and also a prominent Congress politician of Bengal. Chaudhuri's friend Gopal Halder involved him in this case. Halder developed a relationship with a political woman of Bengal named Bimal Protiva Devi. She belonged to a wealthy family and her husband was a doctor. Chaudhuri remarks that in all her published photograph in the press she was shown as a young woman wearing a pretentious looks and a diamond tiara over her head. There were a lot of

reports about her revolutionary and amatory propensity and Chaudhuri had direct experiences also of her activities. Chaudhuri visited her several times at her home. She seemed to be a “high strung” (300) personality though always in smiling. Haldar grew an infatuation for her which Chaudhuri never appreciated. Chaudhuri writes about the special characteristic about the lady. She bore extremely “neurotic” (300) temperament which helped her obtaining release from the prison. Detention made her sick and she showed typical symptoms of being affected by tuberculosis. She vomited fresh blood but what was queer that all the symptoms disappeared when she became free from jail. She wrote remarkably frank letters to her friends. It created much amusement among the police and hence those underwent censor too. Chaudhuri had read some of the letters dispatched to Haldar.

Before the event of the Writer’s Building that lady Prativa Devi was in prison and as usually became very ill. At this Haldar became bewildered and asked Mitra to whom he was closely acquainted to talk to Colonel Simpson over this matter and request to consider the issue. Mitra on his turn told Chaudhuri to speak to the colonel over the telephone pretending to be Mitra. Chaudhuri did so and was pleased by his courteous and sympathetic conversation. He seriously told that he would do whatever he could to help them at that situation. So Chaudhuri became very much grieved to receive the news of his sudden death stricken by the revolutionaries.

Chaudhuri gives elaborate description of the tragic incident of the Writer’s Building. It became known later that three young men went to the Writer’s Building seeking an interview with Simpson. Getting inside they shot at Simpson and he immediately died. The people around became panic-stricken and ran for shelter. At that time there was no police. So police was informed at Lal bazaar Headquarters. They came after sometime. In the mean time it was possible for the revolutionaries to escape by making their way out of the building by firing the revolver creating terror. Instead they chose to take potassium cyanide and crawl along the walls of the corridor. On coming the police found the three men lying in the corridor. Two of them were already dead. Only one was alive. Among the dead one was Binoy Bose who was supposed to have killed Lowman earlier. The survivor’s name was Dinesh Gupta. He was borne to the hospital and treated. Later after trial and conviction he was hanged in July 1931. Chaudhuri relates that while undergoing trial Gupta wrote a satire on the police and an adaptation of a story of Tolstoy to the *Probasi* through the police. Chaudhuri published it. His personal feelings were that it was as much a joke to the police as it was of Dinesh Gupta.

Soon after the incident the house of Chaudhuri was searched by the police. One afternoon Chaudhuri on coming home found that a police was standing by the entrance. He was allowing people to get in but preventing from coming out.

Chaudhuri went inside and found that several police was busy searching. The search was for Gopal Haldar and for his mistaken deed. A few months before Haldar's father and his family became the sub-tenant of Chaudhuri's family. Their house was large and the rent was high. So in order to meet the expenditure of the house it was sub-let to Haldar family. Haldar was a politically suspect and the address of his house was found with another man whose name was in the suspect list of the police. Haldar had drawn a map of his house by a man who was a close friend of Bimal Protiva Devi. That young man's house was searched in the morning and he was arrested. A revolver was found under his pillow and that particular map. So the police came to search Haldar's house. Chaudhuri expected a search in his part also. It worried him for there were some confidential military books in his shelf. At first he thought to hide those books behind the front row. But that might raise the inquisitiveness of the police because they usually lay hand at the back row first. He decided to erase the word 'secret' from those books with a blade when they were busy in searching his friend's part.

Chaudhuri's speculations were correct because when the police came to search his room they laid their hands first at the back row. They did not notice the sensitive books kept in the first row. The police took Haldar for interrogation and released him on the following day. He became very nervous. He wanted to give a message to Devi but realizing that it would not be safe going there he sent Chaudhuri instead. Devi was also released soon – Chaudhuri's comment about her was that her smile was still intact as it always had been.

Chaudhuri being a direct witness of the time knew about many episodes of the Bengali Resistance Movement. He notes that on 14 December, 1930 the District Magistrate of Comilla Mr. Stevens was murdered by two young girls. They were students and two sisters. Their names were Santi and Suniti. They were convicted to life transportation. The District Magistrate of Midnapore Mr. Peddie was murdered on 7, April 1931. The murderer could not be traced. Dinesh Gupta was hanged on 7 July and it created a great commotion. Garlick, the District Judge who had sentenced him was shot dead in the court on the 29 of the same month. It had created a loud cry among the British in Calcutta. Chaudhuri reports that from then the British community in Calcutta remained in chronic obsessions with the fear of being murdered at any time by the

natives. Chaudhuri also believes that in a way it was also a kind of pretence to hide their atrocious social racial arrogance against the local people. To quote Chaudhuri,

This combination of cowardice and ferocity is always exhibited by people who live in a situation of danger without being exposed themselves to any personal risk; as for example; by civilians during a war. The British community in India, and more especially its trading element, showed this self-generated pseudo-bellicosity (302).

Chaudhuri says that at times of real danger the British administrators exhibited cool nerves but when nothing had happened that was in times of peace they found enjoyment in nursing fears. It was in Calcutta where most of the British community was settled and were engaged in trade, commerce and industry the noise seemed to be loudest. According to Chaudhuri, “they barked, gapped and snarled like frightened street dogs” (302). They even complained that handkerchiefs infested with venereal diseases were dropped on the seats of the tram-cars where less affluent British and their womenfolk traveled. Chaudhuri denies this accusation as baseless and goes on to say that no revolutionary had any access to such contagious germs because they were too puritanical in character and those who were in love – that was “unfleshly” (303) and was more of a platonic type. Chaudhuri satirically says that no clever Bengali who had studied in England would believe that the British people needed to be contaminated by the venereal diseases from the handkerchiefs of the revolutionaries. In his own words,

I have heard them repeat what must have been a state joke in England: I gave to the maid, the maid gave it to father, father gave it to mother and mother gave it to parson.” In any case there were bazaar prostitutes in India to spread venereal disease among the British in India, who did not stand in need of contaminated handkerchiefs from Bengal revolutionaries to contract it (303).

Chaudhuri writes that these revolutionary activities of Bengal persisted for two years. The last of their outrageous outbursts fell on Sir Stanley Jackson, the then Governor of Bengal. He was shot while he was presiding over the Convocation Ceremony of the Calcutta University as the Chancellor on 7, February 1932. The assailant was a student named Bina Das. She was the daughter of a school headmaster. She missed her target and was caught up by the Vice-Chancellor. He was a Muslim and was knighted immediately by the British Government for this. Bina Das was convicted to nine years imprisonment.

The revolutionary movement was suppressed by arresting a large number of suspected young men and old leaders and detaining them without trial. The police strengthened their network by appointing a lot of informers from all walks of life. In fact they had a lot of informers from the same class as revolutionaries. The police did not record the name of the informer. They recorded only the information concerned. It was their policy of prevention to be better than cure. In this way they controlled the revolutionary activities of Bengal.

According to Chaudhuri the police detained probably a few thousands revolutionaries in this connection. The leaders who masterminded the plans were sent to the hill forts of Rajputana. Among the detainees there were some remarkable figures of the National Movement like two highest political leaders of Bengal – Sarat Chandra Bose and his younger brother Subhas Chandra Bose. Subhas was deeply associated with the nationalist politics as well as in close contact with the revolutionaries. Sarat Bose was barrister of the Calcutta High Court and had been ideologically very close to his brother and both of them were secretly very well informed about the revolutionary activities. Sarat Bose was interned in Kurseong, a hill station near Darjeeling. He named his dog there “Coulson” after the name of the Police Commissioner of Calcutta, who succeeded Charles Tegart after his retirement. He was kept in imprisonment for four years. After his release he went back to the bar and joined politics again. During this time Chaudhuri was appointed his secretary. It was a significant period of Chaudhuri’s life because being with him he acquired a deep insight about the arena of Indian Nationalist Movement.

Chaudhuri gives us information about the treatment of the colonial authority to the detained revolutionaries. He writes that despite of some of their attitude of creating trouble to the authority in every possible way, in general they were well treated. They were given handsome allowances and enough food for their sustenance. Sometimes their relatives who depended on them also received help from the Government.

Chaudhuri writes that although the situation came under control by the end of 1932 the British government decided to make a show of military power in Bengal to raise an impression of awe and fear among the civilians. With that end in view they ordered one battalion of British infantry, six of Indian infantry, all Gurkhas and two brigade headquarters to Bengal. The troops were posted in comparatively troubled areas and they were ordered to display parade marches before the villagers. Chaudhuri remembers seeing trains full of Gurkha soldiers at a station in northern part of Bengal while returning to Calcutta from Shilong in November 1932. A part of the

expenditure of this military deployment was imposed on the Bengal. On this aspect Chaudhuri wrote an article in *Modern Review*. Chaudhuri comments that as a whole the following years remained quiet in this revolutionary issue.

Chaudhuri also turns up to find out the real causes behind the revolutionary uprisings. He dismisses the idea of economic reason which was the view of many people. They said that since the educated young men were unemployed they became involved in these dangerous activities to while out their time.

Chaudhuri confidently wipes out the accusation and says that unemployment had nothing to do with revolutionary activities because by the time the young generation became recruited for these activities their age group spanned between fourteen to eighteen years. So for them at that time there was no problem of livelihood. Another vital point was that these boys mostly came from well-to-do families and some of them were from wealthy families. They were the offspring of professional men like lawyers, doctors, teachers, government servants or even police officers. So those who had problems of livelihood generally kept no relation with such revolutionary activities.

Chaudhuri believes that the dream of revolution had actually sprung from racial and class hatred. He confirms that though driven by serious racial hatred the Bengali revolutionary did not try to overthrow the British Government by dying of hunger in prison except one sensational event in one case. It ended prestigiously. The exception occurred in 1929 when a Bengali revolutionary named Jatin Das was imprisoned in Lahore jail. He took to fast in demand of better treatment for prisoners and continued it for 64 days. At the end of that period he died. The British authorities did not give in. His body arrived in Calcutta and a large procession carried his dead body from Howrah Station to the cremation place at Kalighat. Chaudhuri comments that the procession was larger than the one which followed the last remaining of C. R. Das.

Next, Chaudhuri comments on the impact of the revolutionary activities in Bengal and Bengalis. He says that as an active movement it lost its spirit as soon as the police force was directed to control it intelligently. It never rose again till the end of the British rule.

Chaudhuri views that this revolutionary movement which he terms as the obsession with weak violence by the Bengalis harmed them permanently. Chaudhuri mourns it as a political grievance for the Bengalis. Because before independence the British deprived the Bengalis from national scene and in the course of achieving independence the Bengalis became alienated from Gandhi

(for he could not support their violent revolutionary activities) and thus could not get any national position after independence. Gandhi indirectly cornered the top Bengali leaders like Subhas Bose from the leading position of the All India Congress.

Subhas Bose was a man of indomitable spirit. Chaudhuri noticed him for the first time at the Congress session in Calcutta in December 1928. There Subhas Bose gave an exhibition of formal militarism. He presented there a corps of volunteer, clad in military uniform with steel-chain badges. He wore a uniform too which was made by a British tailor firm with all through English cloth material. He called himself GOC of the cavalry of the volunteers. He sent a telegram to himself addressing as such to the General Commanding of the Presidency and Assam district of the Indian Army in Fort William. From there it was directed to the proper addressee and that created a lot of amusement among the British in Calcutta. Chaudhuri informs that girls were also included in the women contingent of the corps. Chaudhuri's wife Amiya who was then a college student also attended there as a volunteer. The girls were not put in any kind of uniform. Sajani Das drew a caricature of Bose as GOC and of the girls and published it in the *Sanibarer Chithi*. Chaudhuri though had not been so passionate a nationalist-minded man then, still could not appreciate Das's this sort of activity. Chaudhuri's impression was that Bose's activities thus reflected the hidden military aspirations of the Bengali middle class people. Chaudhuri also noticed an infantry training manual of the British Army in Bose's own hand. Mahatma Gandhi as usual took offence to this activities and called all this "Bertram Mill's Circus" (317). He ridiculed the whole thing.

To quote Chaudhuri regarding the existing situation,

But even this shallow and theatrical militarism was better than the infatuation with weak violence showed by the Bengali middle class in 1930. The events of those years were too tragic to be subjects of satire. I felt deep sorrow all the time.

Yet all educated Bengalis were in sympathy with the revolutionaries (317).

Chaudhuri regrets that the revolutionaries did not get any reward for their sacrifices later. It was their aim to become free from the British rule but unfortunately in the newly independent India no honour or position was accorded to them. Chaudhuri cites the example of other countries where revolutionaries were invited to form government at the end of a successful revolution. Chaudhuri thinks that only India and Bengal are exception to this rule. The Bengali revolutionaries had no political role. He remembers his friend Gopal Halder and Tridib

Chaudhuri. After independence they became communists and joined the opposition. At that time Chaudhuri's observation was that in India in the Legislative Assembly the opposition members formally participated in the law making – they hardly had any chance to have formed a government or holding any officer. However, Chaudhuri's comment that after remaining in the Congress fractions the Bengali's tried to maintain their intellectual integrity elected the Marxist Government in West Bengal later though it was nothing very strong – rather a moderate form of Marxism which had many weak alignments.

Conclusion

6.3

It is difficult to form an accurate estimate of the effect of the boycott movement of the foreign goods in Bengal as no exact statistics is available. It is known, however, from the official and confidential Police reports that for the first two or three years, there was a serious decline in the import of British goods, particularly cloth.

But the most positive significance of the movement was that this urge to use indigenous goods instead of the foreign ones soon attained a much more comprehensive character and became a concrete symbol of nationalism. The Swadeshi movement in Bengal involved a class of people who originally belonged to the landed aristocracy. These people till then maintained distance from the Congress or any other political organization. They had little or no connection with the lower strata of the society. This society included a large number of Muslims. The core message of Swadeshi was 'Atmasakti'. Outside Bengal it also stimulated the political thoughts of the people. It taught the people to challenge and defy the authority of the Government openly in public and took away from the minds of even ordinary men the dread of police assault and prison so successfully that the sense of fear which was attached to these attributes before had totally disappeared.

The monumental figure Tagore also took part in this movement. He participated in the mass rallies delivered speeches and composed many of his famous songs including *Banglar Mati Banglar Ja* during this time. He wrote this song to commemorate the Rakhi Bandhan Day as a symbolic gesture against the decision of partition. On that special Day the Hindus tied Rakhi to their Muslim brothers as a symbol of communal harmony negating the social Hindu tradition of looking down to the Muslims as inferior aliens. But Tagore's enthusiasm soon faded out as the

non-violent mode of the movement changed to a violent one. Tagore condemned the violence perpetrated by the Extremist groups. Moreover the deceptive character and hypocrisies of some of the national leaders frustrated him. To quote Nurul Kabir in this issue:

Suddenly when the English-literate city dwellers go to the illiterate villagers to say that “we are brothers” the rural poor fellow cannot understand the meaning of the ‘brother’. We have always treated these villager’s as ‘rustics’, their sorrows and happiness have hardly mattered to us we still need to take the official statistics to know their conditions and we have never visited them in their difficulties. Now, while protesting against the British, if we suddenly call upon these people, in the name of brotherhood, to purchase essential commodities at a higher price and to be exposed to police torture, it is only natural for them to be suspicious about our intention. And that they did. I have heard from a Swadeshi propagandist that after hearing the Swadeshi speeches, the Muslims of East Bengal talked to each other that the ‘Babus must have been exposed to difficulties’ (quoted from the book *Rabindranath Tagore and the Muslim Society* by Bhuiyan Iqbal by Nurul Kabir).

But the bondage of Rakhi could not keep tied or unify the two communities because they had drifted away from each other over a period of more than a century primarily because of the politically dominant Hindu community’s maltreatment to the weaker Muslim community.

The so-called Swadeshi movement did not contain the political essence of ‘nationalism’ and as such it was not inherently secular. Instead it divided the nation in Bengal along the religious lines. Nirad Chaudhuri rightly observes:

“The Nationalist movement brought about an accentuation of the difference between Hindus and Muslims. Theoretically it preached Hindu-Muslim Unity . . . But against that unconvincing preaching was to be set the definite inculcation of an anti-Muslim doctrine” (270). Then Chaudhuri quoting Bipin Chandra Pal says, “It gradually awoke, at least in a section of the nationalists, the . . . ambition of once more re-establishing either a single Hindu state or a confederacy of Hindu states in India” (271).

There was more to it. Nirad Chaudhuri points out: “The more dangerous form of the aggravation of Hindu-Muslim antagonism by the Swadeshi Movement was that this hostility was now

brought down from the historical to the contemporary plane and converted from a retrospective hatred to a current hatred” (271).

Chaudhuri provides us with a vivid description of how the Swadeshi movement brought in a communal division among the school boys of a small township of Kishoreganj in East Bengal. To quote him,

A very large number of our school-fellows were Muslims, and in the whole school there were at least as many Muslim boys as Hindu. We worked, talked and played with them quite naturally (272) . . . But the change inevitably came, and came very early. It was from the end of 1906 that we became conscious of a new kind of hatred to the Muslims, which sprang out of the present and showed signs of poisoning our personal relations with our Muslim neighbours and school fellow. . . Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, the protagonist of the Muslim League and new Muslim politics, became our particular *bête noire* – and we contemptuously called him “the one-eyed (273).

I agree with Kabir’s observation that the All India Muslim league came to be born in Dacca ‘in the end of 1906’ and the Nawab of Dhaka, Sir Salimullah hosted the conference of the Muslim leaders of the sub-continent, who were behind the formation of the party. While the Muslim League leaders of India had a general political objective to represent Muslim interests separately -- independently of the All India Congress. Nawab Salimullah had along with the general objective, an additional one – the consolidation and expansion of the new opportunities for the local Muslims, particularly its elite, in the newly created Muslim majority province of East Bengal. Hence, the Hindus of East Bengal were ‘contemptuous particularly about Salimullah and found him *bête noire*’ – ‘the black beast’. Chaudhuri also provides us with a specific example of the intensity of communal hatred – that the Swadeshi movement, largely disliked by the Muslims had generated even in the young hearts of the school boys in his hometown of East Bengal. To quote Chaudhuri,

A cold dislike for the Muslim settled down in our hearts, putting an end to all real intimacy of relationship. Curiously enough, with us, the boys of kishoreganj, it found visible expression in the division of our class into two sections, one composed purely of the Hindus and the other of Muslims (276) . . . whether or not the Muslim boys had also expressed unwillingness to sit with us, for sometime past we, the Hindu boys had been clamouring that we did not want to sit with the Muslim boys because they smelt of onions (277). The ‘cold dislike for the Muslims’ that

settled down in the hearts of the Hindus of Kishoreganj, in fact represents the situation of entire Bengal of the time.

The annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911 might have reduced the level of Hindu dislike for the Muslims, but it definitely deepened the Muslim dislike, particularly that of the Muslim elite, for the Hindus of Bengal in general, for the annulment robbed the Muslim elite of East Bengal of certain benefits that it had started enjoying due to the partition.

The Hindu elite of Bengal continued to show enmity even after the annulment of the partition in 1911. Aware of the dissatisfaction over the annulment of the partition, the British regime arranged for a “splendid imperial compensation” for the annulment by way of setting up of a university in Dacca. Lord Lytton the then Governor of Bengal, disclosed in his convocation speech in 1922 that the university was planned as an ‘imperial compensation’ for the annulment of the Eastern Bengal and Assam province (quoted from the book of M. A. Rahim by Nurul Kabir).

To this effect, the government published a communique on Feb 2, 1912, stating the decision of the government to set up Dhaka University. But the Kolkata based Hindu elite made all out efforts to undo the project. In this regard a historian of Dhaka University Prof M a Rahim writes,

The Hindu leaders were opposed to the plan of setting up of a university at Dacca. They voiced their disapprobation in press and platform. On Feb 16, 1912 a delegation headed by Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh waited upon the Viceroy and expressed apprehension that the creation of a separate university at Dacca would be in the nature of “an internal partition of Bengal”. They also contended that the Muslims of Eastern Bengal were in large majority cultivators and they would benefit in no way by the foundation of a university (5).

The Government, however, did not succumb to the Hindu pressure. In a letter on April 4, 1912, the Government of India invited the Government of Bengal to submit a complete report with a financial estimate for the proposed university.

The University of Dhaka was eventually founded in July 1921. In the initial decades, the vast majority of the teachers and students of the University was Hindu. Still the Kolkata based Hindu elite used contemptuously call the Dacca University ‘Mecca University’ hinting obliquely that the institution was meant exclusively for the Muslims – the University which would in fact become the centre of secular democratic political thoughts of East Bengal in two decades and

guide all secular democratic students movements in the next two decades, contributing substantially towards the consequence of secular-democratic Bangladesh in 1971.

Another important aspect of the Swadeshi Movement was the revolutionaries. The primary contribution of these revolutionaries was the indirect pressure they exerted on the movement of freedom. Their expression of undaunted courage and undying urge for achieving freedom inspired others. The valiant sacrifices of lives by Khudirsm, Surya Sen, Jatindranath Das etc. served as a perennial source of moral strength for the following generation who attained manhood between 1908 and 38. Besides these it would be hard to count the success of the revolutionaries.

There effected some changes in the Government policy due to the revolutionary attacks on the British:

Firstly, it caused serious alarm to the British Government in India.

Secondly, the activities of the British intelligence service increased to a great extent after the bomb incident. And it was within a very short time that the British police authorities unearthed the bomb factory at Muraripukur in Calcutta.

Thirdly, the Alipore Conspiracy Case instituted against the revolutionaries was the first of its kind in India which was soon to be followed by a number of conspiracy cases lodged against the revolutionary outrages committed later.

The Bengali Revolution finally became a failure. It could not bring about any significant change in the society. There were several causes behind its failure like the revolutionaries mainly came from the urban middle class intelligentsia. They were out of touch with the peasants and workers. They lacked a common plan and a central leadership. And on the top of everything the British government on its part pursued a ruthless and repressive policy towards them.

Chapter 7

Partition and its aftermath

Overview

7.1

Kuldip Nayar in his autobiography *Beyond the Lines* narrates Partition as the greatest tragedy humanity had ever witnessed. Like many other migrants from West Punjab to East Punjab – the Partition also became his story of life. Born and brought up in the Muslim majority populated Shialkot in Punjab Nayar had to leave his ancestral land in 1947 and step into a new land in order to survive and avoid the hostility of the other religious sect. There were a few families like the family of Nayar who did not want to leave their own home and go to India because they thought that as large numbers of Muslims would continue to live in India and the same would be true to the Hindus of Pakistan. Nayar remembers that before the announcement of Partition was made on 3rd June 1947 they had led a normal life there despite of the prevailing communal tensions. But the announcement seemed to have sparked the insatiable anger of the Hindus and the Muslims. “A sadistic desire” (9) of killing inflamed both the communities and they became atrocious to each other. The situation became more aggravated because the administration also became divided on the religious lines.

Many other writers and intellectuals had also examined the issue of partition from different angles. Mushtaq Naqvi, for example, writes in his book *Partition: The Real Story* that even those who knew that Pakistan would not include in its territory their places of birth where they had been living peacefully with Hindu neighbours for centuries supported the idea sincerely and wished it to happen. They thought that the Partition would give birth to an Islamic country. To quote Naqvi,

When it came to the matters of state they listened to their political leaders. They turned a deaf ear to such eminent Muslim divines as Madani and Azad and did not let slip away any occasion to ridicule and positively humiliate them. They did not spare the coffin of the wife of Maulana Azad which was stoned in Calcutta while the Maulana was in jail. It seemed as if the Muslims worked up a frenzy which swept aside everything on its way to Pakistan including reason and sanity (100).

Kushwant Singh, a victim of Partition like Nayar describes the political atmosphere of the country during the Partition in his novel *Train to Pakistan*. In the foreword of his book Singh writes,

A cold war broke out between Muslims on the one side, Hindus and Sikhs on the other. It was not like other wars in which armed men battle with each other, one in which one side armed with swords, knives and staves slew the other side, unarmed and unresisting. Women were abducted, raped and forced into wedlock against their will. Thousands escaped by throwing themselves into wells. Over ten million were uprooted from their homelands and treaded across the plains on foot, or were crammed into bullock carts and trains set upon marauders and killers till they crossed the new frontiers to safety. . . . Almost overnight, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, who had co-existed amicably over centuries became sworn enemies. The aftermath was beastlier than anything beasts could have done to each other (xxii).

Perceptions of Chaudhuri

7.2

Nirad C. Chaudhuri observes the prelude of independence from his own experience. He too confirms the mass murders committed by the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs on one another in 1946 and 1947. He also believes that the political actors who were responsible for much of the mayhem that accompanied the Partition could not anticipate such a blood bath. It was also true that they could not prevent it because the situation went beyond their control.

Chaudhuri believes that the British imperialists might have thought that as soon as they would leave, the Muslims of the North-West India would descend on the plains and massacre the unwarlike inhabitants including Bengalis. But in reality what happened was the Bengalis themselves killed each other along religious lines. It was deplorable because this divisive spirit of religion sparked through the rest of India. The British soldiers and officers were there but they could not control the mass slaughter.

According to Chaudhuri the massacre became inevitable when the Indian people understood that Partition could not be avoided. What would be the nature of their inheritance after the British had left became the root of their acute anxiety and the old feelings of hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims triggered.

Chaudhuri says that the hatred between the communities heightened and became so acute that it was hard to mitigate. There was the historical resentment between the two communities and later the intense desire of self assertion that complicated the matters to such an extent that both the communities became impatient. They seemed to be in a psychological state which was not ready to make any slight concession to the other.

Chaudhuri maintains that if the British had interfered with the settlement of the issues and imposed their best options over the parties even by force if necessary things would have turned out better. The situation would not have deteriorated so much in that case. But the reality was that the British gave the opportunity to the political leaders to decide everything themselves.

Chaudhuri says that the transfer of power was actually a bluff. Firstly because the British were not ready to hand over power to the people of India and they had no specific plan in this regard. After the Second World War the situation changed. Due to economic pressure Britain became unable to carry on the burden of its colonies so they wanted to abandon it. They decided to decolonize India because it was their largest colony. The political leaders of India becoming aware of their intention started bargaining. The two rival communities the Hindus and the Muslims tried to extract privileges from the British Government through their respective political organizations – The Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. Chaudhuri had no doubt about the good intention of the British. He thinks that they wanted to leave India with good conscience; so they were reluctant to give in to the Indian political games. They welcomed all the parties to let them know their point of views. It proves that the issue was not only the transfer of power but also negotiations with different communities to settle of the animosity between them. Chaudhuri writes,

This talking went on for two years, and every failure seemed to whet the appetite for more talks. In the end, all this led to the inescapable result – an unqualified surrender to the Hindu – Muslim animosity. It is that which has been described in the pseudo – history of this period in India as ‘transfer of power’ (806).

Chaudhuri harshly criticizes all the formal steps pursued for the intended settlement like the Simla Conference in 1945, the Cabinet Mission Plan in 1946, and the formation of The Interim Government. The British and the Indian political leaders were ignoring the national interest and welfare of the general people. But Chaudhuri does not deny its indirect positive implications. He terms the Simla conference a flop though it revealed the disunity between the Congress and the

Muslim League, which should have been a warning to the British authorities both in Britain and in India. Chaudhuri considers the next plan of the British – the Cabinet Mission Plan as the last chance for keeping India united by meeting the Muslim demands as far as possible. Jinnah agreed to it but the Congress refused.

Chaudhuri had seen Independence from the inside. Various issues intensified his queries. The anti-Muslim attitude of Gandhi and Nehru surprised him because he believed them to be secular persons. According to his observation Nehru had a deep sensitivity towards Muslim culture. He was quite close to the upper class Muslims in his home province U.P. In fact he dressed up like them and was more accustomed to their ways. Chaudhuri maintains that Nehru did not know much about contemporary Hinduism as preached in Bengal and Maharashtra and maintained very little sympathy for what he actually knew of it. Chaudhuri expected that a message of amity for the two communities would have come from Gandhi and Nehru. But it was shocking for him to see that they became opposed to Muslim demands like any other Hindu extremist. This characteristic contradiction in their action had hurt him deeply.

Chaudhuri had his own interpretation about it. He says that when both the leaders were in jail between 1942 and 1945 they could not guide the political movement of the country. During this vacuum of leadership -- fundamentalist parties like Hindu Mahashabha and a fraction of Muslim League became powerful. The country suffered a strong polarization between Hindu Nationalism and Muslim Nationalism. On their release from jail Gandhi and Nehru found the spirit of Hindu nationalism so intense that they had no other way but to yield to it. In this way they became anti-Muslim.

About the formation of the Interim Government Chaudhuri's view is that in the referendum involving two opposite ideologies the Muslim League won. The Viceroy invited the Congress to form the Government because Jinnah did not fully accept the Cabinet Mission plan. But Nehru too rejected certain provisions of the plan which made Jinnah reject it. Chaudhuri informs that Lord Wavell was not also quite satisfied with his own action. By introducing this new type of Government the Viceroy and the Governor General of India became constitutional heads and that was why they could not exercise any power and control during the mass killing when it took place.

The Congress was happy to have ascended to power. Muslim League demanded the inclusion of its members in the Cabinet by October. Chaudhuri's opinion is that the members of the two

parties did not have any tolerance and frequently attacked each other. It was like two governments working in the centre but without any effect. So it could not control the Hindu-Muslim massacre.

Chaudhuri in his autobiographical details also includes the 'Direct Action Day' observed from 16 to 18 August, 1946 in Calcutta which later came to be known as the great "Calcutta Killing" (). Its implication was so far reaching in the implementation of the Partition of Bengal and the migration of the Biharis from Bihar to the Eastern part of Bengal that the post-Partition generation could never forget it. In fact after this killing it became evident that co-existence between the two communities was impossible. Chaudhuri too could not help getting moved in describing the episode of 16 August.

He informs that on that day in every Muslim concentrated area the Muslims were seen to sharpen their knives and spears and uttering ferocious threats. The secular minded Muslims advised their Hindu friends to avoid the Muslim areas. But no one could calculate how worse the situation could be. The British Viceroy being placed in a constitutional timid position could not launch his army unless the Bengal Chief Minister requested him to do so. The Ministry asked for its intervention in the 2nd day of its occurrence. The militia was a large one – it comprised eight thousand soldiers of British and Indian origin. If it had been properly deployed in advance the fatal situation could be controlled.

Chaudhuri relates that there was certain unwillingness on the part of the Bengal Government to summon the military but later they changed their mind. It might be perhaps they wanted to become free from the charge of plotting the massacre or they saw that the Hindus retaliated more on the Muslims. The military brought the situation under control on the following day. The number of casualties and seriously injured people exceeded twenty thousand even according a conservative account.

This great 'Calcutta killing' also paved the way for mass bloodshed in Punjab during the Partition.

Chaudhuri cannot forget the inhuman savagery inflicted through these large-scale murders. He mentions one of his friend's experiences who saw a Muslim boy of ten years being murdered brutally by the Hindus. His friend tried but failed to save him. The soldiers of the militia discovered a man tied to the electric connector box of the tramline with a hole made in his skull

so that he might die slowly from excess bleeding. Chaudhuri cites many more typical examples of such cruelty.

Chaudhuri also writes about well-intentioned Muslims and their initiatives to save their Hindu friends. One of his friends with his family was saved in that way. The mother of this friend was a widow and a very pious and philanthropic lady. She was the daughter of Bengali reformer Keshob Chandra Sen and the sister of the two Maharanis. They used to live in the Muslim dominating Park Circus area. During a fateful day his friend with his brothers stood behind the front door with bamboo sticks to give a last fight. They heard the blows on the doors and yells of the Muslim attackers over which a sudden masterful voice of the Imam of a nearby mosque rose and warned them to stop. The attackers obeyed them and left. But such incidents were a few and far between.

Chaudhuri also confirms that the truth about the Calcutta massacre and its organization was never discovered. A commission was appointed to investigate the tragedy but no report was ever published and after Partition it was dissolved.

Chaudhuri remembers that the immediate after effect of the killing was the repentance shown by both the communities by embracing each other openly and calling each other brothers. But such fake show-offs could not pacify the animosity of the communities. The city remained disturbed for the whole year till the independence came. Violence continued.

Chaudhuri confirms the far-reaching effect of the killings in Calcutta and Noakhali, a southern district of East Bengal where the Muslims retaliated on the Hindus through large-scale massacres. Mahatma Gandhi immediately went there for bringing peace among the communities. Chaudhuri then a resident of Delhi could feel the impact of the Noakhali riots there. He remembers that the father of one of his neighbours who was from Noakhali, arrived in Delhi like a refugee leaving his wife and daughter behind. Chaudhuri says that this old man behaved roughly with anyone he thought was Muslim. The father did not go back to the riot-stricken Noakhali anymore. His son went there and rescued the other members of the family.

Chaudhuri also felt that the Noakhali riots had far reaching repercussions in the whole of Northern India.

In Bihar, for example, where the majority were the Hindus, Muslims were killed in masses at that time. The majority community in Bihar was the Hindus. They became hostile and killed the Muslims in masses. The slaughter went on from October to November.

At the same time, the killings spread westward to the next province U.P. In the western U.P Garh Mukteswar on the Ganges was a famous holy spot for bathing in the late autumn. That year the festival fell in November and from 5th to 16th November. The large crowds of Hindu pilgrims dipped into the sea where Muslim blood was spilled and thus fulfilled their destined pilgrimage. Chaudhuri's view was that these events made Partition inevitable whereas before a year the British administration and the Indian National Congress even refused to contemplate over the issue.

But the confirmed decision of the Partition could not stop this killing. Even after the formal acceptance of Partition the massacres started from March, 1947 and continued even after its implementation. It first started in the district around the capital Delhi and two other adjoining Princely States of Bharatpur and Alwar both of which were ruled by Hindu princes. Chaudhuri first heard about it from a Muslim friend and a colleague of his whose village home was in Bharatpur. He told him that the Jats were killing the Muslims and so his relatives were fleeing from the state.

Chaudhuri recollects that after a few years when his sons went to Bharatpur to see the famous palace of Dig, they saw that the town was largely depopulated. When they inquired about it the Jats explained that they had forced the Muslims to leave the place.

Punjab was the most riot ridden area. Before Partition it was a peaceful state where Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs lived in harmony. But when communal killing started the overall law and order situation of Punjab broke down. The killings started in Amritsar, but took a horrifying shape after the acceptance of Partition. The Muslims of West Punjab also killed Hindus and Sikhs in large numbers and the rest were driven out from there.

Chaudhuri believes that since the British had ruled the Indians for so many years it was their duty to settle everything amicably before they had departed:

The responsibility for all this killing, bloodshed, plunder, ruin and displacements of millions, with their subsequent miseries, must be placed squarely on the shoulders of the British authorities – directly on the British administration in India and at one remove on the Government at home. There was no way in which either of them could refuse to accept that, and I assume for the credit of the British people that they would admit their historical responsibility in retrospect (815).

Chaudhuri gives in detail the deteriorating communal situation of Delhi which continued for three weeks following the Partition. The outbreak of violence started in September 1947. The capital city of India saw large scale “looting, arson, and massacre”. (837)

Chaudhuri recollects that the disturbances started in Delhi during the last six days of August and the first six days of September 1947. In the suburban areas around Delhi several incidents of stabbings, looting and minor arson took place. A night time curfew was imposed from 25 August and another more rigorous one only with a recession for two to four hours was enforced from 28 August to 1 September.

Chaudhuri still managed to attend his office. He sometimes went there by car, sometimes in the public bus and sometimes by bi-cycle or by foot. On Sunday, September 7 the situation worsened. Chaudhuri was told by some people that it was “premeditated and prearranged” (839). In Chaudhuri’s words,

The way the rioting developed, spread, and continued makes this allegation plausible. In any case, what happened in Delhi happened with moral concurrence of almost the whole Hindu and Sikh population of the city, and perhaps more than moral concurrence on the part of the police and soldiers (839).

Chaudhuri depicts human beings ability to survive the riot. He cites a few examples from his experience. One day he saw one of his servants who happened to be also the peon of his office coming home with his head shaven with a prominent tuft at the back of his head. The man had been free from religious prejudices so far. But in those days he did not feel secure so he exposed the symbol of Hinduism on his scalp. The fashion of proclaiming one’s religion became popular and it spread fast. The Hindu of Punjab kept his shirt collar unbuttoned to expose the thread he wore which was considered sacred in his religion. The Indian Christians wore their red cross by stitching it to their shirt. In this context Chaudhuri mentions the most uncommon exhibition of the cross that he had ever seen was on the body of a Christian sergeant working in the GHQ of the Indian Army. He says the sergeant was in full uniform, displaying his three chevrons on the arm and with his rifle held from the shoulder. Chaudhuri further adds that a coloured ribbon on his chest showed that he had done active service in the war, but hanging from his war service ribbon, was a brass cross about two inches in length. The shops also carried the religious identity of their owners. The shops in Connaught Place had the inscription “Hindu Shop” (849) on the top of them.

Chaudhuri quotes from his diary entries that from Saturday, 13 September 1947 he began to see refugees in the street. He mentions that in his locality the inhabitants were mostly of lower middle classes – who were artisans, small shopkeepers, workmen etc. They had been living in that locality for decades and perhaps for generations. The Muslim inhabitants were then instructed by the Government to leave their homes and take refuge in the camps established by the government for safety. With scanty belongings they were waiting to go there. Chaudhuri comments with subtle sarcasm that he had read in the newspapers that after the first day of riot in the Connaught Place the Government had saved the lives of many Muslim residents of New Delhi by removing them quickly from their homes. The Government could not ensure their safety in their homes.

Chaudhuri heard that everybody was talking about the restoration of normalcy only through the removal of the Muslims “either through death or flight or confinement in the refugee camps” (849). But peace could not be restored until all the shops were owned by Muslims were taken over by the Sikhs and Punjabi Hindus. They also forcibly occupied all the houses of the Muslims. All the goods of the Muslim shops were seized and openly sold by the same. Chaudhuri writes that the only time the Muslims could flee with their lives was when the Hindu and Sikh fanatics were busy looting. The Muslims had died mostly in their houses where there was very little to loot. Chaudhuri was not sure about the motive of those looters. Was it just greed for material possession or religious fanaticism, he asked.

Chaudhuri explicates another issue already mentioned above, which became very common in Delhi after Partition. It was the possession of the properties of the Muslims by the Sikhs and the Hindus. They used to enter the vacant houses and occupied them. Chaudhuri had to face such a situation. He had a Muslim neighbour who left his house in his charge and went to Pakistan. To ensure the safety of the house Chaudhuri locked up the flat and posted a notice saying that the flat was under his possession. But on 17 September morning he heard that a group of Sikhs and Punjabis broke open the flat and tried to occupy it. On hearing the news Chaudhuri rushed to the place and was able to convince them to leave the place. But the episode disgusted him. Being a student of history he once again realized the basic truth of man’s nature. In his own words,

What it felt like being a Roman citizen in Gaul or some other province of the Roman Empire contiguous to the Germanic fatherland, when one tribe of Teutonic barbarians driven out of their home territory by other stronger tribes

came into these provinces. I could see their memory of their dispossession by the stronger barbarians and of their headlong fight before them had nothing to chasten their savage impulse to dispossess the civilized peoples who were weaker than they (852).

Chaudhuri noted the events following the Partition sequentially. On 18 September Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made an appeal to the armed forces to discharge their duties impartially. It was their sole duty to protect the citizens and defend the country, he reminded them. Chaudhuri being a well-read person on Military code believed that the army personnel were always fully concerned about the rules and regulations. He never had any idea that they too needed reminders. He remembers that immediately after the riot broke out one of the New Indian Major-Generals who was in command of the Delhi area issued an order to his troops that it was their duty to obey the order of the superiors “implicitly and impartially” (853).

On October 14 a headline in a newspaper attracted his attention. The headline was “Exaggerated Reports on India Deplored”. Lord Listowel claimed that the post-Partition situation in India was not so bad as it had been publicized. He made three important points. The first one was that the average citizens of both India and Pakistan had not been involved in the riots. The second was that disturbances only occurred in Punjab but the reports of which also had been coloured. And third, what had happened was trifle compared to what could have happened in case the British rule continued till then. Chaudhuri was shocked by the views of Lord Listowel. But later he understood that after being in Delhi during the riots Lord Listowel might have been suffering from the qualms of conscience for his share of responsibility in the riots.

In this way Chaudhuri gives a passionate account of the collapse of the Imperial system of Delhi just after the Partition.

Conclusion

7.3

It may be largely said that since the Partition was a new phenomenon to the people and politicians of the subcontinent the political leaders could not foresee its negative aspects. Their chief mission was to drive out the British from the subcontinent in any way they could. They also became physically and psychologically tired by exerting all their efforts to lead the renewed

struggle for independence from 1920 onwards. So they did not hesitate to compromise with the existing situation by accepting Partition. The direct aftermath of Partition was beyond their imagination. Jinnah's secretary, K. H. Khurshid many years later told journalist Kuldip Nayar in Lahore that Jinnah had never visualized such large-scale massacre and migration taking place after Partition (8). His idea of Pakistan was basically that of a formation of a parliamentary democracy where there would be no difference between Muslims and non-Muslims on the basis of religion. Khurshid's comment however is no historical truth because if that was so then why Jinnah did give support to the Muslim League Working Committee's declaration of 'Direct Action day' and made Partition a 'necessity of the time'. It is understood that the implied meaning of direct action was no doubt 'Instant killing'. Is it acceptable that that the very dark premonition of cruel butchery escaped Jinnah! It was true that this 'migration' of human resources was a new phenomenon at that time. It is heard that Jinnah at first did not believe the reports that thousands of people were crossing the borders from both sides. Both Congress and Muslim League rejected migration as a policy. They told everybody to stay at their own homes. But the spread of riot and religious fanaticism went beyond control. Jinnah remained sullen for a few days and then accused India of trying to undermine the transfer of power though at heart he had reservation over the issue.

General people in the subcontinent are the victims of over ambitious and politicians and their utopian dreams. For this unfortunate division of India both Jinnah and Nehru's roles were more significant. Nehru and other leaders of Congress were not happy to see India divided after they had stood for united India for so many years. Maulana Azad has written that Nehru believed that partition was by nature wrong but there was no alternative to it.

The aftermath of the partition had been a legacy of tears, agony of displacement and the deep anguish of leaving ancestral homes. I may mention here the name of Saadat Hasan Manto. He represented the right thinking, perceptive poets and writers who could understand this agony and anguish. He hated politics and politicians and compared them to birds of prey. He offered us a viable notion of secularism which stems from our culture and is not borrowed from the West. Partition is the price that the religious animosity made us pay and it was a dear price. It left one million dead and twenty-six million displaced.

The British government must be held primarily responsible for this catastrophe of Partition which is comparable to that of holocaust carried out in Germany by the Nazis in the Second World War under the leadership of Hitler. But the leaders of the Muslim League, the Congress and the Sikhs were also culpable in this unpardonable offence against humanity. It may seem unconvincing but Lord Mountbatten put an effort to defend his actions and inactions but why didn't the Muslim League, Congress, and the Sikhs try to justify their actions was best known to them. One is left with a distinct feeling that all the glitter, glamour, royal splendor, pomp and grandeur of the transfer of power ceremonies provided a camouflage for the mismanagement of the unduly rushed and badly executed plan for Partition. It is distressing to remember that the silent screams of countless millions remained unheard due to the whimsical actions of the self-centred political leaders.

In conclusion, Nirad C. Chaudhuri has impartially observed and analyzed the cruel and inhuman situation that prevailed around the Partition of India. The dormant animosity and hatred between the Hindus and Muslims did won over the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of the two communities for the last few centuries and this led to the tragic events of riots, killings, rapes and mass displacement as well as migration on religious grounds. He rightly blames the British Administration in India as the responsible agency who could minimize the massacres by timely intervention but at the same time, the interim Indian Government including the local administration in the states such as Bengal and Punjab were especially responsible. Chaudhuri, however, does not forget to highlight the fact that the long term responsibility for this unfortunate development lie with the Indian political leaders from both Congress and Muslim League, who in intimate analysis, gave more priority to their personal ambitions which led to ignite communal feelings rather than a desire for a secular and democratic and united India.

Conclusion

Chaudhuri occupies a controversial position in our life. It seems that about every aspect of life he had an independent view of himself. We may accept that or may not from our point of view but he had strong reason to establish his points.

Chaudhuri died on 1 August, 1999 at the age of one hundred and one year, eight months and eight days. He was in short of only twenty-one weeks to have caught the new millennium. According to his last wishes Chaudhuri was clad in a fine silk dhoti and kurta like a true Bengali 'bhadrolok on the start of his eternal journey. This also confirms his belief about himself to be first a Bengali, then a hindu and last but not least an Indian.

Chaudhuri in his centenary life was lucky to experience the direct contact of the Bengal Renaissance which eventually gave way to the emergence of Indian Nationalism.

The 19th century reawakening attained its full glory in the following five decades after 1880. He points out how the economic prosperity of a certain section of people due to the commercial attachment with the East India company contributed to the making of a successor elite class who became aroused by the great passion for reforming society and religion. Their vision of life created a Renaissance situation in Bengal. This era signifies the development of humanism and modernity. It was also characterized by the Hindu reformist movements in the areas of religion, society and thought. Intense intellectual activities in literature and arts were perceived at this time. Foundation of science following Western approach was also laid at this time. The British Orientalists too contributed to the growing up of the Bengali intelligentsia. Besides introducing new things in India like printing and publishing, founding schools and systematizing education they historicized the Indian past and stimulated a consciousness of history among Indian Hindu intellectuals. The colonized nation seemed to have invigorated in the course of time.

Chaudhuri through his autobiography insisted his indebtedness to the canonical Renaissance figures like Rammohun Roy, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Swami Vivekananda for representing the aura of modern liberal Hinduism along with the European literary heroes like Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, homer and

Virgil who were a great source of enrichment for him. He believes that these figures did speak to Europeans as their equals.

Much to Chaudhuri's regret, this spirit of Hindu liberalism acquired from the European cultural heritage was later ignored or despised by the wake of Indian Nationalism. In this connection Chaudhuri opines Mahatma Gandhi as a problematic figure whose saintly politics were often misunderstood and abused by his numerous claimed followers. In Chaudhuri's view Indian Nationalism had taken wrong turns virtually since the beginning of the twentieth century. This he felt a perpetual source of deep anguish. His sympathizes against his fellow Indians who are wrapped up by this pain. He seems to follow in the footsteps of Swami Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who also castigated their contemporary Indians in order to rouse them to patriotism and sacrifice for the nation.

Chaudhuri's book originates in despair. He was not pleased with the rise of Indian Nationalism or the immediate withdrawn of the British from the subcontinent it had ruled since 1757. He realized that both developments would put an end to the time of Babus – his fellow intellectual Bengalis centred in Calcutta who had reached out to European civilization and who he thought should be the political and cultural rulers of modern India.

He saw himself as the last survivor of the Bengal Renaissance, the vital and creative cultural movement that was initiated by Rammohun Roy in the nineteenth century and that ended with the death in 1941 of Rabindranath Tagore.

The Bengal Renaissance was flawed from the outset. It failed to involve regeneration of ancient literature and institution. Besides, the educated community in Bengal reaped the immediate benefits of the English education overlooking the exploitations of the English. The key-figures of the Renaissance failed to comprehend the needs of the toiling masses that lived in the suburbs and hinterlands with their age old Hindu rituals and traditions and also the limitations of the Muslim citizens. Another setback of this Renaissance was that the colonial rule let loose political and economic forces which led to the birth of middle class bourgeoisie. The ideology accepted from the West directly or indirectly led to the growth of Nationalism. Rammohun Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore were aware of the economic revolution which would later become beneficial for a transition from medievalism to modern times. Actually three classic factors are

responsible for a Renaissance situation: Firstly cultural growth; secondly sound economic infrastructure and thirdly free capitalism. At that time cultural growth was developing in the society but the economic situation was on the verge of decline. Almost all enterprises were debasing. In 1906 we find the mention of Jamshedji Tata's venture that was rising. Other than that as compared to Medici merchants and bankers' of Florence we didn't find any good example of free capitalism. According to several Marxist critiques, the historical process enlivened by Rammohun Roy, Bankim Chandra and Rabindranath Tagore was not a progressive one. They had invited western intrusion.

However, whether we appreciate or not, there was a wide spread turmoil and alteration occurred in the Indian society in the nineteenth century that paved way to this transition. Whether or not it was a renaissance is questionable but it did open up the avenues to the progress of Indian society so that India itself had moved to recapture its own heritage and culture. Though the path was not strewn with roses – the Bengalis had to pursue the radical approaches – had to accept optimum sacrifices but finally they were able to evoke the spirit of nationalism among the Indians. The Hindu-elite Bengali's inspired the majority Hindu Bengalis through Swadeshi movement and finally merged with the Freedom Movement in India. In the broad spectrum the main object was same for all – to end the colonial rule.

At the end of the British Raj Calcutta was almost a mirror of Bengal and it pioneered the intellectual and political life of India as a whole. Thenineteenth century social life of Calcutta can be summarized around the evolution of Anglo-Indian community, creation of the "Baboo" culture, generation of the 'bhadrolok' class coupled with a Victorian ideologue inspired women folk who initiated women liberty in Calcutta, the socio-religious revolution led by the Brahma Samaj, reorganization of social groups in various classes (including some influential families), development of social gatherings in the form of clubs, addas, musical programmes, restaurants, pastry shops etc. and overall social turmoil due to anti-British political struggles complicated by Hindu-Muslim communal tension.

What makes Nirad Chaudhuri's observation unique is his impassionate and impersonal accounts of the time and events. His 'cold' and 'detached' views tend to stimulate the objectivity of social scientists in reconstructing the life of that time and it may help to reveal causal connections in the later evolution of the society and politics in Bengal. As Chaudhuri has acknowledged that he

lived for a long thirty-two years in Calcutta but still he felt like a 'stranger' there. With his generally 'disinterested' personality he could observe society from an angle which an emotionally involved person could have never done. Partly due to this reason Chaudhuri pointed out issues which others could have never done. Partly due to this reason Chaudhuri pointed out issues which others have not seriously touched at all.

One of the so far untouched issues which Chaudhuri has elaborated is the architectural poverty and chaotic urban planning of Calcutta. Many people may feel antagonized by his comments but the non homogenous and disharmonious buildings and streets as well as crowded housings still plague Calcutta and that probably influenced planning in other major cities in Bengal. His observations on the management of roofs of the houses and garbage are still very unpleasant truths of Bengali social life.

Though Chaudhuri had admiration for the British society and culture his estimation of Chaudhuri regarding the Indian Britons and Anglo-Indians was quite low. He pointed to the 'shopkeeper' nature of the British residents in India and also the lower level cultural exposure of the Anglo-Indians. He held them responsible for the role they played in the downfall of British Empire in India.

Chaudhuri's appreciation for Rabindranath Tagore as well as for the Tagore family as a whole was immense. His acknowledgement of the positive contribution of the Brahma Samaj and other social platforms including women liberation pioneers reveal his deep inclination towards the humanist liberal ideas which rested beneath his profound likings of pro-British and pro-European culture.

He also mentions about the antagonism towards these liberal movements of Bengal from the mostly conservative communities of Calcutta. In this connection it is interesting to note his keen observation of the basic shortcomings of people of Calcutta (or West Bengal in general) and East Bengal. Although he disliked the relative characteristic harshness of the East Bengal people (from where he originally came from) he could sense the superficiality and complexity in the nature of West Bengal people which to many people is still an issue of intense discussion and may be a topic of social science research.

Chaudhuri has a very noteworthy observation about the origin of addas in the Bengali society. He traces it to the relative lack of regularly organized events like dinner and drama or tea parties in the social aura and hence it to be a sort of psychological relief for the Bengali man. So they practiced adda in their life through a habit of gossiping in work places or in any other fixed locations. In spite of differences of opinions among the participants of adda these observations certainly provoke some thoughts on many deeper social issues.

Finally, the views of Chaudhuri on organizational and political nature of Bengalees are sharp and bold. He acknowledges the guiding role of the Calcuttans in the freedom movement of India but at the same time he correctly points out to the weakness in our collective life and organizational capability. The habit of not working through any committee or council and the domination of all organizations including highest public offices of the country by 'families and friends' and 'autocratic power' are the main feature of politics in our country.

His reflections on the role of 'cliques' in Bengali political and organizational culture deserves deeper attention.

Chaudhuri actually has some in-depth and original observations on social-life of Calcutta during the British Raj which can provoke literary discourses as well as scientific research on the evolution of socio-political and cultural events in both sides of Bengal.

India's national Movement was the outcome of the contribution of many people. As the central political party Congress was the bargaining agent but the execution body was the cross section people of India. The militant nationalists, the revolutionaries, Gandhi Satyagrahis, the Khilafatists, the Communists, the INA, the peasant organizations, the Sikhs through their Gurdwara reform movement, the Vaikkqm Satyagrahis, the Garhwali Army mutineers, the Royal Indian Navy mutineers etc. all contributed to their optimum capabilities. They were essentially ordinary men women who took part in India's National movement. They came from all parts of the country and from all classes. We see them facing a firing squad or mounting the gallows, suffering imprisonment, confiscation of properties, all for a common cause and that was the end of the British rule and freedom of the country to which they belonged.

It cannot be denied that as a universally accepted leader of the Congress, at this time Gandhi was in favour of limited autonomy instead of complete freedom on the one hand on the other he was

opposed to any militant political movement of the workers of and peasants. By coordinating the khilafat and Non-co-operation movements and by placing religion in the forefront he very tactfully organized this opposition at a very difficult phase of Indian politics.

By suggesting various reform proposals the main political objective of the British Government was to safeguard and expand imperialist interest in India by giving some share of power to the representatives of the higher class vested interest groups rather than to the toiling masses of India.

Although Jawaharlal Nehru talked a lot about his knowledge of the hunger, poverty and distress of the Muslims, in reality he and Jinnah had no headache for either the Hindus or the Muslims of the poor classes. All of them were fighting for the middle class and the class interest of the bourgeoisie, and in that fight none would concede an inch to the other. But because of the absence of any organization and strength needed to control the situation, bourgeoisie politics dominated the Hindus and the Muslims. The feeling for separatism increased. The British Indian Government pretended to favour sometimes the Muslims and sometimes the Hindus. Thus more and more dividing and isolating the two major communities of India. However, though creating calculated situation by riots one after another there was no way out excepting the division of India.

It is obvious that Nirad C. Chaudhuri although free from many oriental and conservative ideas failed to appreciate the historical significance of the 'Modern' or 'Kallol' era in the evolution of Bengali literature. He was a devoted classicist and had his admiration for western liberalism. The Modernists of the early 20th century Bengal brought a new wave of insight, outlook, and style through their romanticism as well as their revolt against conventional ideas and social structure. This impetus added a renewed vitality to the already existing rich tradition of Bengali literature. At that time though it reached almost in its peak but without some fresh stream of air it might not have made the progress in the same pace as it did in the later decades of the century. It is mainly through the contribution of the Modernist poets that the Bengali readers had got the first taste of the diverse schools of art and literature not only from the English world, but also from the French, Russian, Spanish and other languages and culture widely spread across the world. The tradition in fact continued till late and the influence of the Latin American and African writers in Bengali literature, can also be traced back to the Thirty's Bengali literature for its origin.

Chaudhuri could not identify all these aspects in his observations. Even more notable is his failure to notify the ringing bell of these changes in the later writings of Rabindranath Tagore of which he was an ardent admirer. Tagore with his natural genius as well as his wide exposure to World literature could already sense the footsteps of an ensuing globalized literary arena which would be able to offer later a space to the elements of social and emotional trauma and moral transcends caused by the colonial, political and cultural invasions in the East. Although he could not embrace fully the new wave writers, he never ignored them and a few of them like Kazi Nazrul Islam received his deep appreciation. Paradoxically, Chaudhuri could not even recognize the important role that was set to be played by Islam in Bengali literature. Nazrul Islam was not a Modernist in the truest sense of the term and bore much traditional elements in his writings still he could not draw attraction from Chaudhuri. Chaudhuri also missed an important trend of Bengali literature of that era which was embodied in the writings of poets and writers like Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976), Sukanto Bhattacharya (1926-1947), and Subhash Mukhopadhyay (1919-2003) who were highly influenced by the Marxist ideology.

His evaluation of the new generation writers' writing was illogical because their feelings expressed through their creative works were not superficial as he thought to be. Bengal experienced the horrors of the two World Wars through its colonial status to Britain. India contributed massively to the British war effort by providing men and resources. So in the heavy taxation, a wide spread influenza epidemic and the disruption of trade during war increased sufferings in India. Besides these crises, international events like the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 had great impact on Bengal's educated class. The victory of Japan in 1905, the Russo-Japanese War sped up the nationalist struggle against the colonial state. The political scene of the early twentieth century provided a new cultural awakening. So the literature produced by the avant-garde writers of Kallol, Sanhati, Kali-Kalam had touched the reality of everyday life. They explored class exploitation, poverty and sexuality. These writers were also well read and well informed. In this regard we can regard Achintya Kumar Sengupta's saying, that Kallol moved away from Rabindranath. . . into the world of lower middle classes, the coal mines, slums, pavements into the neighbourhood of those rejected and deceived. It was also a great failure of Chaudhuri for not being able to acknowledge the contribution of the poets like Jibananda Das and other great writers of Modernism in 1930.

Having said so much about the limitation of Nirad C. Chaudhuri regarding his evaluation of the new literary movements of the early twentieth century it is important to appreciate the relevance of some of his observations on that period. I agree with his view about the ‘alienation’ and sense of emptiness that entered into the heart of human beings in Europe as two vital after effects after the two World Wars. But those were not present in the then Indian society and many of those emotions were super imposed in our literature by the poets of the thirties. Those were not natural elements in our social context. Later the socio-economic changes in Bengal during the last century and its chronology of events conforms the truth that the typical ‘capitalist’ economy from the Marxist point of view, never developed in this part of the world and the breakdown of social bondage from the existentialist point of view, still remains incomplete in our society. Despite the lives of highly rich elite class revolve around the very modern urban values the traditional family feeling seem to exist and it has not still disappeared as it has been in the West. Thus human isolation and loneliness apart from their universal existence in all ages and in all societies should not be the only focus of a certain period of literature. In fact, Bengali literature before the Kallol era had also beautifully depicted human struggle and emotional despair and also had not forget to portray human love and hope in a positive sense too.

Another issue which has been rightly raised by Chaudhuri is about the depiction of human physical passion in the form of sexuality in literature. It is sometimes believed that this is a bold introduction of the Modernist writers in Bengali literature who imitated the feature from the West. When the issue is considered from the view of relatively conservative person Tagore (who maintained more openness in his younger days than the later when he became more other worldly) it is understood that he too did not like it. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s evaluation also seems to be in the same track. Actually the trace down of Bengali literature from Sanskrit through Vaishnava Padabali to modern day’s literature proves that our classical writers were never blind towards sexuality; it being an essential component of human life dealt it in its own special way. Its portrayal merged with an essence of reality. Initially one may be mistaken that Chaudhuri is against any sexual element in literature, but in reality he is not so. He only disagrees with the usage of vulgar sexuality in literature. He abhors its unnecessary treatment as central theme in any literary creative writing.

But Chaudhuri is reluctant to accept even the contextual use of obscenity in literature. His literary mind is fashioned with the exposure of the Sanskrit literature. Sanskrit literature maintained the reflection of a permissive society where sex was not treated as a taboo but an essential part of life. So he objected the explicit exploration of sex in literature by the Modernist poets. Chaudhuri might have forgotten that life in ancient India was much more simple and easy. But post war years were complex and multifarious. The psychological shock which the human civilization had to undergo because of the world wide devastation was beyond imagination. So the expression of sex in literature then evoked a sense of reality. It could be treated as a relief from extreme suppression of life. So I cannot support Chaudhuri's even uneven comparison between Sanskrit poets of ancient India and Modernist poets of the decade of 1930.

Besides Chaudhuri we can say that throughout his life he was proud to be a member of a race to which belong the towering geniuses like Modhusudan Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore. But it would be unwise to think that Bengali literature had attained its zenith through them so no more development was expected in this field and none can contribute in its realm more meaningfully.

There are some positive things too in his enumeration of Bengali literature. Like his comment on the role of books in Bengal's cultural life during that decade is important. The growth of library culture in Bengal and treatment of books as a precious gift, comparable to jewelry were significant positive aspects prevailed at that time.

Chaudhuri was unusually ambitious too. Since the fashion of literary criticism did not develop in Bengali literature he wanted to become one following the French critics.

The Swadeshi movement in Bengal involved a class of people who originally belonged to the landed aristocracy. These people till then maintained distance from the Congress or any other political organization. They had little or no connection with the lower strata of the society. This society included a large number of Muslims. The core message of Swadeshi was 'Atmasakti'. Outside Bengal it also stimulated the political thoughts of the people. It taught the people to challenge and defy the authority of the Government openly in public and took away from the minds of even ordinary men the dread of police assault and prison so successfully that the sense of fear which was attached to these attributes before had totally disappeared. The most positive

significance of the movement was that the urge to use indigenous goods instead of the foreign ones soon attained a much more comprehensive character and became a concrete symbol of nationalism. It is known, however, from the official and confidential Police reports that for the first two or three years there was a serious decline in the import of British goods particularly cloth.

The monumental figure Tagore also took part in this movement. He participated in the mass rallies delivered speeches and composed many of his famous songs including 'Banglar mati Banglar jol' during this time. He wrote this song to commemorate the Rakhi Bandhan Day as a symbolic gesture against the decision of partition. On that special day the Hindus tied Rakhi to their Muslim brothers as a symbol of communal harmony negating the social Hindu tradition of looking down to the Muslims as inferior aliens. But Tagore's enthusiasm soon faded out as the non-violent mode of the movement changed to a violent one. Tagore condemned the violence perpetrated by the Extremist groups. Moreover the deceptive character and hypocrisies of some of the national leaders frustrated him.

But the bondage of Rakhi could not keep tied or unify the two communities because they had drifted away from each other over a period of more than a century primarily because of the politically dominant Hindu community's maltreatment to the weaker Muslim community.

The so called Swadeshi movement did not contain the political essence of 'nationalism' and as such it was not inherently secular. Instead it divided the nation in Bengal along the religious lines. Chaudhuri rightly observes:

"The Nationalist movement brought about an accentuation of the difference between Hindus and Muslims. Theoretically it preached Hindu-Muslim Unity . . . But against that unconvincing preaching was to be set the definite inculcation of an anti-Muslim doctrine" (270). Then Chaudhuri quoting Bipin Chandra Pal says, "It gradually awoke, at least in a section of the nationalists, the . . . ambition of once more re-establishing either a single Hindu state or a confederacy of Hindu states in India" (271).

There was more to it. Nirad Chaudhuri points out: "The more dangerous form of the aggravation of Hindu-Muslim antagonism by the Swadeshi Movement was that this hostility was now

brought down from the historical to the contemporary plain and converted from a retrospective hatred to a current hatred” (271).

Chaudhuri provides us with a vivid description of how the Swadeshi Movement brought in a communal division among the school boys of a small township of Kishoreganj in East Bengal.

To quote him:

A very large number of our school-fellows were Muslims, and in the whole school there were at least as many Muslim boys as Hindu. We worked, talked and played with them quite naturally” (272) . . . But the change inevitably came, and came very early. It was from the end of 1906 that we became conscious of a new kind of hatred to the Muslims, which sprang out of the present and showed signs of poisoning our personal relations with our Muslim neighbours and school fellow. . . Nawab of Dhaka Sir Salimullah of Dacca, the key-figure of the and new Muslim politics, became our particular *bête noire* – and we contemptuously called him “the one-eyed” (273).

The All India Muslim League came to be born in Dacca in the end of 1906. The Nawab of Dacca hosted the conference of the Muslim Leaders of the sub-continent, who were behind the formation of the party. While the Muslim League leaders of India had a general political objective to represent Muslim interests separately and independently of the All India Congress. Nawab Salimullah had along with the general objective, an additional one, the consolidation and expansion of the new opportunities for the local Muslims, particularly its elite, in the newly created Muslim majority province of East Bengal. Hence the Hindus of East Bengal were contemptuous particularly about Salimullah and found him ‘*bête noire*’ – ‘the black beast’. Chaudhuri also provides us with a specific example of the intensity of communal hatred provoked by the Swadeshi Movement in the young hearts of the school boys in his hometown of East Bengal. To quote Chaudhuri:

A cold dislike for the Muslim settled down in our hearts, putting an end to all real intimacy of relationship. Curiously enough, with us, the boys of Kishoreganj, it found visible expression in the division of our class into two sections, are composed purely of the Hindus and the other of Muslims (276) . . . whether or not the Muslim boys had also expressed unwillingness to sit with us, for sometime

past we, the Hindu boys had been clamouring that we did not want to sit with the Muslim boys because they smelt of onions (277).

The ‘cold dislike for the Muslims’ that settled down in the hearts of the Hindus of Kishoreganj, in fact represents the situation of entire Bengal of the time.

The annulment of the Partition of Bengal in 1911 might have reduced the level of Hindu dislike for the Muslims, but it definitely deepened the Muslim dislike, particularly that of the Muslim elite, for the Hindus in general, for the annulment robbed the Muslim elite of East Bengal of certain benefits that it had started enjoying due to partition.

The Hindu elite of Bengal continued to show enmity even after the annulment of the partition in 1911. Aware of the dissatisfaction over the annulment of partition, the British regime arranged for a “splendid imperial compensation” for the annulment by way of setting up of a university in Dacca. Lord Lytton the then Governor of Bengal, disclosed in his convocation speech in 1922 that the university was planned as an ‘imperial compensation’ for the annulment of the Eastern Bengal and Assam province.

To this effect, the government published a communiqué on Feb 2, 1912, stating the decision of the government to set up Dhaka University. But the Calcutta based Hindu elite made all out efforts to undo the project.

The Government, however, did not succumb to the Hindu pressure. In a letter on April 4, 1912 the Government of India invited the Government of Bengal to submit a complete report with a financial estimate for the proposed university.

The University of Dacca was eventually founded in July 1921. In the initial decades, the vast majority of the teachers and students of the University was Hindu. Still the Kolkata based Hindu elite used contemptuously call the Dacca University ‘Mecca University’ hitting obliquely that the institution was meant exclusively for the Muslims, the University which would in fact become the centre of secular democratic political thoughts of East Bengal in two decades and guide all secular democratic student movements in the next two decades contributing substantially towards the consequence of secular-democratic Bangladesh in 1971.

Another important aspect of the Swadeshi Movement was the revolutionaries. The primary contribution of these revolutionaries was the indirect pressure they exerted on the movement of freedom. Their expression of undaunted courage and undying urge for achieving freedom inspired others. The valiant sacrifices of lives by Khudiram, Surya Sen, Jatirindranath Das etc.

served as a perennial source of moral strength for the following generation who attained manhood between 1908 and 1938. Besides these it would be hard to count the success of the revolutionaries.

But there effected some changes in the Government policy due to the revolutionary attacks on the British:

Firstly, it caused serious alarm to the British Government in India.

Secondly, the activities of the British intelligence service increased to a great extent after the bomb incident. And it was within a very short time that the British police authorities unearthed the bomb factory at Muraripukur in Calcutta.

Thirdly, the Alipore Conspiracy Case instituted against the revolutionaries was the first of its kind in India which was soon to be followed by a number of conspiracy cases lodged against the revolutionary outrages committed later.

The Bengali Revolution finally became a failure. It could not bring any significant change in the society. There were several causes behind its failure like the revolutionaries mainly came from the urban middle class intelligentsia. They were out of touch with the peasants and workers. They lacked a common plan and a central leadership. And on the top of everything the British Government on its part pursued a ruthless and repressive policy towards them.

Finally Nirad Chaudhuri impartially observes and analyzes the cruel and inhuman situation that prevailed around the Partition of India. The dormant animosity and hatred between the Hindus and Muslims did won over the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of the two communities for the last few centuries and this led to the tragic events of riots, killings, rapes and mass displacement as well as migration on religious grounds. He rightly blames the British Administration in India as the responsible agency who could minimize the massacres by timely intervention but at the same time, the interim Indian Government including the local administration in the states such as Bengal and Punjab were especially responsible. Chaudhuri, however, does not forget to highlight the fact that the long term responsibility for this unfortunate development lie with the Indian political leaders from both Congress and Muslim League who in intimate analysis, gave more priority to their personal ambitions which led to ignite communal feelings rather than a desire for a secular and democratic united India.

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