II

PRECURSORS OF NATIONALISM

Class and Colonialism

In the previous chapter we have sought to draw attention to the relationship between class and nationalism. We have also referred to the objective and subjective developments in a colonial situation as the determinants of the nature of key elements or the class character of the vanguard. It should be reasonable to assume that pre-colonial Bengal and colonial Bengal differed from each other both objectively and subjectively, and, therefore, in terms of their class character. However, before we look at the class aspect of the colonial situation let us state more specifically what is meant by class in this context.

Class is understood here in terms of possession: a class is taken to consist of those who stand in the same relation of ownership or non-ownership of productive land and/or capital. We do not resort to somewhat looser concept of class defined simply in terms of the rich and the poor for at least three difficulties associated with such formulation, viz., (1) the variation in the meaning of richness from time to time and from place to place, (2) possession of wealth does not automatically indicate the means of acquiring the same, and (3) the use of wealth may not be understood authentically. Besides this objective aspect of class, there is also the subjective dimension of class relationship. Subjectively, a class refers to the element of awareness among the

members of a class of its 'true' interest. This awareness is vital in transforming a 'class in itself' into a 'class for itself', in giving a class a unity of purpose in its struggle for the removal of oppression. However, in a colonial situation, especially in Bengal, a pure class analysis would be difficult, if not impossible. The persistence of pre-industrial tradition was particularly manifest in the Indian popular movements which often fell back on sectional, and often on divisivities of kinship, region, caste or religion. Though at times these had a congruence with a class strong enough to enable the articulation of interests and demands, these often cut across or blurred the class differences. Because of this asymmetry in the relationship of class and traditional factors we may adopt a somewhat restricted use of class categories. While we may pitch our analysis on the objective level of class relationship to understand the relationship between a colonial power and a subjugated society with little mutual understanding of each others social universe, we should be prepared to base our analysis on the interplay of class, caste and communal consciousness all of which influenced developments within the colonial setting.[1]

There are two well opposed views on the contemporary socio-economic history of India. The first is represented by scholars who believe in the gradual breaking down of feudalism in India and the emergence, in one form or another, of the capitalist

elements during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[1A] The other view is represented by scholars who either deny the emergence of such rudiments of capitalism or consider that these were so few that they could be ignored.[2] Recent researches on the Sannyasis and Fakirs, and, if one likes, the Sannyasis or Fakirs who rebelled against the East India Company in the sixties of the eighteenth century furnish important clues to the class aspect of pre-colonial situation. Dr. B.P. Misra has produced sufficient evidence to prove that the Sannyasis and Fakirs comprised a major trading community that resisted unsuccessfully the British encroachment on their field.[3] The most important evidence cited by Dr. Misra was G.H. Barlow's report to the Governor General in 1787 about the trade and coinage of Benaras.[4] Barlow wrote: "The Principal merchants who trade from Bengal to the Deccan are called Sunnasees, a religious sect remarkable for their wealth and for their integrity in all commercial transactions." Barlow further observed: "... the Sunnasees carried on a very considerable trade to Nepal in the piece-goods of Bengal, in return for which they annually imported gold bullion to the amount of four or five lakhs of rupees" [sic].

The fact that native trading assumed international dimension becomes evident by the activities of a Dasnami ascetic named Puran Gir who travelled widely throughout the globe on pilgrimage. He mentioned specifically of 'Hindu' commercial and religious

establishments in Malay, Isle of Kharak, Bassarah, Muscut, Ballah, Mecca and Astrakhan.[5] The extensive researches of the Russian scholars into the economic history of India during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have already proved that the Indians had remarkable trade connections during this period in many places of Central Asia and Persia extending far up to Russia.[6]

The evidence of considerable trading capital and a class of native merchants revealed an important objective contradiction with the British Mercantilism represented by the East India Company in India. There occurred a series of clashes between the two rival classes of traders which have been serialised by Dr. Misra as follows[7]:

1. Warren Hastings recorded in his note in 1763 that "sometime ago a large body of Fakir infesting the country about Backergunge surrounded Mr. Kelly, my agent and put him in danger of life ... the Fakir have since quitted the country."

2. In the same year, a band of Fakirs attacked the Dacca factory. They kept the factory under their occupation till December 1763 when it was recaptured after a heavy fight waged against them.

3. A factory at Rangpur Boalia in Rajshahi town was plundered in the same year by the Sannyasis when Mr. Bennet was in charge of the factory.

4. In 1764, the factory at Rampur Boalia was again attacked and plundered.

5. From 1766 onwards a party of Sannyasis in collaboration with the Bhutias fought to install their own nominee to the Coochbehar throne against the English who wanted otherwise.

6. In the same year, Mr. Myrtle, an English official engaged by the Company in the fir trade was killed along with his men by the Sannyasis and Fakirs in the neighbourhood of Morung near the frontier of Nepal.

A case study of the English factory at Malda between 1757 and 1883 by Anandagopal Ghosh showed further instances of such conflicts.[8] Thomas Henchman, the Resident of Malda, reported in May 1771 that frequent robberies were committed by the dacoits in the villages where the weavers working for the factory resided. The weavers complained that their clothes were torn from the looms and their houses plundered by the dacoits. Further instances of this nature confirmed that the Sannyasis and Fakirs would not allow the trade of the English to be carried on peacefully, the major targets of attack being the Company's business establishments as before. This action (or Reaction?) on the part of the Sannyasis was prompted by the identity of their goal with that of the East India Company. The Sannyasis - Fakirs had trading interests and therefore they disturbed and challenged the British who were monopolising and usurping all trading rights to themselves.

Mercantilism

It is interesting to note how this aspect of class antagonism differed from a new alignment of class forces. The new align-

ment called for active collaboration of a section of a native population with the British mercantile interest. Initially the attitude of the East India Company was wholly commercial. The Company traded in India before it controlled much territory and it was concerned mainly with making profits from the sale of Indian manufactures and luxuries in the European market. The Company shipped bullion to India, encouraged Indian manufacturing and purchased Indian finished goods for sale in Europe. "It was quite indifferent about promoting the sale of British goods in India. Its trade was conducted for the advantage of its stock-holders, not for the Empire, or for the British nation."[9] After the conquest of Bengal the East India Company brought under its control the wholesale trade and to a certain extent also the retail trade within Bengal, in addition to the monopoly of foreign trade which it already possessed.[10] The Britishers resorted to non-economic coercion, method of debt-slavery and the like. They sought the help of the agents, middlemen and the baniyas who willingly followed an economic rank path. Thus mercantilism directly contributed to the creation of a new alighment of class forces, rank-conceding and collaborationist, that was objectively as well as subjectively different from the power conceding rest of the native society. Thus British mercantilism created the objective contradiction between a power conceding native elite closer to the masses and the rank conceding section of native elite comprising the baniyas, mutsuddis and agents that was gradually being alienated from the rest of the society. However,

the actual configurations remained rather obscure till the demand for free-trade was pressed upon and a pre-meditated agrarian policy came into operation.

Liberal Imperialism

After the loss of American colonies in 1776 India became the centre of interest of the British ruling class. Monopoly trading and maximising the profit no longer remained the primarily important goals. But then the question of empire-building came in. In fact, the imperial sentiment was implicitly accepted by Burke and Cumming who made very eloquent appeals for the preservation of Indian culture and constitution. Never did they expressly advocate that the British withdrew from India.[11]

Another trend was developing in England. Mercantilism which was responsible for the substantial accumulation of merchant capital created the base for the industrial revolution. But soon it began to face a challenge from the emerging industrial interests. The investment policy of the East India Company is very well illustrated in the letters from its Court of Directors. In 1782 the Calico printers put pressure upon the Directors to prohibit the importation of printed goods from Bengal. Export of muslins to India started in 1783.[12] This was the immediate expression of the Industrial revolution. The interest of the industrialists was to make the colony a raw material producing appendage. "Development of colonies as markets and as sources of tropical raw

materials, under the stimulus of Britain's industrial development and capital accumulation, thus became the setting for a new dimension of imperialism, ---- a combination of imperialism with the policy of laissez faire and, free trade, ---- a species termed liberal imperialism."[13] British interests now could be specified as follows : (1) consolidation of its imperial position in India, (2) making of India a raw material producing appendage, and (3) transformation of India into a consumer of British products.

The highly efficient mechanism for fulfilling these interests was the British policy of Permanent Settlement. The British interest in the consolidation of its rule called for a social basis. This could be met by mellowing down the resistance posed by the traditional landlords and introducing in its place a new class of revenue-collectors dependent on the Company. Permanent Settlement proved successful on this count. As a result of the agrarian policy of the East India Company, there emerged a class of land-speculators and grain merchants replacing the traditional members of these professions and representing a wider arena of commercial and economic interaction. This also involved the upper strata of society who had been traditionally aloof from such activities.

The Permanent Settlement proved highly successful in the consolidation of British Revenue collection. We can have the idea of the rate of revenue increase from the following table[14]:

	Regime(of)	Period	Amount of Revenue (in Rs.)
(A)	Todarmal	1582	106'93 lakh
(B)	Suza Khan	1782	142'46 lakhs
(C)	East India Company	1790	220'00 lakh

From (A) to (B), in 146 years, only an increase of 35'53 lakh was made in which 14'36 lakh has been taken into account for the new estates. While in only 62 years an increase of 77'54 lakh was made. This was indeed a very high return.

The amazing thing about the operation of Permanent Settlement wes the way in which it could make land an extremely covetable asset while securing a high rate of revenue return from it. By directing existing capital resources away from manufacture or from the possibility of its use for manufacture to agricultural channel the British fulfilled the two related interests of making India a raw material producing appendage and of converting it into a consumer of British finished goods. The growing prospect of profit from landed assets and the prestige normally associated with the same in a traditional society, which was made even more lucrative by the British policy of bestowing titles on the landholders, allured the upper strata of the villagers and native businessmen into many unproductive life styles. For instance, Kanta Babu, the businessman of silk, became happy with the estates of Kasimbazar.[15]

The fabulously rich Maharaja Nabakrishna gave up business after getting estates from Hastings. Thus, the very nature of Zamindari property led inevitably to extreme subordination of usufructuary interests to tributory privileges, a state of things throughly inimical to the advance of the productive economy. The base of the productive economy was further knocked down by the practice of sub-infeudation. "One of the social results of sub-infeudation has been the impetus to the increase of a middle class in a country possessing little or no manufacturing industry."[16] Thus we find that the new alignment of class forces in the days of mercantilism was followed by a widening of collaboration in the days of liberal imperialism. The class aspect of social basis of the British rule underwent minor changes following changes in the agrarian policy in the second half of the nineteenth century when the government extended protection to the occupancy ryots. We would take up this issue later. Meanwhile it may be noted that the collaborationist strategy could not really produce any concrete benefits to the collaborating class; for, the British always had the upper hand. The British supplied money while purchasing cheap raw-materials but also pumped the money out in the form of land revenue. "By sending plenty of money to India in exchange for cheap commodities which could be sold for a high price in Europe the British had facilitated the collection of land revenue in cash instead of in kind in India."[17] This was highly prejudicial to the prospect of native capital accumulation through such collaboration with the British capital.

The opening up of India to free international trade was certainly a major achievement but the benefits were far from mutual. The British gained most from the trade, Indian middlemen also derived a moderate share of profit from it but the shell of the Indian peasant economy was cracked by the pincer movement of the land revenue demand of the government and the supply of credit by traders and money-lenders. There was much truth in what was observed by Joan Robinson: "... they (The Classicists) were arguing against the narrow nationalism of mercantilists in favour of a more far-sighted policy, but they were in favour of free trade because it was good for Great Britain, not because it was good for the world."[18] In fact, the free trade became complementary to the policy of Permanent Settlement. While native capital was rushed to land under the Permanent Settlement the produce from land was mostly transferred abroad under the pretence of free trade. The doctrine of comparative advantage of free trade was used to justify a policy of 'ruralisation' or 'Rustication' as M.G. Ranade aptly called it.[19] In earlier times the urban centres of the interior of the country had been very important. Now under the British rule the whole interior of the country became "mofussilised" and the big ports emerged as the capital cities. So the growing symbiotic relationship between this section of the native elite and the British under Permanent Settlement and Free-trade systems contributed to the advancement of the former on an economic rank path but this could scarcely have laid the foundation for a native bourgeois economy. Instead, the native elite was increa-

singly committed to a pseudo-bourgeois existence in a colonial peripheral economy. But we will later have the occasion to note in the proto-nationalist model, that they had, if at all, only a vague awareness of their real position.

It is necessary to grasp the full significance of these changes in the class alignments vis-a-vis those who stood at the other end, viz., the peasants, artisans and petty manufacturers who constituted a class in itself. Neither under the Muslim rule nor under the British mercantilism they had a comfortable position in the economy. But liberal imperialism made the contradiction even more acute. The symbiosis which we noted earlier took the form of a synergistic action for the power conceding population. The amount of adverse pressure that was put on this wretched class by the partners in the symbiosis far exceeded any that could be brought on to to be borne by any or both of the partners separately. Thus, with all its limitations the symbiosis was profitable to the rank conceding elite but for the larger part of the population it proved to be synergistic, that too, negatively.

The stratification of Indian society in general and of Bengal in particular which emerged as a consequence of British rule can be described in the following terms. There were a small group of landed magnates and a class of prosperous traders whose assets and influence were rapidly declining. There was a class of people, investing in and buying control over land, who took

little interest in its productive capacity. They imitated the British life style but allowed the economic productivity to remain as the privilege of the British bourgeoisie. The educational system transplanted by the British was tailored to the needs of the colonial administration and it aided the process of false imitation. By all criteria, then, it was a pseudo-bourgeois class. Salaried employees and members of the professions objectively formed a different class but not subjectively. This class was partly linked with the upper strata of the protected tenants and rich peasants which dominated the countryside. And finally, there was a small industrial proletariat and a large mass of dependent agricultural labourers and share-croppers. Obviously such clear lines of demarcation were often blurred by other sociological, religious, regional, caste and communal identities. Sometimes this sort of overlapping resulted from the circumstances of nationalist struggle and sometimes it was deliberately brought about. The process will be understood as and when we will study the genesis, weaknesses and continuities of the models of nationalism in Bengal.

Anti-colonial Responses

From the class aspect of colonialism our inquiry goes into those aspects of movements and ideas that challenged the class alignments of colonialism. To one such movement --- the Sannyasi Rebellion, --- we have already referred. The first of the two other movements was the Wahabi Rebellion in 1831 and the

Faraezi Rebellion in Eastern Bengal, both outcomes of the ruin of the ryots. The second was somewhat later in 1855-57, the Santal Insurrection. The fact that we ignore the timings of these two movements by lumping them together calls for a little explanation. Should these movements be regarded as nationalist there is little point in ignoring the time sequence, or the historical circumstances of each event. But when we think in class terms the historical record falls into a pattern that can hardly be treated as nationalist. But before we elaborate upon this point let us have a brief look at how they emerged.

The Sannyasi and Fakir Rebellion had spread mainly over the areas in North Bengal during the early years of colonisation of India by the East India Company. A shade of contemporary opinion regards this movement as the first peasant revolt during the British rule in India. The Sannyasis according to this view had settled by and large on land during the time of rebellion and they themselves were the impoverished and exploited peasantry.[20] A slightly different version was given by Ibne Karim and Ebadat Hussein who have recently characterised the Sannyasi and Fakir Rebellion as the first national struggle against imperialism waged under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie who rallied the peasants and workers behind them.[21]

As we noted earlier the Sannyasis and Fakirs were a trading community. But opposition by a native trading community to the British trading community could not seriously be taken as a natio-

nalist movement. The movement could be regarded as nationalist had the Sannyasis evolved any alternative political organisation or engaged in vertical mobilisation of the masses which they did not.[22] Still the Rebellion could be regarded as nationalist if it was a peasant movement led by the Sannyasis and Fakirs. Evidence shows that the Sannyasis were not settled people and as such, the movement could not be a localised peasant affair. The obvious trading connection belies its peasant character. Not only the Sannyasis were not peasants but the Rebellion was not a case of Sannyasis leading peasants, too. There have been instances of popular involvement among the Sannyasis but Hastings himself referred to the collusion of Zamindars with the Sannyasis who were otherwise regarded as the class-enemy of the peasants.[23] The main targets of attack during the Rebellion were English factories, their agents and native Gomostass, - neither the Zamindars nor the revenue collecting establishments maintained by them. This hardly fits in with the requirement of a peasant-revolt hypothesis. The movement was doubtless anti-colonial but this was anticolonialism in a limited sense of anti-trading activities of the East India Company. Neither did the Sannyasis and Fakirs claim to represent the masses through vertical mobilisation nor did they consider nation as the chief definer of man's identity, let alone considering a sovereign state as a necessity. We cannot even regard it as a protonationalist movement since we have no knowledge of whether they ever used appeals of language, culture, religion and similar factors to distinguish themselves. History has no room for the

merely probable or possible; all it permits the historian to assert what the evidence before him permits him to assert.

The Wahabi Rebellion in 1831 in Bengal was led by Titu Mir (1786-1831) and the Faraezi Rebellion in Eastern Bengal was led by Hazi Shariathullah and his son Dudu-Miyan. These were both the outcomes of the ruin of the ryots and the opposition of the Muslim intelligentsia to the British rule. The movements, therefore, took a religious colour and these were directed towards purifying Islam. As far as the ryots' interests were concerned the movements came also to acquire economic and political programmes.

In the agrarian sphere the Wahabi and Faraezi movements stood for defending the socio-economic interests of the peasantry against the Zamindars and the European Indigo Planters.[24] The Faraezis not only resisted successfully the levy of all extra and illegal cesses by the Zamindars and landholders but with equal ability their land rent too. They proclaimed that land belonged to the 'tillers of the soil.' "Thus they directed their movements against the Zamindari system."[25] Hunter therefore did not hesitate to call it" an infuriated peasant rising."

The significant aspect of Wahabi and Faraezi movements was the religious idiom used. The members of the Wahabi sect came to separate themselves from the bulk of the Muslim population of the country by distinctions of dress and appearance. They shaved their heads but allowed their beards to grow. They refused also to eat or join any social function generally with any but their

own numbers. The ceremonies of the Mohurram, those performed at stated periods after the death of relatives, the customary honours and offerings at the tomb of Pirs were all summarily denounced by this sect.[26] The Faraezis called for non-observance of the Friday prayers and the two great _ids_ on the ground that India under British rule was _dar-ul-harb_ (the country of the enemy).[27]

It has been opined that the Wahabi and Faraezi movements constituted a great patriotic force which aimed at the goal of complete independence from the British rule. It has been observed that these movements drew together the businessmen, bourgeoisie and the toiling population of all communities.[28] Was not then such a development an anti-imperialist nationalist struggle? Looking at the actual course of the movement and basing our arguments on the earlier discussion on nationalism our answer would be partially in the negative, - partially, because the anti-imperialist drive of the movement was obvious. The movements clearly exhibited specific subaltern features[29]: viz., horizontal mobilisation through heavy reliance on the traditional organization of kinship and territoriality which were less legalistic and with more violent expression, and an ideological notion of resistance to elite domination arising out of the experience of exploitation and labour. Certainly these movements were anti-imperialist or anti-colonial and nothing more.[30] We discount its nationalist claims at least on three counts. First, there is little evidence that a section of the native elite cooperated with the revolutiona-

ries. Occasional association of the Sannyasis with these movements had no inkling of actual vertical mass mobilisation by them. The Sannyasis became disorganised as a class at the beginning of the nineteenth century and gradually settled down to small trading activities and cultivation in the isolated pockets.[31] Thus when the Sannyasis were associated with these movements they no longer retained their erstwhile class character. The movements then did not lead to inter-class cooperation but remained quite subaltern. Secondly, these movements suffered from localism which was the direct outcome of their predominantly feudal character. The potentiality of popular involvement was curbed by the extremely sporadic nature of these movements that prevented them from becoming a comprehensive struggle. Finally, these movements were effectively insulated by the idiom of customs, manners and dresses which acted as the additional factor that prevented its anti-colonial character from developing into a full-fledged struggle for national liberation.

The expression of militancy was manifest more in the Santal Insurrection of 1855-57. The Insurrection took an intense form in places like Rajmahal, Murshidabad, Birbhum and Raniganj. The movement in the beginning was not anti-British. It was chiefly directed against the mahajans and traders. But gradually the nature of the movement changed as the insurgents began to attack the symbolic pillars of the Raj, the oppressive Naib Suzawals, the police, and the courts.[32]

It is difficult to regard the Insurrection as a peasant uprising but its pro-peasantry bias can hardly be missed. A deep sympathy for the ryots of Bengal was a unique feature of the movement. Evidence of such an attitude can be found in the pages of a contemporary newspaper Sambad Bhaskar which quoted two parwanas (letters of warrant) of the Santal insurgents.[33] The first letter was addressed to Mr. Grant, the proprietor of the Kuthi (factory) of Suzaranpur by Sibshah Bhagatsuba and it read as follows :

"This is to inform you that on receipt of this order you shall quit the factory along with all your belongings. None of your protests or excuses will be heard. Therefore, you are hereby informed that my soldiers shall arrive at your factory, and that no ryot shall suffer. Rather, they shall be rendered protection."

The second letter was addressed to the court of Bhagalpur and referred to the judges, magistrates, collectors and such other government servants. It read as follows :

"By the order of Shibshah Bhagatsuba. Ramjiolal has occuped the territory. So let me know if the judges, the magistrates and the collectors have decided to join the war. If our soldiers launch the attack the ryots shall have to suffer, and even if the English soldiers come on, the ryots shall be troubled. Hence it is reasonable that the English should fight against Kishoria Suba alone so that the ryots shall sustain no loss. Send by post the message of this warrent to all the persons concerned for whom it is written."

The object of this Insurrection was an exploitation-free independent state but its religico-communal aspect was its definite limitation. Sidhu and Kanu, the two brothers who led the insurrection mobilised the insurgents by referring to a Divine grace that had been allegedly bestowed on them. They convinced the ignorant Santals about the presence of God in their house and his assurances of protection against the British military might.[34] The sense of community that made horizontal mobilisation easier robbed this Insurrection of the potentiality to become a mass struggle. The communal fanaticism became predominant in the later stage, "the distinction of persons was lost, and the Bengalee ryot who had done them (the Santals) no injury, his defenceless wife and children, the traveller and the beggar were sacrificed with equal barbarity to their inhuman revenge."[35] Thus, popular support gradually waned and anti-colonial movement failed to develop into a struggle for national liberation.

This brief survey of the movements from the late eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century is, we hope, sufficient to sustain our generalisation that all of them were movements to end specific types of exploitation under British rule. We may view them as reactions to the class divided societies of their time. The pattern is clear enough. They all conceded power to British colonialism but never did they concede it rank. The power concession did not involve an identity crisis for them and the aspects of their internal solidarity were preserved and in

one sense strengthened. They could see themselves as a dominated community or, to put it in Orans' term, "encysted society." The sense of community was probably weak among the Sannyasis but that was compensated by a mature class outlook in them with which they reacted against its rival class of British traders. All these movements reacted against the parasitical symbiosis, the symbolic pillars of an exploitative society --- money lenders, zamindars, business community, Britishers, police and the go-between dalals, as specific situations demanded of them. The primary target of attack was always determined by the more immediate and intimate experience.

In so far as we place them against the objective setting the time gaps between them become insignificant and they appear as constituting a definite type, --- sporadic, violent, local, of limited involvement and indeed spontaneous anti-colonial struggles. But the factors that gave them strength as anti-colonial struggles also acted as fetters to their development as nationalist struggles. In short, they were anti-colonial,struggles, but not nationalist. The rank conceding part of native population or the partners in a symbiosis had then no political perception of nationhood. But the cultural manifestations among the power conceding part of native population were also inadequate. The vanguard of the former tradition, at least for the time being, were all willing to nurture colonialism. The vanguard of the other tradition, power conceding as we have seen, were performing through horizontal mass mobilisation, utilising as the case may be, sentiments of common traits,

community or religion. While such horizontal mobilisation increased solidarity within the power conceding part of the native society, it also caused division in the context of larger society. Thus the movements discussed so far are a single handicraft model of anti-colonialism and as such , are best considered as precursors of nationalism.

We have already noticed two levels of interaction between British colonialists and native population . It is not then inconsistent to go on to inquire when and how these two levels converged to produce our subsequent models of nationalism. Understandably enough, this could not come except in stages and our subsequent models are intended to exhibit this process.

N O T E S

1. Nationalist movement in Bengal cannot be understood without taking into account the struggle for supremacy among the two dominant high castes of Brahmins and Kayasthas, although other castes like Vaidya also challenged the Brahmins. If the Brahmins have produced Rammohun, Ramakrishna, Bankimchandra and Rabindranath, the Kayasthas have produced Vivekananda, Aurobinda, Madhusudan Datta and Jagadish Bose. C.R. Das was a Vaidya. Among the topmost intellectuals Brajendranath Seal was a Tati(weaver), Meghnad Saha, a Vanik and S.N. Dasgupta, a Vaidya. While it is true that such a caste conflict considerably weakened anti-colonial struggle by diverting attention from the colonial rule this was only natural to expect during a process of social and political change in a traditional country. In Bengal it may be said that a growing sense of nationalism evolved side by side

with a pluralisation of intellectual elites in which the non-Brahmin intellectual elite had almost overwhelmingly proved its superior scientific and literary competence vis-a-vis the Brahmin groups. It is not surprising that the Brahmins had to take resort to strategies and Calcutta High Court in 1884 declared that the Bengalee Kayasthas were Sudras. It is to be noted that one of the judges associated with the illogical decision was a Brahmin ---- Sri Gurudas Bandopadhyay . Later on the Calcutta judgement was overruled by the Patna and Allahbad High Coutts and the Kayasthas were declared to be Kshatriyas. Vide V. P. Varma, Modern Indian Political Thought, (Agra: 9th edn. 1987), p. 832; Mulla , Hindu Law (Bombay: 15th Edn. 1982), P.79

The extent of caste conflict in Bengal can be understood if we take into consideration the following facts. Among orthodox sections in Bengal there was a commotion after Swami Vivekananda's return from America particularly because there were numerous enthusiasts among the Hindus to give a warm hero's welcome to him. The orthodox objections to recognise the Swami as a true Hindu Sanyasi were based on the following grounds: (a) he had crossed kalapani (black waters of the seas); (b) he lived abroad among the mlech-chhas (non-Hindu people) whose ways of life anf beliefs oppose those of the Hindus; (c) he used to take food pre-pared by mlechchhas as also by non-Brahmin Hindus; (d)he was a Sudra (Kayasthas in Bengal were supposed by the orthodox to be Sudras) and hence had no right to become a Yogi or Sannyasi; (e)actually a Yogi is expected to aban-don worldly life and take recluse in far away mountains and forests which the Swami had not done. The periodical

of Bengal which published such criticisms include : Light of the East(ed. Satishchandra Mukhopadhyay), Dharmapracharak, Anusandhan(Owned by Durgadas Lahiri), Dasi(ed. Mahesh Chandra Bhowmik), Prayas and above all Bangabasi(ed. Panchkari Bandopadhyay). Some relevant excerpts from each of these periodicals can be found in Sankari Prasad Basu, Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatbarsha, (Calcutta:1385BS), Vol. III, pp. 127-139.

A thanks-giving meeting was arranged at the Town Hall on September 5, 1894 in honour of the Swami. A few gentlemen led by Manomohan Mitra , Bhupendranath Basu , Charuchandra Basu etc. had approached Justice Sir Gurudas Bandopadhyay to preside over the meeting. Sir Gurudas declined as he had been informed by some distinguished Mahamahopadhyaya pundits of doubts as to if a Sudra was entitled to be a Sannyasi and if a Sannyasi could go to a mlechchha country. Later Sir Gurudas however did attend the meeting but did not speak there. Vide Sankari Prasad Basu , Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatbarsha, op. cit., Vol. I., p. 247.Earlier on March 4 1894 Swamiji had spoken on 'Sarvavayaba Vedanta' in the Star Theatre of Calcutta which was attended among others by Sir Gurudas. In this lecture the Swami lashingly criticised those Brahmins who had raised a hue and cry over the Varnashrama but had little knowledge of their own shastras on the subject. Sir Gurudas also spoke in the meeting but he had little to offer in response to Swamiji's criticisms. Vide Sankari, op. cit.,Vol. III.,p.155. Sankariprasad Basu does not , however,think that the kind of adverse attitude noted above among Brahmins was confined among them only. He referred

to Bhupendfanath Datta's (a brother of Swamiji) view that some leading Kayastha gentlemen of Calcutta were up in arms against the Swami on the ground that orthodox interpretation of the Hindu shastras was different from what Swamiji was offering. Vide Ibid, pp.157-59. Swami forcefully expressed his views in Madras in the following section of his speech:

One word more: I read in the organ of the social reformers that I am called a Sudra and am challenged as to what right a Sudra has to become a Sannyasin. To which I reply: I trace my decent to one at whose feet every Brahmin lays flowers when he utters the words---- - - - - ॐ नमोय धर्मराजाय चित्रगुप्ताय वै नमः - - - - - - - - and whose descendants are the purest of Kshatriyas. If you believe in your mythology or your Pauranika scriptures let these so called reformers know that my caste, apart from other services in the past , ruled half of India for centuries. If my caste is left out of consideration, what will there be left of the present day civilisation of India. In Bengal alone, my blood has furnished them with their greatest philosopher, the greatest poet, the greatest historian, the greatest archaeologist, the greatest religious preacher; my blood has furnished India with the greatest of her modern scientists. These detractors ought to have known a little of our history, and to have studied our three castes, and learnt that the Brahmin. the Kshatriya, and the Vaishya have equal right to be Sannyasins, the Traivarikas have equal right to the Vedas.

Vide The Complete Works of Vivekananda (Calcutta: 10th edn. 1970), Vol. III, p.211.

Although the speech was delivered in Madras it was very much an extension of the controversy current in Bengal. By 'reformers' Vivekananda might have refered to the Brahmos of Bengal who perhaps had floated the issue to antagonise the orthodox Brahmins of Madras against Vivekananda. The

Brahmos instead of lauding the efforts of Swamiji opposed him. The mouthpiece of Brahmo Samaj, The Indian Messenger wrote in its January 31, 1897 issue under the caption, 'Social Reform in Madras':

The intended visit of Vivekananda in Madras on his way-back from England has brought to the front the question , how to give him a fitting reception;....Perhaps our Madras friends (Brahmins) are under the impression that Swami Vivekananda is a Brahmin, which he is not. His original name Sri Narendranath Datta implies that he is a Sudra, and the fact of Brahmin's dining with him would certainly speak much in favour of the moral courage of the former....There lies the main question; according to the rules of Hinduism , how can Vivekananda, who is a Sudra assume the role of Sannyasi, a religious teacher of the people. Perhaps nothing is impossible under the modern revived Hinduism. (Emphasis ours).

This comment was reproduced in Indian Social Reformer of Madras in the issue of Feb. 7, 1897. Swamiji was perhaps refering to these as 'Reformers'.

1A. Irfan Habib, Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India, An Enquiry, cited in V. I. Pavlov et al . , Bharater Arthnitik Bikash (in Bengali), (Moscow: 1976), pp. 38-9.

For a general agreement on the existence of production for market, vide Irfan Habib , "Report on the Disscussion on the Medievak Period" in B.N. Ganguli(ed), Readings in Indian Economic History, (Delhi:1974),pp. 80-1. Vide in the same book Iswar Prakash, "Organisation of Industrial Production in Urban Centres in India during the 17th Century with special reference to Textile". Vide also D.H. Buchanan, The Development of Capitalist Enterprise in India (New York: 1934).

2. A.I. Chicherov, India: Economic Development in the 16-18th Centuries (Moscow: 1971).

3. B.P. Mishra, The Sannyasi Rebellion: The Sociology and Economics of a conflict in Sub-Himalayan Bengal (Occasional Paper as part of an on-going research project), (University of North Bengal, Centre for Himalayan Studies, June 1985).

4. Commissioners Office, Duncan Records, Basta No. 2, Vol. 7, August 1787 (Allahabad, U.P. Regional Archives).

5. Jonathan Duncun, "An Account of two Fakeers" in Asiatic Records, Vol. 5 (Delhi: 1976, first pub. 1808).

6. Subhas Samajdar, Epar Ganga Opar Amudariya, (in Bengali), (Calcutta: 1982).

7. B.P. Misra, n. 3, pp. 19-20.

8. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, The Factory of the English East India Company at Malda, 1757-1833 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, North Bengal University, 1978).

9. George, D. Bearce, British Attitudes Towards India: 1784-1858, (London: 1961), p. 51.

10. V.I. Pavlov, The Indian Capitalist Class: A Historical Study, (New Delhi: 1964), p. 99.

11. George D. Bearce, n. 9, p. 10 ff.

12. N.K. Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal, Vol.1 (Calcutta: 1971), p. 28.

13. B.N. Ganguli, Indian Economic Thought: Nineteenth Century Perspectives (New Delhi: 1977) p. 9.

14. Quoted from Nripendra Bhattacharya, Banglar Arthanaitik Itihash, (in Bengali), (Calcutta: n.d.), p. 93.

15. Somendra Chandra Nandy, Life and times of Cantoo Baboo (Krishnakanta Nandy), The Banian of Warren Hastings, 1742-1804, (Bombay: 1978), pp. 31 ff.

16. Report on the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal, Vol. 1, (Calcutta: Alipur: 1940), p. 339.

17. D. Rothermund, The Indian Economy Under British Rule and Other Essays, (New Delhi: 1983), p. 1.

18. J. Robinson, Economic Philosophy, (Garden City: 1964), p. 121.

19. M.G. Ranade, Essays on Indian Economy, (Madras: 1920), p. 22 ff.

20. Suprakash Roy, Bharater Krishak Bidroha O Ganatantrik Sangram, (Calcutta: July 1966, 3rd edition, April 1980), pp. 20-53.

21. Vide Ibne Karim, "East India Companir Sasan Suru O Pratham Krishak Yuddha," in Samakal, Nineth special edition, (Calcutta, October 1980), pp. 101-18, 169-74, 223-25; Ebadat Husein, Marxbader Bichare Rammohun, (in Bengali), (Calcutta: 1983), pp. 156-63.

22. B.P. Mishra, n. 3, p. 9.

23. G.R. Gleig, Memoris of the Life of the Right Hon. Warren Hastings, first Governor General of Bengal, (London: 1841), p.305.

24. Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, Islam in Bengal: Thirteenth to Nineteenth Century, (Calcutta: 1972), p. 59.

25. Ibid, p. 64.

26. Narahari Kaviraj, Wahabi and Faraezi Rebels of Bengal, (New Delhi: 1982), pp. 31-32.

27. Ibid, pp. 64-67.

28. Ebadat Hossain, n. 21, pp. 165, 171.

29. Rajat Ray, "On Some Aspects of Historiography of Colonial India," in Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society, (Delhi: 1982), pp. 4-5.

30. Some suggest that Dudu Miyan, the Farezi leader, had no desire to oppose the British rule. It has been reported that Dudu Miyan in an application to British authority in 1850 prayed for himself a post of Deputy Collector, Deputy Magistrate or Principal Sadar Amin. He requested for pension or any post in 1859 also. Vide Swapan Basu, Gana Asantosh O Unish Sataker Bengali Samaj, (in Bengali), (Calcutta: 1984), p. 42.

31. B.P. Mishra, n. 3, pp. 68 ff.

32. Kalikinkar Datta, The Santal Insurrection of 1855-57, (Calcutta: 1940), p. 10.

33. Benoy Ghosh (ed), Samayikpatre Banglar Samajchitra, Vol. III, (in Bengali), (Calcutta: 1964), pp. 294-95.

34. Proceedings of the Judicial Department, Nos. 221, 23, 8; 1855.

35. Vide the Report of Mr. Bidvell in Ibid, Nos. 157, 142; 1856.