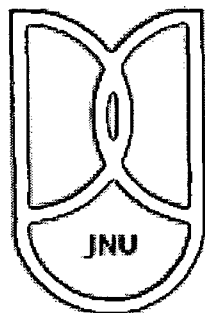


**REPRESENTATIONS OF HINDUS AND MUSLIMS IN
THE NOVELS OF BANKIM CHANDRA
CHATTERJEE**

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

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled, '**Representations Of Hindus And Muslims In The Novels Of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee**', submitted in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this university is my original work and has not been previously submitted, in part or full, for the award of any other degree of this or of any other university.

Ranjana Das
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*This dissertation is dedicated to
my parents and
'an old friend', Late Shri Ganesh Karmakar*

Acknowledgement

Writing this dissertation has been an enlightening experience that has fundamentally enriched my intellectual thought processes. But for the support and enthusiasm from persons who had helped in my research process, I would have never been able to complete my research work.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Bhagwan Josh, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, who suggested this topic to me and thoroughly guided me. His understanding of the subject and his critical analysis of my work has enabled me to explore the theme better. This dissertation would not have been complete without his constant guidance, encouragement and support.

I thank my parents, Shri Himansu Ranjan Das and Smt. Prava Das, for their support and enthusiasm that has enabled me to reach such a stage of learning. Their emotional support has always been a ray of hope for me during hard times. I thank my elder sister, Ruchira, for her enthusiasm in my academic pursuits.

I thank Mr. Vikas Pathak for his critical appraisals, opinions and insightful suggestions that have more often than not helped me evaluate myself and often led me to indulge in fundamental questions that duly broadened my research perspectives. I thank Krishanu for his steady support and assistance.

I am thankful to my friends, Jigyasa, Rachna, Apneet and Kavitha, for their constant support during the course of my research work.

Finally, I thank the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme for providing me sufficient financial assistance for this dissertation.

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INTRODUCTION

I

A significant preoccupation in the novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, which happens to be a recurrent motif especially in his later novels, is a thematic representation of the Hindus and the Muslims as two inherently differentiated categories. The ‘*differentials*’ between the two communities have been enunciated through significant nuances in different contexts depending on the novel’s historical background and the conceptual framework within which the author intends to operate. The notion of ‘*difference*’ between the two communities remains a central concern with Bankim but the manner of its treatment broadens only gradually with due intensification. There is a persistent vision of Hindu-Muslim difference broadening to overt and absolute confrontation and a certain Hindu empowerment through the defeat of the Muslim. However, it is important to point out that Bankim Chandra Chatterjee is largely associated with the first efforts of nationalist imaginations. He made an indigenous effort to reconstruct the historical past; to carve out an ‘*ideal man*’ representing in himself the requirements of both tradition and modernity; to deify the land itself as the ‘*Mother*’ and the ideal man committed to the tasks of regenerating the Motherland. This was certainly a novel idea and it went a long way to inspire many young Indian nationalists.

The juxtaposition of notions of differences and oppositions between the two major communities inhabiting common land, with the burgeoning concepts of nationhood remains an interesting issue in terms of exploring the development of the entire paradigm in the novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. The dissertation seeks to locate the paradigm of this difference in terms of critical *cultural* differences and how it contributed to the aspects of indigenous identity formations, defining the community and conceptualizing the nation.

II

UNDERSTANDING THE NOVELS OF BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJEE

The period, nineteenth century in Bengal, provides an interesting area of exploration in terms of the intellectual developments that took place, which were centrally concerned with the ideas of self-awareness and self-representation. The quest for the Indian past and development of indigenous language by the nineteenth century Bengali intellectuals has been more often than not linked with the question of power.¹ Ranajit Guha argues that the development of indigenous language, '*matribhasha*' was intrinsically related to a certain self-consciousness. A significant by product of colonial education was development of Bengali prose and the possibility it created for the production of a modern and

¹ See Ranajit Guha, 1988, *An Indian Historiography of India: A nineteenth Century Agenda and its Implications*, Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi and Company

autonomous Indian historiography. Guha says that Bankim Chandra Chatterjee had pointed out that the inadequacy of anglophone historiography could be overcome by replacing it with Bengali, which inevitably led to a second terrain of thought that there was a special relationship between the Indian past and an indigenous language that made the latter more competent and sensitive towards writing Indian history. Ranajit Guha quotes Bankim from his writings in *Bangadarshan* of 1880:

Bengal must have her own history. Otherwise there is no hope for Bengal.

Who is to write it?

*You have to write it. I have to write it. All of us have to write it. Anyone who is a Bengali has to write it...*²

This, however, more importantly, involved the question of power. The system of education facilitated by the colonialist project of Enlightenment on the surface had an inherent sense of 'authority' attached to it. To teach Indians of their inevitable and useful subjection was to argue from the pedestal of 'power', meant to educate the colonized to interpret the past not in terms of their own interest, but those of the colonizers- it served the project of imperial dominance and prevented any possibility of the usage of their past by the subject people as a site whereupon they could assert their own identity. The development of modern Bengali prose was, therefore, a necessary condition for an autonomous view of the Indian past. Since the colonial rulers appropriated the Indian past

² Ranajit Guha, op.cit., p.1, Guha has adapted the text from Bankim Rachanavali, vol.2.

to serve the purposes of imperialist dominance, its reclamation by natives could only be achieved by '*expropriating the expropriators*'.³

Self-assertion at the intellectual level was stimulated by the notion that the Indians had been under a long period of subjection, a thought which substantially perturbed the English educated middle classes in colonial Bengal. On one hand there was an effort to construct an '*autonomous*' discourse asserting indigenous identity, but on the other hand they remained within colonially imposed boundaries and their thoughts remained mediated by colonial concepts of evaluation.⁴ The fact that modern Bengali prose as an instrument for autonomous indigenous discourse was only an emulation of English prose and that the insight for historical thinking was also a derivation from the West seeks to explain the internal whirlpools of the nineteenth century intellectual climate. Nevertheless, the onus to define themselves and determine their historical background against the colonial stereotype was in itself an idea that was certainly indigenous in its origination and the independent Indian categories of representation had to be brought in. Partha Chatterjee argues that the first efforts of nationalist imaginations were made in the *spiritual-cultural* domain which represented the essential marks of an indigenous cultural identity and which had to be preserved and protected from Western influences and encroachments. It was in this inner, spiritual domain that nationalism launched its most powerful, creative and historically significant project, namely to fashion a modern

³ Ranajit Guha, op.cit.

⁴ See Indira Chowdhury, 2001, *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal*, New Delhi: OUP. Chowdhury has elaborately discussed the issue in her book.

national culture that is nevertheless not Western.⁵ Literature was an intrinsic and inherent part of this domain and was more often than not involved in the tasks of historical thinking. Sudipto Kaviraj says that the task of imagining a nation has great implications for the project of history-writing, conferring on a possible community a common welding history, a narrative of unity. History is essentially a way of talking about the collective self, and bringing it into existence.⁶ Fictions based on historical themes and narrating stories out of historical events are in this sense a continuation of history, uttering what mere factual history could not.⁷ Novels had a deep internal relation to historical work, for they pronounced and depicted the same ideas, with a difference in manner or style. They tried to spell, as much as serious history sought to do, a self-respecting relation with the community's past.⁸

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was an icon in the realm of nineteenth century intellectual processes, engaged in the project of identity formations and self-representations. He sought an integral relation between fictional writings and historical sensibility. Sudipto

⁵ Partha Chatterjee, 1995, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post Colonial Histories*, Delhi: OUP. Partha Chatterjee seeks to define the nature of anti-Colonial, nationalist resistance in terms of a difference and not an identity with the modular forms of the national society propagated by the modern West. He defers from the conventional representation of nationalism as a political movement much too literally and rather conceptualizes it in terms of its own creative domain of sovereignty within the colonial society, well before it begins its political struggle. He takes up the material-spiritual domain syndrome and explains: the material is the outer domain, of economy, statecrafts, science and technology, in which the West had proved its superiority. In this domain the aspects of Western superiority had to be acknowledged and emulated by the East. The spiritual on the other hand, was the inner domain which represented the indigenous cultural characteristics and which had to be protected from Western encroachments. And it was in here that nationalism essentially made its beginning and asserted its difference from the Euro-centric vision.

⁶ Sudipto Kaviraj, 1995, *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankim Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India*, Delhi: OUP, p.131.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.111

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.111

Kaviraj says that like most of his contemporaries, Bankim had also begun in a curiosity about the empirical past, driven no doubt by the belief that it was uncivilized to live without knowledge of the past. The factual history that Bankim initially sought was out of an immediate consciousness of the group, or the people who faced the British in a colonial situation, and needed an intellectual solution for their indignity and state of subjection. A history was therefore required for the Bengalis. But it was not in the ontological sense of history, which the Bengalis surely had. Rather, what was required was a stimulating account; they did not lack events in their past, but a narrative to put some significant order into them.⁹ This was certainly a strong proposition that sought to establish a '*connection*' between narrative and collective identity. Fictions based on historical themes adequately served such purposes. British historians had earlier written histories of India but they had narrativized them in a manner that upheld European superiority. The Indian authors on the other hand, attempted a very different history- in its manner, aims and even its object. They attempted to write a history '*not externally but internally, through the process of making an India that was not there.*'¹⁰ Perhaps for the first time in Bengali literature, Bankim converted a neutral territory, a profane space, into a sacred ground of a community. Again, this sacred ground turns into the feminine symbol of sustenance, the Mother, the virulent goddess from the Hindu tradition. With all her feminine qualities and maternal instincts, she is also extremely violent and stimulating, both vulnerable and invincible when it comes to inspire a battle against the

⁹ Sudipta Kaviraj, op.cit., pp.124-125.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.114.

enemies. This is perhaps an extremely powerful imagery when it comes to evoke national consciousness, where the land itself is sanctified!

The mechanism of 'narrative' as a vital organ of fictional writings and its usage in the domain of historical thinking, in terms of invoking a historical background and historical characters to a certain extent and concocting an inspiring story out of it, provided Bankim a rhetoric for the present and the future. However, the constitutional basis and the character of this historio-literary space so created and configured by Bankim remains a pertinent area of enquiry and it also underlines the fundamental purpose of this dissertation. If indigenous history was to be valorized so that a collective identity and a coherent community could be consolidated on its basis, then what were to be the criteria of any such historical reconstruction if it had to be developed into a 'narrative'? Partha Chatterjee points out that Bankim's explanation of the subjection of India was not in terms of material or physical incapacities but in terms of 'culture'- cultural ineptitude to prevent invasions and assimilations against a whole series of Muslim conquests, culminating in the establishment of British rule. Chatterjee argues that according to Bankim, this cultural ineptitude as a major reason for India's subjection was due to the Hindu attitude towards power based on the philosophy of 'vairagya'.¹¹ For Bankim, certain cultural values were more advantageous than others in the real-political world of

¹¹ Partha Chatterjee, 1986, 'The Moment of Departure: Culture and Power in the Thought of Bankimchandra' in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, New Delhi: OUP, p.56. Chatterjee quotes Bankim's argument in his essay, 'Sankhya Philosophy' :

The present state of the Hindus is product of this excessive Other worldliness...Our second most important characteristic- fatalism -is yet another form of this Other-worldliness derived from the Sankhya. It is because of this Other-worldliness and fatalism that in spite of the immense physical prowess of the Indians, this land of the Aryans had come under Muslim rule. And it is for the same reason that Indian remains a subject country till this day...¹¹

power relationships. Those which were advantageous implied a certain rational evaluation of the importance of power in material life and other cultures, and those which did not make any such rational evaluation were thrown into a state of subjection. Partha Chatterjee argues that Bankim's critique of the state of religious beliefs in India during its period of subjection, and perhaps also the period of decline beginning a few centuries before its actual subjection, was thus, founded on a specific conception of the relation between 'culture' and 'power'. He interpreted power or the lack of it as '*a social phenomenon*', which was based on four critical components- enterprise, solidarity, courage and perseverance. According to Bankim, Bengalis as a people have always lacked them, which explain their general state of powerlessness. But these are '*cultural attributes*' than can be acquired. Partha Chatterjee explains that for the cultural ineptitude that Bankim had pointed out, his resolution for the lack of it was in cultural terms as well: to counter-pose the material superiority of the West with the East's spiritual aspect of culture. This moment of departure formed the substratum of a national-cultural project that embarked upon a necessary cultivation of the concepts of '*dharma*', '*anusilan*' and '*bhakti*'.

In Dharmatattva or The Theory of Religion, in the form of a dialogue between a teacher and his pupil, Bankim argued his concept of 'anusilan' or practise. Anusilan, he said was a '*system of culture*' more complete and more perfect than the Western concept of culture. While the Western concept was agnostic and hence incomplete, anusilan was based on the notion of 'bhakti', which in turn implied the unity of knowledge and duty. Mere knowledge would not create bhakti, for that knowledge would have to be united

with duty. Duty meant the performance of acts without the expectation of reward and this non-possessive, non-utilitarian concept of duty formed the core of 'dharma' or religion. Thus, a mere Western emulation in terms of a rationalist doctrine of power was not wholly sufficient; it had to be necessarily combined with a comprehensive ethical ideal and a moral project of national regeneration, something which he depicted in Krishnacharitra.¹² An excerpt from the novel, Anandamath written in 1882, intrinsically addresses Bankim's idea of commitment or 'bhakti':

Amidst an extremely vast and dense forest with absolute darkness on all sides and a heavy silence that compounded the darkness, suddenly a human voice bursts out saying, "shall I ever attain my heart's desire?" Another voice reciprocated inquiringly, "what can you sacrifice to win your heart's desire?" "My life itself!" was the reply. "Life itself 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.¹³

Notions of cultural ideals which maintained and highlighted what was thought to be distinctively Indian, remained central to Bankim's project of self-representation. And significant attributes therefrom, largely valorized and popularized by Bankim, were also upheld in his novels. The concepts of devotion, commitment and such other attributes

¹² Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, p.66

¹³ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 1992, *Anandamath*, Translated by Basanta Kumar Roy, New Delhi: Vision Books. It is a translation of the novel's prologue.

were characterized in the 'heroes' incumbent with the tasks of defending the community or the Motherland. Bankim's novels were no passive arenas; rather they were extremely active and aggressive arenas which sought to make a statement about how the Hindu community and 'culture' was to be protected from further degeneration, to be resurrected to its purity and utility and were required to be preserved.

In defining the cultural attributes that need to be acquired, Bankim brings in the 'Hindu' and the Hindu religion more specifically and emphatically. The acquisition of relevant cultural attributes that could prevent a state of subjection and enable regeneration was discussed in the context of Hinduism. To quote Bankim from his Letters on Hinduism, Letter II:

*Hinduism is in need of a reformation; - not an unprecedented necessity for an ancient religion. But reformed and purified, it may stand forth before the world as the noblest system of individual and social culture available to the Hindu even in this age of progress. I have certainly no serious hope of progress in India except in Hinduism- in Hinduism reformed, regenerated and purified. To such reformation, it is by no means necessary that we should revert, like the late Dayanand Saraswati to old and archaic types. That which was suited to people who lived three thousand years ago, may not be suited to the present and future generations. Principles are immutable but the modes of their application vary according to time, to circumstances.*¹⁴

¹⁴ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 1940, 'Letters On Hinduism', in Brajendra Nath Banerji and Sajani Kanta Das (eds.), *Centenary Edition*, Calcutta: Prabashi Press, letter II, p.12

Unlike the early reformists, Bankim pointed out that the remedy for cultural deficiencies or backwardness lay not in reform, but in total regeneration of national culture, or as he preferred to call it national religion, embodying in itself a combination of both the worldly material and spiritual values.

Partha Chatterjee raises the question as to why Bankim's national religion regenerated to its utilitarian prospects was to be based on the planks of purified 'Hindu' ideals, for Hinduism was not the only religion practised in India and in Bengal, Bankim's home province, more than half the population was Muslim. However, Chatterjee himself proceeds to seek an answer in Bankim's faith in Hinduism as a viable cultural basis for the convergence of the national and the popular.¹⁵ It was practised in some form or the other by the majority of people for India as a whole. He accepted that there were innumerable differences in the religious beliefs and practises of groups of people who were generally called Hindu. And yet, they shared some commonality that made them fundamentally different from the other religious systems- they all came from a common source and therefore held many doctrines in common and secondly, they were supported by sacred scriptures in Sanskrit or in some other language that originated from Sanskrit. But the most significant point of emphasis for Hinduism was Bankim's faith in the reformed and regenerated religion detached from its '*non-essential adjuncts*'¹⁶ which contained the potential for unifying within a single national culture the vast majority of

¹⁵ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, p.75

¹⁶ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Letters on Hinduism*, letter II, p.12. Bankim explains these as the superstitions and other such absurdities which may be called popular delusions that have encrusted Hinduism and which tends to subvert its higher purposes.

the inhabitants of India, a possibility he could not locate with his understanding of Islam.¹⁷

Bankim locates his novels on the Hindu-Muslim themes in the medieval and early modern period. The span of seven centuries of Hindu subjection created the space for the entry of the 'Muslim' in Bankim's discourse. Tanika Sarkar points out that Bankim bestowed on the Muslim an unusual visibility, a quite unprecedented centrality in his historical and political scheme, thereby starting a tradition.¹⁸ Bankim saw the Muslim as the historical and political adversary of the Hindu. The cultural attributes which Bankim wished to incorporate in a regenerated Hindu in a particular historical setting such that the historical wrongs can be pointed out and the '*tendentious*' loops in the available histories can be highlighted, inevitably portrayed Muslims as the historical opponents. The 'culture' that Bankim wished to valorize and portray in his protagonists differentiated them in a fundamental sense from the Musalman or '*Yavan*' systems of culture. A general concept of Hindu-Muslim contest runs common in his novels on such themes, wherein, the Hindu emerges as the undoubted 'hero'; be it in the sense of protecting female honour, as the object of transgressive emotions or as the redeemer of the Hindu '*rajya*'.

¹⁷ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, p.77

¹⁸ Tanika Sarkar, 1991, Bankimchandra and the Impossibility of a Political Agenda: A Predicament for Nineteenth Century Bengal, *Occasional Papers on History and Society*, New Delhi: NMML, second series, XL, p.28. This paper has been published in her book, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism*, Delhi: Permanent Black

III

The Indian Renaissance which occurred first in Bengal with the advent of the English in the aftermath of Plassey was in a fundamental sense different from its European counterpart. It was more a movement of discovery rather than rediscovery; it was '*nascence*' rather than 're-nascence'.¹⁹ The leaders of the Indian Renaissance were more Western in their intellectual outlook and belief. They did not seek the seeds of humanism in ancient literature of the land but in the new learning they sought to import from the West. Raja Rammohan Roy, the first and a great exponent of the Renaissance had more faith in Western science and philosophy than Sanskrit learning which he said was calculated to "*load the minds of youths with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or to the society.*"²⁰

With dissipation of the initial phase of the Renaissance, which apparently coincided with the racist government policies following the suppression of the 1857 revolt (the Lytton policies and the Illbert Bill agitation), an escalating '*Anglicism*', thoroughly Westernized and extremely loyalist, received a set back. The decline of the Brahma Samaj, around 1870s also created an intellectual vacuum for those who were willing to separate the

¹⁹ Subodh Chandra Sen Gupta, 1958, 'Bankim Chandra Chatterjee' in Atul Chandra Gupta (ed.), *Studies in Bengal Renaissance: In Commemoration of the Birth Centenary of Bipin Chandra Pal*, Jadavpur: The National Council of Education, p.68

²⁰ Ibid., p. 68

essence of Hinduism from mere ritual and rather realize it in its true dynamic aspect.²¹ Thus, an urge for self-discovery together with an intellectual reassessment was gradually taking a concrete shape. Amiya Sen in fact suggests that the trend was towards an acceptance of the traditions not simply as a cumulative experience but also through skillful analysis '*using modern tools of analysis and communication*'.²² Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, born in 1838, five years after the death of Rammohan Roy, was the greatest figure of the second phase of the Bengal Renaissance just as Rammohan Roy was of the first. This phase actively involved a looking back at the country's past heritage. However, it was more comprehensive as a movement as it did not indulge in mere resurrection of ancient learning. It aimed at a synthesis between the East and the West and also at interpreting the ancient scriptures from a rational and humanist point of view.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was a romantic and a humanist. His novels and other prose writings seek to celebrate human life in its entirety. His novels magnificently indulge in portraiture of human characters with subtlety and splendor. They deal with emotional whirlpools and complexities of human nature juxtaposed with social concerns and boundaries. They highlight human culture. Bankim was highly inspired by the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott. His expressive descriptions enabled the reader to feel more sharply the aroma of the historical past. The details that the Musalman chroniclers or the British travellers had missed out, either due to tendentiousness or partiality or for any

²¹ Amiya P. Sen, 1993, *Hindu Revivalism in Bengal (1872-1905): Some Essays in Interpretation*, New Delhi: OUP, p.85.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

other reason, were successfully accomplished by Bankim, mobilizing for this purpose his qualities as a writer-historian and writer-novelist.²³ Jasodhara Bagchi discusses Bankim's idea of representing womanhood in his novels.²⁴ The female characters occupy a certain centrality in Bankim's humanistic concerns. With all his traditionalism, Bankim subscribes to the refined Victorian ideal of womanhood, which has two faces: the partner in marriage, conceived as a '*sahadharmini*', and the other as the temptress. In these two roles she makes and breaks homes as well as polity in the social and historical novels of Bankim. In his later novels however, this stereotype takes a distinctive turn. Throughout the later phase of his fictional writings, when Bankim became preoccupied with preservation of Hindu order, he also gave a similar centrality to his women characters. They defied the normal gestures of femininity and emerged at par with the male protagonists to join the resistance against the crisis in order. Kalyani in *Anandamath* is the wife of Mahendra Sinha, a rich man in the village of Padachina. She is committed to her husband but she becomes the temptress for Bhabananda, an ascetic of *Anandamath* who happens to rescue her. Shanti, the other woman, who is the wife of Jibananda, emerges out of traditional domesticity to join her husband in his acts to save the Motherland. In a nuanced manner she emerges as the real '*sahadharmini*', her husband's partner in his tasks of defending the religion and the land. Sree in *Sitaram* represents the three roles in herself at different times. She is the forsaken wife of Sitaram who inspires and instigates him to fight the enemies; again she becomes the temptress for him and; in

²³ Vera Novikova, 1976, *Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya: His Life and Works*, Calcutta: National Publishers, pp.188-189

²⁴ Jasodhara Bagchi, 2000, 'Positivism and Nationalism Womanhood and Crisis in Nationalist Fiction Bankimchandra's *Anandamath*' in Alice Thorner and Maithreyi Krishnaraj (eds.), *Ideals, Images and Real Lives: Women Literature and History*, New Delhi: Orient Longman

the end she joins him for the war. The human characters and the complications in their manifestations vis-à-vis each other and with the society at large are magnificently brought out by Bankim in his novels.

Jasodhara Bagchi points out that Bankim's art of novel writing owed a great deal to his pervasive social concerns born out of a deep sense of historicism on one hand and an emphatic search for individual selfhood on the other. The project made him the father of Indian nationalism, for nationalists like, Aurobindo Ghosh, called him '*rishi*' and hailed him for his ingenious ideas and imageries to inspire people for the country's salvation. Bankim had given him and the other nationalists the descriptive vision of the '*Mother*' holding trenchant steel in her twice seventy million hands and not the bowl of a mendicant. He had infused the '*religion of patriotism*' in the society through his works. He had perceived and expressed the vitality of moral strength based on complete sacrifice for the country and complete self-devotion to the work of liberation.²⁵

Tarachand writing in 1967, in *The History of The Freedom Movement in India*, says that around 1870 in Bengal and 1880 in Maharashtra, revivalism had begun to take over the creed of Brahmoism and the Prarthana Samaj, and a new form of '*assertive Hinduism*'

²⁵ Aurobindo Ghosh, 1994, 'Rishi Bankimchandra', in Bhabatosh Chatterjee (ed.) *Bankim Chandra Chatterjee: Essays in Perspective*, Centenary edition, pp.5-6. Originally published in *Bandemataram*, 16 April, 1907. Bipin Chandra Pal, another stalwart of the Swadeshi-Extremist movement, also acknowledged the contribution of Bankim in ascertaining a reinterpretation of the old theology to suit modern needs and also how it helped in the birth of a 'new cult of patriotism' more indigenous and closer to the land. See his autobiographies, *Memories of My Life and Times: In the Days of My Youth (1973)*, Calcutta: Yugayatri Prakashan, and, *Swadeshi and Swaraj: The Rise of New Patriotism(1951)*, Calcutta: Yugayatri Prakashan

had surfaced. Many factors had combined to promote this tendency. In Bengal, Ram Mohan Roy's Brahma Samaj was challenged by the orthodox Hindu middle class under the lead of Radha Kanta Deb, who had founded the Dharma Sabha in 1830. But the movement was unable to make much progress due to the continued influence of the social reformists, until the 1857 Revolt, brought about a marked '*change*' in the country's political atmosphere. The seventies were marked by an urge towards nationalism and romanticism. A desire for political emancipation was prioritized to movement for social reform. A feeling of pride in the country's past was aroused through religious movements and historical studies that enhanced the self-respect of the colonized people. A consequential feeling of revulsion against Western aspects of culture resulted in an eagerness to posit an effective counterpoise to Western superiority. The movement took to a path of '*neo-Hinduism*'. Tarachand says that there were two distinct schools of thought, the pioneer of the first being Sasadhar Tarkachudamani and of the second, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.

Tarachand points out that Bankim combined in his person an intense sense of nationalist fervour with religious devotion. He vehemently advocated that the solution to India's degenerated condition lay in the revival of Hinduism. But his defense of Hinduism was based on his approach to the concept of religion, which was considerably shaped by the methodology of Western sciences based on a scientific, critical and rational method. However, despite his belief in religion and in Hinduism as a vital instrument to help in national regeneration, Tarachand points out with subtle poignancy that Bankim was after all so absorbed in seeking everything from Hinduism that he tended to lose sight of the

multiple nature of the Indian society and sought to devote his attention on the moral and political regeneration of the Hindu community '*exclusively*'.

Writing in 2001, Indira Chowdhury,²⁶ also seeks to assert a similar point in analyzing the inherent complexities of the nineteenth century indigenous consciousness of the colonial intelligentsia- they wanted to carve out an identity distinct from the one imposed by their colonizers, and yet it was not to be wholly autonomous. And more importantly, in defining the 'self', it resulted in overemphasizing the Hindu, more often than not held synonymous with the 'national'.

The struggle to evaluate Hindu achievements against Western or European standards resulted in delineating lines of contrast between the Hindu and the '*Yavan*' or the '*Mlechha*', underpinned by Orientalist constructions. As the nineteenth century Bengali intelligentsia, mostly Hindu, largely responded to Hindu components, the denigration and the exclusion of the Muslims in the nationalist project, it seems, hardly concerned them. The process was further fuelled by the choice of history, which hailed those as heroes who defied Muslim tyranny: history became a means of asserting a Hindu heroism, which had proved itself against the Mughal rulers. The choice of 'fiction' also became compatible with the indigenous understanding of history. Muslims came to be described as '*Yavan*' or '*Mlechha*' and Bankim's *Anandamath* was a scintillating example of the Hindu-Muslim distinction. The novel also entailed a search for identity imbued with a

²⁶ Indira Chowdhury, op.cit.

masculinity that affirmed Hindu or Aryan identity. Indira Chowdhury, however, in the end concludes that although construction of the new 'self' was profoundly Hindu, yet opposition to Muslim rule was only a *metaphor* for militant opposition to British rule.

The intrinsic realization that the Muslims had not been included in Bankim's project of self-representation and had been in fact highly disregarded and notoriously portrayed in some of his novels vis-à-vis his Hindu protagonists substantially instigated Muslim intellectuals and invited communal allegations from them. Dr. Munir Choudhury has accused Bankim of spreading straight communitarian animosity in the context of Rajsingh. Narayan Choudhury seeks to fault Bankim on the ground that the seeds of Hindu-Muslim rift have been laid by Anandamath. S.M. Akbaruddin had published three articles in the newspaper, 'al Islam, as a review of the Muslims' position in Bankim's novels. He complains that despite a definite humanist trend in his writings, Bankim's concerns did not encompass the Muslim community. In the context of the song, Vande Mataram, he points out that with more than half the population as Muslims in the Bengal of those times, Bankim's deliberate exclusion of the community from the song suggested that in the new haven of freedom, the Muslims were to be the subordinates of the Hindus.²⁷ Even Bankim's urge for a popular vernacular medium did not attract much enthusiasm from the Muslim community. With the new sense in nationalism more akin to a pride in Hinduism, the Muslims sought their reference from West Asia, as the land of Islam's origin and those of its cultural tenets. The educated Muslims of Bengal

²⁷ Supriya Sen Bhattacharya, 1996, *Unbingsho Shotabdir Chinta O Bankim Chandra*, Calcutta: Calcutta University Publications, pp.147-148. Bhattacharya looks into a whole gamut of the contemporary Musalman allegations against Bankim.

established the Bangiya Musalman Sahitya Sammilani in 1917 to maintain a cultural identity of their own, wherein Muhammad Sahidullah clearly declared in the second session that though their mother tongue was Bengali, they must not forget that “*Allah’s final verdict was in Arabic*”. So he prescribed that while an ideal Muslim has to learn Arabic, for the Bengali Muslims the alternative language would be Urdu or Persian.²⁸

The nature of Muslim representations in the novel, *Anandamath*, emerges as the focus of seething controversies considering that the novel is largely hailed and revered by the nationalists. Any inference on the issue of Hindu-Muslim animosity seeks to trace a contiguous lineage from the novel itself, suggesting a problematic inception of the ideology of nationalism that was inherently fractured. Akbar S. Ahmed in fact claims that there is a ‘*direct causal relationship*’ between Bankim’s *Anandamath*, written in 1882, and the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya in 1992.²⁹ He says that from the writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee to the 1990s bazaar slogans, it was essentially a century of all-out war for many people in the subcontinent, and in this war, the elimination of Muslims were planned and carried out. With reference to the national song, *Vande Mataram*, as included in *Anandamath*, A.G. Noorani points out that the song does not stand for an all-inclusive nationality. Noorani quotes several instances from the novel, which depict anti-Muslim sentiments and says that even the usage of *Vande*

²⁸ Sumita Chakraborty, 2000, ‘Bengali Muslim Community and Bankimchandra’, in Ujjal Kumar Majumdar, *Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay: His Contribution to Indian Life and Culture*, Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, p. 8.

²⁹ Akbar S. Ahmed, 1997, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin*, Routledge, p. 220

Mataram in the novel is not adventitious and its reference is frequently invoked against a background of communal context, to encourage the Hindus against the Muslims.

Tanika Sarkar seeks to analyze the critical problematic of locating the Muslims and the conception of Hindu nation in Bankim's works. She argues that Bankim had taken to more compulsive writings on Hindu knowledge and identity, at a much later stage, following his exchanges with Reverend Hastie of the General Assembly who had been rather vicious in discussing Hinduism. Bankim reacted by repudiating his earlier dealings with general and universal social issues and became exclusively preoccupied with the theme of a reconstructed Hindu form of knowledge and leadership. Sarkar says that at this stage, Bankim sought to concentrate on the issue of '*what was truly indigenous- that is Hindu*'; although she says that his earlier writings were not completely free from such concerns, but remained in there with "*locked horns*".³⁰ The two reasons which made the Muslim the obvious adversary of Bankim's regenerated Hindu were the fact that the Hindus in the past had been defeated by the Muslims due to their cultural deficits and, secondly, Muslim rule according to him brought neither material nor spiritual improvement. Sarkar points out that perhaps the most significant way in which Bankim served as the 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 guising it as an apocalyptic holy war.

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³⁰ Tanika Sarkar, 1996, 'Imagining Hindurashtra: The Hindu and the Muslim in Bankim Chandra's Writings', in David Ludden (ed.), *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, Delhi: OUP, p.169



And despite this, in the ultimate analysis, Tanika Sarkar finds in Bankim the impossibility of an agenda with a sustained conviction, even in his last ‘dogmatic’ phase. She says that ‘if the agenda seems to be coherent and complete, he then proceeds to fracture it from within, to dissolve his own statement of conviction’³¹. Sitaram is defeated by his own flaw, and the novel with an intensive agenda leads to an uncharacteristic end. Sarkar comes to look at this major departure in terms of a final failure of hope in the heroic, redemptive exercise of national building- a criticism of the Hindu masses who have forever refrained from crucial moments. It may also indicate the independent domain of imagination, or, perhaps may be suggestive of a possible return to the theme of ‘Samya’, after a long gap. Sarkar says that while Bankim formulates a powerful Hindu agenda, he soon after proceeds to destroy it himself. This is because, Sarkar argues, Bankim located the problem in the primary ‘*guilt*’ factor that lay within the Hindu self and not within an external enemy, as the Hindu fundamentalist project would point out. The historical function of the external enemy was to provide the occasion for a confrontation, through which the Hindu guilt may be exorcised. This guilt was not confined to the most recent period of subjection, as Ranjit Guha observes; rather, it had a much longer lineage, which essentially provided space for the Muslim entry.

A recent translation of the novel, *Anandamath*, by Julius J. Lipner, published in 2005, claims to highlight significant nuances in so far as Bankim’s agenda in writing the novel is concerned.³² Lipner points out that the construction of the Muslim self and his

³¹ Tanika Sarkar, *Imagining Hindurashtra*, p.183

³² Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 2005, *Anandamath or The Sacred Brotherhood*, Translated by Julius J. Lipner, with an introduction and critical apparatus, OUP

historical role in the subcontinent was largely the outcome of Colonial stereotypes, done in a racist context, against the prospect of emergent British rule. The first step was to distinguish between 'Aryan' and 'non-Aryan' categories of people in racial, linguistic and cultural terms. The Hindu elite, who smarted under British rule, were too happy to derive their lineage from the ancient Aryan ancestors. The second step sought to separate the indigenous, i.e., the Hindu-Aryan culture and descent, from the usurping Muslim presence in the subcontinent. In this 'contrast' so invoked, the Muslims were depicted as the oppressive invaders, who in contrast to the enlightenment brought by the British had contributed little if anything to enriching the lives of their subjects. This view was largely adhered to by many in the Bengali intelligentsia by the middle of the nineteenth century. Lipner says that Bankim also subscribed to such a perspective but in a more nuanced manner. He says that Bankim acknowledged the differences between the 'Muslim-as-Jaban' and the native Muslims. The former were foreign invaders and Dermont Killingley points out that the term, 'Jaban' or 'Yavan' of that time was generally used to denote the Muslim as an alien presence. Lipner seeks to argue that Bankim had merely inculcated the general applicability in vogue. For him, the 'Muslim-as-Jaban' was an alien ruling elite that neither belonged nor sought to belong to the natives. The Indian Muslims, generally the ryots or peasants, found a more conciliatory attitude from Bankim. For him, they were not outsiders by origin but largely native inhabitants who had converted their faith but retained much of their cultural practises. He also included the Bengali Muslims among the seventy million children of the Mother in the song, Vande Mataram. Nevertheless, while the Muslim as native Indian or 'desi' was included, the 'Muslim-as-Jaban' was largely kept apart as outsiders.

In discussing the novel's purpose and its consequential impact, Lipner says that Anandamath was written with hindsight in the early 1880s. The novel must be read with the political roles of the Muslims and the British in a contested land as juxtaposed. The verdict of history was that the Muslims (as symbolized by Muslim rule in Bengal) had failed in their kingly duties. But the historical essence in terms of relevance for the future implied instrumentalization of British rule towards the ultimate Indian objective. The problem however, inhered in the fact that the objective was to be defined in Hindu terms, and this brought complaints from Jinnah and the Muslims.³³ Nevertheless Lipner points out that objections from the Muslims came particularly in the aftermath of Bengal's partition in 1905, when Anandamath came to be seen as an open ground for Hindu-Muslim rivalry and Vande Mataram as a predominantly Hindu symbol and hence lacking in national content. A resolution of the twenty-fifth annual session of the All India Muslim League, headed by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in October 1937 condemned "*the attitude of the Congress in fostering Bande Mataram as the national anthem upon the country as callous, positively anti-Islamic, idolatrous in its inspiration and ideas and definitely subversive of the growth of genuine nationalism in India*". Although much of it, Lipner says, had been a handiwork of the British policy of 'divide and rule', nevertheless further worsening of the matters in recent times has come about with the rise of a Hindu right.

³³ Herein Lipner refers to the work of Akbar S. Ahmed

IV

Bankim's conception of the Hindus and the Muslims has been a matter of intense analysis for historians and scholars down the generations. Paradigms have randomly shifted from nationalist positions to communal allegations to psycho-analytical researches into the author's background, mentality, public image and propaganda. The conception of the Hindu is dominant and is widely accepted by scholars in so far as Bankim's novels are concerned based on themes of resurrection and salvation. The problem comes in analyzing his notions and representations of the Muslims. Herein also paradigms range from intentional silence on the issue to acting as a metaphor for political emancipation from the British to the 'desi-Jaban' or native-outsider conceptions of the Muslims in India to overt communal allegations.

Bankim's novels certainly become more dogmatic and exclusionistic in his later phase. As figured out by Tapan Raychaudhuri and Tanika Sarkar, perhaps his exchanges with Reverend Hastie in 1882 had made him more defensive and more preoccupied with Hinduism. Nevertheless, his engagement with the issue was definitely not limited to this period. In fact a reading of his novels from *Durgeshnandini*, his first novel onwards, one does notice a *trend* in his writings, in constructions of the Hindu as the '*self*' and the Muslim as the '*other*' mediated and defined by notions of '*cultural differences*'.

Studies of medieval social and cultural movements reveal cultural conceptions of the community as early as fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was cultural because a wide

spectrum of religious beliefs agglomerated within the Muslim and non-Muslim enclosures respectively.³⁴ The cultural cannot be interchanged with the religious as the latter cannot encompass the features embedded in the former. Culture may include religion but it is more a way of life, an identity of a community and the people within it which essentially differentiates it from the non-practising others. It, more importantly, involves notions of power and relations mediated by it regulate or disrupt relations between cultural communities. Bankim may have belonged to the generation of Bengal Renaissance, thoroughly inspired by Western concepts and stereotypes, but his understanding of the problematic of the Hindu- Muslim relations, his imagination of a Hindu self and a Hindu territory was certainly ingenious and his own.

This dissertation aims to configure and analyze the notions of cultural representations of Hindus and Muslims as portrayed by Bankim in his novels. It looks into the five fundamental novels on the theme: *Durgeshnandini*, *Mrinalini*, *Rajsingh*, *Anandamath* and *Sitaram*. There is a perception of gradual underlining of differentiations between the two communities from a paradigm of difference to absolute dichotomy, and, within this how Bankim's representations address the vital questions of identity, community and the nation.

³⁴ Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, 1994, *Struggle for Hegemony in India 1920-47: Culture, Community and Power*, vol.3, Delhi/ London: Sage Publications, pp.18-19

NOVELS OF BANKIM CHANDRA

YEAR OF PUBL.

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Durgeshnandini</i> | 1865 |
| <i>Kapalkundala</i> | 1866 |
| <i>Mrinalini</i> | 1869 |
| <i>Bishabriksha</i> | 1873 |
| <i>Indira</i> | 1873, revised 1893 |
| <i>Jugalanguriya</i> | 1874 |
| <i>Radharani</i> | 1876, enlarged 1893 |
| <i>Chandrasekhar</i> | 1877 |
| <i>Kamalkanter Daptar</i> | 1875 |
| <i>Rajani</i> | 1877 |
| <i>Krishnakanter Will</i> | 1878 |
| <i>Rajsingh</i> | 1882 |
| <i>Anandamath</i> | 1882 |
| <i>Devi Chaudhurani</i> | 1884 |
| <i>Kamalakanta</i> | 1885 |
| <i>Sitaram</i> | 1887 |

CHAPTER 1

BANKIM AND REPRESENTATION OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

'Hindus' and 'Muslims' occupy a central space in the novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. They emerge in them as fundamentally two distinct and different communities in different forms and kinds, as the historical 'Self' against the historical 'Other'. Rajat Kanta Ray argues that the identities, 'Hindu' and 'Muslim', arose out of a historical process. To believe that they are of more recent origin and a result of the new political and religious discourse of the colonial period is to reject the entire history of their existence, as psychological forms and social symbols, too deep in the unconscious to be amenable to such ready-made 'deconstructions' of colonial or anti-colonial discourses.¹ Hindustan or *Al-Hind*, despite the innumerable fractions within the land, was conceived as one entity and one space that was originally Hindu, by the Islamic conquerors.² The fact that the natives were Hindus and the newcomers were Muslims was implicit first in the early Muslim literature in Arabic and Persian. Gradually however, there was a paradigm shift from the native-alien stereotype to recognition of two separate religious communities living in India.³ With the settlement of Islam in India and the birth of Muslims in the country who were natives of the land but certainly not Hindu, the emphasis shifted to describe the people inhabiting the territory, to two distinct

¹ Rajat Kanta Ray, 2003, *The Felt Community: Commonality and Mentality before the Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Delhi: OUP, pp.47-48

² *Ibid.*, pp.63-74

³ *Ibid.*, p.85

communities different in their religion. Rajat Kanta Ray explains that peaceful assimilation of the Muslims in South India was different from the more violent encounters in the north in that the south was facilitated by its *bee-hive* formation, with more cells being added to the cellular structure without altering the basic formation, a characteristic that was lacking in the north.⁴

A study of the two communities in India seeks to contend their *ambiguous* encounters in close quarters: they shared common territorial space and some social proximity. And yet, they did not end in socio-cultural amalgamation, rather, they maintained their peculiarities and ascertained that they were *different* from one another. Their social milieu resulted in instances of increased interactions and even cohabitation, but, at the same time there were decisive moments when certain religious symbols acquired significant meanings to be passed onto future generations. This is where religion acquires a '*cultural*' meaning, in terms of constructing an identity specific to a community, which in turn differentiates it from the other. The notion of cultural difference between Hindus and Muslims had been adequately addressed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. His novels depict an intrinsic understanding of this idea gradually from an '*implicit*' terrain to a more '*explicit*' level of expression with a certain conceptual '*continuity*' in the way they had been written.

⁴ Rajat Kanta Ray, *op.cit.*, p. 101

This chapter essentially focuses on the novel, *Durgeshnandini*. It is was the first novel written by Bankim in Bengali and was the first of the series to trace the relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims. The theme of the novel is complex in terms how it seeks to address the relationship and the notion of ‘*boundaries*’ between the two communities.

The story in brief:

Durgeshnandini first published in 1865, was written in the historical background of a struggle for power between Akbar, the then emperor of India and the Pathans, who were the successors of Ikhtiyar-ud-din Bakhtiyar Khilji, over Bengal and Orissa. Katlu Khan was the contemporary Pathan ruler. In order to conquer the Pathans who had created much trouble for the Mughals, Akbar had sent his Rajput commander, Man Singh as his representative. Man Singh was being assisted by his son, Jagat Singh, in this mission. It was the historic moment when Jagat Singh was returning from Bishnupur having surveyed the positions of the Pathans that he lost his way to a temple in a jungle, estranged from his troops, and met Tilottama and Bimala, who had also taken shelter in the same temple. The ladies refused to reveal their identities but Bimala, the older lady, promised Jagat Singh that if he was still inclined to know them, she would meet him at the temple after fifteen days, upon which Jagat Singh agreed. Tilottama was the daughter of a Rajput chieftain, Virendra Singh, who ruled Mandaran and Bimala was her governess but she did not look like the ordinary maids and was rather mysterious in her

mannerisms. Abhiram Swami was a learned man of an ascetic personality who was also Virendra Singh's mentor.

Gar Mandaran had become a bone of contention between the Pathans and the Mughals and upon Abhiram Swami's advice it was decided that Mandaran would ally with the Mughals. Meanwhile, Tilottama had fallen in love with Jagat Singh and a concerned Bimala decided to inform Jagat Singh about it. She met the latter as she had promised and when she was convinced of his love for Tilottama she insisted that he should profess his love to her. At the time when Jagat Singh met Tilottama in the royal fort of Mandaran, the Pathans attacked and captured the fort. Virendra Singh was taken captive. Despite Jagat Singh's heroic efforts to save the ladies, he was severely wounded and taken captive and so were Bimala and Tilottama.

Usman Khan was Katlu Khan's representative and commander who had directed occupation of the fort but it was also he who had actually saved Jagat Singh from being murdered by his men. Usman brought a wounded and unconscious Jagat Singh to Ayesha. She was the daughter of Katlu Khan and an extremely compassionate person who would take good care of Jagat Singh. Usman was also in love with Ayesha but the latter did not reciprocate his love. Virendra Singh, who had been captivated, was sentenced to death for supporting the Mughals. He refused to seek mercy from the Pathans and chose to die. Before his death he met Bimala who turned out to be his wife. Bimala took a sacred vow to avenge her husband's death and the loss of their territory.

Tilottama and Bimala had become part of Katlu Khan's harem. It was the general custom with Katlu Khan that post-conquest of some village or fortress, female captives were to become part of the king's harem. When Gar Mandaran was captured, Tilottama and Bimala were captivated and similarly sent to his harem. But due to impending tasks the king was unable to spend time with them. Bimala had come to know from Usman that Jagat Singh was still alive and she requested Usman to convey her letter to him. The letter informed that Bimala was Virendra Singh's wife and Abhiram Swami was her father. Her mother was a Shudra woman and she was an illegitimate child. Her father had left her mother after he got her pregnant but with the help of a Pathan, who had happened to stay at their place on his way to Delhi, after a long span of time she was able to meet her father who had put up with the Mughals. Virendra Singh visited their place and had fallen in love with her but would not marry her as she was a Shudra's daughter. However with due pressure from Man Singh, Virendra Singh was forced to marry her but she remained as Tilottama's governess and could not reveal her identity. Usman on exigency grounds read the letter with Bimala's permission and said that he was the son of the Pathan who had helped her seek her father. He promised her a favour and said that he would release her on the day of Katlu Khan's birthday. He gave her a ring.

Meanwhile, with due care from Ayesha, Jagat Singh gradually recovered. He came to know that Virendra Singh had been beheaded, Abhiram Swami had escaped, several people had been converted and Bimala and Tilottama had become part of the king's harem. Jagat Singh as a Rajput decided to renounce his desires for Tilottama. Given the conditions, he also asked Bimala to die when Usman gave him her letter. Usman was

shocked to hear this. He further informed Jagat Singh of the Pathan intentions. He said that Katlu Khan wanted to posit a proposal of alliance through him, which he refused to comply with and instead accepted prison.

Bimala met Tilottama on Katlu Khan's birthday and gave her Usman's ring, to escape. Tilottama however, chose to meet Jagat Singh instead, but, he had already renounced her. Ayesha wanted to help Jagat Singh and even offered him to escape. At an impulsive moment, she confessed her love for Jagat Singh with due instigation from Usman, who happened to arrive at the venue. But she soon took control of her emotions.

Meanwhile, Bimala had acted upon her sacred pledge and fatally stabbed Katlu Khan. She escaped from Pathan stranglehold and met Abhiram Swami. Tilottama had already reached Abhiram Swami's cottage, and they decided to desert the place. A dying Katlu Khan was assured by Jagat Singh of a Mughal-Pathan alliance. He also informed Jagat Singh of Tilottama's chastity, upon Ayesha's request. The Mughal-Pathan alliance was accomplished and both sides were to retreat to their respective areas. Jagat Singh was informed of Tilottama's forlorn condition. He took to retrieve their emotional bond and proposed to marry her. The marriage happened in Mandaran and was even attended by Ayesha, as she had earlier promised. She adorned Tilottama with all her precious ornaments, and emotionally overwhelmed, she confessed her act of surrender; that she had surrendered to her everything that she had cherished. Tilottama was unable to understand its implications. The novel ends with Ayesha's contemplation of death and

her subsequent will to overpower her weakness. She soon realized that life was not so insignificant that as a woman she would not even be able to endure the sorrow of estrangement and, besides, how would Jagat Singh feel? With this she gave up the idea of death.

Durgeshnandini is basically an emotional story with a certain transgressive taste. In the novel the moral-personal aspect of the plot is remarkably daring. Jagat Singh, the protagonist, is seen at the intersection of two evolving relationships: his own love for Tilottama and Ayesha's love for him. Sudipto Kaviraj discusses transgression of emotions and considers it particularly interesting in the way in which love is inscrutable, and the possibility that it can arise unbidden between people who are separated by an uncrossable social distance.⁵ The limits which separate Ayesha from Jagat Singh are not barriers placed by war; these are deeper prohibitions that separate two religious communities. According to Kaviraj, the feeling left in us at the end of the story is not one of moral horror at the presumption of Ayesha's transgressive love for Jagat Singh, but a stealthy fundamental sympathy.⁶ However, one must not overlook the fact that the notion of socio-cultural barriers and constraints was perhaps more *overpowering*, so much so that the author, despite bringing about a transgressive edge to the love story, would not attempt to overcome the boundaries and materialize such transgression. While Bankim addresses the 'idea' of transgression in his first novel, nevertheless, in his later novels he

⁵ Sudipto Kaviraj, 1995, *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India*, Delhi: OUP, p.4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.5.

does attempt 'real' transgressive acts. Ayesha does not enter into an actual transgression but his subsequent heroines do: Kundanandini in *Bishabriksha*, Rohini in *Krishnakanter Will*, Sree in *Sitaram*, Indira in *Indira*, all enter into real transgressive acts. But this does not happen with Ayesha. If one may look into the Hindu-Muslim plots in his subsequent novels, it may be more logical to deduce that such transgression could not have materialized for Ayesha, for the cultural confines had to be maintained and Bankim could not have thought of removing the demarcations and carried the story further thereafter. Sudipto Kaviraj discusses '*liminality*' and points out that the subject of Bankim's literary imagination across his other novels after *Durgeshnandini* is this struggle between the turbulence of desire and the stability of societal norms. The play around this liminality is eventually the conflict between desire and denial, 'desire' seen as the human elemental inclinations, and 'denial' as the system of prohibitions constructed by society to regulate them and render them safe. While in the subsequent novels, the idea of transgression in emotions irrespective of social norms had been adequately developed to posit vital questions thereafter, in case of *Durgeshnandini*, even the possibility of any such is not attempted. It touches upon the issue but there is no attempt to overcome the social and cultural boundaries. This aspect remains quite eye-catching and besides, such an act was not pursued further in his subsequent novels. While the theme was radical in itself, the impact that it had on contemporary Muslim literary world was quite strong. They regarded it as unjust violations of Muslim female dignity. Writing in *Islam Pracharak*, in 1903, Taslim Ahmed vehemently criticized Bankim in this respect. Muslim writers acknowledged that human passion could cross religious and social barriers and hence, Muslim men could love and marry Hindu women (and convert them to Islam), but they

could hardly accept the opposite. It seemed to them unrealistic and objectionable. While 'purdah' probably made it extremely unlikely for a Hindu man to meet a Muslim woman and have an affair with her, they presumed no difficulty for a Muslim man to meet a Hindu woman and win her over to Islamic faith. This attitude essentially affected the sense of community as well as social customs which reinforced it. Stories of Muslim women falling passionately in love with Hindu men made the Muslims impatient.⁷

Notions of cultural differences and socio-cultural boundaries between the two communities have been significantly harped upon in the novel through subtle but symbolic nuances. The fact that a Musalman woman's love for a Hindu prince could not materialize and is even looked upon as transgressive suggests the complexity of uncrossable boundaries. But Ayesha's presence apart, the idea has been adequately developed through other references in the novel.

When Bimala found out that Tilottama had fallen in love with Jagat Singh she became worried about the girl. But, when she overheard that a possible alliance might take place between Man Singh and Virendra Singh, she simultaneously thought of a possible union of Jagat Singh and Tilottama. She informed Abhiram Swami about their sudden encounter with Jagat Singh and Tilottama's state of mind in its aftermath. But Abhiram Swami pointed out the impossibility of such a marriage, as despite belonging to the same

⁷ Mohammed Shah, 1996, *In Search of an Identity: Bengali Muslims (1880-1940)*, Calcutta, p.58. Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh also discuss the vigorous anti-Bankim campaign by the Muslim press in *Struggle for Hegemony in India*, vol.3.

caste, Virendra Singh would not agree to get his daughter married to a Musalman's brother-in-law's son.⁸ This proves that despite Akbar being the Mughal ruler and Man Singh being his brother-in-law, the marital connection with the latter's son was not preferred, keeping the social and religious differences in mind and the fact that such an alliance that involved Musalman connections would contaminate one's caste and religious purity.

The rigidity of cultural differences between the two communities also emerges when Jagat Singh, acting upon his Rajput perspectives, rejects and renounces Tilottama, having heard, that, both Tilottama and Bimala had become part of Katlu Khan's harem. For so long, ever since he had recovered, Jagat Singh had tried gathering some news of Tilottama and her father, Virendra Singh. He was worried about Tilottama but once he came to know of her state, he wished that she was dead instead. As a Rajput he could no longer nurture thoughts about her and sought to forget her instead.⁹ He was so adamant in his decision that he refused to reciprocate Tilottama's affectionate feelings for him when the latter managed to meet him in Katlu Khan's prison. Thus, the fact that his beloved had been appropriated by the Musalmans instantaneously eroded all his aspirations to acquire Tilottama. Even though in the end, he does marry Tilottama, a change in his decision and even his behaviour towards Tilottama owed largely to Katlu Khan's

⁸ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 2006, 'Durgeshnandini' in *Bankim Rachanavali*, vol.1, Calcutta: Dey's Publishing, p.40, "jodubongshiyō konyā Musalmanēr shalok putrer bodhu hoibe?"

⁹ Ibid., p.94, "she ki? Tilottama morilona keno... Tilottama tahar hridaymondīradhishathtri debimurti... shei Tilottama Pathan bhobone! Shei Tilottama Katlu Khaner Upatni! Aar ki she murti Rajpute aradhona kore?"

confession in his death bed, upon Ayesha's request, that Tilottama was as pure and as chaste as his own daughter.

The central theme of *Durgeshnandini* certainly deals with an emotional world, a story of love of two women for the same man. The emotional complexities of the central characters tend to engross the readers till the end but the general background and its *historicity* must not be lost sight of in case one intends to look into the issues of cultural differences between the Hindus and the Muslims in the novels of Bankim. The novel does not develop the theme of Hindu-Muslim rivalry as its focus. Nevertheless, the story unfolds against the background of a war between the Rajputs and Pathans. Although Jagat Singh represents the Mughal army but the emperor at that time was Akbar and as later mentioned in a certain context in *Sitaram*, Bankim does not consider Akbar to be an orthodox follower of Islam. Besides, gradually in the descriptions of the novel, the confrontation becomes more of one between the Rajputs and the Pathans. There are numerous references of Rajput valour and chivalry.

In describing Jagat Singh's confrontation with the Pathans when they had besieged and attacked Virendra Singh's fort, Bankim says that the Pathans were shouting the name of 'Allah' and jumping like mad ghosts.¹⁰ The religious invocations help to ascertain the fact that the confrontation was essentially between two *mutually exclusive* cultural domains

¹⁰ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Durgeshnandini*, p.70, "*Pathanera shikar shomukhe paiya 'Allah-laaho- ho' chitkar koriya pishacher naye lafayite lagilo.*"

and religious belief systems. It was no longer a war between the Mughal representatives and the Pathans. In due course of the narrative it assumed such proportions and such a character as to suggest that the war was between the Hindu Rajputs and the Musalman Pathans. Jagat Singh valiantly faced the Pathans and vigorously fought them till he could fight no more. In this context Bankim describes Rajput valour, when despite being alone and realizing that the opponents were in huge numbers, the latter fought with all his might and made a chivalrous attempt to save the ladies' honour (Bimala and Tilottama). There is also a reference here, where, Jagat Singh calls the Pathans '*Jabans*' (yavans) and says that even in the face of death the Rajput gives his best to fight his opponents, when one of the Pathans had tried to mock his death.¹¹

The description of Gar Mandaran's conquest by the Pathans as narrated by a Brahman native of the place to Jagat Singh is suggestive of not only the general loss and oppression of the vanquished by the conquerors but it also involved an aspect of cultural deprivation and religious loss of the Hindu natives at the hands of the Pathans. The Pathans ruthlessly attacked the Rajputs, destroyed their fortress, took its inhabitants captive, converted the people, took the women to the harem and killed the ruler, Virendra Singh¹² when the latter had refused to succumb to the Pathan ruler, Katlu Khan.

¹¹ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Durgeshnandini*, p. 70, "*Jaban! Rajputera ki prokare pranotyag kore, dekh.*"

¹² *Ibid.*, pp.92-94

Thus, in discussing the notion of socio-cultural differences between the Hindus and the Muslims in the context of *Durgeshnandini*, an observation and understanding of the general historical background of the story remains important. Bankim invokes a historical context of war between the *Hindu* Rajputs and the *Musalman* Pathans. Every effort has been made to valorize the Rajputs, be it Jagat Singh who valiantly fought the Pathans and won battles against them initially to relieve the local native population; when he confronted the sudden attack by the Pathans on the fort of Gar Mandaran, which eventually made him an injured captive at their hands; when he accepted prison against freedom offered by the Pathans to him on condition that he would negotiate an alliance between the Pathans and the Mughals that would allow the Pathans to retain control over their territories, or, Virendra Singh who courted death rather than accepting Pathan suzerainty, or, Bimala who eventually turned out to be Virendra Singh's wife and who pledged to avenge her husband's death and loss of their territory and ultimately succeeded in treacherously murdering Katlu Khan during his birthday celebrations. Against such Rajput characterizations Bankim creates the general Muslim '*stereotype*' of plundering and oppressing the helpless local natives, forcibly converting them and abducting the Rajput women for the ruler's harem. While the general Muslim stereotype persists throughout, Bankim brings in an interesting characterization of the two important Pathan characters, Usman and Ayesha.

Usman was the commander of Pathan troops, who led the attack on Gar Mandaran. He tracked Bimala's movements and taking advantage of her negligence, led the Pathan troops inside the fort, which in due course they also captured. But, he was also the man

who had saved Jagat Singh from being killed by his men and it was because of him that Bimala was able to meet her husband before his death. Bankim had in fact made a picturesque portraiture of Usman and had even compared him and placed him on the same pedestal with the Rajput, Jagat Singh: *“the man was a Pathan soldier... had Bimala come out of her vulnerable and palpitated state she would have noticed that this man did not differ much from Jagat Singh. Perhaps he lacked Jagat Singh’s hefty structure and big eyes but the heroic temperament and the gallantry that he seemed to possess were similar and could be even more...”*¹³ When he tried to help Bimala, Bankim says that although Usman was committed to the Pathan causes for war, he did not oppress the captives in the aftermath of their victory. Had Katlu Khan himself not ordered for Bimala and Tilottama to be sent to his harem, he would not have taken them as captives.¹⁴ It was with his help that Bimala was able to meet her husband before his death. Not only this, when he came to know that Bimala had saved him from getting kidnapped in his childhood, he became indebted to her and even provided her an opportunity to escape. The fact that Usman was ‘different’ from the general Muslim stereotype, in the manner in which Bankim had characterized the other Pathans in general, has been particularly highlighted by him in this context.

¹³ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Durgeshnandini*, pp.62-63, “*je bekti akasmat eiroope Bimala ke behal korilo, tahar porichhed Pathan jatiyo soinik purushdiger nay... Bimalar jodi totkhone moner sthirota thakito, tobe bujhite pariten je, shoyong Jogotsingher shohit tulonaye e bekti nittanto nuan hoiben na, Jogotsingher shodrish dirghayato ba bishalorsk nohen, kintu totshodrish birottobainjok shundor kanti, todhodik shukumar deho...*”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.81, “*Usman Pathankutilok. Judho tahar sharthasadhan o nijo babshae ebong dharm; shutorang judhojoiartha Usman kono kajei shonkoj koriten na. kintu judhoproyojon shidhho hoile, porajitopokhher proti kodachit nishproyojone tildardho ottachar korite diton na. jodi Katlu Khan shoyong Bimala o Tilottamar odrishte e darun bidhan na koriten, tobe Usman er kripaye tahara kodachit bondi thakiten na.*”

Ayesha was the daughter of Katlu Khan and even before she had fallen in love with Jagat Singh she had unconditionally committed herself to his well being when Usman had brought a wounded and unconscious Jagat Singh to her. On one such day when Ayesha was taking care of Jagat Singh, Usman had in fact asked Ayesha how she could take so much care of an enemy!¹⁵ Despite mutual enmity, Jagat Singh beckoned aid from Ayesha when Tilottama became unconscious in his prison cell. Ayesha not only helped Tilottama regain her consciousness and promised her absolute security but also took the occasion to assure Jagat Singh and offered to share his problems. She even offered him aid to escape, which the latter declined, and ultimately she confessed her love for Jagat Singh, as a result of Usman's sarcasm when the latter happened to reach the venue to find the two together. Ayesha's love for Jagat Singh was such that she also made her father confess in his death bed that Tilottama was as pure and as chaste as his own daughter. She also attended the wedding of Jagat Singh and Tilottama, and gifted her all her precious ornaments. At the end, overpowered by emotions she contemplated death for some time but ultimately, as strong as she was, she chose to live with the pain of estrangement.

The portrayals of Ayesha and Usman are certainly not typecasts. They are complex, religious and imbued with emotional subtlety. Acting in their realms, they certainly hold the story together. But, at the same time the fact that they are '*different*' and stand apart from the general stereotype has been highlighted by the author and this in itself adds a

¹⁵ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Durgeshnandini* pp.74-75, Usman says, "*Ayesha, tomar guner shima dite parina, tumi ei porom shotruke je jotno koriya sushrosha koritechho, bhogini bhratar jonno emon korena. Tumi uhar prandan koritechho.*"

significant dimension to the notion of fundamental differentiations in perceiving the Hindu and the Muslim.

Durgeshnandini in this sense, therefore, provides a novel insight into the literary realm of defining cultural differences between the Hindus and the Muslims. It is a new dimension altogether. The central theme concerns itself with juxtaposing emotions across communitarian boundaries with construction of interesting characters such as Usman, Ayesha, Jagat Singh and Bimala, each contributing to emotional complexities, actions and reactions, that allows the story uninhibited flow and by the time the inhibitions become resplendent the story ends on an emotional note. There are instances of mutual trusts and distrusts, love and hatred; an ambiguous world which allows transgression of emotions and at the political level alliances and expediency cut across religious demarcations, such that the novel has been more often than not looked upon as one attempting to establish a shared code of conduct.¹⁶ According to Tapan Raychaudhuri and Tanika Sarkar, Bankim's compulsion for a pure site of exclusive Hindu Knowledge had triumphed only after his exchanges with Reverend Hastie. In 1882, Hastie of the General Assembly wrote a tract that was brutally critical of Hinduism. Bankim, who had always ridiculed Orientalist pretensions, reciprocated with an angry reply. It was after this that he repudiated 'Samya' and became more dogmatic and preoccupied with the theme of a reconstructed form of knowledge and leadership. The anger was probably fueled by the changing political climate since the mid and late 1870s that enunciated racist government

¹⁶ Tanika Sarkar, 1996, 'Imagining Hindurashtra: The Hindu and the Muslim in Bankim Chandra's Writings' in David Ludden (ed.), *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, Delhi: OUP, p.182

policies (the Lytton policies and the Illbert Bill controversy) following the suppression of the 1857 revolt.¹⁷ This was the time when Bankim had written *Rajsingh and Anandamath* (1882) and hence it is in reference to this period and the period thereafter that Bankim is recognized to be dogmatic and revivalist in his works. Certainly the point may not be overlooked, as the notion of cultural ‘*dichotomy*’ between the Hindus and the Muslims is but obvious in his fictional writings of this period. Nevertheless, this is not to entirely obliterate the earlier phase of his literary writings from the paradigm of Hindu-Muslim differences altogether. The differences have been discussed and the notions in such directions have been gradually and subsequently developed, thereby suggesting a certain ‘continuity’ in his writings.

In discussing Louis Dumont’s concept of cultural symbiosis or ‘*syncretism*’, Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh point out that such a concept may develop as a result of the apparent cultural ambiguities of everyday life that produce a blurring of boundaries between communities. However, during moments of ‘*crisis*’ which can be brought about by perceptions of external challenge or inner dissent and dilution, significant symbols from everyday life are identified as cultural tools for the community’s existence.¹⁸ A symptomatic if not similar situation may be identified in case of the novel, *Durgeshnandini*. While the main theme of the novel seeks to highlight juxtaposing and mutually dependent emotions across communitarian boundaries in preference to notions

¹⁷ Tanika Sarkar, *Imagining Hindurashtra* p.168.

¹⁸ Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, ‘Women and Sexuality in the Discourse of Communalism and Communal Violence’ in *Struggle for Hegemony in India, 1941-47: Culture, Community and Power*, vol.3, p.44

of opposition and conflict, nevertheless, the background, the cultural definitions and in the end realization of uncrossable socio-cultural boundaries stand for the intrinsic and substantial '*differences*' in Bankim's consciousness for the two communities. Depiction of cultural differences at this stage is more 'implicit', working more at a subterranean level than asserting open rivalry and focusing upon opposition as such. The descriptions at this stage operated at a passive level reserving more explicit and active representations for his future writings.

CHAPTER 2

CULTURAL DIFFERENCE TO CULTURAL DICHOTOMY

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee seeks to explore cultural differences between Hindus and Muslims from his *first* novel onwards. *Durgeshnandini* addresses the issue with subtle and implicit references that otherwise does not disturb the thematic focus of the novel. Nevertheless, the idea of ‘differences’ are held intact throughout and in the end the novel stands for the realization that the socio-cultural boundaries between the two communities are immutable and cannot be infringed. While representations of cultural differences were more passive and inert at this stage, the idea was taken up more aggressively and more explicitly from his third novel onwards. This chapter essentially focuses on how the notion of cultural differences widened gradually to assert cultural *dichotomies* between the two communities, with due reference to the novels, *Mrinalini*, *Rajsingh*, *Anandamath* and his last novel, *Sitaram*, to be dealt with in their chronological sequence.

Mrinalini, the *third* novel of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, was first published in 1869. In its first two publications, Bankim had claimed the novel to be a ‘historical’ one, nevertheless, in its subsequent publications this claim was removed as per the author’s decision. The historical background of the novel was Ikhtiyar-ud-din Bakhtiyar Khalji’s conquest of Bengal. It is said that Bankim was extremely perturbed by the Musalman historical testimony that Bakhtiyar Khalji had conquered Bengal with *just* seventeen cavalymen. Bankim’s *Mrinalini* in this sense was an effort to redeem the Bengalis of

such a historical 'taint' through the fictive world and through concoction of the character, 'Pashupati'. Hence it is said that in the later publications of the novel he had removed his claims of it being a historical one as he had come to refute such a historical reality altogether.

The story in brief:

Hemchandra was the prince of Magadha who was deprived of his kingdom due to the sudden attack by Bakhtiyar Khalji. He vowed to recover his kingdom from the 'Yavan' stranglehold with strategic inputs from his mentor, Madhavacharya, a learned Brahman. However, his love for his beloved, Mrinalini, prevented him from being completely committed to his tasks, a fact, which essentially perturbed Madhavacharya. The latter through trickery sent Mrinalini to live in the refuge of one of his trusted disciples in the kingdom of Gaur. Hemchandra virtually rebelled when he came to hear of it. Nevertheless, he managed to extract information about her from Madhavacharya on condition that he would not meet Mrinalini until he recovered his kingdom from the Yavans.

Hemchandra tracked Mrinalini to Gaur but did not pursue to meet her, bound by his pledge to Madhavacharya. He instead, left for Navadwip to seek help from the Sena ruler for Yavan counteraction. Meanwhile, Mrinalini was ousted from her refuge upon a false

allegation that she was unchaste. Left without any shelter she decided to follow Hemchandra to Navadwip assisted by a beggar woman, Girijaya. In Navadwip, Hemchandra met Manorama, a young woman who lived with a Brahman, Janardan. Hemchandra was affectionate towards Manorama and treated her as his sister. Meanwhile, Madhavacharya had left for a country wide tour in search of an alliance of various kings to oppose the Yavans. On one such occasion when Hemchandra was recollecting his past, he suddenly tracked a man in the attire of a Yavan at his window. He became alert and with due preparations for confrontation he followed the man. While he was doing so, he unexpectedly met Manorama and she took him to the place where the Yavan had gone. Manorama was in general mysterious in her mannerisms. She was very young and was considered a widow. It was difficult to interpret her mannerisms as she frequently oscillated from being a child to behaving grave and matured.

As old as Lakshman Sena was at that time, the real authority of his kingdom rested in the hands of his efficient minister, Pashupati. The man however was pursuing a different trajectory. He coveted the kingdom and sought to ally with the Yavans for the purpose. He assured the Yavan messenger, Mohammed Ali, that there would be no opposition at the time of their conquest. The alliance was made in secrecy and incidentally the Yavan whom Hemchandra had followed happened to be the same Yavan messenger who had come to meet Pashupati. Manorama overheard Pashupati's conversation with the Yavan messenger and she confronted him over the issue. Pashupati loved Manorama. Being deserted soon after his marriage, Pashupati's life had become void which he wished to

overcome with Manorama's company. He wished to marry her. Manorama however, disapproved of Pashupati's intentions.

When Hemchandra went in pursuit of the Yavans who had ambushed in the surrounding jungles, he was attacked and wounded by Pashupati's men and he fell unconscious in front of the house where Manorama and Giriya had taken refuge. They recognized him and tracked him to his house when he regained his consciousness. They became suspicious when they found him with Manorama. Madhavacharya returned successful from his tour with assurances of alliances from several other kings to fight the Yavans. He also informed Hemchandra that Mrinalini had been turned out of his disciple's house for reasons of her immorality. Hemchandra decided to believe him despite being traumatized by such news.

In the temple of the *Ashtabhuj* devi, Pashupati met Manorama, where she informed him that she was his wife who had abandoned him soon after their marriage as her father had come to know from astrological interpretations that her daughter would become *sati* on the funeral pyre of her husband. Before he died he had submitted her to the care of his mentor, Janardan Brahman. Pashupati was overjoyed to hear this and he would not let her go. At this hour, the Yavans led by Bakhtiyar Khalji attacked. The latter had come with *only* seventeen cavalrymen and upon Pashupati's command they had not faced any hindrance. They went to the heart of the kingdom and brutally slaughtered the guards and entered the king's palace. The old king escaped with his family. Pashupati was beckoned

but he arrived with surprise at the unexpected bloodshed. Bakhtiyar Khalji agreed to surrender the kingdom to Pashupati upon a condition that had not been mentioned earlier by his messenger. Pashupati had to convert himself to embrace Islam as Qutubuddin's representative could not be a Hindu king. Pashupati was taken aback but he was helpless. Mohammed Ali, the Yavan messenger he had earlier met, however, helped him to escape. Pashupati realized his mistake and he returned to the temple where he had left Manorama. He did not know that Manorama had gone. The Yavans had set fire to his house and the temple, and in his frantic search for Manorama he could not protect himself and was ultimately burnt to death.

When Hemchandra was informed of the Yavan attack, he set out to fight them alone. However, he found that the Yavans were more interested in plundering and there was actually no war between two equal sides. So he sought to save the poor victims instead. In doing so he came across a Brahman who was about to die and before his death he tried to confess his guilt over having falsely blemished the character of a chaste woman, Mrinalini. Hemchandra began to repent his ill treatment of Mrinalini. He found her where he had left her. She had not been able to recover from the trauma that Hemchandra had deserted her. However, when Hemchandra begged her for forgiveness, she forgave him with all her love. Hemchandra then went to Madhavacharya to discuss matters of the Yavan attack. He also informed him that Mrinalini was his wife and that he had not disclosed the fact to him for fear of rejection. Madhavacharya initially felt depressed but he also appreciated Mrinalini's restraint in the matter. He blessed the couple.

The Brahman of the Ashtabhuja devi's temple wanted to recover the devi's idol and install it at his place. From the debris, he recovered the idol and clinging on to it Pashupati's burnt dead body. The Brahman and his son decided to ritualistically dispose the dead. While they were in the process, Manorama arrived at the site in a state of insanity. She addressed herself as Pashupati's wife and offered to commit sati. She burnt herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. Before becoming sati she sent for Hemchandra and informed him of Pashupati's hidden wealth. With Pashupati's wealth and Madhavacharya's instructions, Hemchandra established a kingdom down south and thwarted all Yavan efforts from there. With Madhavacharya in Kamrup, Bakhtiyar Khalji was ousted from there and on his way back he died.

Mrinalini as such is a literary effort of Bankim to thwart the historical claims of the medieval Musalman testimonies regarding the fate of Bengal at their hands, a fact which he discusses in detail in his essay, 'Banglar Itihas Shombondhe Koekti Kotha' (A Few Words about the History of Bengal).¹ Bankim refutes the historical basis of the claim that Bengal could be conquered by Bakhtiyar Khalji with just seventeen cavalrymen. He charges the medieval Musalman historian, *Minhasuddin* with such tendentious speculations. In his essay he proceeds further to counter-argue that Khalji had not been able to conquer the whole of Bengal and that independent Hindu domains had continued to exist, a fact that went unmentioned in the Musalman chronicles. However, in the novel, he seeks to explain and simultaneously reason the historical conquest of Bengal through

¹ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 'Banglar Itihas Shombondhe Koekti Kotha', *Bangadarshan*, 1880, Calcutta, also published in *Bankim Rachanavali* (1964), vol.2, Sahitya Samsad edition, Calcutta

his concoction of the literary character, 'Pashupati'. He reasons Hindu disunity vis-à-vis the Yavans as the fundamental cause, an aspect which he continues to construct and discuss in his later novels. Bankim believed that the Hindus in general lack common solidarity and in this sense also national solidarity. They have always fought one another.² Pashupati's treachery to Lakshman Sena and his defection to the Yavan side indicate that the problem inhered in Hindu solidarity and collective defense. The defection and disunity from within rather than incapacities and lack of physical strength were more substantial and rational reasons for the cause of Bengal's conquest by the Yavans. Pashupati wanted to become the ruler of Gaur and he sought Yavan help for the purpose. He agreed to surrender the kingdom to them without any confrontation and in return he wanted to become the ruler, as their representative and feudatory. The aspect of Hindu disunity lingers till the end when Bankim says that Bengal could not be recovered and *Shantisheel*, who had been loyal to Pashupati in the end becomes part of the Yavans when he realizes that the Hindus would not come to power in Gaur and with his commitment to the Yavans and his deception towards the Hindus he acquires for himself strategic position under the Musalmans, and also participates in oppressing the Hindus. The problem of *Hindu disunity* is significantly cultivated by Bankim in and through the thematic of the novel. It is an aspect which continuously perturbs him and he keeps returning to it by way of explanations and suggestive counter visions. He returns to the problem in Sitaram.

² Partha Chatterjee, 1986, 'The Moment of Departure: Culture and Power in the Thought of Bankimchandra' in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, New Delhi: OUP, pp.54-55

If disunity as such was to become a cardinal factor, the Hindu sense of '*fatalism*' is also argued upon as a relevant obstacle that prevents them from taking up arms immediately.³ It is the Hindu attitude towards power which ultimately justifies their state of prolonged subjection. The Hindu religion embedded with philosophical connotations more often than not vests the ultimate authority on the Hindu scriptures. The interpretations in there are held high, often exceeding the authority of Gods, as the knowledge that leads to 'salvation' and not the European concept of knowledge as the basis to acquire power. This system of Hindu *belief-structure* is according to Bankim fundamental to explain the Hindu subjection to Muslim rule and not their lack of physical prowess. In *Mrinalini*, when Madhavacharya comes to meet Lakshman Sena in his royal court and enquires about his arrangements to counter the Yavans, *Damodar*, the chief Brahman pandit of Gaur announces that according to the Hindu *shastra* the Turks would eventually assume power over the country. The maxim of shastra is inevitable and none has the power to alter what the shastra predicts. In that case it is futile to prepare for a war in order to prevent something which is inevitable.⁴

The Hindus were to be blamed for their flaws; the inevitability of their defeat lay in their religious beliefs and cultural systems. Bankim simultaneously engages himself in the dual project of constructing and reasoning Hindu behaviour on one hand and on the other, he

³ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, p.6. It has already been discussed in the Introduction

⁴ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 2006, 'Mrinalini' in *Bankim Rachanavali*, vol.1, Calcutta: Dey's Publishing, p.218, "... je roop rajagya hoilo, iha shastra shangat. Shastre rishi bakko projukto ache je, Turkiyera e desh odhikar koribe. Shastre ache obosho ghotibe- kahar shaddho nibaron kore? Tobe juddhodome proyojon ki?"

counters and rejects the historical claims of Minhasuddin, which belittles Hindu capabilities of self-defense. When he posits his argument as such, he inevitably enters the domain of Hindu-Muslim differentiations. The difference becomes '*explicit*', for Bankim posits the two communities in opposition to each other. Mrinalini in this sense is a step ahead of the paradigm set in Durgeshnandini where realization of differentiations was more at an implicit level, with less importance attributed to '*confrontational*' features as such. Mrinalini sets the paradigm for '*dichotomy*' with distinct definitions of the *native* Hindus vis-à-vis the 'Yavan' *outsiders* who ultimately take over Bengal. The Yavans were the Turkish conquerors from outside who aimed to conquer the whole of Hindustan. The contours of dichotomy nevertheless, scintillate *more* when it comes to reckoning the '*cultural*' context.

The novel from its outset most potently unites political opposition with religious confrontation, thereby ascertaining a cultural power struggle between the two parties. Political war did not limit itself to mere usurpation of political authority of one party by another, on the contrary, it involved the more vital questions of power related to religion and culture. It crucially underlined triumph of one religious system over the other or conquest and subjugation of one religion by another. The Yavan conquest of Bengal involved large-scale slaughter of the native Hindu masses. Pashupati had voluntarily accepted Yavan alliance and had assured complete surrender and despite this, the helpless subject people of the kingdom faced tremendous torture, oppression and plunder at the hands of the invaders.

They plundered all they could and then brutally slaughtered the residents... Brahmans were tortured. Their sacred threads adorned the horses' neck and the idols of Gods were trampled by the Yavans. It was a terrible and painful sight...⁵

The targets of attack were *religious symbols*. It was the general medieval trend of political confrontation where conquests and invasions often involved striking at the native religious symbols to assert victory and supremacy. However, in this case there had been no open confrontation as such and yet no opportunity was left even amidst general plunder, to strike at religious symbols and claim cultural dominance.

Vital questions of cultural power struggle are more importantly depicted in the conversation between Bakhtiyar Khalji and Pashupati in the aftermath of the former's conquest of Bengal:

Khalji informs Pashupati that he has been accepted as Qutubuddin's representative in Bengal, and that Gaur has been placed in his hands but, it is the condition of the Yavan king that all his men had to be adherents of Islam as a necessary pre-requisite to serve him. Hence, before undertaking his royal

⁵ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Mrinalini, p.264, "*Shonite grihoster grihoshokol plabito hoite lagilo... Sulagre biddho hoiya bramhoner mundoshokol bhishonbhabe byakto korite lagilo. Bramhoner joggopobito oshher golodeshe dulite lagilo. Shinghashonshto salgramsilashokol jobon-podaghate goraitte lagilo.*"

*responsibilities, Pashupati has to convert to Islam. But the latter says that he has not been earlier informed of any such criterion. Upon this, Khalji says that it is but obvious, as the Musalmans having conquered Bengal could not allow it to be transferred to the Hindus again. Pashupati refuses to accept Islam; he says that for the sake of Yavan's ruler's kingdom, he would not forsake Sanatan dharma and proceed towards hell. Khalji says that Sanatan dharma is nothing but worshipping ghosts. The maxims of Quran alone define true dharma and hence in accepting Muhammad, Pashupati must improve his life there after. Pashupati realizes that he has been trapped and so he relents but Khalji was too clever. He decides upon an immediate conversion of Pashupati...*⁶

The volley of words thrown from each side depicts a situation of cultural offense and defense; it is a religious conflict between Sanatan dharma and Islam and with the injunctions of each influencing and determining the existence of their respective believers, the religious confrontation largely assumes cultural proportions. It becomes a power struggle between two different and divergent cultures, both claiming superiority upon each other and both claiming to be the only true religion. The compulsion is such,

⁶ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Mrinalini, pp. 262-263, "Qutubuddin gour-sashonbhar aapnar protti orpon korilen. Aaj hoite aapni bonghe rajprotinidhi hoilen. Kintu jobon-shomrater shonkolpo ei je islamdhormabolir byatito keho tahar rajkarje shonlipto hoite paribe na. Aapnake islamdhormo obolombon korite hoibe." But Pashupati argues, "Shondhir somoy erokom kono kotha hoi ni." Khalji replies, "Jodi na hoiya thake, tobe seta bhrantimatro. Aar a kotha utthopito na hoileo aapnar nyay buddhiman byakti dyara onayashe onumito hoiya thakibe. Keno na amon kokhono sombhob noi je, musholmaanera bangala joy koriyai abar hinduke rajjo debe." Pashupati refuses, "Aami sthirshonkolpo hoiyachhi je, jobon-shomrater samrajjer jonnou shonatondhormo chhariya norokgaami hoibo na." Khalji says, "Eha aapnar bhrom. Jahake shonatondhormo bolitechhen, se bhuter puja matro. Quoran ukto dhormoi sotto dhormo. Mohammad bhojiya ehokal porrokaler mongolshadhon korun."

that cultural factor *supersedes* political alliance to the extent that Khalji insists on forcible conversion of Pashupati. Political guarantee is made to rest on religious faith. The intention was not so much to seek mere political allegiance as it was to ensure that Islam reigned supreme in Hindustan and their representative rulers in all quarters of the country were adherents of Islam. Political legitimacy was therefore made incumbent on cultural criteria.

The Hindus on their part also seek redemption in opposing and defeating the Yavans. Madhavacharya asserts that the divine task of defeating and ousting the Yavans was incumbent on Hemchandra.⁷ The temporal conflict against the Yavans is given a ‘*divine*’ character, such that Hemchandra’s struggle to recover his throne and political legitimacy is expanded from a domain of personal interest to the benefit of the larger Hindu community. Restoration of Hemchandra signified resurrection of Hindu power and dominance. And hence, Madhavacharya ensures that nothing comes in between Hemchandra and the accomplishment of his divine task. Pashupati in contrast, asserts his ‘*Hindu-ness*’ in a different sense. Apparently he stakes his country for personal ambitions and becomes a betrayer to his own religion and land. But, his confession in the temple of the Ashtabhujā devi symbolizes a ‘*nuance*’.

⁷ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Mrinalini, pp. 199-202, “*Tumi debkarjo na sadhile, ke sadhibe? Tumi jobonke na taraile ke taraibe? Jobonipat tomar ekmatro dhyanshorup houa uchhit.*”

*He says that he would never compromise on the independence of his motherland. His alliance with the Yavans is a mere temporary arrangement to help him replace the old and incompetent king of Gaur. Just as a thorn helps to take out another thorn after which both are disposed of, similarly, after becoming the king with the Yavans' help he would destroy them with his kingly power. He asks the goddess if his intentions were polluted and if it were he would practice penance throughout his life...*⁸

Pashupati's patriotism in this sense is an unexpected and different shade altogether. It is a rationalization of his personal greed. In an instant the villain, the betrayer, becomes a hero in an alternate sense. He is rational in his own situation. He is completely unaware of his and the country's consequences. He assumes that with his true intentions to benefit the kingdom by dismantling the incompetent ruling authority, which of course he could not do by way of open rebellion, he was not being unpatriotic or disloyal to his land and faith. He was operating from a political point of view and sought to take Yavan aid only in political terms. Nevertheless, he failed to realize the inherent *compulsiveness* of cultural terms that could not be separated from political strategies, especially when he himself deliberated the same trap for the Yavans.

⁸ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Mrinalini, p. 231. "*Ami jononisworup jonmobhumi kokhono debodweshi jobonke bikroy koribo na. Kebolmatro ei amar papabhisondhi je, okkhom prachin rajar sthane ami raja hoibo. Jemon kontoker dara kontok uddhar koriya pore ubhoy kontokke dure feliya daey, temni jobonshohaytay rajjo labh koriya rajjo-hchaytay jobonke nipat koribo. Ehate paap ki ma? Jodi ehate paap hoy, jabojjibon projar sukhanushtan koriya se paaper prayoschitto koribo.*" On another occasion regarding Pashupati, Bankim writes that the man who could have saved Gaur was sitting aside and like a spider conspiring to form the net to trap his own motherland, p. 256.

Mrinalini made important statements on issues of cultural dichotomy between the Hindus and the Muslims. Although the Hindus in the end fail to reinstate themselves in Bengal, nevertheless, Bakhtiyar Khalji gets killed and with Hemchandra being able to establish a Hindu base down south and with his efforts to thwart the Yavans from there, the story ends on a suggestive note leaving the possibilities of Hindu resurrection open for the future.

The process of '*polarization*' between the two communities achieves a progressive direction in the novel, *Rajsingh*. The rhetoric is carried further and the novel enters a new domain whereby the compulsive trend of exploring Hindu-Muslim oppositions is not confined to Bengal alone but is taken aboard to include intrinsic references from the *Rajput* histories and stories of their courageous counteraction of the mighty Mughals. Rajsingh is phenomenal is valorizing the Hindu Rajputs, for their chivalrous feats in protecting and preserving the Hindu land and objects of honour against the Mughal trend to usurp whatever they wanted.

The novel initially appeared as a series of separate excerpts under the common title of 'Rajsingh' in the magazine, *Bangadarshan* (1877-1878). Later Bankim published them in the form of a novel as he felt that such a form would do more justice to the chivalry and the valour that Rajsingh had exhibited in fighting the Mughals.⁹

⁹ Vera Novikova, 1976, *Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya: His Life and Works*, Calcutta: National Publishers, p.166

Story in brief:

Rajsingh published in 1882, is set against the seventeenth century backdrop of a confrontation between the Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb and a Rajput chieftain, Rajsingh. The daughter of Vikram Singh, the ruler of a small kingdom of Rupnagar in the mountainous terrains of Rajasthan, was in awe of Rajsingh who was amongst the very few to resist Mughal authority at that time, considering that a large number of Rajputs had allied with the Mughals for a very long time. Chanchal Kumari's father had also accepted Mughal suzerainty and, hence, Rajsingh was their opponent as well. But Chanchal Kumari did not approve of Aurangzeb; she thought that he was a most evil and shrewd person and in a very assertive moment had also crushed the Emperor's portrait under her feet.¹⁰ This act produced tremendous repercussions.

Zebunnisa, the royal princess was in love with an ordinary soldier, Mubarak. But royal as she was, she would not part with her royal luxuries, pomp and glamour and hence she rejected Mubarak's love for her. Dariya Bibi was Mubarak's forsaken wife. She was also the professional gossip seller and when she came to know of the incident in Rupnagar she sought to convey it to Zebunnisa. The chief queen of Aurangzeb was Jodhpuri Begum, a Rajput princess, but he did not much approve of her. His favourite was Udaipuri Begum, though she had no connection with Udaipur as such. She was from West Asia and had

¹⁰ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 2006, 'Rajsingh', in *Bankim Rachanavali*, Calcutta: Dey's Publishing, p.749. Referring to Aurangzeb, Chanchal Kumari says, "*bodjater dhari je. Omon pashondo je ar prithibite jonmo neini!*"

initially belonged to Dara, but when the latter was defeated all his possessions became Aurangzeb's and so, Aurangzeb had come to acquire Udaipuri Begum. He made her his queen and she was his favourite. Udaipuri Begum was a drunkard and at the time Zebunnisa had come to inform her of what Dariya had conveyed to her, she was in her usual drunk state. Zebunnisa informed her of the incident in Rupnagar and instigated her to punish Chanchal Kumari. As an act of avenging the insult on Mughals, she said that Chanchal Kumari should be brought to Delhi and forced to serve them. The queen agreed and when Aurangzeb came to meet her that day she informed him of her conversation with Zebunnisa. Aurangzeb was angry and decided to do the same.

Aurangzeb gave orders that he intended to marry Chanchal Kumari. The news was much celebrated in Rupnagar but Chanchal Kumari became perturbed and anxious. In Delhi, Jodhpuri Begum also became apprehensive and she suggested that Chanchal Kumari should approach Rajsingh for help.¹¹ Chanchal Kumari sent message to Rajsingh saying that it was incumbent on him to confront the Mughals in order to defend Rajput honour.¹² In response, Rajsingh conducted a guerilla attack on the Mughal contingent which had arrived to escort the Rajput princess to Delhi. In the encounter that followed, the Mughal force, notwithstanding its numerical superiority and better equipment, suffered defeat. Chanchal Kumari sought refuge in Rajsingh's kingdom. Her stay in Udaipur exacerbated the situation to the extent that ultimately, Aurangzeb decided to confront Rajsingh himself. Bloody battles followed but ultimately the Mughal forces faced defeat at all

¹¹ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rajsingh. Translation of this excerpt is given in the analysis of the novel.

¹² Ibid. Translation of this excerpt is given in the analysis of the novel.

fronts; the royal queens and the princess were imprisoned and; Aurangzeb himself was forced to starve. Aurangzeb in the end was forced to accept a truce upon Rajsingh's conditions. With Mubarak's help Rajsingh had been able to vanquish the Mughal emperor and hence every effort was made to reunite Zebunissa with him, the latter having realized her initial mistakes had succumbed to his love. Despite his disapproval, Aurangzeb was forced to accept their marriage. However, upon his return to Delhi, he renewed his threats and made preparations for war.

He sent Mubarak for the war and made a ploy to get him killed as he could not accept him. He sent a message to Vikram Singh that his daughter had not yet arrived at Delhi. But the latter had allied with Rajsingh. Thus, along with Gopinath Rathore and Vikram Singh, Rajsingh confronted the renewed Mughal attacks on Udaipur. Mubarak died in the war. With Vikram Singh's consent Rajsingh married Chanchal Kumari after which, they set out to confront Aurangzeb and ended defeating him. Aurangzeb made futile efforts to seek refuge in Chittor. Subaldas, a Rajput made it really difficult for Aurangzeb and forced him away from Udaipur. Rajsingh's son, Kumar Bhimsingh, plundered the Mughal troops in Gujarat. Another son, Dyalsingh destroyed Mughal settlements in Malwa, threw away their holy books into the wells and bareheaded the kazis. Dyalsingh and Jaysingh together fought Azim, Aurangzeb's son, and forced him out of Chittor. War continued for four years, in which the Mughal troops were repeatedly defeated. In the end, Aurangzeb was forced to pursue for alliance. He gave Rajsingh more than what he had asked for; his arrogance was badly hurt and he did not try showing his prowess again. The Rajputs had given him a disastrous defeat.

Rajsingh, in unequivocal terms, stands for *overt* opposition between the Mughals and the Hindu Rajputs, so much so that the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb has been depicted as the historical enemy of the Hindus. The historical reference is duly legitimized for unlike in the other cases where Bankim claimed that a historical background had been concocted, in case of *Rajsingh*, he says that it is a historical novel.¹³ Jadunath Sarkar has also acknowledged the historical basis of the novel. Vera Novikova quotes Bankim:

*The main thing in Moghul rule are these clashes of the Hindus and Moghuls. Among the Hindus, the main opponents of the Moghuls were the Rajputs and the Marathas. Every body is aware of the Marathas but little is known about the bravery of the Rajputs although their achievements are considerable. History is surely a medium which could have done it but there are many impediments in writing history. It is impossible to establish correctly the true facts of history. The Muslim historians were extremely tendentious in their narrations and they hated the Hindus. More often than not they keep silent regarding the heroic feats of the Hindus, specially about the Rajputs, who were the old enemies of the Moghuls.*¹⁴

Bankim therefore took up the task of deliberating this historical distinctiveness of the Hindus that had not been much stressed upon. The theme of seventeenth century

¹³ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Rajsingh*, preface, p.738.

¹⁴ Vera Novikova, *op.cit.*, pp.166-167

Rajputana aptly justified such distinctiveness. Rajputana, essentially a conglomeration of several Rajput princedoms engrossed in mutual wars and oppositions, often accepted or were coerced to accept Mughal suzerainty. *Mewar* or Udaipur ruled by Maharana Rajsingh was one of the princedoms which preserved its independence. The repeated attempts by Aurangzeb to subjugate this princedom did not meet with success and for a long time this independent pocket remained the *epicenter* of Mughal opposition. Bankim had magnificently appropriated the theme for his novel, simultaneously maintaining its historical authenticity. Vera Novikova quotes him again:

*I have kept the main event, that is the result of battles etc., as they are in history. None of the battles or their outcome is imaginary, but the descriptions of the battles which are not in history have been re-created. Aurangzeb, Raj Singha, Zeb-un-nissa, Udaipuri- are all historical personages. Their characters have been drawn according to what is recorded in history, but the incidents which have been described relating to them are not all based on history. In a novel there is no need to be a historian in all matters.*¹⁵

The representation of Aurangzeb as the adversary of the Hindus is but too obvious. The novel begins with the event of a Rajput princess kicking Aurangzeb's portrait and recounting his sins. Aurangzeb's wife, Jodhpuri Begum, prefers widowhood to destruction of Hindu religion and culture by her husband's oppressive activities. In fact,

¹⁵ Vera Novikova, op.cit., p. 169

she goes to the extreme extent of saying that the kingdom of Delhi was fast approaching its destruction, with the Marathas resisting the Mughals in the south and the Rajputs gradually consolidating in the north. She also refers to the collection of the oppressive and discriminatory taxes, *jeziya* in Rajputana as also incidents of cow-killing.¹⁶ Towards the end, when Rajsingh discusses with his ministers, the possibilities of a ceasefire with Aurangzeb, his ministers almost unanimously reject the proposal and instead propose to slay Aurangzeb, claiming that such an act would at least rid the earth of an evil and thorny personality without which there could be no redemption.¹⁷

In discussing the plight of Chanchal Kumari and the Rajput gallantry to save her from the notorious intentions of the Mughal ruler, Bankim places a central concern upon the concept of *female honour* interlinked with the whole idea of Hindu masculinity. Jodhpuri Begum, the Hindu wife of Aurangzeb, advises Chanchal Kumari, to embrace self-destruction rather than surrender herself to the Mughals.¹⁸ Chanchal Kumari also accepts the fate when she writes to Rajsingh that lest he is unable to protect her honour, she would commit suicide on her way to Delhi.¹⁹ Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh have pointed out that the society which derived the sanctity of its social values from a

¹⁶ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rajsingh, p.766, Jodhpuri Begum says, “*he bhogoban! Amake bidhoba kor. E rakkhosh ar odhiki din banchile Hindunam lop hoibe.*” She further says, “*...bhoy nai, Dillir shinghashon tolitechhe. Dokkhine Maratha Mogholar har bhangiya ditechhe. Jejiyar jalae shomosto Rajputana joliya uthiyachhe. Rajputanae gohotya hoitechhe. Kon Rajput iha shohibe? Shob Rajput ekotrito hoitechhe.*”

¹⁷ Ibid, p.855, the minister says, “*tobu ei mohapapishto prithibir kontoshworup Aurangzeb ke bodh korilei prithibike purnodhhar kora hoibe...*”

¹⁸ Ibid, p.765, Jodhpuri Begum said, “*...bolio, borong bish khaiyo, tothapi Dillite ashiona.*”

¹⁹ Ibid, p.778, Chanchal Kumari says, “*proyojon hoile pranbisharjon koribo, protigya koriyachhi...*”

woman's complete subjugation to a man also indirectly raised her to a status where she became an autonomous symbol or carrier of social honour, and even an embodiment of the sovereignty of state, in case the woman belonged to the ruler or the ruling family.²⁰ Thus, the issue of woman's honour often became an immediate cause for communitarian animosity. The entire paradigm on masculinity as the protector and preserver of female honour then develops in the vulnerable context of a Rajput woman appealing to Rajput valour and chivalry. Rajsingh emerges as the protector of Chanchal Kumari's honour; he vows to fight Aurangzeb and his Mughal army even at the expense of his own life. The masculinity and heroism of the Rajput rulers, *Rana Pratap* and *Rana Sanga* are valorized and frequently quoted in the novel. It reflects Bankim's intention to appropriate a chivalrous Rajput history in order to suppress an otherwise 'effeminate' Bengali stereotype; to emerge as the defender of female honour and with that also of the national honour. The theme of 'Hindu impotence' was also employed by Savarkar as a mode of provocation and instigation: "*look at the gutless Hindu. He cannot even defend his women from Muslim goondas!*"²¹

The complex juxtaposition and cohabitation of transgressive emotions in *Durgeshnandini*, gives way to historically determined differences and divergences between the two communities in Rajsingh. Jodhpuri Begum was the chief wife of Aurangzeb but she continues to preserve and uphold her traditional Hindu-ness. She is a fundamental icon as

²⁰ Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, 1994, 'Women and Sexuality in the Discourse of Communalism and Communal Violence', *Struggle for Hegemony in India, 1941-47: Culture, Community and Power*, vol.3.

²¹ Ibid.

far as tracing the Hindu-Muslim differences in Bankim's novels is concerned. Traditionally speaking, a devoted Hindu wife is so committed to her husband that she is called 'ardhangini', which means she is one half of her husband's self and hence she partakes in all his activities and responsibilities, happiness and sorrow, life and death. But here is an example of a Hindu wife who prefers to become a widow and prays for her husband's death rather than witness continuous vandalism of Hinduism through his intolerant and oppressive activities.²² The novel reveals that although married to the emperor of *Bharatvarsha* and herself the royal *Bharateshwari*, as Aurangzeb's chief queen, Jodhpuri Begum was never happy in the Mughal household. She preserved her Hindu culture, accepted the services of only the Hindu maids, and had food that was permitted by her religion; she also continued to worship the Hindu gods and goddesses.²³ Thus, Bankim essentially depicts her as confined to a cage. In fact at a later instance when Aurangzeb gets defeated and the women are taken captives by Rajsingh's men, Jodhpuri Begum expresses her joy and sense of freedom to Nirmal and asks her to take her along as she no longer wanted to stay in the 'Mlechhapuri'.²⁴ The attitude of Jodhpuri Begum opens up the gnawing reality of a distinct *cleavage* between the Hindus and the Muslims that could not be reconciled with ease. Though married to a Musalman she remains a Rajput to the core and has faith in Rajput gallantry, and so, she advises

²² Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rajsingh, p.766, Jodhpuri Begum says, "he bhogoban! Amake bidhoba kor. E rakkhosh ar odhiki din banchile Hindunam lop hoibe."

²³ Ibid, p.765, "Tini Hindur meye Musalmaner ghore poriya Bharateshwari hoiyao tahar shukh chhilona. Tini Aurangzeber puri r modhheo aapnar Hinduani rakhiten. Hindu poricharika dwara tini shebita hoiten, Hindur pak bhinno bhojon koriten na- emon ki, Aurangzeber purir modhhe Hindu debotar murti sthapon koriya puja koriten."

²⁴ Ibid, p.839, Jodhpuri Begum says, "amake tomader shonge loiya cholo... ami e mlechhapurite, e mahapaper bhitor ar thakite parina."

Chanchal Kumari to approach Rajsingh for help. Chanchal Kumari in her letter to Rajsingh refers to several Rajput states as Jodhpur, Amber, etc. who sought content in establishing matrimonial connections with the Mughal emperor, but as a Rajput herself, she entirely disapproves it and thinks that such an association actually *tarnished*²⁵ Rajput tradition and culture and, with the others having done it already she did not want Rupnagar to do the same. She further confides to Rajsingh that her father was not capable enough to stand against the mighty Mughals and hence she sought his help. Through the incident, Bankim argues that while such marriages to the emperor had to be done for strategic reasons, in reality perhaps they were not much approved of.

The polarity is further emphasized with Bankim's constant valorization of Rajput bravery and chivalry in protecting a woman's honour as also dexterity in war tactics in the manner in which Rajsingh finally manages to trap Aurangzeb.

*Mubarak, who was the Mughal chief, was astonished by the fact that such a small number of Rajput soldiers had actually killed so many Mughal soldiers. On hearing this, Chanchal proudly declares that this was not the first time that the Rajputs had exhibited their tremendous prowess, for the battle of Haldighati had already set a similar, scintillating example...*²⁶

²⁵ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rajsingh, p.778, she uses the term 'kolonko' which means taint and 'kuldhangsho' which meant destroying tradition and lineage.

²⁶ Ibid, p.797. Mubarak exclaims, "She ki ponchash jon sipahi ato mogul marilo?" Chanchal replies, "Bichitro nohe – Holdighate ei rokom ki ekta hoiyachilo suniachi..."

In comparison, Aurangzeb is portrayed as a dog which lifts its tail at the first opportunity of flight.²⁷ However, Bankim adds some 'grey' shades to the Mughal character-descriptions: the first appearance of Aurangzeb as an elderly, quiet and dignified man; his gentle and melancholy love for a Hindu maid and; the moral anxiety of Mubarak, who connives with the Rajputs to defeat Aurangzeb but simultaneously wishes death for himself for betraying the Mughals. But, on the whole such references are *overpowered* by an overemphasis on the Musalmans as the Hindu opponents. Sudipto Kaviraj points out that Rajsingh at many levels is a story of a new type compared to Bankim's earlier novels with a historical background. In Rajsingh the story moves in terms of space outside Bengal, and becomes in a more real sense a historic one. This does not mean historical factual authenticity; for its exulted end is due to the way in which the narrative has been ended. Within the fictive world of the novel, Rajput power is not humiliated; Bengalis make an effort to appropriate the glorious Rajput histories and appropriate them as their very own. There is therefore, an effort to tear out historical events out of their local contexts and to create some kind of common historical substratum to relate an otherwise unrelated and distant people. This Sudipto Kaviraj considers as perhaps the founding movement of conceiving a '*national*' community, the historic beginning of an imaginative integration, though the process is no doubt heavy with ironies.²⁸

²⁷ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rajsingh, p.859, "... Aurangzeb betrahototo kukurer moto bodone langul nihito koriya Rajsingher shommukh hoite polayan korilen."

²⁸ Sudipto Kaviraj, 1995, *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India*, Delhi: OUP, p.146.

When it comes to nationalist imagination or a symbolic terrain from which rhetorical idioms can be drawn for usage in nationalist purposes, *Anandamath* has always been hailed and highlighted for its concept and strategy. It emerges as a climax to the extent that its rhetoric is compulsive and its symbols emotionally overpowering. But this domain of nationalist imagination is nonetheless not free from cultural jargons. With *Anandamath*, Bankim enters the terrain of complete estrangement and cultural dichotomy between the two religious communities.

Anandamath, first published in December, 1882, is situated in the historical background of the *Sannyasi Rebellion* of 1771, manipulated to the tasks of fiction writing. The novel was earlier flashed in sequential parts in *Bangadarshan*, the self-edited vernacular journal of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Chittaranjan Bandopadhyay²⁹ traces a possible inspiration of the novel to the life and revolutionary activities of the Marathi leader, Vasudev Balwant Phadke, although direct evidences are unavailable. A subsequent Bengali translation of the latter's monograph, '*Apurva Bharat Uddhar*', which appeared two years before the novel's publication is said to reflect substantial similarities with the plot set in *Anandamath*. The question of inspiration apart, the historical context of the novel has been an object of polemical scrutiny and discussions. Jadunath Sarkar and R.C. Majumdar have completely rejected any historical possibility of the sannyasis fighting the British or the Musalmans with an intensive agenda to free the country. They point out that the sannyasis had no nationalist perceptions and were often imbued with extremely

²⁹ Chittaranjan Bandopadhyay, 1983, *Anandamath Rochonar Prerona O Porinam*, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers

narrow motives of unscrupulous dacoity. Interestingly however, Bankim himself has refrained from any such historical claims for his novel. It was one of those instances of ‘*deliberate*’ historical construction that Sudipto Kaviraj has emphasized upon.³⁰ The novel is set in the ‘*transitional*’ historical moment of late eighteenth century, when a majority of Bengal suffered acute and devastating conditions under the Muslim rulership of Mir Jafar and the indirect control of the British.

Story in brief:

The story unfolds in consequence of the great famine of 1770, as a result of which, major parts of Bengal were depopulated and devastated. Due to the famine-stricken condition of the village of Padachina, Mahendra Sinha, a rich man in the village, deserted home with his wife Kalyani and daughter, Sukumari for the city. While Mahendra went searching for milk to feed the child, some famished robbers came and captured his wife and daughter and took them into the depths of jungle. Taking advantage of a subsequent quarrel among the robbers, Kalyani escaped with her daughter until she was succored by an ascetic, a sannyasi named Satyananda, who had organized a band of sannyasis known as ‘*santans*’ or ‘children’ to free the Motherland. The centre of their activities was known as ‘*Anandamath*’, which was established in some unreachable part of the jungle. Satyananda’s chief associates were Bhabananda, Jibananda and Dhirananda. Kalyani and her daughter were brought to the ‘*Math*’ while Bhabananda was sent in search of

³⁰ Sudipto Kaviraj, op.cit. See his chapter, ‘Imaginary History’.

Mahendra Sinha, who in the meantime had been arrested by some apprehensive sepoys. Bhabananda rescued him from the sepoys by a trick. On his arrival at the 'Math', Mahendra heard about the santans' creed and became thoroughly motivated to join them. However, he was required to forsake his worldly cares. As he was contemplating to take his wife and child to his native village, on the way, in ignorance, Sukumari, the child swallowed a poison pill and became senseless. Kalyani decided to follow her daughter's fate and rid Mahendra of his liabilities. In the midst of intense bereavement, Mahendra met Satyananda who approached him singing a '*Vaishnav*' hymn. Some passer-by sepoys anticipated them as rebels and took Mahendra and Satyananda in custody. On his way to prison, Satyananda sent a message through his song. Jibananda understood the meaning and rescued the child, Sukumari, who was lying in the forest and left her in the care of his sister, Nimaimani. In the meantime, the santans after a fight with the Musalman authorities had rescued Mahendra and Satyananda. Jibananda's wife, Shanti lived with his sister and by meeting her, he had transgressed the rules of the order. A further complication arose when Shanti followed her husband to the 'Math' in the guise of a young man and was initiated as a santan. Satyananda, however, guessed her real identity. Bhabananda had found Kalyani in the forest and had restored her back to life, but he also fell in love with her. Kalyani repelled his advances. In a skirmish with the combined English and Musalman forces, Bhabananda died fighting, though his men came out victorious. Mahendra was reunited with his wife and child in Padachina. In a subsequent battle with the English, the santans won and Jibananda fell wounded, but a mysterious saint, a '*mahapurush*', restored him to Shanti. The two decided to spend the rest of their lives as ascetics, while in the 'Math', Satyananda was dissuaded by the same saintly

person from pursuing any further conflicts with the English. The 'mahapurush' said that it was in the larger benefit of the Hindus that the English should be allowed to undertake the country's administrative responsibilities.

Bankim's *Anandamath*, pregnant with nationalist connotations and imageries, formed the basis of inspiration for a large number of nationalists during the Extremist-Swadeshi movement and continues to be hailed by the nationalist paradigm. The construction of the 'Mother' cult with her 'seventy-million arms' raised to fight the enemies and the unconditional devotion of her children to the cause of regenerating the Motherland, at once struck the core of nationalist thought so much so that a fictional concoction was rendered alive and the song, 'Bande Mataram' (I bow to thee my Mother), became the revered anthem and the symbol of commitment and sacrifice. To quote the Swadeshi leader, Aurobindo Ghosh of his opinion about Bankim's *Anandamath*:

A momentous vision had to be revealed... The message which he has received, the vision which has been vouchsafed to him, he declares to the world with all the strength that is in him, and in one supreme moment of inspiration expresses it in words which have merely to be uttered to stir men's inmost natures, clarify their minds, seize their hearts and impel them to things which would have been

*impossible to them in ordinary moments. Those words are the mantra which he was born to reveal and of that mantra he is the seer.*³¹

Nevertheless, the ‘*mantra*’ fraught with religious icons and distinct definitions of the ‘self’ soon became the fertile ground for religious and cultural controversies. The contemporary Bengali Muslim opinion in *Al-Eslam*, attacked Bankim alleging that “*it was through this hatred of the Muslims that he sought to enrich his patriotism and for this reason his patriotism never came off... since he has conceived Bengali Muslims to be his enemies, the Bengali Muslims consider him a self-interested traitor.*”³² The nature of Muslim representation in *Anandamath* involved the critical problematic of actually announcing that the Hindus and the Muslims are inherently dichotomous and that with the advent of the Muslims, the Hindus have undergone cultural ruin and degeneration. The rhetoric inherent in the plot of the novel is too powerful in terms of bolstering national regeneration or saving the Motherland but the criteria for self-defense lay in opposing and destroying the Muslims who had maneuvered Hindu decay. A direct lineage has been often tracked from *Anandamath* to the Ayodhya riots of 1992, alleging that such a representation of the Hindu-Muslim relations in *Anandamath* manifested in reality due to the inherently splintered nature of nationalist ideology from its outset.³³

³¹ Aurobindo Ghosh, 1994, ‘Rishi Bankimchandra’ in Bhabatosh Chatterjee (ed.), *Bankim Chandra Chatterjee: Essays in Perspective*, Centenary edition, Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, p.4. Originally published in *Bandemataram*, 16th April, 1907.

³² Nurul Islam, 1973, *Bengali Muslim Public Opinion as Reflected in the Bengali Press: 1901-1930*, Bangla Academy. The quotation has been adapted from Abul Kalam Shamsuddin’s ‘Sahitya gurur Bangali priti’, *Al-Eslam*, published in 1918

³³ Akbar S. Ahmed, 1997, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin*, Routledge, p.220

In terms of representing a notorious Muslim rulership in Bengal, the novel does begin from the disastrous consequences of Mir Jafar's rule in Bengal and, the subsequent vigorous counter-position and agenda of regeneration in the novel is formulated in this background. Tanika Sarkar highlights that with the Muslim administration as the obvious political opponent and Bankim's conception of a Hindu rejuvenation, his patriotic enterprise in *Anandamath* at once becomes a '*communal*' one. Bankim in fact mentions that it was a period when Bengal had not yet completely come under direct British rule. The British were content with the '*dewani*' rights and did not involve themselves in administrative matters. While the British held the rights of revenue collection the administrative responsibilities lay with the incompetent and notorious ruler, Mir Jafar.³⁴ The British bothered only about their revenue collection, extracted as much as they could and dispatched them to their treasury in Calcutta. And with the actual rulers of Bengal completely unaffected, Bengal took to degeneration and famine-stricken conditions. The ethos of the period and the nefarious imageries of the Musalman rulers have been vividly captured through reflective metaphors.

The harvests failed due to dearth of rain and the people began to starve but the king was least affected by the people's poverty and continued to collect taxes.

The royal revenue collector, Mohammad Reza Khan, sought the opportunity to advance his personal prestige by increasing the land revenue by ten percent.

³⁴ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 2004, *Anandamath*, Calcutta: Sahityabihar, pp.12-13, Mir Jafar is referred to as the treacherous villain whose nefarious deeds formed one of the blackest chapters of human history; Bankim uses the analogy, "*papishtho noradhom bishbashohonta monushyo kulkolonko Mir Jafar*"

*And in dire misery Bengal suffered. The conditions in Bengal were such that the people in extreme poverty and lack of food were forced to take on to leaves and grass and in certain cases even animals. People deserted their homes in multitudes and epidemics spread like wild fire.*³⁵

From here the novel unfolds onto an insurrectionary scheme of an ascetic order devoted to the cause of resurrecting the degenerated Sanatan dharma and re-establishing the Hindu civilization. The motive involved ousting the Musalmans from power for the purpose and Bankim makes frequent references to such intentions. Bhabananda's statement to Mahendra Sinha bears significant testimony to the fact.

*With tremendous uncertainties and oppression around, the Muslim ruler of Bengal declines to defend the subjects. He says that unless the drunkard Muslim rulers are driven out only then the Hindu civilization will be able to prevail.*³⁶

³⁵ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Anandamath*, pp.2-3, Bankim sets the historical background for the novel, "1174 shahle phoshol bhalo hoi nai,...kintu raja rajashaw kadai gandai bujhiya loilo .Kintu Mohammad Reja Kha rajashaw adaiyer korta, mone korilo, ami ai shomoi shorofraj hoibo.akebare shotkora dosh taka badaiya dilo.banglai bodo kanna r kolahol podiya galo."

³⁶ Ibid., p.20, Bhabananda tells Mahendra Sinha, "amader musholman raja rokha kore koi? ai neshakhod nededer na tadaile ar ki hindur Hindustani thake?"

The angry outburst of the santans when they had come to know of Satyananda's imprisonment is also an important point of reference.

*Together they take the oath that for long they have been aspiring to destroy the Musalman realm (Bankim uses the term, "Yavanpuri") as a step to reinstate the holy motherland and with the imprisonment of the mahatma their much-awaited opportunity had arrived, as they would have to free their leader from the clutches of the notorious Musalmans (they refer their leader as the one who had been spearheading a movement to resurrect the "Sanatan" dharma and whom they epitomized as lord Vishnu's incarnation). They therefore decide to destroy the "Yavanpuri" to shreds and free their leader.*³⁷

The antagonism against an irresponsible and incompetent Muslim rule and a consequential erosion of Hindu glories has been significantly notified through the exchange of dialogues, thereby highlighting the novel's ethos and content. The santans undertook it as their divine task to oppose and rout the Musalmans in order to bring peace to Hindu life and culture. Nevertheless, apart from such open confrontation that involved the binary categories of the santans against the Musalmans, Bankim also extends a

³⁷ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Anandamath*, p.46, The santans express their anger, "amra anek din hoite mone koriachi je,ai babuiyer basha bhangiya, ai jobonpuri charkhar koriya, nodir jole pheliya debo.ai shuoryer khoyar augun ye podaiya mata Bashumati ke abar pobitro koribo.bhai, aj shei din ashiyache.amader gurur guru,porom guru, jinni anantagyanamoy,shorboda shuddhachar, jinni lokhitoishi, jini deshitoishi,jini shanatan dharmyer punno prochar jonno shorirpatan pratigya koriyachen-jahake bishnu r abotar shorup mone kori,jini amader mukti r upai,tini ajke musholmander kadagarye bondhi...cholo ,amra shei jobonpuri bhangiya dhuligudi kori."

similar metaphorical representation to the people at large in order to suggest the swelling heights of popular disgust and disapproval against the Muslim rulership. Increased conversions to the santan order suggested that the people already displeased with the chaos and lawlessness brought about by the Musalman rulers readily welcomed the efforts of the santans.³⁸

The infamous, irresponsible and unconcerned Muslim rule generated extreme political anarchy and with the jinxed natural conditions, the obvious outcome was popular suffering, famished conditions of the masses and the subsequent barren-ness both in the land and life of the people. The entire landscape had taken onto tremendous sterility and the people were forced to lead the lives of primitives and vagabonds. This follows with a subsequent comparison and a certain positive acceptance of the British norms when Bhabananda expresses that while the English have courage and will power, the Muslims are absolute cowards who take the first opportunity to desert the battle ground in order to save their lives.

*An English comes to his senses when in danger... If Muslims see a canon ball dropping their entire lot takes to flight but, an English will not do the same even with a shower of canon balls.*³⁹

³⁸ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Anandamath*, p.71, “loke dekhilo, santanatte bilokkhon lab achche. Bishesh Musholmanrajer orajogotae o oshashone shokole Mushalmaner opor biroкто hoiya uthiyachchilo. Otoeb dine-dine santan shonkha briddhi paite lagilo. Dine-dine shoto-shoto, mashe-mashe shohosro-shohosro santan ashiya Bhabananda Jibananander padosparshe pronam koriya, doloboddho hoiya digo digontore Musalmanke shashon korite bahir hoite lagilo.”

³⁹ Ibid., p.21, “...kintu ekta gola dekhile Musholmaner goshtishuddhu polay- ar goshtishuddhu gola dekhile to ekta ingrej polayna.”

A second allegory is used to convey that the legal system of the Musalman rulers may in no way be compared to the system that the British would establish later. Bankim actually tries to portray a comparison between the former's lawlessness and the latter's pronounced system of legal justice. T.W. Clark argues that although Bankim's attitude towards the British and the British Government in India cannot be determined with quite the same certainty as his attitude towards the Muslims, nevertheless, a certain belief in and loyalty towards the Government of Bengal which he served was quite visible and which was not necessarily in conflict with his fervent patriotism.⁴⁰ In fact a direct rhetoric becomes explicit when Shanti, addressing Captain Thomas, asks him why the British had to interfere in the conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims, while in an earlier context, Bankim as a background voice declared that the santans were unaware of the fact that the British stay in India was actually beneficial for the country.

The most important extract is undoubtedly the final chapter, which makes a conclusive remark on the entire historical plot.

Satyananda returns to Anandamath and takes to meditation. At that time the mahapurush who had cured Jiban approaches him and asks him to come along with him. He says that with the destruction of the Muslim kingdom, Satyananda's task has been accomplished. A perplexed Satyananda says that Muslim power has indeed been

⁴⁰ T.W. Clark, 1962, 'The Role Of Bankim Chandra And The Development Of Nationalism' in C.H. Philips, (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, London: OUP, p.440

destroyed but Hindurajya has not been established yet as the British were still active in Calcutta. To this, the mahapurush clarifies that Hindurajya cannot not be established at that time. Satyananda enquires that if Hindu dominion was not going to be established then who will take rulership or if it will again be the Musalmans? The mahapurush answers him that the British will take over. He explains that the essence of Sanatan dharma was not the thirty-three crore Gods; that part is a mere result of folk beliefs. True Sanatan dharma consists in being “gyanatmak” and not “karmatmak”. The gyanatmak is divided into two aspects- “bahirbisayak” (external, physical knowledge and wisdom) and “antarbisayak” (internal and spiritual). While the internal aspect is more important, nevertheless, external knowledge also has its relevance, especially as it was the crucial trajectory to gain access to the internal. With reference to the prevalent conditions, the external knowledge of the Hindus has degenerated and is required to be resurrected and remade with the help of some outside force. The British being adept in this respect, need to become the rulers until the Hindus acquire their former sanctity. Therefore, the mahapurush advises Satyananda that the British are in the country for good reasons- British system of education was more advanced and useful and moreover, the British will not prohibit practise and propagation of Sanatan dharma. Satyananda asks that if ultimately the British had to be made the king then why they had to involve in such cruel war fares and bloodsheds. The mahapurush replies that the for the time being the British had been mere merchants, disinterested in taking up administrative responsibilities, but with disruption caused by the santans’ oppositions the British will take up effective administration to protect their own interets. He says that the santan rebellion’s actual

purpose was to establish British rule. Satyananda says that he is not interested in pursuing knowledge and wisdom; his main vow is “matribhakti”, to serve the Mother and make her prosperous with the enemy’s blood. At this the mahapurush retorts saying that the British are no enemies, they are “mitrarajya” and besides considering the British might, it is impossible to continue war with them for long. The mahapurush asks Satyananda to come along with him to the Himalayas and in the temple of Lord Vishnu both hold each other’s hands; Chatterjee suggests a symbolical merger of “gyan” and “bhakti”; “dharma” and “karma”; “bisharjan” and “pratishtha”; “Shanti” and “Kalyani”.⁴¹

The climax or anti-climax of all mounting hopes, but it is definitely important in reflecting the author’s intentionality. The Muslims had been removed from authority but the English were to become the next ruler. The subsequent deterioration that the Hindu religion had undergone through popular additions could only be extirpated through extraneous influence and knowledge, which the British would provide. And the novel ends in a suggestive tone.

With Anandamath, Bankim’s agenda of cultural polarization and struggle for supremacy reaches the altitude of absolute and explicit representations, to be taken to a conclusive state in Sitaram. Anandamath quintessentially depicts a situation of open confrontation

⁴¹ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Anandamath*, pp. 121-123. Translation of the last extract of the novel is mine.

between Hindus and Muslims where Hindus take up arms against Muslims in a sense of divine vengeance and a war of freedom against oppression and cultural degeneration. Anandamath as the centre of the santans' activities was certainly not a passive arena but a violent space where the initiated followers of the ascetic order were trained to take up arms in defense of their Motherland, their traditional culture, their dharma and essentially their identity. In this sense, Anandamath also becomes the metaphorical representation of the antagonized Hindus warring against the Muslims for self-rejuvenation and preservation and also motivating the other disgruntled Hindu commoners to destroy the Muslims, their obvious enemy. Thus, the novel essentially broadens the hemisphere of cultural opposition to the extent that it is no longer limited to a symbolic fight between protagonists, rather it becomes an overt expression of confrontation where individual-identity merges with respective community-identity and a war takes place between the two communities, involving the vital question of culture and power. In fact, Anandamath treads a step further as it does not end with extirpation of the Muslims and establishment of a Hindu 'rajya' in its place. In fact a Hindu kingdom is not established at all; instead, it creates space for *British entry* which would regenerate Hinduism and resurrect it to its former status.

The novel, *Sitaram* (published in 1887), is located in the historical backdrop of the late Mughal period, in Bengal. Murshid Quli Khan reigned Bengal from Murshidabad when sporadic efforts were made to establish a Hindu territory.

Story in brief:

The novel opens with the reference of a place called Bhushda, which subsequently came to be known as Bhushdo. Bhushda was administered by a Musalman faujdar and was an important township. An event of a Hindu Kayastha, Gangaram Das, crossing over a Musalman fakir, who had been lying in the middle of the road when Gangaram was in sheer urgency to seek medical aid for his dying mother, had spurred tremendous tension. The latter complained to the kazi for such dishonor and Gangaram was arrested and subsequently sentenced to be buried alive. When his sister, Sree came to hear of it, she sought help from Sitaram Ray.

Gangaram's burial was to be a public event and it had instigated considerable tension between the spectators of the two communities who had come to witness his fate. Sree accompanied by Sitaram's mentor, Chandrachur Tarkalankar who was a Brahman, stood aside in anxiety. When Gangaram was about to be buried, Sitaram arrived at the venue to reason the prisoner's actions, but suddenly the entire scenario took a different turn with the advent of few armed Hindu soldiers. It resulted in public commotion and to heighten the effect Sree took to inspire and instigate the Hindus to take up arms against the Musalmans. She became the Hindu goddess, *Mata Chandi*, to motivate the Hindus against their enemies.⁴² The Musalmans were defeated and Shah Sahab, the fakir was

⁴² Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 2006, 'Sitaram' in *Bankim Rachanavali*, Calcutta: Dey's Publishing, p.1097. The extract will be dealt with in details in the analysis.

murdered. Sitaram sent Gangaram and Chandrachur Maharaj to Shampur, across the river and himself stayed back to attend to an unconscious Sree. Sree recovered and in the conversation that followed between them, it became evident that Sree was Sitaram's forsaken wife. Soon after her marriage she was astrologically declared as '*priyapranhantri*', i.e. she would be responsible for her husband's death and hence she was abandoned. In distress Sree left Sitaram but the latter could no longer forget her. The vision of her as the inspiring goddess Chandi continued to linger in his mind and made him restless in love.

Shampur, located on the banks of the river Madhumati was Sitaram's ancestral property. After the riot in Bhushda, Sitaram had taken shelter there. In fact the riot was consciously planned by him with the help of few supporters in Bhushda. However, if mutual discussions could resolve the issue he would have preferred it but his mentor, Chandrachur Maharaj was more ambitious. He said that without murdering one or two, Musalman oppression would not lessen.⁴³ That was why even before Sitaram could signal Chandrachur had instigated the riot. But this had worsened matters. The death of a Musalman fakir could lead to disastrous consequences. Hence, Sitaram considered it appropriate to leave Bhushda for some time till matters settled down and many others who were afraid of the faujdar also followed him. Sitaram decided to settle in Shampur and with this, the small village soon became an important township. It became the hub of

⁴³ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Sitaram, p.1103, "...tobe bibad hoi, mondo noi,- Musalmaner douratmo boro beshi hoiya uthiyachhe, kichhu domon howa bhalo. Chandrachur thakurer monta she bishoye aro porishkar- Musalmaner ottachar eto beshi hoiyachhe je, gotakotok near matha lathir gaye na bhanglei noi."

all business activities and Sitaram earned tremendous wealth. He spent lavishly on administering, decorating and maintaining the town. Soon it became known to many that Sitaram was establishing a *Hindu 'rajdhani'*⁴⁴. From all quarters of the country, those who were frustrated with persistent Musalman atrocities and were desirous of settling in a Hindu kingdom immigrated to Shampur. This further increased Sitaram's wealth. Sitaram took to further improve his estate and people contributed lavishly for the cause of a Hindu territory; those who could not contribute money did so with their physical strength.

With Sitaram's dexterity and people's enthusiasm to establish a Hindu kingdom, all tasks were completed within a short span of time. But Sitaram did not adopt the title of a king. Until the emperor in Delhi did not officially declare him a king he could not adopt such a title. Had he done it the Musalmans would have considered him a rebel and with all their might would have destroyed him and Sitaram was certainly aware of it. He continued to send regular revenues to Delhi and maintained friendly relations with the Musalmans so much so that he had even named his kingdom *Mohammadpur*.

And yet, with the escalating prosperity of his territory and his subjects and his increasing fame, faujdar, Turab Khan grew restless. He decided to confront and conquer Sitaram, but his plot did not succeed. Nevertheless matters worsened and both parties took to

⁴⁴ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Sitaram*, p.1103. " *Abar ekkhone jonorob uthilo je, Sitaram Hindurajdhani sthapon koritechen, eha suniya, deshe bideshe jekhane musholmanpirito, rajbhoye bheeto ba dhormorokkharte Hindurajje basher echhuk, tahara shokole dole dole ashiya Sitaramer odhikare bash korite lagilo.*"

equip themselves. Sitaram was in his tasks assisted by three stalwarts, Chandrachur Tarkalankar, Mrinmay and Gangaram. A Musalman fakir by the name of Chand Shah frequently visited his court. The fakir was an intelligent and learned man who supported Hindu-Musalman amity. He was Sitaram's well-wisher and it was his suggestion that Sitaram should name his territory Mohammadpur in order to impress the nawab. However, Sitaram's wife, Rama with all her anxieties proved to be a major impediment in Sitaram's political ambitions. She was afraid of the Musalmans and believed that the latter would defeat and destroy them. Hence she asked Sitaram to succumb to the faujdar's might. The other wife, Nanda was too complacent with what ever he did. Ultimately it became so that Sitaram could not enjoy either of their company and craved more for Sree.

With adequate preparations at hand, Sitaram went to Delhi in order to seek royal recognition. But Murshid Quli Khan did not relent and ordered Turab Khan to indulge in arrangements for war. When Sitaram's younger wife, Rama, came to hear of it, she panicked of a possible Musalman attack and in her anxiety sought disastrous consequences for herself and the kingdom. She sought help from Gangaram and although her intentions were straight, Gangaram felt affectionate towards her. Rama sought to stem any aberration in relations in Sitaram's absence but an obsessed Gangaram became angry and decided to indulge in treachery to seek her. He conspired with Turab Khan and ensured his reward in return.

Meanwhile a distressed Sree had sought to become an ascetic. The astrological interpretation about her marriage was confirmed by Gangadhar Swami in Lalitagiri. Nevertheless, it was incumbent on her to inform Sitaram of the impending dangers and help him preserve his dominion. At the time when Sitaram had gone to Delhi and his kingdom lay vulnerable to enemy's intentions, Sree assisted by Jayanti arrived at Shampur. Attired as '*bhairavis*' they looked like goddesses and a helpless Chandrachur Tarkalankar relied on their efforts. The enemies made a surprise attack but in the war that followed the Musalmans suffered a mysterious defeat and were compelled to retreat. It was Sitaram who had arrived at the opportune moment and had saved his kingdom with the help of a canon that was provided to him by a bhairavi.

Sitaram engrossed himself in thoughts about coveting Sree. With Jayanti's help he met her and persuaded her to stay back but the latter insisted that she would lead the life of an ascetic. Increasingly Sitaram spent more time with her and gradually even took to neglect his kingly duties. Two men, Ramchand and Shyamchand, contemplated flight lest the Musalmans attacked Mohammadpur, as the king was no longer committed to his duties and towards preservation of the Hindu *dharma*. Sitaram completely overlooked his tasks and had also not sent Murshid Quli Khan's share in revenues. Chandrachur Maharaj requested the king to look into his pending tasks. The kingdom suffered from financial crisis and severe maladministration. When Sitaram took to resolve some problems he handled them with sheer recklessness that further worsened matters. Increasingly Sree became responsible for the doom of the king and his kingdom. When Jayanti informed her that the kingdom was in jeopardy, Sree left without informing Sitaram.

Sitaram was enraged and in reaction, he indulged in extreme intolerance and reckless activities. Chandrachur Tarkalankar, thoroughly disillusioned with the king's attitude abandoned the kingdom and on his way met Chand Shah fakir who was on his way to visit Mecca. When Chandrachur asked him the reason, he said that Sitaram had taught him the lesson that he should not stay in a Hindu's kingdom. Jayanti and Sree made a last attempt to help Sitaram from his inevitable destruction.

The Musalman forces attacked Mohammadpur but Sitaram was alone to face and fight them. Except for a handful of loyal servants and Nanda, he had been deserted by all. Sitaram decided to fight till the end. He met Sree and Jayanti who had come to his aid and accepted them. Sitaram made arrangements for Nanda and the children and together with his few soldiers, led by Sree and Jayanti, he opened the main entrance. The enemy forces came swarming in but when they saw the two bhairavis in front they were awe-struck and gave them way. But they fought Sitaram and his soldiers who fought back gallantly. The Musalmans received quite a set back and so they took to use the canons but when Sree stood in front of one of them that was directed at Sitaram and his soldiers, the canon operator stood still and Sitaram instantly chopped off his head. He then took command of the canon and made a safe way out for his soldiers and the palanquin which was carrying Nanda and the children. Nevertheless his kingdom was completely destroyed.

Sree became inquisitive about the canon operator who died because of her. Together with Jayanti she went to the battlefield and found out that it was Gangaram, her brother. Sree remarked that her horoscope turned out to be true: if she could not lead to the death of her husband she became the reason for her brother's death. After that they did not meet Sitaram; together Sree and Jayanti disappeared into the darkness of the night.

The novel ends with an epilogue that features a short conversation between the two men, Ramchand and Shyamchand, who had appeared earlier in the novel. They had already escaped to Naldanga and they discussed several rumours about the fate of the king and queen of Mohammadpur and in the end they dissolved the issue relieved that at least they had been able to save their own lives. With that they puffed their hookahs!

Sitaram was the last novel written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and remains extremely important from the point of view of tracking the course and the ultimate *fate* of the Hindu-Muslim context that Bankim had developed in his novels. The polarization between the two communities is *complete* and in fact one gets to read and visualize a situation of aggressive 'communal' violence and mob-riot, long before it became a part of Bengal's political reality⁴⁵. Anandamath treads the first step in this direction where the war of cultural power symbols is no longer limited to individual fights but is rather

⁴⁵ Tanika Sarkar, 1991, 'Bankimchandra and the Impossibility of a Political Agenda: A Predicament for Nineteenth Century Bengal', *NMML Occasional Papers on History and Society*, second series, XL, New Delhi: NMML, p.38. This paper has been published in her book, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism*, Delhi: Permanent Black.

depicted as community affair. Sitaram however, takes this agitation to a detailed and vivid expression through dialogues and situations, a fact that was certainly lacking in Bankim's earlier novels. Notions of mutual hatred between the two communities have been voraciously portrayed in this novel. The novel begins with a Hindu man, Gangaram Das, crossing over a Musalman fakir, in his urgency to obtain medical help. The fakir takes this act as a breach of respect, notwithstanding his own irresponsibility to respond to the man's ardent request and the urgency of his situation. However, he makes sure that the man is punished to the extreme extent of being buried alive. When a distressed Gangaram is arrested and the latter enquires his fault, the fakir abuses him (calls him 'kafir', 'badtamiz')⁴⁶, and orders him to come along. On the way he continues speaking abusively about the degeneration of Hindu religion in Arabic and Persian. Gangaram's sister, Sree was with him at the time of his arrest. While she manages to escape their clutches as they tried to pursue her as well, in sheer helplessness, she approaches and appeals to Sitaram for help. Sree informs him of her brother's fate and requests him to save his life. Sitaram clarifies that as the kazi was the emperor's appointee it was difficult to oppose him and that in order to save him he would have to stake his own life. Upon this, Sree remarks:

The almighty God and the sacred dharma is true and omnipresent. The task of protecting the poor and the helpless could not do him any harm. If a Hindu would not protect another Hindu then who would they look up to?⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 'Sitaram' in *Bankim Rachanavali*, p.1088 "Kafer! Badbakhat! Bettamij! Chal!"

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.1091, "Daakho, debota achhen, dhormo achhen, narayon achhen. Kichui mithya noi. Tumi dinn dukhi ke banchaile tomar omongol hoibe na. Hinduke hindu na rakhile ke rakhibe?"

Sitaram is convinced and he agrees to help her. Bankim in this context reflects upon the vulnerability of the Hindus as subjects of the Musalman rulers. It is no longer the question of political incompetence or conscious negligence of the Hindu subjects; it now involved the more vital question of cultural supremacy or cultural subordination. The theory of '*cultural faultline*' becomes manifest, where in, the individuals are looked upon only in terms of their larger community-identity and mutual antagonism is explicit and every opportunity is taken to derogate and fight one another. To the extent that Bankim addresses and seeks to develop the concept of cultural faultline in his novels, Sitaram makes an *aggressive* statement and even comes up with a vivid description of an all out war between the two communities. It is no longer a war spearheaded by royal stalwarts who were nevertheless cultural ambassadors and critically concerned with questions of political supremacy, in Sitaram, the context of confrontation is extended to the common people at large. The war between the two communities essentially acquires a preordained '*holy*' distinction when fused with the spectacle of divine energy, a goddess, a vulnerable feminine body, each aspect interfacing another and appealing to the impulse of revenge and violence. In an instant Sree had transformed an otherwise scattered Hindu populace with no previous sense of mutual connectedness into an army with a single violent purpose, into a community for-itself that can be realized only through invocation of vengeance against another.

When Gangaram was about to be buried and Sitaram had failed to convince the kazi, suddenly a large number of Hindu armed soldiers arrived onto the scene and started fighting the Musalman forces. Gangaram managed to escape but an enraged kazi

sought to bury Sitaram instead. When Gangaram was able to gain some safe ground he saw that the crowd had become divided into two halves, one Hindu and the other, Musalman. He saw that the Hindus were equipped and a large number of Hindu forces had come in. The Musalmans were unable to confront them and hence they were fleeing, while the armed Hindus followed them shouting, “kill...kill” The entire atmosphere became surcharged with such aggressive reverberations and to Gangaram’s surprise he also heard the exclamations of “hail goddess Chandi” and along with it, “goddess Chandi has come...kill...kill...hail goddess Chandi”. At that moment he saw that hanging from the branches of a huge tree, in the midst of green leaves and branches was the ‘goddess’ herself! With her left hand she was clinging onto a branch and with the right she was waving the fringe of her sari and shouting, “kill the enemies”. Her long hair was in a mess, the branches were also dancing with her agitative movements. She was looking like goddess Durga, dancing the vigorous dance of war in the battlefield. Extremely angry she motivated the soldiers of god, “kill the enemies”. At that time she had no shame, no consciousness and no intention to stop. She kept shouting, “Kill the enemies of the gods, the enemies of men, the enemies of the Hindus, the enemies of mine”. She enthralled all and inspired the people to the extent that the entire Hindu mass started shouting, “kill...kill...hail goddess Chandi”. Initially Gangaram thought that the lady in front was perhaps the goddess herself but upon closer observation he realized that she was his sister, Sree.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Sitaram, p.1097, “*Mar shotru mar! Debotar shotru, manusher shotru, Hindur shotru – aamar shotru – mar! Shotru mar!*” Other Hindus, looking towards hailed, “*Joi Ma chondike!*”

The aforesaid extract remains extremely important in understanding the compulsive trend of mutual hatred and exclusion between the two communities. The realm of imagination extends to both the spiritual and the temporal and an appeal is made for victory of one and destruction of the other. Tanika Sarkar explores that in the last novel, the Muslim combatant is largely an abstraction, an absence, yet battles with him fill up the entire novelistic space. This, she suggests, is perhaps Bankim's historical agenda at the point of blind, abstract, total 'communal' hatred, when the enemy sheds his human features and is reduced to the quintessential other, defined by the community's hostility.⁴⁹ And yet, in the end the Hindu empire crumbles due to Sitaram's own flaws. Sitaram was the ideologue of a Hindu rajya who had not only conceptualized but also established a kingdom, a Hindu alternative to the dominant Musalman government. This is certainly a climax of all strategies and intentions to rejuvenate Hinduism and ascertain a Hindu domain. After repeated clashes and oppositions the Hindus successfully establish an empire under Sitaram and lavishly contribute in money and manpower to consolidate state system⁵⁰ and popular conviction. Anandamath stops short of actually establishing a Hindu empire but the novel, Sitaram accomplishes the task and indulges in vivid descriptions of the Hindu success. Nevertheless, in the end, lustful desires and worldly luxuries derail Sitaram, the Hindu ruler, from his earlier convictions and he is led to his doom.

⁴⁹ Tanika Sarkar, *Bankim and the Impossibility of a Political Agenda*, p. 38.

⁵⁰ *Op cit*, no.44.

Tanika Sarkar explores that the novel charged with shrill intensity, high seriousness from the beginning, ends rather abruptly, with an anticlimax, when Ramchand and Shyamchand as ordinary people seem least concerned about the destruction of the Hindu dominion and concentrate more on celebrating their survival by puffing their *hookahs*. Sarkar suggests several possibilities in terms of interpreting the novel's end. She says that it can denote a final failure of hope in terms of Hindu capabilities to carve out a nation for themselves. It may be a critique of the Hindu masses who have forever stayed away at the decisive moment in the war. Or, it can be a recognition of the autonomy of the imaginative domain or, may be even a return to the theme of *Samya*, which in the meantime, had been overtaken and overshadowed by the dream of Hindu nationhood.⁵¹ On the whole Sarkar suggests that Bankim formulates and constructs a violent Hindu agenda and then in due course proceeds to deconstruct it perhaps with an equally powerful certainty about its untenable future.

Sarkar's proposition may have a point to make but whether Bankim may have thought that the future for the Hindus was wholly untenable and hence he returned to the theme of *Samya* may be problematic to a fundamental extent. Bankim is perhaps disillusioned with the nature of contemporary Hindu leadership that frequently sacrificed ideologies to worldly quests of power and lust. Sudipto Kaviraj says that the geometry of successful ideology of resistance as Bankim may have tried to conceptualize was the *triangle* of leader, people and God, which implies that the leadership is not an attribute of the person,

⁵¹ Tanika Sarkar, *Bankimchandra and the Impossibility of a Political Agenda*, p.40

but of the structure of relationship. The leader-people structure is ruptured the moment the leader deserts his vocation, as Sitaram does.⁵² Hence, Sitaram is perhaps both a depiction of the contemporary reality as also a word of caution. Bankim was sure that Hindu religion and culture had undergone a certain degeneration which had to be done away with before establishing and rejuvenating a Hindu empire, a notion that he had already specified in *Anandamath*.

⁵² Sudipto Kaviraj, *op.cit.*, p.148.

CHAPTER 3

IDENTITY, COMMUNITY AND THE NATION

Cultural meanings play an intrinsic role in explaining Bankim's conceptual framework in locating and representing Hindus and Muslims in his novels. He deliberates a situation of difference between the two communities, which graduates subsequently to depict absolute dichotomy. This he articulates, using cultural tools to depict power struggles between the two communities. *Culture*, according to Clifford Geertz is 'a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life'. Culture essentially imparts meaning to events and symbols of regular life but, when it coincides with power equations, it eventually becomes a cultural power struggle between different cultural groups. *Religion* is an integral part of culture as it codifies and determines individual behaviour and belief systems. Although, essentially a passive and internalized feeling, religion has the potential to move people beyond dormancy to display active political energy even to the extent of sacrificing their lives.¹ Religion therefore acts as a binding force that creates solidarity and a sense of community. Religious power struggles therefore become cultural power struggles when one religion strictly differentiates itself from the other and intends to dominate the other. The historical situations of such dominations and subordinations therefore explain the

¹ Rumina Sethi, 1997, 'The Writer's Truth: Representation of Identities in Indian Fiction', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol.31, no.4

existence of a 'cultural faultline'² between the two communities cohabiting in the same land.

An inherently segmented Hinduism with the several heterogeneous sects was eventually given the form of a cultural unity by the Muslim outsiders who sought to differentiate themselves from the natives by broadly describing the non-Muslims as the 'infidels'. The non-Islamic 'others' of this discourse on their part, however, advocated a social and cultural differentiation of their 'self' through categories as "Mlechha" or "Yavan" for the other.³ Rajat Kanta Ray explains that the 'native-outsider' understandings of the initial confrontation between Hindus and Muslims subsequently shifted to recognition of two distinctly separate religious communities, with Muslim settlement in India and the birth of their kith and kin who were natives but not Hindus. Religious identity thus assumed an active cultural status to decide the line of difference and demarcation. The discourse of religion and religious symbolism became the ideological weapon to determine cultural power relations in society.⁴ Given the conditions of domination and subordination, the Muslim- non-Muslim faultline that came to be, the non-Muslim communities with their

² Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, 1994, *Struggle for Hegemony in India 1920-47: Culture, Community and Power*, vol.3, Delhi/ London: Sage Publications. The concept has been avidly developed and explained in this book. The evolution of the concept of cultural faultline between Hindus and Muslims shall be dealt with in due course.

³ Romila Thapar, 1989, 'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol.23, no.2

⁴ Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, op.cit., p.118

varying religious practises fell on one side of this faultline vis-à-vis the Islamic communities on the other side.⁵

The adaptation of traditional non-Islamic groups to the Mughal system was partly coercive and partly a contractual alignment of their respective interests. This adaptation was not an expression of cultural accommodation and synthesis.⁶ Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh quote *Muhammad Iqbal* that the adjustments in the political system were transient and aimed at securing the specific aims of wealth and status. Iqbal cites the precedents of *Sikh* and *Maratha* alternative cultural assertions at points of declining Mughal system, which essentially depicted the nature of their adaptation and compromise with the Mughal politico-military system.

Under the colonial state however, with its manifestation of cultural neutrality for both Hindus and Muslims, the *state* no longer played the role of a cultural ideologue and, this formed the ground for both parties to claim respective power positions.⁷ Recollection of the past and indigenous history writing largely became a part of this process of manifesting respective cultural superiority. The nationalist intelligentsia inspired by Western modernity and nationalism sought to define the '*indigenous*', but decades of Muslim dominance and subsequent British colonization placed them at a culturally

⁵ Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, op.cit., p.117

⁶ Ibid., p.75

⁷ Ibid., p.118

disadvantageous position to construct a powerful indigenous image. Hence reconstruction of a heroic past was required to overcome this cultural disadvantage. Indigenous history writings and, novels recollecting events of the past played a critical role in *reinforcing* the cultural faultline that had been created in the medieval period. The intelligentsia wanted a cultural weapon that would enable them to nullify their cultural subordination to Muslim rulers and glorify those occasions where Hindus offered cultural resistance to the Muslim state. The novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in terms of representing Hindus and Muslims have intrinsic cultural understandings and they make vital statements about the burgeoning concepts of indigenous identity, community and the nation.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was deeply concerned about indigenous identity formation, an aspect which recurrently appears in his novels and essays. His essays reflect upon specific issues, such as ancient and modern India and notions of independence, history writing, Hinduism, etc. and suggest frameworks to comprehend such phenomena and alternative ideas, in case required. His novels on the other hand, enter into emotionally charged, descriptive visions of the present and future conceived against a medieval or early modern historical background. He rejected histories written by the Musalman chroniclers and attempted reconstructions through his novels, by injecting historical settings and arguing out the conditions of the Hindus vis-à-vis the Muslims and more often than not carved out Hindu heroes encountering powerful Muslims, perhaps in an effort to highlight historical instances that may have been suppressed or depict qualities that an '*ideal*' Hindu was required to possess. Bankim's '*Hindu*' was a regenerated Hindu, certainly not anachronistic in ascertaining the traditional religion. His concept was

a reincarnated one for the new Hindu was emphatically a Hindu man with a difference. He was a self-monitoring ethical agent who had internalized reinterpreted concepts of Hindu knowledge and devotional practises. This suggests a certain transmutation, which replaced the privileges of birth and ritual expertise and distinguished the new *Brahman* from the old, unreformed Hindu authorities.⁸ Thus, the ascetics of Anandamath, with their militant patriotic zeal were *Vaishnavs* but their religious belief-system was fundamentally different from the traditional Chaitanya cult of Vaishnavism predominant in Bengal.

*Satyananda tells Mahendra that the santans are Vaishnavs who do not believe in the non-violence of Sree Chaitanya because they believe that God, apart from preaching love is also extremely powerful and advocates the use of physical power to overcome the evil.*⁹

In fact, in one of his essays on Hindu religion, Bankim says that not everything that *Manu* said explains the essence of Hindu religion. The society dependent on Hindu religion does not require to revive all that is there in the scriptures, instead, only the substance of

⁸ Tanika Sarkar, 1996, 'Imagining Hindurashtra: The Hindu and the Muslim in Bankim Chandra's Writings' in David Ludden, *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, Delhi: OUP, p.172

⁹ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 2004, *Anandamath*, Calcutta: Sahityabihar, pp.59-60 "*santanera bhoishnob... Choitonyo-deber Boishnobdharma prokrito Boishnobdhorma nohe – uha ordhek dhorma matro. Choitanyo-deber Bishnu premomoye kintu Bhogoban kebol premomoye nohe – tini onnonto shoktimoye. Choitonyo-deber Bishnu shidhu premomoye – santaner Bishnu shudhu shoktimoye.*"

it must be revived that can help in improving and regenerating the society.¹⁰ Bankim believed in the *practical* relevance of religion and this he claimed to have found in Hinduism. The fact that the Hindu religion had been able to survive the several onslaughts of numerous other religions, such as, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, explains its vitality to overpower the 'alternatives' that had constantly questioned its authority or made efforts to conquer it.¹¹ Nevertheless, this Hindu religion that Bankim had been so passionately advocating had not been a single, homogenous religious system since the ancient times, which was followed and professed by all natives of India. Heinrich Von Stietencron argues that Hinduism, a term given by the Muslims initially and then by the British colonialists, consisted of multifarious religious belief systems like, *Vaishnavism*, *Saivism*, *Saktism*, etc, which were inherently divergent. They were amalgamated into a coherent religion first, by the Muslim outsiders, and then, by the British. It was the Muslim urge to maintain their distinctions and continuing linkage of social prestige to origins outside India which, even after centuries of settlement in the country, prevented the upper class Muslims specifically, from identifying themselves with the Hindus or the indigenous Indians. The Hindus remained a separate population-*natives*, as the British would later call them- and, in spite of all differentiation according to caste and status, they continued to form a distinct entity characterized by their indigenous Indian origin.¹² It was perhaps the realization by the nationalist intelligentsia

¹⁰ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 1884-86, 'Hindu Religion', *Prachar*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Heinrich, Von Stietencron, 1995, 'Religious Configurations in Pre-Muslim India and the Modern Concept of Hinduism', in Vasudha Dalmia and Heinrich, Von Stietencron (eds.), *Representing Hinduism: The Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity*, New Delhi/ London: Sage Publications, pp.77-78

that the Hindu religion was native to the land that its otherwise original *multiformity* lost relevance. The fact that the different strands of Hindu religion had originated in the same land, shared a common cultural heritage, a common socio-economic and historical background and had mutually influenced each other¹³ gave them a certain *homogeneity* when viewed against religions like Islam or Christianity, for reasons that the latter themselves had created and reinforced. Thus, with the struggle for independence from mid-nineteenth century onwards, Hinduism, accommodating within itself the several religions, indigenous to the land, came to be looked upon as the *unifying* and *politically viable factor*, which could help in creating a 'nation'.¹⁴ Cultural commonality and not religion as such, of those who belonged to the land and identified themselves with it vis-à-vis those who glorified their foreign origins and hence professed a different cultural identity, became the dominant factor for societal configurations. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novels largely concerned themselves with issues of such identity formations of the Hindus vis-à-vis the Muslims.

Bankim reinforced the ideas of an active and coherent community consciousness in his novels. The process of identity formation was not confined to insisting on individual ethics, it also emphasized upon the essence of a *group* identity where in such individual ethics were synchronized into the cultural harmony of the group. Hence, a *community* consisted of such culturally alike individuals who sought to preserve their individual as

¹³ Heinrich, Von Stietencron, Religious Configurations in Pre-Muslim India and the Modern Concept of Hinduism, p.71

¹⁴ Ibid., p.79

well as their larger group identities against any possible onslaughts or encroachments from outside. This task of preservation included defending the Hindu religion as also aggressively regenerating it in case it had been deprived of its former glory. Durgeshnandini, primarily a story of love and emotion, in the end, stands for the realization of impermeable social distance between the two characters, Jagat Singh and Ayesha who belonged to two culturally apart communities. Bankim does not attempt to materialize Ayesha's transgressive love for Jagat Singh and thereby cross the cultural faultline between the two communities. In Mrinalini, Madhavacharya unites both political and religious aims, when he motivates Hemchandra to confront and fight Ikhtiyar-ud-din Bakhtiyar Khalji. He says that it is the divine task incumbent on him to fight the Musalmans. Bakhtiyar Khalji's insistence on Pashupati's conversion to Islam also suggests that such religious practises had become the community's cultural tools to claim superiority on one another. When Pashupati, who had treacherously allied with Khalji for political interests, refuses to convert, it reflects his determination to stand by his community. In Rajsingh, Jodhpuri Begum's efforts to maintain her Hindu 'self' despite being Aurangzeb's queen and living in Muslim household, implicates her conviction in Hindu religion and culture. She is dissatisfied with Aurangzeb's attitudes and prays for the latter's death for causing harm to numerous Hindus. She is also convinced that the Musalmans would soon be overpowered by the Hindus. Rajsingh emerges as the chivalrous Hindu leader who in protecting the honour of a Rajput lady challenges the mighty Mughal Emperor and in the end also manages to defeat him. These are numerous references of an *individual's* commitment to his own community and his intention to defend it. As far as these novels are concerned, Bankim has stressed more on the

individual characters and their community consciousness. The *climax* of Bankim's Hindu intentions are however, built in the novels, *Anandamath* and *Sitaram*, when individuals are amalgamated with the community '*whole*' and in the consequent violence for cultural supremacy, individuals no longer play protagonists but the entire community gets involved.

The novel, *Anandamath*, develops the idea of an active and disciplined community, aggressive in its intentions to regenerate the glory of its religion and culture. The novel reflects upon the incompetent and oppressive Musalman rule in Bengal, which results in a deliberate degeneration of Hinduism and the conditions of its adherents. A group of disciplined and committed ascetics then, undertake the task to relieve the Hindus of Musalman tyranny and motivate them into unison for the subsequent revival of Hindu religion and culture. Their battle with the Muslims is perceived as their divine vengeance and they revere their leader, Satyananda, as the incarnation of Lord *Vishnu*, who would organize their mission and lead them to victory. Bankim addresses the idea of a Hindu community by conceptualizing such coherence and integrity as among the ascetics in *Anandamath* and their efforts in motivating Hindu population, and supplements it with an aggressive intensity to fight a religious battle. *Sitaram*, however, goes to the extent of depicting a mob-riot between the Hindus and Muslims. The occasion of a public persecution of a Hindu polarizes the members of the two communities and provides a vent to the pent-up grievances of the Hindus. The violent outburst is sudden and spontaneous, but the issue gives the Hindus enough reason and strength to form solidarity, and with divine stimulation in the form of Sree, as goddess *Durga*, the Hindus

are driven into a united frenzy to attack the Muslims.¹⁵ Sitaram also stands for the realization of a Hindu '*rajya*'. With the Hindus facing persecution from the Musalman rulers and their enthusiasm to consolidate a Hindu territory, the novel describes the establishment of a Hindu dominion under Sitaram Ray. Hence, the idea of consolidating a community for rejuvenating Hindu religion and culture reaches a climax with the formation of an *exclusive* Hindu domain. The fact that this domain collapses in the end, due to Sitaram's flaws and worldly desires is a matter of a later concern. It may be looked upon as recurrence of degeneration should the Hindu society follow a path of aberration. But nevertheless, it is a celebration of Bankim's intent and purposes.

Nationalism, as it had developed in the West had profoundly interested the Indian intellectuals, who then made their own indigenous efforts to appropriate the concept and contextualize it in the contemporary Indian set up. This made these Indian intellectuals '*nationalist*' in their thinking. Nevertheless, in its early rudimentary beginnings, nationalism as a concept created a wave of enthusiasm and optimism and was devoid of any concrete or mature presuppositions to define the Indian state and its objectives. It was more ideational and dispersed and indulged in rejuvenating the past and making assumptions for the future. It was a vibrant phase with efflorescence of various thought processes. The novels of Bankim also indulge in assumptions of nationalism. The novel, *Anandamath*, makes a vivid and lyrical description of his concept, which is at the same time, is concrete and structured. Certainly conceptualized in Hindu terms, Bankim

¹⁵ A detailed explanation of the entire event in the novel, *Sitaram*, has already been discussed in the dissertation, in the chapter, '*Cultural Difference to Cultural Dichotomy*'.

defines and *deifies* the nation as the 'Motherland'. Though *Anandamath* is the culmination of his nationalist presumptions, the notion of *land* as the motherland also occurs in his other novels. In *Mrinalini*, Pashupati's commitment towards his land, the Sena Kingdom of Bengal, is a complex case study of an individual who is conniving with the Yavans to overthrow the Sena rulers of Bengal and yet, is extremely devoted to his Motherland. In temple of the Ashtabhuj Devi, he confesses that his alliance with the Muslims is for exigency reasons and his intention to free the land from the inefficient Sena rulers. His dedication to his purposes come to the fore when he disapproves of Bakhtiyar Khalji's unnecessary blood shed of his people and his refusal to convert to Islam. The Rajput tradition of hailing the land as the Mother and the commitment to defend it may be adequately visualized in *Rajsingh*. In fact, Bankim's efforts to appropriate Rajput histories explain the widening of his narrative parameters and inclusion of several groups outside Bengal as part of his nationalist conceptions.

The land as the Mother and an unconditional devotion to it, assumes its full and '*structured*' form in *Anandamath*, where the entire narrative structure of the novel presupposes Bankim's idea of nationalism. *Anandamath* stands for the construction of an *icon*, the Mother, as it was in the past, the dispossessed Mother of the present and the triumphant Mother of the future.

Satyananda takes Mahendra to a series of rooms where he explains to Mahendra the different forms of the Mother – the Mother in her true self; the

*Mother as she was, the Mother as she is, and the Mother as she is to be. In the beginning the Mother is sitting on the lap of Vishnu, then she is Jagaddhatri, then Kali and last of all she is Durga.*¹⁶

The form of the 'nation' is symbolized by the Mother goddess in her different states. The nationalist task of reconstruction lay with her 'children', or '*santans*' as they called themselves. The novel then lays down the strategies and the methods in realizing the nation of the Hindus. Though Bankim's nation fails to incorporate the Muslims and fundamentally indulges in the tasks of rejuvenating Hindu religion and culture, nevertheless, it was *not* anachronistic in its presumptions. It relied on the past but intended to build a *modern* state for the future, taking significant '*bahirbisayak*' or external and worldly knowledge and wisdom from the English. The hymn, '*Bande Mataram*' that begins in Sanskrit and then turns to Bengali and ends with Sanskrit passages again, is a beautiful illustration of the land deified as the Mother and a lyrical narration of its conditions. The fact that the song became the *symbol* of Extremist nationalism in the early twentieth century and the novel was their source of inspiration validates Bankim's nationalist presuppositions. Julius Lipner interprets this nationalist consciousness of Bankim in terms of an '*implicit political sense*', which seeks to instill among his readership a sense of purpose, a new sense of historical destiny vis-à-vis the encounter of Bengal (especially Hindu Bengal), with British rule in particular and with Western socio-political ideas and science in general. This was a regenerative movement,

¹⁶ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Anandamath*, pp.23-24

which could only be indirectly political for the people had to rediscover and restate their cultural identity before they could claim the right of political expression.¹⁷ In this sense, Lipner calls it a neo-Hindu or neo-Vedantic movement of the time. The attribute, 'new' was important, as it signified the sense of regeneration or reinvention of commitment to the principles of Hinduism or aspects thereof, irrespective of whether it is to be called revivalist or reformist.

The novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, therefore, reflect a complex interplay of several factors operating simultaneously. Within the broad paradigm of cultural power relations Bankim develops stories that address and consolidate notions of individual identity, community and the nation. Though the concepts were largely in their initial stages, the credibility of Bankim lay in being one of the early spearheads to provide conceptual visions at such an early stage.

¹⁷ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 2005, *Anandamath or The Sacred Brotherhood*, Translated with an introduction and critical apparatus by Julius J. Lipner, OUP. Lipner adapts the line into his extract from Amiya P. Sen's work on nineteenth century colonial Bengal.

CONCLUSION

I

A compulsive trend of cultural differences and dichotomies has been avidly brought out by Bankim in his representations of Hindus and Muslims. The trend however, depicts a certain '*continuity*' in the manner in which the stories have been conceptualized. Each novel is individualistic in its treatment of its theme and representations; the narratives are set in different backgrounds and problematizations are theme specific. But the general trend in which all the five novels have been subsumed is one of progression and gradual expansion from subtle differences to explicit dichotomies. *Durgeshanandini* is the first novel written by Bankim in Bengali and although this novel is not much considered when one speaks of Bankim's notions of Hindu-Muslim differences, as the main thematic preoccupation of the novel is love and emotion. And yet, notions of differences persist; they are implicit and they problematize the entire treatment of the novel. Ayesha's love is not led to fruition and the novel stands as the rhetoric ascertaining cultural differences that cannot be compromised. The socio-cultural environment built in the novel is also one of Rajput-Yavan differences that most crucially help to define representations of cultural differences and power equations. From *Durgeshnandini*, the progressive trend escalates onto *Mrinalini*, *Rajsingh*, *Anandamath* and finally *Sitaram*. Representations of cultural

dichotomies begin from here, when descriptions no longer deal with subtle and passive connotations but become overt and aggressive. A general atmosphere of communitarian animosity runs common in all the novels. In *Mrinalini* and *Rajsingh*, the idea of cultural dichotomies is more emphatically brought out through the protagonists indulging in cultural power struggles. In *Mrinalini*, it is Hemchandra and Madhavacharya against Bakhtiyar Khalji with Pashupati fighting his own battle, while in *Rajsingh* it is the Rajput hero, Rajsingh taking up arms against the mighty Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb. In *Anandamath* and *Sitaram* however, the cultural dichotomies ultimately get defined. In here, it is no longer individual characters as the symbolic cultural icons indulging in warfare but the *binary* construction of two communities, constituting their respective people, pitted against each other. Community identity and community participation becomes too evident and obvious at this stage and with this the trend of representing cultural differences and dichotomies also reaches its climax. Within a paradigm of cultural power struggle and the Hindu efforts to rejuvenate, Bankim develops his narratives and therefrom he builds the entire Hindu rhetoric of identity formation, consolidation of community and perception of nation.

II

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was vivid and aggressive in his literary constructions that were impregnated with meaningful presuppositions for his readers. They provided a conceptual structure to understand the contemporary problems in a certain manner and

often provided a vision that was stimulating. In fact they laid the foundation for a certain kind of national solidarity. However, having explored his literary intentions, it would nevertheless be quite interesting to look into the *social background* within which Bankim, as part of the English educated '*bhadralok*' society, operated, in order to comprehend the *nature* of his literary compositions. In explaining the emergence of *novel* in Modern India, Shivaram Padikkal contends that the emergence of a particular literary form out of specific historical circumstances is connected to the ideological consciousness of a certain social group.¹ Thus, while a particular form of literature enables a certain understanding of the specific historical context, at the same time it also throws significant light upon the *social class* which indulges in such writings. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee belonged to the nineteenth century English educated '*bhadralok*' class, critically conscious of a need to foster indigenusness vis-à-vis the growing Anglicism of his class and the predominant colonial constructions. However, this is not to suggest that he was opposed to modernity, in fact the entire '*bhadralok*' class was largely a product of it and the class as such most fundamentally recognized the importance of modernity for the Indian society. The intention was to overcome an unnecessary overemphasis of it and to rather use its *tools* to enquire into an Indian past. The intelligentsia mostly *Hindu* were thrilled with the Orientalist outlines of the Indian history: their recognition of a classical Vedic age followed by a period of Musalman havoc. As an outcome, the Vedantic vision dominated perspectives of Indian intellectuals who sought to rejuvenate and regenerate it in renewed and redefined forms. This became

¹ Shivaram Padikkal, 1993, 'Inventing Modernity: The Emergence of the Novel in India', in Tejaswini Niranjana, P.Sudhir, Vivek Dhareshwar (eds.), *Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India*, Calcutta: Seagull Books, p. 220

the early beginnings of Indian nationalism, and as part of the larger enterprise of imagining a modern nation the *bhadralok* class constructed an identity for itself.²

The project of self-representation and imagining a nation involved a restructuring of the religious and other traditional institutions. Even as it appreciated the diversity in Indian traditions, the English educated class strove to dissolve these and cast them in a mould of 'homogeneity' so as to foster the existence of the same historical memories and the same spiritual traditions throughout India.³ But, given the fact that literary production as a cultural artifact acts as a mode of expression of a certain *dominant* social group in society, how far it seeks to encompass the expressions of the *other* groups in society remains a pertinent issue to be looked into. In calling for a regeneration of Hindu religion and culture and restricting importance of the medieval Muslim epoch as one of brutal invasions and oppressions and as such retrogressive in impact, Bankim adopts an *essentialist* argument critical to his class consciousness. He represented cultural power struggles between Hindus and Muslims through his writings, where by the decadent Hindu would rejuvenate to reclaim his power and glory. This could certainly be the consciousness of a class which had been *deprived* of its power status in the medieval past and which sought to avenge its historical 'taint' in its present. English education as it was introduced in India was primarily intent upon educating the Indian elite. The Brahman community, which was one of the upper classes in the rigidly hierarchical society as well as the other caste groups according to their positions on the social ladder, were exposed

² Shivaram Padikkal, op.cit., p.224

³ Ibid., p.224

to English education and Western thought.⁴ Bankim, a *Brahman* by caste, was part of this class, and actively shared in its ideological presuppositions. Those who belonged to the class were the first beneficiaries of the colonial system; the Muslims rulers had been supplanted by the British and the indigenous power structure was again thrown open under a culturally neutral state. This gave an opportunity to the Hindu upper castes, who appropriated English education and absorbed the fruits of modernity, with a renewed vigour to reclaim its cultural power positions. The historical ‘*memory*’ of such a class being one of deprivation and destitution at the hands of the Muslim invaders gets activated at the time of historical reconstruction.

Bankim’s construction of a Hindu ‘self’ as an ideal man incumbent to avenge the historical wrongs done to his community and resurrect its former glories may have been revivalist⁵ or redefined⁶ but was certainly *Brahmanical* in its assertion. It was Brahmanism with a *nuance*; Bankim had no faith in the traditional priestly system, however, he emphasized upon the system of ‘*sannyasa*’ or asceticism which was also an aspect of Hinduism. The ‘*sannyasis*’ were essentially Brahmans who had renounced the normal worldly style of livelihood and practised severe self-discipline in search of truth. Bankim wanted to inject a similar self discipline and devotion in the Hindus of his novels. Appropriation of Rajput histories in his narrative domain was also due to the fact

⁴ Shivaram Padikkal, op.cit., p.223

⁵ Amiya P.Sen, 1993, *Hindu Revivalism in Bengal (1872-1905): Some Essays in Interpretation*, New Delhi: OUP, pp.8-20

⁶ Indira Chowdhury, 2001, *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal*, New Delhi: OUP, p.4

that Rajputs and Marathas were considered '*embodiments of Aryan courage*'.⁷ Such a literary exercise nevertheless ran common with most of his contemporaries who were involved in history or fiction writings. It undoubtedly aroused a noble sentiment of patriotism among the readership but at the same time it often ended up being narratives of the leaders of society.⁸

Caste symbolism is quite profound in Bankim's novels, with the primacy of leadership undoubtedly accorded to members of the upper castes. While as a novelist he may have been representing the contemporary social milieu, and in this sense his novels may have indulged in some derogatory descriptions of low caste people, but the fact that he does not consider them as party to his communitarian or nationalist enterprise and does not make any such inclusive statements about them as he generally does for his upper caste leaders makes his writings in a fundamental sense upper caste centric and hence more appealing to people from those social categories. In his novel, *Durgeshnandini*, Bankim discusses illicit liaisons between Brahman or Rajput men and Shudra women, which obviously gave a position of disadvantage to the Shudra women. Bimala ultimately turns out to be Virendra Singh's wife; they were in love but having known that Bimala is a Shudra woman's daughter, Virendra Singh refuses to marry her and is forcibly made to do so by Man Singh. He hates Man Singh for this and does not make his marriage public, although Bimala accompanies him and takes care of his daughter, Tilottama. In the end Bimala also avenges her husband's death by murdering Kaltu Khan, who had captured

⁷ Indira Chowdhury, *The Frail Hero and Virile History*, p.54

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.54-59

Gar Mandaran and sentenced her husband to death, but she had effectively led a sad life both as a daughter, being forsaken by her Brahman father initially, and later as a wife, being rejected by her husband. Although she actually commits the task of confronting Katlu Khan and killing him, nevertheless, it is the muscled Rajput valour of Jagat Singh which continues to dominate the entire narrative, as chivalrous and courageous. The other novels of Bankim, apart from those which have been discussed here, which deal with social themes, indulge in such similar descriptions. They are either stray references or tinged with some derogatory description. In Indira, the protagonist by the same name is captivated by brigands on her way to her father-in-law's house. However, the brigands desert her having taken her ornaments and while she is left alone she suddenly encounters a young man who she presumes to belong to some *low* caste and who tries to pull her towards him but Indira manages to hit him and escapes. Some stray references may be sought in Bishabriksha and Krishnakanter Will but what makes them noticeable is their *insignificant* representation. They are too insignificant to find any credible reference in Bankim's novels.

This is an aspect which needs to be dealt with separately. However, it is an observation that gains some relevance given the social composition of the English educated 'bhadralok' class and given their efforts to foster a homogenized indigenous identity.

Vande Mataram

Translation by Aurobindo Ghosh

*Mother, I bow to thee!
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Cool with thy winds of delight, Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
Mother free.*

*Glory of moonlight dreams,
Over thy branches and lordly streams,
Clad in thy blossoming trees,
Mother, giver of ease,
Laughing low and sweet!
Mother I kiss thy feet,
Speaker sweet and low!
Mother to thee I bow.*

*Who hath said thou art weak in thy lands,
When the swords flash out in twice seventy million hands,
And seventy million voices roar,
Thy dreadful name from shore to shore?
With many strengths who are mighty and stored,
To thee I call, Mother and Lord!
Though who savest, arise and save!
To her I cry who ever her foemen drive,
Back from plain and sea,
And shook herself free.*

*Thou art wisdom, thou art law,
Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,
Thou the love divine, thou the awe,
In our hearts that conquer death.
Thine the strength that nerves the arm,
Thine the beauty, thine the charm,
Every image made divine,
In our temples is but thine.
Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen,
With her hands that strike and her swords of sheen,
Thou art Lakshmi lotus-throned,
And the Muse a hundred-toned,
Pure and perfect without peer,
Mother, lend thine ear.
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Dark of hue, O candid-fair,
In thy soul, with jeweled hair,
And thy glorious smile divine,
Loveliest of all earthly lands,
Showering wealth from well-stored hands!
Mother, mother mine!
Mother sweet, I bow to thee,
Mother great and free! **

*Source: Bhabatosh Chatterjee (ed.), 1994, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee: Essays in Perspective, Centenary edition, Delhi: Sahitya Akademi

VANDE MATARAM

Published in THE STATESMAN, 29 OCTOBER, 1905

Hail Mother!

*Sweet thy water, sweet thy fruits,
Cool blows the scented south wind,
Green waves thy corn- Mother!*

*Land of the glad white moonlit nights,
Land of trees with flowers in bloom,
Land of smiles, land of voices sweet,
Giver of joy, giver of desire, Mother!*

*Seventy million voices resounding;
Twice seventy million arms in resolve uplifting-
Dare any call- Thee weak?
Obeisance to Thee! O Thou, mighty with multiple might,
Redeemer Thou, Repeller of the enemy's hosts- Mother!*

*In Thee all knowledge, Religion Thou,
Thou, the heart, Thou, the seat of life,
The breath of life in the flesh!
O Mother, the strength of this arm thine;
Thine the devotion in the heart;
Thine the image consecrate- From temple to temple*

*The wielder of ten arms, Durga, Thou,
Thou the Goddess of wealth, bower'd in the lotus,
Thou the Muse dispersing wisdom, Obeisance to Thee!*

*Salutations to Thee! Holder of wealth, peerless,
With thy limpid water and luscious fruits,
Mother! Hail, Mother!*

*Verdant, artless, sweet, smiling,
Radiance-holding, nourishing, Mother, Mother, Hail! **

*source: Chittaranjan Bandopadhyay, 1983, *Anandamath Rochonar Prerona O Porinam*, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers

VANDE MATARAM

Published in **INDIAN REVIEW, JANUARY, 1906**

*Thou with sweet springs flowing,
Thou fair fruits bestowing,
Cool with zephyrs blowing,
Green with corn tops growing,
Mother, hail!*

*Thou of the shivering joyous, moon-blanced night,
Thou with fair groups of flowering tree-clumps bright,
Sweetly smiling,
Speech beguiling,
Pouring bliss and blessing,
Mother, hail!*

*Thou sole creed and wisdom art,
Thou our very mind and heart,
And the life-breath in our bodies,
Thou as strength in arms of men,
Thou, as faith in hearts doth reign,
And the form from fane to fane,
Thine, O Goddess!*

*For thou hast the ten-armed Durga's power,
Riches thrones thee in her lotus-bower,
Wisdom thee with deity doth dower,
Mother, hail!*

*Lotus-throned, rivalless,
Radiant in thy spotlessness,
Thou whose fruits and waters bless,
Mother, hail!*

*Hail, thou, verdant, unbeguiling,
Hail, O! decked one, sweetly smiling,
Ever bearing,
Ever rearing,
Mother, hail! **

*source: Chittaranjan Bandopadhyay, 1983, *Anandamathi Rochonar Prerona O Porinam*, Calcutta: Ananda Publishers

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