

## III

## MODEL I : UNDEVELOPED NATIONALISM

We would like to say a few words about the significance of the present model before we delve into the same. The discovery of this model would challenge the very foundation of one of the recent scholarly interpretations of Bengal renaissance that has located proto-nationalism in the 'Dharma Sabha' group of early nineteenth century Bengal and showed a link among Orientalist researches, development of the 'Dharma Sabha' group and Hindu revivalism of the late nineteenth century Bengal.<sup>1</sup> The challenge would be given a further thrust in the next model and together they would provide an alternative interpretation. Since we consider it rather important we would first like to elaborate a little on the circumstances in which the model came into being. Since we want to maintain a unity of approach in the analysis of this model with that adopted in the case of anti-colonial responses, some amount of repetition of the policy-profiles discussed in the previous chapter seems to be unavoidable.

After the conquest of Bengal the East India Company brought under its control the wholesale trade and to some extent the retail trade as well within Bengal in addition to the monopoly of foreign trade which it already possessed. For this purpose they resorted to measures like non-economic coercion and debt-slavery. They sought and secured the help from the agents and the banyas

who all made good fortune. With their help the Company could rob the country through taxation, contributions and forced labour of peasants and artisans. In other words, the British, epitomised by the Company, thought of their role only as mercantile agents and no more. The trading business was conducted for the advantage of the share-holders of the Company and not for the empire or for the British nation.<sup>1A</sup> The motto was maximisation of profits and the means monopoly-trading.

After the loss of American colony<sup>ies</sup> in 1776 the question of empire-building came in. Monopoly-trading alone could not secure the goal of imperial policy; it could neither avert the process of capital-formation in the hands of native banyas, agents, mutshuddis and money-lenders, nor could it secure a viable support base for its colonial rule. Thus, the policy of Permanent Settlement was designed to meet these ends. The court of Directors also hoped that the 'magic touch<sup>le</sup> of property would set a certain productive principle in operation,'<sup>2</sup> a phenomenon found so welcome to make the country a covetable raw material appendage. This was however not to be and the British had to modify the Permanent Settlement in the later years. Nevertheless, the political interest behind the introduction of Permanent Settlement was fully realized.<sup>3</sup> The magic touch of property created a 'social basis' for colonial rule, ----- a new class of revenue-collectors dependent on the Company. Despite the new goal of empire-building the Company did neither shift its major emphasis from the motto of profit-maximi-

sation nor did it change its assumptions and assessments about its social role with respect to the native society. On the social matters of the native society they observed restrained professionalism and, one might say, social Conservatism. The Company did not only eschew a social-interventionist role but was also determined not to do anything that might unsettle the minds of its Indian subjects. Missionaries were excluded from its territories as far as possible and traditional customs were treated with utmost respect. The British conservative thinkers like Burke and Cumming made very eloquent philosophical appeals for the preservation of Indian 'constitution' and 'culture.' This was, indeed, conservatism but at the heart of it was an imperial sentiment, illustrated by their silence on the exploiting role of the Company.<sup>4</sup> Such then were the assessments and assumptions of the colonial rulers about their role and position in the native society. But a change was inevitable.

Monopoly trading so far served the British interest well. But while mercantilism supplied the necessary momentum to the industrial revolution it began gradually to face a challenge from the emerging industrial interests in Great Britain. The investment policy of the East India Company also began to change.<sup>5</sup> The industrial revolution could gather momentum only by sucking out raw materials from the colonies and dumping on them the British industrial produce.<sup>6</sup> Thus mercantilist privileges and monopolies acted as fetters on economic development and by 1813 free-trade interests began to assault the Company's monopoly.

This change led immediately to a revision of the earlier assumptions and assessments of the colonial rulers about their role with regard to the native society. There was another reason for this change. After 1800 the individualist competitive society of industrialising Britain was increasingly viewed as the ~~scme~~ ~~scme~~ of an advanced and progressive civilisation. India, a barbarous and superstitious land, could be elevated into the scale of civilisation by direct intervention. James Mill in his History of British India insisted upon legal reforms. His son, John Stuart Mill who entered into India House in 1823 and rose to the position of Examiner ~~ex~~ exercised considerable influence in the formulation of Indian policy until his retirement in 1858. In his opinion India needed education, a "parental despotism" which would train its subjects in western knowledge and self-government. Obviously there was the other side of the coin as well. There were much mundane considerations around the interventionist role. There was, for instance, a great promise of enhanced trade once European civilisation was diffused in India and native resistance to assimilation sufficiently curbed. MacCaulay epigrammatically observed: "To trade with civilised man is infinitely more profitable than to govern savages." There was little surprise, therefore, that with the arrival of Lord Willam Bentinck in Calcutta in 1828, an unprecedented era of reform and innovation began in India. Free trade and colonial consolidation became preferable to mono-

poly trading and social Conservatism was replaced by an aggressive ideology of reform. This was a new setting for the spokesmen of the native society and there emerged a cognisable pattern of their response, described by some as 'conservatism' or 'proto-nationalism' (with whom we disagree). We call this 'un-developed nationalism.' Our reason behind such description will be clear after we exhibit the pattern.

#### Espousal of Nativism and Conservatism

The first abuse to come under attack was the practice of Satidaha which Bentinck prohibited in the Bengal Presidency in 1829. An organisation, "Dharma Sabha", led by Radhakantâ Deb, Ram Kamal Sen and Bhabanicharan Banerjee submitted a petition to the government opposing prohibition of Satidaha.<sup>7</sup> The petition prepared by the leaders of this Sabha and signed at their instance by many more represented that Sati was supported by Hindu religious texts as well as by long established practice and formed an integral part of Hinduism that previous Muslim rulers and preceding British Governor Generals refrained from interfering with this practice, that "certain persons taking upon themselves to represent the opinions and feelings" of the Hindoo inhabitants of Calcutta, have misinterpreted those opinions and feelings, and that a resolution passed by the Governor General in Council on the basis of such misrepresentation was "an interference with the Religion and Customs of the Hindoos, which we mostly deprecate and cannot

view without the most serious alarm." The petition also said that the preceding Governor Generals "never came to a resolution by which devout and conscientious Hindoos must be placed in the most painful of all predicaments, and either forego, in some degree, their loyalty to Government, and disobey its injunctions, or violate the precepts of their religion." They urged that "the resolution which has filled us and the faithful Hindoo subjects of the Honourable Company's Government with concern and terror, will be abandoned, and that we will obtain a permanent security through your lordship's wisdom against the renewal of similar attempt."<sup>8</sup>

Though initially formed to oppose the prohibition of Satidaha most of the sessions of successive meetings of the "Dharma Sabha" were occupied by the question of social boycott of the Brahmos, - the movements of the Young Bengal against Hindu prejudices and superstitions, and the proselytisation by Christian missionaries. The Sabha took active part in organising the orthodox sections against these developments. Apparently this was a straight forward reaction to the ideology of reform, -- -- a defensive and nativist reaction in the form of sudden jealous appreciation of Hinduism. So it was easy to conclude, as David Kopf actually did, that the Dharma Sabha had the importance of being India's first modern nationalist movement, or to be specific, a 'proto-nationalist' movement.<sup>9</sup>

There are sufficient ingredients to make this pattern stand out admirably well. For example, the case for proto-nationalism gets strengthened when we remember the enthusiasm expressed in Samachar Chandrika, the organ of the Orthodox Hindus, about the spread of Bengali language. The Chandrika welcomed the Governmental decision to abolish the use of Persian language.<sup>10</sup> The exultation at the prospect of the spread of vernacular language can be, without qualifications, taken as the expression of a desire to preserve the framework of the native society. Similarly, a Hindu nativist reaction was too readily ~~the~~ detectable and David Kopf was quick to pin-point it. In fact, if we take these facts on their face value then we are to confirm the proto-nationalist claim of this model which of course, would be an invalid assessment. The case for protonationalism becomes credible and a Hindu and nativist reaction appears to be perfectly natural when we find a real concern for the poor and the unemployed in their opposition to colonial measures in addition to their conservatism in respect of their caste and religion. The conservative attitude is all too prominent in their arguments against colonisation and free-trade. Samachar Chandrika pointed out the following evils of European colonisation: scarcity of rice (due to plantation agriculture), the economic misery of the poor classes, the danger of conversion of the Hindus to Christianity.<sup>11</sup> One "Zamindar" writing in Samachar Chandrika expressed his apprehension about the evil aspect of free-trade

as follows : "poor women who sold thread spun in this country find themselves in great distress, in consequence of the importation of British made thread. Flour vendors have been eliminated in Calcutta by European machinery in flour mills." It was further observed that "the natives will lose caste, their means of subsistence will be destroyed and communal disputes will arise with the British settlers regarding [SIC] agricultural land."<sup>12</sup> The Orthodox Hindus submitted a petition to the Parliament against European colonisation in March 1829. It was alleged that the indigo planters occupied lands by force, destroying rice-plants and that they detained the cattle of the poor cultivators and extorted money from them. This was accompanied by the following plea: "Owing to caste and religious restrictions, Hindus cannot seek employment in foreign countries; nor they can obtain employment in public service suited to their 'rank' [ 'mental duty' or 'menial trade' were forbidden ]. They have therefore to depend on land for their economic support, but then landed property is not 'absolutely secure.' In these circumstances, if the Europeans are allowed to buy land freely, their miseries will multiply and they will be unable to maintain their 'rank and character."<sup>13</sup> It is easy to read into these objections to colonisation and free-trade the general conservative premise and nativism as exemplified by the use of such expressions as 'caste,' 'rank and character' and the like. The pattern of thought, one is led to conclude, was defensive, nativist and conditioned by a crisis of identity in the face of an aggressive ideology

of reform and equally aggressive philosophy of free-trade and colonisation. How far such a claim can be sustained? A look at real relations beyond appearances would, as we find, expose the myth of purely nativist and Hindu reaction. The issues we are going to discuss in a moment, the real nature of Hindu defence, the actual circumstances of such a defence and the so-called deviations from such a defence, would inevitably lead to irreparable cracks in the solid construction of proto-nationalist explanation so affectionately maintained by a sizeable section of the academic profession. Initially, a look into the so-called deviations may be found interesting.

### Liberalism

We have to encounter serious difficulties in branding either Dharma Sabha, or for that matter, Radhakanta Deb (in whom the Orthodox Hindus found their faithful representation for some time) totally Conservative, interested only in the preservation of the Hindu way of life against all odds. It is on record that even before the Hindu College was set up, there were many social vices current in the Hindu society. Among these were drunkenness and prostitution with Muslim women (Yavani-gamana).<sup>14</sup> The silence of the Conservatives about these social vices does not appear compatible with the hypothesis of Hindu defence.

In Radhakanta Deb we find certain obviously liberal and unorthodox thoughts. We have to remember his liberality of spirit. He was the director of the Hindu College for several years, and

supporting the dissection of human body for medical education, his subscriptions to the fund for sending native youths to England to enable them to prosecute their studies in medicine, his support to the movement for female education, his support to the movement for education of children when necessary in collaboration with Christian Missionaries and under European teachers, and, his lively interest in education in general as evident from his active participation in Calcutta School Book Society and Calcutta School Society.<sup>15</sup> These had been, are, and may be regarded as pleasant deviations from the suggested pattern. Regarding them as deviations would sustain the proto-nationalist claim of the model. But it is our contention that such representation of these ideas distorts the most significant relationships. To us the liberal shades of thinking are not deviations but complements to 'conservatism' and 'nativism.' This does not make much sense in itself. It will make sense when we show that nativism and Hindu defence had been fully strategic and, therefore, essentially limited and the circumstances of such a defence amounted to a perceived class threat. These together give us a new pattern as well as a new model. So we now shift to a discussion of the class basis of this model.

#### The Class Basis of the Model

An analysis of the socio-economic basis of the so-called conservatives reveals an aspect of their dependence on the colonial structure. Three specific relationships can be pointed

out, viz., (1) the colonial structure with Permanent Settlement and Monopoly trading made possible earning through land-revenue, baniya as well as money lending activities, and an extensive net-work of dependant production or parasitism; (2) the officially sponsored curricula held out the prospect of petty jobs, and (3) the policy of the government of non-interference with the basic framework of native society was permissive of traditional form of life-style often generative of income through classical learning and social rites. The Brahmins, for example, earned a lot from different religious ceremonies. The rich used to spend lakhs of rupees to mourn the death of their relatives and for construction and maintenance of temples as also in numerous other ways.

The dependence of the so-called Conservatives on this form of colonial structure is not difficult to see. Radhakanta did not join any trade or business on his own account except perhaps looking after the inherited estate and that too only after his father's death in 1837. Maharaja Nabakrishna Bahadur and Babu Madan Mohun Datta who led two rival factions of the Dharma Sabha respectively had their fortune tied up with land. Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay, the elected Secretary of the Dharma Sabha and the editor of Samachar Chandrika also pursued his career through classical learning. The patrons of the Sabha were mostly those who had stakes in the landed property.<sup>15</sup>

However, the prima facie fact of their dependence on this given type of colonial structure certainly does not explain their ideas, let alone indicate a pattern, unless we can show a cognition on their part of such a dependent position. The question is simple: Did they take cognizance of their dependent position on a particular type of colonial structure? In view of what follows next we think we should answer in the affirmative.

An analysis of the grounds offered by them - against colonisation and free-trade in the perspective of class would indicate the subordinate position that they accorded to caste, culture, religion and other similar factors. In all writings, petitions and appeals that we have taken note of so far a more genuine and sustained concern can be found for jobs, "means of subsistence" and security of landed property. Let us, for example, take this statement: "Owing to caste and religious restrictions, Hindus cannot seek employment in foreign countries ... " Let us take one more: "If the Europeans are allowed to buy land freely, then their [Hindus] miseries will multiply.. .." What was their position then? Did they perceive colonisation as a threat to their caste and religion or as a threat to their employment and means of subsistence? It is not difficult to see that they considered colonisation to be a threat to both of these, but to the former only as a consequence of the latter. That the prior concern for them was always mundane advantages

was indicated in their calculated support to the promotion of Bengali language, a support that was never prompted by any nativist reaction to any aggressive ideology of social reform. The Samachar Chandrika observed: "We have learnt that it is the intention of our Governor General, Lord William Bentinck, to abolish the use of Persian language altogether. We are overjoyed at this intelligence, and offer hundred benediction to our chief, for, this arrangement will be highly beneficial to the country - when the regulation is promulgated the haughtiness of these javanas will be brought low which will be of much service to us. When the Bengali language is brought into use, all the natives, besides Mosalmans, may be employed in the public service. The Mosalmans will be driven out, and never will be able to read write [SIC] Bengali " [Emphasis added] 7.<sup>17</sup> It is obvious that the major concern of the Conservatives was the conservation of their own interests and that too, from a class point of view and not to preserve the framework of the native society. Beneath the petitions, utterances and memoranda of the Conservatives lay a clear perception of what constituted a class threat to them.

Since the Conservatives fully recognized their dependent position on a particular type of colonial rule they resented any change in it that would go against them and welcomed any that would promote their interest. Thus, it is not surprising that they neglected caste and religious considerations on their

own terms and were prepared to compromise on these as far as it was necessary for the furtherance of their class interest. Thus, no caste consideration could be found in their support to studies in medicine, even if it involved dissection of human body. Even missionary involvement was welcome in order to learn the English language. So, whatever enhanced the prospect of jobs for them, be it training in useful skills or knowledge of English they welcomed them. And in so doing they did not bother about caste, religion and social customs. Conversely, they played upon the social and religious themes in the face of any perceived threat to their 'means of subsistence.' The liberal dispositions of the Conservatives were thus no deviations from the nativist reaction and Hindu defence. Rather, these were all very consistent with the same from the point of view of their own class position.

When we find that the nativist reaction and the Hindu defence on the one hand and a compromise with, or sacrifice of, such a reaction or defence on the other were determined by a clear perception of their class advantage or class-threat we may go on to enquire into the circumstances of different reactions. We hope the class basis of the model would be well understood when we will find close correspondence between their different reactions and the changing circumstances of colonial rule. Let us, for this purpose, look into their patterns of reactions to the most formidable of the forces of change in

their times, the policies of colonisation and free trade.

It would be interesting to find that the Conservatives did not voice their protest forcefully against colonisation and free-trade before the Charter Act of 1833, by which the Europeans were empowered to buy lands. The Indigo planters well before the Charter Act were buying patni taluks from the Zamindars at high prices for indigo cultivation following Regulation VIII of 1819.<sup>18</sup> The Zamindars and the so-called Conservatives had no reason to be unaware of this process but they did not see in it anything to react to. There was neither a nativist reaction nor a Hindu defence against it. Why? Was it because the scale of indigo cultivation was negligible or the exploitation of the peasants was very little? If we find that both were so little as to pass unnoticed by the Conservatives then nativism and Hindu defence can be regarded as natural reactions to attacks on the native society, which were challenged from conservative premises after 1833. However, records do not bear out these conjectures. The scale of Indigo cultivation was fairly extensive before the Charter Act of 1833. The Directors "were inclined to think that indigo might become one of the best means of remittance to this country and one of the least prejudiced exports of Bengal" and in 1778 they wrote a letter to the Company on this subject.<sup>19</sup> The Company entered into a contract with J.T. Princep in 1780 and gave an advance of Rs.1,70,000 for the supply of 2100 munds of indigo at the rate of Rs.5/- per kg [sic]. Contracts were entered into with others such as Douglas,

Ferguson and J.P. Scott.<sup>20</sup> Thus, indigo cultivation became popular by 1793. In 1790 England purchased indigo from other countries of the value of 18,40,815 pounds. But in 1795 England procured from Bengal alone indigo of the value of 29,55,862 pounds.<sup>21</sup> In 1810 the East India Company purchased from Bengal indigo worth Rs.20,00,000.<sup>22</sup> In the same year in Calcutta the price for indigo per mund was Rs. 130/- which increased to Rs. 330 in 1824.<sup>23</sup> During this period the number of indigo factories/godowns in Bengal was around 400.<sup>24</sup> As can be seen then, Bengal witnessed a fairly extensive indigo cultivation and trade well before 1833. But then what about exploitation? Enough evidence had been there on the nature of abuses associated with the indigo rebellion of 1859-60. But the abuses were not new. These were continuing for long. The Governor of Bengal, J.P. Grant, commented in 1860: "It cannot be said that the character of the abuses to which the system of Bengal indigo Manufacture is subject to essentially altered now from what it was 50 years ago."<sup>25</sup> So we have to come back to the old question. Though the scale of indigo cultivation was extensive in Bengal before 1833 and the level of exploitation was high the Conservatives did not bother about them. Why? The answer, basing on the analysis that follows, would be: Because they did not see in these development any class-threat or they did find in them some advantage.

Our readings become easy now. In the first two decades of the nineteenth century the interest of the planters and of

the Company were identical. There was exploitation of the peasantry and a flourishing trade in indigo was also there, of which the Conservatives were fully aware. Upto 1828 the planters carried on nij-cultivation in which they hired labourers from outside the ryoti areas and provided them with necessary instruments of production. The exploitation continued unabated but the Conservatives did not see in it a class threat. Upto 1828 the landowning classes had no reason to be worried about the security of their landed property or about their own interest in the ryoti-tenures. Moreover, the Zaminders charged high prices for the lands leased to the indigo planters. But after 1828 a class-threat emerged when the planters were shifting from nij to ryoti system of cultivation. The Zamindars found their own ryots taken forcibly to indigo cultivation. After the Charter Act of 1833 the planters were themselves becoming Zamindars.<sup>26</sup> Also there ceased to be an identity of interest between the Company and the planters who by then were finding the free-trade lobby to their advantage. So, the native class-alignment with British mercantilism was threatened by these new developments, the 'means of subsistence' weakened and the Conservatives suddenly became vocal against European settlement. Interestingly the timing and circumstances of the Sati controversy indicate the same relationship with the debates on free-trade and colonisation. Rammohun and the liberals who initiated the proposals for the prohibition of Sati made them disagreeable to the Conservatives by working in favour of free-trade interests

and supporting the indigo planters even after these had constituted threats to the interests of the Conservatives. To the Dharma Sabha group this was an unholy alliance among the powerful free-trade lobby, indigo planters, European settlers and the native liberals who had already begun to eat up their means of livelihood. Devoid of governmental patronage the only way in which the Conservatives could build resistance to the emerging class threat was by mobilising masses against the threatening measures. Since the social distance between the Conservatives and the masses in terms of caste, prestige and wealth was great an appeal to religion could best serve as a bond of unity.

Satidaha provided a fit issue. The direction of the attack of the Dharma Sabha became obvious from the subsequent concerns of the Sabha, such as opposition to the Brahmos, missionaries and the young radicals, all of whom had a favourable disposition to the ideology of reform and free trade, and therefore, constituted a class-threat to the Conservatives.

#### A Definite Pattern

The so-called Conservative and Liberal ideas judged in the perspective of class indicates a recognizable pattern of thoughts and reactions. The liberal dispositions and the Hindu defence were different manifestations of the same class basis and class attitudes. Both were inherently strategic and therefore essentially limited. The factors of caste, religion and social

framework were ignored, the consequences of European settlement overlooked as long as their 'means of subsistence' were maintained. Liberal ideas such as English education, medical training were encouraged since these would increase the scope of employment. The urgency to assert nativism arose from a class threat just as willingness to sacrifice nativism, from a calculation of class-advantage.

As their opposition to the invading ideology of reform and free-trade was circumstantial partial and unguided by any socio-ethical principle, their opposition to an alien British civilisation was also partial, circumstantial and unguided by any moral conviction. Their opposition was against a sub-set of the British society, --- against a class of traders-reformers. The same opposition was shown to the Brahmos and the young radicals, who together with a section of the Britishers, constituted a class-threat to the Conservatives.

#### The Faltering of the Model

We can, it seems, hardly allow the proto-nationalist claim of this model. Indeed, there was vertical mobilisation of a fully apolitical nature as evident from the rallying of the masses by the Dharma Sabha. There were also strong socio-cultural elements like caste and religion in the native reaction. But these were all made secondary to class-considerations. They withheld the social and cultural indices on areas which they found

to their advantage, or still better, if it is said that they played upon social and cultural themes only to confront the ideology of social reform and free-trade whose extent and timing too were determined by the considerations of their class advantage. The primary weakness of the model, then, is this: it failed to make a case of civilisation vis-a-vis a civilisation and sacrificed it to a case of a class vis-a-vis a class. They saw themselves as a class, as a subordinate actor in a colonial situation and placed themselves in opposition to another class of British free-traders, reformers and a section of the native elite.

The claim of proto-nationalism cannot be granted because proto-nationalism bases itself on a civilisational claim. Its <sup>26A</sup> basis is also on socio-cultural elements but these surpass the purely class considerations. Rank concession may be extensive in matters affecting native class interest but native identification in terms of language, culture, religion and the related factors continues independently of rank concession. Thus, proto-nationalism in respect of socio-cultural distinctiveness ~~that~~ is a response to the totality of the colonial civilisation. But, as we have seen, the nationalism in the present model was essentially undeveloped. It was neither a response to the totality of the alien civilisation nor ~~it~~ was it a claim of civilisation in its totality. The response was circumstantial, strategic and partial to a part and not to the whole of an alien civilisation, with

which a part of native society was also identified. So, nationalism here was undeveloped in more than one sense. The nationalism of nativist reaction was limited, strategic, and therefore, was not fully developed. The response again was directed to a part of alien civilisation and was not developed enough to challenge the alien civilisation as a whole.

A related weakness was in the way the Conservatives built up a class defence in the form of Hindu defence. The researches of the Oriental scholars into Indian traditions discovered a number of trends on which the Hindu elite could fall back for rationalisation of their newly acquired position under British colonialism and for the defence of their class interest wherever applicable. In falling back on these traditions they did not encounter any problem; rather, they overcame the problem of identity. But for the Muslims both Orientalist contributions and the Hindu defence created a problem of identity. To understand this we have to refer briefly to the class and sociological aspect of the Muslim elite in Bengal.

As observed earlier, the new alignment of class forces during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was highly beneficial to the Hindu elite. For the Muslim elite, however, it was encroachment on their well-entrenched position. The changes introduced by the new rulers (the diarchy of 1765, change of capital from Murshidabad to Calcutta in 1768, the Permanent

Settlement in 1793, the Resumption Proceedings, the replacement of Persian by English as the court language etc.) sent shock-waves to the Muslim elite. They conceded power and turned defensive. As observed by a scholar: "Bereft of power and glory, without the means to retrieve their dignities, many Muslims turned introspectively to the solace of the spirit and sought refuge in religion."<sup>27</sup> The social aspect of Muslim leadership, however, had an important implication for the nature of such introspection.

The Bengali Muslims were not homogeneous. Like the Caste system of the Hindus they had also a broad division between aristocracy (ashraf) and the common folk (atraf). The former usually consisted of the up-country Muslims, of those who came ----- or believed they came, ----- from outside of Bengal and even of India, and carried prestigious surnames like Sayyid, Khondker etc.<sup>28</sup> The Muslim elite, moreover, was made up largely of the conservative Ulama (Madrasah educated theological jurists).<sup>29</sup> In the pre-colonial Bengal this elite lived either on the favours shown by the rulers in the form of jobs or jagirs or by using religion among the common folk.<sup>30</sup> Now that their class interest was threatened under the East India Company's rule they came to hate the new alignment of class-forces and tried to defend themselves by creating a cocoon of exclusiveness around them. One way to maintain this exclusiveness was to cling to the traditional system that was mainly an

Arabic system. The madrasahs provided such an education. Another way to separate identity was to initiate purificatory movements among the lower orders of Muslims. There was of course no question of nationalism. The class defence was definitely built on a religio-communal line but the social nature of Muslim leadership, --- their pride in their blue blood, --- their reference to the golden age of Islam, their fascination with Arabic, Persian and Urdu etc. --- could not reinforce a Bengali, and for that matter, an Indian identity. Rather, Pan-Islamism became the motto. The self-searching of the Muslim elite or their introspection linked them geographically to the pristine religion of a Middle-East culture. Thus, a class defence expressed as a defence of Islam did not become an Indian defence, rather a defence of an authentic Arab tradition against un-Islamic excrescences.<sup>31</sup>

While the Muslim elite resorted to Pan-Islamism, the Conservatives failed to put up any civilisational claim in their model. By pursuing a trend of rationalising their actions such as invocation of Hindu sanctions for their actions, --- they camouflaged their class outlook. What they did as a matter of strategy appeared to be a matter of principle. Devoid of any rational leadership, the Muslim peasants and weavers were forced to express their anti-colonialism in movements that acquired Pan-Islamic character. Thus, by building a class

defence in the form of Hindu defence the proponents of undeveloped nationalism indirectly allowed the Pan-Islamism to percolate down to the common folk, and in turn, exposed them to a crisis of identity: Are the Bengalees or Muslims? In the face of such a crisis of identity the elites of both communities were showing the signs of exclusiveness. The communal differences were not, however, real differences. Objectively, neither the Hindu elites, nor the Muslim elites represented the real interests of the Hindu or the Muslim masses. There were no sharply etched or articulated interests of Hindus and Muslims standing in juxtaposition to one another. In particular, the condition of Hindu and Muslim peasants and workers was the same.<sup>32</sup> Thus neither the Hindu elites nor the Muslim elites could represent even the interests of the community they claimed to represent. As a consequence, Communalism appeared as a false consciousness<sup>33</sup> hiding the real contradictions of a colonial situation. All these predetermined to a great extent the future patterns of thought.

#### NOTES :

1. According to David Kopf the Bengal renaissance was substantially a product of eighteenth century cosmopolitanism and pragmatic British policy built around the need for an articulated civil-service class of Englishmen. Spurred on by this class of British officials known as Orientalists, sympathetically engaged in a scholarly reconstruction of the Hindu past, a newly formed intelligentsia selectively reinterpreted their heritage and strove to reshape their culture

in the new image . Kopf in particular referred to the contributions of William Jones(1746-94), H.T.Colebrooke (1765-1836) and H.H. Wilson (1786-1860). Jones was responsible for the foundation of Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. He also translated Shakuntalam (1789), the Gita Govinda and the Manusmriti( 1794). Wilson translated the Vishnu Purana and the Rigveda. Vide David Kopf, British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

While it can be safely asserted that Western Indology was a contributive factor to the cause of Indian nationalism Kopf ignored the substantial contribution made by the German Indologists. This in itself is a serious limitation apart from the fact that Kopf overstretched the importance of Orientalist contribution in explaining nationalism in Bengal. While we would take care of Kopf's disproportionate emphasis on Orientalism historical record must be set right here.

Leonard Chezy, Christian Lassen (1800-76), E. Burnouf(1801-52), August Schlegel(1772-1829), Bothlingk (1815-1904), Rudolf Roth (1821-1895) and Max Muller (1823-1900) were founders of Sanskrit studies in Europe . Benfey, Roth, Muller, Albrecht Weber (1825-1901), Abel Bergaine , W.D.Whitney (1827-94), Alfred Ludwig , Herman Grassman, A. Hillebrandt(1853-1927), H. Oddenberg(1854-1920), Karl Geldner (1854-1929), A.A. Macdonell(1854-1925), M.Bloomfield (1855-1929), and A.B.Keith(1879-1945) have been profound Vedic scholars. The first printed editions of the four Vedas were brought out for the first time in the world by German scholars. Theodor Benfey published

Samaveda in 1848, Max Muller published the Rigveda in 1849-74, Weber published Vajasaneyi Samhita in 1852 and Roth, with assistance from American Vedist Whitney published Atharvaveda in 1856. While many Indologists were content with interpreting Indian texts on the basis of philology, comparative history and linguistic paleontology scholars like Schopenhauer, Schlegel, Max Muller and Deussen made flattering remarks about the value of old scriptures which boosted the morale and self respect of the Indians. Vivekananda hailed Max Muller as a sage and both Tilak and Gandhi quoted him. So, the German Indologists had the greatest contribution in shaping cultural nationalism in India. The philological and mythological researches of Jones, Bopp etc. demonstrated that the dark skinned Hindu also descended from the same common ancestors as the Greeks, Latins and Teutons and the black skinned Dravidian from the primary Caucasian race. For a comprehensive discussion of this theme vide V.P. Varma, Modern Indian Political Thought, (Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, Ninth Edn. ,1987), pp. 6-8.

- 1A. George D. Bearce, British Attitudes Towards India, ( London; 1961), p. 51.
2. Quoted from Asok Sen, "The Bengal Economy and Rammohun Roy" in V.C. Joshi (ed), Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernisation in India, ( New Delhi:1975), p. 83.

3. Vide the "Speech" of Lord William Bentinck quoted in  
Rajni Palm Dutt, India Today, (Calcutta: 1970), p.218.
4. George D. Bearce, op. cit., p. 10 ff.
5. N.K. Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal, vol. 1,  
(Calcutta: 1971), p. 28.
6. Narahari Kabiraj, Swadhinata Sangrame Bangla, (in Bengali),  
(Calcutta: nd.), pp. 48-50.
7. When the Governor General (Bentinck) in Council passed  
Regulation XVII prohibiting Sati, the practice of Hindu  
widows burning themselves in the pyre of the deceased  
husbands, as "illegal and punishable by the Criminal  
Courts" on December 4, 1829, the Conservative Hindus  
decided to oppose it by petitions. The meeting they  
held for this purpose on January 17, 1830 at the  
Sanskrit College, rather casually, led to the origin  
of the Dharma Sabha. Vide report of this meeting in  
Samachar Chandrika reprinted in Samachar Darpan of  
January 23, 1830 in Brojendranath Bandopadhyay, (ed)  
Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha, vol. I, (Calcutta: 1344 BS),  
pp. 266-69.
8. The petition has been reproduced in A.F. Salahuddin Ahmed,  
Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal, 1818-1835,  
(Calcutta: 1976), Appendix IV, pp. 217-20.

9. David Kopf, British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance, (Berkeley: 1969), pp. 226, 271-72.
10. Reported from India Gazette, 26 December 1831 in A.F. Salahuddin, n. 8, pp.173-74.
11. Cited by B.N. Ganguli, Indian Economic Thought: Nineteenth Century Perspectives, (New Delhi: 1978), p. 40.
12. Ibid., p. 42.
13. Ibid., p. 43.
14. Report of Samachar Darpan, January 22, 1831, in Brajendra-nath Bandopadhyay, Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha, vol. II, n. 7, pp. 751-53.
15. For an informative discussion on Radhakanta Deb vide K.S. Bhattacharya, The Bengal Renaissance: Social and Political Thoughts, (New Delhi: 1986), pp. 70-87.
16. For an analysis on the socio-economic status of the members of the Dharma Sabha vide Rajat Sanyal, Voluntary Associations and the Urban Public Life in Bengal (Calcutta: 1980), pp. 97-104. Vide also a biography on "Radhakanta Deb" in Calcutta Review, No. XC, Volume XLV 1867, p.317.
17. Cited from India Gazette, 26 December 1831 in A.F. Salahuddin, no. 8, pp. 173-74.
18. Tapobijoy Ghosh, Nilbidroher Charitra O Bangali Budhijibi, (in Bengali), (Calcutta: 1983), p. 6.

19. N.K. Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal, vol. I, n. 5, pp. 29-30.
20. Ibid, pp. 206-8.
21. Cited from Holden Furber, "John Company at Work" in Tapobijoy Ghosh, n. 18, p.4.
22. Ibid.
23. N. K. Sinha, (ed) The History of Bengal, (Calcutta:1967), p.121.
24. Ibid.
25. C. E. Buckland, Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors, vol. I, (Calcutta: Reprint,1976), p. 240.
26. Tapobijoy Ghosh, n. 18, p. 6.
- 26 A. Sorokin (1889-1948) who was both a social philosopher and a scientific sociologist did not make any distinction between civilisation and culture and came out with a theory of fluctuations which suggested that a civilisation periodically undergoes changes. Vide Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics ( New York: American Book Co. ,1937-41), 4 vols. While Sorokin used the term culture in a broad sense to comprehend civilisation also MacIver carried forward the tradition of Danilevsky and Spengler and distinguished civilisation as the accumulation of artifacts, techniques and instruments, and culture as consisting of values. For a comparison of Sorokin and MacIver vide V. P. Varma , Political Philosophy ( Agra: Lakmi Narain Agarwal, 2nd Rev. Edn. 1977 ), pp. 363-64. Some of the anthropologists used the term civilisation as the latter phase of culture, characterized by civil social organisation as in the cities, in contrast to kinship organisation in tribal

societies. Viewed in this way, there is no essential distinction between culture and civilisation. Anthropologists like A.A. Goldenweiser would consider the two terms synonymous.

In our study, however, the word 'civilisation' is used in a generic sense to comprehend what in the language of technical social sciences can be analytically differentiated as culture and civilisation.

27. A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, n. 18, p. 18.
28. Safiuddin Joardar, "The Bengali Renaissance and the Bengali Muslims : Some Reflections" in David Kopf & Safiuddin Joardar ( eds. ), Reflections on the Bengal Renaissance, (Rajshahi: 1977), p. 47.
29. Muin-ud-Din Ahmed Khan, "Birth Pang of the Muslim Modernism in Bengal: A Probing into the educational and learning mechanism" in Kopf & Joardar, Ibid, p. 75.
30. Safiuddin, no. 28, p.47.
31. David Kopf, "Introduction" in Kopf & Joardar, n. 28, p. 15.
32. Bipan Chandra, Communalism in Modern India, ( Delhi:1984 ), p. 13.
33. Ibid, p.7.