

MODEL 3 : LIBERAL NATIONALISM

The policies of the British administration after 1857 were all derived from a new model of attitudes, - a model which abandoned the cherished belief in reform for a benevolent but strong government. A new imperial sentiment sustained this modified model of enlightened despotism for which the best intellectual justification was given by Fitzjames Stephen, an English lawyer who served two years and a half as Legal Member of the Viceroy's Council (1869-1872) and who published subsequently the political manifesto of the new school, Liberty, Equality, Freedom.¹ Indian government, Stephen told Lytton, was "the best corrective in existence to the fundamental fallacies of liberalism the only government under English control still worth caring about." Actually hard political calculations lay behind the new model of attitudes. The government was obeying a rule of expediency or was doing what was considered politically prudent.

In matters of education a bitter mistrust worked in the minds of officials against the new intelligentsia in the post-mutiny decades. Already in the mid-fifties Charles Wood gave vent to his opposition to higher education of the natives : "I am against providing our future detractors, opponents and grumblers."² Though Calcutta University was established in 1857 its course was tilted in favour of pure Arts and Literature to the utter neglect of courses of practical importance. The standard of qualifying examination was deliberately set too high to reduce the number of success-

ful candidates. Since the seventies the government was clearly in favour of a policy of withdrawal. In 1871 George Campbell degraded some degree colleges to secondary level (Krishnanagar College, Baharampur College etc). The policy reached its apex in 1882 when the Hunter Commission recommended closing down of these colleges if no private sponsors were available.³

While higher education was deliberately shrunk down the employment opportunities were all made restricted. In 1868 the Government of India resolved that "it is not advisable to award the scholarships wholly upon the principle of open competition." Instead, the government was favouring the Zamindars and traditional elites in its policy of awarding scholarships and titles.⁴ The government's distrust of Bengali baboos was well illustrated by its preference of selection by nomination to selection through open competition. Again, the maximum age for Civil Service Examination was reduced to 18. While the British Indian Association and Bombay Association were demanding simultaneous examination the government was clearly hostile to such proposal. G.O. Trevelyan in his statement before the House of Commons in 1868 regarded Bengalis as "singularly deficient in the bolder and harliex vitures --- in pluck, self-reliance, and veracity, - the three great national attributes by which we gained, and by which we retain our hold upon British India."⁵ Lawrence defended his government's action accordingly :

We conquered India mainly by force of armsIn like manner we must hold it. The Englishman must always be

in the front rank, holding the post of honour and of power.... The District Officer is the unit of the whole civil administration. He is the official to whom, in the first instance, the Government looks for information as to all which may be going on This post must be held out by the English official.⁶

From all intents and purposes then, the government was keen on throwing obstacles to the newly emerging native elites while maintaining its old nexus with the traditional elites as well, who still, in the opinion of the government, could serve as an effective social base for their rule. The scholarships, titles and nominations all saw to that. If the government picked up a conflict, that was with the educated natives of urban roots. With regard to the traditional elites the policies still resembled patron-client relationship. This policy was complemented by the measures taken by the government in regard to Calcutta Corporation. The government made repeated attempts to introduce the representative principle in the first half of the nineteenth century in the constitution of the Corporation. The response from the native quarters was not much enthusiastic, probably due to lack of a sufficiently large number of educated Bengalis, but by 1863 the notables were granted enough influence within the existing system of municipal administration to be satisfied with. In 1863 a new Act introduced a mild representative element in the existing system of the Justices of the Peace by constituting a corporate body with the general control of municipal expenditure. Calcutta's landed notables, represented

through the British Indian Association came forward to work for the system from 1863 to 1876 with considerable enthusiasm. The middle class or the ordinary civil population had no place in it. Maharajas, Rajas and Rai-bahadurs, the titled natives of Calcutta who owned extensive property in the town and had enough social leadership were selected by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal to serve as Justices.⁷

That the government was adhering to a rule of expediency is well illustrated by its agrarian policy in the post-mutiny days, - a policy which was apparently directed against the landed magnates, the Zamindars and proprietors of the soil. The change in the agrarian policy had a broader implication because it concerned almost nine-tenths of the population. Though no reliable official census was undertaken before 1872, rough estimates could be had as to the pressure of population on land. Between 1792-1892, only 254,000 were involved in industrial production under the factory acts of India. The marginal figures for Bengal need not be doubted.⁸ Urbanisation only affected 3% of the people as revealed by the Census reports. In 1872, Calcutta, with a population of 447,601, was having an entirely rural hinterland. Dacca had only 69,000 people and Jessore had 8,152 out of a total population of over two millions in the district. Moreover, towns other than Calcutta housed citizens who were almost entirely dependent on agriculture.⁹ The government was aware of the problems of distribution of profits and capital formation at grass-root level under

Permanent Settlement but ignored it as long as the Indigo planters could carry on productive farming in a small peasant economy. But the slump in indigo trade in the fifties made reconsiderations imperative on part of the government. Cash crop was no longer synonymous with indigo. Sugar, Coffee, tobacco and sufflour had a better prospect. To the British Free-traders the problem of raising cash crops and agricultural development were linked up with the sale of Lancashire cotton piecegoods, Sheffield cutleries and Bristol salt. In both cases the rural masses held the key. An increase in the purchasing power would promote the sale of British goods. In 1853, the House of Commons ordered a return of the prospect of cash crops in India and it revealed that Jute, Sugar, Silk Safflour etc were gaining over Indigo.¹⁰ In the missionary petition of 1855 this was especially brought home.¹¹ Thus the agrarian policies in the post-mutiny period had two interrelated goals, - to contain agricultural disturbances and to ensure agricultural productivity and national prosperity. The stated objectives of all rent legislations made to appear moral what was politically prudent. In fact, with the assumption of direct control of Indian colony the British started drawing away more efficiently the sustenance of Indian people and the vital raw materials. This process became more systematic after 1857. The following table indicates the increase of the export of raw materials from India¹² :

<u>Items</u>	<u>1849</u>	<u>1914</u>
Cotton	£ 1.7 million	£ 22 million
Rice & Jute	£ 8,58,000	£ 19.3 million
Jute	£ 68,000	£ 8.6 million

The commercial penetration of the Indian market was achieved through establishment of industry and expansion of the communication network which, as can be seen from the following presentation, sharply increased since 1857¹³ :

Tea gardens

Period -	1850	1853	1859	1869	1871
Nos. of gardens -	1	10	48	260	295

Coal mines

Period -	1820	1854	1860	1880
Nos. of mines -	1	3	50	60

Jute Mills around Calcutta

Period -	1854	1874	1875	1882
Nos. of mills -	1	9	17	20

Length of Railway Lines

Period -	1857	1905
Length of lines -	Less than 200 miles	More than 28,000 miles

Expansion of telegraph system

Period -	1857	1905
Length of lines -	4,500 miles	60,000 miles

As can be observed the rule of expediency led the British rulers to placate the landed magnates for their support and also

to ^acurve out an agrarian policy attractive to a class of ryots which would be complementary to the policy of facilitating exploitation of India's resources and the marketing of British goods. Let us now concern ourselves with an account of the British agrarian policy of this period.

The government passed the Act X in 1859¹⁴. The Act gave occupancy right to all ryots holding land for at least 12 years without break in an estate. Since no definition of ryot was provided in the Act, ryot implied all, who were recorded as ryots in the Zamindar's rent-roll. No provision was made to check subletting. Therefore, a very substantial number of middlemen and jotedars were termed as ryots. The classification of ryots into occupancy and non-occupancy groups by itself excluded a vast majority of tenants-at-will, many of whom were actual tillers of the soil. Act X thus gave legal protection to the small class of rural capitalists who could and did organise rural production by lending seed and money to the primary producers.

Whatever might be the intention of the government the Zamindars could easily by-pass the Act by shifting the tenant from one plot of land to another. Furthermore, the High Court decision of 1863 (judgement of Peacock in Hills V. Ishur Ghosh) had made this occupancy right worthless by declaring that the landlord could ask for the full market value of the rent, which in fact, meant that there was no restriction on rent enhancement. A reversal of this ruling by a High Court decision of 1865 (Thakasonee Dasse V Bi-

sheshur Mookherjee) which established that the rent could only be enhanced in proportion to the previous rent and that the increased value of the produce did not solve the problem either, because landlord and ryot would never agree as to the period and date which should serve as the basis for calculation. In 1869 the cases were transferred to the Civil Courts, thereby further complicating the same.

The old system which could continue despite Act X got a jolt in 1872 when Sir George Campbell imposed a road cess on Bengal, to be collected by the Zamindars according to their rent rolls. Many landlords tried to enhance and consolidate the abwabs before they would come under government scrutiny. This brought out violent unrest in the district of Pabna where the occupancy ryots organised agrarian leagues, refused to surrender Kabuliyats or to pay enhanced rents and also fought law suits. Moreover, they mobilised the tenants-at-will, the adhiars and bargadars to join their struggle against the Zamindars. The movement in course of the next few years spread to the whole eastern and central Bengal (barring the districts of Chittagong, Noakhali and Rangpur, - in which the landlords neither attempted nor were in a position to deny the occupancy rights of the substantial ryots). Campbell's administration did not interfere and it turned a deaf ear to the demands of the landlords for a revision of the existing tenancy law. The government's attitude was clear. It threw out a nexus to the substantial ryots.¹⁵ The Bengal Administration Report for 1874-75 noted the rise of this class with satisfaction.¹⁶ Campbell's successor, Sir Richard Temple

studied the situation differently :

The material advancement of the sub-proprietors, the ryots and peasantry in Eastern Bengal, has been mentioned with satisfaction on former occasions. A remarkable illustration has been offered by the detailed inquiries which are being made for the valuation of lands in the deltaic district of Backergunge. It appears from the road cess returns that the rent roll payable to the intermediate tenure holders is often 10, 20, or 50 times the rent paid to the superior landlord. It seems probable that no less than a crore of rupees (assumed as equal to one million sterling) are annually paid in rent in this district, and that the value of the agricultural produce of the district can hardly be less than five-million sterling annually, and may be much more. The returns, moreover, while they show the prosperous condition of the tenure holders and other middlemen, show how the profits of the land are slipping out of the Zamindars, who have permanently alienated their interests in the soil, and in many cases, have fallen into the position of needy annuitants.¹⁷

Temple was responsible for passing the Agrarian Disputes Act of 1876 which empowered, in certain cases, the Collectors to try rent suits without the provision of appeal to civil courts and suggested a gross produce rule (for tenants without occupancy right 20% of the value of the gross produce as rent and for occupancy ryots 15%).¹⁸ While Temple's attempt was unsuccessful and the 1876 Act was never made use of, his minute clearly revealed the who's who of agrarian relations and sufficiently illustrated the class aspect of the rent agitations.

A more comprehensive proposal was made by the Rent Law Commission which submitted its report along with a Draft Bill in July 1880. The Commission did not concentrate its attention on the problem of rent recovery, it rather tried to deal with the problem of tenancy protection. The Commission made a basic distinction between large tenants called tenure holders who had more than hundred bighas of land and normal tenants with an occupancy right which would accrue to them after only three years of holding the plot. The Commission defined the term 'ryot' (which Act X of 1859 had left undefined) as 'a person who holds land, or who occupies and cultivates land, if such person or his predecessor in title was originally let into the possession of such land for the purpose of cultivating it or bringing it under cultivation.' Practically this did not make any distinction between middlemen and actual cultivators of the soil. In fact, the Commission discussed the question whether certain classes of agriculturists should be regarded as ryots or tenure holders, such as jotedars and chukani-dars in Rangpur, the different classes of persons having interest in land in Bakerganj, and the ajamdars and mandals in Midnapore.¹⁹ The Commission found 'no clear line of distinction' and treated the present arrangement as 'the most reasonable ground of distinction.'²⁰

Sir Ashley Eden, to smoothen the resistance of the landlords to Rent Commission's suggestions, proposed to make all tenants occupancy tenants and to give them the right of free sale of their holdings.²¹ The Government of India and the Vice-roy, Lord Rippon,

recommended that the land occupied by the tenants should be clearly separated from the land which was under the direct management of the landlord, and the occupancy right should then not be vested in the tenant but should be attached to all the land which the landlord had let. Rippon's proposal was a bold step against the middlemen but it did not go deeper to protect the lower stratum of landless peasants, bargadars and adhiars who were the actual backbone of the peasant economy. Even then it invited the opposition of the Secretary of State.²² The Bill which was introduced into the Legislative Council by Courteney Ilbert in 1883 showed the traces of many previous proposals and debates such as twelve years provision, idea of latent occupancy right in the tenure and maximal rent rate. However, the Select Committee of the Legislative Council gave up the latent occupancy right and dropped the table of rates.²³ The gross produce rule was also rejected. It fixed the percentage of permissible rent enhancement at 12 and a half per cent (two annas in the rupee) for 15 years.²⁴ The Act of 1885 then was significant for two reasons. In the first place, it was a type of legislative interference which the Zamindars, to their dismay, had to accept. And secondly, this Act offered only a limited protection to one particular category of ryots, - the occupancy ryots, - placing them in a comparatively strong position with security of tenure and reasonably moderate rent. It did not alter the basis of landlord-tenant relations substantially.²⁵ The protection did not reach much beyond the first tier of tenants and it suited the political interest of the government very well. In their

quest for a broader base of support and higher productivity they were quite satisfied when they reached the level of substantial tenants on whom they conferred statutory or occupancy rights.²⁶ Rothermund comments : "... there was a common denominator ... the need to retain a social base for the maintenance of British rule. A restricted franchise and a limited protection of the tenantry were two sides of the same coin in this respect."²⁷ In this way the social conditions of Indian politics in the twentieth century were predetermined to a great extent by British-Indian tenancy legislations in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In their political interest the British government twisted and then reinforced the existing system of agrarian relations making it totally hidebound so that it failed to serve as a basis for future economic growth. The investment opportunities that it created were at once removed from any attempt at native entrepreneurship in industry and commerce. There is a great insight in the following observation of a commentator. "If my hunch is correct, nineteenth century Bengali enterprise seems to have responded precisely to those outlets for its talents and capital for which the rate of return was higher than in industry."²⁸ This was what the British model aimed at after Bengal came under direct imperial control.

Transition to new model

A shift of Indian attitudes from business to politics and from unquestioned loyalism to more assertive nationalism must be understood in this background. Previously, we observed the self-

defeating collaboration of the native elite with British capital. This reached its culmination in the commercial crisis of 1847 and after that Bengal's economy fully succumbed to imperial requirements.²⁹ In addition, because of rising population, fragmentation of land and lack of agricultural improvements, inter alia, their revenue from land was steadily decreasing. This loss of agricultural revenue in the 1870's forced the Bengali elite to seek public service and professional employment which proved to be short in supply in proportion to their demands.³⁰ Between 1857 and 1871 1,495 students passed the F.A. examination, 548 the B.A. examination and 112 the M.A. examination.³¹ All of them could hardly be provided employment in public departments. Moreover, the growing discontent among the Bengali elite was further aggravated by increased racial bias and social discrimination from both private and official Britishers.³² In short, the Bengali elite found to their dismay that their economic rank path was closing down. As a response to this new situation the Bengali elite attempted to organise themselves politically. In place of erstwhile economic rank path a political rank path was substituted to retain, if not heighten, the position and number of the Bengali elite in civil service and professions. When the Bengali elite was forced to switch over to a political rank path they also became aware of the necessity of fostering solidarity with other segments of their society. In their attempt to widen their bases of social support they began to play louder and longer the themes of earlier Proto-nationalism. This attempt in course of time produced a recognisable model of liberal nationalism and also

let loose and developed certain trends that shaped the courses of nationalist movement in this sub-continent. We shall find an unmistakable continuity from Proto-nationalism to the moderate nationalism of Congress through the model of liberal nationalism which we will presently discuss. The remaining trends, to be discussed in the next chapter, were partly reactions to the model of liberal nationalism, partly products of the new direction contained in liberal nationalism and partly the manifestations of the process of abandoning a rank-path altogether, which was built upon a realisation of the limitations of the model of liberal nationalism. The element of rank concession or of basic loyalism was not questioned till the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the trends were already developing almost side by side with the elaboration of the model of liberal nationalism. Here we would restrict ourselves to the liberal nationalism or to the process of transition from economic rank path to the political rank path and to the elaboration of Proto-nationalism in a new context.

Recognition of the closure of the economic rank path and the imperatives of transition to a political rank path: extension of Proto-nationalism

The Bengalee, which was the principal organ of the educated native elite, pleaded for the appointment of natives in high places or offices :

The Governor General may safely trust anybody who attains, by compensation or appointment, a good berth, covenanted or

uncovenanted. But it would be more advantageous if this great and necessary piece of equity were connected with the collegiate system, and guided by the principles of competitive evaluation for all the judicial and administrative departments. Appointment in the financial and revenue services might with more propriety be awarded on the score of personal character and ascertained business aptitude. Selected thus and not through their own servility, or Vice-regal favour, - the dark Civil Servant of India would be respected, and could respect themselves ... it may be made a gentile and happy corollary of our education, or an unwise attempt to pick out and establish 'British Brahmins.'³³

The connection between higher education and employment became the common concern of Bengali middle class and thus the Bengalee in referring to the proposed education meeting of the British Indian Association observed : "We are well assured that the whole of the middle class population of Bengal feel strongly on the subject."³⁴ The meeting reacted very strongly to the Government's proposal to strengthen vernacular education at the expense of secular higher education. The resolution ran thus -

That while feeling the urgent importance of measures calculated to educate the mass of the population of the country, the meeting is of the opinion that to afford such education to the neglect of English education is unsound in principle and subversive of that amity which should exist between the middle and the lower orders of our society.

The spirit of the meeting, however, was reflected in the observation made by Baboo Hara Prasonna Mookherjee: "Though the

government is making the vernacular education the ostensible ground it is clear that their real object is to prevent us from gaining any importance in the state."³⁵

The native elite not only became conscious of the threats to education and employment, they could also see through it and discover the bitter racist feeling. Sulav Samachar, the highest circulating Bengali daily under the able editorship of Keshab Chandra Sen filled its pages with acid comments on the subject³⁶:

Bengalis should be labourers.

Why should a submerged nationality aspire to be judges and magistrates? Why should the Bengalis dare to pick up quarrel with the Divinely favoured Britishers? Bengalis by virtue of their learning have created their own problems. We have invited our own troubles. While the government is offering better jobs to the Bengalis it never fails to malign and torture them should they show least independence.

.... How dare the dark Bengalis live upto the fair British? There may not be any difference of learning and intelligence but what a difference in complexion! Bravo, my European brothers! Vice-roys and Governor-Generals all belong to your race. We are just aliens. Moreover, we are subjects. The rulers have everything in this world.

Another Bengali magazine, Somprakash, repeatedly complained against racial discrimination in matters of employment opportunities of the natives: "We have reported earlier that the higher offices of the Government of India are being filled by Europeans; the natives rarely get high salaried jobs."³⁷ Awareness of racism and

growing anti-British feeling were reflected also in the dramas that were staged in the National Theater of Girish Chandra Ghosh (1872). Especially important in this context was Surendra-binodini --- a drama by Upendranath Das which was staged in National Theater. The drama contained enough ingredients to panick the British government which immediately stopped the play and arrested all concerned. In 1876 "Dramatic Performance Act" was passed to prevent such politically damaging plays from being performed. Moreover, some of the contemporary creative writers were articulating the spirit of patriotism. They in particular romanticised past historical events. Rangalal Bandopadhyaya, for example, became influenced by the writings of Byron and Scott and wrote his famous patriotic lyrical poem on a historical theme, namely, Padminir Upakhvan (1858). Following the same track Hemchandra Bandopadhyaya wrote a historical fantasy charged with patriotism, namely, Birbahu Kabyya (1864). Palasir Yuddha (1875), a lyric of strong patriotic undercurrent was written by Nabinchandra Sen. These are only illustrative and not exhaustive examples of the process at work.

It was but () a short step from this to assert the national distinctiveness which the native elite did not hesitate to take. They began fostering national self-respect , were glorifying past achievements, attacking Anglophilism and pleading to become self reliant. The Bengalee wrote :

Titu Mir fought for the cause of barbarism, fanaticism and oppression, and was entitled to very little sympathy from

any sensible man; yet his memory deserves to be held in respect for his bravery, though shown in a bad cause. Pratapaditya, Titu Mir and Ghalan Masum are perhaps the only three genuine Bengalees who deserve to be honoured for their valour and for training followers who showed that all Bengalees are not alike cowards.³⁸

Again, the Bengalee became most eloquent under the heading 'nationalism' :

"Let us not be misled by high sounding words like Civilisation and Enlightenment. Civilisation does not consist in hat and coat, knife and fork, meat and drink. A half naked man with Dooty and Chadar eating boiled rice with little vegetable may be a far more civilised being than a well-dressed Saheb, stuffed with animal food and spirituous liquors

Those who complain loudly of the defects of our social arrangements, should pause and reflect before they condemn... .. Caste also keeps up a certain moral standard among its members, and tends to separate the criminal classes from the rest of the community. Our social system, which compels each family to provide for its incapable members, has saved our country from the frightful evils of a poor law"³⁹

The above type of nationalist consciousness was most ably spread by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in his first phase of writings.⁴⁰ Eight satirical essays published originally in Bangadarsan were included in 1888 in a collection Lokrahasya. In one essay, "Byghracharyya Brihallangul", Bankim ridiculed those Europeans who indulged in disdainful and totally erroneous evalua-

tion of Indian culture though they had nothing more than fragmentary and superficial acquaintance of it. In another piece, Babu, Bankim described the Babus as those who wore printed garments, carried cane sticks in hand, dyed their hairs and put on big shoes; they could not be defeated in verbal combats, they were versed in other people's dialects but opposed to the use of their mother tongue. The main drive of the piece was to ridicule that band of English educated people who were devoid of any self respect. In another series of publications, Kamalakanter Daptar, Bankim provided a number of belles letters which were directly relevant to the spread of patriotism. In its eleventh number Bankim exhorted the six crores of Bengali people to plunge boldly into the dark stream of time and retrieve the golden image of the Motherland who had drowned herself centuries ago. Some of the essays included in Vividha Prabandha deserve special mention in this connection - Bangalir Bahubal (The strength of arms of the Bengalis), Bharat Kalanka (The blemish of India), Bharatbarsher Swadhinata Ebang Paradhinata (Freedom and bondage of India) and Prachin Bharatbarsher Rajniti (The principles of State in ancient India). Bankim's essays were glowing with rationalism and we must emphasise, secularism, a quality which is very visible in the present model of nationalism. Together with Bankim Jogendranath Vidyabhusan began to preach nationalism through his biographies of Mazzini, Garibaldi and Wallace. His monthly magazine Arya Darsan had an important place in this regard.

Thus far we have noted the elaboration of the civilisational claim that was the hallmark of the Proto-nationalist model. Proto-nationalism lacked economic content as there was no need for it; the economic rank path was still open. But now with the closing of economic rank path nationalism acquired an economic dimension. In 1869 Chandranath Bose and in 1873 Bholanath Chandra called for protective tariffs to encourage the development of indigenous factory industries. Chandranath Bose was probably the foremost among those who drew attention of the public to the necessity of encouraging Indian manufacturers. He observed: "when Bengal becomes a country of manufacturers, she will begin to think and to act; then will she rise in the esteem of civilised Europe; then for the first time in her history, will she acquire a position of dignity and importance in the great commonwealth of nations."⁴¹ Four years later that note was taken up by Bholanath Chandra whose economic doctrine was an extreme type of crude mercantilism: "The richest country is that which has to sell everything to others, and buy nothing from them." Despite the obvious weakness of this doctrine his economic nationalism was indeed bold: "The Native English Vernacular papers should preach for the founding of independent Native Banks, Native Companies and Corporations, Native Mills and Factories, and Native Chambers of Commerce in the Presidencies. They should denounce the insensate practice of preferring foreign goods to home-made manufactures." He further declared: "I want no foreign capital to resort to India; her own capital should be created. I want no foreign imports which she can manufacture herself at home."⁴² The Bengali...

home."⁴² The Bengalee also drew attention to the 'expensive luxuries' forced upon the people of Bengal by the British government and observed, "Moreover, the policy pursued by the British Government has destroyed to a large extent our manufacturing industries; and India, which once clothed the world, is now dependent on foreign supply for its clothing"⁴³ Somprakash observed in the same vein: "We ought to do something so that we do not have to depend on others. We must produce in our country printing machines, quality papers, quality pens and quality blocks. It is now absolutely necessary."⁴⁴ Keshab Chandra Sen, the central figure in the Brahma reform movement in the second half of the nineteenth century, in his widespread reform activities elaborated the civilisational claim put forward by Rammohun Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore. He, in keeping with his time, however, added the element of economic nationalism to his liberal reforms. While returning from his visit to England in 1870 Keshab Chandra observed: "The result of my visit to England is that as I came here an Indian, I go back a confirmed Indian I have learnt to love my own country more and more. English patriotism has by a sort of electric process quickened my own patriotism."⁴⁵ He did not fail to convey the sentiments of his countrymen when he said: "You cannot hold India for the interest of Manchester, nor for the welfare of any other section of the community here, nor for the advantage of the merchants who go there and live as birds of passage for a time, and never feel an abiding interest in that country, because they really cannot do so."⁴⁶ The element of economic nationalism in his thought

became clear when he founded Indian Reform Association under whose auspices 'Workingmen's Institute' and the 'Industrial School' were opened on November 28, 1870.⁴⁷ The main object of these was to give the middle class population special instruction in useful arts with a view to training them for independent arts. Krishnakumar Mitra, a young radical Brahmo created a great deal of uneasiness in official circles by publishing his paper Sanjibani and exposing the unfair methods employed to recruit coolies for the gardens. In 1883 an International Industrial Fair was organised in Calcutta the object of which was to display the quality of English factory goods and to get the samples of Indian handicrafts for their subsequent production in factories. The radical young men quickly understood the significance of this Fair. In an editorial Krishnakumar wrote :

Who cares for the skilled artisans in different localities of this state? Who cares to purchase their goods? If you purchase more local goods in comparison to British goods it will yield two results: one is that the price would be cheaper and the other thing is that the money will not go out of this country.

....At the time of the Declaration of American Independence, the American aristocratic ladies wore country made coarse cloth instead of the British made fine cloth. Can't we be equal to it? Can't we take pledge that, like the Americans, we too will not use foreign goods, which might be better than country-made goods, whatever be the discomfort we may have to undergo? For the welfare of the country can't we take definite pledge to discard foreign goods and accept home-made goods?⁴⁸

In fact, economic nationalism was given shape by the liberal Bengali elite on a wide scale. In different vernacular magazines the nature

of British investments in tea gardens, Railways and factories were scrutinised and criticised.⁴⁹ Thus, we find that the Bengali elite recognised well the obstacles in their economic rank path and reacted by elaborating the earlier Proto-nationalist model and by adding an element of economic nationalism to that. These were quite complementary to their alternative rank path, that is to say, a political rank path, of which these ideas served as support, justifications and rationalisations. We outline their political rank path below.

Transition to Political rank-path

The model of Liberal Nationalism is of course an extension of the Protonationalist model; but this does not reflect its distinctive nature. Liberalism is the running thread of both these models and hence inadequate to mark out separately the present model of Liberal Nationalism. The imperatives of transition from Protonationalism to Liberal Nationalism or from economic rank path to political rank path do explain the transition from one to the other but they do not reveal the essence of Liberal Nationalism which is to be understood by analysing the quality of transition from Protonationalism to Liberalism or from economic rank path to the political rank path. The understanding of the present model must be grounded upon the realisation that Liberal Nationalism was groomed to pursue a political rank path by the Bengali elite. Obviously, such a path could not be anti-colonial. Given the nature of colonial development it was but an attempt by the Bengali elite

to strengthen their bargaining position. Political rank path was an elite affair and so was liberal nationalism.

Modern institutional politics was not unknown to Bengal. The first political association, - the Landholders' Association - was founded in Calcutta as far back as 1838. A more elaborate political association came up after the integration of British Indian Society with Landholders' Association resulting into a new association, namely, the British Indian Association. But all these were merely agencies of articulation of landed interests. Moreover, the main political idiom was that of collaboration and that too, was essentially in the form of direct relationship with the Europeans. The native urban elite, the intelligentsia, were still left politically unorganised. They began to take interest in institutional politics when it became imperative on them and they found avenues forged by British constitutional reforms. The Indian League was organised by the Amritabazar group in 1875 in order to wrest control of the Calcutta Corporation from the hands of Europeans. Indian League was, however, supplanted by the Indian Association in 1876 as a fuller organisation backed by the educated natives and student community. The Association got full support of the radical Brahmos who formed a separate group from K.C. Sen under the leadership of Sibnath Sastri. The factional rivalry among the Bengali elite which became clear at the dawn of their entry into constitutional politics was to have its repercussions^e in certain disturbing trends that overshadowed Liberal Nationalism late in the ~~na~~ nineteenth and in the early part of the next century. When Indian Association

was able to consolidate its position in the Calcutta Corporation and to provide a local base of the Indian National Conference and its successor, the Indian National Congress, the Amritabazar group began to move towards a position of Hindu Orthodoxy. We would reserve a discussion of the trends for the next chapter and presently concentrate on the political rank path which formed a part of Liberal Nationalism.

With the advent of Indian Association a triangular pattern of political relationship among three elements, - the Europeans, the landed magnates and the educated Bengalis, - came into existence in the later half of the nineteenth century in Bengal.⁵⁰ From the deliberations before the inauguration of Indian Association the shape of subsequent political activities could be easily understood. In the famous public meeting on 26 July, 1876 in the Albert Hall of Calcutta, where the members of British Indian Association and of the Indian League were present, Surendranath Banerjee rose to reply to the argument of Rev. Kalicharan Banerjee of the Indian League that no case had been made out for the establishment of a political association⁵¹ :

And I make bold to assert that before I resume my seat, I shall have shewn, beyond the shadow of doubt, that there are just sufficient and ample grounds for the establishment of the association, we are about to inaugurate this afternoon. I ask, is there any association in the large city, which really represents the people? The British Indian Association, and all honour to that body for the many and incalculable blessings it has conferred on this country, represents only a section of the people. I say this, in the presence of a most

distinguished representative of the British Indian Association. The Indian League represents no portion of the community whatever, it certainly does not represent the ryots, the dumb unrepresented millions, who above all, need representation. I say this, in the presence of a distinguished member of the League. Therefore, gentlemen, because there is really no representative body in this city -- and this association aspires to represent the views, the feelings and the aspirations of the middle classes and the ryots, its necessity is placed beyond the shadow of doubt.... There are other grounds which justify the establishment of the association.... We intend dealing largely with educational questions.... But above all, in this country, we suffer from a dearth of political life. There is no political activity, no political life in this country. We aspire to supply this want. Our society will be an organisation to keep up, to stimulate political life among the people of this country.

The Indian Association energetically followed up its stated objectives the essence of which was the enjoyment of political power. Inside the Calcutta Corporation a new set of municipal commissioners, such as, Surendranath Banerjee and Bhupendranath Basu exercised their influence in favour of Indian professional and business interests, quite often in direct opposition to the wishes of native magnates and European merchants.⁵² The Indian Association, on the other hand, was actively concerning itself with all major decisions of the Government. The Association organised a large public meeting on the issue of Civil Service on March 24, 1877. In the words of Surendranath Banerjee :

The Civil Service question is indeed a national question. There is everywhere a strong feeling connected with it.

Who does not wish that his own countrymen should rule over him? Who does not feel the exclusion of his race, of his kith and kin, from the most responsible offices under the Government.⁵³

Surendranath toured both Northern and Southern India on this issue and received wide support from these areas. Though the native elite got no more than the Native Civil Service Scheme as a result of the agitation the concession on the part of the Government highlighted the value of combination. Other issues also came up for scrutiny. Lalmohun Ghosh on behalf of the Association wrote a letter to Gladstone informing him about the strong popular reactions to such enactments as the License Act, the Arms Act and the Vernacular Press Act.⁵⁴ The successfully organised protest by the Europeans against the Ilbert Bill and the racial vehemence with which it was pursued further reinforced the bond of Indian unity. The Association expressed the Indian views very well and got wide support. The political gains made by the Association were well illustrated when Surendranath Banerjee was arrested on the charge of contempt of court. It caused an upheaval throughout India. A 'National Fund' was created by the Association to sponsor constitutional agitation. Regarding the impact of the contempt case Surendranath wrote in his autobiography : "The contempt case, as it was called, operated as unifying influence, strengthening the growing bonds of fellowship and good feeling between the different Indian provinces."⁵⁵ Here were the traces of the great transformation from provincial politics to All India politics. The transformation which was to usher in the

Congress movement found its expressions in two national conferences organised by the Association, first in 1883 and the second in December 1885. Surendranath Banerjee spoke in the first conference:

The main object, therefore, is to bring the Government of the country into harmony with national aspirations and in harmony with the declared wishes of the Crown and English people. We want local self-government. We desire parliamentary institution. We desire, in short, to be placed on the same footing as the colonial possessions of the Crown.⁵⁶

As can be seen, entry into decision-making was the objective of the Bengali elite trodding along the political rank path and all other immediate goals were related to this objective. This became quite clear also in the statement made by Lalmohun Ghosh in England :

... all these complaints that I have been urging before you today are nothing in comparison to another subject which is regarded by us as the very origin and fountain-head of all our grievances. I allude to the utter absence of any system of popular representation in the Government of India⁵⁷
(Emphasis added).

As we can see the Bengali elite already were moving ahead with appropriate organisations along the constitutional channels forged by the British rule.

The pursuit of political rank path demanded a wider support base for the native elite and the Indian Association was trying to foster social solidarity for the effective pursuit of political rank path. In fact, the requirement of solidarity was so keenly

felt that Sepoy Mutiny, so far decried by the Bengali elite, was referred to as a lesson in fostering unity and as an example that should be followed⁵⁸ minus of course, its anti-colonial drive. Occasional attempts at fostering communal harmony became widely prevalent. Thus, referring to an association in Dacca, - Social Union, - which was established to foster communal harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims, the Bengalee observed: "The Establishment of friendly feeling between the two communities would make a new era in the history of India."⁵⁹ However, the attempts at manipulating mass support became most well illustrated in the policy which the Association adopted in regard to the agrarian sector. We have seen in the objectives of the Indian Association as stated by Surendranath Banerjee, the Bengali elite were proclaiming themselves as the self-styled leaders of the ryots of Bengal. Thus, for the first time in Bengal politically meaningful mass orientation came into the realm of political organisation and a political linkage was attempted between the urban centres of power and its rural hinterland.

The linkage that developed between urban centres of power and its rural hinterland for the purpose of strengthening the bargaining position of Bengali elite mainly took the form of Rent Bill agitations. The Indian Association was unflinching in its support to the governmental measures to extend the occupancy rights of the ryots. Occasionally it came out with sharpest criticisms of the Government when it found the Government yielding to the pressures of the landowning classes. Previously the native

elite supported the passage of Act X of 1859 and also sided with the ryots in Pabna rent agitations. Som Prakash pleaded for a permanent settlement between the landlords and the tenants. The 'Sadharani' described the peasant revolt in Pabna as explosion of the peasants against the oppression, although the Zamindari system was not condemned.⁶⁰ In "An Apology for the Pabna Rioters" Ramesh Dutt emphatically asserted that the ryots' demands were just :

Fugitive zamindars crowding in Calcutta or suffering zamindars writing from Pabna, did not fail to influence the press ... the ryots were guilty of some acts of violence ... yet those who condemn too severely such acts should remember that a rising like that of Pabna seldom concludes without some acts of violence When the zamindar wants to increase his share of the produce of that land, the ryot will bear no more ----- the last straw breaks the camel's back.⁶¹

It was, however, left for the Indian Association to set up Ryot Sabhas during 1880-85 in different districts of Bengal. The Bengalee reported the activities of the Indian Association in this regard⁶²:

The Indian Association have been most active in ascertaining the views of the ryots themselves upon the important provisions of the Bill [Rent Bill], and accordingly, meetings of the ryots have been held in different parts of the country, and altogether a new feature has thus, for the first time been, displayed in the history of political agitations in this country The public meetings of the ryots that have been held in different parts of the country - At Kissen-gunge, Poradaha, Goospara and Gopalpur in the Nuddea district, at Lagusai in Birbhum, at Rahitu in the 24 Pergunnahas, at

Boidyabatti in Hooghly, at Burdwan, and in the town of Calcutta itself, have enabled the Committee to form a totally correct idea of the views of ryots themselves upon the many important provisions of the Rent Bill

It is easy to note that the technique of vertical mass mobilisation resorted to by the Indian Association had a definite political objective of channelising the discontents of the ryots to the constitutional path with a view to strengthening the bargaining position of the Bengali elite. The Ryot Sabhas and the meetings held under the guidance of the Association were all geared to project to the British administration the political credibility of the Bengali elite who were keen on pursuing a political rank path. For instance, a meeting held at Rahuta in the 24 Parganas proposed that the services of Baboo Surendranath Banerjee be accepted as a member of the Indian Legislative Council to represent the tenantry of the country. The Bengalee reported :

Some of the ryots then proposed that a memorial numerously signed by them be submitted to the Viceroy in Council praying that His Excellency be pleased to concede them the privilege of having a representative in the Supreme Council and to appoint Babu Surendranath Banerjee, as a member of the Indian Legislative Council.⁶³

The proposal was carried and it spelt a major success of the technique of vertical mass mobilisation adopted by the Association. The Rent Bill agitations successfully linked the urban Bengali elite with the unorganised rural masses so far insulated from any liberal

political activity. By becoming self-styled leaders of the ryots the Bengali elite got an edge over the landowning classes in taking a competitive place along the constitutional channels forged by the British Rule.

Class Basis of the Model

The class position of the Bengali elite continued generally unaltered from that of the preceding model with, of course, some minor changes which concerned reduction of income from land and lack of opportunities for joint ventures with the Europeans. More and more, the Bengali elite became dependent on their urban environment, drawing sustenance from the offices, judiciary, schools, professions opened up by the colonial administration in Calcutta and independent careers of publishing and editing newspapers, periodicals etc. The occupations became more intimately connected with the collegiate system than was the case decades ago. In this way a clear polarisation took place along class line, between the older landed families of the Renaissance generation and the concentrated Calcutta petty bourgeoisie.⁶⁴ This class aspect is understood well from the quality of the office bearers of the Indian Association, most of whom possessed a graduate, post-graduate or a legal degree and were associated with some association or some form of publication.⁶⁵ The elite, as usual, mostly comprised of the upper caste members of the Hindu society and it was not surprising that no Muslim could be found in the list of the office bearers of the Indian Association. The elite was also pretty conscious of their class identity. The Bengalee observed: "But the Association is not rich. Its members

are not wealthy men. They have no broad acres, no hoarded treasures. But they have hearts"⁶⁶ The image was accurate. They were the creatures of British rule trying to find their competitive place in a colonial administration on which they were dependent.

An analysis of the issues that the elite considered, reacted to and picked up for political agitations reveals this late nineteenth century class aspect of Liberal Nationalism in a convincing manner. We need not elaborate on the close correspondence between the class position of the Bengali elite and the issues like higher education, Press Act and Civil Service on which they agitated. All these were vitally important for an elite dependent on the colonial administration. Nevertheless, we may look into some detail of their solidarity movement or their attempt at bridging the gap between themselves and the rural folk in order to understand the class parameters of Liberal Nationalism.

We have already seen that the Bengali elite zealously supported the extension of the occupancy tenure. There was near unanimity about the passage of Act X of 1859. Sanjeet Chandra Chatterjee wrote his famous monograph Bengal Ryots: Their Rights and Liabilities (1864) in full support of this Act. Romesh Chandra Dutt in his The Peasantry of Bengal (1874) not only supported the Act but also demanded another permanent settlement with the ryots. Later, the Indian Association continued to support the same stand. Nobody realised the essentially limited nature of the protection offered to the peasantry or, if they did, they thought it prudent not to recognise it. In fact, after scanning through the documents one may be tempted to conclude that

the Association was consciously supporting the substantial ryots, the middlemen and zotedars to the detriment of the real cultivators of the soil. We may quote here a letter from P. Cornish, Collector of Hoogly, from which the effects of Act X would be clear: "I believe the intention of the law-makers of 1859 was to grant the right of occupancy to actual cultivator; but the word 'held' has been interpreted to extend it to other than actual cultivators. Now a person who is not himself a cultivator generally takes land to let them to cultivators at an exorbitant rent, and enjoys the difference of rent as a middleman."⁶⁷ "The Indian Association is ascertaining the views of the ryots ignored this implication of the term while using it. The Bengalee reported that "the Association holds that a ryot who for a continuous period of three years has as a tenant held or as a tenant occupied and cultivated land and paid rent for the same, shall be deemed to be a ryot enjoying the occupancy tenure."⁶⁸ The Association did criticise the provision of the occupancy rights for the 'tenure holder' and argued against the middlemen depriving the real cultivators of the soil.⁶⁹ But the image of the real cultivators was far from being realistic. Considering the tacit support of the Association to sub-letting, it is not difficult to see that their target group were the substantial ryots who sublet, lent money, transferred holdings and entered into expensive legal battles with the landlords. The Pabna rent movement was fairly illustrative of this.

In Bengal the agrarian relations displayed enormous complexities and innumerable tiers in which the urban middle class could

find their own sustenance. No substantial change took place after Act X except that the moneylanders and the middlemen got extra opportunities. In his note on the proposed rent law E.V. Westmacott, Collector of Noakhally, observed:

Rapacious, speculative Hindoos of the class of mooktiars and Court Amila and non-resident, they extort from the cultivators every pice they can, and give back nothing either by way of advancing capital, or by the expenditure by which a wealthy resident benefits his poorer neighbours. It is when the cultivator is in the clutches of such landlords as these that the class of non-cultivating money lenders arises. The capital expended on the land is small; and on that capital an enormous interest is charged. We have no substantial ryots, but a pauper who starves the land and starves himself, and the gross produce of the soil is lessened, while what there is of it goes to fatten the non-cultivating middlemen and non-cultivating money-lender.⁷⁰

The Indian Association ignored these aspects of agrarian relations in instructing the ryots of their rights. The way of articulation of demands of the ryots by the Association was well illustrative of whom they were actually representing. The Association always stuck to the demands of containing rent enhancement, making the tenures transferable and making sub-letting permissible. For example, the ryots in Rahuta, under the instruction of the Indian Association, expressed their views as follows: "The ryots desire that they should be allowed to mortgage their holdings as freely as law gives them the right to sale, and that they should also be allowed to sublet or to sell a portion of their holdings according to their require-

ments."⁷¹ Obviously, the way the views of the ryots were articulated was far from relevant to the real needs of the actual cultivators of the soil, the adhikars and the bargadars. The Bengali elite had no ideological commitment to improving the lot of the peasantry but only a political necessity of gaining wider support to enable them to pursue their political rank path and for this purpose a limited strategy of reaching out to the substantial ryots was most useful; it would not only characterise them as loyal supporters and sympathisers of the government's long term economic policy of reaching out to the substantial ryots, it would, at the same time, retain land as an useful business proposition for the urban middle class.

Thus the linkage that was developed between the urban elite and the agricultural population was determined by the class outlook and class interest of the former. True to their dependent status on the colonial administration the Bengali elite was actually complementing the long term goals of British imperialism while strengthening their own bargaining position in their competition with the landed magnates for a larger share of administrative patronage. The British, we have seen, were content with a limited protection to the substantial ryots, who they believed, would raise the production of raw materials and in turn consume the British finished goods. The Bengali elite in leading the rent bill agitation was not doing anything which clashed with the British imperial goal. From the standpoint of class character rent agitation resembled the Indigo Rebellion. Neither of the two movements challenged administra-

tive policies, nor did their self-styled leaders. They were all strengthening the hands of the administration or complementing the typical goals of British imperialism. Their nationalist leadership was just fit for taking a competitive place in what they grimly believed to be a liberal polity. Unconscious about the limited nature of political avenues in a colonial set-up they were only prepared to go as far as necessary for a pursuit of political rank path and no more. They neither realised the contradiction between the British rule and the Indian people nor did they feel any need to unleash a genuine mass movement for this purpose.

It may not be out of place to refer to the role of the Bengali elite in urban politics in this connection. Calcutta Corporation was the urban political base for the Indian Association. From it Surendranath Banerjee went to the Legislative Assembly. Undoubtedly, the Bengali elite took ^a most energetic interest in the politics of the Corporation. What needs to be emphasised is that in the late nineteenth century urban politics was essentially the politics of the relatively privileged. The Government of India permitted by the Act of 1859 an indenture system for the supply of labour to the plantations of Assam and a general flow of labour from ~~the~~ Bihar and United Provinces toward the East was thus set in motion. A motely migratory body of labourers thus thronged Calcutta, worked in inhuman conditions in the Jute factories and lived and died uncared for. Creation of suitable living conditions for them was deliberately neglected to keep down the wages of labour at an extraordinarily low level of subsistence and they continued

to live in the city, exploited, unorganised and socially isolated. Though the Bengali elite took much pain to expose the atrocities committed on the coolies in Assam they ignored the labourers at home and took no step to organise them. The class parameters of elite politics were thus quite clear. In fact, ⁱⁿ the rate payers 'agitation of 1890 the professional politicians like Surendranath Banerjee and Lal Mohan Ghosh supported the landed notables against the slum-dwellers.⁷² After all, labour as a social force was not relevant to the municipal politics of Calcutta at that time, though in the interest of a genuine mass movement and broad-based nationalist struggle this was absolutely essential.

That the pursuit of political rank path was essentially circumscribed by the class interests of the Bengali elite became further evident through the National Fund Movement which was initially concerned with demanding the Indians' entry into the I.C.S. and the introduction of representative institutions. It soon exceeded its initial purpose when the villagers of Bengal, stirred by the Indian Association in relation to Rent Acts, showed the signs of developing a wider popular movement to give vent to their long standing grievances. But as soon as the public meetings in the rural areas showed the signs of developing into something more than vocal protests, the political ambitions of the Bengali elite became threatened. Surendranath Banerjee was quick in manoeuvring the trend into constitutional agitation, a fact which we observed in Rahuta meeting of the ryots, which was of value only to the English-educated urban elite. 'National Fund Movement' contained within itself potential elements which

could have developed into a wider and more popular movement; yet it was curbed by the intellectual character of the constitutional agitation and lost its wider appeal."⁷³

So, we have seen that the model of Liberal Nationalism came to prevail in Bengal in the second half of the nineteenth century. The model, of course, arose as a response to a new situation in which a section of the Bengali elite found themselves. In other words, the model was developed in the context of transition of the Bengali elite from economic rank path to political rank path. Throughout, the model, as revealed from the analysis of its class-basis, remained an elite affair and this considerably impaired its democratic claim. The proponents of this model, whatever might have been their attitudes to the masses, need not, however, have failed to understand the most basic contradiction of colonialism, namely, the contradiction between the Indian people and the British rule, had they been alive to the reality of the colonial situation or to the real interest of their own class even. We may look at these issues more closely.

Falterings of the Model

We have seen that each of the models of nationalism discussed so far was an overlay on the previous model. In this respect each not only indicated a phase in the development of nationalist thought but also contributed to a cumulative process of decline in realism. We discussed this process by analysing the falterings of the models.

The model of Liberal Nationalism was no exception . We would discuss its falterings under two convenient heads : economic and political. We do not, however, belittle its falterings on the social front. In fact, the falterings of the model on economic and political fronts aggravated certain social factors in Bengal that became prominent through the reactions to Liberal Nationalism. We would discuss this later.

It may be noted that the liberal political ideology of Liberal Nationalism did not accompany its economic aspect. The ideas of freedom and competitive advantage in political life that were so dear to the Liberal Nationalists did not lead to the notion of economic freedom, economic competition and demands for economic self-reliance. It is true that the proponents of Liberal Nationalism became vocal about economic drain, pleaded for native investment in industry and took interest in disseminating manufactory skill among the native population. But what is important, they also supported the British in the creation of a hidebound agricultural system and a peripheral colonial economy. The utter lack of realism in all this was best portrayed in the writings of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in Bangadarsan under the title 'Bangadesher Krisak' (the peasantry of Bengal). When the native industry and commerce were crumbling ~~down~~ and Britain was drawing away the natural resources and capital of the country, Bankimchandra commented: "It is true that the weaving industry has collapsed. But why does not the weaver resort to another business? Other business avenues are still open. The weaver cannot feed himself on weaving but he can always survive

on the cultivation of paddy." ⁷⁴ Being totally indifferent to the role of commercial agriculture in a colonial economy he continued:

Trading is nothing but exchange. If we import British clothes we have to export in exchange something. What do we export? In exchange of almost everything we export agricultural produce, such as rice, silk, cotton, jute, indigo etc. ... thus as the demand for agricultural produce is rising every year, agriculture is also developing.

What are the results of the development of agriculture?
Increase of the wealth and wellbeing of the country. ⁷⁵

From a person who was so critical of Anglophilism and who wanted to foster national self-respect such readings on colonial economy were indeed appalling.

There were, of course, some Liberal Nationalists who were alive to the dangers of a peripheral colonial economy. For example, Bholanath Chandra and Chandranath Bose were critical of the colonial trade relations. We also found occasional writings on the nature of British investment in Railways and plantations which were critical enough. ⁷⁶ But even they were not alive to the ill effects of a hidebound nature of agricultural system. The Zeal with which they supported the premeditated tenancy reforms confirmed their partial and imperfect understanding of the nature of colonial economy. Thus, while they were much interested in the development of native capital and industry they were knocking the bottom out of such a development by aiding the British in their design of commercialising our subsistence agriculture and of directing native capital to commercial agri-

culture for the benefit of the British imperial interest. The tenancy legislations of 1859 and 1885 aided and abetted subletting, mortgage, sale and transfer of holdings to sacrifice marginal peasants as pawns in the game of competition. Analysis of data from the official compilation, Twenty Years' Statistics of the Revenue and Registration Departments for 1880-1900 revealed a number of interesting trends. So did a number of settlement reports. At the top crust of agrarian structure big estates were crumbling ~~down~~ and the substantial peasants and zotedars were buying them up. At the bottom the ryoti holdings were being transferred to the ryot purchasers through land mortgage, sale and transfer.⁷⁷ Besides this, fortune hunters from town and country, the urban native elite, invested savings in buying occupancy jotes protected by tenancy legislations and turned them over to share-cropping.⁷⁸ The fact, that native capital investment was responding to the artificially stimulated higher returns in agrarian sector was never understood in right perspective. Almost silently the British knocked out the bottom of a native case for development of native industry and commerce. This significantly delayed the development of a native bourgeoisie and seriously crippled political leadership. This neglect of the agrarian sector for the sake of a political rank path alienated the Bengali elite from the vast mass of peasant population. This proved fatal to both nationalism and secularism. The failure on the political front was equally responsible for the emergence of such threats to nationalism and secularism to which we may now turn.

The false notion of the Proto-nationalists' self-image as equal to the British bourgeoisie was carried forward by the Liberal Nationalists who demanded for themselves and hoped to receive equal freedom with the Europeans. The anomalies they detected would be removed, they hoped, by resorting to constitutional agitation. They all had, therefore, liberal vision, liberal aims and liberal methods which had no place in a regime which was essentially not liberal. They did not realise the basic contradiction between their own aspirations and the Imperial aims. They little realised that constitutional agitation or a political rank path would not take them very far; the goods the British could deliver without threatening their own regime would only lead to elite conflict in their own community for they would never be enough. At best the Liberal Nationalists could only help themselves with a larger share of the pie by monopolising the formal constitutional channels, but in that process, they were also likely to face stiff competition from those who were stirred by the example of the success of the Liberal Nationalists and who now would have to realise their political aims in conflict with the Liberal Nationalists. While by following a political rank path the Liberal Nationalists were to lose their link with the masses, their political opponents were likely to use various appeals of language, religion and the like through a cultural movement for the sake of political support from the masses. Thus, the failure of the Liberal Nationalists to organise the peasantry and to lodge a nationalist movement against British imperialism gave definite encouragements to the development of reactionary and communal forces in the nationalist movement and

provided opportunities for the British to follow a *strategy* of divide and rule by distributing favours.

The Indian Association, soon after its amalgamation with the Indian National Congress, was forced to voice only a set of generalised demands which were little concerned with the real interests of the people. The association was also forced to stop its mass-oriented programmes and it began to lose touch with the rural scene. Its promising district network of 124 branches lost their cohesion and then disappeared altogether.⁷⁹ The Association concentrated its political activities on independent centers of local political activities, such as the district bar association, schools, and colleges, mofussil voluntary associations, peoples' associations such as municipal rate payers' associations and finally the municipalities, local boards and district boards which formed in turn constituencies for the Bengal Legislative Councils Act of 1892.⁸⁰ By establishing a virtual monopoly over these channels the Association ensured the phenomenal success of the liberal Congressmen in the election to Legislative Assembly under Indian Councils Act of 1892.⁸¹ This monopolisation of constitutional channels virtually eliminated the other bodies as representative of nationalism in Bengal, who were then forced to mobilise the masses against the pattern of constitutional agitation forged by the Congress. It was not surprising therefore that the social distance of the Bengali elites would be attempted to be bridged through religion and common cultural bonds. But in a multicultural and multireligious society a politically meaningful cultural movement that was to work

within the framework of a colonial regime by manipulating the masses was bound to spread the false consciousness of communalism for which the social conditions in a highly underdeveloped society were just right. Thus a crystallisation of Zamindari opposition to liberal influence in the Bengal Legislative Assembly, an attempt to engineer a communally orientated alternative political rank path by power-hungry politicians, the growth of communally exclusive political organisations dominated by both Hindu and Muslim elites separately were the logical outcomes of the failures of Liberal Nationalism on both economic and political fronts.

A word or two about the success of the model of Liberal Nationalism. The model was certainly offered to the people in general and in this respect it popularised nationalist ideas to a great extent. So, to some extent it contributed to the political awakening of the people. Again, in working through the framework of British rule the Liberal Nationalists were invariably altering the equations of power within it and were also steadily eroding the steel frame of the British empire. But as its gravitational centre was weak and understanding of the colonial reality was imperfect, the model could not contain threats to secularism and broad-based nationalism. Thus, the gains of the model were significantly offset by the losses.

However, it would be improper to consider this model as responsible for the development of divisive and communal trends. The previous models too, as we have seen, failed on communal front. The model of Liberal Nationalism merely aggravated the already disturbing trends. It may be noted that though these trends could be traced well

before 1885, the terminal point of our present study, -- their fuller developments, could be observed well into the twentieth century. We intend to give a broad outline of the emerging trends and developments in terms of an epilogue to the present chapter. We would not consider when and how the basic contradiction of colonialism, namely the contradiction between the Indian people and the British rule, came to be recognised and the struggle for independence began. This aspect has been extensively covered. We would only note the developments of the trends of communalism in nationalist struggle which, of course, concerned our struggle for independence also. We do so because these are vitally important for understanding the models of nationalism. In a sense, these trends sum up the effects of a steady decline in realism in the models of nationalism surveyed so far.

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19. Report of Rent Law Commission (1880), Vol. I, paras 14-16.
20. Ibid., paras 20-21.
21. For an analysis of Eden's bill vide Sir Charles Tupper, Notes on the Bengal Rent Bill No. II, (Calcutta: 1882).
22. Revenue Despatch No. 54, dt. 17th August 1882 in Selections from papers relating to the Bengal Tenancy Act, (Calcutta: Government of India, 1885).
23. Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor General, Report of the Select Committee on the Bengal Tenancy Bill, 14 March, 1884.
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25. Anil Chandra Banerjee, The Agrarian System of Bengal, n. 14, p. 279.
26. Dietmur Rothermund, Government, Landlord and Peasant in India (Wisebarden: 1978), p. VIII.
27. Dietmur Rothermund, The Phases of Indian Nationalism and other Essays (Bombay: 1970), Chap 12, p. 215.
28. Morris David Morris, "Values as an Obstacle to Economic Growth in South Asia: An Historical Survey" in The Journal of Economic History, vol. 27, December 1967, No. 4, p. 601.
29. Blair Kling, "Economic Foundation of Bengal Renaissance" in Rachel Van Baumer, Aspects of Bengali History and Society, (New Delhi: 1976), p. 38.
30. John N. Gray, "Bengal and Britain: Cultural Contact and the Reinterpretation of Hinduism in the Nineteenth Century" in Baumer, *Ibid.*, p. 119.
31. Report of the Indian Education Commission, 1882, p. 269.
32. Amiya Kumar Bagchi, Private Investment in India: 1900-1939, (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 150-156, 165 ff.
33. The Bengalee, April 24, 1869.
34. The Bengalee, June 11, 1870.
35. The Bengalee, Special Supplement, June 18, 1870.
36. Sulav Samachar, Vol. I, No. 41, Calcutta, Thursday, 7th Bhadra, 1278 B.S., (1861), pp. 161-62. Free translation was used by

- us. This was the first Bengali daily.
37. Somprakash, September 18, 1882. Free translation was used by us. Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan began to popularise national democratic ideas through this influential vernacular periodical.
 38. The Bengalee, Sept. 10, 1870, p. 291.
 39. The Bengalee, May 24, 1873, p. 164.
 40. Shri Aurobindo in 1907 observed, "The earlier Bankim was only a poet and stylist - the latter Bankim was a seer and a nation-builder." For us, however, the earlier Bankim was also a nation-builder and his initial and later phases of writings were relevant to two successive stages of nationalist thought. For an exposition of the nationalist relevance of his first phase of writings vide, K.S. Bhattacharya, "Bankimchandra and National Consciousness: Two Periods and two messages" in The North Bengal Review, The University of North Bengal, Vol.1, No.1, April 1978.
 41. Quoted in B.B. Majumdar, History of Indian Social and Political Ideas: From Rammohun to Dyananda, (Calcutta: 1967), p. 111.
 42. Ibid., pp. 111-12.
 43. The Bengalee, June 21, 1876.
 44. Somprakash, July 30, 1883, Free translation was used.
 45. Quoted in Kanailal Chattopadhyay, Brahmo Reform Movement: Some Social and Economic Aspects, (Calcutta: 1983), p. 62.

46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., pp. 71-72.
48. Sanjibani, December 15, 1883 and Feb. 12, 1884. Free translation has been used.
49. Somprakash, April 30, 1883.
50. Rajat Kanta Ray, Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal: 1875-1927, (Calcutta: 1984), p. 84.
51. The Bengalee, August 5, 1876.
52. Rajat Ray, Urban Roots of Indian Nationalism, (New Delhi: 1979), p. 23.
53. Quoted in Kanailal Chattopadhyay, n. 45, p. 152.
54. The Bengalee, June 21, 1879.
55. S.N. Banerjee, A Nation in Making, (Calcutta: 1963), pp. 74-75.
56. Brahmo Public Opinion, June 21, 1883.
57. Hindu Patriot, August 25, 1879, p. 402.
58. Somprakash, April 23, 1883.
59. The Bengalee, Feb. 28, 1880, p. 105.
60. The Sadharani, April 1875. The article was entitled, Prajabioplav (Revolt of the tenants).
61. R.C. Dutt, "An Apology for the Pabna Rioters," In Bengal Magazine, September 1873. The author used a pseudoname, "Archydac."
62. The Bengalee, July 2, 1881.
63. The Bengalee, March 17, 1883, p. 122.

64. Premen Addy and Ibne Azad, "Politics and Society in Bengal" in Robin Blackburn, Explosion in a Subcontinent (Zordon: 1975), p. 108.

65. The list of office-bearers of Indian Association is given below:

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 Babu Dwaraka Nath Gangoolie;
 Babu Brajendra Coomar Sen;
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 Babu Kali Nath Dutt;
 Babu Omesh Chunder Dutt, B.A., (Editor, Bharat Sangharak);
 and Babu Sasipoda Banerjee of Barahanuggur.
 For the list vide The Bengalee, August 5, 1876.

66. For the passage vide The Bengalee, March 27, 1880. On January 1, 1879. Surendranath Banerjee became the proprietor and editor of the Bengalee. From now on it became the semi-official newspaper of the Indian Association. Vide S.N. Banerjee, A Nation in Making, n.55, pp.68-69.

67. Report of the Government of Bengali (Calcutta: 1881), p. 500 of National Library, Calcutta.

68. The Bengalee, July 2, 1881.
69. The Bengalee, Sept. 20, 1883.
70. Report of the Government of Bengal (Calcutta: 1881), p. 907.
71. The Bengalee, February 12, 1881.
72. Rajat Ray, Urban Roots of Indian Nationalism, n.52, pp. 49-52.
73. Daniel Argov, Moderates and Extremists in the Indian Nationalist Movement 1883-1920 (Bombay: 1967), p. 27.
74. Free translation from Bengali used. Vide Asit Kumar Bhattacharya, Banglar Nabayug O Bankimchandrer Chintadhara (in Bengali), (Calcutta, n.d.), pp. 311-12.
75. Ibid., p. 289. The second printing of the article offered a slight variation in reading but Bankim still held the opinion that agriculture was contributing to wealth and wellbeing of the country. Vide Bankim Rachanavali, 2nd vol., (Calcutta: 1983), pp. 228-89.
76. Vide somprakash, 30 April, 1883 for such criticisms.
77. Chittabrata Palit, Perspectives on Agrarian Bengal, (Calcutta: 1982), pp. 51-52.
78. Ibid., p. 115.
79. Rajat Kanta Roy, Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal, n. 50, p. 115.
80. Ibid.

81. The first elections under the Legislative Councils Act 1893 in Bengal were a triumph for the congressmen five of whom were among the six men elected to the Bengal Council. Bangavasi noted with disapproval that four of these five were England returned babus. Vide Bangavasi, 20 May. The Bengalee of 20 May 1893 expressed its satisfaction over the monopolisation of political power:

The "Microscopic minority" are no longer to be despised; they are a living power in the land; in the facetious language of a friend, they have all on a sudden been converted into "a telescopic majority."