

**Mother India: Nation, Gender and Community in Select
Novels of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay
and Rabindranath Tagore**

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
award of the degree of

Master of Philosophy

Chandrima Chakrabarti



Centre for Linguistics and English
School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110 067

India
1999




CENTRE OF LINGUISTICS & ENGLISH
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE & CULTURE STUDIES
जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067 INDIA

21 July, 1999


Certificate

Certified that this dissertation entitled **Mother India: Nation, Gender and Community in Select Novels of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore** submitted by **Chandrima Chakrabarti** in partial fulfilment of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** is entirely her own work and has not been considered for the award of any other degree at this or any other university.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


Prof. H. C. Narang
Chairperson

Professor Harish Narang
Chairperson
Centre of Linguistics & English
School of Language, Literature &
Culture Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067



Dr. Ania Loomba
Supervisor
Dr. Ania Loomba
Associate Professor
Centre of Linguistics & English
School of Language, Literature
& Culture Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067



To

Ma & Baba

Acknowledgements

This dissertation had to be written when I was passing through one of the most eventful days in my not so eventful life. My supervisor Dr. Ania Loomba deserves special mention for not merely helping me to produce this piece of writing but for standing by me throughout this semester when circumstances in the campus created a vast deal of uncertainty as to whether I would ever come out of my nightmarish existence. My sincere regards and heartfelt thanks to her for her invaluable guidance and for particularly bearing with me, as I consistently crossed deadlines and invariably arrived late for our appointments. My apologies...

Prof. H.C. Narang, Prof. R.S. Gupta, Prof. K. Kapoor, Prof. F. Manjali have provided me with guidance all these years in JNU.

Rawatji & Ritaji will always be remembered with fond memories.

I am grateful to a lot of people for helping me in numerous ways. I am extremely grateful to Nida and Tanmaya for their support and help throughout and especially in the final stage of this work. My unlimited access to Arjumand's computer made life much easier. Zahid, Sabil, Ajay, Amit, Gopal, Mridula, Uma, Sudha, Rakesh, Himanshu, Jinu, Himadri, Santosh and many others have been of immense help.

Thanks to Neelesh, Vikram, Pari and Bobby for offering to help.

Thanks to Nasser for providing logistical support always and particularly in his absence.

Bhai has egged me on the last day with a brilliant piece of news.

A word of appreciation to A.P.Computers.

And

Anil for all his love, affection and (unbelievable) patience Yesterday & Today.

Chandrima Chakrabarti

CONTENTS

Introduction	1-6
CHAPTER ONE	
Nation, Gender and Community	7-33
CHAPTER TWO	
Essays and Lectures: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore	34-76
CHAPTER THREE	
<i>Anandamath</i> and <i>Devi Chaudhurani</i>	77-119
CHAPTER FOUR	
<i>Gora</i> and <i>Ghare-Baire</i>	120-174
Conclusion	175-181
Bibliography	182-190

Introduction

The study of nationalism, its ideologies and the struggles it spawned in India has been, until recently, the exclusive preserve of the historian, the political theorist or the sociologist. British colonisation of India began in Bengal in 1757 and it was here that the first formulations of national identity were to emerge. Nationalism provides perhaps the most compelling identity myth in the modern world. Other types of collective identity – class, gender, race, and religion - may overlap or combine with national identity but they rarely succeed in undermining its hold, though they may influence its direction. With the escalation of Hindu nationalism in India in recent times one can say with some amount of certainty that the question of nationalism is likely to remain important as well as controversial. In the course of a changing and changed socio-political situation in India, literary texts which initiated and propelled the anti-colonial or national movement forward seem worthy of our attention.

Literary texts are produced by, but are also productive of, particular forms of knowledge, ideologies, power relations, institutions and practices. A study of the Bengali literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century can significantly add to our understanding of nationalism as it operated in India because these texts were the first nationalist ‘imaginings’ of the nation as mother. I will concentrate on analysing some essays and popular Bengali novels of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and try to show how the imaginative power and narrative capabilities of writers like Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore created different images of the nation.

Through a close analysis of the four novels - *Anandamath* (1882) and *Devi Chaudhurani* (1884) by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and *Gora* (1909) and *Ghare-Baire* (1916) by Rabindranath Tagore I will explore how the 'imagining' of the nation is highly gendered. These novels reveal the complex interlinking of gender, nation and community in the nationalist discourse of the period. The time frame is roughly the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, when the nationalist debate as well as the debate about cultural identity held centre stage in intellectual debates and writings.

In Chapter 1, I will discuss the theories of nation and nationalism and the complex intertwining of gender, nation and community in nationalist discourses. Recently, a number of critical readings have recently come up in which the historians have based their theories on nation, gender and community in Bengal. Since Calcutta, the capital of British commerce and (until 1911) the British government, witnessed the first stirrings of nationalism, many of these critical readings have used Bengal as a testing ground for the theories of nation, gender and community. Social scientists like Sudipta Kaviraj and Ashish Nandy have used the novels of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore to make their points about Indian nationalism, but they have not offered a systematic analysis of these novels. They have not paid detailed attention to the way in which these novels delineate a gendered discourse about the nation. I hope to utilise the perspectives of these critics and historians and also to extend their insights by a more detailed focus on the literary texts. An important question I ask here is why Bengali nationalists imagined India/Bengal as a mother.

Questions of nationalism are highly valued-loaded and are expressions of interests and power positions of individuals, groups and even nation-states. Therefore, to expect a consensus on contested political realities or a single, overreaching paradigm explanatory of all manifestations of the national phenomena is illusionary, at least for the time being. What is known as the Hindu cultural renaissance started with the writings of Rammohan Roy in Bengal, and after passing through the spiritual phase as represented by Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Kesab Chandra Sen and Swami Vivekananda, assumed a political form in the works of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay. While Bankim made nationalism into a religion Rabindranath Tagore, Bengal's most popular writer, offered a different perspective on the anti-colonial movement in Bengal and India. He not only rejected violence as a mode of struggle but rejected the entire concept of nationalism. In Chapter 2, I will examine the essays and speeches of Bankim and Tagore, in order to discuss their views on gender, nation and community identities.¹ I will also look into the arguments between Tagore and Gandhi. There will also be substantial discussions on the role of the Brahma Samaj in furthering women's cause in Bengal.

Bankim realised the need to construct in his novels a linguistic, regional, religious collectivity and also the larger collectivity called the nation for them to have a place in the imagination of his people. Bankim's *Anandamath*, which is discussed in Chapter 3, is a crucial text in this regard because it is here (probably for the first time in Bengali literature) that the nation is transformed from a geographical space to the symbol of a mother. *Devi Chaudhurani*, the next novel under discussion, also reveals

¹ In this work, I refer to Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay as Bankim and Rabindranath Tagore as Tagore following popular usage.

the iconisation of women and the nationalist's ideological position on women's issues. *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* show the writer's fascination with empowered women and the simultaneous compulsion to harness this threatening energy into safe, prescribed traditional roles. I will also investigate how 'Bande Mataram' (which was originally conceived as a salutation to mother Bengal) acquired the status of a political slogan in Bengal and how it was later used in the service of the Indian nation.

In Chapter 4, I will analyse two of Tagore's most popular novels – *Gora* and *Ghare-Baire*. The central motif of *Gora* is the quest of the collective as well as the individual identity. The discovery of the self at the conclusion of the novel is Tagore's solution to the problem of nationalism in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country like India. Gora's nationalism or the attractiveness of nationalism for intellectuals like Gora and Binoy was an attempt to resolve the identity crisis of the intellectuals. The parameters of Hindu revivalism - an important aspect of Indian nationalism and the myriad meanings of Indianness as is given by the diverse communities in the novel - are the significant issues that will be dealt with in this chapter. I will also study the role played by the traditional mother figure, Anandamoyi and 'new' women like Sucharita and Lolita in the nationalist 'imagining' of India and Indianness. In *Ghare-Baire*, a study of Bimala, the woman protagonist in the novel will reveal the underlying politics behind the elevation of women to the role of a passive participant in the nationalist struggle. The different views on Indian nationalism that are expressed by Sandip, Nikhil, Chandranath Babu and the political frenzy created in young minds will be studied in great detail. I will also explore the politics of joint

family systems, the polygamous relationships enjoyed by men and the plight of the widows in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Women are pivotal figures in all these texts and, to some extent, they participate in the political struggle for independence. They are repeatedly invested with divinity or motherhood. My project is to explore the place of women in this predominantly masculinist project. I would like to investigate the ideological underpinnings of such identifications and the simultaneous containment of women's conjugal role as wife or woman and her elevation to the role of Bharatmata (Mother India). I will also analyse how the male protagonists view the place of women in Indian society, and their re-conceptualisation of the Bengali woman who is different from both traditional and Western woman. I will examine whether any new dimensions were added through the association of women comrades in the nationalist struggle and explore whether women's politicisation led to a radicalisation in other respects of women's life and status.

The keen conflicts between the Hindu orthodoxy and the Brahmo Samaj in *Gora*, and the same orthodoxy and the Muslims in Nikhil's estate in *Ghare-Baire* reveal that neither the Hindus nor the Muslims are homogeneous groups. Yet the narratives assume a citizenship that is normatively Hindu, upper caste, feudal and patriarchal. Does such a concept of the citizen provide any scope for the accommodation of various groups like the Muslim peasants, women, the lower caste poor and the Brahmo community that are depicted in the novels? In fact, was it viable to project a monolithic sovereignty for a country like India with its multiple religious

and ethnic identities? Or, can the nation be imagined only by forging certain bonds and disallowing others?

We can explore what constitutes India and Indianness during this period by examining the work of these two central literary and social figures of Bengal. More specifically, the work of Bankim and Tagore allows us to locate the construction of the Indian nation as mother, an image which continues to haunt the national imagination even today.

Chapter One

Nation, Gender and Community

Nationalism

“Nationness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.”¹ Today the nation, rather than other forms of collectivity, is of paramount importance to people all over the globe. However, it is difficult to generalise about nationalism because none of the factors which one might think of as responsible for forging national consciousness such as language, territory, religion, race, a shared past, etc. are applicable in every case of nationalism. In Homi K. Bhabha’s opinion there is no “nationalism in general” such that any single model could prove to be adequate to its myriad and often contradictory historical forms.² In Africa and Asia for instance, racial oppression by European nations was an important factor in the rise of nationalist feelings. The new nations to come into being, like India, often lacked the usual common elements attributed to nationhood, like common history, language, customs, “except a common territory” and even this was “lately and arbitrarily created by an alien power.”³ Thus although the term ‘nation’ functions globally today as an important marker of an individual’s identity, this term is incapable of registering the multiple differences dividing one nation from another. A study of particular instances of nationalism therefore serves to subvert the powerfully homogenising theories of nationalism that were initially propounded.

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections in the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1990), p. 12.

² See Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990). Anderson in *Imagined Communities* also notes both the “universality” of the modern concept of the nation and “the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations.” (p. 15).

³ As cited in, Boyd C. Shafer, *Faces of Nationalism: New Realities and Old Myths* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), p. 12.

Studies of nationalist movements however reveal that nationalism was, primarily, a doctrine of popular freedom and sovereignty. According to Hutchinson and Smith nationalist movements propagated that “free from any external constraints they [the people] must determine their own destiny and be masters in their own house, they must control their own resources; they must obey only their inner voice.”⁴ Such a belief further implied that people must be gathered together in a “single historic territory, a homeland” and they must “share a single public culture.”⁵ In fact, the three guiding principles in this statement - autonomy, identity and unity, write Hutchinson and Smith, have been pursued by nationalists ever since Rousseau, Herder, Fichte, Koras and Mazzani popularised them in western and central Europe. Another feature common to most nationalist movements was that they had been founded and inspired by intellectuals. The movements then fanned out to include the professional classes and finally broadened to other sections of society such as the clerks, artisans, workers and peasants.

According to Gellner, “nationalism uses the pre-existing, historically inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth” but it uses them “very selectively and it most often transforms them radically.”⁶ Most modern nations, despite their appeal to an august and immemorial past, are of recent invention. He thus contradicts the earlier assessments of nationalism by Carlton Hayes, the ‘father’ of scholarly American study of nationalism, and Hans Kohn, one of the most learned as well as most prolific authorities on nationalism. Hayes, (in 1931) had defined nationalism as:

⁴ John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Nationalism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

the paramount devotion of human beings to fairly large nationalities and the conscious founding of a political 'nation' on linguistic and cultural nationality.⁷

For Hans Kohn, (in 1944) nationalism was “an act of consciousness of a large majority of a people” which recognised “the nation-state as the ideal form of political organization.”⁸ But, Gellner argues, “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.”⁹ The same view is articulated by the Marxist historian, Eric Hobsbawm, who, through a case study of the French Republic and the German empire, argues that the nation was one of many traditions “invented” by political elite in order to legitimise their power in a century of revolution and democratisation. In his book, *The Invention of Tradition*, written in collaboration with Terence Ranger, Hobsbawm defines the nation as a “comparatively recent historical innovation,” along with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest. All these, in his view depend on “exercises in social engineering which are often deliberate and always innovative.”¹⁰

Ernest Renan in “What is a Nation?” focuses on the twin processes of “forgetting” and “remembering” that help to constitute the nation.¹¹ Renan and Hobsbawm show that a national collectivity is created by careful selections from multiple histories and exclusion of certain communities. Hobsbawm in *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* contends that ‘traditions’ are continually invented and

⁷ Quoted by Shafer, *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁹ Quoted by Partha Chatterjee in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Press, 1986), p. 4.

¹⁰ Hutchinson and Smith, *Nationalism*, p. 76.

¹¹ Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?”, in A. Zimmern, ed., *Modern Political Doctrines* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), pp. 194–98.

reinvented. He cites the case of Rwanda to show how communities are constantly in the process of creation.¹²

Benedict Anderson warns that Gellner tends to assimilate 'invention' to 'falsity' rather than to 'imagining' and to 'creation'. He supports Hobsbawm by defining the nation as "an imagined political community imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."¹³ Nations are limited "because even the largest of the [nations]...has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations."¹⁴ Nations are also "imagined" "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."¹⁵ And finally nations present themselves as "communities" "because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship."¹⁶ In other words, nations are, in Anderson's view, systems of cultural representation whereby people come to imagine a shared experience of identification with an extended community. Anderson views the nation as growing from the roots provided by religious communities and dynastic realms primarily by the means of print capitalism, which supported nationalist ideologies in their endeavour to associate languages with particular territorial units. Print languages laid the basis for national consciousness by creating unified fields of exchange and communication, giving a new fixity to

¹² See E.J.Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

language and thereby, creating languages of power different from that of the older administrative vernaculars.¹⁷

According to Anderson, former colonies have been unable to break away from the modes of nationalism created in the West. Eastern nationalisms and in particular "the third world nationalisms," are forced to choose between "being themselves" and "becoming modern nations" as though the universal standards of reasons and progress were natural and intrinsic to the West. Partha Chatterjee, criticises such a view:

If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain "modular" forms already made available to them by the Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imagination must forever remain colonized.¹⁸

In Chatterjee's opinion Anderson's argument sustains and continues the baleful legacies of eurocentrism and orientalism. The received history of nationalism allows for only two kinds of nationalism: Eastern and Western. Western nationalism are deemed capable of generating their own models of autonomy from within, whereas Eastern nationalisms have to assimilate something alien to their own culture before they can become modern nations.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 46-8.

¹⁸ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 5.

In *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* Chatterjee argues that nationalism as a concept was historically bound to the social and political preconditions of enlightenment as it unfolded itself in the countries of its origins. Therefore it could not be universally applicable to all cases of nationalism, especially those developed under colonial rule, which were first labelled 'nationalist' and then found wanting in comparison to the western models. Categories of thought originating in an alien culture were bound to acquire new meanings in an new cultural context.¹⁹ Anthony D. Smith shows that Eastern Europe and Asia, for instance, "challenge the dominant Western model and added significant new elements, more attuned to the trajectories of non-Western communities."²⁰

In recent years, there has been an attempt to uncover the histories of people excluded by nationalist projects. Ranajit Guha accuses the dominant historiography of Indian nationalism for leaving out the subaltern classes and groups who in his opinion are "the people". He argues that the historical articulation of power in colonial India can be conceptualised as the interaction of the two principles of dominance and subordination. Dominance consists of persuasion, as well as coercion and subordination consists of resistance and collaboration. Guha maintains that colonial rule in India worked more with coercion than consent and was to finally generate more resistance than collaboration. The indigenous Indian idiom and the colonised idiom overlapped, or subverted each other, in order to coalesce into the third, which was that of modern India. This third idiom could neither be the replica of

¹⁹ Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, p. 27.

²⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 11.

the western, nor of the ancient Indian concept. The constituent element formed a new compound “a new and original entity.”²¹

John Hutchinson’s distinction between cultural and political nationalism seems pertinent here since in contemporary Islamic countries in the Middle East and Asia, and particularly in India, cultural nationalism was a ‘defensive’ response by educated elite to the impact of exogenous modernisation on existing structures of society. Chatterjee’s study of nationalism in Bengal supports this view, where the fracture of the nationalist’s world-view into *ghar* - the spiritual or inner domain of culture, and *bahir* - the material outside sphere, is evident. The particular instance of Indian nationalism makes use of the inner/outer distinction as a way of selectively coping with the West. It is not coincidental then that the women’s question is very much a part of this dichotomous adjustment. The supremacy of the West is conceded in the material sphere, whereas the inner sphere is claimed as the essence of national life and culture, one which must not merely be defended but also eulogised.²² As Philippe Aries says the modern public/private fundamentally relates to the positioning of the individual into the role of the citizen.²³ Since the colonial relationship denied the colonised the status of the citizen, Indian/Bengali engagements with modernising the domestic cannot be discussed in isolation from nationalism, the ideology that promised citizenship and the nation-state.

²¹ Ranajit Guha, “Dominance without Hegemony and its Historiography,” in Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies VI: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 271.

²² See Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, pp. 120-21 for a detailed discussion on the division of the domains of the home and the world in colonial Bengal. Although Chatterjee’s work is Bengal specific, it provides useful insights on anti-colonial nationalisms in various parts of the world.

²³ Philippe Aries, “Introduction” in Roger Chartier, ed., *A History of Private Life: Passions of the Renaissance* (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 9.

In his book, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, Hutchinson argues that the two strands of nationalism – cultural and political – “must not be conflated, for they articulate different, even competing conceptions of the nation, from their own distinctive organisations and have sharply divergent political strategies.”²⁴ For a cultural nationalist, nations are not just political units but “organic beings, living personalities.” Moreover, unlike the political nationalist, the cultural nationalist founds the nation not on ‘mere’ consent or law but on the passions implanted by nature and history. Hutchinson suggests that cultural nationalists act as ‘moral innovators’ for their community and, by opposing the tendency to assimilate the community to any universal model of development, equip the nation to make its distinctive contribution to humanity.

In Finland for instance, the past and its heroes were put to striking nationalist use. Elias Lonnrot captured the imagination of the masses by bringing back from the province of Karelia the ballads and poems that he formed into the *Kalevala* in 1835. This epic of the ‘The Land of Heroes’ bore only a partial resemblance to earlier Finnish society of the first millennium A.D. but it was enough to create for modern Finland a cult of the golden age of the heroes Vainamoinen and Lemminkainen. It was the ideal self-definition and also an example for a regenerated Finland in its heroic struggles against Swedish cultural and Russian political domination at the end of the nineteenth century.²⁵

In late nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengal too, a section of the intelligentsia or cultural nationalists established informal and decentralised socio-

²⁴ Hutchinson and Smith, *Nationalism*, p. 122.

²⁵ Smith, *National Identity*, p. 67.

cultural institutions and published journals and newspaper articles designed to inspire “spontaneous” love of community in people by educating them about their common heritage of splendour and suffering. It was an attempt to identify a community by differentiating it against other communities.²⁶

As the debates in nineteenth century India or Bengal centred on the revival or reinterpretation of India’s past, the reformers of political culture remained those who enjoyed by birth the right to be its interpreters i.e., the Brahmins. In Bengal the Brahmanic elite were the first generation of Western educated, urban-centred and pro-British intellectuals. However, Tapan Raychaudhuri’s study of three prominent nineteenth century figures of Bengal – Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and Swami Vivekananda, *Europe Reconsidered*, reveals that even within the narrow range of upper caste Bengali culture, the experience and assessments of different individuals remained diverse. Thus Raychaudhuri reads nineteenth century Bengal neither as renaissance nor as revival but as a complex interplay of assimilation and welding as also of antagonism and resistance.²⁷ Anil Seal points out that a significant section of the Bengali elite co-operated with the British, but their allegiance was conditioned by their perception of the benefits of British rule. The loyalty of the *bhadralok*, who dominated the associational and political life of Bengal, was shaken by the British refusal to expand the political participation of educated elite at the end of the century. They were also disturbed by the indications that the British were cultivating alliances with other groups that might

²⁶ Though black nationalism in the United States might often better be termed black culturalism, what helps to lend this movement its identity as a movement is its very recourse to the rhetoric of the nation.

²⁷ See Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).

undercut their influence. Although most *bhadralok* remained loyal to the British Raj until the end of the nineteenth century, others developed a nationalist critique of the pernicious effects of British rule and forged the beginnings of the nationalist movement in the province.²⁸

They made current the idea of an Indian polity and remained the leaders of the freedom struggle.²⁹ Significantly, to the Hindu elite of the nineteenth century the concept of Indian national identity was indistinguishable from Hindu identity. They accepted textual Brahmanism as a potent political force and linked the emerging Indian identity to the period of Vedas and Upanishads. Ashis Nandy observes that "Brahmanism provided, for the first time, the basis for a collective political identity."³⁰

Swami Vivekananda, who became the apostle of Hindu nationalism, recognised the spiritual heritage of Hinduism as the foundation of the country's emerging national identity. Contrasting the so called spirituality of India with the materialism of the West, he said:

Let others talk of politics, of the glory of acquisition or of the power and spread of commercialism; these cannot inspire India.... Religion... is the one consideration in India.³¹

²⁸ See Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

²⁹ On the role of intellectuals in the Indian polity, see S. Tangri, "Intellectuals and Society in the Nineteenth Century," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, no. 3 (1961), pp. 368-94.

³⁰ Ashis Nandy, *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 58.

³¹ Yogendra K. Malik and V.B. Singh, *Hindu Nationalists in India: The Rise of BJP* (New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1994), p. 3

And for Vivekananda undoubtedly, religion meant Hinduism alone. Aurobindo Ghosh, another prominent philosopher-thinker of that age, closely identified nationalism with the teachings of *Sanatan Dharma*. “Nationalism,” he asserted “is simply a passionate aspiration of the realization of the Divine Unity in the nation.”³²

Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, who has been called “India’s politically most influential novelist,” was one of the first to introduce the nativist idiom into nineteenth century India’s political consciousness.³³ He, along with the Swadeshi leader Bipin Chandra Pal, “established a parallel between ancient Hindu gods and goddesses and the new god called nation.”³⁴ Such an ideology of nationalism, laced with symbols and myths of Hindu religion, was further popularised by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and his associates in the Congress Movement and by the writings of a host of others in regional languages in India, especially in the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Bengal.

The Novel and the Nation

Like all complex historical movements, nationalism is not a monolithic phenomenon to be deemed entirely good or entirely bad but a discourse whose internal contradictions need to be unpacked in their historical specificity. Cultural nationalism holds that a shared literature is an important component in the consolidation of a community or communities to form a nation. For literature to be constitutive of a shared national identity, it must be able to convince the people that they had a shared national identity and thus, ought, perhaps, to have their own state,

³² As quoted in Shafer, *Faces of Nationalism*, p. 291.

³³ Nandy, *At the Edge of Psychology*, p. 60.

³⁴ Jalalul Haq, *Nation and Nation-Worship in India* (New Delhi: Genuine Publications, 1992), p. 8.

or in some other way associate together politically. The achievement of nationalist fiction lies in the political act of forging a national identity. The rhetoric of nationhood, and particularly of nationalist literature, tries to assimilate national solidarity to kinship and to make its loyalties and obligations seem natural and inevitable. The most important feature of nations is this fictive quality – the fact that they are communities which are highly contingent, but which function only in so far as they seem natural and inevitable.³⁵

Solidarity is not discovered by reflection but created, and those who help to create it and extend its boundaries are the novelists, poets and dramatists. They widen the meaning of 'us' by intensifying our sensitivity to suffering and forcing us to understand and identify with those we would previously have regarded as 'other'.³⁶ Richard Rorty feels that the proper function of literature is to stretch narrow solidarities rather than intensify them. Novels mobilise fellow feeling, and harness it to causes and collectivities that transcend the individual and his/her personal interests and relationships. Patriotic poetry and novels promote solidarity among the multitude of living individuals to whom they are addressed. More importantly they link them to the past of their glorious ancestors and promise them a future in the nation's memory.³⁷

British colonisation of India began in Bengal in 1757 and it was here that the first formulations of the national identity were to emerge. It was Calcutta,

³⁵ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 14. However, it is important to remember that its very existence as a national literature is itself politically determined and not the reason for political choice.

³⁶ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. xvi, 189-98.

³⁷ See Smith, *National Identity*, pp. 160-63 and Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 18-9.

both as the administrative capital and commercial and industrial centre, which was to become the city where the "new Bengal" was to be forged where the transition from the village identity to a national identity had to be articulated. Calcutta, the capital of British commerce and, until 1911, the seat of the British government, witnessed the first stirrings of nationalism. Hence a study of the literature of that period can significantly add to our understanding of the period. The nation, in that era, came to life in texts other than those which were or are ostensibly nationalist. The bilingual intelligentsia of Bengal, for instance, despite being schooled in the Western fashion, and despite their Anglicisation, tried to create, through theatre, novels and art, an aesthetic sphere that would be distinctively Indian.

For Anderson, the novel is central to the possibility of 'thinking' the nation because the reader imagines that he or she is written into the narrative of the novel and thus, by extension the nation. In examining the nineteenth century Filipino novel, *Noli Me Tangre*, Anderson notes how the author's shift from the "interior" time of the novel to the "external" time of the [Manila] readers everyday life gives a hypnotic confirmation of the solidity of a single community, embracing characters, authors and readers, moving onward through canonical time."³⁸ The author of this novel, Jose Rizal, presents a narrative, which transforms the readers into characters in a story about the nation. The novel gathers the listeners in a circle around the storyteller. For both the novel and the nation, the telling of the story about the community itself creates the community.

³⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 27.

The structure of the novel produces the 'imagined' community, but for Anderson the substance of the novel is largely independent of the type of community, which is imagined. Ringrose and Lerner in *Reimagining the Nation* argue that in the multitude of texts through which the concept of the nation travels, it is never imagined on its own but is always forging liaisons. In other words, "nations are not transhistorical in their contours or appeal but are continually being reimagined."³⁹

Engendering the Nation

A number of critics have followed Tom Nairn in naming the nation 'the modern Janus'. For Nairn, the nation takes shape as a contradictory figure of time: one face gazing back into the primordial mists of the past, the other into an infinite future.⁴⁰ Deniz Kandiyoti expresses the temporal contradiction thus:

[Nationalism] presents itself both as a modern project that melts and transforms traditional attachments in favour of new identities and as a reflection of authentic cultural values culled from the depths of a presumed communal past.⁴¹

Bhabha, following Nairn and Anderson, writes, "Nations, like narratives, lose their origin in the myths of time and only fully realise their horizons in the mind's eye."⁴²

The temporal anomaly within nationalism is resolved by figuring the contradiction as a 'natural' division of gender. Women are represented as the authentic 'body' of national tradition embodying nationalism's conservative principle of continuity –

³⁹ M. Ringrose and A. J. Lerner, *Reimagining the Nation* (Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1993), p. 3.

⁴⁰ As quoted in Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family", in *Feminist Review* 44 (Summer 1993): 65.

⁴¹ Deniz Kandiyoti, "Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation", *Journal of International Studies* 20, no. 3, pp. 429-43.

⁴² Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration*, p. 1.

inert, backward-looking and natural. Men, by contrast, represent the progressive agent of national modernity being supposedly forward-thrusting, potent and historic. They embody nationalism's progressive or revolutionary principle of discontinuity. Nationalism's anomalous relation to time is thus managed as a natural relation to gender.⁴³

No nation or nationalism anywhere in the world gives women and men the same access to the resources of the nation-state. Nations are contested systems of cultural representations that limit and legitimise peoples' access to the resources of the nation-state.⁴⁴ Women have been "subsumed only symbolically into the national body politic," representing in the process "the limits of national difference between men and women."⁴⁵ It is evident that despite nationalisms' ideological investment in the idea of popular unity, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalisation of gender difference. As a result, as Cynthia Enloe remarks, nationalisms have "typically sprung from masculanized memory, masculanized humiliations and masculanized hope."⁴⁶ Boehmer notes that the male role in the nationalist movements is typically 'metonymic,' that is, men are contiguous with each other and with the national whole. Women, by contrast, appear "in a metaphoric or symbolic role."⁴⁷

TH-9026

DISS
D, 157, 3, M38:9 (W, 94)
N9



⁴³ Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds", p. 66.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 61-2.

⁴⁵ As cited in Andrew Parker et al., eds., *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 6.

⁴⁶ Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 44.

⁴⁷ E. Boehmer, "Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa" in *NASTA* (1991).

Gender and sexuality are, indeed, central to the conceptualisation and expression of the national collectivity. The national state or its guiding principle is often imagined literally as a woman.⁴⁸ Resistance itself is feminised as is evident from the enormous number of statues of liberty that were produced to commemorate the spirit of the French Revolution between 1789-1880.⁴⁹ The French Republic was named 'Marianne,' that is Marie-Anne, a common, widely used and therefore popular first name so as to designate a regime that also saw itself as popular. In Chicano culture, the popularity and significance accorded to the story of Malintzin or La Malinche reveal the attempt to express the spirit or dilemma of the entire culture through a female figure. Such examples abound in history and display that anti-colonial struggles had to challenge colonialism not only at a political or intellectual level but also at an emotional plane.

In a brilliant exposition of the imagery of Marianne, Maurice Agulhon, in his book *Marianne into Battle* writes:

In order to be victorious the Revolution had to mobilise, educate and galvanise the popular masses by means of omnipresent, stirring and yet simple propaganda. Secondly, having reached a point where the Catholic Church was seen as an enemy, it had to fill the gap this left in men's mind in decor and in folklore, and there was a strong temptation (whether conscious or as a result of existing pressures) to make use of and reverse some of its symbols... The Revolution which was entirely philosophical and political in its origins, evoked so many new sentiments that it also had to become religious in the

⁴⁸ See Ania Loomba, *Colonialism, Postcolonialism* (New Delhi: Routledge, 1998) for a detailed discussion on the use of women in nationalist movements and discourse.

⁴⁹ Maurice Agulhon in his book has done a detailed study of the Republican imagery and symbolism of the French Republic between 1789-1880. Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789-1880*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

sense that it had to find an artistic ideal and source of inspiration.⁵⁰

The French Revolution did away with the King together with his title and image and replaced him with a collectivity and an abstract name – the Republic. The State, the Republic, the Nation or even the Motherland, however, are entities too abstract to appeal to the imagination. For the countless inhabitants whose level of education or political consciousness denied them any direct psychological contact with the State, the fact that the State was represented by one person (Queen Victoria, or Queen Elizabeth or any other), in other words, the monarchy, made it possible for them to feel to some extent a sense of belonging. But once the State became anonymous, as was the case in the era of nationalist and anti-colonial struggles, it lost the means to be emotive unless it proved possible to reawaken devotion for the ideal of its inspiration, namely the nation.

In the revolutionary era of nationalist uprisings, when old values were disintegrating and old certainties seemed uncertain, the old authorities (religion and its priests, feudal masters, monarchs) no longer sufficed and new ones were sought. The nation and government soon became the authority, and nationalism likewise, the dominant faith – a major religion of Western peoples and eventually of many people throughout the world. As subjects became citizens, the kings could no longer claim that they ruled by divine right, but the nation was now given the sanction of religion. The figures of Mother India, Britannia or Marianne can be interpreted as abstractions, allegories or real life women. However nationalists realised that for the nation to be loved and revered it was necessary to be personified. Thus Rani Jhansi or numerous

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 16-7.

other women of India, (particularly Bengal) could represent Mother India; Britomart or Queen Elizabeth could stand for Britannia and any French woman by the name of Marie-Anne living in France at the time of the French Revolution could represent the French Republic.

The feeling that it would be difficult to make a faceless State popular explains the reversal to allegory. To erect the statue of the nation at the exact spot where the statue of the monarch had been torn down was surely to substitute one term for another. The controversy regarding the origin of Tagore's song "Jana gana mana" illustrates this reversal very well. It is alleged that Tagore composed this song in honour of the British Viceroy and later claimed it to be a song of salutation for the mother nation.

The nation is often figured as a loved woman in danger or as a mother who lost her sons in battle during national liberation struggles or during national conflicts when men are called to fight "for the sake of our women and children" or to "defend their honour," as is pointed out by Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis.⁵¹ Since the image of the nation as mother is primarily used to signify ethnic or national difference the position of women in anti-colonial or nationalist movements is central to the ideological reproduction of the collectivity.

In an essay entitled "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question," Partha Chatterjee elaborates the complex relationship between women's politics and the politics of Indian nationalism. His point is that while the women's

⁵¹ An extract from Floya Anthias and Nira-Yuval Davis, *Women-Nation-State* (London: Macmillan, 1989) has been compiled in Hutchinson and Smith, eds., *Nationalism*, p. 315.

question “was a central issue in some of the most controversial debates over social reform in early and mid-nineteenth century Bengal,” this very issue disappeared from the public agenda by the end of the century. “From then onwards,” Chatterjee observes, “questions regarding the position of women in society do not arouse the same degree of passion and acrimony as they did only a few decades before. The overwhelming issues now are directly political ones – concerning the politics of nationalism.” Chatterjee concludes, “nationalism could not have resolved those issues; rather, the relation between nationalism and women's question must have been problematical.”⁵²

Bengal and Mother India

Benedict Anderson has described the quality of the political lore in nationalism in terms of the language through which nationalism describes its object. He says that it is expressed either through the vocabulary of kinship which in Bengali literature is a matriarchal connection or in the vocabulary of the home, where again the figure of the mother is dominant.⁵³ In fact in the peasant cosmology of Bengal the image of authority has always been feminine. “It was that of a mother goddess who was the original or basic power, *Adyashakti*, the ultimate principle of a nature and *Prakriti*.”⁵⁴ In any case, by the end of the eighteenth century, Durga, the protective mother and Kali, the punitive mother had become major icons in Bengal. Further,

⁵² Partha Chatterjee, “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question”, in Kunkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), p. 233.

⁵³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 143. The family trope is important to nationalism, for it offers a ‘natural’ figure for sanctioning social hierarchy within a putative organic unity of interest points out McClintock in her article “Family Feuds”, pp. 61-66.

⁵⁴ Nandy, *At the End of Psychology*, p. 8.

these two most powerful symbols of sacred authority - the goddesses Durga and Kali - soon became associated with the elite castes in Bengal.

The mother goddess was such a basic element in the cosmology of Bengalis, that imperialism too produced its own mother goddess, the figure of Queen Victoria, about whom Bengali poets in the 1870s and 1880s were very effusive:

Where are you, Mother Victoria, I touch your feet
Mother, what kind of mother are you, why have you
forgotten your child?

Or

Where are you, our mother the Great Queen
We have no other shelter but you
Mother, we call out to you and....⁵⁵

But with nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century becoming the new creed - a new religion - literature transposed the language addressed to this unseen, remote mother to Mother India.

However, the mother is not just a figure of enslavement. For Bengalis accustomed to the worship of a variety of female cults, the enslaved mother figure was very powerful in harnessing anti-colonial energies. Female cults also represent power, an image of resurgent and fearful strength, irrevocably associated in the Bengali Hindu mind with the concept of *shakti* on whose grace the success of the patriotic enterprise depends. "Our history," wrote the Swadeshi leader Bipin Chandra Pal, "is the sacred biography of the Mother. Our philosophies are the revelations of

⁵⁵ As quoted by Tanika Sarkar, in "Nationalist Iconography: Image of Women in 19th Century Bengali Literature", *Economic and Political Weekly* (21 November 1987): 2011. However, songs addressed to Queen Victoria were not marked by the interlocking crises of power and resistance that marks the nationalist use of the icon of the nation as mother.

the Mother's mind... It is, I know exceedingly difficult, if it be not absolutely impossible, for the European or American to clearly understand or fully appreciate this strange idealisation of our land, which has given birth to this cult of the Mother among us."⁵⁶

The standard British criticism against Bengali men was that, unlike the manly British administrator or the Indian martial races, the Bengali *babu* was a weak, effeminate creature. The colonial culture thus derived its psychological strength from the identification of rulership with male dominance and subjecthood with feminine submissiveness.⁵⁷ Bengali nationalism as an oppositional ideology, defiantly worshipped and eulogised the female figures. The Hindu man had already surrendered to a Western colonial power, in the external sphere of their life. Hence it was the responsibility of the Hindu woman to restore and retain the dignity of the community and the nation. It was held that the Hindu woman's body being disciplined by the shastraic regimen of non-consensual, indissoluble infant marriage, austere widowhood and supposedly proven capacity for self-immolation could become "a subject fit enough to embody the redemptive mission to form the site of the future nation."⁵⁸ The Hindu woman's purity implying the superiority of Hinduism as a religion constituted the Hindu claim to nationhood.

"Nationalism is not a mere political programme. Nationalism is a religion ... a creed in which we shall have to live," wrote Aurobindo Ghosh.⁵⁹ With

⁵⁶ As quoted in Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, eds., *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 50.

⁵⁷ Nandy, *At the Edge of Psychology*, p. 74.

⁵⁸ Tanika Sarkar, "Bankimchandra and the Impossibility of a Political Agenda", *The Oxford Literary Review* 16 (1994): 183.

⁵⁹ B.R. Purohit, *Hindu Revivalism and Indian Nationalism* (Sagar: Sathi Prakashan, 1965), p. 95.

the motherland becoming the mother goddess in the nationalist imaginings, the special implications it had for women, held to be aspects of *Shakti*, were manifold. After Chittaranjan Das' death, Subhas Bose asked Das' wife Basanti Devi to assume leadership of the movement. "The spiritual quest of Bengal has always been voiced through the cult of the Mother" [Letter from Shillong, 17.7.27].⁶⁰ Such modes of appeal was not uncommon in Bengal where the Mother's mantle fell on the 'race of mothers' without whose awakening and participation national regeneration remained an impossible goal for the Bengali nationalists.

But as mothers to the nation, women were granted limited agency in the nationalist project. Arguments for women's education and social reform in nineteenth century Bengal were based on the assumption that female education would revitalise and preserve the patriarchal family structure and produce companionable wives and better mothers.

It is important for women to be good mothers as they are the biological reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic or national groups. It is women who teach and transfer the cultural and ideological traditions of ethnic and national groups as well. Thus, nationalists upheld the view that if a nation of true mothers can be built then true sons will abound in every household. Even though the most commonly used Bengali term for the mother's children, *santan*, was not gender-specific, early ideologies of nationalism implicitly, if not explicitly, portrayed a mother-son relationship. ✓

⁶⁰ Sisir Bose, ed., *Subhas Chandra Bose Correspondence, 1924-32* (Calcutta: n.p., 1967), p. 99.

Meredith Borthwick has examined the emergence of a model for respectable womanhood in Bengal, which synthesised the qualities of wifely chastity, devotion and self-sacrifice of Brahmanic religion with Victorian ideals of wives as sympathetic companions, capable household managers and enlightened mothers. Her book, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal: 1849-1905* provides a thoughtful analysis of the process of social and economic change in colonial Bengal in the nineteenth century that transformed the lives of elite women and made it possible for women to emerge from their homes to take part in public affairs. Borthwick suggests that the change in the lifestyle of elite women was due to “a complex response to the presence of British colonial rule.”⁶¹ The members of the Bengali elite or *bhadralok* were very sensitive to British criticism of Indian society which often focussed on the low status of women and the lack of educational opportunities for them. The self-fashioning of the nationalist male necessitated the fashioning of his wife into a fresh subservience. Moreover the *bhadralok* who sought upward mobility through white-collar employment under British rule found that the traditional ideal of the uneducated women who devoted herself entirely to household, family and religion was no longer completely compatible with their lifestyle. Many felt the need for educated wives who could help them in their professional careers and oversee their children's education.

Ghulam Murshid, whose study of nineteenth century elite women includes a small number of Muslims as well as Hindus and Brahmos, agrees with Borthwick that men took the initiative in making possible the changes in the lifestyle

⁶¹ Meredith Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal: 1849-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 36. Borthwick has examined the emergence of a novel model for respectable womanhood in Bengal, synthesising the qualities of wifely chastity, devotion and self sacrifice of Brahmanic religion, with Victorian ideals of wives as sympathetic companions, capable household managers and enlightened mothers.

of women. According to Murshid, men striving for modernity found it “impossible to advance their society or to fulfil their own lives without uplifting their women.” He views the changes that took place in the nineteenth century as a process of ‘modernisation’ rather than ‘emancipation’ or ‘liberation’ of women, because women gained very little autonomous control over the direction of their lives.⁶²

✓ The data analysed by Borthwick and Murshid on elite women in the nineteenth century suggest that women usually accepted the reform that men advocated for them and tried to adapt to changing expectations of the ideal wife and mother. Changes in the role of women did not arise from autonomous feminist concerns expressed by women themselves, but from the nationalist agenda for strengthening Indian society. Women accepted this reconstruction of their traditional roles to include a subordinate partnership with elite men in the nationalist plan because this modification of their role permitted them more space for self-realisation. However, Partha Chatterjee maintains in “Nationalist Resolution of Women's Question” that the new model of the ideal women ultimately prevented women from independently analysing the questing gender roles.

Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid have pointed to the ideological dependence of the women's movement on the nationalist movement, and the difficulties experienced by Indian women in finding their own voice. They point out that the social reforms promoted by the male elite created new forms of patriarchy which were more convenient to them in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Women were assigned new variants of their subordinate role that were more

⁶² See Ghulam Murshid, *Reluctant Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization, 1849 – 1905* (Rajshahi: Rajshahi University Press, 1983).

appropriate for the changed lifestyles of aspiring social groups. Moreover, modifications in women's role provided a semblance of modernism that facilitated the political ambition of certain sections of the Indian society. In fact Lata Mani argues that the real concern was not women at all. The debates over the position of women in Hindu society were arguments about the status of Hindu tradition and the legitimacy of the colonial power which male colonial administrators, missionaries, Hindu liberals and reformers, conservatives and ultimately rationalists, conducted between themselves. In this process, women came to represent 'tradition' for all parties either to be reformed through legislation and education or as the valiant keepers of tradition who had to be protected. "Tradition was thus not the ground on which the status of woman was being contested. Rather the reverse was true: women in fact became the site on which tradition was debated and reformulated."⁶³

Community

The very language of nationalist discourses singled out women as the symbolic repository of group identity. Women, by virtue of their positioning in the private domain, were expected to live and abide by religious norms, and their fidelity to religious values became the basis for the judgement of community identity as a whole. As Kandiyoti points out, "Women are considered to be custodians of cultural identity by virtue of being less assimilated, both culturally and linguistically into the wider society" and this is particularly so for "women of minority communities [who] retain cultural separateness to a greater extent than men."⁶⁴

⁶³ Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India", in Sangari and Vaid, eds., *Recasting Women*, p. 118.

⁶⁴ Kandiyoti, "Identity and its Discontents", p. 435.

Where nations are homogenous and national identity rests on religious or ethnic ties, patriotism may be especially conducive to narrow loyalties. When, however, a nation is religiously and ethnically pluralistic like India, national loyalty becomes a force for overcoming otherwise divisive distinctions among people. As Hans Kohn notes, “nationalism provides the foremost ...emotional incentive for the integration of various traditions, religions and classes into a single entity....”⁶⁵ The concept of community in the pre-colonial period was based on identities of locality, occupation, language, caste and sect. There was no uniform religious identity readily identifiable as ‘Hindu.’ It was a term used first in pre-Islamic and then in Islamic Arab texts as a geographical nomenclature, *Al Hind*. Gradually it came to be used for people of the sub-continent, who were not believers in Islam or Christianity. In this usage it included all those considered the ‘other,’ making no distinction between the upper castes and the lower castes, the Brahmanical and the non-Brahmanical. The usage of the term Hindu in non-Islamic sources in this sense of a religious group dates only to the fifteenth century.⁶⁶ The nineteenth century definition of the Hindu community was based on the whole hearted adoption of the “Aryan Race” theories as propounded by European Orientalists and Indologists. The theories positing an Aryan migration to India further cemented another myth, the notion of an idyllic past. Thus began the creation and writing of a history of the “golden age of Hinduism” when Indian culture had flourished. This Aryan myth also provided an opportunity for rewriting history and creating the notion of a golden age of Hinduism and Hindu

⁶⁵ “Nationalism” in Philip Wiener, ed., *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, Vol. III (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974), p.324.

⁶⁶ Romila Thapar, “Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity”, in *Modern Asian Studies* XXIII, no. 2, pp. 222-24.

culture destroyed by the depredations of Muslim invasions. The Muslims, unlike the untouchables, lower castes and tribals, had enjoyed power in certain stages of Indian history, so they could not be written out of history. But they could be seen as destroyers of the “true” and “legitimate” history.⁶⁷

The social, cultural and political concerns of nationalist and religio-revival movements in nineteenth century Bengal played a key part in legitimising gender differences. A study of the novels in the following chapters reveal that religious ideology and leadership do more than legitimise patriarchal structures; they play a vital role in the socialisation and creation of Muslim or Hindu identity, so that community and State legitimise and reproduce each other.

⁶⁷Sucheta Mazumdar, “Moving Away from a Secular Vision? Women, Nation and the Cultural Contestations of Hindu India” in Valentine M. Moghadam, ed., *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminism in International Perspective* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 243-73.

Chapter Two

*Essays and Lectures: Bankimchandra
Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore*

Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-94) was one of the outstanding novelists of India who received recognition even during his own lifetime.¹ His writings on social and political questions initiated the beginning of critical prose writing in Bengali literary history. Rabindranath Tagore suggested that -

The great mission of his (Bankim) life was to establish and leave behind for posterity to emulate, the model of an ideal in every department of our newly born Bengali literature. Always he ably and gladly responded to the diverse needs of the helpless literature of Bengal.²

The Noble laureate Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) too, began with Bankim as his model but soon sundering himself from Bankim and his followers created a new prose and the Bengali voice of a new century. In Tagore's writings is recorded the whole evolution of prose from the point where Bankim left off.

As a writer and an educated Bengali, Bankim perceived it the duty of his social class to instruct his people about the nation's past heritage, current problems and make them aware of their duties to the nation. His Bengali magazine, *Bangadarshan*, first published in summer 1872, played an important role in the realisation of this ideal and in the development of Bengali literature. However, his reasoned arguments in his numerous essays and ideological constructs proved to be less influential than his passionate appeals to patriotic fervour and the fictional invocation of the motherland as the mother goddess, the ultimate object of worship.³

¹ S.N. Mukherjee and M. Maddern eds., and trans. *Bankimchandra Chatterjee Sociological Essays: Utilitarianism and Positivism in Bengal* (Calcutta: Riddhi-India, 1986), p.iii.

² M.K. Haldar, *Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay: Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, (Calcutta: Minerva Associate, 1977), p. 3.

³ It was not addressed to any particular caste, class, gender, region or linguistic group hence its initial appeal to all sections of the population.

Aurobindo Ghosh became the prophet of this 'new' nationalism and prepared the ground for the emotionally charged political outburst following Curzon's decision to partition the province of Bengal.⁴ B.C. Pal speaking of the birth of this new nationalism says:

This new nationalism had its origin in a renaissance in Bengali literature brought about by our contact with modern European thought. Bankimchandra was in a special sense the prophet of this renaissance.⁵

Rabindranath Tagore articulated a dissident concept of national ideology. He rejected the use of violence to free the nation from British domination that Bankim had justified and propagated. He was one of the very few who could discern the inherent weakness of militant Hindu revivalism and the exclusive and sectarian nationalism or patriotism, of early twentieth century Bengal. In the initial phase of the nationalist movement in Bengal following the partition, Tagore participated in the Swadeshi campaign of 1905-6. He provided the intellectual and emotional leadership for the movement by writing tracts, leading demonstrations and composing songs that gave expression to the nationalist spirit pervading his country. Later, the Hindu-Muslim riots made Tagore realise the need to unite all sections of the educated elite and the masses in the national cause. The call to overt action against the British government by extremists had great popular appeal and assassinations, bombings and political martyrdom marked the next decade after partition. Tagore

⁴ In an essay written in 1894, a few months after Bankim's death Aurobindo Ghosh summed up in a brief phrase Bankim's achievement: he created "a language, a literature, and a nation." As quoted in Bhabatosh Chatterjee, ed., *Bankimchandra Chatterjee: Essays in Perspective* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1994), p. xii.

⁵ Matilal Das, *Bankim Chandra: Prophet of the Indian Renaissance: His Life and Art* (Calcutta: D.M.Library, 1938), p. 176.

stayed away from it and later stated, "I do not belong to the present age, the age of conflicting politics."⁶

Both these writers, through their novels and parallel writings, created a consciousness among the people about the existing circumstances and projected a vision of the future. Their writings depicted the outer or the public sphere of life, dominated by Western values and the spiritual, inner world dominated by Hindu or indigenous values. They expressed concern about the condition of women and wanted to improve their lot. They conceived a new image of women in the context of the changes taking place in nineteenth and twentieth century Bengal. The question of gender construction and gender (in)equality thus occupy an important place in their prose writings.

A reading of some of the essays, novels, lectures and speeches of Bankim and Tagore provides insights into issues of gender, community identity and national identity. Their writings invalidate the assumption that post colonial literature operates fundamentally in and inevitably as a form of resistance.⁷ Their works prove that the colonial past was not an unproblematic retrospect where all power was on one side and all protest on the other. It was a multi-faceted nationalism, all aspects of which were complicit with power and domination even when it challenged colonial power. In the name of national ideology people were prepared to sacrifice their personal identities and also when they thought it necessary trampled on the civil and

⁶ Leonard A. Gordon, *Bengal: The Nationalist Movement, 1876-1940* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 88.

⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1995). Said points to the totalising nature of Western knowledge that constructs a necessarily monolithic, non-stratified colonised subject who is entirely powerless and devoid of any operative history of his/her own. As a result the colonised subject is absolved of all complexity and culpability in the makings of the structures of exploitation in the two hundred years of our history.

religious rights of ethnic, racial and religious minorities whom the nation could not or did not want to absorb.

The views of Bankim and Tagore on these three interlocking themes are the subject of discussion and analysis in this chapter - issues that have been already raised - in the first chapter. This chapter has been divided into two sections: the first deals with some of Bankim's essays published in *Bangadarshan* in which he expresses his views on gender, nationalism and the construction of community identities and the second focuses on Tagore's views on identical issues with special reference to the Brahmo Samaj – a religious group that rejected the idolatrous side of Hinduism in the early nineteenth century and gave to the conjugal role of the Bengali women an importance and dignity it never had before. The attempt, primarily, has been to gather their views and opinions on key issues dispersed in a number of essays and not to arrive at homogeneous conclusions. I have attempted a comparative study of the two novelists in the concluding chapter.

I

In his *Europe Reconsidered*, Tapan Raychaudhuri writes that “the Bengali intelligentsia was the first Asian social group of any considerable size whose whole mental world was transformed through its interactions with European culture, the West.”⁸ The close contact of this intelligentsia with European culture led to the imitation and adoption of the mannerisms, habits and belief systems of the West. A faith in the beneficial role of the British presence and hopes of India's progress under

⁸ Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. ix.

Britain's providential guidance was evident in the literature of the time. The colonial apparatus provided opportunities for upward mobility and by the last quarter of the nineteenth century most Bengali *bhadralok* had accepted the idea that British rule was good for India.

Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, who was considered "the most acclaimed man of letters in the Calcutta of his day"⁹ offered praise to the colonial regime:

Look at the railways, and the engines which surpassing a hundred thousand of horses of Indra in strength, make a month's journey in a day. Look at ships full of fire which, like sporting swans cleave the great waves of Bhagirathi on which the celestial elephants used to float, and speed on bearing articles of trade. Your father who lives in Benares, has this morning fallen fatally ill - lightning descending from the sky gives you the news, and by night you sit at his feet and care for him. The disease which formerly used to be incurable is now, by virtue of new medical lore, cured by the doctor.... And I who, alas, have sat down in a chair to write sociology for the *Bangadarshan* on foolscap paper, would, hundred years earlier, have sat on the ground like an animal and, with a torn manuscript close to my nose, have given himself a headache over quibbles as to whether or not bottle gourds are to be eaten on the ninth day of the lunar fortnight. Has not the country progressed?¹⁰

Bankim's faith in modernity, progress, science and technology - all products of the British rule in India led him to a positive assessment of the overall effects of British rule. After a comparative study of 'ancient' India, which he calls 'autonomous' implying free or independent, and 'modern' India under subjection of

⁹ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Press, 1986), p. 54.

¹⁰ Mukherjee and Maddern, eds., *Sociological Essays*, p. 115-16.

the British, Bankim arrives at a positive assessment of the latter.¹¹ British rule has established a fairer and more impersonal legal and judicial system, he writes, and has made available the benefits of Western science and literature. Although “the task of governing and so forth are all in the hands of the English”, the Indians are now “becoming educated in European literature and science. If we were not in subjection to an European race, this good fortune would not happen. So although on one hand our subjection means our loss, on the other it means our progress.”¹²

Bankim counters the opinion that British rule oppresses Indians by arguing that in ‘ancient’ India a “similar oppression of caste was prevalent”¹³ and “to he who is oppressed it is immaterial whether the oppressor be of the same or of a different race.”¹⁴ He further explains that in India, the common people have always been Sudras. The three upper castes were smaller in number compared to the Sudras yet they were alone the rulers of the country. Similarly, in ‘modern’ India by which he means colonial India, the British minority is the ruler. He asks, “is the inequality which exists between Indians and English in modern India greater than the equality

¹¹ Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, *Bharatvasher Sadhinata evam Paradinata* in Mukherjee and Maddern, eds., *Sociological Essays*, pp.110-17. Bankim’s periodisation of Indian history is quite problematic. In his essays he uses the terms ‘ancient’ India, ‘medieval’ India and ‘modern’ India indiscriminately without explaining which age in Indian history he is referring to by these umbrella terms. There is no effort to date the periods historically or sociologically. In fact by positing the category ‘ancient’ India against ‘modern’ India as diametrically opposed to each other Bankim flattens the history of the ages which come between ancient India and colonial India. He seems to make a complete move from ‘ancient’ India to ‘modern’ India dismissing the progress or changes that are bound to have happened in the years in between. He thus projects history as stable and fixed in time. Further, he equates Muslim rule with the medieval age, that is the age under subjection of alien rulers. But even during the Muslim reign there were kingdoms, which were still under Hindu rulers such as the Maratha kingdom. Throughout this chapter therefore the terms ‘ancient’ India referring to India ruled by Hindu rulers, ‘medieval’ India meaning India under Muslim rulers and ‘modern’ India implying India under the British follows Bankim’s categorisation of Indian history.

¹² Mukherjee and Maddern, eds., *Sociological Essays*, p. 58.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

between Sudras and Brahmins in ancient India?"¹⁵ Bankim feels that increased security and law and order have contributed to an increase in population leading in its turn to an expansion in agriculture. Trade between India and Britain has further led to an increase in India's wealth by an expansion of the market of India's agricultural production.

Under the control of the British the realm is well-governed. The dread of foreigners establishing settlements and stealing the country's wealth has been abolished for a long time.... There has been a decrease in the fear of bandits, of thieves,... More land is cultivated now than before the Permanent Settlement.... In Bengal, day by day, the country's wealth from agriculture is increasing with the increase in cultivation.¹⁶

Bankim explains that the price rise, which many complained about, "really meant that money had become cheaper and that income from agriculture was on the increase." To the critics who said that weavers had been harmed and indigenous manufacturing destroyed by importing plain cloth, Bankim replies: "that the weavers cannot make a living does not mean that the country's wealth is decreasing."¹⁷ It only means that the income now "goes not to the weaver but to somebody else." If the weaver found it difficult to compete with imported textiles he should shift to other trades. The reluctance of the Indians to give up their hereditary trades is the reason that he assigns to the weavers not seizing the new opportunities opened up by the increase in agro-production.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 155.

Bankim is of the opinion that Cornwallis' Permanent Settlement should have been with the peasants and not with the zamindars, so that wealth instead of being concentrated in a few hands would have been dispersed in the houses of the majority.¹⁸ Yet he does not "desire the destruction of the Ten-Year Settlement" because "the mistake which was made in 1793 cannot now be corrected".¹⁹ Bankim feels that the destruction of the Permanent Settlement will throw the society into "serious disorder":

We are not in favour of social revolution. In particular, we do not offer such evil counsel to the English as to suggest that they should destroy that Settlement which they solemnly pledged would be permanent, making them become known as liars throughout the Indian empire, and permanently forfeiting the trust of the people. If we ever become ill-wishers of the English, and of the community, we will offer such a advice.²⁰

Thus while pointing to the inefficacy of the Permanent Settlement through an elaborate description of Paran Mandal - a representative peasant and his subsequent pathetic and hopeless existence Bankim concludes the discussion with a recommendation for mild reform and an appeal to the right-minded zamindars. This essay explicitly shows Bankim at pains to declare that he is not against the British and his efforts to allay the British of any seditious attempt in his work. Indeed, as Tapan Raychaudhuri insightfully comments - "defiance of social or political authorities was

¹⁸ Lord Cornwallis introduced the Permanent Settlement in Bengal and Bihar in 1793 which converted the zamindars and revenue collectors into landlords. Following which, the zamindars were not only to act as agents of the government in collecting land revenue from the peasants but also to become the owners of the entire land in their zamindaris. On the other hand, the peasants were reduced to the status of mere tenants and were deprived of long-standing rights to the soil.

¹⁹ Mukherjee and Maddern, eds., *Sociological Essays*, p.151.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

by no means the hallmark of the colonial intelligentsia who was essentially dependent on the alien ruler for his livelihood.”²¹

Another characteristic attribute of the colonial intelligentsia is his acceptance of the objectification of his own culture as projected by the coloniser. The Bengali intelligentsia was no different and Bankim a well-known Bengali intellectual of that age, also accepted the British ascription of weakness to Bengalis as a self-evident fact. Thus in the prologue to the journal, *Bangadarshan*, Bankim writes unhesitatingly that there is no hope that the Bengalis will ever be the equals of the British and efforts to transform Bengalis into Englishmen were likely to produce only asses in lions’ skins. His opinion of his fellow Bengalis, the English educated *babus*, was similar to the view held by the colonial masters. The disciple in “Dharmatattva” thus comments, “most Bengalis nowadays are either hypocritical and deceitful or like animals,” and the guru, who articulates Bankim’s position in this essay agrees wholeheartedly.²² Further, the example Bankim cites to validate his view that literary revival was an important agent of national regeneration clearly reveals the extent of mental colonisation of the colonised intelligentsia:

It may seem improbable that European ideas will ever be assimilated by the people of India - that all we can effect here is a superficial varnish of sham intelligence.... there was a time when it would have seemed almost equally improbable that the little remnant of intelligence preserved in the Latin Church, and the study of classical antiquity, would have grown into what we now see among the Celtic and Teutonic peoples of the West. The Bengalis may not seem to have the fibre for doing much in the way of real thought any more than of vigorous action; but it was

²¹ Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered*, p. 195.

²² Mukherjee and Maddern, eds., *Sociological Essays*, p. 176. Bankim’s essay “Dharmatattva”, is in the form of a dialogue between a ‘guru’, teacher and his disciple. Bankim elucidates his views on nationalism and patriotism through a discussion between the teacher and his student.

chiefly among the supple and pliant Italians that the revival of learning in Europe began; and it is possible to imagine that the Bengalis - the Italians of Asia, as the Spectator has called them - are now doing a great work, by, so to speak, acclimatising European ideas and fitting them for reception hereafter by the hardier and more original races of Northern India.²³

In a public address in 1798, Sri Rajnarayan Basu had castigated the educated classes of Bengal for their 'love of imitation'. In reply, Bankim asks, "Is imitation itself condemnable?"²⁴ No education can be acquired other than by means of imitation. All uneducated and uncivilised races learn by imitating educated and civilised societies. Hence "the imitation of the English by the Bengalis is reasonable and rational... The Bengalis see that the English is superior in every field ...Why will not the Bengali want to be like the English? But how will they be like them?"²⁵ The Bengalis can only become like the English by imitating the latter therefore the Bengalis do likewise. In fact "any other race in such a circumstance would have done the same," Bankim confidently states. But then tries to correct himself by immediately adding - "Of course we agree that it may not be entirely desirable for the Bengalis to be as imitative as they now are."²⁶ However, it is evident that Bankim's project is to initiate progress by transforming the backward culture of his nation.

In another essay entitled "Bharat Kalanka" Bankim writes that it is through India's contact with the West that the Hindus have discovered terms like liberty and national solidarity. Hence, "the English are India's benefactor: they are

²³ Ibid., p. 124.

²⁴ Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, "Anukaran" in J.C. Bagal, ed., *Bankim Rachanavali* Vol.3. (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1969), p. 70. Translation mine.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 70-3. Translation mine.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 74. Translation mine.

teaching us new words....”²⁷ Bankim unfortunately disregards, or is perhaps oblivious of the autonomous and positive cultural content of colonial nationalism in Asia and Africa and their efforts to devise new goals and criteria for man’s progress. He overlooks the fact that the “priceless” terms – “liberty” and “national solidarity” were not in their totality imported from the West but were in most cases, derived in reaction to it.²⁸

In his introduction to Bankim’s collected works, Jogeshchandra Bagal says that Bankim withdrew from publication his popular essay on equality, “Samya.”²⁹ Bankim is supposed to have said to his friends that he withdrew “Samya” for his views had undergone a change and he repudiated “Samya” as erroneous. A close examination of “Samya,” however, reveals that he had, in fact, suppressed only three chapters of this work. One of the chapters in which he had stridently argued about the poverty of the peasants of Bengal was incorporated in his long essay “Bangadesher Krishak.”

Interestingly one of the suppressed chapters is on the oppression of women where he has raised issues like the denial of higher education to women, their seclusion in the *zenana*, the lack of employment opportunities and the virtual absence of right to property. In this chapter, Bankim’s indictment of the inequality between man and woman is very strong. He appreciates the greater equality of men and

²⁷ Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, “Bharat Kalanka”, in J.C. Bagal, *Bankim Rachanavali*, p.137. Translation mine.

²⁸ See Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, and *Nationalist Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) and *The Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Press, 1986) and Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991) and Chapter 1 of this work for a detailed discussion on this topic

²⁹ It is significant that apart from “Samya,” Bankim’s other essays had all gone through a number of publications during the author’s own lifetime.

women in the West and the relative freedom enjoyed by the European women as compared to their Indian counterparts. To the allegations of some that the freedom of social contact had affected women's morals in the West, Bankim replies that such an assumption was an insult to womanhood.

We ask, if it is so desirable for women to be obedient to men, why is it not desirable for men to be obedient to women? You have bound women in every possible way: why are there no bonds for men? Are women's characters so much worse by nature than those of men? Or is it because the rope is in the hands of men that women are so firmly bound? If this is not adharma, than we cannot say what is.³⁰

He wants the same rules of morality or ethics to be applied for both men and women and questions the reformers' emphasis solely on the chastity of the Hindu wife. Yet Bankim himself puts predominance on chastity of women when he writes:

The dharma or chastity of women should by all means be preserved: in order to preserve it, the more bonds you use the better, and nobody will object. But why is nothing said about men?³¹

He also questions the marriage between a polygamous male and a monogamous child-wife. He feels that if a man can remarry then woman as a corollary can also remarry, but only after the death of her husband. He, however, does not forget to state that -

A wife who is faithful and who deeply loved her first husband, will never wish to marry again: even among peoples where widow marriage is prevalent, pure-natured,

³⁰ Ibid., p. 106.

³¹ Ibid., p. 117.

affectionate, faithful wives, if they become widowed, never marry again.³²

Regarding the moral justification of the polygamous attitude of men, Bankim interestingly is silent.

...is it in fact proper for a man to marry again after his wife dies? Whether it is or not is an independent issue: we have nothing here about its propriety or otherwise.³³

Thus it seems that Bankim is not ready to subvert the power structure or the interests of men at the cost of granting greater freedom to women. On the question of employment too, Bankim's argument for allowing women the freedom to earn their living is not based on egalitarian ethics. It is merely a response to the plight of Bengali widows. Unwilling to subvert the role of men as bread-earners for the family, Bankim writes:

It is true, indeed, that men, who earn, support the women of their own family. But there are many women in this country who have nobody to support them in that way.³⁴

Bankim is against "the caging of women within the house, like forest animals" and the restricting of their movement to "hundred square yards of earth". He wants to improve "the animal houses which Bengali households are."³⁵ However, he maintains that a wife's unqualified devotion to her husband makes the Aryan household "full of happiness as paradise" and woman's "true *dharma*" is her efficient role playing as a wife or mother. In a later essay, titled "Prachina evam Navina,"

³² Ibid., p.120.

³³ Ibid., p.120.

³⁴ Ibid., p.108.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 105.

Bankim censures modern woman for being a *habu* implying laziness and affectatious behaviour and laments that *navina* (modern women) were losing the virtues of the Bengali women of old. His advice to such modern women who spend their life lazing in bed, stitching carpets, reading novels, decorating themselves and producing children is to hang themselves and thereby relieve the earth from the burden of carrying such useless creatures.³⁶

In “Dharmatattva”, an essay written in the latter phase of his creative life which was around the same time that he wrote the two novels - *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* Bankim completely rejects the notion of equality between men and women as an impossible ideal, because nature had ordained separate roles for the two sexes.

Guru: How is equality possible? Can a man give birth or suckle a child? On the other hand can a battle be fought with a platoon of women.³⁷

He further says that the reformers’ attempts to Westernise the weak and timid Indian women could not be successful because the Indian women were inherently different from their Western counterparts. However, if this transformation does happen, he mockingly writes “than we can hope that sal tree will also one day transform itself to an oak tree.”³⁸

Bankim’s prose writings on gender issues reveal an anxiety, a dilemma. He is in favour of granting more freedom to women and genuinely wants to

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 152-57.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 175.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 152.

improve their living conditions. But he is uncertain as to how to improve the condition of the Bengali women without compromising the privileges enjoyed by the men. He wants to ensure a better life for women but is unable to resolve the inherent contradiction that lies in attempting to provide women with education, freedom and economic independence and yet wanting them to remain subservient to men. In the essays he never talks about women's political activity or the role that he imagines that women could play in the colonial situation. Women remain external to the nationalist project that he envisions for Bengal and India. In his novels - *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* that are discussed in the next chapter, we find a disjunction between women's education per se and women's political activity and also a sharp difference between the roles of men and women at home and in the outside world.

It is also paradoxical that, on the one hand, Bankim accepts the Orientalist construction of the 'effeminate' Bengali and regards novel ideas such as the nation and nationalism, which were making their impact on the emerging Bengali nationalist consciousness, as imports from the West, but on the other hand is highly critical of Western scholarship on India, particularly the Orientalist rendering of Indian history. His numerous attempts to write the history of Bengal and India were a result of his view that the Bengalis needed history to graduate from being animals to human beings and more importantly, to become men. Bankim's endeavour to write the history of an yet unnamed people defined by the ambiguous term *jati* was a clear rejection of Orientalist conclusions of the 'effeminate' Hindu and the brave Englishman. He puts forward two reasons for India's subjection throughout the centuries. First, the Indian's lack of a natural desire for liberty and second, the

absence of a sense of community or nation and the persistent segmentation of Hindu society on the basis of different religion, language and lineage.

There is an indeterminate use of the term *jati* in Bankim's writings. Sometimes, Bankim identifies the nation with the linguistic community, the Bengalis, at other times with the religious community, the Hindus and at certain times with Indians in general. A footnote to the essay, "Bharat Kalanka" reads: "In this essay the word *jati* means nationality or nation". This is significant, because, unable to find evidences of Bengali martial order in the historical past, Bankim opens up the boundaries of the natural community and brings in the history of the 'hardier races' to figure in the narrative of the Bengalis. His quest for a patriotic tradition in India fastened on the Rajput and Maratha resistance to the Muslim rulers. Although concerned with the immediate Bengali populace in order to fill the inadequacies of the Bengali character as was historically given and exaggeratedly propounded by the British, Bankim begins to construct a much larger and more complex community.³⁹ In his novels too Bankim delivers a community, at least in the imagination of the reading public. As Anderson had suggested, "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."⁴⁰ Bankim's essays and novels successfully function in this respect to establish an imaginary connection between people across social and geographical space and even across time by creating links

³⁹ Sudipta Kaviraj, "The Imaginary Institution of India", in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, eds., *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Vol. VIII, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 15. Kaviraj calls this link that Bankim creates with other peoples in India as "the widening of the collective self" – the early beginning of the creation of an Indian nationhood.

⁴⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), p. 15

between the dead and the yet unborn, of who we are and who we yet shall be. In the essays of the latter years however there is a definite shift and concrete marking of boundaries as Bankim explicitly equates the nation with the religious community. Cultural self-assertion centring on a new-found pride in the Hindu past which was, in the last half of the nineteenth century, an important aspect of the developing nationalist consciousness of the Bengali intelligentsia was to a great extent initiated by Bankim.⁴¹

In "Bangadesher Krishak," Bankim delineates in vivid detail the sorry state of the peasants due to the covetousness and wickedness of the zamindars. Yet, unwilling to subvert the interests of the zamindars Bankim traces the ultimate responsibility for the situation in the colonial era to the Muslim rulers under whom the zamindars first emerged. Thus, Bankim conjures up the image of the Muslim community as outside the national mainstream by depicting them as aggressive descendents of depraved and tyrannical medieval rulers.⁴² In fact, interests, Bankim's aggressively Hindu orientation in the later phase of his creative life led him to draw a prejudiced and negative picture of Islam's role in Indian life.

⁴¹ Sumit Sarkar, in "Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva", in David Ludden, ed., *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 270-93, recognises two historical transitions in the genealogy of Hindu communalism. The first is a transition from a relatively inchoate Hindu world, without firmly defined boundaries, to the late nineteenth century construction of ideologues of unified Hinduism and the second transition which he dates around the mid-1920's, is a move towards an aggressive Hindutva. Bankim looked upon Medieval India as a period of bondage and saw in Islam a quest for power and glory, devoid of spiritual and ethical qualities – a complete antithesis of his "ideal" religion – Hinduism. Also see Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered*, pp. 188-89, Mushirul Hasan, 'The Myth of Unity: Colonial and National Narratives,' in David Ludden, *Making India Hindu*, p. 201 and Tanika Sarkar, "Imagining a Hindu Nation: Hindus and Muslims in Bankimchandra's Later Writings", in *Economic and Political Weekly* (24 September 1994): 2553-561.

⁴² An imagined community identity is formed not only in opposition to the imperial state but also to an indigenous 'other'. Because a community can be much more effectively imagined in contradiction to the 'other' the national or anti-colonial movements delineated an 'other' as rhetorical object and actual target.

Some critics hold that the anti-Muslim sentiments in Bankim's essays are in reality a surrogate for anti-British sentiments - "a characteristically middle class desire to play safe and avoid giving offence to the British" because "acts of resistance to the British was not a safe subject."⁴³ But there is no doubt that Bankim started a tradition by making the Muslim central to his historical and political scheme. His notions of ideal Hinduism, his construction of the Muslims as aliens and oppressive rulers and most importantly the language that he developed to describe the Muslim community, in Tanika Sarkar's view "certainly inflected the rhetoric and the aspirations of violent Hindu communalism of the next century."⁴⁴

In 1882, Reverend Hastie of the General Assembly wrote a brutal critique of Hindu idolatry. Bankim, who had always ridiculed Orientalist scholarship on India, published in the columns of the *Calcutta Statesman* his first avowal of faith in Hinduism. Thereafter, his discursive prose became exclusively preoccupied with the theme of a reconstructed and purified Hinduism, which could be the basis of national regeneration. In the light of this new ideology he also rejected much that he had previously admired in the West like its egalitarian views of society and the beneficial effects of scientific knowledge. He repudiated "Samya" and excised the frontal contestations of Hindu caste, class and gender hierarchies from his essays.⁴⁵ He now claimed that "a purified and regenerated Hindu ideal was superior as a rational philosophy of life than anything that Western religion or philosophy has to offer."⁴⁶

⁴³ Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ Sarkar, "Imagining a Hindu Nation", p. 2553.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2555.

⁴⁶ Haldar, *Renaissance and Reaction*, p. 72.

In his earlier essays – “Bharat Kalanka” and “Bangalir Bahubal,” Bankim, we find, is critical of the European nation’s willingness to inflict pain on other nations in the interest of their own nation. But now, in his efforts to adopt the heritage of Hindu culture as the focus of India’s identity and in order to glorify the Hindu past, Bankim declares that Hindus or Indians have a solution to offer to the expansionist tendencies and xenophobic content of Western nationalism. He had been vociferous in his acid critique of ancient⁴⁷ Hindu society in “Samya.” But in “Dharmatattva,” his position is completely reversed. In this essay, Bankim legitimises Brahmin supremacy in Hindu society. Emphasising the importance of *bhakti* or devotion towards Brahmins for the progress of society he writes:

It was because society offered so much devotion to the Brahmins that Indians progressed so far in a short time. Because society was fully submissive to the givers of education, it easily achieved progress... If society relies on Brahmanical ethics, there is no longer any need of war. Their praise is eternal. There are no other people of all those on earth with as much genius, ability, wisdom and religion as the Brahmins of ancient India.⁴⁸

However, Bankim is not willing to offer unqualified devotion to the Brahmins. Devotion, he says, is to be offered to only those who have the qualities of a ‘true’ Brahmin, that is one who is “a religious, learned, dispassionate teacher of the people”. Thus, a Sudra, (who is supposed to be of low birth) is worthy of devotion if he conforms to Bankim’s definition of a ‘true’ Brahmin. Bankim is aware of the fact that the Brahmanical monopoly of learning in India made it impossible for a Sudra to have access to knowledge and that the Brahmins had for centuries forced the lower

⁴⁷ I have explained Bankim’s use of the terms ‘ancient’ and ‘modern’ India in the footnote no. 7

⁴⁸ Mukherjee and Maddern, p.179.

castes to live in a state of subhuman existence. Hence such a seemingly revolutionary statement can be easily dismissed as mere rhetoric.

Bankim's theory of *anusilan* or practice is based on the concept of *bhakti* which implied the unity of knowledge and duty. *Bhakti*, he stresses, is essential to attain all types of improvement, individual or collective. He gives an elaborate description of *bhakti* as a system of widening circles which beginning from the love of the world which is "the root of Hindu religion", proceeds to self love which is "more important than achieving the welfare of others" and finally to "love of one's own country" which is "above all other *dharma*".⁴⁹ In the expanding circles of devotion to be attained by his countrymen Bankim posits devotion to the country as the highest and the final goal – an obvious choice in the context of the colonial rule in Bengal in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Anusilan, he emphasises, implies involvement and not withdrawal from the world. The worship of a personal god, even though his (it is invariably 'his' in Bankim's writings) existence cannot be proved, is fundamental for the perfection of all faculties. The object of *anusilan*, can only be realised in the deity. *Bhakti* for the deity implies all the duties defined as *dharma* and for the Hindu, *dharma* subsumes religion, morality, virtue and good deeds. Bankim also holds that there cannot be any politics without religion.

It is my humble view that not a single activity in the world should be independent of religion... It is because we did not introduce religion into our politics that there has been so much delay in winning freedom.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp.186-99.

⁵⁰ Aurobindo Ghosh, *Essays on the Gita*, (Pondicherry: Aurobindo Ashram, 1928), pp.64-5.

He projects nationalism and patriotism as a part of *anusilan dharma*. His aim is to rouse people to work selflessly for the welfare of the country. But Bankim soon realises that one cannot be devoted to an abstraction. So he takes recourse to the strategy of giving an anthropomorphic form to an abstract idea, the nation. Although he is a severe critic of the theory of filtration in the field of education, he believes that nationalism among his populace can be generated effectively through filtration from above.⁵¹ In “Dharmatattva”, Bankim thus writes: I do not entertain much hope at this time that the ordinary Hindu would understand the religion of *anusilan*.⁵²

But,

a national character is built out of the national religion... I do accept that if intellectuals accept this religion, a national character will finally be built.⁵³

He states that the lower classes are the objects of conscious and deliberate social engineering and political initiative is beyond them. Thus the project envisioned by the nationalist Bankim is one in which the intellectual will lead and the masses will follow.

The concluding section of this essay also reveals a change in Bankim’s views on the adoption of violent methods for the freedom from alien rule. In sharp

⁵¹ The British rulers assumed that education would trickle down from the upper castes to the lower castes of the Indian society. However the Bengali *bhadralok* claiming superior knowledge and higher intellect, were contemptuous of the Muslims and low caste Hindus. The religious, cultural and economic cleavages in Bengali society set the confines of the new ideas acquired through Western education. The *babu* had nothing but contempt for his mother tongue and the language of his intellectual discourse created a permanent barrier between him and the poor and the unprivileged. The mentality of the Muslims, the low castes and the peasant communities were cast in a mould sharply distinct for the expanding world consciousness of the educated high caste male Hindu *bhadralok* in nineteenth century Bengal. This difference in consciousness was later to have explosive long-term implications in the politics of twentieth century Bengal.

⁵² Halder, *Renaissance and Reaction*, p. 73

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

contradiction to his rejection of social revolution and critique of warring European nations in "Bangadesher Krishak." Bankim now declares *dharmayuddha*, by which he means war in a just cause to be in accordance with morality.

A king is a king for as long as he protects his subjects. When he becomes an oppressor of the people,....Far from offering devotion to such a king, the people should do whatever will force the king to rule properly.⁵⁴

Both *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani*, each in its own way can be read as illustrations of this principle. The Indians he asserts can find fulfilment by performing action according to *dharma* and through the fullest cultivation of manly qualities as eulogised in the character of Krishna.⁵⁵ Bankim's Krishna, it is important to note, is not the Krishna of orthodox Hindus, he is the possessor of all the human qualities in their fullest and richest fulfilment. Krishna convinced him that according to the needs of circumstance the path of violence may also be the right path. Thus the militant phase of India's struggle for independence received considerable sustenance from Bankim's writings.

The later phase of Bankim's literary life explicitly reveals a transition from a predominantly liberal to a markedly Hindu revivalist discourse. There is therefore an identifiable but no consistent pattern of responses in his prose writings. The essays are fraught with contradictions and doubts. He expresses many

⁵⁴ Mukherjee and Maddern, eds., *Sociological Essays*, p. 170. Peter van der Veer, "Writing Violence", in Ludden ed., *Making India Hindu*, pp. 250-69 shows how power and violence are crucial to Hindu discourse and practice. The gradual nationalisation of religion, particularly in the middle-class has to be understood as a modern, ideological move.

⁵⁵ Bankim's essay "Krishnacharita" portrays Krishna as the ideal human being. It is very long and beyond the scope of this chapter therefore I have not discussed it in detail. But it is very important for understanding Bankim's views on patriotism so I could not do without referring to it.

contradictory views within the course of one single essay thus giving the readers the scope to arrive at many different and often irreconcilable meanings. This complexity derives partly from his own uncertainties, dilemmas and shifts in attitudes over time but primarily from his dependence on the alien ruler for his livelihood. His emphasis on *dharma* as a necessary basis for personal and social improvement was an offshoot of his quest for an Indian political ideal different from the West. His education, personality and perhaps above all his middle class background, made it impossible for him to reject modernity, which he associated with British rule in India. He, therefore, held that India had to remain under the subjection of the British for some time - a view expressed in both the novels under discussion, *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani*. At the same time, his projection of Krishna as an ideal character to be emulated by the Bengalis and, subsequently, the Indian population at large and his legitimisation of the path of violence as justified for the liberation of the nation from what he later saw as the torturous colonial rule made him an important precursor of the extremist groups of the Indian freedom movement. The various contradictory stances articulated by Bankim in his prose works reveal that he was not free from the predicament of the western educated intelligentsia of Bengal. There is also no doubt that the Hindu nation imagined and constructed by Bankim through his prose writings is centred around a new Hindu male which invariably pushes to the margins the other castes, the other communities and also the other sex.

II

Rabindranath Tagore's essays contain a definition of nationalism and patriotism, an analysis of its implications, and arguments to discredit it. In his essays,

novels and lectures Tagore presents both a strong denunciation of patriotism and an analysis of why he rejects it. For Tagore, nationalism and imperialism are two faces of the same monster. From the 'soil of Europe' was produced the virulent poison of 'national self-glorification', he writes, which when fused with imperial adventure and the pursuit of greed created the Frankenstein of modern Western civilisation seeking to devour its neighbours.⁵⁶ This 'epidemic of nationalism' is in the words of Tagore,

...always watchful to keep the aliens at bay or to exterminate them. It is carnivorous and cannibalistic... it feeds upon the resources of other peoples and tries to swallow their whole future ... We used to have pillages, changes of monarchies... but never such a sight of fearful and hopeless carnage, such wholesale feeding of nation upon nation, such machines for turning great portions of the earth into mincemeat, never such terrible jealousies with all their ugly teeth and claws ready for tearing open each other's vitals.⁵⁷

He seeks a political freedom, which will not be only the freedom to be powerful, for he knows,

those people who have got their political freedom are not necessarily free, they are merely powerful. The passions which are unbridled in them are creating huge organisations of slavery in the disguise of freedom.⁵⁸

He is sceptical about the nationalist agenda and suspicious of the motives of the leaders who lead the large majority. He argues that in the so-called free nations in the West, the majority of the population are not free because "they are

⁵⁶ Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (London: Macmillan, 1950), p. 28.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁵⁸ Anthony X. Soares, ed., *Lectures and Addresses by Rabindranath Tagore* (London: Macmillan, 1936), p. 114.

driven by the minority to a goal which is not even known to them.”⁵⁹ In the West ordinary people are flattered into believing that they are free and they have the sovereign power in their hands, but in reality this power is robbed by hosts of self-seekers and adventurers, who take recourse to the concept of nationalism or patriotism, to further their own interest.⁶⁰ Patriotism is in the interest of rulers/leaders but not of the community itself. He cautions the nationalist leaders of India and all those who felt that political freedom would make India free –

Whatever weakness we cherish in our society will become the source of danger in politics. The same inertia which leads us to our idolatry of dead forms in social institutions will create in our politics prison-houses with immovable walls. The narrowness of sympathy which make it possible for us to impose upon a considerable portion of humanity the galling yoke of inferiority will assert itself in our politics in creating the tyranny of injustice.⁶¹

He insists on the primacy of social reform over political freedom. Vociferous in his critique of the caste system which he describes as an “inelastic system” which has “forcibly” held human beings within its grips, Tagore asks, “Have we an instance in the whole world where a people who are not allowed to mingle their blood shed their blood for one another except by coercion or for mercenary purposes?”⁶² According to Tagore the caste system originated as an experiment in evolving social unity within which all the different peoples of India could be held together, while fully enjoying the freedom of maintaining their own differences. However, Indian society failed to recognise the mutability of human beings and the need to change social structures in

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 114-15.

⁶⁰ Rabindranath Tagore, *Creative Unity* (Calcutta: Macmillan, 1922), pp. 134-35.

⁶¹ Soares, ed., *Lectures and Addresses*, p.116.

⁶² Ibid., p. 116.

response to changing times. At present, therefore, the Indians are “worshipping with all ceremony the magnificent cage of countless compartments that she (India) manufactured.”⁶³ The discriminative and tyrannical social restrictions followed in the Indian society have made the lives of millions of Indians miserable.

Stressing the need to reform Indian society and to improve the life of the masses before aiming at the political unity of the nation, Tagore argues that the discriminatory practices followed by the upper castes for centuries have become a social habit of the mind, which is sure to persist in the political organisation as well, and end up “creating engines of coercion to crush every rational difference [between the various races] which is the sign of life.”⁶⁴ However, the situation in India is far better than that in the West in this respect asserts Tagore because India never had an aristocracy of the whole people, like the “monstrous” aristocracy in the West. The aristocracy in India is restricted to “a narrow circle”, hence the majority of the people have the “true” democratic spirit, which is the spirit of the community as a whole, argues Tagore.

Tagore’s emphasis on the need to improve the condition of the Indian masses and his recognition of the need to adjust with and accommodate people of different racial stock by reforming the existing social structures is appreciable. But his assertion that the aristocracy in India being limited to a narrow segment of the population, the masses have the “true” democratic spirit is historically invalidated by records of centuries of oppression revealing the abominable and torturous existence that this small section of elite (which was not that small either) forced on the rest of

⁶³ Ibid., p. 111.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 117

the population. The “narrow circle” of Brahmanical, upper-caste males who occupied the highest rung of the social ladder retained their hierarchical status even during the colonial era. They were the privileged section of the Indian population who benefited from British education and, subsequently, the people eligible for jobs in the colonial government. It was this particular group too, who first advocated and made popular the ideals of democracy and equality and demanded for their people social freedom, that is the freedom from oppressive and archaic social structures and political freedom, which meant freedom from alien rule. This “narrow circle” of aristocrats were also successful in mobilising the masses under their leadership and thereby legitimising their claim as rulers of the future nation to be. They mobilised the peripheries of society – the masses in general, by partially demolishing an ancient social system and in the process consolidated their power as a group and continued to occupy the apex of a new hierarchy.

Regarding the popular opinion that as a religion Christianity is superior to Hinduism, Tagore argues that such a belief has been derived merely on the basis of Christian nations being in possession of the greater part of the world. “It is like supporting a robber’s religion by quoting the amount of his stolen property,” explains Tagore in his essay, “The Nation”⁶⁵ He is not against any nation in particular but against the general idea of all nations, which is in his opinion, the “collective egoism of the people” because “whenever the spirit of the Nation has come it has destroyed sympathy and beauty, and driven out the generous obligations of human relationships from the hearts of men.”⁶⁶ The spirit of the nation, with its intense consciousness of

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 149.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 135-36.

self-interest concentrated in political organisation has produced suspicion, hatred and inhospitable exclusiveness in the minds of the people destroying in the process the spirit of human brotherhood. He firmly believes that it is nationalism, which is “the aspect of a whole people as an organised power” that makes people who love freedom perpetuate slavery in a large part of the world.⁶⁷ Hence Tagore cannot approve or accept the idolatry of the nation. He loves India, his own nation, but refuses to be confined within its national boundaries. He believes that the Indian problem is a part of the world problem and he advises the Indian nationalists in these words:

The moment is arriving when you also must find a basis of unity which is not political. If India can offer to the world her solution, it will be a contribution to humanity. There is only one history – the history of man. All national histories are merely chapters in the larger one.⁶⁸

He is unhappy and concerned that the same concept of nation and nationalism which has “dehumanised man” in the West has begun to spread elsewhere in the world. He expresses concern at the independence movements or anti-colonial movements in the East being already infected with the disease of nationalism when they advocate “paying back Europe in her own coin” and “returning contempt for contempt.”⁶⁹ In a speech delivered in America titled “Nationalism in India,” Tagore says :

India has never had a real sense of nationalism. Even though from childhood I had been taught that idolatry of the Nation is almost better than reverence for God and humanity, I believe I have outgrown that teaching, and it is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 107-08.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

⁶⁹ Tagore, *Nationalism*, p. 31.

India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity.⁷⁰

Tagore holds out a challenge for the divided world of his time:

The most important fact of the present age is that all the different races of man have come close together. And again we are confronted with two alternatives. The problem is whether the different groups of peoples shall go on fighting with one another or find out some true basis of reconciliation and mutual help; whether it will be interminable competition or cooperation.⁷¹

Thus a new India was to be created, built on a broad-based humanism, which in turn meant discarding much of Hindu tradition. His novels *Gora*, *Chaturanga*, *Ghare-Baire* and *Char Adhyaya* devise intellectual discussions and convincing situations to emphasise on the importance of man above all pseudo-religious traditions and narrow minded sectarianism and nationalism. As the following lines in a hymn to India written by Tagore suggest, historic India could provide a model for the world to follow:

No one knows whence and at whose
call come pouring endless inundations of men
rushing madly along – to lose themselves in the sea;
Aryans and non-Aryans, Dravidians and Chinese,
Scythians, Huns, Parthians and Moghuls –
all are mixed, merged and lost in one body.
Now the door has opened to the West
and gifts in hand they beckon and they come –
they will give and take, meet and bring together,
none shall be turned away
from the shore of the vast sea of humanity
that is India.⁷²

⁷⁰ Soares, *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 105. This is also published in *Nationalism*.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.103.

⁷² Quoted in Krishna Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 209-10.

Like the novelist Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Tagore also emphasises the need to study Indian history in order to understand the country better. But contrary to Bankim's endeavour to rediscover or imagine a 'past' tradition, or highlight select and sectarian glories and triumphs of the past.⁷³ Tagore says -

In India, the history of humanity is seeking to elaborate a definite synthesis. The history of India is not the history of the Aryans, it is not the history of the Hindus, nor a history of only Hindus and Moslems taken together.... On us today is thrown the responsibility of building up a greater India in which Hindu and Mussalman and Christian, the dark-skinned and the white skinned, will all find their place.⁷⁴

Tagore feels that the idea of India and of Indian-ness must include a new integrated cultural identity. Ironically, however, Tagore's sensitivity to the India beyond Bengal is somewhat obtuse. His plays, novels and poems all describe the landscape of Bengal and the characters in his works are also the people of Bengal. But while some writers of nationalist fiction and history are silent about the Muslim era and others, like Bankim, equate the medieval age with Muslim depredation and torture, Tagore regards India under the Muslim rule as an important constituent of Indian history. In his essay, "East and West" Tagore says -

In Indian history, the meeting of the Mussulman and the Hindu produced Akbar, the object of whose dream was the unification of hearts and ideals.⁷⁵

⁷³ This construction of the 'glorious' past was a key factor in the forging of a nationalist consciousness in Bengal and India.

⁷⁴ Tarasankar Banerjee, *Various Bengal: Aspects of Modern History* (Calcutta: Ratna Prakasan, 1985), p. 305.

⁷⁵ Tagore, *Creative Unity*, p. 104.

He tries to redefine the terms of the debate not so much on Muslims or Indian Islam but on inter-community relations. He demonstrates that the Muslims both in their historical and contemporary setting, were part of and not separate from the Indian reality.

Writers of nationalist fiction like Bankim tried to create a historical past for the Indian nation in an effort to arouse the masses to action and to generate pride in the people about their 'past' heritage and ancestry. Tagore appreciates the efforts of such nationalists to write Indian history from the Indian perspective. He welcomes the publication of *Aitihāsik Chitra*, a quarterly historical journal published from Rajshahi in 1899, as he finds in it an attempt to emancipate Indian history from alien hands and render a new reading of historical events and situations from within. He declares - "*Aitihāsik Chitra* has launched a crusade for unshackling India's history."⁷⁶ Tagore is also aware of the complex processes of construction and imagination that is involved in any historical writing and consequently he assigns Indian history written by nationalists a complementary role rather than a competing role against Orientalist historiography on India. The task of determining the truth becomes easier, says Tagore,

...if history is two-sided and not one-sided. The foreign historian will arrange his evidences in one way and the nationalist historian in another way. This will facilitate the work of a third neutral side.⁷⁷

Evidently Tagore regards nationalist historiography as merely another kind of history writing which is different from Orientalist historiography. He is ahead of his time in

⁷⁶ Banerjee, *Various Bengal*, p. 308.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

recognising the multiplicity of historical reading that may be possible depending on the perspective of the historian. Several explanations of one reality are thus not only possible but also desirable, because he is aware that every account of historical reality has an ideological component in it. Thus Tagore provides a critique of Bankim's reconstruction of the past as a unilinear narrative. But his statement that "a third neutral side" can use the varied historical renderings of a single event to arrive at the 'truth' of Indian history, raises the question whether there is anything that can be unhesitatingly accorded the absolute value of something called - 'the truth' which is also universally acceptable.⁷⁸

The poet wants to synthesise the old with the new. In an essay, titled "Brahman," he writes that there must be adjustment between the old and the new.⁷⁹ His announcement to the students and faculty of his Vidyalaya or boys' school at Shantiniketan on 22 December, 1918, that a university or Visva-Bharati will be established there reflects his desire to combine the best of the past and the present into a cogent whole. He proposes to create an "institution which would be a true centre for all the existing cultures of the world... and where the wealth of past learning... might be brought into living contact with modern, influences."⁸⁰ In July 1921, with the university still several months away from completion, Tagore declares that the institution is being designed to establish "a living relationship between East and West,

⁷⁸ A reconstruction of the historical arena as an ideology can reveal the true nature of the nationalist movement itself as one among several such taking place at the same time. It can help to critique the monolithic and uncontextualised readings of the Indian response to the British rule brought under the unified title of the nationalist movement. Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies VI: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 214, shows that the monolithic concept of one ideologically neutral truth which is central to liberal historiography is no more accepted.

⁷⁹ Sachin Sen, *The Political Thought of Tagore* (Calcutta: General Printers, 1947), p. 36.

⁸⁰ P.C. Mahalanobis, "The Growth of Visva-Bharati", in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (April 1928): 79.

to promote intercultural and international activity and understanding and to fulfil the highest mission of the present age – the unification of mankind.”⁸¹

Romain Rolland, who admired both Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, writes of the difference between them:

What an irony of destiny that he [Tagore] should be preaching co-operation between Occident and Orient at one end of the world, when at the very moment non-co-operation was being preached at the other end!⁸²

In 1913, Tagore makes a statement in one of his lectures at Harvard which certainly is his rationale for the title he was to bestow upon Gandhi within ten years. Tagore says:

Our great revealers are they who make manifest the true meaning of the soul by giving up self for the love of mankind. They face calumny and persecution, deprivation and death in their service of love. They live the life of the soul, not of the self, and thus they prove to us the ultimate Truth of humanity. We call them Mahatma, "the men of great soul."⁸³

This does not seem to be a conscious reference to Gandhi but there are indications that Tagore knew something about the Satyagraha movement in South Africa, under the leadership of Gandhi. Gandhi and Tagore met in March 1915 at Shantiniketan and until Tagore's death in 1941 they were close friends. Tagore conferred upon Gandhi the title of *Mahatma* (great soul) and Gandhi was the first to call Tagore, *Gurudev* (great sentinel). Tagore was relatively unaware of Gandhi during his participation and activism in the Swadeshi movement of 1904-6 and while he was writing *Prayaschitta*, his first play with a Gandhi-like figure (Dhananjay), as well as one of his major

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 94.

⁸² Romain Rolland, quoted in Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 293.

⁸³ Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana* (London: Macmillan, 1964), p. 28.

novels, *Ghare-Baire*, published in 1915, in which there is also a character, Nikhil, who approaches Gandhi's ideals.

Both Tagore and Gandhi recognised the need for a 'national' ideology of India as a means of cultural survival. For both of them, the Indian freedom movement ceased to be an expression of nationalist consolidation alone and it came to acquire a new stature as a symbol of the universal struggle for political justice and cultural dignity. They feared the concept of nationalism and did not want their society to reach a stage where the idea of the Indian nation would supersede that of the Indian civilisation, and where the actual ways of life of Indians would be assessed solely in terms of the needs of an imaginary nation-state called India.

In a lecture delivered in Japan on international relations, Tagore calls Gandhi "a prophet" who proclaims that one has to conquer violence by non-violence.⁸⁴ "Passive resistance to violence – militant non-violence, as Erik H. Erikson calls it – became in the Gandhian world-view an indicator of moral accomplishment and superiority in the subjects as well as the... rulers."⁸⁵ Gandhi's revaluation of femininity and legitimisation of femininity as a valued aspect of Indian self-definition made the earlier theory of resistance and militant struggle for freedom from alien rule articulated by Bankim and Aurobindo irrelevant. The argument propounded by the extremist group that the Hindus had to redeem their masculinity by fighting and defeating the Muslims and the British in war took the back seat as non-violence as a means of struggle gained wide acceptance. Cultural traits such as femininity, passivity

⁸⁴ Soares, *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 126.

⁸⁵ Ashis Nandy, *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 74.

and tolerance which were considered by the earlier nationalists as the weakness of the Indian people were projected by Gandhi as the strength of his nation.⁸⁶ Interestingly, as Gandhi emphasised the centrality of politics and public life in a primarily apolitical society and mobilised the periphery of the Hindu society for the nationalist cause it undermined the position of the elite, urban middle-class – the leaders of the people. The upper-castes felt insecure with the active participation of the non-Brahmanic masses in the freedom struggle as well as with the wide-scale adoption of non-violence so long denigrated by them.⁸⁷ Gandhi asserted that violent nationalism was merely another name for imperialism and it is non-violent nationalism, which could help India achieve its goals.

Tagore shares Gandhi's concerns with resisting the violent means of struggle, which received wide support from the masses in Bengal during the Swadeshi movement. In his novels he goes a step further and portrays violence such as the Hindu-Muslim riots as a natural by-product of the strategy of mobilisation adopted by Hindu nationalist leaders. Tagore not only critiques the extremist faction of the freedom struggle but deplors the very process of nationalism with its arrogant self-glorification, self-righteousness and contempt for all things foreign.

⁸⁶ Tagore's essays and lectures on women reveal Tagore's partial acceptance of the British equation between manhood and dominance, between masculinity and legitimate violence and between femininity and subjugation.

⁸⁷ In the first section of this chapter I have talked in detail about Bankim's attempt to contest the colonial stereotype of the "effeminate" Bengali afraid of battle. Bankim's creation of the Muslim community as the "other" was widely accepted and the Hindu revivalist discourse of the next century drew its strength from such writings. In Bengal, many terrorist organisations began to function according to Bankim's portrayal of the *akhara* model in *Anandamath*. It was a popular view of the Bengali middle-income upper caste that Gandhism was "emasculating" the Hindus. The Brahmanic elite of Bengal as well as various parts of the country who held the same opinion thus began to regard "Gandhi's political leadership and movement of non-violence with antipathy and frustration which found expression in a sustained campaign of calumny against Gandhiji for over a quarter of a century." See Nandy, *At the Edge of Psychology*, pp. 70-98.

Often he expresses optimism that patriotism would be rooted out and that universalist ethic will gain the upper hand. He believes that though nationalism had made a place for itself in the public consciousness of most countries including his own, "this Age of Nationalism of gigantic vanity and selfishness, is only a passing phase in civilisation" and it will die.⁸⁸ It was Gandhi's rejection of all that was western or modern that alienated Tagore and he opposed the freedom movement even under the leadership of his dear friend, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. On the impact of Gandhi's liberation struggle and emphasis on non-co-operation with the British government, Tagore says, "to separate our spirit from that of the Occident is tentative of a spiritual suicide."⁸⁹ The following passage from Tagore as quoted by Rolland is perhaps among the clearest and most concise statements on international unity, which the poet ever articulated:

My prayer is that India may represent the co-operation of all the peoples of the world. For India, unity is truth, division evil. Unity is that which embraces and understands everything; consequently it cannot be attained through negation... No nation can find its own salvation by breaking away from others. We must all be saved or we must all perish together.⁹⁰

No discussion of Tagore can be satisfyingly concluded without talking about the Brahmo Samaj for the history of the Brahmo Samaj and the history of the Tagore family of Jorasanko were, in the nineteenth century, often synonymous. In 1828 Rabindranath Tagore's grandfather, Dwarkanath Tagore, together with Rammohan Roy co-founded the Brahmo Samaj. His father, Debendranath Tagore,

⁸⁸ Tagore, *Creative Unity*, p. 148.

⁸⁹ Kripalini, *Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 294.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

saved the movement from extinction after the death of Rammohan Roy and shaped it into a socio-religious community in 1843.⁹¹ It was a reformist sect whose membership was largely drawn from the Hindu upper castes. It incorporated several features of Christianity, rejected contemporary Hinduism and took the lead in the second half of the nineteenth century advocating reforms to improve the status of women in Bengali society. The Brahmo Samaj also consistently defended the right to apply modern values from the West in the reformation of Hindu society. In the 1860's and 70's, the Samaj spearheaded the movement for women's education in Bengal. The fear of evangelisation had prevented many of the Bengali middle and upper classes from sending their daughters to schools run by Christian missionaries. The Brahmo Samaj opened schools to stem the tide of conversion and to meet the need of women's education. Barbara Southard writes:

Higher education for women in Bengal was dominated by Brahmos and Indian Christians in the nineteenth century, but Hindu attendance increased rapidly in the opening decades of the twentieth century.⁹²

The most radical Brahmos like Rabindranath Tagore favoured elementary and higher education for women, widow remarriage, inter-caste marriage, elimination of *purdah* and participation of women in social and public life. Tagore condemned the oppressive structures and conventions existing in Hindu society and was interested in improving the lives of the women by educating them. At the same

⁹¹ David Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 161-64. For a detailed discussion of nationalism and the Brahmo Samaj see pp. 157- 214.

⁹² Barbara Southard, *The Women's Movement and Colonial Politics in Bengal: The Quest for Political Rights, Education and Social Reform Legislation, 1921-36*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1995), p.51.

time, he expected women to retain their primary devotion to family life and the spirit of self-sacrifice which was characteristic of the traditional feminine ideal.⁹³ Tagore subscribed to Bankim's view that women and men are, by nature, designed to play different roles in society. "...women cannot have been created by Nature to tread the same beaten track as man."⁹⁴ He firmly believed that women cannot function successfully in the public sphere because

her nature is unsuited for it (to share man's work in the public sphere); she could never be at home in the sphere of masculine rough and tumble activities. For women's function works passively, subterraneously, like the roots of a tree, while man's fruitfulness consists in spreading himself out like the branches through growth, adventure, activity.⁹⁵

In an essay titled "Woman and Home," Tagore says that women are not meant for money-making or for organising power, nor for intellectual exercise, but for establishing and maintaining human relationships, which require "the highest moral qualities." According to him, in India, true womanliness is regarded as the saintliness of love and she who is gifted with it is called a Devi, and is worshipped as one revealing in herself Woman, the Divine.⁹⁶ The domestic world is in Tagore's opinion "the gift of God to woman," thus Tagore accepts the division of the public and the private into discrete domains as an *a priori* instead of as a changing historical variable. Kumkum Sangari suggests that the effects of this division in the late nineteenth and twentieth century "are used not only as an index of women's existing

⁹³ In the essay "Woman and Home", Tagore writes, "Woman has to be ready to suffer." See Tagore, *Creative Unity*, p. 163.

⁹⁴ "Tagore on Women", (Selections), Selected by Girish C. Misra in M. Kulasrestha, ed., *Tagore Centenary Volume* (Hoshiarpur, India: V.V.R. Institute, 1961), pp. 135-36.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁹⁶ Tagore, *Creative Unity*, pp. 162-63.

agential capacity but become the theoretical grid through which their agency is defined.”⁹⁷ This not only theoretically reproduces, or reinforces the division, between the home and the world but also forecloses any rigorous historicisation of the categories of the private and the public.

Tagore, however, appreciates the social and economic changes in colonial Bengal in the late nineteenth century, which led to a transformation in the lives of (elite) women making it possible for women to emerge from the “zenana” to take part in public affairs. As Borthwick points out, a new feminine ideal emerged during the nationalist era in Bengal which “was created to suit the purposes of an elite under colonial rule, combining the self-sacrificing virtues of the ideal Hindu woman with the Victorian woman’s ability to cooperate in the furtherance of her husband’s career.”⁹⁸ Tagore confidently assumes -

such a state of things can never have the effect of changing woman into man. On the contrary, it will lead her to find her place in the unlimited range of society, and the Guardian Spirit of the personal in human nature will extend the ministry of woman over all developments of life.⁹⁹

Although for Tagore, “man needs freedom and space – mukti more fundamentally than woman, who needs nest building as urgently,”¹⁰⁰ he is confident that the spatial freedom that his age has granted to women to move out of the

⁹⁷ Kumkum Sangari “Consent Agency, and Rhetoric of Incitement” in T. V. Satyamurthy ed., *Social Change and Political Discourse in India: Structures of Power, Movements of Resistance* vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 465.

⁹⁸ Meredith Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal: 1849-1905* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 59. Also see chapter one of this dissertation for a detailed discussion.

⁹⁹ Tagore, *Creative Unity*, pp. 165-66.

¹⁰⁰ Kulasrestha, ed., *Tagore Centenary Volume*, p. 136.

confinement of the home into the outside world would not dilute the traditional virtues of the Hindu women. They would, however, be modernised according to the needs of the modernising agenda of reformers and nationalists. He is appreciative of the fact that his age “has sent its cry to woman, asking her to come out from the segregation in order to restore the spiritual supremacy of all that is human in the world of humanity.”¹⁰¹ Thus without rejecting the family as an institution, or woman’s traditional, nurturing and maternal role, Tagore creates a space for self-identity and expression for women. He works out a space for women’s autonomy but only within interpersonal relationships in what are shown as patriarchal institutions, whose values are to be respected. Further, instead of propounding sexual liberation for women, Tagore in accordance with the Brahmo faith only advocates freedom for social activity outside the four walls of the home. He considers the creation of space for women in public life an important factor in the liberation of women. In his novels, however, his attempts to change the condition of women are limited to the domestic sphere. His perspective is not directed at a radical rendering of relations within the family but only at a readjustment within the traditional patriarchal framework. For him thus, a woman has to be educated to be civilised, but she should not become free in the same way as modern Western women, the *memsahib* (the wife of the colonial official, being the negative stereotype) but as a true Hindu, that is a modest and auspicious woman entirely devoted to her husband.

Thus unlike the commonly held separation between tradition and modernism, we see, as Partha Chatterjee points out, a balance being maintained

¹⁰¹ Tagore, *Creative Unity*, p. 166.

between the two where modernisation to a limited and controlled extent, finds its place in the domain of the home but without dismantling tradition.¹⁰² However, Tagore subverts the idea of the natural anonymity of the good Hindu woman who remains in the *zenana* away from the gaze of men which designate the woman as the property of the male and valorises her as a symbol of his honour. The family in *Ghare-Baire* and *Gora*, the two political novels of Tagore, analysed in the fourth chapter, thus emerges not merely as an undifferentiated site of woman's socialisation and oppression but also as a site of struggle. It appears in the novels as an arena of heated battles about the regulation of women's sexuality, the definition of gender roles, control over marriage and the need for reform.

According to Meredith Borthwick's study of elite Hindu women in Bengal, the Brahmo ideal of female behaviour, which was at first resisted by Hindu conservatives, was widely accepted in upper caste society by the end of the nineteenth century. Borthwick describes the new consensus on the characteristics of the ideal woman as follows:

The set of values she represented were those of cleanliness, orderliness, thrift, responsibility, intelligence, and a moderate interest in and knowledge of the public world of men. These were added to, rather than substituted for, the traditional virtues of self-sacrifice, benevolence, devotion to husband, respect for elders, and household competence. She was also expected to have certain practical skills, including literacy, accounting, and the ability to rear children and manage the household with some observance of precise routine and organisation; to mix socially with friends, colleagues, and superiors to her husband, and occasionally to act as hostess at official functions; and to be involved with other women for her position in organised

¹⁰² For a detailed discussion on the emergence of the "new" woman in nationalist writings and the division of the home and the world, see Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*.

groups or associations for self-improvement or charitable purposes.¹⁰³

As elite women acquired secondary and higher education they were in a position to support this new ideal of the Bengali wife and mother which had been first propounded by Brahma male reformers. These educated women provided positive examples of the expanded female role, which now included sympathetic support for their husband's career and guidance of the children's educational endeavours. Unfortunately, however, the Brahma Samaj was primarily concerned with the problems of upper class woman – their age of marriage, the life of widows, their right to remarry and educational opportunities for them.¹⁰⁴ Tagore's debates and concerns too function within the orbit of familiar middle-class and upper caste problems and possibilities. There is no attempt to improve or transform the life of peasant women or the tribal women of Bengal.

An analysis of the novels – *Ghare-Baire* and *Gora*, in chapter 4 will reveal more explicitly Tagore's ideological positioning on women's issues, his critique of militant nationalism and his perspective on the form anti-imperialism should take in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like India. Bankim had provided in his novels a monolithic, separatist and authoritarian concept of nationalism. Tagore's writings, on the other hand, represent a consistent intellectual trend within the nationalist consciousness that is vitally critical of exclusionary and

¹⁰³ Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women In Bengal*, pp. 358-59.

¹⁰⁴ In The Bengal Women's Education League organised in 1927, in response to an invitation from the Director of Public Instruction to women to articulate their views with regard to the reform of female education, women of all major communities in Bengal – Hindus, Muslims and British – were represented in the League, which consciously sought to improve the conditions of all girls irrespective of class or creed. However, women of the upper castes who belonged to various branches of the Brahma Samaj dominated the top leadership of the League. See Southard, *The Women's Movement and Colonial Politics*, pp. 200-01.

triumphant slogans in favour of the larger, more generous human realities of the community. Tagore's essays and speeches reveal that, just as with any other ideology, Indian nationalism too is not representative of the unified aspirations of the Indians and the perceptual projections like nations or communities are neither homogeneous nor fixed. There are co-existing voices or "fragments" as Partha Chatterjee calls it, among peasants, women, elite, castes – each with its separate discourse.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵See Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* for an insightful discussion on how nationalism as an ideology is represented as a force representing and mobilising a whole, but is contested even within the nation it 'imagines'.

Chapter Three

Anandamath and Devi Chaudhurani

In the late nineteenth century Indian writers showed a new and unprecedented interest in the Indian past. The newly awakened interest in the past can be related to the nascent nationalism of that age.¹ Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, concerned about his linguistic community - the Bengalis, chose historical subjects for his novels to awaken their national pride. His journal *Bangadarshan*, which has been discussed in detail in the preceding chapter, was primarily instituted with the aim of creating an atmosphere of self-respect among educated Bengalis through the study and discussion of their past. Meenakshi Mukherjee remarks that *Anandamath*, one of Bankim's most popular novels was also "very much a part of this lifelong endeavour."²

Bankim realised that before the ideology and identity of a nation and a culture could be defended it had to be defined. He looked backwards into the past of Bengal to find inspiring events on which to base his novels. But the recorded history of Bengal had been one of defeat and surrender. So, in *Anandamath*, Bankim tried to create a myth of a glorious Bengal in order to instil in the minds of his people that they had a glorious but forgotten past. The novel was a deliberate attempt to mythologise history in order to awaken the masses from their slumber and to arouse

¹ Sudipta Kaviraj in *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), writes "In the complex, diverse, noisy discourse of 19th century Bengal, there is above all a new sound. This is the sound of history." Bankim realised the need to create a past in the interest of the present. By telling the history of India, Europeans were constructing an image of a subject people which destined them for British conquest. Indian intellectuals through their historical treatises and historical novels attempted to prove Western historiography as false and to remind their own people that in the long history of subjection there are great episodes of resistance, (p. 107). Meenakshi Mukherjee in "Story, History and Her Story", in Indu Banga and Jaidev, eds., *Cultural Orientation in Modern India* (Shimla, India: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1996), p. 110 regards the construction of the past – an enterprise implicit in the agenda of nationalism and points to the use of history and literature to serve this purpose.

² Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 49.

them to action. For Bankim and other nationalists, any past historically recorded or otherwise was better than the miserable present of the British reign. Therefore Bankim constructs a 'radiant' past and a 'glorious' future as an antidote to what he considered the present servitude of the Bengalis.

Anandamath is situated in the 1770s, in the decade of a dreadful famine in Bengal and the Sanyasi Rebellion. The historical record of the Sanyasi Rebellion provided Bankim with a plot where elements of bravery, religion and nationalism could converge. Although the famine and the Sanyasi Rebellion are historically recorded events, Bankim did not emphasise the historicity of the novel in the Introduction to the first edition. In response to popular demand, he added, in the second edition of 1884, an introduction where he quoted from Gleig's *Memories of the Life of Warren Hastings* and W.W. Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*.³

Devi Chaudhurani, another novel of Bankim that I will analyse in this chapter, also has historical underpinnings. A report on the Rangpur district of Bengal included in Hunter's *Statistical Accounts of Bengal Vol. II* states that around 1774, Devi Chaudhurani, a female dacoit who belonged to a gang led by Bhawani Pathak "lived in boats, had a large force of *barkandaz* in her party, and committed dacoities on her own account, besides receiving a share of the booty obtained by Pathak."⁴ Bankim, however, denied the historicity of the novel. In the Introduction to *Devi Chaudhurani* (1883) he wrote:

³ Sisir Kumar Das, *The Artist in Chains: The Life of Bankimchandra Chatterjee* (New Statesman Publishing Company: New Delhi, 1984), p.139.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 174. This passage from W.W. Hunter's *Statistical Account of Bengal vol. II*, has also been quoted by J.C. Bagal in his Introduction to *Bankim Rachanabali*, vol. I (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1969), p. x-xii.

Many were curious to know after the publication of 'Anandamath' whether the story was founded on any historical fact. The Sannyasi Rebellion is indeed a historical fact, but little need the reader be apprised of that ... I shall feel much obliged if the reader does not kindly consider either 'Anandamath' or 'Devi Chaudhurani' a historical novel.⁵

A historian has pointed out that the theme of *Anandamath* has striking similarities with the actual career of a militant nationalist, Vasudev Balwant Phadke (1848-83) who wore the robes of a sanyasi and attempted to raise an army, in order to destroy the English. He was finally arrested and convicted by the British in 1879. The immediate cause, which drove Phadke to raise an army, was the terrible famine of 1876-77 which ravaged western India and caused immense suffering to the people.⁶ It is noteworthy that the background of *Anandamath* is also the devastating famine of 1769-70, which was said to have wiped out a third of Bengal's population.⁷ Further, *Anandamath* portrays the nationalistic endeavours of a group of sanyasis reminiscent of Phadke's group. It is likely that Phadke, who was very much in the news in 1879, provided Bankim with the plot of *Anandamath*.⁸

Both *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* are set against the misrule of a Nawab who is in charge of the welfare of the people whereas the British are mere revenue collectors. It is under such circumstances that Bengal is struck by a famine. In

⁵ Introduction to Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's, *Devi Chaudhurani* trans. Subodh Chunder Mitter (Calcutta: Chuckerverty, Chatterjee and Co., 1946), p. xii. All quotes in this chapter are from this edition of the novel.

⁶ Biman Bihari Majumdar, "The *Anandamath* and Phadke", *The Journal of Indian History* XLIV, I, no.130, (April 1966), pp. 95-6.

⁷ Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality*, p. 49.

⁸ Das, *The Artist In Chains*, p.146-47.

Anandamath Bhavananda, a *santan*⁹ admonishing Mahendra, a householder for his indifference to the country's plight asks:

Can you find another country on earth outside India where human beings are forced by starvation to live on grass? Here in India famine-stricken people today are eating creepers, anthills, jackals, dogs and even human flesh! And the British are shipping our wealth to their treasuries in Calcutta; and from there that wealth is shipped again to England. There is no hope for India until we drive the British out. Only then will the motherland live again.¹⁰

Similarly in *Devi Chaudhurani* Bankim describes the present state of affairs as follows:

The country is passing through a lawless state. The Mohammedans had lost their kingdom and the British had not fully settled down - they were just then laying the foundation of their empire in the East. To add to this, a great havoc had been created in the land by the great famine of 1776...Those who had nothing to eat lived on robbery alone.¹¹

Anandamath begins with the description of the village of Padachinna, which is completely deserted:

In this village were many houses, but not a soul could anywhere be seen. The bazaar was full of shops and the lanes were lined with houses.... Every house was quiet. The shops were closed....Even the street beggars were absent.... The streets were empty. There were no bathers in the river. There were no human beings about the houses, no birds in the trees, no cattle in the pastures¹²

⁹ *Santan* literally mean children. In *Anandamath*, *santans* are specifically children of the motherland who have taken a vow to free their country from foreign rule.

¹⁰ All quotations are from the English translation of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandamath*, by Basant Koomar Ray, (Delhi: Vision Books, 1992), p. 40.

¹¹ Chattopadhyay, *Devi Chaudhurani*, pp. 46-7.

¹² Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath*, p. 24.

Under such circumstances, Mahendra, a prosperous householder with his wife, Kalyani, and baby daughter, Sukumari, is forced to leave Padachinna. After walking for miles they reach an inn where Mahendra, leaving his wife and daughter to rest, goes in search of milk. In his absence, robbers kidnap Kalyani and Sukumari. Satyananda, who is the leader of the sanyasi rebels who call themselves *santans* rescues them. He takes Kalyani and the child to his monastery in the jungle called 'Anandamath,' from which the novel derives its name. Mahendra, on the other hand, returns to the inn with milk and finding it deserted proceeds towards the city looking for his wife and daughter. On the way, guards of the East India Company who are carrying taxes to the city arrest Mahendra mistaking him for a dacoit. After some time, the guards also arrest Bhavananda, a *santan* who had been given the task of finding Kalyani's husband by Satyananda. Soon there is a fight between the *santan* army and the Muslim sepoy of the British. The *santans* successfully loot the boxes full of money and disappear in the jungle. Bhavananda informs Mahendra that his family is safe, hearing which Mahendra follows Bhavananda into the jungle.

As they walk towards *Anandamath*, Bhavananda sings to himself the song, *Bande Mataram*:

Mother, hail!
 Thou with sweet springs flowing,
 Thou fair fruits bestowing,
 Cool with zephyrs blowing,
 Green with corn-crops growing,
 Mother hail!¹³

¹³ Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath*, p. 37. Ray in his book adds a footnote after this song: "Translated anonymously, when it was illegal even to utter the word *Bande Mataram*."

Mahendra at this stage is not able to understand who this mother is. So he enquires: Who is this mother?¹⁴ Hearing the next verse of the song he remarks, “This refers to a country, and not a mortal mother, I see.”¹⁵ Mahendra cannot yet see the connection between Mother and Nation. Bhavananda therefore explains,

We recognise no other mother,...The Motherland is our only mother. Our Motherland is higher than heaven. Mother India is our mother. We have no other mother. We have no father, no brother, no sister, no wife, no children, no home, no hearth- all we have is the Mother with sweet springs flowing, fair fruits bestowing...¹⁶

Later, Satyananda takes Mahendra into the depths of an underground tunnel, inside the monastery of the *santans* which contain the successive iconographic images of India.¹⁷ Through Mahendra, the readers are allowed, perhaps for the first time in Bengali literature, to comprehend the three facets of the mother-who-is-the-land as represented through the icons depicted in the novel. The past that is prior to foreign conquest, the present symbolising the subjection to foreign rule, and the future states of the mother are represented through three main iconographic sets.¹⁸ Jagadhatri, the nurturer of the world, a glorious figure of bounty, peace and benevolence representing India’s past is now reduced to Kali - a have-not figure “trampling upon her own Shiva herself.”¹⁹ “She is in the gloom of famine, disease,

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 38

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 38

¹⁷ Jasodhara Bagchi, “Representing Nationalism: Ideology of Motherhood in Colonial Bengal”, *Economic and Political Weekly* (20-27 October 1990): WS-69. Bagchi writes that ‘the full span of the “condition of India” question is to be found in the three successive images of the mother-goddess, corresponding to past, present and the future of Indian history’

¹⁸ See Chapter two of this work for Bankim’s periodisation of Indian history.

¹⁹ Tanika Sarkar, “Nationalist Iconography: Image of Women in 19th Century Bengali Literature”, *Economic and Political Weekly* (21 November 1987): 2012.

death, humiliation and destruction” and has to be transformed finally to Mahishasurmardini Durga, the demon-slayer who is “bright, beautiful, full of glory and dignity,” “the Mother as she is destined to be.”²⁰ The location of the icons in various parts of the underground temple is also significant. The icons of Jagadhatri and Kali are inside chambers in the dark tunnel while the icon of Durga is situated in the garden around the temple, the implication being that while the history-less Bengalis or Indians have to be made aware of their past, the future is out in the open, visible to all those who want to behold it. The transition from an allegedly golden past to present misery is attributed to factors perceived to be extraneous to the original genius of the culture. The glorious past is then ideologically transported and projected into the future as the destiny of the people.²¹

It is clear that in *Anandamath* Bankim attempts to construct the nation as a continuity from the hoary past. The conjuring up of the nation-to-be from out of a seemingly endless past has according to Aloysius,

multiple functions: one to give legitimacy to the nation which is made to appear as having always or nearly always existed; two, to indicate the ideological direction the nation is to take in the future with its past as the model and three, to draw the desired line of inclusion and exclusion within society, culture and history. It is this construction of a continuity from the past through the present towards the future that constitutes the identity of a people, the soul or genius of the nation.²²

²⁰ Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath*, p. 43.

²¹ See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger ed., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London and New York: Verso, 1991) for a detailed discussion.

²² G. Aloysius, *Nationalism without a Nation in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 154.

Indeed this culturo-historical construction is an important element in the process by which a people become conscious of their distinct identity.

The iconography of the motherland that Bankim provides in *Anandamath* exemplifies the general pattern followed by nationalist “myth-histories”. Bankim unproblematically establishes the continuity of the present with antiquity, and thus provides a framework to reconstruct a past of the culture through elision, selection, addition, etc. into a desired nation.²³ According to Sumit Sarkar, the symbolic representation of India as the mother as well as the mother goddess in *Anandamath* became a major source of “mass contact” between the leadership and the masses.²⁴ It was powerful enough to guarantee not only the rational but also the emotional allegiance of the citizens. As the nation became the mother, the people became the children. However, the entire patriotic agenda was endowed only on the sons, who were actively involved in the nationalist struggle, while the daughters were regarded as mere supporters. In fact, the transformation of the nation from Kali to Durga is dependent on the emergence of the son of the nation - the *santan*. Thus when Mahendra moved by the iconographic images of the nation, asks Satyananda:

When O Master, when shall we see our Mother India in
this garb again - so radiant and so cheerful?

Only when all the children of the Motherland shall call her
Mother in all sincerity²⁵

replies Satyananda.

²³ See the discussion in chapter 2 regarding Bankim’s merging of historical periods and the ideological and political underpinnings of such a strategy.

²⁴ See Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903 - 1908* (Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1973).

²⁵ Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath*, p.43.

The nation and her sons bring each other into existence - one cannot exist without the other. Even though the term used in the novel to address the mother's children, *santan* is not gender-specific, Bankim implicitly portrays a mother-son relationship. Partha Chatterjee also notes that the mother "exhorts a small band of her *sons*, those of who are brave, and enlightened, to vanquish the enemy and win back her honour."²⁶ The nation, Bankim tells us, is to be founded by a fraternity of men by overthrowing paternal British power. Satyananda tells Mahendra-

The British keep India in subjection by the sword. And she can be freed only by the sword. Those who talk of winning India's freedom by peaceful means do not know the British, I am sure. Please say *Bande Mataram*.²⁷

Women and non-combatants are thus skilfully excluded from the 'imagined' collectivity or the nation and the border of the nation is being drawn demarcating those whose tales will not be told.

The novels propagate a new image of upper-caste leadership formulated in terms of paternalist philanthropy. The focus on Durga is important as the mother goddess is part of the *Shakti* cult to which most high caste Bengalis or the *bhadralok* belonged. In *Anandamath*, the common people participate in the nationalist struggle for freedom in large numbers but political activity is rigidly controlled from the top, safely maintains bourgeoisie hegemony. Yet, the looting and arson that follows the *santans'* victory against the British reveals that the after-effects of the patriotic struggle were often beyond the imagination of the nationalist leaders.

²⁶ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought And the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Press, 1986), p. 43. Emphasis mine.

²⁷ Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath*, p. 43.

A number of theoreticians on nationalism have commented on the motivated and conscious social engineering involved in nationalist movements – a fact which is validated by Satyananda's attempt to get Mahendra inducted into the *santan* army.²⁸ Satyananda wants to establish a factory to manufacture arms and ammunition, and therefore wants Mahendra, a prosperous landowner to be initiated as a *santan* as he can provide them with both land and money.

It will indeed be a blessing if he joins the Children. For then the hoarded wealth of generations which he owns will be dedicated to the service of the Mother.²⁹

It is important to note that all the leaders of the *santan* army are recruited from upper caste and landed origins. Bankim is also completely silent about the role of Muslim fakirs, who in a manner similar to Satyananda led plundering bands of starving people.³⁰ Thus the 'imagined' Hindu nation for Bankim cannot be created and ruled by agents other than upper caste Hindu males.

At the same time Bankim suggests that caste differences among Hindus and religious differences among Indians are irrelevant. One of the vows taken during the initiation of the *santan* is:

...all Children belong to the same caste. In our work we do not differentiate between Hindu or Moslem, Buddhist or Sikh, Parsee or Pariah. We are all brothers here – all Children of the same Mother India. What do you say?

*We agree to forget caste altogether. We are all Children of the same Mother.*³¹

²⁸ See chapter 1 for a detailed discussion.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

³⁰ Tanika Sarkar, "Imagining a Hindu Nation: Hindu and Muslim in Bankimchandra's Later Writings", *Economic and Political Weekly* (24 September 1994), p. 2557.

³¹ Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath*, p. 78. Emphasis mine.

The repetition of the vow by the *santans* during initiation thus subtly bypasses the question of religious differences. The emphasis is on the forsaking of caste affiliations and not on the accommodation of religious differences. But even this forsaking of caste codes in times of struggle and recruiting soldiers from all strata of society is presented as a tragic necessity - yet another sacrifice that the nationalist struggle requires. The nationalist or anti-colonial movement merely provides the established leaders of Hindu society the opportunity to renew and extend their control over the masses by inducting people from all castes. It is presumed that once the nation is purified of alien invaders, the normal, hierarchical social order will be restored. Bankim, therefore, seems to be evading rather than trying to reform or even significantly improve caste or gender discrimination.

In *Anandamath*, the nation becomes not just another new deity added to the Hindu pantheon, but the highest deity demanding the highest sacrifice from its children. The main focus of nationalist activities in *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* is sacrifice. And the sacrifice is not only of the *santans* but also of the other, the non-Hindu, who must be got rid of in order to make the nation more pristine.³² “Kill the low Muslims” is a refrain that runs right through *Anandamath*. Tanika Sarkar suggests that “perhaps the most significant way in which Bankim served as a bridge between nineteenth century Hindu revivalism and the later, anti-Muslim, violent politics was by providing an immensely powerful visual image of communal violence and by giving it the status of an apocalyptic holy war.”³³ As is

³² The most preferred sacrifice for Durga and Kali, the two goddesses made popular by the nationalist movement was human, as it was human sacrifice which Durga and Kali were believed to relish the most. See J.C. Roy, Vidyanidhi, *Puja-Parban* (Calcutta: Viswa-Bharati, 1951). It was as if one could placate these celestial mothers by aggressing for the mother’s cause, (pp. 10-23).

³³ Sarkar, “Imagining a Hindu Nation”, p. 2558.

obvious a unitary identity, out of a heterogeneous, pluralistic society, can be only constructed by effacing various groups. At the conclusion of the novel the Mahatma tells Satyananda::

worship of three hundred million gods and goddesses is not *sanatan dharma*, it is a corrupted popular religion. Under its influence the true *dharma* which the heathen calls Hinduism – has become extinct...³⁴

Thus the differences between the various groups of Hindus also have to be sacrificed on the altar of the type of nationalism that Bankim posits in *Anandamath*.

In *Anandamath* an ‘imagined’ identity of the community is formed not only in opposition to the imperial state but also to an indigenous ‘other’- the Muslims. Bankim puts the Muslim rulers and the British colonisers in the same category of oppressive or inefficient rulers and thereby suggests that Muslims must be eliminated for the nationalist project to be completed successfully. If there is no place for Muslims, who constituted a vast majority of Bengal’s population in the formulation of a national identity, it also renders other minorities invisible. Satyananda uses “say *Bande Mataram*” and “let us make obeisance” (*pranam karo*) so interchangeably that nationalism now becomes a form of worship. One consequence of the conflation of religious devotion and community activism is that the individual is required to be simultaneously a ‘good believer’ and a ‘good citizen’.

Bankim’s image of the new Hindu is grounded in a specific gender division of labour, and sexual orientation. The British colonial stereotype of the ‘effeminate’ Hindu is effectively countered through the portrayal of Satyananda,

³⁴ J.C. Bagal, *Bankim Rachnavali*, vol.1, p. 799.

Jivananda, Bhavananda, in *Anandamath* and Bhawani Pathak and others, in *Devi Chaudhurani*. Significantly, all men, who are honourable, courageous and active in the public domain. Indeed, the notion of combat plays a central role in the construction of 'manhood' in the novel and justifies the text's glorification and presentation of maleness in the social order. Masculinity, Bankim implies, will be the foundation of the nation and society, while women will have a complementary role as the guardians of morality and tradition, and that in the private sphere.

The *santan* in *Anandamath* is quintessentially a soldier-devotee at war.

Unless we throw these dirty bastards [that is, the Muslims] out, Hindus will be ruined...When shall we raze mosques to the ground and erect Radhamadhav's temples in their place?³⁵

asks one of the patriotic *santans* – a prophetic forewarning of the unfortunate demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 and the communal riots that followed. Bankim's community of Hindus can be realised only through an orgy of violence, of war. That is the only passion, which brings the community into being. The older Hindu had suffered by being continuously under alien rulers because of his absence of physical prowess and desire for self-rule; the new Hindu will therefore have to prove himself in a battle that will establish his superiority over the Muslims and the British. The country has to be saved from both, but Bankim remembers to comment on the relative superiority of the British as a race. At the end of *Anandamath* Satyananda is persuaded by an ascetic to submit to British rule until the true religion of Hindus can be purified from its degenerate and corrupt state by new (and British) empirical and

³⁵ As quoted by Tanika Sarkar, "Imagining a Hindu Nation", p. 2557.

scientific knowledge. *Devi Chaudhurani* on the other hand ends with a celebration of

British rule:

The British ultimately took the administration of the land and the country was well governed. Bhawanithakur's task was over. The wicked now found their proper punishment in the hands of the British officers. So, Bhawani now stopped raiding.³⁶

Considering Bankim's official position, it is not easy to assess how much of his admiration of the British was sincere and how much expedient. It is in fact representative of the ambivalence characteristic of most educated Indians towards British rule - wavering between the dream of an independent India and the prospect of beneficial British rule. Meenakshi Mukherjee after comparing five editions of *Anandamath* which appeared during Bankim's lifetime, with the original serialised version in *Bangadarshan* concludes: "Bankim was continuously attempting to save the situation by adding and subtracting words and sentences to make the book less offensive to the British."³⁷

The hymn *Bande Mataram* is an imaginative and rhetorical device with which a militant Hindu form of patriotism is constructed in *Anandamath*. The song was originally composed in 1875 to fill a gap in *Bangadarshan*. Later, Bankim inserted the song in *Anandamath* and vested it with highly significant narrative

³⁶ Chattopadhyay, *Devi Chaudhurani*, p. 277.

³⁷ Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality*, shows how Bankim, frequently softened the adjectives applied to the British as enemy, or substituted the word British by *yavana*. In the novel both the British and the Muslims are portrayed as enemies, therefore the word *yavana* or *bidharmi* (those belonging to a different religion) can refer to either (p. 52). For a detailed account of these additions and subtractions see Majumdar, "The *Anandamath* and Phadke", pp. 100-01 and Das, *The Artist in Chains*, pp. 141-42.

functions. In the final verse of the song the motherland is equated with the icon of the

Durga:

twang hi durga dashapraharana-dhaarinee,
kamala kamala-dala-biharinee,
bani bidyadayinee,
namaami twaan

You are Durga bearing the weapons of war,
Kamala at play in the lotuses
Goddess of Learning, giver of knowledge,
I bow to you.³⁸

She is a political goddess and the language used to describe her displays a tense instability, experimentation, a newness of what it says - *navarangarangini*, *navabaladharini*, *navadarpedarpini*, *navaswapnadarsini*.³⁹ The language shifts from Sanskrit to the vernacular, moving quickly from the *stotras* to the form of a slogan, from a private incantation to the public collective chant of a people in movement.⁴⁰ The song sacralises the war between the *santans* and the British and transforms the congregation of devotees of Krishna gathered in the religious fair into a monolithic body of disciplined *santans*. "Then, in a single, resounding voice, the thousands of santan soldiers...sang out to the rhythms of the canon - *Bande Mataram*."⁴¹

The *santan* Jivananda, who first pronounces the *mantra* emerges as the military commander leading the others in the 'holy' war. The *santans* kill two British

³⁸ This translation in English from the Bengali original is by Sugata Bose in Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, eds., *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 62.

³⁹ All these terms have the prefix *nava* meaning new. There are meanings are as follows: *Navarangarangini*, the one who is sportive and newly dressed; *navabaladharini*, the one with new strength; *navadarpedarpini*, the one with newly acquired pride, and *navaswapnadarsini*, the one who sees a new vision of the future.

⁴⁰ Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness*, p. 138.

⁴¹ Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath* in J.C.Bagal ed., *Bankim Rachanavali* Vol. I, p. 739. Quoted by Sarkar in "Imagining a Hindu Nation", p. 2557.

captains and a large number of soldiers, but Bankim does not condemn their acts. On the contrary, he eulogises them as heroes. In fact, the 'duty' of killing in the cause of the nation is a tradition initiated by this novel, which was to inspire a younger generation of romantic revolutionaries to undertake political assassinations. Tanika Sarkar notes that "*Bande Mataram*" went on to become "the most potent slogan at peak points in 20th century mass nationalist struggle as well as the Hindu rallying cry in moments of Hindu Muslim violence."⁴² The importance of this symbiosis of the religious and the political to aggressive Hindutva lies in its explicitly political violence that can express itself convincingly as a religious purpose. Indeed, as Tanika Sarkar remarks - "the greatest triumph of the present communal movement has been to blend *Deshbhakti* and *Rambhakti* into a homogenised whole so that adherents use them interchangeably."⁴³ In fact Bankim, has a direct imaginative linkage with contemporary aggressive Hindutva politics. Today, the *Bande Mataram* hymn is for the RSS combine "the authentic national anthem, a truer one than the 'Jana Gana Mana' of Rabindranath which is the accepted version for the Indian State" since it symbolises the undivided, inviolate body of the pre-partition motherland.⁴⁴ Therefore while Bankim's notion of the rejuvenated Hindu informed nineteenth century Hindu revivalism, the language he used to describe the Muslim, certainly inflected the rhetoric of violent Hindu communalism in the next century.

Anandamath is significant today for the tremendous impact it has had on subsequent nationalist movements in Bengal and other parts of India. The novel was

⁴² Sarkar, "Imagining a Hindu Nation", p. 2553.

⁴³ Tanika Sarkar, "The Woman as Communal Subject; Rashtrasevika Samiti and Ramjanmabhoomi Movement", *Economic and Political Weekly* (31 August 1991): 2062.

⁴⁴ Sarkar, "Imagining a Hindu Nation", p. 2553.

an important source for the structure and emotive content of Bengali terrorism and Indian nationalism. Bengali revolutionaries at the turn of the century patterned their organisational cells on Bankim's *akhara* model engaging in strength training and martial art techniques in partial emulation of Bankim's sanyasi soldiers in *Anandamath*. "The secret societies modelled themselves closely upon the society of the "children"(*santan*) of *Anandamath*. *Bande Mataram*, the battle cry of the *santan*, became the war cry not only of the revolutionary societies but the whole of nationalist Bengal," wrote Lord Ronaldshay in 1925.⁴⁵ The extremist nationalists also worshipped the country as mother goddess as evoked in Bankim's hymn *Bande Mataram* and sung by the *santans* in *Anandamath*. Indian nationalists adopted this hymn as the unofficial anthem of the freedom movement, particularly after the partition of Bengal in 1905. This happened because perhaps for the first time in Indian history the concept of mother goddess with its connotation of *Shakti* became linked with the idea of the nation as a political unit. So that even though Bankim was not directly concerned with the national identity and past glory of Indians as a whole, *Anandamath* eventually had a pan Indian appeal.

Bankim supposedly wrote *Anandamath*, *Devi Chaudhurani* and *Sitaram* to illustrate the cardinal principle of his "Dharmatattva", *anusilan dharma*. Quotations from the *Gita* entailing disinterested service on the devotee occur in both the novels under discussion. The prologue of *Anandamath* records a dialogue between two anonymous voices in the jungle

"Shall I ever attain my heart's desire?"

"What can you sacrifice to win your heart's desire?"

⁴⁵ Quoted by Majumdar, "The Anandamath and Phadke", p. 94.

“My life itself!” was the reply.

“Life is so insignificant that it is the simplest thing for anyone to sacrifice!”

“What more have I? What else can I offer?”

“Devotion! My friend, devotion!” declared the voice from above.⁴⁶

And *Devi Chaudhurani* ends with the following lines:

Come Prafulla, come now and stand once more before the public,...and proclaim to the world at large:

“Behold I am not new but am the old. I am that eternal Word. Often did I come here, but you have forgotten me. So I am here again”

“To succour the good and destroy the evil-doers and to confirm the right am I in every age born.”⁴⁷

As these novels propound the message of *anusilan*, Bankim cannot show the inevitable defeat of enterprises of defiance. Consequently, he does not allow Satyananda, Jivananda, Shanti and Prafulla to detach themselves from their historical-fictional role. At the end of the novels Bankim effaces the success of individual protagonists like Satyananda, Jivananda and Prafulla but turns them into icons. The novel ends with Satyananda being taken away towards the mountains by a mysterious holy man who saves Jivananda's life by administering him some medicine, while Shanti and Jivananda are shown as holding hands and disappearing into the moonlit night. Thus the narratives end, but in each case there is an analogical extension that should a similar situation recur, similar acts of detached service and self-sacrifice will be necessary. The future pointed out by the novels was in the views of the Bengali

⁴⁶ Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath*, p. 8.

⁴⁷ Chattopadhyay, *Devi Chaudhurani*, p. 278.

and Indian revolutionaries of the late nineteenth century, their sorry and degenerate present.

Anandamath and *Devi Chaudhurani* are stories of rebellion against alien rule organised by militant monks who have taken an oath of “purifying Mother India from the pollution of this alien domination.”⁴⁸ Bankim’s strategy of basing the novel on the participation of monks derives from his belief that the monastic orders represent crucial access to popular sentiment, and that the role played by soldier monks in defending Hindu India from foreign and particularly Muslim depredation, was historically recorded. Pinch writes that soldier monks were signed on as mercenaries for the state, and since a large part of India was under Muslim rule, Muslims often ruled the state for which the soldier monks fought. Hence the wars they waged were not religious wars.⁴⁹ However, Bankim gives to Satyananda and the *santans* a patriotic vision of India that combines territorial nationalism and Hindu religious symbolism, as embodied in the conversion of Mahendra, to the cause of India’s liberation from foreign rule. Therefore, Pinch regards *Anandamath* as a work of political fiction, in which Bankim “cast the protracted skirmishes between wandering bands of armed *sadhus* and the English East India Company army as a proto-nationalist defense of India by a brotherhood of monks organically sprung from the soil of the peasant –countryside.”⁵⁰ Indeed, all of Bankim’s militant ascetics like Satyananda, Bhavananda and Bhawani Pathak represent a homegrown, organic

⁴⁸ Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath*, p. 64.

⁴⁹ William R. Pinch, “Soldier Monks and Militant Sadhus” in Ludden, ed. *Making India Hindu*, pp. 140–61. Pinch writes that “the image of the soldier monk in the Indian past, both real and imagined, flies in the face of the pacifism and relativist tolerance often presented as key components of Hindu philosophy” (p. 149).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

patriotism, free from the sophistication of urbane nationalism. Bankim's *santans* begin as peasants and landowners before uniting to take up arms against alien invaders of the country. These monks or sadhus can thus easily ally with the common man. Hence, in *Anandamath* as well as in *Devi Chaudhurani*, the sanyasis (or dacoits) are assisted in their confrontation with the Mughal and the British troops by householder peasants from the surrounding countryside.

The *santans* have to renounce 'everything for the sake of Mother India' and take a vow never to meet their wives or children until the goal is reached, "We forget our higher duties the moment we look at our wives and children."⁵¹ Prafulla also, to become Devi Chaudhurani, has to learn to suppress her passions. On the expiry of the first year of her training, Bhawani Pathak suggests that:

she learn a bit of wrestling to conquer passions. A weak frame can seldom defy passions. There is no royal road to check them except by means of physical exercise.⁵²

Prafulla, Shanti, Jivananda, Mahendra and all the other *santans* have to pass through a process of initiation, of which the central vow is self-conquest or the conquest of desire. The emphasis is not on the balanced disposition of faculties, but on the mortification of flesh. They are all expected to subdue their sexual passion:

When we have mastered all techniques and attained our goal, we shall return to our homes for our duties as householders. We, too, have wives and children at home... We do not pretend to be above all attachment. We

⁵¹ Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath*, p. 76. Partha Chatterjee in *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) in an analysis of the *Ramkrishna Kathamrta* shows that the female body is represented as "the prison of worldly interests, in which the family man is trapped" (p. 67).

⁵² Chattopadhyay, *Devi Chaudhurani*, p. 97.

simply observe the sanctity of our vows.⁵³

The central element in the disciplining of the *santan* or the dacoit queen, Devi Chaudhurani, is the transformation of sexual energy into power. Satyananda and Bhawani Pathak, both detached, celibate men propagate the ideal of detachment. Detachment not only confers or leads to spiritual perfection but is also crucial for recovering the strength and power of the Indians, which has been sapped by colonial domination.

Mahendra, overwhelmed by Bhavananda's passionate discourse on the Mother and the *santans* duty to the nation, feels inclined to join the *santans* but he gives up the idea when he realises that joining the *santans* would require him to leave his family.

Since Mahendra was versed in music and was also a good singer, he joined Bhavan in the song. His eyes became wet with tears as he sang. He said gently:

"If I do not have to give up my wife and daughter, you may initiate me as a Child".

"He who joins our order," Bhavan said gravely, "must give up every thing. If you really wish to join the order, you cannot ever be with your wife and child..."

"Then I do not care to join the order of the Children."⁵⁴

Mahendra later joins the *santans* cause to free the nation from alien rule but only after he has been separated from his wife and child and is under the impression that they are dead. Jivananda, one of the noted generals of the *santan* army, is in a dilemma after meeting his wife, Shanti. He tells her:

...it will be difficult for me to return to the ashram of the Mother after having looked at your face again. That's why

⁵³ Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath*, p. 41.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

I told Nimi that I did not want to see you. I knew that I could not return to my national duty if I looked at your divine face, Shanti, dearest. Place religion, money, ambition, salvation, society, vows, devotional rites, rituals, prayers, sacraments and all that is involved on this earth – yes, place all these on one side of the scale, and you, and you alone on the other, and I swear by the holy name of Mother India herself that I do not know which side weighs heavier, my dearest Shanti!...The sorrows of my countrymen? Yes, sorrows indeed! But is there a more sorrowful figure in the country than the man who is fortunate enough to obtain and then renounces, a wife like you...? You are greater than this country. You are my heaven itself.⁵⁵

Bhavananda, another *santan*, saves Kalyani's life by administering some herbal medicine to her. He is infatuated with her and proposes marriage even though her husband, Mahendra is alive. Prafulla, under the training of Bhawani Pathak becomes Devi Chaudhurani, the famous dacoit queen. She follows all his instructions except one - to have vegetarian food during her training. Her five years of rigorous training under Bhawani Pathak cannot efface the memories of her past. Therefore she eats fish on the eleventh day of every lunar cycle – a ritual enjoined on the wife by Hindu stricture – for the well-being of the husband.

The inner turmoil in Jivananda and Shanti, Bhavananda's infatuation with Kalyani and Prafulla's ritual eating of fish on the eleventh day of the moon mock the stringent regimen and lofty idealism that is propagated in *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani*. Bhavananda's expiation in the battlefield and the pilgrimage of Shanti and Jivananda at the closing of the novel as a mode of atonement are merely the triumphs of the puritan spirit over the body. *Anandamath* not only accepts but also

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 60-1.

endorses the violence perpetuated against women as a result of the nationalist project envisioned by its author. Jivananda, Dhiren and Mahendra, as *santans* dedicated to the service of the nation, embrace celibacy and coerce their wives into accepting it too. Shanti is the ideal wife imagined by the nationalist Bankim. Therefore on meeting her husband, she stands by her husband's decision:

Please do not weep. I know you are sorry for me. I am happy indeed in whatever state of existence you have placed me. Please do not cry for me.⁵⁶

But a closer reading reveals the emergence of a new space for coercion of women that is distinct from the traditional sphere of wifedom and motherhood.

Patriarchy, whether in its most traditional or modern form, constantly tries to glorify motherhood as the most prized vocation of women. The 'chaste' wife as the exclusive property of the polygamous husband and the 'self-denying' mother glorified only as the mother of a son became the ruling icons of the myth of the Indian women in the cultural life of Bengal in the late nineteenth century. The ideology of motherhood successfully took away real power from women and created a myth about their strength and power. The glorification of motherhood was, according to Bagchi, an "excellent ploy" to keep women out of the real domain of power.⁵⁷ To compensate for the feeling of powerlessness of the Bengali male, nationalists invoked the myth of *Shakti* and made it stand for the motherland. According to Bagchi, the heroic women served to affirm the identity of the colonial elite. An ethnic glow lit up this image of heroism that mythologised the feminine form even as it denied Indian women all

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

⁵⁷ Bagchi, "Representing Nationalism", p. ws-66.

human control over their own bodies.⁵⁸ It was by coalescing the mother goddess terrible and destructive with the affection of one's own mother that nationalists helped to domesticate *Shakti*.

The control of sexuality and patriotism is indeed closely interlinked in Bankim's novels. The iconography of India as mother goddess reveals the nationalist endeavour to worship women as goddesses and control them as mothers. Jasodhara Bagchi and Tanika Sarkar both point to the curious blending of victimhood and triumphant rage and strength in the image of Kali and Durga. Kali, who has abandoned her femininity signifies for the colonial elite "the total collapse of the ordered world."⁵⁹ The iconography of Kali shows her standing with her foot on her husband's chest. The mythical tale goes that Kali, out on a destructive rampage cannot be pacified by any of the gods. She can only be controlled by her husband, Shiva, the male principle incarnate. So, Shiva transforms himself into a wooden plank and lies down in her way. Kali unknowingly steps on the plank, upon which Shiva reverts to his original form. Seeing herself standing on top of her husband, Kali stops in shock and bites her tongue in shame. The iconography of Kali is a classic sign of social control which suggests that all women including the independent, educated, modern wives have to be, and can also be, easily controlled by their husbands.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ See Jasodhara Bagchi, "Socializing the Girl Child in Colonial Bengal", *Economic and Political Weekly* (9 October 1993).

⁵⁹ Sarkar, "Nationalist Iconography", p. 2012.

⁶⁰ In *Devi Chaudhurani* the authorial voice continually eulogises the traditional virtues of the ancient Hindu wife and criticises the modern Hindu wife. For example praising Prafulla's shyness and embarrassment on meeting her spineless husband who has deserted her according to his father's command Bankim writes: "The girls in those days were quite different from the modern types, fie on the modern girl..." (p. 33).

Durga is iconographically represented as riding a lion, wielding weapons in her ten hands, and slaying the demon Mahishasura with no male support. But it is interesting to note that Durga Puja, the most important and popular festival of Bengal, celebrates Durga's role not as a militant female warrior, but as a daughter, wife and mother. Durga is not allowed to be worshipped as a militant goddess as that would legitimise women's operation and movement in the public space. The Bengali nationalists by imagining Durga as a wife easily and successfully limit her energy to procreation, and consequently confine her within the private space. Hence Durga is depicted in her domestic role as the wife of Shiva and the mother of several divine children with whom she visits her parental home. She is the archetypal mother and daughter with only hints of strength and power. The final impression that the onlookers derive from the icon of Durga is not of a warrior goddess but of a domesticated, gentle femininity.⁶¹ The representation of the motherland through the icon of Durga by Bankim suggests a single underlying motive - the glorification of motherhood and maternity and the obsession with the control and management of female sexuality.

The power of Kali, the powerful, independent goddess is seen by Bankim as dangerous and destructive, but when transformed into Durga, the mother, her power becomes positive and benevolent. The different faces of the mother

⁶¹ In Bengal, according to the popular narration of Durga's birth, broadcast by a male narrator every year over the radio on the Mahalaya day immediately before Durga Puja, the gods collectively create Durga and thus empower female militancy. Women's aggressive potential is thus recognised but the controlling creative force that empowers her and sets the agenda is unequivocally stated as the privilege of the male. It is *always* the divine or the mortal male who prescribes the particular context in which it is allowed articulation. See Zakia Pathak and Saswati Sengupta, "Resisting Women", in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia, eds., *Women and the Hindu Right: A Collection of Essays* (New Delhi: Kali, 1995), pp. 270-98.

goddess iconography in *Anandamath* depict female sexuality as dangerous and disruptive, if not harnessed appropriately. As a properly married woman, the same goddess or the same woman who is initially disapproved of by society becomes the embodiment of grace and benevolence. Thus, Devi Chaudhurani as the dacoit queen is, in Brajeshwar's eyes, "a sinful woman, given to raiding", she "might be a siren too- otherwise how could she, a woman, lead a band of robbers without having recourse to some sort of sorcery or witchcraft."⁶² Yet, after Devi Chaudharani reverts back to her previous identity as Brajeshwar's first wife Prafulla and returns to the private domain of the household, she is acclaimed as the "ideal" daughter-in-law, wife and mother. The way in which power is articulated by the iconography of the goddesses in *Anandamath*, and suggested by the narrative structure in *Devi Chaudhurani*, it appears that women's autonomy and power in the public sphere is socially less acceptable than power acquired through playing a familial role.

In Bankim's *Devi Chaudhurani*, Prafulla, the eldest wife of Brajeshwar, is deserted by her husband and her in-laws because of a false scandal. She is kidnapped by the zamindar's men and finds herself alone in the forest. She comes to possess the hoarded wealth of a Vaishnava whom she nurses in his death-bed. She meets Bhawani Pathak, the leader of the dacoits who has taken law and order into his hands in the absence of any ruler.

There is no king in this country at present. The Muslim power is extinct now and the British are just come. They do not know how to rule, nor do they care to rule. I myself punish the wicked and protect the gentle.⁶³

⁶² Chattopadhyay, *Devi Chaudhurani*, p. 198 and p. 136.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

He gives Prafulla rigorous training for five years in the art of 'non-attachment'. She is initiated into the mysteries of Bankim's *anusilan* creed as expounded in his "Dharmatattva". The basic principles in her training are: "control over senses", "absence of egoism" and "dedication to Lord Krishna." Faithful to her master, Prafulla remains an ascetic doing actions without desire - *nishkam karma*. As a leader she takes the name of Devi Chaudhurani and distributes wealth in charity and checks the oppression of the wicked. But Prafulla can never forget Brajeshwar, the husband she had met for a day. Throughout the novel, she is shown as longing for domestic happiness. When Nisi admonishes her for forgetting her training under Bhawani Pathak, Prafulla replies, "I should never have tried this life had the other course been open to me."⁶⁴ Later, she uses her position as a bandit queen to escape into her own familial surroundings at the earliest possible moment.

Towards the end of the novel Prafulla is about to be captured by the British and is ready to surrender. She tells Brajeshwar:

What's the good of living any more? I have met you, have unburdened my soul to you, and have realised too that you still love me. What money I had I spent in charity. I have no more work left to finish nor any earthly desire to fulfil. What have I to wait for now?⁶⁵

But on hearing that her husband will take her back as his wife she changes her plans: "...I shall adopt all means that lie in my power to save myself".⁶⁶ Subsequently, she evades arrest and enters her in-laws' home as a mute, homely and an efficient new bride. Referring to this transformation in her role, Nisi comments: "The Devi is dead,

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 160.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 204.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 206.

but Prafulla will be leaving for her father-in-law's house."⁶⁷ The novel reveals that Prafulla, though a dacoit queen, does not ever desire independence. She becomes independent because of circumstances and not by asserting her own will or desire, and finally, at the end of the novel the conventional social values which she had internalised as a daughter makes her return to an oppressive, patriarchal, family set-up.

However, the portrayal of the bandit heroine in *Devi Chaudhurani* and Shanti in *Anandamath* question women's image as weak and passive. These two female protagonists prove that motherhood is not so much biological as acquired. Their characterisations reveal that femaleness is not a fixed inalienable quality. It is rather a mode of social being which can be reformulated and redefined. Their changing character traits prove the situational nature of identity and the way in which supposedly essential aspects of identity are in fact socially constructed and therefore changeable. Shanti for instance, is first coerced into conventional feminine roles as daughter-in-law and later when she joins the nationalist movement her sexual role is subsumed by her role as a mother. Yet Shanti's ability to serve as a *santan* and her excellent combat skills act as a critique of the nationalists' investiture of women with passivity and motherhood.

The author tells us that Shanti "had lost her mother in her infancy. This had played its part in the formation of her character."⁶⁸ Having grown up devoid of traditional models of femininity, Shanti, enjoyed the freedom from the bondage of

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 247.

⁶⁸ Chattopadhyay, *Anandamath*, p. 67.

pre-defined Indian middle-class stereotypes. And even after her marriage to Jivananda, she retains those qualities:

Shanti stubbornly refused to dress as a girl, and would not even fix her hair like a girl's. She was scarcely at home, but would mingle with the boys of the neighbourhood and play with them like a tomboy. She used to enter the neighbouring jungles alone and search for peacocks, deers; and rare fruits and flowers...⁶⁹

As a girl brought up amidst sanyasis,

Shanti learnt gymnastics and the use of arms, and soon became strong and hardy. She travelled with them far and near, taking part in many a fray, and became an expert in the use of weapons of war.⁷⁰

She develops hardiness, physical courage and independence - all qualities valorised as manly at the time. Shanti does not see herself as a girl to be protected or defended by the sanyasis but as their equal. Later, Bankim narrates: "...living with her husband, Shanti's tomboy qualities gradually began to disappear. The feminine within her began daily to unfold itself,"⁷¹ that is, with Shanti's exposure to society her personality orientation changes (or is made to change) and the process of her feminisation begins.⁷²

Shanti's character portrayal explicitly reveals a parallel between female behaviour and enforced passivity. We find her struggling to come to terms with an identity and a role that is fundamentally inimical to the androgynous wholeness of her

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 68

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 68

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 70

⁷² Interestingly, almost a century ago, in *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Mary Wallstonecraft had emphasised that femininity is an artificial construct: "I will venture to affirm, that a girl whose spirits have not been dampened by inactivity, or innocence tainted by shame will always be a romp and the doll will never excite attention unless confinement allows her no alternative." Quoted in Lola Chatterjee, ed., *Women, Image, Text: Feminist Readings of Literary Texts* (New Delhi: Trianka, 1986), p. 47.

girlhood. The freedom that her unorthodox upbringing had given her backfires as it results in oppression and torture by her in-laws. As a child-wife she undergoes ritual torture for her transgressive behaviour. Ironically however, it is Shanti's wit, learning, physical prowess and most importantly her ability to 'pass' for a man that enables her admission into the world of active politics, which is presented essentially as a male domain.

Bankim's claim for equality between the sexes. is in finding women's entry into the military, which is deemed to be a male preserve. *Anandamath* suggests that women have to become surrogate men in order to gain entry into the public sphere of activity. Shanti's experience shows that to enter into this sphere women must dress and act as males. The novelist's predisposition to perceive men as violent and action oriented and women as compassionate and supportive to the male warrior serves to secure women's position as non-combatant and men's as warriors. In the public arena of the battlefield, Jivananda, Dhiren and Bhavananda are transformed into iconic warriors embodying bravery, loyalty and determination. This public transformation of men into super-heroes renders them void of such emotions as empathy, sympathy and compassion. These emotions are reserved for the guardians of the home front: women who are portrayed as pacifists or patriotic mothers, whereas men are essentially viewed as aggressive (Bhavananda) or humiliated for their lack of aggression, like Mahendra.

Bankim portrays the women in his novels - Shanti, Kalyani, Nisi and Prafulla as in need of protection by men. The woman to be protected, respected and adored however is the mother, and the more she is adored and respected, it further

marginalises and constructs the non-mother as the ‘other.’ Furthermore in *Devi Chaudhurani*, female betrayal is perceived as a virtual law, requiring only exemplification. Informing his readers about the past of the vaishnava whose hoarded wealth comes into the possession of Prafulla, Bankim writes that he had “none else on earth except a vaishnavi mistress. Finding him in a moribund state the vaishnavi had run away with the old man’s property.”⁷³ The sexuality of women and especially of widows is an object of suspicion by society, as they are not under the control of one man. Therefore, Prafulla’s mother is an easy target about whom a false scandal is spread by her neighbours leading Prafulla’s in-laws to desert her. Interestingly, Fulmani, a barber woman, who aids in Prafulla’s kidnapping is also a young widow. The author’s prophetic patriarchal tone in his description of Fulmani is significant:

Fulmani was ten years older than Prafulla. She looked pretty handsome too and was not altogether inattentive to her dress. Born of an *uncultured* family and having become a widow in the prime of her youth she could not keep herself scrupulously chaste.⁷⁴

On the contrary, Prafulla – a high caste woman is in need of protection from men and by men.

Prafulla was both young and beautiful. In addition she had to live alone in her cottage at night. These circumstances might prove a fruitful source of danger and scandal at the same time.⁷⁵

Bhawani Pathak, the paternal dacoit after taking Prafulla under his tutelage, immediately addresses her as “mother” and instructs Rangaraj to allow no man except

⁷³ Chattopadhyay, *Devi Chaudhurani*, p. 52.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

himself to enter her house since “youth and beauty are still too prominent in the girl.”⁷⁶ Prafulla also, the author tells us “felt happy to find a guardian in this forest.”⁷⁷

Through the presentation and endorsement of the women’s need to be protected, both the novels – *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* - tend to essentialise differences between men and women. In the name of protecting women, Satyananda and Bhawani Pathak serve to reinforce their subordinate status. It is also significant that it is a man, Bhawani Pathak, who has to ‘teach’ and instil in Prafulla confidence and positive thinking so that a new Prafulla may emerge. Equality, for Bankim, does not mean treating women and men on equal terms. It means for him an affirmation of the difference between men and women.

When Haraballabh Babu, Prafulla’s father-in-law is told that Brajeshwar’s new bride is actually the first daughter-in-law, the first thought that comes to his mind is, “Where has she been so long - under whose care?”⁷⁸ A woman deserves to be socially accepted only if she is chaste, that is owned by one man. Yet, Brajeshwar can have three wives and marry a fourth without any scruples. The different roles of women and men, in family and in society, are affirmed and celebrated as a harmonious synthesis in Bankim’s novels. “The assertion of the greater dignity, even sacrality of the chaste and good Hindu women covertly substitutes for, and ultimately displaces, a demand for equal rights”, remarks Tanika Sarkar.⁷⁹ The new Hindu woman is celebrated for restoring the glories of an ancient

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 76

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 75

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 266.

⁷⁹ Tanika Sarkar “Heroic Women, Mother Goddesses: Family and Organisation in Hindutva Politics” in P. R. Ram, ed., *Secular Challenge to Communal Politics: A Reader* (Mumbai: Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, 1981), p.172.

past, a past which accords a particular role for women in the family and in the society - dutiful wives and self-sacrificing mothers. In the closing pages of the novel, Prafulla is glorified as a model housewife - reticent in speech, subservient, intelligent and self-sacrificing. Any additional roles that she might have performed are projected as ancillary to these primary roles.

It is paradoxical, however, that in spite of Bankim's glorification of a woman's femininity, Shanti and Prafulla, problematise the conventional view that all that is female is feminine and all that is male is masculine. *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* show that not all men fit the standard model of what it means to be masculine unequivocally. Indeed, rather than a single masculinity or femininity, there are multiple masculinities or femininities that vary across space, time and context. Shanti for instance unhorses the British officer Hindley with ease and rides away on his horse. It is ironical that Shanti, who was coerced into being a stereotypical wife by her in-laws and punished for not being a 'true' daughter-in-law or wife, becomes the real *sahadharmini* during the nationalist struggle. On the contrary, Kalyani, the domesticated wife is depicted as a hindrance to her husband's vow of celibacy. She has to take poison and kill herself to allow Mahendra to become a *santan*. Saved by Bhavananda she assumes the role of a temptress wooing Bhavananda from his chosen path of a *santan*. Kalyani is given no scope for participation in the political struggle for independence. She remains the beautiful mother and the chaste, self-sacrificing wife and is contained within the domain of family life.

However, Shanti's decision to join her husband, Jivananda and participate in the nationalist struggle demonstrate that women were neither autonomous agents nor wholly dependent on men. Shanti's as well as Prafulla's

political involvement were not acts of totally independent choice. For Shanti it was a matter of being with her husband and for Prafulla, it was the only course that fate offered her. Prafulla's desire for family life later leads her to confront Brajeshwar and Haraballabh Babu and at the end of the novel she returns to her in-laws. The activism of both the female protagonists is accidental. In spite of being leaders, the sense of autonomy and self choice that is associated with the male *santan* is missing in Bankim's portrayal of the women protagonists. Shanti, Prafulla and Nisi's politicisation and participation in active politics also show that the possibility of political independence did not mean the same thing, or carry the same importance for everybody.

Shanti and Prafulla take their private role as mothers into the public realm of politics. They delink wifehood from the enclosed space of domesticity. Their characterisation bring to light the sharp divide in the domains of social life into *ghar* and *bahir*, and the emergence of the 'new' woman during the nationalist movement, who is different from both traditional and western woman. While not challenging symbolic gender boundaries Shanti and Prafulla transgress the deeply gendered public-private divide. Satyananda's criticism of Shanti for attempting to participate in the nationalist movement in disguise and his attempt to thwart her entry into the public domain clearly reveal, that within the nation's citizens, there are differences between men and women. It is only after Shanti takes an oath "to remain a *brahmachari*," though living near her husband and asserts her role as her husband's helpmate, that Satyananda finally permits Shanti to join the *santans*. But he assigns her a special place within the collectivity. Her membership is dependent on prescribed behaviour and her conformity to the role ascribed to her as 'mother'. Bankim through

Satyananda clearly explicates that women's participation in the war differs from that of men. Her participation in public life is acceptable provided her public role is an extension of the culturally approved maternal role that she plays in the home.

'Motherhood' functions as one of the key institutions through which women protagonists in Bankim's novels are discriminated against. Shanti's role and responsibility as inspirer and supporter of the male protagonists is used as an alibi to exclude her from power, authority, decision-making and a participatory role in public life. Satyananda and the other *santans* recognise and respect Shanti's specific role as mother. There is no pressure on her to deny her womanhood and become the same as man.

Prafulla, the heroine of *Devi Chaudhurani*, under the stewardship of Bhawani Pathak reigns as the leader of the dacoits. Yet her training is entirely devoted to transforming a woman into a goddess. She is depicted as the epitome of vibrant *Shakti*, yet the symbol of vaishnavite self-restraint. She is an activist who yields justice and power with self - controlled detachment. She introduces restraint and compassion in a male-dominated society effectively. But in spite of the role of a leader (which she is compelled to play), her role of a mother is dominant. She is portrayed as calm, wise, tolerant and reveals universal compassion – all attributes of glorified motherhood. Prafulla as Devi Chaudhurani is never asked to deny her femininity, rather all her public appearances are an effort to enhance her beauty and femininity. She is bedecked with jewels, reclines on a throne, has a crown on her head and is guarded by well-dressed maids and warriors. The common man regards her as an incarnation of the "Goddess Bhagwati." "Her descent on earth they thought, was

for the good of suffering humanity,”⁸⁰ the author informs us thus forcing the individual to become an icon.

Bankim’s characterisation of Shanti and Prafulla reveal how Indian nationalist movements have used the notion of ‘nation as mother’ to limit and control the use of women within the ‘imagined’ community. Shanti, who is at par with the four generals of the *santan* army, both in mental and physical strength, is not given the role of a leader. She is relegated by Satyananda to the position of a mother – her sole duty is to raise the patriotic consciousness of the *santans* and rouse them to action. Bankim invests Prafulla with the female principle of *Shakti*. He represents Devi Chaudhurani as an achiever and a leader of the dacoits. Prafulla’s training under Bhawani Pathak enables her to win many battles against the British. But even as her name sends tremors through everybody’s soul and makes Sagar’s maid faint, she does not lose her identity as mother within the community. After having enjoyed the freedom and autonomy of being a leader, even if in a limited way, at the end of the novel, she gladly and voluntarily reverts back to her previous identity as Brajeshwar’s wife. She returns to the confines of her family and in-laws to perform her “real” role as wife, daughter-in-law and mother.

But she cannot escape her heroic identity as easily as the novelist would have liked it and the reader still remembers her as Devi Chaudhurani, the dacoit queen. The author therefore has to narrate in detail how she uses her training as a leader to live a successful domestic life. At the close of the novel Bankim writes long passages to impress upon the readers that Prafulla has a long and productive life after

⁸⁰ Chattopadhyay, *Devi Chaudhurani*, p. 115 and 176.

fading out of her role as a leader of the masses – a role in which the novelist never allowed the Devi to speak or act as a leader is expected to do. The novel does not depict the Devi as leading her people in battles or inspiring them to fight or loot. The text does not allow Prafulla to command or direct. Bankim never portrays what Prafulla does as a leader. The authorial voice merely intervenes and informs us that the Devi reigned for five years as the queen of the dacoits denying her the opportunity to speak or act. Prafulla never voices her own opinion or view on various contentious issues. The novelist usually narrates them to us. The text permits Devi Chaudhurani, the dacoit queen to be visible before the readers only at those times when the leader in her is subsumed by her wifely prerogatives. She is presented as pining for domestic life and desirous to meet her husband. A dilemma about Prafulla's public role is evident in the narrative structure of the novel but there is no dilemma about restoring her back to her in-laws house.

The dacoit queen sitting and scouring plates near the tank at her in-laws is almost comical. But Bankim's ideological positioning regarding woman's 'true' domain is explicit in this novel. The novelist does not provide the reader any scope to speculate whether Prafulla faces a dilemma over her decision to return to her in-laws. The manner in which the narrative unfolds suggests that a woman's 'true' place is at her home and that Prafulla never really enjoyed her role as protector and saviour of the poor and the needy. The conversation between Sagar and Prafulla, in the closing pages of the novel is significant:

“Well, would domestic work please you any more? Once a queen sitting on a silver throne and wearing a crown of diadem and now these petty household duties, would they please you at all? How would you like Brahmthakurani's

fairly tales after a hard study of Yogasastra? She who had once two thousand people under her command would she be satisfied domineering over a handful of menials?"

"Yes, they will please me very well," replied Prafulla, "and that is exactly why I have come back again. They constitute a woman's true duty and not sovereignty. Quite a hard task too is to lead an ideal household life. No yoga is more difficult than this.... No other work of life exacts a greater sacrifice than this and no other mode of life leads to greater virtues than this...."⁸¹

Bankim clearly states that the Devi or the mother goddess, must like other women confine herself within the contours of oppressive norms and a patriarchal family structure and perform the traditional domestic role in a subordinate position. Seeking to establish a unilateral relationship between the stereotypes he propagates and the human identities he attempts to create, the author controls and limits the human subject and does not allow the novel to develop. Sudipta Kaviraj in this context correctly comments that Prafulla "is not defeated by her adversaries but by the author."⁸²

The novels depict the way women perceive and put up with patriarchal structures, but effects no break with the acute sense of oppression and constraint. *Devi Chaudhurani* tentatively suggests that women's friendship is a broadening out of sympathies. Sagar, Prafulla's co-wife provides Prafulla with the opportunity to meet and spend a night with their husband. Later Prafulla, as Devirani, brings about a reconciliation between Brajeshwar and Sagar. Shanti plays a similar role in *Anandamath* when she brings Kalyani to her husband, Mahendra. With women

⁸¹ Chattopadhyay, *Devi Chaudhurani*, pp. 271-72.

⁸² Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness*, p. 150. The authorial voice states that Prafulla is educated not for self-development but for self-renunciation and for wifely subjection.

stepping out of the enclosed domestic sphere the novels show women coming together with other women or co-wives as friends and sharers of life, even if temporarily, instead of mere rivals seeking approval by men.

Interestingly, Bankim places the burden of accomplishment on Prafulla and Shanti. He challenges them to performance but keeps them 'free' of both the taint of the public role and the 'vice' of power. He endows his women characters with intelligence, wealth and vulnerability and empowers them with the female capacity for self-realisation and the ability to act, without divesting them of passivity. It is significant therefore that neither Shanti nor Kalyani nor Prafulla ever articulates her oppression. In spite of their activism and heroism, Shanti and Prafulla are both objects of patriarchal benevolence. The supportive paternal atmosphere in which they are placed successfully mute the militancy of their feminism. The author describes Prafulla as 'happy' to find a 'guardian' in the forest and she requests Bhawani Pathak - "you seem to be very wise; please teach me, sir,..."⁸³ Shanti and Prafulla are both created by men, do their bidding and are applauded. This exaltation of militant female energy should not be mistaken for female emancipation. "Women of Bengal," wrote Bankim "you are the true jewels of this country."⁸⁴ Attainment of this iconic status put a closure on all self-critical probings into their real conditions within nationalism.

Neither *Anandamath* nor *Devi Chaudhurani* attempts a transformation of patriarchal institutions nor do the women protagonists ever question the patriarchal

⁸³ Chattopadhyay, *Devi Chaudhurani*, p. 74.

⁸⁴ S. N. Mukherjee and M. Maddern, eds., and trans., *Bankimchandra Chatterjee Sociological Essays: Utilitarianism and Positivism in Bengal* (Calcutta: Riddhi-India, 1986), p. 153.

values. Thus the women characters remain within the contours of bourgeois ideology. In fact, Shanti and Prafulla seeking acceptance of their public role from their male counterparts cannot envision the possibility of questioning the underlying ideological assumptions of nationalism. Thus political participation, it can be concluded, does not necessarily radicalise women's position in society if they do not encourage women to question their traditional roles.

In *Devi Chaudhurani* there is no critique of the male world, rather Bankim seems to be defending the traditional values of Hindu society - duty of a son to his parents, fidelity of a wife and the inviolable sanctity of marriage. There is for example a long description of Prafulla's mother-in-law's devotion to her husband:

The first prahar of the night was hardly over, when the master of the house appeared and sat down in the dining-hall. The wife in all her glory sat near, waving a fan over his plate. Not a single fly was there, yet the fan continued to wave in assertion of the traditional rites of a Hindu wife. Woe to the sinful wretches, who are out to do away with a custom so sweet and charming as this! A legion of housemaids fluttered about the whole mansion, yet to serve the husband none but the wife could approach him! Oh Heavens! Hast thou no bolts to strike the heads of these reformists!⁸⁵

Bankim is concerned with improving the status of women and opening up new opportunities for women but does not focus on claiming equality with men. The novels project women's new dignity and confidence without disrupting the existing social fabric. Prafulla remains for Bankim a sign of Hindu supremacy. She

⁸⁵ Chattopadhyay, *Devi Chaudhurani*, p. 25.

remains limited in her act of embodying unchanged domesticity in an age of flux. In appreciation of Prafulla, at the end of *Devi Chaudhurani*, Bankim writes:

Such indeed was her unostentatious and unassuming conduct at home that few could know that she had ever been acquainted with the alphabets even, much less the fact that she was a disciple of an unrivalled scholar and herself a great savant. No display of learning at all is necessary for the discharge of domestic duties. True, the learned can accomplish household work much better than others, but a home is no place to make a parade of one's learning.⁸⁶

The conclusion of Bankim's *Devi Chaudhurani* shows that the family which coerces women to conform to traditional roles cannot handle outspoken women. Hence *Devi Chaudhurani* has to be silenced by the novelist. She has to become a mute new bride to enter into the household of her husband and her in-laws. Her taking up of the role of a leader is restricted to the public sphere. Her exposure to the larger, external world does not bring about any change in her mentality. The text does not reveal any desire or attempt on her part to transform the domestic sphere.

Shanti breaks through the alienation of her sex by her entry into politics. She undermines the socially constructed artificial dichotomisation of the 'male' public sphere and the 'female' domestic domain. Yet Bankim accords her the role of a mere helpmate and domestic support. Moreover, both Shanti's and Prafulla's entry and participation in the public arena are tied to family interest and there is no change in their life and ideology. Their life remains unchanged except for the momentary excitement of a limited but important public identity, after which they

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 274 -75.

again return to the domain of the enclosed space. Bankim enables both the women protagonists to transgress sex-typed roles but they are soon put back in their place, that is, after a momentary empowerment they are more permanently situated in the patriarchal structure.

At the end of *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* the family is naturalised and sacralised. Both the heroines retreat at the end of the novels to silence and passivity, thus marginalising the more disruptive elements of female power. Non-domestic and non-conventional roles are seen in the novels as products of tragic necessity and not as liberating ones. The gendered imagery and female leadership associated with the nationalist movement in Bankim's *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* bring to mind images of women devoid of their agential capacity as self-sacrificing, long-suffering and non-violent victims.⁸⁷ As Indian and Bengali women began to savour their new freedom in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it became imperative for Bankim in *Devi Chaudhurani* and *Anandamath* to reinforce the boundaries of control over the dynamic women protagonists in his novels and keep their activism within the limits of older patriarchal priorities.

These novels of Bankim more deeply imprint on the readers' mind the notion of the dominant male and the submissive female because they expound that all women - liberated and independent, or oppressed and dependent can be controlled by men. Bankim freezes the new found political activism of women with an intensified restatement of older patriarchal norms and values because when women are granted unprecedented visibility and voice, it becomes even more imperative to recover,

⁸⁷ See Sarkar and Butalia, eds., *Women and the Hindu Right*, for an insightful discussion on this topic.

gather and articulate the submerged patriarchal assumptions, to tighten them up and indicate firmly that the new public role needs to be contained within the war against the Muslims.

Thus in his fiction Bankim, on the one hand, fosters the possibility of women's liberation and on the other restructures the condition for the continuation patriarchal family structures and ideology. In the guise of empowering women Bankim ensures that they are more solidly located at home. Both of Bankim's women protagonists - Prafulla and Shanti move in and out of the two domains - *ghar* and *bahir* but the novels fail to bring about a reconciliation between women's familial role as wife and mother and her political role as leader and activist. Shanti, in *Anandamath* can enter the political arena only in disguise and Prafulla, in *Devi Chaudhurani* can re-enter the domain of the family also in disguise. As Partha Chatterjee has pointed out a separation between 'tradition' and 'modernism' is firmly demarcated by a separation of social space into the two domains of the material or outer public world and the spiritual or inner private world or the home.⁸⁸ For Bankim the values and principles associated with these two spheres of life remain disparate and it is left to Tagore to strike and maintain a balance between the two spheres.

⁸⁸ See Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, for a detailed discussion. Also see Chapter 1 of this work.

Chapter Four

Gora and Ghare-Baire

Nationalism involves the effort by a people to determine their own destiny and free themselves from external constraints, to end internal divisions and unite, and to find and express their 'authentic' cultural heritage and identity. Not all nationalisms, however are based on pre-existing ethnic ties. Some nationalist movements try to create or enhance common identities which did not exist before or were of little importance in people's lives. *Gora* and *Ghare-Baire*, two of Tagore's most popular political novels, assign a central place to the political debates that took place in India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries over the methods adopted by the Swadeshi Movement and the social reform movement. *Gora* retains the vision of an all-inclusive nation, while *Ghare-Baire*, written seven years later, shows the historic degeneration of the nation into communal hatred and violence. *Ghare-Baire* represents Tagore's most outspoken views on early twentieth century extremist nationalism and terrorism. It is "a testament of Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, of love and truth, of his insistent warning that evil means must vitiate the end, however nobly conceived."¹ *Gora* is situated within the larger conflict between modernism and the Hindu tradition, which was inevitable in view of its composition in the early twentieth century.

The educated Bengali middle-class was exposed to new intellectual ideas and concepts through English education but also faced increased colonial humiliation. The political movement that followed the partition of Bengal in 1905 raised two major issues before the intelligentsia of Bengal - the need for political freedom and the Hindu-Brahmo controversy. Thus Krishna Kripalani describes it as

¹ Krishna Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 252.

“the epic of Indian transition at the most crucially intellectual period of its modern history....”² *Gora* also highlights other local tensions relating to caste, class and gender that further complicate the question of freedom and selfhood towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The text of the novel mentions no dates, but because *Gora* is said to be born at the time of the Sepoy Mutiny (1857), the temporal frame of the novel may be located around 1880. The events in *Gora* are roughly contemporaneous with the time when the novelist Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, under the pseudonym Ram Chandra, entered into a debate with William Hastie about Hinduism in the pages of *The Statesman* (Sept.- Oct. 1882).³ *Gora* begins his public career in a manner similar to Bankim through similar debates with an Englishman, justifying the religious practices of Hinduism in the columns of a Calcutta newspaper. But, that he soon realises the futility of such an endeavour is evident from his conversation with his closest friend, Binoy: “We must refuse to allow our country to stand at the bar of a foreign court and be judged according to foreign law.”⁴ Ram Chandra had also made a similar declaration in his letter to *The Statesman* on October 28, 1882:

Hinduism does not consider itself placed on its defence. In the language of lawyers, there is not yet a properly formed charge against it. And at the bar of Christianity, which itself has to maintain a hard struggle for existence in its own home, Hinduism also pleads want of jurisdiction.⁵

² Ibid., p. 207.

³ Refer to Chapter 2 of this work for further details.

⁴ Rabindranath Tagore, *Gora*, trans. W.W. Pearson (Madras: Macmillan, 1924), p. 23. All quotations are from this English translation.

⁵ J. C. Bagal, ed., *Rabindra Rachanavali*, vol. 3 (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1969), p. 213.

Unlike Gora, Ram Chandra is defensive. In fact, Gora's aggressive stance in the first part of the novel is prophetic of the rift that occurred in the educated middle class of colonial Bengal. The novel, which is structured largely through a series of arguments is, in Niharranjan Ray's opinion, "the only novel in Bengali which mirrors faithfully the social, political and cultural life of the entire educated Bengali middle class...."⁶

Gora, like other English educated young men of his generation, had first been drawn towards the reformist impulses of the Brahmo Samaj, which attempted to purge Hinduism of its stifling rituals, customs, caste hierarchy and elaborate idol worship. But after his debate with an English missionary in the columns of the newspaper "goaded to the quick at this disrespect shown to Hindu society by a foreigner" and impressed with the philosopher Vidyavagish's liberal mind, he turns towards a loud and flamboyant brand of Hindu orthodoxy.

We must not feel apologetic about the country of our birth-whether it be about its traditions, faith, or its scriptures-neither to others nor even to ourselves. We must save our country and ourselves from insult by manfully bearing the burdens of our motherland with all our strength and all our pride.⁷

Gora is shown as a symbol of the rising Indian nationalism of the early twentieth century. He represents the aspirations and sentiments of the educated Bengalis of his age, who agitated against the injustice and arrogance of the British and, being conscious of their slavery, tried to seek out their cultural heritage and protect it from all types of onslaught. His love for his motherland makes him denounce everything alien and accept every thing Indian. His flaunting of Hindu

⁶ Niharranjan Ray, "Three Novels of Tagore," in *Indian Literature- Tagore Number 4* (1961): 172.

⁷ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 23.

ritualistic practices and assertion of cultural superiority is directed at the westernised, anglicised Bengali *babu* of his generation, who had rejected everything that is associated with Hinduism and was busy imitating the British masters.

Gora depicts two conflicting forms of response to imperialism by Hindu society. The novel notes an all-pervasive concern, almost obsessive in the social and intellectual life of the educated Indians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - an anxiety to assess European culture as something to be emulated or rejected. British culture which attracted and repelled the Bengali *bhadralok*, often at the same time, split Hindu society into two warring factions. Haran Babu, who aspires to marry Sucharita slavishly imitate the Western ideas and denounces everything Indian. Gora represents another sort of Indian who, in reaction against this attitude, blindly and perseveringly holds on to orthodox traditions. The Brahmo Samaj, which Meenakshi Mukherji describes as "the most palpable institution through which both the religious and social impact of the West was mediated in Bengal," is a representative new movement which consciously sought to alter social practices and inherited systems of belief.⁸ Paresh Babu, who is a humanist, regrets this struggle between Brahmo and Hindu youth of his time. He remarks "...what I actually see before me is the intolerable aversion of man for man in our country, - and how this is dividing and subdividing our people."⁹

To Gora, everything that is Indian is sacred and everything that is Indian has to be interpreted in terms of an undiluted Hinduism-

⁸ See Meenakshi Mukherji, "Introduction" in Rabindranath Tagore, *Gora*, trans. Sujit Mukherji (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1997), p. xiii.

⁹ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 120.

I am a Hindu! A Hindu belongs to no party. The Hindus are a nation, and such a vast nation that their nationality cannot be limited within the scope of any single definition. Just as the ocean is not the same as its waves, so Hindus are not the same as sects.¹⁰

He even believes that Hinduism is a very liberal religion that accommodates all shades of opinion within its fabric:

You must understand that the Hindu religion takes in its lap, like a mother, people of different ideas and opinions; in other words, the Hindu religion looks upon man only as man, and does not count him as belonging to a particular party. It honours not only the wise but the foolish also, and it shows respect not merely to one form of wisdom but to wisdom in all aspects.¹¹

There is, however, a difference between what he professes and what he practises. He shuts the doors of his religion to anyone who deviates even slightly from its tenets. Thus Binoy's decision to marry Lolita, a Brahma girl, brings an end to their long relationship.

Gora believes that the humiliation of being colonised can only be overcome by an uncompromising avowal of everything indigenous. His assertion of nationalist consciousness is based upon Hindu values.

When the whole world has forsaken India and heaps insults upon her, I for my part wish to share her seat of dishonour—this caste-ridden, this superstitious, idolatrous India of mine!¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 294.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 296.

¹² Ibid., p. 267.

He is most hurt by the indifference of educated Indians towards the masses and angered by the fact that “the educated people did not take on their own shoulders the burden of this eternal shame and insult.”¹³ Anthony D. Smith’s comment is pertinent here. He points out that the depreciation of indigenous cultures was an important factor in the attempts of semi-Westernised intellectuals to “return” to the peasant masses.¹⁴ Gora’s wanderings in the villages in search of “rural India” is a manifestation of a new socio-political trend which was gaining significance in Tagore's age.

One of the first moves that Gandhi made on his return to India from South Africa was to repudiate the urban politics practised by the Indian National Congress. Gandhi located his politics in the villages of India where the majority of India's population resides. He believed that it was in the village that India had to be experienced and discovered. It was in this context that the “discovery of India” became a major theme in the nationalist history.¹⁵ However, the unification of the people is attempted not in their own interests, but in the name of the emerging nation and the nation state that is to follow. Gandhi becomes “one with the masses” but Gora is incapable of such an organic identification with the masses. Gandhi can inspire the masses but Gora is powerless to intervene in the history of the Indian masses.

Interestingly, India figures in *Gora* both as a transcendent and marvellous identity that awaits comprehension and as a malleable entity awaiting

¹³ Ibid., pp. 39-40.

¹⁴ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 109.

¹⁵ This theme presupposes that a certain India exists already awaiting to be touched, known narrativised. Gandhi believed that no worthwhile plan of action could be based on a knowledge that is spurious and non-representative. The people of India thus, become the subject of the Independence movement.

transformation by her people. Gora wants a future that is both nationalist and modern. Therefore, he accepts caste and idol-worship and yet displays a modern “historical consciousness” in matters of social justice. He also fights against any actual case of social oppression, perpetuated on the basis of caste affiliations. Gora venerates the myth of the Indian traditions such as caste or the ritual observance of purity and yet fights against any actual case of caste oppression in his own time.¹⁶ In the midst of the educated community in Calcutta, he cannot approve of the relaxation in traditional customs, but he dismisses orthodox customs in a rural set up. In his visit to the villages, Gora notices that amongst the lower castes, owing to a scarcity in females, a large amount of dowry has to be offered to obtain a girl for marriage. Hence most men remain unmarried all their lives and many do not marry until late in life. There is, however, a strict prohibition against widow remarriage.¹⁷ So he advises the villagers to marry widows. However, they are angered by Gora’s suggestion, since it is contrary to the rules prescribed by Hindu orthodoxy and they read it as a reflection of Gora’s disrespect for the poor and uneducated peasantry. This incident reveals Tagore’s recognition of the minority-position of the modern intellectual in a country where the peasants too, refuse to listen to him.

When Gora decides to bathe at Triveni it is not in search for purity or piety, but to be able to shed his diffidence and stand with the common people.¹⁸ It is emblematic of a desire to reconnect with the masses. He hopes and desires that the Hindus become one nation. Without destroying the differences between people of

¹⁶ Ashis Nandy in “Sati in Kali Yuga” in his book, *The Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 40-41 shows that it was possible for modern South Asian colonial intellectuals such as Rabindranath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore or Ananda Coomaraswamy to embody an apparent contradiction in their relationship to the past. They could be appreciative of the values that ‘sati’ in its idealised representations, was meant to embody in the ‘past’ while (as in the case of the Tagore family) at the same time was in the forefront of the fight to make the practice illegal.

¹⁷ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 368-69.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

different communities and cultures, Gora wants ultimate unity within India. He mobilises young people for physical culture and group games through his Sports Club without making any discrimination between them on the basis of caste. When a Bengali *babu* nearly runs over a Muslim cook who was crossing the road Gora runs to his aid. But he is aware that by offering help he is actually embarrassing the man who, greatly distressed to see such a well-dressed *babu* taking so much trouble, says: "Why are you troubling yourself Babu? These things are no longer any good."¹⁹ Next, through the incident at Ghosepara, Tagore makes it clear to the readers that Gora's well-meaning intervention can cause more harm than good to the oppressed inhabitants. Gora is genuinely concerned about the welfare of the rural folk but unable to bridge the class difference that separates him from the villagers. The villagers either suspect his sincere concern for them or clearly see him as a *bhadralok* and treat him like a *babu*. He also cannot comprehend the village barber's request to him to leave the village. He dismisses the barber's perfectly legitimate fear of persecution, by the indigo planter, as mere cowardice and thereby displays his inability to recognise the split between the two domains of politics – the politics of the elite and the politics of the subaltern classes. Thus Gora on the one hand, is unable to identify with the masses and, on the other, is incapable of realising the reality of rural India.

Tagore here seems to suggest the paradox involved in investing too much hope on English education. Gora's experiences in rural India point to the inevitable outcome of Western education in a colonial society - the alienation of a few from the millions. Gora's visits to rural India are part of his anti-alienation strategy - urban Indian's desperate attempt to become part of the larger whole. The miseries of the actual people that Gora confronts in the village at Ghosepara make him realise that

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 80.

his imagined organic community is deeply fractured by cruelty and caste exploitation. He sees for himself that Hinduism in popular practice is reduced to “Prohibition, prohibition, nothing but prohibition” which serves more as a hindrance than help for national regeneration.²⁰

Gora shows that the social reform movements of the nineteenth century, like the Brahmo Samaj, only succeeded in lowering the barriers between the three upper-caste Hindus – Brahmins, Kayasthas and Baidyas. As Broomfield points out, ‘the great gulf between upper caste Hindus and the mass of the community, Hindu and Muslim, remained unabridged.’²¹ The resistance offered by a predominantly Muslim village to the British and Hindu oppressors and the liberal Hindu village barber who lives in solidarity with the Muslims rather than with the people of his own religious community impresses Gora. He comprehends the shortcomings of his ideal religion – Hinduism, in the rural areas, but still holds on militantly to it through a mistaken notion of patriotism that equates India with the Hindu religion. Bhabani Bhattacharya observes that Gora readily absorbs the shock of the revelation of his birth because he had been yearning for an escape from “the inner strains of his self-imposed obligations.”²²

Gora, after whom the novel is named, serves as a metaphor for the ironies and anomalies that stem from the ambiguity of his identity. His name itself is significant for it means “pure” and “fair,” and is still used, in many parts of India, to refer to the British or any white skinned foreigner in general. When the orthodox

²⁰ Ibid., p. 164.

²¹ J.H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 15.

²² G.V.Raj, *Tagore, the Novelist* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1983), p. 42.

Harimonini meets Gora the first time, Gora's well-built physique, fair complexion and authoritative voice overwhelm her and she is convinced of his "pure" Brahmin origin. The members of the Hindu Patriots Society and well-known pandits too are impressed by Gora's strict observance of orthodox Hindu rituals and his fiery speeches and writings that assert the supremacy of the Hindu religion. They regard Gora as a "true" Hindu, the pride of the Hindu society and decide to honour him by bestowing on him the title, "The Light of the Hindu Religion." The irony behind this decision is strengthened by the reader's knowledge of Gora's Irish origin and Gora's ignorance of the same. He vehemently indulges in polemics fighting the battle on behalf of a social heritage to which he has no claim. His mistaken identity thus defines the very absurdity of the premises on which the purity of Hinduism is asserted.

To Gora, Paresh Babu's Brahma family is contaminated. So when Binoy starts frequenting this Brahma household Gora is afraid that his friend will be influenced by them and soon lose his purity. By the end of the novel however, Gora's original concept of purity disintegrates and he realises that Paresh Babu and Anandamoyi are more truly pure than his own father, Krishnadayal who, turning orthodox in later life, observes all the rituals and customs enjoined by Hindu society. His discovery of his biological origin dismantles the concept of self that he had constituted through caste, religion, race and purity of birth. The knowledge of his birth makes him finally dissociate Hinduism from the concept of India or *Bharatvarsha*.

Purity of birth is the most important factor in Gora's constitution of Hindu identity. On hearing that his parents were Irish and that the Hindu family of

Anandamoyi and Krishnadayal had only brought him up he is dumbfounded. But, soon, he is relieved to find himself free from the imperative of belonging to any category of persons. Gora knows that belonging totally to a group can be stifling for the self and he urges Sucharita not to identify completely with the readymade ideology of a group:

My only wish is you should understand your mind. Don't belittle yourself by listening to other peoples' opinions. You have to realise clearly in your own mind that you are not merely a member of some group.²³

From the beginning of the novel Tagore shows Gora's shifting stances thus making his acceptance of his Irish birth at the end of the novel more plausible to the readers. The novelist narrates that Gora had at first been an enthusiastic member of the Brahmo Samaj. He was in the habit of arguing with the Brahmin pandits who gathered round his father. Later the Brahmin baiter becomes a fervent defender of the "blameless excellence of Hindu religion."²⁴ His changing concept of nationalism is a consequence of the changing contours of his self-knowledge, acquired through his wanderings in rural India and his arguments with Paresh Babu and other members of his family.

Gora's parentage is used by Tagore to suggest that the concept of national identity is an external, social construction, which often violates the fundamental principle of Indianness and Hinduism.²⁵ Tagore's portrayal of a white man's unqualified love for Hinduism and the Indian nation suggest that religion and

²³ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 354.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁵ The nineteenth century definition of the Hindu community was based on the Aryan race theories propounded by European Orientalists and Indologists. The theories posited an Aryan migration to India. The Hindu religion was regarded as a sacred charge given to the Aryan race to preserve it through the ages. See Romila Thapar, "Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity", *Modern Asian Studies* XXIII, no. 2, pp. 222-24.

patriotism are not ingrained in the blood of a man from birth but are a result of his upbringing and socialisation. It also highlights that collectivities, like nations or communities, are neither homogenous nor fixed. They keep fluctuating contextually. The division between 'us' and 'them' remains ever fluid as is evident from the fact that Gora at the end of the novel accepts Lachmi, his nurse, so long denigrated as an untouchable. The novel shows that depending upon the issues in question, different criteria come into operation to determine not only group alignments but also the very definition of any given group, including the one called "nation."

At the end of the novel Gora is reduced overnight to an untouchable and a non-Indian. His first symbolic act is to ask for a glass of water from Lachmi, the untouchable domestic help. This is his first step towards recognising a wider Indian identity. The new awareness of his origins saves Gora from a narrow nationalism and brings him closer to his foster mother, Anandamoyi and hence to India. He acquires a wider self-definition where his western self is not disowned but finds a place in a larger philosophy of life. He tells Paresh Babu,

Now I have truly the right to serve her, [India] for the real field of labour is spread out before me- it is not a creation of my own imagination – it is the actual field of welfare for the three hundred millions of the India's children.²⁶

Thus as Hindu orthodoxy closes their doors against him, "the vast country with its diversity is thrown open before him for a new quest, a new career, a new victory possibly."²⁷

²⁶ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 405.

²⁷ Kalyan Kumar Chatterjee, "Incognitos and Secret Sharers: Patterns of Identity, Tagore, Kipling and Foster," *Indian Literature*, no. 131 (May-June 1989): 11-130.

Paradoxically, however only the knowledge of his Irish birth could transform Gora into a true Indian, freeing him from all sectarian identifications based on caste, race and religion - a solution that cannot be replicated for others like Abinash or Ramapati, or his other followers. Thus Meenakshi Mukherji comments that the novel's providential closure "remains in the realm of an idealised optimism, marking a step in Rabindranath's evolving relationship with Indian nationalism, prefiguring a more stringent criticism of the swadeshi ideology with its neo-Hindu rhetoric in his next political novel *Ghare-Baire*."²⁸

Gora and Binoy are not oppositional figures - they are both high caste Hindus, members of the Hindu Patriots Society, educated and fluent in English and most importantly close friends and fervent defenders of Hindu tradition and ideology. Yet Binoy, being "like the ordinary run of educated Bengali gentleman," is a truer representative of his class than Gora.²⁹ Forced to choose between the India of Gora and India as represented by Anandamoyi, Binoy intuitively and lovingly chooses Anandamoyi. Later, Gora makes the same choice more self-consciously when he feels that Anandamoyi represents in her womanliness the "spirit of India" more truly than his pure, disinfected, masculine version of Indianness and Hinduism.³⁰

Tagore's portrayal of the two friends - Gora and Binoy explicitly reveals that even within the narrow range of upper caste Hindu males there are

²⁸ Meenakshi Mukherji, "Introduction", p. xvii.

²⁹ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 6.

³⁰ For Gora India now means not only the motherland of the Hindus; she represents the fundamental unity of the diverse people who, whether as original inhabitants, immigrants, or conquerors, have made their homes on her soil. Anandamoyi, through her adoption of Gora expresses her belief in this view and she comes to represent for Gora the motherland incarnate.

contradictory and variant ideas and opinions.³¹ Tagore also recognises contradictions within the views of minority communities such as the Brahmo Samaj, as within Hindu society. Neither the advocates of Westernisation nor the upholders of supposedly age-old Hindu traditions speak in a single voice. This makes possible an understanding that the members of a community may experience conflicting loyalties and fragmented identities. Further, it is these contradictions that make way for alliances between women across collective groups. Thus Anandamoyi, a Hindu and Sucharita, a member of the Brahmo Samaj, discover similarities in their views and opinions and unhesitatingly approve of Binoy's marriage to Lolita. They also jointly participate in the marriage ceremony while the rest of their class stay away and heap abuses on the couple. At the same time Lolita, who has a deep disregard for orthodox women, is surprised by Anandamoyi's strength of mind and liberal opinion on a number of issues. Thus, through the portrayal of his women characters, Tagore suggests that women from different communities can come together through a process of dialogue to construct a shared position on particular issues. The novel also reveals that an idealisation of communities and the assumption of identity (sameness) within them, is not only exclusionary, but also fails to take account of differences within communities or within particular social categories such as 'woman.'

Like the young female protagonists of the novel, Sucharita and Lolita, the male members of the Brahmo Samaj also do not agree on every issue. Panu Babu, the acclaimed leader of the Brahmo Samaj, is a stereotypical representative of the

³¹ Tapan Raychaudhuri, in his analysis of the views of three nineteenth century Bengali middle class males - Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, Swami Vivekananda and Bhudeb Bandhopadhyaya in *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988) reveals that they had different opinions on key issues of the time viz., gender, nationalism, East-West relations etc.

anglicised Bengali who is the object of Tagore's bitter criticism for being narrow-minded, authoritative and sectarian. He finds nothing good in his own culture and is vehement in his criticism of the Bengalis. In fact, Mr. Bronlow, the English Magistrate, impressed by Haran's exposition of Christianity, asks him, "Why, when he had gone so far, he stopped short of becoming a Christian himself!"³² Gora, who is the opposite of Haran argues that every nation has its own peculiar "genius" and one must work to rediscover that unique genius and that peculiar identity.³³ He tells Haran that reform will come from 'within' and in the nationalist revolution, both men and women would be empowered to decide which traditions are outmoded, which should be transformed, and which should be preserved.

In *Ghare-Baire* Tagore shows how Sandip, a shrewd politician, constructs the nation according to his vested interests and in the process creates a rift between the Muslims and the Hindus of the area. The Muslims in Nikhil's estate who had, like their Hindu counterparts, developed an aversion to eating beef, revert back to cow-slaughter in the concluding pages of the novel in an attempt to assert their separate identity. Thus *Gora* and *Ghare-Baire* explicitly reveal that traditions are the outcome of and the result of past political contests, as well as being the sites of continuing conflict.

Food assumes considerable semiotic significance as a signifier of inclusion and exclusion in Tagore's novels. In the earlier part of the novel *Gora*, Binoy, thinking it would be impolite to refuse a cup of tea in the Brahmo family,

³² Tagore, *Gora*, p. 140.

³³ Herder, as quoted by Smith, *National Identity*, "Let us follow our path...let all men speak well or ill of our nation, our literature, our language: they are ours, they are ourselves, and let that be enough." (p. 75).

accepts the offer of tea and is soon included by Barodasundari into the family circle. On the contrary, Gora's refusal to have tea earns him the dislike of all the members of the Brahmo family and he is soon ignored by the hostess while Binoy is invited inside the house as a gesture of acceptance. While Binoy gains entry into the *andarmahal* by this one polite gesture, it considerably weakens his relationship with Gora. Food, in fact, marks the boundary between Harimohini and the rest of the Brahmo family. When Harimohini invites Binoy to eat some sweets, that she had offered to her God, Binoy's ready acceptance of her invitation earns him her affection. However, Binoy's acceptance of food from the Brahmo's soon alienates him from Harimohini and at the same time his eating food with Harimohini angers Barodasundari as she fears that she is losing her control and power over Binoy. At the end of the novel Gora also uses the metaphor of food in defining his new self:

That which day and night I have been longing for but which I could not be, to-day at last I have become. To-day I am really an Indian! In me there is no longer any opposition between Hindu, Mussulman, and Christian. To-day every caste in India in my caste, the food of all is my food!³⁴

Many such incidents regarding the ritual observance of rules of purity regarding eating and drinking show how food stands as an important marker of one's identity and helps to form a larger community.

The novel shows how community identities are often defined through the conduct of women, who are subject to the customary strictures of tradition. Tagore at the same time depicts how women often make use of orthodox customs to serve

³⁴ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 406.

their own interests. Harimohini, for instance, can easily appear before Haran Babu, but she is certain that “if she once allowed him to see her, neither she nor Sucharita would have any respite” from him. So, whenever she catches sight of Haran Babu, “she would draw her veil with a caution surpassing that of a newly married bride.”³⁵ Anandamoyi, Lolita and Sucharita adopt identities that appear to entail their subordination and confinement to domesticity and reproduction. But, in the process, they negotiate the context and meaning of the dominant political and religious ideologies and in doing so come up heavily against male authority at home and in society. Their interpretation of a woman’s place is far less restrictive than the ideas held by the men. They prove that women are different and they speak from different positions resulting in partial and different knowledges.

The major flaw in Gora’s concept of India is that it excludes women altogether. Women exist for him as merely symbols of grace, purity and motherhood who remain within the enclosed space of the home, invisible to the outside world. When Binoy argues with Gora that so long as women remain in the *zenana* the country will be a “half-truth” to the nationalists, Gora replies,

I have seen, in her, [his mother] all the women of our country, and known as well the place they should occupy....if we drag our women out into the field of outside duty, then their characteristic quiet work will be interfered with, the peace and happiness of society will be destroyed, and frenzy will prevail in their stead.³⁶

Gora’s Victorian attitude to morality makes him fear that the honour of women will be unsafe outside the home. For him women need to protect and to be protected in

³⁵ Ibid., p. 334.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 83-4.

(the home). Thus, when he meets Sucharita for the first time, he ignores her in keeping with the norms of traditional Hindu society. This deliberate withholding of attention is an indication of the Hindu nationalists' or Gora's ideological positioning on women. Sucharita's non-observance of the rules of seclusion and participation in an intellectual argument between two men surprises Gora and he dismisses her with contempt.

Jasodhara Bagchi points to this feature of Indian nationalism where Hindu nationalists' efforts to overthrow colonialism and re-invent their 'golden past' hinged upon the "increasing identification of the woman question with the purity of the Shastric injunctions.... In the nationalistic reckoning, the purity and morality of elite Hindu women was essential for the rejuvenation of a subjugated nation, differentiation of a pure Hindu culture and womanhood from those of the 'Other'.³⁷ Later, under Sucharita's influence, Gora realises that women are individuals rather than static icons of culture: "There had been a time when the fact that there were women in India hardly entered Gora's mind, but now he had made a new discovery of this truth through Sucharita,....³⁸ He comes to regard Sucharita not as a special individual, but as a special idea, a representation of Indian womanhood.³⁹ He upholds the need for men and women to work in harmony for the unity and progress of India, for if women "stand aloof the service of India can never be complete." Gora's project of Hinduism is initially masculine. His humanisation therefore is also a process of

³⁷ Jasodhara Bagchi, "Ethnicity and the Empowerment of Women" as quoted in Kumari Jayawardene and Malathi de Alwis, eds., *Embodied Violence: Communalising Women's Sexuality in South Asia* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996), p. xx.

³⁸ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 271.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

feminisation.⁴⁰ He realises that it is the indifference to the humiliation of women-as-motherland that explains the Indian male's insecurity about his loss of manhood.⁴¹ He recognises that women do not merely symbolise the motherland, they are the motherland.

At the end of the novel Gora claims that the ancient truth of India is that Hinduism, like his mother, has accommodated different people of diverse views:

The mother whom I have been wandering about in search of was all the time sitting in my room at home. You have no caste, you make no distinctions, and have no hatred-you are only the image of our welfare! It is you who are India!⁴²

This complete transformation in Gora's views on women's emancipation occurs after his meetings and long conversations with Sucharita, thus revealing the possibility of an exchange of knowledge between the sexes. It also shows the emergence of a new kind of companionate marriage for middle-class women. Sucharita initially finds Gora superstitious, orthodox and arrogant. But his faith and conviction in the greatness of India and Indians impress her. Gora's initial defiance and disregard of the Brahmo family too undergo a change and are replaced by the widening of his understanding for people outside his community. Niharranjan Ray comments:

It is Sucharita again who administers the necessary dose of liberalism to his too narrow ideals and brings him towards the path of universal love and harmony.⁴³

⁴⁰ Meenakshi Mukherji, "Introduction", p. xviii

⁴¹ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 272-73.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 407.

⁴³ Ray, "Three Novels of Tagore," p. 175.

However, it is important to note that Gora's acceptance of the changing roles of women arises from the nationalist agenda for strengthening Indian society and not from his desire to give autonomy to women. Although he extends women's roles from service in the home to service for the nation, the sanctity of the domestic sphere is never questioned nor is the patriarchal family set-up jeopardised in his harnessing of female energies for an anti-colonial, nationalist struggle. The implication is that women were stepping out only for the nationalist cause and would finally return to domesticity

The novels demonstrate the new type of womanhood that emerged in Bengal as a result of Western education and changes in the socio-economic set-up. Sucharita and Lolita are the products of Western education and represent the new class of emancipated women. Lolita is an individualist, a lover of freedom and an upholder of truth. Lolita "could never bear to be forced into anything whether by speech or by action."⁴⁴ Therefore, the development of her individualism may be attributed to her inherent nature, as to her western education and her Brahmo faith. She anticipates the modern Indian woman who rebels against all kinds of tyranny and oppression, both within the family and outside society. M. Sarada describes her as "the harbinger of the women's liberation and feminist movements of the twentieth century."⁴⁵ Lolita's growth of consciousness is not the result of any outside agency but an awareness of the oppressive conditions existing in her home and in society at large. She tells Sucharita that God has not given women intelligence to "expound

⁴⁴ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 88.

⁴⁵ M. Sarada, *Rabindranath Tagore: A study of Women Characters in His Novels* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1998), p. 60.

other people's ideas, and a mouth simply to repeat other people's phrases...."⁴⁶ Her growth of personality is through a slow and continuous struggle against the ideology of patriarchy. She begins by thinking about the conditions in which she and her sisters are forced to live and soon breaks with the structures of oppression. Thus Lolita successfully overcomes passivity, indifference and submission to patriarchal norms which have been the hallmark of the Indian women.

She represents the new kind of woman that was emerging under the influence of the Brahmo Samaj. She constantly criticises and mocks Binoy for being a shadow of Gora and for echoing the latter's opinions. Her intimacy with Binoy begins as an attempt to make Binoy assert his individuality and free himself from the dominance of Gora. In fact it is due to Lolita that Binoy rises from being a mere shadowy associate of Gora to discover his separate identity as an individual.

Lolita's initial dislike for Gora's conservatism and arrogance is replaced by her respect for Gora's patriotism and courage to stand up for his ideals. She cannot accept the unjustified arrest of Gora by the Magistrate in whose house they are to enact a play. She decides not to take part in the play and also asks Binoy not to allow himself to be persuaded by anybody. She tells Sucharita, "I couldn't utter a single word even if I bit my tongue till the blood flowed!"⁴⁷ As a mark of protest against the racial discrimination of the British towards the Indians, Lolita leaves the Magistrate's house and returns to Calcutta with Binoy.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 90.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁴⁸ The Swadeshi Movement and the Boycott resolution passed by the Indian National Congress at the Calcutta session in 1906 might have influenced Tagore to depict the boycotting of the magistrate's function by Lolita. It reveals, for the first time, the dawn of political consciousness among Indian women.

This courageous and transgressive act of Lolita creates a scandal but brings her closer to Binoy. She inherits her father's non-sectarian outlook, rational thinking and will power, but she excels him in courage. When she hears that Binoy is ready to convert to the Brahmo faith in order to marry her and save her family from disgrace, she prevents him from doing so because she does not consider religion an obstacle to marry Binoy. She feels that there is no need for Binoy's initiation into the Brahmo Samaj:

It can never be necessary for a man to cut off all connection with his religion, his beliefs, or his society, no matter of what nature they may be, in order to be united with other men.⁴⁹

The hostilities of the two groups of Hindu youth, delineated in *Gora*, create an atmosphere in which religion becomes a divisive factor in the unification of men. Society is represented as an obstacle that stands in the way of perfect union of man and woman. Tagore feels that humanity will be poorer if man has to grow externally under the weight of social regulations. He believes that husband and wife must meet as man and woman transcending the sectarian categories of caste, creed or religion. Thus Binoy and Lolita decide to marry each other retaining their original religious affiliations in spite of opposition from both the Hindu society and the Brahmo Samaj. Emphasising the unimportance of religion as an obstacle to their union in marriage, Lolita says, "If love is unable to acknowledge differences, then why are there differences anywhere in this world?"⁵⁰ As the couple's determination

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 305.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 306

grows stronger, “they forget they were Hindu or Brahmo, and only remembered that they were two human souls.”⁵¹

Tagore presents his vision of the future woman through Lolita who is ready to step out of her home and to take part in the National Movement side by side with men. Lolita not only asserts her equality with men but is also, in her own way, eager to serve the nation and its people and contribute to the progress of India. She questions the woman’s seclusion in the domestic sphere and asks her elder sister, Sucharita:

Because we have been born girls, are we to wear our hearts out within the four walls of our home? Are we never to be of any use to the world?⁵²

She wishes to take part in the National Movement and involves herself in the upliftment of the country by setting up a free school for the girls of the neighbourhood. But her orthodox Hindu neighbours refuse to send their girls to an institution run by ladies of the Brahmo family.⁵³ Undeterred, Lolita decides to teach girls from poor Brahmo families who cannot afford to go to the Bethune School.⁵⁴ But in spite of Lolita’s and Sucharita’s determination to set up a girls’ school, they need men like Binoy and their father, Paresh Babu, to decide on the rules and regulations to run the school. The narrative structure implies that without the active participation of the men their endeavour would have remained a dream. But, both Lolita and Sucharita explore the possibilities of an independent course of life by deciding to open a girls’

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 306.

⁵² Ibid., p. 226

⁵³ This reminds one, of the difficulty that Sister Nivedita had to face in getting girls for her school at Baghbazar, in the early days of its history.

⁵⁴ Arts classes were started in the Bethune School - the first girls’ school - in 1878.

school. Thus they are not mere pawns in male debates, rather enthusiastic participants in carrying out the blue print for social change as initiated or projected by male social reformers.

The Brahmo Samaj allowed women greater access to the public sphere and led to an awakening in their consciousness as women. The 'new woman,' however, it is to be noted, is socially perceived as the product of the benevolent, liberal and educated male elite. Haran Babu, we are told, devoted himself "single-mindedly to the task of removing her [Sucharita's] imperfections, correcting her faults, increasing her enthusiasm, and generally improving her" so that every one assumed that "he wished to make this particular girl worthy of being a helpmate unto himself."⁵⁵ Paresh Babu, Sucharita's otherwise liberal and broadminded father, is also worried as to whether Sucharita is good enough for Haran Babu. It never occurs to him to enquire "how far Haran was pleasing to Sucharita." As no one feels it necessary to consult Sucharita in this matter, she too never thinks of analysing her own personal inclination.⁵⁶

Of all the women in *Gora* who resist the contesting ideologies of conventionality, collaboration and defensive neo-conservatism, it is Anandamoyi's resistance, which appears the most 'natural.' It is motherhood which questions the dominant male Hindu discourse of the nineteenth century and resists it more effectively than does conjugality.⁵⁷ Caste, creed or nationality does not inhibit

⁵⁵ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 73.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁵⁷ Anandamoyi is constructed as the embodiment of the Indian mother, tender, loving and understanding. This eulogising of motherhood leaves out those women who choose not to or cannot be mothers. The protection of the sanctity of motherhood may very well set women up to be failures when they cannot live up to the myths. Andrew Parker et al., *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1992), point out that "where the heterosexual family played such a central role in the nation's public imaginings that mother could be viewed as a national service, female nonproductive sexuality and female-female eroticism were constrained, as a consequence to operate with in the domestic (or at least the private) domain." (p. 7).

Anandamoyi. She is devoted to housework, busy throughout the day in scrubbing the floor, washing and sewing clothes, mending objects and keeping the accounts. Yet she takes great care of all the members of her own family as well as those of her neighbours. Being childless, the mother's instinct and desire for a child makes her reject religious practices which build barriers between human beings on the basis of race, caste or religion. She asserts, "When you hold a little child to your breast then you feel certain that no one is born into this world with caste."⁵⁸ The day she takes the orphan child Gora, into her arms her religious outlook changes. She confesses to Harimohini: "He Himself took away my caste, I have ceased to fear what others may think of me."⁵⁹

She believes that human beings are not born with caste or religion. She does not consider religious differences as an obstacle for Binoy and Lolita to unite in wedlock. She gladly welcomes the marriage of Binoy with Lolita and takes upon herself the responsibility of arranging their marriage without caring for social sanction and Gora's opposition. Answering to Binoy's question as to whether Gora would be allowed to marry into a Brahmo family, Anandamoyi says,

Marriage is a matter of hearts coming together- if that happens, what matters it what *mantras* are recited? It's quite enough if the ceremony be performed in God's name.⁶⁰

Anandamoyi exerts a regal dignity and a maternal compassion which makes her the motivating force within the household. She represents one model of all-inclusive love and quietly confident individualism. When Harimohini questions

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 219.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 183. Emphasis in original.

Anandamoyi about the reaction of her family members to her non-adherence of the rituals of eating and drinking to maintain the purity of the Hindu religion, Anandamoyi replies that they did not approve of her behaviour. "But is my life given to me merely to please husband and children?" she asks.⁶¹ The author tells us that she was the only one in her social class to wear a bodice with her sari, which was considered very modern and Christian and hence denigrated by the orthodox Hindus. However, Anandamoyi remains unperturbed because she does not think that "to cover the body properly was a matter to be ashamed of, or to laugh at."⁶² She does not care for the traditional and orthodox practices of her community and regulates her life as she thinks right, without coming out of her religious fold to obey the ethos of her group. Anandamoyi is an independent person and a staunch individualist, who does not think it inconsistent to lead a life different from that of her husband and at the same time serve him and her child. When Anandamoyi visits Paresh Babu's residence to bring Harimohini to her house as it was not possible for her to stay at Paresh Babu's because of the constant torture and abuse poured on her by the hostess of the house, Baradasundari, asks her if she would take any refreshment at her place. Anandamoyi had no scruples about eating in a Brahma household but she still refuses as in Gora's absence she "did not like to do anything, which might be contrary to Gora's wishes...."⁶³ When Binoy tells Anandamoyi that he cannot follow the strictures laid by Hindu orthodoxy she says, if "three hundred million people can live in the Hindu community, then why can't you do so?" But Binoy expresses his doubts

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 219.

⁶² Ibid., p. 11.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 218.

whether the members of the Hindu society would accept him as a Hindu, Anandamoyi replies,

The people of my community call me a Christian,...but I don't see why I should have to accept their definition of me. I consider it wrong to try and escape from a position which I myself think to be the one I ought to be in.⁶⁴

Through her Tagore proves how the barriers of caste, creed, religion and race can be overcome by love and understanding. She plays a pivotal role by influencing, inspiring and guiding all the four major characters in the novel. To Gora she is, besides being an ideal mother, a great source of inspiration and the very image of his beloved motherland; to Binoy, a living scripture; to Lolita and Sucharita, a moral supporter and to Paresh Babu, a source of peace and solace. She represents Tagore's vision of Indian motherhood with her liberal and non-sectarian outlook.

Tagore seems to suggest that if Anandamoyi can so effortlessly reconcile her faith with practical morality and still remain a Hindu, it means that Hinduism as a religion is accommodative of different opinions and values. It is not a monolithic institution as Gora, the Hindu nationalist, or Panu Babu, the leader of the Brahmo Samaj, suggests. She also reveals that a self overly well defined and exclusive could not, by definition, be an authentic Indian self, capable of serious relationships with other Indians.

Anandamoyi represents the best of both Indian traditions and Western liberalism. Harimohini and Barodasundari represent the average women of the *bhadralok* family. Like Panu Babu, Barodasundari represents Brahmo orthodoxy. She

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 303.

is very particular about maintaining the purity of Brahmoism and is always careful “about keeping clear the distinction between things that were Brahmo and things that were not.”⁶⁵ Consequently, she changes the orthodox name of Radharani to Sucharita. “Whenever she wanted to be particularly scathing,” about any fault of Lolita, she always denounces it as “fit only for girl’s of Hindu homes.”⁶⁶ Thus when Harimohini comes to live with them there is no end to her complaints about the bad influence that the “superstitious, ill-fated, idol-worshipping woman” would have on the children.⁶⁷

Harimohini functions as a contrast to Barodasundari, the wife of Paresh Babu. Both are fanatically proud of their religion and believe in outward observances. Harimohini enters the novel as a poor, destitute woman, a victim figure who has been cheated of her property by her brother-in-laws. She takes refuge in Paresh Babu’s house, claiming her relationship with Sucharita. In Paresh Babu’s house she is quiet and passive looking up to others for approval and acceptance. However, as she acquires independence, she grows increasingly possessive and intolerant of laxity in matters of purity regarding food and water. Unhappy with Binoy for his non-observance of the rituals of Hindu orthodoxy she asks him, “Is it good to be neither one thing nor the other?”⁶⁸ The fear of losing her comfortable shelter and living makes her selfish and wicked and she tries to keep Sucharita under her control. Harimohini blurs the distinction between agency and victimhood, as she is transformed from a social victim to a despotic figure of orthodoxy who would

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 35.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 178.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 193.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 278.

forcibly push Sucharita in a marriage, in order to consolidate her own power.

Anandamoyi observing this transformation in Harimohini wonders:

Where now was that Harimohini who, in Paresh Babu's house, had always been as timid as though she were a criminal, and who on noticing the least sign of approval on anyone's part would hold on to him with all her might? Today she stood like a tigress, defending her own rights.⁶⁹

In *Gora*, through the depiction of the unfortunate widow, Harimohini, fighting for survival, the novelist tries to draw the readers' attention to the cruelty that widows received at the hands of their relatives. The novel is an appeal to the ideal subject of the extended family. Nikhil, in *Ghare-Baire*, clearly understands the predicament in which his widowed elder sister-in-law is placed. Bimala's complaints about her pettiness and jealousies make Nikhil pose the question for the readers: "Has not the pressure of the society cramped them into pettiness and crookedness?"⁷⁰

Paresh Babu, the father of Lolita and Krishnadayal's old friend is non-sectarian and tolerant. In the novel he often acts as Tagore's mouthpiece articulating Tagore's appeal to tolerance and humanism. He tells Lolita "What to Him is the Brahmo Samaj? What is Hindu society? – He sees only Man."⁷¹ He is at peace with himself and more open to cultural differences and dissents. He and Anandamoyi are free from religious fanaticism and do not take sides in the heated Brahmo-Hindu conflicts of the day. Interestingly, both Anandamoyi and Paresh Babu stand isolated in their respective families and yet exemplify the ideals that Tagore wants to impress

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 363.

⁷⁰ Rabindranath Tagore, *Ghare-Baire*, trans. Surendranath Tagore, *The Home and the World* (Madras: Macmillan, 1919), p. 16. All subsequent references are from this text and have been cited as Tagore, *Ghare-Baire*.

⁷¹ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 309.

upon his readers, to emulate and to practice. The difference between Paresh Babu and Anandamoyi lies in the way they realise the unity of humanity. The former realises it through his intellect and the latter through her heart. He allows differences of opinion and never imposes his ideas on others. He supports Lolita's action when she walks out of the Magistrate's bungalow. He readily consents to her marriage with Binoy even at the risk of excommunication by the Samaj.

Through the figure of Paresh Babu Tagore suggests that man has to free himself from the shackles of society. A great responsibility lies on the iconoclasts because, in order to disobey society, one has to be greater than society. Criticising the exclusive tendencies inherent in Hindu society Paresh Babu asserts:

It can never be right that man should remain narrow and confined out of regard for society- rather society ought to become more liberal out of regard for the individual.⁷²

He gives his approval to the marriage of Lolita and Binoy because he respects the freedom of the individual to decide on his or her own future. According to him, it is through the blows inflicted by the liberty of the individual that one can know for certain what is the truth and what is transitory fancy.⁷³ Replying to Panu Babu's disapproval of Paresh Babu's uninhibited introduction of his daughters to Binoy and Gora, both 'outsiders' in Panu Babu's view, Paresh Babu says that girls should be allowed to mix with people of all shades of opinion, otherwise they will simply remain narrow-minded. By restricting girls to one's own community the Brahmo Samaj was indirectly returning to the *zenana* system practised by orthodox Hindus.

⁷² Ibid., p. 316.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 345.

By emphasising the cultural unity of India, transcending caste, sect and religion, through Paresh Babu, Tagore not only asserts the value of humanism in life but also points to the dangers of the national regeneration in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. He warns his countrymen against the drifting of the national movement towards a militant Hinduism under the influence of extremist leaders like Bal Ganghadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh.

One important aspect of *Gora* is the novel's silence about question of work or livelihood so far as its young male protagonists are concerned. Binoy and Gora indulge in long debates and write brilliant journalistic pieces for the newspapers. But they never show any concern for a remunerative profession. However, throughout the novel Gora's elder brother, Mohim, who is a stereotyped Indian clerk with regular hours of work, a routine job and fixed pay is satirised. His British employer constantly humiliates him and his colleagues and he is presented as swinging between the two extremes - excessive mortification at racial humiliation and excessive gratification at occasional approval by Englishmen. This contradictory response to his British employer is in a sense the manifestation of an injured personality structure suffering from a concealed inferiority complex and groping for self-assurance. He is depicted as keen to please his superiors and thus retain his job by all means. He is a representative of the bourgeoisie whose allegiance to the British was derived from the hope that it was the only means to gain benefits from the British. He tells Binoy -

If we use a little oil from the mill of falsehood to flatter them, saying: 'O righteous one, O holy saint kindly throw us something from your satchel, even if it be only its dust,' then some small part of our own may be restored to us. At

the same time we shall avoid all chance of a breach of the peace. If only you think of it, this is patriotism.⁷⁴

In another occasion he tells his younger brother, Gora

You should understand, my boy that they are the ruling class, there is nothing derogatory in your lowering your pride a little before them!⁷⁵

Similarly, Satkori Haldar, Gora's school friend and an accomplished lawyer in Ghosepara, tells Gora that he cannot protest against the oppression by the British, simply because he has a family to support who would starve if he is without a job. He asks Gora, "How many people are there ready to risk death for their families by taking other peoples perils on their own shoulders...."⁷⁶

A few Englishmen make fleeting appearances or are mentioned in conversation. They, however, remain marginal on the whole. An occasional English magistrate or police officer is all there is by way of a direct encounter with the British Raj. But the presence of colonialism is felt throughout and it shapes the narrative act at every stage. Each major contradiction in the novels involve the entry of Western ideas of the nation-state, history, and progress into the Indian life style.

In *Gora* Tagore constructs the true Indian as one who inhabits a composite culture and in *Ghare-Baire* he reaffirms his faith in this culture by repudiating the idea of the nation-state in India. The plot of *Ghare-Baire* is set against the background of the Swadeshi Movement which began as protest against the

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 404.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 143.

partition of Bengal (1905). The Movement was the first campaign for the boycott of foreign goods. Tagore, who had, as early as 1897, started a Swadeshi Bhandar in Calcutta for the active promotion of indigenous goods supported the movement. But the assassinations and bombings that followed alienated Tagore from the fanatic and frenzied patriotism of the early twentieth century. Krishna Kripalani in this context, writes:

Not even in his fiercest outburst of patriotism could Tagore be jingoistic which may partly explain why among his own people he was never popular, whatever the praises sung after his death.⁷⁷

Ghare-Baire, which portrays the unscrupulous and anarchic patriotism of the Swadeshi Movement in the early years of the twentieth century Bengal, is Tagore's critique of militant and coercive nationalism. His most powerful criticism against the inhuman and destructive tendencies of militant nationalism is expressed through the conflict of opinions, debates and arguments between the two main male protagonists - Nikhil and his friend, Sandip. The novel makes a sharp distinction between two competing strands within the Swadeshi Movement, with Nikhil representing a passion for constructive work and Sandip, nationalism's greed and destructive energy.

Nikhil is a genuine patriot who emphasises the need for self-reliance and the adoption of righteous means to fight the British. He establishes a bank to dispense easy and unsecured loans to poor peasants of his area and thus loses a fortune. He imports country-made cloth and keeps it for sale in his market and even

⁷⁷ Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 178.

sends bales of it to markets belonging to neighbouring zamindars, much before Swadeshi becomes a symbol of pseudo-patriotism, but is ridiculed by all. Later, the Swadeshi Movement is accepted in his village with enthusiasm as a popular ideal to proudly display and boast of. Nationalist leaders too, demand the boycott of foreign articles. But Nikhil is unmoved by this show of patriotism all around him and does not banish foreign cloth, salt and sugar from his estate because he does not want to put any compulsion on the villagers. He wants to give the villagers the freedom to choose as to whether they want to make sacrifices for their country's sake. He does not want to compel his people to make sacrifices in the name of the nation, for he disagrees with the militant nationalists who, "would cut freedom at the root, to gain it at the top."⁷⁸ Nikhil, with his original and radical ideals about economic independence, thus remains a lonely man whose projects fail due to the lack of public co-operation.

Jyotindranath, Tagore's cousin, could have provided Tagore with the model for a patriotic hero with his attempts to establish an indigenous match-box factory and a textile mill. Ashis Nandy writes that Jyotindranath can be regarded as "an early prototype of Nikhil in *Ghare-Baire*."⁷⁹ Rabindranath Tagore too, we are told, had led the younger Tagores into adventurous ventures that invariably failed. In this model of patriotism that Rabindranath, Jyotindranath and Nikhil represent there is some amount of amateurishness and romanticism. But Nikhil invariably articulates the author's views of a syncretic culture and a more catholic form of cultural selfhood. Nikhil's concept of freedom, self-government and constructive leadership, reflect Tagore's own vision of the struggle for independence, so that the novel has

⁷⁸ Tagore, *Ghare-Baire*, p. 121.

⁷⁹ Ashis Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 71.

been interpreted not only as a “defence of certain principles but also, in a way, the author’s defence of his own role” in the Swadeshi Movement.⁸⁰ Like Nikhil, Tagore had to face unpopularity, isolation and even hostility due to his opposition to militant nationalism. Krishna Kripalini thus claims that “the novel is his answer to the critics who had accused him of desertion”.⁸¹

Nikhil rebels against social orthodoxy and colonialism and also tries to resist nationalist violence. Nikhil regards the use of force in any form a sign of weakness because “only the weak dare not be just. They shirk their responsibility of fairness and try quickly to get at results through the short-cuts of injustice.”⁸² The concept of the state of union reflecting and presiding over the balance and harmony of free regional peoples and religious communities is a major theme running through Bengali nationalist thought: “Man’s history has to be built by the united effort of all the races in the world, and therefore,... this making a fetish of one’s country, will not do,” says Chandranath Babu and Nikhil his true pupil and a liberal nationalist criticising militant nationalists like Sandip and his followers asserts:

What I really feel is this, that those who cannot find food for their enthusiasm in a knowledge of their country as it actually is, or those who cannot love men just because they are men, - who needs must shout and deify their country in order to keep up their excitement, - these love excitement more than their country.⁸³

⁸⁰ V.S.Narvane, *An Introduction to Rabindranath Tagore* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1997), p. 119.

⁸¹ Kripalani, p. 125.

⁸² Tagore, *Ghare-Baire*, p. 44.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Sandip, an enthusiast for armed revolution believes that his country -

...does not become mine simply because it is the country of my birth. It becomes mine on the day when I am able to win it by force.⁸⁴

Such a response was very typical of militant and aggressive anti-colonial intellectuals to an oppressive colonial rule. The violent, sacrificial element in Indian nationalism, drawing its inspiration from Bankim's invocation of Bengal's dominant mother deities, provided the background for the invocation of the sacredness of mother India. In fact *Ghare-Baire*, with its religious oriented vocabulary is steeped in the imagery of Durga, the most popular form in which the mother Goddess is worshipped in Bengal. Sandip, the crafty politician, is aware of the fact that "no one can give up his life for a map."⁸⁵ He decides to turn the nation into an image of the mother goddess to facilitate greater mobilisation of the masses. He proudly asserts: "Ignorant men worship Gods, I, Sandip, shall create them."⁸⁶ This statement not only reveals the hypocrisy and illusion that lie behind the supposedly patriotic zeal of many nationalists but also shows the ridiculousness of all acts of violence, performed in the name of Swadeshi or the mother deities - Durga and Kali. Bimala, the young wife of Nikhil is overwhelmed by Sandip's eulogisation of the nation as mother, his emotional extremism as well as his frenzied patriotism. In her excitement she passionately exclaims: "I would make my country, a Person and call her Mother, Goddess, Durga, for whom I would redden the earth with sacrificial offerings", and the country Tagore tells us "thrills in salutation to the unrealised future."⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 49.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 91.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 166.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

Through the characterisation of Nikhil and his teacher Chandranath Babu, who is an impassioned political activist, Tagore consistently opposes those who, like Sandip and his followers, justify political murder in the name of Kali or patriotism. Sandip believes that God is manifest in one's country and it must be worshipped. Nikhil argues that, in that case, God must be manifest in other countries too, and there is no scope for hatred of them. To Sandip the means adopted by nationalists are of no consequence as long as they lead to the freedom of the nation from alien rule but Nikhil cannot even imagine the possibility that foul means will lead to noble ends.

In the novel *Ghare-Baire* Tagore also shows how people readily identify with a supraordinated common cause whether it is the new nation, or the father figure of the national leader, Sandip. Such an identification makes individuals like Bimala, Amulya and other revolutionaries willing to shed their own group affiliation and even their own personal identities. Unfortunately Sandip, the Swadeshi leader, creates this new group identity through the exclusion of the 'other', the 'different.' *Ghare-Baire* explicitly reveals that such identity construction serves only as an opposition and leads to ethnic cleansing. This identity which is primarily created in opposition to the 'other' can, under certain circumstances, lead to riots (and maybe war), as is evident from the conclusion of the novel.

Sandip's Hindu nationalism has two simultaneous impulses: building a united India as well as 'Hinduising' the polity and the nation. Muslims and other groups are not excluded from the definition of India, but their inclusion is premised upon their assimilation or acceptance of the political and cultural centrality of

Hinduism and Hindus. If assimilation in his own terms is not possible, Sandip is ready to suppress the Muslims of the country and make them understand that the Hindus are the “masters.” Nikhil’s love for the Muslims in his estate is incomprehensible to Sandip and he tells the former that it is important for Hindus to “know” the place of Muslims in Indian society and “keep them there, otherwise they will constantly be giving trouble.”⁸⁸ Sandip, the communal politician, claims to represent the interests of the majority. The generally mythical threat to the unity of the majority community is transferred to the threat to the unity of the nation. By putting his community in opposition to the minorities, he is in fact, encouraging communal strife, which really does threaten the unity of Indian society towards the latter part of *Ghare-Baire*.

Tagore in detail shows that while Nikhil’s non-violent, inclusive mass movement creates a nation, the religious foundations of mass politics leads to Hindu-Muslim riots. Indeed, by refusing to accommodate the interests of the Muslims and by imposing on them immediate and unconditional sacrifice for the nationalist cause, Sandip precipitates a communal conflagration. Leaders like Sandip seem unable to see that to tyrannise for the country is to tyrannise over the country. Sandip’s nationalism is one of forced and absolute domination of upper caste male standards, not one of universal reason, leading towards freedom and self-determination for the dispossessed. He is aware that indigenous woollens are unavailable and costlier than imported woollen, and yet he forces the poor peasants of the villages to wear Indian cloth not for the benefit of the nation, but merely to make things difficult for the British. Sandip delights more in the destruction of foreign articles than in the

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 158.

manufacturing of indigenous goods. In order to teach the English a lesson he coerces the rural folk to join in the boycott of foreign goods even at considerable sacrifice. Thus Tagore shows that the leaders of nationalist movements do not respect or care for the realities of rural India.

“We must be unswervingly, unreasonably brutal”, asserts Sandip and attempts to make the country of his birth his own by winning it by force. In the process he excludes the vast majority. When Nikhil finds that Sandip’s narrow and prejudiced vision makes him disregard the interests of Muslims, he remarks: “If the idea of a united India is a true one, Mussulmans are a necessary part of it.”⁸⁹ Nikhil’s nationalism is tolerant and inclusive. When the extremists find fault with the Muslims in his estate for cow-slaughter, Nikhil, the liberal humanist, reminds them that the Shaktas also offer animal-sacrifices:

Buffaloes in the country likewise give milk and are used for ploughing. And therefore, so long as we dance frantic dances on our temple pavements, smeared with their blood, their severed heads carried on our shoulders, religion will only laugh at us if quarrel with Mussalmans, in her name, and nothing but the quarrel will remain true. If the cow alone is to be held sacred from slaughter, and not the buffalo, then that is bigotry, not religion.⁹⁰

The novel undoubtedly suggests that the full-fledged Hindu-Muslim riot that, at the end of the novel, tears the social fabric of society is the inevitable result of Sandip’s sectarian nationalism. For the Muslims on Nikhil’s estate who suddenly turn to eating beef religion becomes less of a faith or a way of life than an

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 158.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 218-19.

ideology.⁹¹ The resentment of the Muslims is not communal in character but primarily economic. The novel suggests that communalism is of much later origin than is warranted by the assertion that, over the centuries, it has continued in its medieval barbarity. Sandip through his exclusionary and sectarian politics tries to coerce the members of diverse communities which form the Indian nation into one homogeneous whole. Lower caste Hindus and Muslim traders who are forcefully prevented from importing foreign-made cloth, in response, prefer an identity which acts as a rival to the identity that the nationalists like Sandip imagine. Sandip's brand of nationalism thus betrays the nation's own "inner" realities. His obsessive concern with the West and other forms of local elitism makes him fail to speak for the masses; on the contrary, he suppresses the politics of subalternity.

The novel clearly suggests that the introduction of Hindu religious motifs in the nationalist discourse alienated the Muslim community from the nationalist struggle for independence. Tagore, therefore, holds not religious differences but the strategy of mobilisation employed by Sandip and such other enthusiasts as responsible for the growth of communalism. When nationalist leaders find that the strategy of assimilation of the minority communities that they envision is not acceptable to the minorities, their nationalism becomes exclusionary, both in principle and in practice.⁹²

⁹¹ Through reverting back to eating beef the Muslims challenge the elite dominant vision in response and reaction to the elite's somewhat communal exclusivism. For a detailed discussion on the split between religion-as-ideology and religion-as-faith, see Ashis Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance," in *Alternatives: Social Transformation and Human Governance* XIII, no. 3 (January 1988), pp. 171-94.

⁹² Sandip, who represents the aspirations of the majority community, feels that the minorities by not associating with his and thereby the aspirations of the high caste Hindus were a threat to their position. But what he calls national aspirations and traditions in fact show his lack of faith in the 'nation' itself.

Gora and *Ghare-Baire* bring to light another characteristic feature of nationalism - the necessity of linguistic skills in the making of a leader of the masses. It is Gora's fiery speeches, booming voice and excellent command over the English language that make him the leader of the Hindu youth of his generation. Both Gora and Binoy write for the newspapers and the readers are impressed by their linguistic skills. The unscrupulous politician, Sandip in *Ghare-Baire* too, is heavily dependent on rhetoric to make an impression on the masses and he successfully juggles with ideals to draw the people into the Swadeshi fold. Bimala's changing stance regarding Sandip highlights the important role of language and oratorical skills in the nationalist movement. Bimala had seen Sandip the nationalist leader's photograph but he did not appear genuine to her. She was in fact annoyed with her husband for unquestionably giving in to Sandip's demands. But after hearing Sandip's inspiring, flamboyant and rhetorical speech, which Nikhil rightly recognises as a glorification of "selfish lusts under high-sounding names," Bimala's opinion of him undergoes a complete transformation.⁹³ In her own words-

...when, however, Sandip Babu began to speak...and the hearts of the crowd swayed and surged to his words, ... I saw him wonderfully transformed...from beginning to the end of his speech, each one of his utterances was a stormy outburst. There was no limit to the confidence of his assurance.⁹⁴

The leaders of the Swadeshi Movement, Tagore notes in *Ghare-Baire* mobilised the masses by "speaking in towns and market-places".⁹⁵ In *Gora*, the

⁹³ Tagore, *Ghare-Baire*, p. 46. Nationalism in a plural society means the rationalisation of narrow group interests as national interests.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28. Smith in *National Identity*, says that in the non-Western or ethnic model of the nation the people, are "the final rhetorical court of appeal" (p. 12).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

female protagonist Sucharita too is gradually drawn to Gora through his speeches and writings. As Gora, during his conversation with Sucharita, demolishes her views on religion and the Indian nation, Sucharita is pained but overwhelmed by Gora's confidence and genuine display of love for his motherland. She realises her duty to her motherland and wants to serve the nation. Binoy, also points to the importance of language and rhetoric in the formulation of the nationalist discourse. He tells Anandamoyi that it is because of his keen intellect that he had been able "to prove by hair-splitting arguments" even what he did not believe in:

All these religious principles that I have been defending so much all these days, I have been defending, not from the point of religion, but from the point of view of a party.... We do not think of it as religion, but go about fighting for it because it is our religion.⁹⁶

Sandip is a person of doubtful integrity but wins over a lot of people to his side by his charisma and fiery speeches. In a manner similar to Gora, he hypnotises the young students by his eloquence and gains whole-hearted support for his *Bande Mataram* and the Swadeshi Movement. However, while in *Gora*, Abinash and his gang trivialise Gora's principles through their excessive zeal, reducing them to mere populist rhetoric, and his followers are more of an embarrassment than a strength to Gora, Sandip's very existence depends on his followers who worship him as a demi-god. Amulya and many other young boys are attracted to the nationalist movement because of Sandip's rhetoric and oratorical skills. Even Bimala, who Nikhil describes as the "home-made Bimala- the product of confined space and the

⁹⁶ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 302.

daily routine of small duties,"⁹⁷ is swept of her feet by Sandip's patriotic overtures. Sandip, on the other hand, is opportunistic and uses the genuine love and concern of Bimala and the young revolutionaries who join the freedom struggle as a means to achieve power. He is the prototype of a 'populist' demagogue – hypocritical and unscrupulous, capable of sweeping everyone with his magnetism, sophistry and rhetoric. The portrayal of Sandip reveals that very often destructive and violent activities inspired by patriotism, derives part of its strength from greed and violence.

Sandip makes Bimala feel that for the first time she has a role to play in the freedom struggle. He makes it clear to Bimala that the whole country is in "need" of her. For Sandip, however, Bimala is nothing more than an icon to inspire nationalists like Sandip and the young Amulya. He assigns her a passive role in the movement - her sole function being that of inspiring the male activists. Sandip tells Bimala - "You are the Queen Bee of our hive, and we the workers shall rally around you. You shall be our centre, our inspiration."⁹⁸ In *Gora*, Anandamoyi through her adoption of Gora, is able to transcend the barriers of caste, class and religion. Bimala too, has to become a surrogate mother to the young revolutionary, Amulya, to become a "true" representative of Indian womanhood. It is through Amulya that she comprehends the covetous self-love of Sandip and the destructiveness of violent modes of struggle for the national cause.⁹⁹

The deification of the woman as mother and the containment of her role within the national collectivity, both by Nikhil and by Sandip, reveal that while

⁹⁷ Tagore, *Ghare-Baire*, p. 43.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁹⁹ For Indian nationalists a woman's identity is incomplete without her identity as a mother. Bimala is the model woman who is contained within a male-construct. She was a daughter, a wife and now becomes a (surrogate) mother. She has no children of her own, but she is not complete without her child-substitute – Amulya.

their views on nationalism and patriotism seem mutually contradictory, they are united in their appraisal of the women's role in the Swadeshi Movement.¹⁰⁰ Bimala has a number of role identities - wife, daughter-in-law, surrogate mother and even heroine but she primarily acts as a site for the ideological battles and the nationalist imaginings of the male protagonists. The emotive appeal of Sandip's rhetoric is so overpowering that Bimala, all of a sudden, becomes beautiful in her own eyes: "I who before had been of no account now felt in myself the splendour of Bengal itself."¹⁰¹ In her excitement she decides to burn her foreign clothes and dispense with the services of her English governess. Nikhil, who is more open to differences and people of varied cultures, tries in vain to contain her new-found patriotism. Sandip's zeal for the country on the other hand, soon transforms into love for a woman. "Hail Mother" easily slides into "Hail Enchantress".

Tagore, however, underplays the erotic power of nationalism and looks at Sandip and Bimala's relationship on the emotional rather than on the physical plane. The traces of militancy and sexuality in Bimala are transformed into an ideal maternity at the end of the novel, as Bimala becomes a surrogate mother to Amulya. She is eulogised as an embodiment of *Shakti* and attributed the role of inspirer for the extremist struggle. But her participation in the nationalist struggle is limited to non-violent modes of action, which does not entail a drastic violation of the feminine

¹⁰⁰ Contemporary political thinkers make a distinction between patriotism which is good, even indispensable and nationalism which is deplorable. For Mary Dietz, "Patriotism" in T. Ball, J. Farr and R.L.Hanson, eds., *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) patriotism has an admirable history, associated with Republican principles, "love of liberty" and "self-sacrifice for a common cause." Nationalism on the other hand is a more modern concept referring to an uncritical "collective spirit rooted in a sense of national supremacy", associated with warfare and conquest (pp. 178-89). John Schaar, "The Case for Patriotism," in *Legitimacy in the Modern State* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1981) defending patriotism, takes care to dissociate it from "nationalism, patriotism's bloody brother." (p. 285).

¹⁰¹ Tagore, *Ghare-Baire*, pp. 56-7.

image that a violent struggle would have involved. She is, in fact, merely a site on which Sandip and Nikhil are working out their fashioning of the country – “the link between the two forms of patriotism the men represent.”¹⁰²

R.P. Bhaskar describes *Ghare-Baire* as an allegorical novel with “Bimala representing India, Nikhil all that is good and vital in the Indian tradition and Sandip personifying the aggressive, Western-type nationalism.”¹⁰³ Tagore seems to suggest that India may, like Bimala, be hypnotised by the violent forces but ultimately she will understand the inherent strength of Nikhil’s position and will ultimately resort to non-violent means of resistance. In the view of some critics, Jyothindranath’s wife, Kadambari Devi, with whom it is alleged that Rabindranath Tagore was in love or had an affair, inspired the character of Bimala. It is significant that in some of Tagore’s most important novels, *Nastanir*, *Charulata* and of course, *Ghare Baire*, wives fall in love with “talented, spirited poetic figures – men who were sometimes inspired like the young Rabindranath by passionate violent forms of nationalism – thus betraying the trust of their less flamboyant husbands who were equally noble, public- spirited, courageous beings.”¹⁰⁴

One of the most successful ways in which a woman’s sexuality is controlled and disciplined in patriarchal family structures is by confining women within the home and interpellating them into predominantly subordinate and familial subject positions such as daughter, sister, wife and mother. The formation of a new class of educated middle class elite aspiring to hegemony in the late nineteenth and

¹⁰² Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism*, p. 14.

¹⁰³ R.P. Bhaskar, “The Novels of Tagore” in Mahendra Kulasreshta, ed., *The Genius of Tagore: Tagore Centenary Volume Part I* (Hoshiarpur, India: V.V.R. Institute, 1961), p. 100.

¹⁰⁴ Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism*, p. 76.

early twentieth century was deeply linked to this gendering process. In the traditional Bengali Hindu upper caste family, women were restricted to the inner quarters of their home and were expected to cover their faces in front of men who were not members of the family. The rigid observance of this code of *purdah* was a symbol of high social status in Bengali society. Women's confinement in the *zenana* meant not only that women's sexual behaviour was circumscribed, but also that 'other' men were not allowed sexual access to them. Such access would not only impugn the honour of the family and the community but could also sully the purity of the nation. Women are central to reproducing the national collectivity and are also its weakest spot since sexual access to them by an 'outsider' destroys their ability to represent the nation.

Thus male control of women's sexuality and reproductive capacities is an integral part of nationalism. The particular form of cultural identity constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by confining upper caste women to their homes and thus protecting them from pollution was an instrument of class and caste hegemony. The women of the lower castes did not observe *purdah* and, therefore, enjoyed more freedom of movement. Reformers' efforts to improve the condition of the women were also confined to the issues of the upper caste, especially of Brahmin women. The general emancipation of women in the family was neither a part of the liberal nationalist Nikhil's or the intelligentsia's quest nor was it on the agenda of the nineteenth century male writers. Women, in *Gora* and in *Ghare-Baire*, become the subjects of colonial battles. But colonial officials like the Magistrate, or the educated Bengali elite - orthodox Hindus or Brahmos - in *Gora*, and Nikhil and Sandip in *Ghare-Baire*, share very similar language and preconceptions about the significance of women and their proper sphere and duties. Thus, in the nationalist

drive for hegemony, while one can discern a whole range of disparate and mutually contradictory ideologies which may on the surface seem oppositional, they are nonetheless united.

The construction of an ideal *bhadramahila* led to the alienation of upper class women from lower class ones in a manner similar to the alienation of elite leaders from the masses.¹⁰⁵ The construction of an iconic motherhood or wifeness helped to purge the 'others', that is the lower class Hindu women and also women of other communities. In fact, the ideal of the *bhadramahila* constructed during the nationalist era shaped the terms on which women, from the 1920s onwards, were finally allowed participation in the nationalist movement.

Political subjection of Bengal brought forth a new and added sensitivity to the question of bondage, domination and subordination. The subjection of women to male rule at home was obvious and immediately visible. The British equation of Indian civilisation with the status of Indian women further sensitised the urban educated middle-class. In the late nineteenth century, what had passed on for centuries as unquestioned prescription lost its force. Thus liberal husbands, like Nikhil, ask whether men could claim freedom while they enslaved their women. According to Niharranjan Ray, Nikhil is "the new champion of a new ideal of husband and wife relation."¹⁰⁶ He is liberal in his views on women and wants his wife Bimala to come out of *pardah* to "meet reality." He tells Bimala, "if we meet, and

¹⁰⁵ See Sumanta Banerji, "Marginalization of Women's Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal" in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, *Recasting Women* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), p. 127 – 79.

¹⁰⁶ Ray, "Three Novels of Tagore", pp. 234-35.

recognise each other, in the real world, then only will our love be true.”¹⁰⁷ To widen Bimala’s mental horizon and to help her to enter the modern world, Nikhil appoints an English governess, Miss. Gilby, to teach his wife the English language and also English manners. However, it is to be noted as emblematic of the nationalist movement in India and Bengal that Nikhil, a liberal nationalist, is not concerned with the education of his two widowed and uneducated sisters-in-law or about their exposure to the outside world.¹⁰⁸

Bimala is a traditional Hindu wife – “a caged bird” who begins her day by consecrating the dust of her husband’s feet. She is perpetually engaged in enhancing her physical charms to make herself more attractive to her husband. As daughter-in-law, she assumes the important responsibility of running the household and subscribes to the view that she is the custodian of family traditions and it is her primary duty to uphold it and preserve it. She firmly believes that to “surrender one’s pride in devotion is woman’s only salvation.”¹⁰⁹ She has no desire to step out from the domestic sphere. In her words, “I had so much in this cage of mine that there was not room for it in the universe.”¹¹⁰ She clearly tells Nikhil:

If the outside world has gone on so long without me, it may go on for some time longer. It need not pine to death for want of me.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Tagore, *Ghare-Baire*, p. 18.

¹⁰⁸ Although the Bengali original of *Ghare-Baire* portrays two widowed sisters-in-law of Nikhil the English version has retained only one of them.

¹⁰⁹ Tagore, *Ghare-Baire*, p. 14.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Nikhil believes that “man and woman are equal in love because of their equal claim on each other.”¹¹² He is aware of the fact that possession kindles the instinct of brute and true love can never prosper. He is liberal and broadminded in his outlook and brings Bimala out of the *zenana* to meet outsiders. He does not believe in the display of strength to extract devotion from his wife. He knows that only the weak dare not to be just. He is also aware that strength, which is a mere display of masculinity, must have no scruples in treading the weak under foot. He values that kind of love which is “...given out of free will and in the open competition with the outside world and not as an obligation or under duress.”¹¹³ Aware of Bimala’s infatuation with his friend Sandip, Nikhil is troubled but unwilling to confront Bimala. He asks himself:

What is a wife? A bubble of a name blown big with your own breath, so carefully guarded night and day... if Bimala is not mine, she is not; and no fuming or fretting or arguing will serve to prove that she is ...¹¹⁴

Bimala, as a young bride and newcomer within the family, tries to mould herself to become a traditional wife. She enjoys a higher status in the family than her sister-in-law by virtue of Nikhil’s position as head of the family. The *badarani*, that is her widowed, elder sister-in-law on the other hand, is deprived of property rights, excluded from any productive work and debarred from any chance of remarriage. She is doomed to a parasitic existence and looks up to Nikhil for security and acceptance. The family structure in *Ghare-Baire* portrays the contentious relation between existing or emerging ideologies and actual household arrangement. Bimala’s English

¹¹² Ibid., p. 14.

¹¹³ Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 253.

¹¹⁴ Tagore, *Ghare-Baire*, p. 77.

education, wearing of foreign clothes and stepping out of the traditional domestic domain earns her the censure of her sister-in-law. The politics of the household seem to be structured according to the degree of access women have to patriarchal power, accruing from an acceptance of surrogate patriarchal roles, which includes the surveillance of other women. The *badarani* in *Ghare-Baire* for instance, is given the convoluted agency of female incitement. She keeps a close scrutiny on Bimala's mannerisms and movements. She very soon discerns Bimala's infatuation with Sandip comments: "Poor brother Nikhil is paying the penalty of being born too modern."¹¹⁵ The *badarani's* attempt to discipline and maintain a strict surveillance over Bimala produces tension among them leading to petty jealousies and quarrels. Bimala, aware of her important position as the housewife, refuses to accompany Nikhil to Calcutta for his higher studies, as she is afraid that the *badarani* would take charge of the establishment during their absence. She feels that

One ought to stand up for one's rights. To go away and leave everything in the hands of the enemy, could be nothing short of owning defeat.¹¹⁶

The novel depicts that the wives in the family cannot act independently. The *badarani*, being a widow, is under Nikhil's paternal care. She keeps a close watch on Bimala and cautions Nikhil about her misdemeanours. Devoid of any agency she is forced to act through men. The relation between the two sister-in-laws and their looking up to Nikhil, the only man in the family, for approval and acceptance, ensures that in family situations women were only able, if at all, to form an uneasy collectivity.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 84-5.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

¹¹⁷ Biman Bihari Majumdar in *Heroines of Tagore: A Study in the Transformation of Indian Society 1875-1941* (Calcutta: Firma K.L.Mukhopadhyay, 1968) says, "the analysis of Nikhilesh's relation to the Mejo Rani reveals the nature of the poet's relation to Kadambari Devi" (p. 16).

Ghare-Baire, which appeared in a serial form in the literary magazine *Sabuj Patra* marks a total departure from the traditional forms of storytelling. It is built through the awareness of each of the three main characters by the introspective use of the first person singular. Through the female protagonist Bimala, the novelist records the transition of women from their secluded life to national politics. It reveals the tensions and problems caused in the life of a woman who takes part in the national movement. We have, in this novel, for the first time, a woman minutely recording the details of her psychological conflicts. The interiority of the female protagonist, Bimala, is constituted by a tension between individual-private experiences and desires (feelings, emotions, and sentiments) and a universal public reason.

However, while the interior space of the woman or of the human subject is opened up to the documentary gaze of the novelist, love is always depicted as, devoid of desire, struggling with the aid of moral reasoning to avoid any suggestion of physicality. Although the sexual element appears secondary or instrumental in Tagore's novels and also to the aspiration for a national collectivity, it is also basic and structures the idea of national purity, which is ultimately made sexual. The idea of national and ethnic purity is constructed as the one well removed from mixture, that is from contact with other ethnic group(s). Women are seen in this context as property, something very similar to territory and to borders, which should likewise be protected. They actually enact borders and are seen as an instrument to achieve the pure lineage by the nationalist leaders.

In both - *Gora* and *Ghare-Baire*, Tagore suggests that within the national collectivity there are differences in roles corresponding to gender. Sucharita's younger brother is granted the freedom to move from Paresh Babu's house to Binoy's at his will. Sasimukhi, a girl child of the same age, as Satish, is continually discussed

in the course of the novel by Mohim, her father and other elders of the family, in reference to her marriage to Binoy and later to Abinash. She is, however, carefully concealed within the domain of the home. Unlike Satish whose constant chatter earns him the title of “Mr. Chatterbox”, she is static, passive and without a voice. The only glimpse we get of Sasimukhi is when she flees at the sight of Binoy, her prospective husband. While the novelist grants men and boys unrestricted mobility, Sucharita and Lolita have to be chaperoned whenever they go outside the enclosed space of the home. Though the novelist confers on women a special role within the collectively their membership is dependent on prescribed behaviour symbolising an ethnic identity. Thus Lolita’s unescorted steamer-ride throws the whole society into turmoil resulting in a slander campaign and a pamphlet war between the orthodox Hindu youth and the members of the Brahmo Samaj. Later, when Lolita independently decides to marry Binoy, with each of them retaining their religious identities as Brahmo and Hindu respectively, the Brahmo Samaj decides to cancel Lolita’s membership to the Samaj and indulges in slandering her reputation.

Panu Babu on seeing Sucharita follow the Hindu rules of untouchability in an effort to be near her widowed and unhappy aunt Harimohini is perceived as a potential threat to the Brahmo Samaj. As her adoption of Hindu rituals, in spite of being a Brahmo, diffuses the boundary that marks her off from other (Hindu) women, Panu Babu regards both her and Paresh Babu with their liberal and tolerant views and outlook in life, as potential enemies within the Brahmo Samaj. The reliance on notions of shared identity by members of one community (men and women) and difference from those outside it is apparent in the ideology and politics of both the orthodox Hindu society and the Brahmo Samaj.

In the portrayal of his characters, Tagore expresses whatever was ridiculous or false not only in the old religious system but also in the orthodoxy of the new and the 'enlightened' members of the Brahmo Samaj, and the nationalist youth. The novels reveal that everywhere in the world, in different spheres, there is a constant recurrence of the same phenomena. In *Gora*, there is a new tyranny of Brahmos - reformist dissidents from Hindu religion - later substituted by the tyranny of nationalists like Sandip, in *Ghare-Baire*. Haran Babu's dislike of Paresch Babu's tolerant and all-inclusive worldview reveals the effort of most communities to coerce individuals into conformity. Tagore's delineation of the social and cultural concerns of movements for religio-revivalism show how they play a key part in legitimising differences embodied in traditional attitudes and perspectives on family and gender relations. Women, by virtue of their positioning in the private domain, are expected to live and abide by religious norms and their fidelity to religious values becomes the basis for the judgement of community identity as a whole. Thus, Lolita, who transgresses the freedom granted to her by the Brahmo Samaj is criticised and slandered by the members of her own community. Panu Babu to punish her for the steamer incident sees to it that Brahmo girls do not attend the school set up by Lolita and Sucharita. Lolita in frustration, exclaims:

There's no way, then, of atoning for indiscretions in our Samaj, - is that the idea? So I'm to be shut out from all good work in our own community! That's the kind of method you have adopted for my moral uplift and that of the Samaj, is it?¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 229.

Paresh Babu in *Gora* points out how Hindu nationalists (fundamentalists) try to reconstruct a national identity by exclusion on the basis of religion and community identity. It is significant that Gora refuses to hear the name of his father and thereby refuses to acknowledge his sectarian identity. The union of Gora and Sucharita stands for universal love, which knows no barriers of caste, community, race and nation. The marriage of an Indian girl with a European gentleman, which Tagore depicts in *Gora*, was unknown in the Bengali society in the late 1800s.

In *Ghare-Baire*, Tagore offers a perspective on the form anti-imperialism should take in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society like India. His portrayal of Sandip acts as a critique to Bankim's projection of religious militancy as a resolution to the problem of colonialism. He suggests that a nationalism which ignores the unequal sacrifices imposed on the poor and the unprivileged sections of the society and does not acknowledge the differences in social set up will tear apart the social fabric of the country, even if it helps to formally decolonise the country. Nikhil voices Tagore's opinion on nationalism when he states:

I am willing to serve my country; but my worship I reserve for Right which is greater than my country. To worship my country as a god is to bring a curse upon it.¹¹⁹

Similarly, in *Gora*, emphasising the need to break out of the narrow sectarianism imposed by nationalism and the consequent deification of the nation, Paresh Babu advises Sucharita:

¹¹⁹ Tagore, *Ghare-Baire*, p. 26.

Do not lower Him, who is greater than all, before your country or before any one, for that would be neither for your good nor for that of your country.¹²⁰

Gora and *Ghare-Baire* show how forging certain bonds and fracturing or disallowing others is central to the imagining of the nation. They reveal that there have been sharp differences between diverse groups within a 'colonised' population even when they have managed to come together under the banner of anti-colonial or nationalist movements. The novels successfully shift the crucial social divide from that between the colonial and the anti-colonial to that between the elite and the subaltern on the one hand and between the two groups within the elite on the other. The nation thus emerges as a site where the conflicts of class, gender, caste, region and language were played out - a site for the competing and contradictory imaginings of different ideological and political interests.

¹²⁰ Tagore, *Gora*, p. 357.

Conclusion

Nationalism is a love of one's nation and Bankim insists in his novels and essays that it is often a self-sacrificing love. However the dark underside of patriotic love is rooted in fear and hatred of the 'other'. Nationalism, Tagore shows us in his novels cannot be understood without these dark undercurrents. The official history of Indian nationalism as told in school textbooks is the progressive story of the liberation of the people from foreign domination through non-violence and violence against the alien ruler. But a study of Bankim's and Tagore's novels explicitly reveals that there is also a sub-text to this story, a sub-text of partition, of hatred and violence between Hindus and Muslims.

The national narrative in *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* constructs a history of the nation or posits a past as continuous and uninterrupted in an assertion of legitimacy for the practices of the present. The novels, through their narrative of nationalism, also postulate a narrative future, presumably deriving from the nation itself.

A golden past of the Hindus is imagined and glorified in *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* and used as a grid to measure the superiority of indigenous culture in a polluted culture of outsiders. It is quite obvious that the idea of nation or nationalism, which is largely formed on the basis of marking out differences, should end up excluding some groups of people. In differentiating themselves from the colonial rulers, the elite identified itself as Hindu while the Muslims were categorised as the former rulers of Bengal, enabling the nationalists to exclude Muslims from the 'imagined' Hindu nation. Bankim's articulation of nationalism reveals the integrative as well as disruptive aspect of all nationalisms. He questions

and flouts many cherished traditions and belief systems of the past but does not question the conventional wisdom about Muslims. Bankim's conflation of religious devotion and community activism in *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* aroused the suspicion of the minority communities in Bengal, especially the Muslims who constituted a considerable section of the population in Bengal at that time. Bankim's narrowness and intensity of patriotism not only required individuals to be simultaneously 'good believers' and 'good citizens' but also pushed to the periphery the concept of secularism.

Later, sections of the intelligentsia, including Tagore, were required to harness their intellectual resources and creative imagination to demonstrate that the Muslims both in their historical and contemporary settings, were an important component of the Indian reality. In *Ghare-Baire* Tagore shows the activating of communal animosities during the colonial era in Bengal and the inner religio-cultural tensions within the nationalist paradigm. *Anandamath*, on the other hand, calls for individuals to sacrifice themselves for the nation and tries to forge a limited and confrontational solidarity that runs against Tagore's concern for bridging the cross-national frontiers and his ideals of humanity and universal brotherhood. Unified Hindu cultural tradition, Tagore suggests, is a production of modernity and the Hindu-Muslim cultural opposition the outcome of communal politics, rather than its basis.

The divergent positions articulated by Bankim and Tagore highlight that in the Indian context the creation of the Indian past were multiple in number and full of contestations, and the visions envisaged were polarised and antagonistic. While

Bankim, along with other cultural nationalists, recited the narratives of 'imagined' India from a position of dominance, Tagore negates these narratives by offering a perspective on the subaltern classes.

Tagore's novels can be seen as a critique of Bankim's attempts to define the authentic Indian as a male, high-caste Hindu. Gora, the hero of the novel of the same name, reveals the way in which the self is composed of multiple roles and how each of these roles are based on social classifications that may be modified or even abolished. Further, the major as well as the minor characters in *Gora* question Bankim's construction of a unilinear Hinduism. They question the construction of a collective religious Hindu identity among believers and practitioners. They show that Hindu identity is multiple by definition and that India consists of many other religions – Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians, etc.

However, it is clear that the affective bond of the Bengali nationalists was stronger with the nation conceived as Mother Bengal than as Mother India. The Bengalis in all the novels discussed in the preceding chapters do not as yet see themselves as part of a larger whole: they simply append India to themselves. In *Anandamath* or *Devi Chaudhurani* there is no attempt to define the term *desh*, which could refer to either Bengal or India or both. Bankim's *Bande Mataram*, originally conceived as a song of salutation to Bangamata or Mother Bengal, was later offered in the service of the Indian nation.

In Tagore's *Ghare-Baire*, Mother Bengal and Mother India are used as interchangeable terms. Nikhil, the liberal humanist, wants to include the Muslims as participants in nation building but is silent about other regional and

linguistic peoples. In sharp contrast with the protagonists of the other novels, Gora alone has a more inclusive vision of India. A number of major and minor characters in *Gora* reveal a consciousness of a larger national identity beyond the sectarian one projected by nationalists and religious fanatics.

The ideological disposition of nationalism towards its people or its masses is fraught with the same duplicity that characterises its attitude to the women's question. Women figure prominently in Bankim's strategies for nationalist mobilisation, both as victims and agents, symbols and activists. He appeals to men to grant equal rights to women but never exhorts women to rise from their passivity and challenge structures of oppression in the familial or social spheres. He believes that women would have more freedom and liberty if men loosen the chains that enslave them – women cannot and should not break them. Bankim's emphasises on raising the consciousness of men to improve woman's position. He disregards the fact that ultimate emancipation is possible only through the self-activity of women. In *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* the ghettoisation of women within traditionally feminine occupations, even in the militant struggles, reinforces the image of the women as 'other' – nurturing, supportive, affectionate and essential but practically dependent and defenceless. Despite of allowing his women protagonists to move out of the enclosed space of the home, Bankim pushes the narrative to a closure which corrects the deviant female and reinforces the normative code. He sees the public role of women as deviant while suggesting domesticity as the desired goal of all women. But covertly, transgressive women in

his novels are so dynamic that the ideals of ordinary wifehood and domesticity pale in comparison.

In both *Gora* and *Ghare-Baire*, Tagore delineates the transformation in woman's consciousness. Bimala realises her role as an inspirer of revolution and Lolita and Sucharita outgrow their education and upbringing to fight traditional social structures which bind them. Further, unlike Bankim who constitutes the female subject by documenting the external conditions of her life, Tagore presents her internal suffering as well; the way passion may struggle with reason within her to distinguish her as a modern woman. In fact Tagore's novels can be read as an attempt to instal in Bengali fiction the modern subject endowed with interiority. In the widows in Tagore's fiction one can see the expressivist subject clamouring for (self) recognition. To delve into the interior world of the woman, whose innermost feelings were denied recognition by society, was to write the desire for freedom and self-expression into the very structure of the Bengali subject. By doing this Tagore also brought the condition of the women's question within the purview of society in general. Further, he arrives at a modern Bengali and Indian understanding of love as a formation of sentiment that combined recognition of individual desire with the middle-class's need for respectability.

The issue of romantic love was itself a problem in the history of the formation of the democratic subject in a society in which the idea of choosing one's life partner – or of love being an act of self-expression of the subject – went against the norms of social regulation enshrined in the custom of arranged marriages. However, the material as opposed to the spiritual was the concept of Bankim's and

Tagore's concept of marriage. In marriage love was akin to duty, and duty received precedence over everything else. They underplayed the sexual element in love and marriage. While Bankim ensured that his women protagonists in *Anandamath* and *Ghare-Baire* return to their "normal" duties of domesticity after playing their prescribed role in the nationalist movement, Tagore advocates freedom for social activity outside the four walls of the home instead of sexual liberation. But, in a significant development, Tagore attempted to transform women from being an object of reform to a subject with a consciousness of their own.

Tagore's attempt to inscribe women centrally in his narrative of the nation was a radical move, an implicit rejoinder to Bankim's novels in which political praxis demanded the exclusion of women from the sphere of action. In *Gora* and *Ghare-Baire*, Tagore is critical of the deification of woman as the spirit of the country, as happens in Bankim's novels. Such a deification involves a denial of her status as a living human being. Bankim does not offer his heroines any voice to speak for themselves but silences them through his narrativising, but in *Ghare-Baire* the female protagonist, Bimala, records her innermost feelings, tensions and dilemmas minutely.

The 'will be' future in *Anandamath* and *Devi Chaudhurani* posits a 'now' where we are required to see the present as capable of yielding a principle of totalisation whereas Tagore presents the constantly fragmentary and plural nature of 'now' as a problem of 'modernity' and elucidates the impossibility of finding one, single overreaching framework within which to contain the diversity of the populace. His is a voice of dissent in nationalist thought that stressed a federal unity

and cross-communal understanding which was, however, defeated at the moment of the post-colonial transition. The awakening in Bengal did not integrate the Hindu and the Muslim communities, or the *bhadralok* with the rest of the population. Hence, at the beginning of the twentieth century, as Muslims gained access to education and became conscious of their rights which had been pushed to the periphery by the educated Hindu gentry for over half a century, Bengal was torn apart in the decades to come. The insistence of a large section of paranoid Bengali Hindu educated classes on the partition of Bengal resulted in the slicing of the Mother into two and facilitated the Congress high command's acquisition of centralised power. Those who stood for the unity of Bengal till the very end could only lament the denial of opportunity "to work from the bottom and bring into being an Indian Union of our free choice", and the field was left wide open for the Congressmen and Mahasabhites with their matricidal tendencies.¹

¹ Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, eds., *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 69.

Bibliography

Books

- Ahmed, R., *The Bengal Muslims 1871 – 1906*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Agnew, Vijay. ed. *Elite Women in Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Shakti Books, 1986.
- Aghulon, Maurice. *Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789 –1880*. Translated by Janet Lloyd. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections in the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1990.
- Bagal, J.C., ed. *Bankim Rachanavali*. Vol.1,3. Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1969.
- Ball, T.; Farr, J.; and Hanson, R.L., eds. *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Banerjee, Tarasankar. *Various Bengal: Aspects of Modern History*. Calcutta: Ratna Prakasan, 1985.
- Banga, Indu. and Jaidev. eds. *Cultural Reorientation in Modern India*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1996.
- Bhat, Yashoda. ed. *The Image of Woman in Indian Literature*. Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1993.
- Bhabha, Homi K., ed. *Nation and Narration*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Borthwick, Meredith. *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal: 1849-1905*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- Bose, Sisir. ed. *Subhas Chandra Bose. Correspondence, 1924-32*. Calcutta, 1967.
- Bose, Sugata. and Jalal, Ayesha. eds. *Nationalism, Democracy and Development : State and Politics in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Brass, Paul R., *Language, Religion and Politics in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974.
- Broomfield, J.H., *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society : Twentieth century Bengal*. Berkeley : University of California Press, 1969.
- Buch, M.A., *The Rise and Growth of Indian Militant Nationalism*. Baroda: Good Companions, 1940.

- Charles, Nickie and Hintjens, Helen. eds. *Gender, Ethnicity and Political Ideologies*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Chartier, Roger. ed. *A History of Privet Life: Passions of the Renaissance*. Massachussets: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Chatterjee, Bhabatosh. ed. *Bankimchandra Chatterjee: Essays in Perspective*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1994.
- Chatterjee, Lola. ed. *Women, Image, Text: Feminist Readings of Literary Texts*. New Delhi: Trianka, 1986.
- Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* London: Zed Press, 1986.
- _____ and Pandey, Gyanendra. eds. *Subaltern Studies, Writings on South Asian History and Society*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992. Vol. VIII.
- _____ *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Chattopadhyay, Bankimchandra. *Devi Chaudhurani*. Translated by Subodh Chunder Mitter. Calcutta: Chuckerrverty and Co., 1946.
- _____ *Anandamath*. Translated by Basant Kumar Ray. Delhi: Vision Books, 1992.
- Das, Matilal. *Bankimchandra: Prophet of the Indian Renaissance; His Life and Art*. Calcutta: D.M.Library, 1938.
- Das, Sisir Kumar. *The Artist in Chains: The Life of Bankimchandra Chatterjee*. New Delhi : New Statesman Publishing Company, 1984.
- Das, Veena. ed. *The Word and the World*. New Delhi: Sage, 1986.
- Davis, Mervin. *Rank and Rivalry: The Politics of Inequality in Rural West Bengal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Desai. A. R., *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*. Bombay, Popular Book Depot, 1984.
- Enloe, Cynthia. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkely: University of California Press, 1989.
- Gay, Peter. *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*. Vol. I. New York: Oxford University Press, 1894.

- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1983.
- Ghosh, Aurobindo. ed. *Essays on the Gita*. Pondicherry: Aurobindo Ashram, 1970.
- Ghosh, J.C., *Bengali Literature*. London: Clarendon Press, 1948.
- Gordon, Leonard A., *Bengal: The Nationalist Movement, 1876-1940*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974.
- Haldar, M.K., Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay: Renaissance and Reaction in the Nineteenth Century Bengal. Calcutta: Minerva Association, 1977.
- Haq, Jalalul. *Nation and Nation-Worship in India*. New Delhi: Genuine Publications Private Limited, 1992.
- Hasan, Mushirul. *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1916 – 28*. Delhi: Manohar, 1979.
- Hasan, Zoya. ed. *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State*. Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994.
- Hayes, Carlton J. H., *Essays on Nationalism*. New York: Macmillan, 1960.
- Heimsath, Charles H., *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. J., and Ranger, Terence. eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- _____. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Horton, John and Boumeister, Andrea T., eds. *Literature and the Political Imagination*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Hutchinson, J., and Smith, Anthony D., eds. *Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Isaksson, Eva. ed. *Women in the Military System*. New York: Harvester Wheatshaf, 1988.
- Issacs, Harold. *Idols of the Tribe*. New York, Harper and Row, 1975.
- Janeway, Elizabeth. *Man's World, Women's Place: A Study in Social Mythology*. New York: Delta Books, 1971

- Jayawardene, Kumari and de Alwis, Malathi, eds. *Embodied Violence: Communalising Women's Sexuality in South Asia*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996
- Kaviraj, Sudipta. *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Khan, Nighat Said; Saigal, Rubina; and Zia, Afiya Shehrbano. eds. *Locating the Self : Perspectives on Women and Multiple Identities*. Lahore: ASR Publications, 1994.
- Kopf, David. *The Brahma Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Kripalani, Krishna. *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Kulasreshta, Mahendra. ed. *The Genius of Tagore: Tagore Centenary Volume*. Part I Hoshiarpur, India: V.V.R. Institute, 1961.
- Leslie, Julia. ed. *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*. London: Pinter Publishers, 1991.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism, Postcolonialism*, London: Routledge, 1998.
- Ludden, David. ed. *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Majumdar, Biman Bihari. *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*. Calcutta: Firma K.L.Mukhopadhyay, 1967
-
- Heroines of Tagore: A Study in the Transformation of Indian Society, 1875-1941*. Calcutta: Firma K.L.Mukhopadhyay, 1968.
- Malik, Yogendra K., and Singh, V.B., *Hindu Nationalists in India: The Rise of BJP*. New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1994.
- Minogue, K. R., *Nationalism*. New York: Basic Books, 1967
- Moghadam, Valentine M., ed. *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994.
- Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.

- Mukherjee S.N., and Maddern, M., eds. and trans. *Bankimchandra Chatterjee Sociological Essays: Utilitarianism and Positivism in Bengal*. Calcutta: Riddhi-India, 1986.
- Murshid, Ghulam. *Reluctant Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization, 1849 – 1905*. Rajshahi: Rajshahi University Press, 1983.
- Nandy, Ashis. *At the Edge of Pscychology: Essays in Politics and Culture*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- _____ *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of the Self under Colonialism*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- _____ *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- _____ *The Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Narvane, V.S., *An Introduction to Rabindranath Tagore*. Delhi: Macmillan, 1997.
- Nathanson, Stephen. *Patriotism, Morality, and Peace*. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1993.
- Parker, Andrew et al. *Nationalisms and Sexualities*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Purohit, B. R., *Hindu Revivalism and Indian Nationalism*. Sagar: Sathi Prakashan, 1965.
- Raj, G.V., *Tagore the Novelist*. New Delhi: Sterling, 1983.
- Ram, P. R., ed. *Secular Challenge to Communal Politics: A Reader*. Mumbai: Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, 1981.
- Ranjit Guha. ed. *Subaltern Studies VI: Writings on South Asian History and Society*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Raychaudhuri, Tapan. *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Ray, Bharati. ed. *From the Seams of History: Essays on Indian Women*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Ray, Rajat Kanta. ed. *Mind, Body and Society: Life and Mentality in Colonial Bengal*. Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Ringrose, M., and Lerner, A. J., *Reimagining the Nation*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1993.

- Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Rossi, Alice S., ed. *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir* New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books, 1995.
- Sangari, Kumkum. and Vaid, Sudesh. eds. *Recasting Women; Essays in Colonial History*. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989.
- Sarada, M., *Rabindranath Tagore: A study of Women Characters in His Novels*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1998.
- Sarkar, Chandiprasad. *The Bengali Muslims : A Study in their Politicisation*. Calcutta and New Delhi : K. P. Bagchi & Co., 1991.
- Sarkar, Tanika. and Butalia, Urvashi. eds. *Women and the Hindu Right: A Collection of Essays*. New Delhi: Kali, 1995.
- Sarkar, Sumit. *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal: 1903-1908*. Delhi: Peoples Publishing House, 1973
- Satyamurthy, T. V., ed. *Social Change and Political Discourse in India: Structures of Power, Movements of Resistance, Vol. 3*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Schaar, John. ed. *Legitimacy in the Modern State*. New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1981.
- Seal, Anil. *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Late 19th Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Sen, Sachin. *The Political Thought of Tagore*. Calcutta: General Printers, 1947.
- Shafer, Boyd C., *Faces of Nationalism: New Realities and Old Myths*. New York: Harcourt Brave Jovanovich Inc., 1972.
- Shekar, Rukmini. ed. *Making a Difference – A Collection of Essays*. New Delhi : Spic Macay Publication, 1998.
- Sigmund, Paul E. Jr., *The Ideologies of the Developing Nations*. New York: Praeger, 1963.
- Singh, Karan. *Prophet of Indian Nationalism: A Study of the Political thought of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh 1893 – 1910*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1963.

- Sinha, Mrinalini. "Colonial Politics and the Ideal of the Masculinity." *The Third National Conference of Women's Studies*. Chandigarh: Indian Association of Women Studies, 1986.
- Smith, Anthony D. *Theories of Nationalism*. London: Duckworth, 1971.
- _____. *National Identity*. London: Penguin Books, 1991.
- Smith, W. R., *Nationalism and Reform in India*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930.
- Soares, Anthony X., ed. *Lectures and Addresses by Rabindranath Tagore*. London: Macmillan, 1936.
- Southard, Barbara. *The Women's Movement and Colonial Politics in Bengal: The Quest for Political Rights, Education and Social Reform Legislation, 1921-36*. New Delhi: Manohar Publisher, 1995.
- Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.
- Sunder Rajan, Rajeshwari. *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Snyder, Louis. ed. *The New Nationalism*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1968.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. *Ghare-Baire*. Translated by Surendranath Tagore. *The Home and the World*. Madras: Macmillan, 1919.
- _____. *Gora*. Translated by W.W. Pearson. Madras: Macmillan, 1924.
- _____. *Nationalism*. London: Macmillan, 1950.
- _____. *Sadhana*. London: Macmillan, 1964.
- _____. *Gora*. Translated by Sujit Mukherji. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1997.
- Vidyanidhi, J.C. Roy. *Puja-Parban*. Calcutta: Viswa-Bharati, 1951.
- Ward, Barbara. *Nation and Ideology*. New York: Norton, 1960.
- Wiener, Philip ed. *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974. Vol. 3.
- Zacharias, H.C.E., *Renascent India*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1933.

Zepp, Jr., Ira G., ed. *Rabindranath Tagore: American Interpretations*. Calcutta: A Writers Workshop Publication, 1981.

Articles

Ahmed, Aijaz. "Nation, Community, Violence." *South Asia Bulletin : Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 14 (1994) : 24-32.

Bagchi, Jasodhara. "Representing Nationalism: Ideology of Motherhood in Colonial Bengal." *Economic and Political Weekly* (20-27 October 1990) : ws-65 – 74.

"Socializing the Girl Child in Colonial Bengal." *Economic and Political Weekly* (9 October 1993): 2214- 219.

Boehmer, E., "Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa." *NASTA* (1991)

Chatterjee, Kalyan Kr., "Incognitos and Secret Sharers: Patterns of Identity, Tagore, Kipling and Foster." *Indian Literature*, no. 131 (May-June 1989): 11 – 130.

Ganesh, Kamala. "Mother Who is not a Mother: In Search of the Great Indian Goddess." *Economic and Political Weekly* (20-27 October 1990): ws-58 – 64.

Kabir, Humayun. "Tagore Was No Obscurantist." *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, Tagore Birth Centenary Number (1961), p. 125.

Kandiyoti, Deniz. "Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation." *Journal of International Studies* 20 (1991): 429-43.

Mahalanobis, P.C., "The Growth of Visva-Bharati." *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (April 1928): 79.

Majumdar, Biman Bihari. "The Anandamath and Phadke." *The Journal of Indian History* XLIV, (April 1966) : 95-6.

McClintock, Anne. "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family." *Feminist Review* 44 (Summer 1993): 62-80.

Nandy, Ashis. "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance." *Alternatives: Social Transformation and Human Governance* XIII (January 1988): 171-94.

Ray, Niharranjan. "Three Novels of Tagore" in *Indian Literature- Tagore Number*, Vol. 4, (1961) : 172.

Sarkar, Tanika "Nationalist Iconography: Image of Women in 19th Century Bengali Literature." *Economic and Political Weekly* (21 November 1987) : 2012.-15.

_____ "Reflections on Birati Rape Cases: Gender Ideology in Bengal." *Economic and Political Weekly* (2 February 1991): 215-18.

_____ "The Woman as Communal Subject; Rashtrasevika Samiti and Ramjanmabhoomi Movement." *Economic and Political Weekly* (31 August 1991): 2057.-62.

_____ "Bankimchandra and the Impossibility of a Political Agenda," *The Oxford Literary Review* 16 (1994): 177 - 204.

_____ "Imagining a Hindu Nation: Hindu and Muslim in Bankimchandra's Later Writings." *Economic and Political Weekly* (24 September 1994): 2553-61.

Tangri, S., "Intellectuals and Society in the Nineteenth Century." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3 (1961): 368-94.

Thapar, Romila. "Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity." *Modern Asian Studies* XXIII, (year): 222-24.