RELIGION

(i) Hinduism

Historical analogies and parallels suggest themselves much too frequently and often tend to obliterate distances in time and space. India, after Plassey, is thus known to have experienced the dawn of a new era—the era of Renaissance, "a Renaissance, wider, deeper and more revolutionary than that of Europe after the fall of Constantinople." She is also believed to have passed through the phase of "Reformation" and even of "Counter-Reformation". Without pressing the parallel too far, it may be conceded that since the beginning of the nineteenth century India witnessed a steady growth of reawakened interest in the various phases of her own thought and culture in the context of the newly acquired contact with the Western culture. It involved a process of re-valuation and re-discovery, of an adjustment of norm through rejection of some ideas and institutions, and emphasis on others. Religion, which always occupied the predominant position in the people's life in India, reacted to this phenomenon very perceptibly.

The new attitude towards India's oldest religion and the religion of the bulk of her population to this day has been described as neo-Hinduism. This is more convenient than correct nomenclature for the nineteenth century religious reaction in India. Neither the reformist nor the revivalist phase was by any means an exclusive feature of the nineteenth century India. It was but one of several such phases through which Hinduism, in the course of its evolution, across many centuries, passed.

Hinduism embraces such a comprehensive system deriving its sanction from diverse shastric sources and conventions, rituals and ceremonies as well as metaphysical thought of the highest conceivable order that it defies conformation to any rigid pattern except in so far as its hold on a particular sect or sects, or for a given period of time, is concerned. It influenced different categories of people in such diverse ways that its reaction on the community, known as the Hindus, as a whole, is difficult to assess.

Western scholars have found it difficult even to frame a definition of Hinduism. Our study here is an attempt at evaluation of Hinduism in its essential, fundamental approach as understood by the enlightened leaders of the nineteenth century Bengal, and not so much in terms of its actual influence on the diverse units which constituted the commonwealth of religious systems known as Hinduism, described by Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan as "a mosaic of almost all types and stages of religious aspiration and endeavour."

The advent of the West in the modern age produced results which bear some resemblance with those the advent of the Crescent had brought
in the middle ages. On the one hand it stimulated a proneness to rigid conservation, on the other it prepared the ground for adaptation of the existing system to meet the challenge from the West. However contradictory these tendencies might have been, both had their roots deep in the spiritual and cultural traditions of the country. In both cases, rigidity ultimately yielded to adjustment through tolerance and understanding. In fact, Hinduism, when historically viewed, affords the example of a large synthesis achieved in course of many centuries. This gives Hinduism a character and distinctiveness all its own.

The first notable feature of the religious life in India in the early nineteenth century was the attempt made by Ram Mohun Roy to reform and revitalise the national life of his countrymen. In the course of an active public life spread over sixteen years (1814-1830) in India and three years (1830-1833) abroad, his reforming zeal made its influence felt on many aspects of India's problems. His title to greatness was derived from many efforts and achievements; one of his most heroic efforts was directed towards rationalising the religious life as led by his fellow countrymen. This he sought to achieve through conformity, in the main, to the teachings of the Upanishads, promotion of the contemplation of 'the Author and Preserver of the Universe and inculcation of the virtues of 'charity, morality, piety, benevolence and virtues' and strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds.

The urge to re-discover India's past, as understood by Ram Mohun and his followers in the generation after him did never amount to obscurantism. Its character was predominantly progressive and reformist. If it was bold enough to discard a slavish conformity to external ceremonials, mostly derived from conventional usages, not inherent in any system of fundamental religious thought, it was also realistic enough to comprehend the value of a synthetic approach to the entire problem. Thus Ram Mohun proclaimed a universal house of prayer open to all men without any distinction of caste or colour, race or nation.

The Brahma Samaj movement whose rise is the subject matter of the next section is cited as an instance of a movement favouring serious religious reforms in India from the late twenties of the nineteenth century. So too was the Prarthana Samaj movement which did not, however, hold out any prospect of propagation in Bengal where deep-rooted traditions of Bhakti cult held firm sway and the seeds of religious reformation, sown earlier, had already begun to bear fruit.

Two years and a half intervene between the passing away of Ram Mohun Roy and the birth of Ramkrishna. The movement which owed its origin to the inspiration of the seer of Dakhineswar has been cited as an example of 'Full Defence of the Old Religions' by J. N. Farquhar. He draws a distinction between the movement started by Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883), the founder of the Arya Samaj, and the movement initiated by Ramkrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886). In Farquhar's opinion, while the former was a defence of the old, tempered by reform, the latter was
a full defence of the old in almost every particular. Such a distinction is, however, partly correct and, as such, to a certain extent, misleading. It is true that Ramkrishna did not believe in picking and choosing; he had no reason for despising the past and no desire for compromising with the present. But the stream which flew from Dakhineswar was by no means opposed to reform or blind to the potentialities and value of synthesis. Rather synthesis was its very life. It is true that in the seventies of the last century a conscious and sustained effort was made in some quarters to establish and justify "the superiority of Hinduism over all other forms of faith." Indeed this was the topic of a lecture delivered by Raj Narayan Bose in 1872. It is also a fact that in 1873 was formed in Calcutta the Sanatan Dharma Rakshini Sabha or an Association for the Defence of the Eternal Religion. The efforts of Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachudamani were similarly aimed at a defence and justification of Hindu ceremonialism and image worship with all its implications. Such moves were obviously an answer to the problem created by the proselytising exuberance of the Christian missionaries on the one hand, and schism posed by the organisation of the Brahmos as a distinct congregation on the other. But to equate the outlook and activities of such associations and individuals with those which inspired Sri Ramakrishna's vision is to exhibit an incapacity to comprehend the nature and import of his teachings.

Gadadhara's transformation into Ramakrishnadeva is the edifying story of the pilgrimage of a heroic soul, full of passion for God and bent upon the realisation of Truth. A God-intoxicated man, without the so-called advantages of learning derived from schools, he was endowed by nature with a prophetic vision and all-responsive mind. His passion for God was so intense and absorbing that he tried all the ways and teachings laid down by various forms of religion. He experimented with different faiths with the sole object of discovering the elements of enduring Truth. He studied the Koran and followed its prescribed rites. With equal enthusiasm he acquainted himself with the basic concepts underlying the Gospels of Christ and fashioned his life in accordance with the spirit of its precepts. With his unfailing energy he pursued all the forms of worship enjoined by the Hindu shastras. Then he became finally convinced of the supreme fact that 'a truly religious man should think that other religious paths also are paths leading to the truth." The spiritual truths realized by him enabled him to proclaim the unique message summed up as follows:

"The sole aim of human life is to obtain God, that God-realisation can be proved by experiment, that all religions are true, that each man has to approach God in his own way, that men and women are essentially divine, that human relationship is best expressed in terms of service or worship and that it is better to make positive efforts for progress than to be sorrowing over sin and moral lapses".

The transition from Ram Mohun to Ramakrishna was a phenomenon
of tremendous importance. In his desire to reform Hinduism Ram Mohun
was largely influenced by the doctrines of the Upanishads. They supplied
him with the justification of rejecting the Hindu pantheon in favour of a
nirguna, nirakara, Brahman. This admirably suited the needs of the hour,
(for the Christian missionaries and the rational atheists were making
capital out of worship of idols) as well as his own convictions which were
largely moulded by contact with Islamic and Christian theology on the one
hand, and the acquaintance with the treasure-house of the Upanishads on
the other.

This attitude no doubt served a historical purpose. By rationalising
Hinduism mostly conceived of by the mass as a bundle of ceremonials and
worship of images, and practised as such by them, Rammohun did much
to rehabilitate Hinduism and thereby provide itself with a justification
against organised attacks led by the Christian missionaries and the over-
enthusiastic atheists. His effort no doubt satisfied intellectual curiosity to
a large extent, but it failed to strike any emotional chord in the minds of
the people at large. He did not think in terms of a system comprehensive
enough to include non-Upanishadic texts and matter (except at a much
later stage) ; as a matter of fact, his system did not pervade the entire
universe of the Upanishads even. People brought up for generations in the
traditional cults and beliefs did not feel drawn to it en masse. A more
dynamic, pervasive and cosmopolitan credo was called for.

Herein lay the historical need and justification of the Gospel of Sri
Ramkrishna. Its basis was firmly rooted in the soil of the country. It was
excellently suited to the climate of its temperament. It was catholic enough
to comprehend all phases of traditional religious thought and spiritual
discipline. Its keynote was Realisation—the quintessence of Hindu reli-
gious thought—born of the conviction that the highest truths of religion
are realisable even in this life and that religion consists in 'realisation, not
in reasoning about its doctrines but in experiencing it.' The means may
differ, practices may vary, creeds may be diverse, but these do not matter
so long as they help men to reach the destined goal of Spiritual
Realisation. Those who came in contact with Ramkrishna, irrespective of
the religious sects to which they belonged, not necessarily confined to the
rank of the Hindus, could say, as M. K. Gandhi said later:

"The story of Ramakrishna Paramhansa's life is the story of religion
in practice. He is a living embodiment of Godliness. His sayings are not
those of mere learned man, but they are pages from the Book of Life. They
are revelations from his own experiences. They, therefore, leave on the
reader an impression which he cannot resist."

It was no accident that not only the proclaimed seekers after spiritual
truth but also the imperious intellectuals found in him the fulfilment of
their quest. In fact the chief instruments of the propagation of his
teachings—the future Swami Vivekananda, the St. Paul of the Messiah—
had started his career as a relentless advocate of Radical theories bordering
on rational atheism—'a Vedantist-cum-Hegelian-cum-Revolutionary.' as
Sir Brojendranath Seal, one of his class fellows, described him. After his
transformation at the touch of the Great Master, Vivekananda went on propagating the gospel which has been described as "the creed of the Universal Man and the absolute and inalienable sovereignty of the self,—the combination of two ancient Hindu doctrines of Jnana and bhakti?" or in western terms it was combination of an absolute monism which affirms that all is one, and at the same time of a devout approach to a God who can be worshipped. His own words—"Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divine within by controlling nature, external and internal'—are reminiscent of his Master's teaching—"He is born to no purpose, who having the privilege of being born a man, is unable to realize God in this life."

Narendranath Datta (as he was known then) paid occasional visits to Dakhineswar since 1881 and within five years of his first visit the Great Master was laid to rest. But the spell of five years was sufficient to transform the imperious youth into Swami Vivekananda of imperishable fame. Not content with the foundation of a monastery of fellow-disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, he made it his life's mission to carry his Master's gospel to the hearts of his countrymen. "The first work that demands our attention", he wrote, "is that the most wonderful truths confined in our Upanishads, in our Scriptures, in our Puranas must be brought out from the books and scattered broadcast all over the world." The all-consuming fire of his ardour led him to undertake extensive tours in and beyond India. His convincing discourses eloquently delivered made the westerners appreciative of the great potentialities of India's spiritual message. Religion, to him, was not a mere metaphysical speculation, divorced from the context of material or social realities. A staunch believer in Sankara's doctrine of non-dualism, Vivekananda dedicated himself to the mission of uplifting humanity to the status of Godliness through realisation of inherent attributes in manhood and by elimination of the evils of poverty, ignorance and social injustice in every conceivable form.

No one had done in recent times more than the Master and his disciple to bring about a spiritual regeneration in India by imparting to Hinduism a new vigour, a distinctive character and a reinforced moral sanction. What was in the days of Ram Mohun, an approach or an attitude, ripened under Ramakrishna-Vivekananda as a philosophy and aspiration.

The nineteenth century not only saw the spiritual revitalising of Hinduism; it also witnessed the study and interpretation of Hinduism as an intellectual discipline. It found its ablest and most vigorous champion in Bankimchandra in whom the best elements of the Renaissance and the Reformation were happily blended. If he was a Revivalist, so far as his attitude towards Hinduism is concerned, he was no blind devotee of traditionalism, but a refreshingly progressive interpreter of Hinduism as a basis of philosophy and religion.

In an article entitled 'Dharma Ebang Sahitya' Bankim lashed out at those self-constituted guardians and interpreters of Hinduism who indentified
it with ceremonialism above everything else. His concept of Dharma, elaborately discussed in his numerous articles composed between 1886 and 1895 reveals a distinct stage of evolution. His early admiration of positivist philosophy and Benthamite outlook gradually began to wear off till it yielded place to a deep veneration for the Srimad Bhagabat Gita in which he found 'elaboration of the embodiment of the highest concept of religion'. Utilitarianism to which he was deeply attracted earlier, now appeared to him to be one of the many attributes, and a small one at that, which went to the making of Dharma in the sense in which he understood it. True religion, as he conceived it, emanates from chitta-suddhi or purification of soul\(^{11}\) and love of humanity.\(^{11}\) His belief in Godliness was not an abstract or mere metaphysical speculation; he was convinced that such an ideal or status was realisable even within mortal human frame. Sri Krishna who forms the theme of a lengthy, learned and penetrating discourse, entitled Krishna-tattva, in his considered opinion, had proved in real life the realisation of the ideal of Godhood in man. This brought the preeminent intellectual to a remarkable proximity with the lesson of Realisation such as Ramakrishna, the high priest of mystic emotional spiritualism, had preached and demonstrated in his own life.

Bankim's attitude towards the Upanishadic doctrine of nirguna Brahman and Atman or the conscious Essence diffused throughout the universe was undoubtedly one of respect. The concept of an infinite, formless and all-pervasive Brahman or of an Impersonal God (or the 'Inscrutable Power in Nature' as conceived of by Herbert Spencer) was an attractive speculation. But to Bankim's pragmatic thinking it was not enough by itself. It was calculated to serve the interest, and even meet the demands of intellectualism; but it could hardly be expected to stir the depth and understanding of the average individual. In Dharmatattva\(^{12}\) he writes that in the concept of a nirguna, infinite Brahman, religion does not, and cannot find its complete fulfilment. A mere 'philosophical' or 'scientific' God, as distinct from Personal God, cannot be the object of purposeful worship. With its obviously limited capacity for knowledge, the human mind however informed, cannot be expected to fully comprehend the Eternal or Absolute Brahman. Hence the essentially pragmatic mind of Bankim turned from the ethical doctrines of Vedantic philosophy and saw that the Mahabharata, or to be more precise, the Gita, dealing with the problem from a more practical and utilitarian point of view, was a more dependable guide of man's quest of Truth and Fulfilment. To him the worship of a Personal God, as distinct from the Absolute Brahman such as the Upanishads proclaimed and Sankara propagated, was much more meaningful. The belief in a Personal God attended with devotion (bhakti) and anusilan (or proper and systematic cultivation and integration of human faculties) and expressed through right action, held out, in a much more effective manner, the prospect of man's ascent to Godhood, than the concept of nirguna and nirakara Brahman. That such an ascent is realisable in real life is, in his opinion,
amply demonstrated in the life of Sri Krishna, the ideal embodiment of the divine in human shape.

But this advocacy of the worship of a 'Saguna Isvara' did not mean a reversion to the traditional view of Hindu pantheon with all its emphasis on ritualism and worship of idols representing various concepts of divinity. Bankim was well aware of the encroachments often made by the sashtras and usages of desachara on the province of true religion. In his discourse on Srimad Bhagvat Gita he dwells at length on the theory that the worship of numerous divinities as practised by the mass, in conformity with the Puranic maxims, though considered as an inferior form of worship by the protagonists of the Vedic religion, need not be condemned as being entirely devoid of any merit. Its justification arises from the fact that these deities are but the manifestations of one Universal God—Isvara. He discussed the theme more elaborately in his treatise entitled Devatattva O Hindu Dharma. The worship of deities as manifestations of God, he argues, is understandable only so long as it originates from the consciousness that these objects of worship are but the manifestations of the One Supreme Being, the source and giver of all power—Isvara. But he had the practical sense to realise that the Loukik dharma or the traditional form of religion which sanctioned the worship of various deities could not be easily eliminated. Hence he sought and found comfort in the teaching of the Gita—"Even those who are devotees of other gods, worship them with faith, they also sacrifice to Me alone, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), though not according to the true law."

Thus Hinduism, as Bankim understood it, was intended to steer clear of the two extremes—the Upanishadic ideal of Absolute, Infinite Brahman on the one hand and the cult of the worship of the Puranic pantheon on the other. The ideals of Hinduism, as interpreted by him, were best represented by the teachings of the Gita with its emphasis on the concept of a Saguna Isvara, the One and Supreme Author and Dispenser of the Universe. In Dharmatattva he observes that while it is not possible at the primary stage, at any rate, for a worshipper to properly comprehend the ideal of an Absolute and Infinite Brahman, it is possible to cite examples of men raising themselves to the status of Godhood. The best example is furnished by Sri Krishna. Such a conception of God in man is calculated to bring God within the comprehension of an average individual. In so far as Bankim rationalised Hinduism by stripping it of the incubus of ceremonialism on the one hand and by providing it with a living faith in a God Incarnate on the other, he may be said to have imparted a new vigour and outlook to Hinduism, already revitalised in the generations intervening between Ram Mohun and Vivekananda.

Looking at the period from Ram Mohun to Vivekananda it would appear that the so-called neo-Hinduism, in its essential features, was but an attempt at re-stating, with varied emphasis, the fundamental attributes of Hinduism. Such a phenomenon was largely the outcome of the interaction of new forces, both from within and from without, which had
begun to emerge in the wake of the advent of the West. This advent meant more than an alien rule (alien rule was, in fact, in existence for more than five centuries before the advent of the British as the ruling power in India). It meant, what is more important to note, the advent of an outlook which in many respects, was an anti-thesis of the one that the Indians were accustomed to cherish and value. It is commonplace to suppose that the urge for properly interpreting Hinduism, as an integral unit of Indian culture and civilisation, was felt primarily because of two major considerations. These were (i) to meet the challenge of evangelicism of the western missionaries and (ii) to supplement and carry to its logical conclusion the work of religious reformation initiated by Ram Mohun Roy. Its aim was to provide Hinduism with a justification and Faith through re-emphasising its fundamental teachings which had lost much of their appeal to the popular mind, long accustomed to identifying religion with ceremonialism, God with image and social usages with religious sanctions. A study of the movement in this wider perspective would reveal it as an instance of India’s response to the new intellectual forces which had been steadily at work in the world of the nineteenth century.

It is possible to trace some elements of loyalty to tradition and even of orthodoxy in the nineteenth century religious movement in Bengal. Bipin Chandra Pal, for example, recalls the efforts of the Revivalists like Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachudamani and Krishna Prasanna Sen, directed towards justifying the various forms of Hindu ceremonialism and socio-religious cults and institutions. But they, as was only to be expected, merely touched the surface and did not go deep enough. Of much greater importance was the work of Bengali litterateurs, Nabin Chandra Sen and Bhudev Mukhopadhyay. They represented the western educated, middle-class, intellectual reaction to the impact of Western science and philosophy on India’s religious ways and outlook. While Nabin Chandra attempted a reappraisal of Hindu scriptures in the light of western humanism, Bhudev decried reforms born of mere imitation and advocated the retention of the traditional Hindu pattern of society as an essential condition of social security and contentment. Bankim was a class apart. He was no upholder of the old system and subjected it to the severest tests of rationalism. And yet he has not often been described as an advocate of Hindu revivalism.

But this is merely a part and a minor part of the movement which convulsed the religious world of Bengal in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Individuals concerned with this aspect of the movement were at best Intellectuals or Rationalists who attempted to analyse and assess the current religious beliefs and practices so as to either justify them from the point of view of orthodoxy or to rationalise them after the fashion of the Intellectuals. To them it was a mere approach or attitude. But what started as an approach soon developed into a creed and under the impact of the teachings of Ramkrishna and Vivekananda the religious world of
Bengal and indeed of India, underwent a phase of remarkable transformation. Its appeal was so pervasive and forceful that it could not only absorb the shock of religious non-conformity but make its influence felt in the total life of the people—its religion, literature, philosophy and even politics.

REFERENCES

2. "Under the general term Hindu are included classes whose belief, ritual and mode of life are strangely diverse—the learned Brahman, who is a follower of the Vedanta philosophy, the modern theist or agnostic, trained in the learning of the west, the semi-barbarous hill man . . . . who knows little of Brahmanical mythology" (Crooke, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 6 p. 698).
9. "Ramakrishna was all Bhakti without, but within he was all Jnana. I am all Jnana without, but within my heart it is all Bhakti".—Quoted in Swami Vivekananda on Himself, Calcutta, 1963, p. 53.
10. Prachar, Pous, 1292, B. S.
13. His letter to Maharaja Kumar Binay Krishna Deb Bahadur dated 27th July 1892 reads : "I venture to think that Hinduism is not exclusively confined within the Dharma sastras, Hinduism is catholic in its scope. In the hands of the saintly authors of the Smritis, especially in those of the modern Raghunandas and others like him, it has shrunk into narrowness. Quoted in P. Sinha—Nineteenth Century Bengal: Aspects of Social History—Appendix C, p.158.
   ye'py anyadevatābhaktā
   yajante Śraddhayā 'nvitāh
   te'pi mam eva Kaunteya
   yajanty avidhipūrvvakāṃ
   The Bhagavadgīta, Chap. IX, 23.
18. It is interesting in this connection to note the enumeration by Bipin Chandra Pal of three stages of religious evolution concerning the Hindus—(a) the stage of Perception in which the men (of the Vedic age) worshipped gods cognizable by the senses; (b) the stage of Reflection represented by the Upanishads which shifted the emphasis from the seen to the unseen and (c) the Imaginative stage which was wonderfully developed in the Puranas which taught men to seek reconciliation and synthesis between the two necessary aspects of the physical and mental life. He concluded: "Pauranic Hinduism, all its popular misconceptions and misinterpretations notwithstanding, is a much fuller vehicle for the religious life than the Hinduism of the
Upanishads. And because the mythology or Devabada of the Puranas developed after the Hindu mind had passed through the experiences and disciplines of the reflective religion of the Upanishads, it would be unreasonable to place the Pauranic gods and goddesses in the same category either as that of our own Vedic Gods or as that of the gods and goddesses of what is called primitive culture. Writings and Speeches, Vol. I, B. C. Pal—Mythological Hinduism, p. 93-94.

19. Referring to Europe at the beginning of the 19th century it has been observed "Even in the Established Churches a tendency to give rational explanations of miracles, the Resurrection and the existence of God was not unknown". Europe and the Modern World—Gottschalk and Lach, Vol. II, Introduction, p. 87.

(ii) BRAHMO SAMAJ

The history of the movement leading to the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj (correct transcription Brahma Samaj) in 1828 is intimately linked up with that of the individual career of its founder Rammohun Roy (1772-1833). Born in the village Radhanagar in the district of Hoogly, West Bengal, of wealthy and orthodox Brahmin parents, he received in his boyhood the traditional education of his country and soon attained remarkable proficiency in Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. Later in his life he learned English, Greek, Latin and Hebrew. His academic endeavours enabled him to acquire a profound knowledge of Islamic theology. A study of the Quran in the original shook his faith in the popular idolatrous form of Hindu worship and made him a life-long admirer of the uncompromising monotheism of Islam. He was further deeply impressed by the free-thinking and universal outlook of the rationalists (Mutazali) and the unitarians (Mawahhdin) of Islam. Subsequently with the progress of years and maturity he became enamoured of Sufi mysticism which has found so poignant an expression in Persian poetry and in which he must have discovered certain basic tenets comparable to those of the Vedanta. Acquaintance with the Upanishads, the Brahmasutras and the Gita convinced him that the concept of the unity of Godhead was the essence of Hinduism and the current idolatrous worship was only a disgusting aberration of later growth. Another section of the Hindu scriptures that he studied extensively, probably under the celebrated contemporary anchorite Hariharananda Tirthaswami, was the Tantra. An early visit to Tibet possibly gave him some insight into the principles of Mahayana Buddhism as well as into its later decadent phases. During his service career in Rangpur (1809-1815) he came in contact with a number of Marwari merchants of the Jaina faith, got interested in Jainism and is said to have studied "the Kalpasutra and other books appertaining to the Jaina religion". He had also some familiarity presumably due to his travels and stay at Benaras as well as through a complete mastery of the Hindi language, with the masters of the Hindi language, with the medieval Indian bhakti movement. He claimed medieval saints like Kabir, Dadu, Nanak and others as among his spiritual ancestors. His study of Indian and Islamic philosophical and religious thought movements was thus laborious, comprehensive and almost in all cases first-hand. A competent knowledge of several European languages gave him an easy access to the world of western learning and enlightenment. It is possible to trace the stages in the progress of his investigations in this field as well as the influences he succeeded in assimilating therefrom. While at Rangpur he developed admiration for the two great contemporary mile-posts of progress, the War of American Independence and the French Revolution of 1789. Naturally his studies at this stage were
directed to the literature of rationalism and enlightenment that inspired the great historical movements. The literature of empirical philosophy from Bacon to Locke and Newton as well as the propaganda of free thinking and "Illumination" in Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, Valney, Tom Paine and others" formed his favourite subjects. His enquiries into the basic dogmas of Christianity started probably a little later after his final settlement in Calcutta in 1815. The knowledge of Greek and Hebrew enabled him to read the Christian scriptures in the original. To this he added a wide knowledge of Church history "with special reference to the Arian, the Sabellian and the Pelagian controversies" as also of 'the movement of liberal thought and ethical rationalism, Rabbinic writings of the first century before Christ especially in reference to the Tarums of Jonathan and Hillel." Mainly during the third decade of the nineteenth century Rammohun came in close contact with English utilitarian thought as represented by Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. Apart from theoretical studies, personal contact and friendship with representatives of utilitarianism in India and England (including Bentham himself) must have facilitated his enquiries into this branch of contemporary western thought. Finally before his death he found time also to study at least some forms of socialist thought and movement including one propounded by Robert Owen. Mr. Recorder Hill, who was present at an interview between Rammohun and Owen in England, expresses his admiration of the former's close acquaintance with the literature of socialism. His lifelong endeavours had thus enabled Rammohun to gain intimacy with both the rationalist and spiritual traditions of European thought. During his mature years he had sought to give expression to the philosophy of synthesis and harmony born out of a comprehensive assimilation of eastern and western thought through the medium of the Brahmo Samaj.

Rammohun was a man of deep religious conviction from his childhood. His early study of Islamic theology had made him a convinced monotheist and an acquaintance with the literature of Islamic and European rationalism had gradually led him to the position of a Deist. This attitude is clearly reflected in his early Arabic-Persian tract entitled *Tuhfatul Muwahhidin* (1803-04) in which he brands scriptural authority, priestcraft, ritualism, superstition and sectarianism as non-essential and irrational factors responsible for the degeneration of true religion. The latter consists, according to him at this stage, of unalloyed faith in the existence of a Creator and Moral Governor of the universe as well as in a spiritual principle in man called the soul. A study of the Vedanta as expounded by Sankara, however, gradually led him away from Deism to a more lasting foundation of his faith. He came now to hold a theistic view of the world and world history and categorised 'reason' 'scripture', and 'common sense' as collectively constituting the foundation of religious belief. In his own interpretation of the *Vedanta* he has been deeply influenced by Sankara and mainly sticks to the latter's position except on three points viz. (a) he has laid much greater emphasis on upasana (prayer
and adoration); (b) he declares *brahma-jnana* and *moksha* (final liberation) to be within reach of house-holders (*grihastha*) and no monopoly of world-renouncing hermits; and (c) he assigns a much prominent role to *maya* as the creative power of God probably under the influence of the *saktivada* of the *Tantra* which he had studied extensively. As one who inspite of his adherence to *Advaita-vedanta* had placed the greatest possible emphasis on the temporal world and the individual, Rammohun needed a comprehensive scheme of ethical values to guide our social behaviour and here he drew inspiration from the moral precepts of Jesus Christ though the metaphysical doctrines of Trinitarian Christianity appeared to him as scarcely better than popular Hindu idolatry. Religious to the core, he had not accepted the godless ethics of the utilitarians or Robert Owen's programme of social change minus religion, though as a philanthropist he had nothing but warm approval of the ideal of service to humanity advocated by both the schools of thought. The ideal of service was always an integral part of Rammohun's concept of religion and had already found expression through his various endeavours for social, educational and political reforms. The foundations of the Brahm Samaj in 1828 brought to a focal point this comprehensive scheme of religious, social, intellectual and political transformation of India as visualised and formulated by him.

The Brahm Samaj gave a concrete expression to Rammohun's concept of Universal Theism. From the organisational point of view this goal was reached through successive stages. The discussion-meetings and controversies which he used to hold with friends and orthodox Hindu and Muslim critics at Rangpur (1809—1815) indicate that his characteristic attitude to religion had already taken a definite shape and these may be accordingly regarded as the earliest foundation stone of the future Brahm movement. After having settled in Calcutta in 1815 he started an organization named *Atmiya Sabha* originally at his Manicktala residence along with a number of friends who held liberal views on religious and social matters, like Dwarkanath Tagore, Brajamohun Majumdar, Haladhars Basu, Nandakishore Basu, Rajnarayan Sen, Brindaban Mitra, Baidyanath Mukherjee, Raja Kalisankar Ghosal, Gopimohan Tagore and the anchorite Hariharananda Tirthaswami. Regular sittings were held alternately in the residences of different members. The proceedings usually started with recitations from the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* which were followed by discussions on the futility of idolatrous worship, evils of the caste-system, practice of *sati* and polygamy, the desirability of the introduction of remarriage of Hindu widows etc. The meetings terminated with religious songs. The *Atmiya Sabha* remained active in Calcutta from 1815 to 1828 and probably became extinct after the foundation of the Brahm Samaj of which it was in very real sense a precursor. During the same period Rammohun was also very closely associated with the unitarian form of Christianity as represented in Calcutta by Rev. William Adam and a few other European (mostly Scottish) gentleman and along with his friends
Dwarkanath Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Chandrasekhar Dev and Tarachand Chakravorti took an active part in organizing the Calcutta Unitarian Committee (1821) and the British Indian Unitarian Association (1827). This unitarian contact had ultimately proved to be of considerable help to him in the task of organizing the congregational worship of his own church.

The Brahma Samaj was launched into its eventful career on August 20, 1828 (the 6th Bhadra, 1235 B.S.) in Calcutta in a rented house belonging to Ramkamal Basu at 48 Upper Chitpore Road, Jorasanko. About two years later it was formally shifted on January 23, 1830 (the 11th Magha 1236 B.S.) to its new building at 55, Upper Chitpur Road which stands today as the historic house of the Adi Brahma Samaj. The universal creed of the new Church is set forth in its Trust Deed which requires the Church "building, land, tenements, hereditaments and premises" to be occupied, enjoyed, applied and appropriated as and for a place of Public Meeting, of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction, as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious and devout manner; for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe, but not under or by any other name, designation, or title peculiarly used for and applied to, any particular Being or Beings by any man or set of men whatsoever; and that no graven image, statute or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within... the building..., and that, in conducting the said worship and adoration, no object animate or inanimate, that has been, or shall hereafter become, or be recognized, as an object of worship, by any man, or set of men, shall be reviled, or slightingly or contemptuously spoken of, or alluded to, either in preaching, praying, or in the hymns or other modes of worship that may be delivered or used in the said message or building..." Tarachand Chakravarti, one of the leaders of the Young Bengali group, was appointed the first secretary of the Church. Weekly service was held originally every Saturday evening; later it had been transferred to Wednesday. The service consisted of three successive parts viz. recitation of the Vedas by Telegu Brahmans in a closed apartment exclusively before the Brahmans Members of the congregation; reading and exposition of the Upanishads for the general audience; and singing of religious hymns. This would correspond exactly to the reading of the Bible, the sermon and the hymn of Christian worship. The parallelism was, however, confined exclusively to the outward form of congregational worship. The contents of Rammohun's Universal Theism were thoroughly Hindu in character. The reading of the Vedas EXCLUSIVELY BEFORE Brahmans does not apparently accord well with the universal and non-sectarian ideals of the new church as set forth in its Trust Deed. But the only custodian of the Vedic hymns in Calcutta at the moment was the orthodox Telegu Brahmin community and its members
could not be persuaded to recite the Vedas liberally before Brahmins and non-Brahmins alike. That the organizers of the congregation including Rammohun himself, had no objection to the reading of the sruti texts before the general audience, becomes clear from their agreeing to have the Upanishads read and explained before the entire body of worshippers. This part of the service was performed by learned Bengali Brahmins like Pandit Ramchandra Vidyavagis and Pandit Utsavananda Vidyavagis who were free from prejudice unlike their orthodox Telegu counterparts. The general congregations often comprised men of different communities including Christians and Mohammedans and hymns of the service were sometimes sung by choirs of Eurasian and Moslem boys.

The establishment of the Brahma Samaj like all Rammohun's other reforming activities drew forth angry protests from orthodox circles which soon set up the Dharma Sabha as a rival body under the leadership of Raja Radhakanta Deb. It championed the cause of narrow Hindu orthodoxy as well as opposed all the liberal movements sponsored by the founders of the Brahma Samaj including the struggle for the abolition of Sati. The passing of Bentinck's regulation abolishing the evil custom in 1829 made the Dharma Sabha leaders furious. Rammohun, always under fire from the orthodox camp, henceforth became its special target of criticism, slander and ridicule. Two attempts were made on his life and he had to place himself constantly on guard against attempted assassination. Fierce controversies between the two camps rent the air in Calcutta and the neighbouring regions and the two weekly papers Sambad Kaumudi for the Bramho Samaj and the Samachar Chandrika for the Dharma Sabha began to spit fire on each other. It is amidst an atmosphere of so much turmoil, conflict and bitterness that the Bramho Samaj was born.

The character of the new church founded by Rammohun Roy has often been misunderstood. With the introduction of the ceremony of initiation into the Brahma Samaj in 1843 the body had since gradually developed as a sect and historians have sometimes consciously or unconsciously made the mistake of surveying the entire Brahma movement from the sectarian point of view. The formation of a new sect is, however, what Rammohun always tried to avoid and succeeded in avoiding to the last. The Brahma Samaj, as he had tried to shape it, was a congregation or an order rather than a sect or a community. He conceived it mainly as a common platform for the numerous and often mutually hostile religious sects and dogmas of India—where these could discover the grounds of worship common to all religions and learn to be tolerant and respectful towards one another. By removing gradually the age-old mental barriers and inhibitions that have ever kept the religious communities separate in this country, this common congregational worship would provide India with a far deeper basis of national unity and integration than mere political and administrative uniformity could assure. The discovery of such an underlying unity amidst numerous
diversities of creed and ritual seems to have been Rammohun Roy's goal, at least as indicated by the Trust Deed of the Brahmo Samaj. He had further sought to strengthen his doctrine by making the ideal of love and service of humanity an essential part of this Universal Theism. These twin concepts of compassion and service found expression through all his reforming activities. It was, however, his belief that the reforming impulse must come from within the body social and it was not desirable to impose elaborate schemes and measures from outside particularly with the aid of law. This universal and completely non-sectarian character of the Brahmo Samaj as conceived and founded by Rammohun Roy makes it something radically different from the organization into which it was transformed in the days of Debendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen and Sivanath Sastri.

After the departure of Rammohun Roy for England (November, 1830) and his subsequent death there (September, 1833) the central body of the Brahmo Samaj gradually reached a moribund condition though its name, theology and social ideals continued to live among certain groups in and near Calcutta. Most of the associates of Rammohun now severed all connections with the infant church except Dwarkanath Tagore whose munificence, coupled with the single-minded devotion of Pandit Ramchandra Vidyavagis, the first minister (acharya) of the Samaj, enabled it to survive the period of crisis till new life was infused into the Brahmo movement in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century by Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), Dwarkanath Tagore's eldest son. Debendranath had come into contact with Rammohun Roy in his childhood and had been educated in the latter's Anglo-Hindu School and later in the Hindu College. The spirit of western rationalism, disseminated through the teachings of the Hindu College, proved inadequate to solve his spiritual problems and the result was a period of almost intolerable spiritual agony and unrest which he graphically describes in his Autobiography. While passing through this "dark night of the soul" he happened one day to pick up a flying leaf of the Ishopanishad edited by Rammohun Roy. A perusal of the contents of the torn page brought him the long-sought solace. Afterwards a fuller acquaintance with the Upanishads destroyed his already shaken belief in the popular idolatrous form of Hinduism. He began henceforth to take a sympathetic and active interest in the Brahmo Samaj and started the Tattvabodhini sabha in 1839 with the intention of propagating the "Knowledge of Brahma as established by the Vedanta" which is the "central truth upheld by all the Hindu scriptures." Debendranath formally joined the Brahmo Samaj in 1842 and was initiated into Brahmaism along with twenty other youngmen on December 21, 1843 (the 7th Poush, 1765 Saka).

Debendranath's interest in Brahmaism and the Brahmo Samaj found its earliest expression in the formation of the Tattvabodhini Sabha in 1839, which soon became a common platform for the elite of mid-nineteenth century Bengal. Religious zealots like Pandit Ramchandra Vidyavagis,
Debendranath Tagore and Rajnarayan Bose, social reformers and educationists like Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, rationalists of the calibre of Akshoy Kumar Datta, Rakhaldas Halder, Anangamohan Mitra and Kanailal Pync, poets and litterateurs like Iswar Chandra Gupta, Pyari Chand Mitra, Kaliprasanna Sinha and Madanmohan Tarkalankar, Hindu college radicals like Tarachand Chakravarti, Chandrasekhar Deb, Ramtanu Lahiri, Ramgopal Ghosh and Sib Chandra Deb, scholars like Rajendralal Mitra and Ananda Chandra Vedantavagis—to name only a few—had united together for the first time, under the banner of the Sabha with a common ideal and programme. In fact with the formation of the Tattvabodhini Sabha Rammohun Roy's religious and social views emerge in the life of the nation not in the form of a sectarian creed but as the embodiment of all-round progress. The unification of these diverse elements of the national life through the bond of national monotheism was an organisational achievement of no mean order and it reflects credit on the tact, foresight and earnestness of the young Debendranath. The era of the Tattvabodhini Sabha (1839-1859) ushered in a significant and creative epoch also in the history of the Brahmo samaj as an institution and in this field the spiritual and organisational genius of Debendranath Tagore found even a more concrete and constructive expression.

The first task of young Debendranath was to provide the infant church with a solid organisational machinery which it had lacked in the earlier phase. Originally, as Sivnath Sastri writes, there was in the Brahmo Samaj, "no fraternity of fellow-believers. Most of those who attended the services were idolators at home. There was no organisation, constitution, no membership, no covenant, no pledge,...Those who daily condemned idolatry and upheld the worship of God were not required to discountenance idol worship by their example or even to practise the habit of Prayer" This was a source of worry to Debendranath and he sought to remove these defects by drawing up rules, rituals and ceremonials for the new church, the most prominent among these being the form of declaration to be signed by aspirants after membership, the system of initiation, compulsory payment of regular subscription and a revised form of divine service. On December 21, 1843 (the 7th of Paush, 1765 Saka) Pandit Ramachandra Vidyavagis, the first acharya of the Brahmo Samaj, initiated twenty-one young men headed by Debendranath Tagore formally into Brahmonism. The initiated Brahmo was a new phenomenon in the history of the faith. This for the first time gave the Church a concrete institutional character and was the first step towards reducing it to a full-fledged sectarian body. A notable doctrinal change that took place in the Brahmo Samaj during this epoch was the abandonment of the belief in the infallibility of the Vedas. Rammohun Roy in his later years had shifted from the position of a deist and had come to accept the authority of the Vedas as well as the all other scriptures as the common fund of accumulated human spiritual experience of ages. Since the death of Rammohun, however, the church-service had been conducted by Brahmin
pandits like Ramchandra Vidyavagis and Iswarchandra Nyayaratna who inspite of their sincerity and zeal, did not share Rammohun's enlightened views and had accordingly given the Brahma form of worship an almost orthodox Hindu character. It was widely believed that the Brahma Samaj placed the greatest emphasis on the superior form of the worship advocated by the *jnana-kanda* of the Vedas. It did not occur to the exponents of this view that this attitude would necessarily narrow down the scope of Rammohun's universalism and fasten the belief in the exclusive fallibility of the *Vedas* (as in the cases of all other Hindu sects) on the church. Down to 1847 Debendranath and his newly converted associates did not formally renounce this position. But rationalists like Akshay Kumar Dutta who had joined the Samaj as well as the members of the 'Young Bengal' group who had come to be closely associated with the body through the medium of the *Tattvabodhini Sabha* challenged this concept on the ground of irrationality and ultimately after a great deal of deliberation and enquiry Debendranath was convinced of the truth of their standpoint. It was now formally decided that the basis of Brahmoism would no longer be the revealed scripture (*apaurusheya sastra*). Brahmoism came henceforth to be considered based on "the pure human heart illumined by spiritual knowledge born of self-realisation." This really brought about a silent revolution in the history of the new movement which was far-reaching in its effect. It freed the new faith from the shackles of an age-old convention that had been the sheet anchor of Hinduism from the earliest times and attracted all the progressive and enlightened elements of contemporary society to the new church. At the same time it gave a fresh impetus to that spirit of individualism which had been from the very start a characteristic feature of the religious quest of the modern age and consequently of Brahmoism. Subsequently this emphatic individualistic trend was to prove a stumbling block to the Samaj in its efforts to achieve social integration and co-operation within its ranks.

The abandonment of the belief in the infallibility of revealed scripture did not however, minimise the great respect that Debendranath harboured in his mind for the Hindu scriptures, particularly for the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. The controversy over the question of the infallibility of the *Vedas* had led him to enquire more deeply into the contents and nature of Vedic theology. Four students were sent for this purpose to Bāñaras in 1845 to study the *Vedas* and in 1847 Debendranath himself visited the holy city to make a personal investigation into the matter. When ultimately he was led to the conclusion that there were many sections in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* which could not be reconciled to the dictates of reason he accepted it; but at the same time by 1849-50 he compiled in two volumes a magnificent selection from the Hindu sastras with his own comments and a Bengali translation and exposition, entitled *Brahma Dharma*, the first part of which has been specifically described as *Brahmi Upanishad* by him. Without being regarded as
infallible this work has come to be held in high veneration by all sections of the Brahmo Samaj and has ever since remained a source-book of Brahmoism. Of course it comprises exclusively those passages which according to the compiler could be reconciled to the modern spirit of rationalism and enquiry. In 1848 Debendranath also wrote the Brahma-Dharma-Vijam (The Essence of Brahmonism), four short aphorisms in Sanskrit, for the general spiritual guidance of the Brahmos. The last of these viz. "Worship consists of love of God and the performance of the work dear unto Him", has since become classic. It once more emphasised the ideal of service which Rammohun Roy was the first to harness to religion in the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Regarding the form of initiation it may be said that from 1844 to 1850 Brahmos were initiated according to the rite prescribed by the Mahanirvana Tantra. Brahmín members had to discard their sacred threads at the time of the initiation. After 1850 this particular method was discarded. The form of public worship introduced by Rammohun Roy also underwent substantial changes during the period from 1843 to 1859. It started from an individual worship by reciting the Gayatrîmantra ten times a day, and ultimately flowered into a full-fledged congregational worship with its well-planned and clear-cut sections including archana, pranama, samadhana, dhyana, stotra, prarthana, svadhyaya and upasanihara. Devotional songs formed an essential part of the church service as in the days of Rammohun. As the Brahmos had now come to form a compact social group, distinguished from the other contemporary sects, need was naturally felt for a body of rituals conforming to their monotheistic creed, that was to conduct their social and domestic ceremonies. Debendranath had to give his thought to this pressing problem also and ultimately he embodied the results of his labour in a very important book entitled Brahmadharmer Anusthanapaddhati (Rituals of Brahmoism) (1865) in which he laid down rules that were to guide the ceremonies of jatakarma, namakarma, diksha, vivaha, antyeshti and sraddha for the Brahmos. The formation of these rituals went a great way towards strengthening the cohesion of the Brahmos as a social unit.

Philosophically Brahmoism of Debendranath's day differs from the rigorous, unqualified monism of the earlier phase. Less intellectual and more spiritual in temperament than Rammohun, Debendranath had always a horror for unqualified advaitism which left little or no scope for bhakti or the spirit of devotion and adoration in a spiritual seeker. In this book Atma-tattavidya (1850-51) he appears as a strict dualist in firm opposition to absolute monism; his next publication Brahmadharmer Mat-O-Visvas (1860) brings him closer to a qualified form of monism; till at last his theological magnum opus Brahmadharmer Vyakhyan (published in three parts in 1861, 1866 and 1885) established him as a qualified monist, his final position corresponding to that of a Vedantin of the Visistadvaita or more properly of the Dvaitadvaita school. Debendranath thus deserves the credit of having laid the foundation of a spiritual philosophy to which the
Brahmo Samaj has remained more or less consistently loyal ever since.

The Brahmo movement now spread rapidly in the country and due to the impetus received from Debendranath and his associates and thanks to ardour and organising skill later displayed by his brilliant young disciple, Keshab Chandra Sen, the church had succeeded in establishing by 1872 altogether one hundred and one branches throughout India and Burma. It should be mentioned in passing that Debendranath and his associates who were leading the movement during the Tattvabodhini epoch, regarded the monotheism of the Brahmo Samaj as the best and the noblest phase in the development of Hinduism. Without denying the universal outlook of Brahmoism they were always eager to emphasise its special relations with Hinduism. The abolition of idolatry and superstitions according to them was a step towards the purification of the traditional faith.

The next phase in the development of the Brahmo Samaj centres round Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) and his activities. At a comparatively young age he emerged, with the blessings of Debendranath, as an Acharya (the first non-Brahmin to be elevated to the position) of the Brahmo Samaj. He at once imparted a new vigour to the Samaj and generated in it so much apostolic zeal that its message rapidly spread to the remotest villages in Bengal. In 1864 he undertook extensive tours in the presidencies of Madras and Bombay and prepared the ground for the spread of the Samaj in southern and western India. By 1866 the number of Samajas in Bengal grew to be fifty. But for some time past serious differences regarding creed, rituals and the attitude of the Brahmos to the social problems of the day had arisen among the leaders of the Samaj which split up into two groups—the old Conservatives and the young Reformists. While the former were in favour of adhering to the old concept of Brahmoism, based mainly on the teachings of the Upanishads, the latter desired "not only to broaden the basis of Brahmonism by advocating new social ideals but also to apply the dry light of reason even to the fundamental articles of religious belief." (Sivanath Sastri—History of Brahmo Samaj, I. 44). Keshab who led the younger group pressed for the abolition of polyandry, child marriage, and above all, of caste restrictions and demanded changes in the rites at the worship of ancestors, birth ceremonies and several other practices. The division persisted, baffling repeated attempts at reconciliation and came on to the surface towards the end of 1866 with the emergence of two rival associations—The Calcutta or Adi Brahmo Samaj consisting of the old adherents of the faith and the new order, known as the Brahmo Samaj in India. The latter came into full being on the 24th January 1868 under the initiative and leadership of Keshab Chandra Sen. Its inaugural message was one ardent faith. It proclaimed:

"To grant salvation the merciful God has sent His new faith of Brahmoism. The gates of salvation are wide open. He calls one and all;
entrance through His Gate is free, no one ever returns disappointed; the rich and poor, the wise and the ignorant all are equally welcome here". Keshab breathed a new spirit into Brahmoism which was shown to possess boundless catholicity, reminiscent of the ideals embodied in the Trust-Deed of the Brahma Samaj. He combined a deep sentiment of bhakti with a mysticism born of the urge to harmonise all creeds and faiths. It transcended the limits of the Brahma creed as prescribed by Debendranath and the old school and aspired to become a faith based on an appeal to universalism. The Gospel of Christ had an irresistible appeal for him; to this was added the influence of Sri Rama Krishna with whom his acquaintance dates from 1875. The teachings of Sri Chaitanya and the technique of his preaching also made their influence felt on his mind and intellect, now dominated by the deep and joyful experiences of devotion and prayers. His ardour and piety, combined with the charms of a striking personality and oratorial abilities of an unusual kind, made a great impression on the contemporary age. Brahmoism went on gaining strength. Gradually its influence spread beyond Bengal and the message of the Samaj was echoed in other parts of India—notably in Bombay, Madras and the North Western provinces. Keshab's overwhelming bhakti and mysticism found their culmination in the declaration of the Nava Vidhan or the New Dispensation in January 1880.

Keshab was now more than a preacher. He had become, in the eyes of many, a prophet. The founder of the New Dispensation died within four years of its birth, on January 8, 1884 at the premature age of 46. Yet within these brief years he had succeeded in letting loose a torrent of religious zeal deriving its strength from the common source of all religions. "His most valuable contribution to his age and race", observes Bipin Chandra Pal, "was his conception of the religious unity of the human race. This unity has been preached before him, no doubt, both in India, by Raja Rammohun Roy, and outside India, by one or two European Philosophers. But this unity had been arrived at, in the previous attempts by what may be called the method of subtracting, by reducing all religions, so as to say, to their least common measure, which, therefore, left out of account all the higher and specific developments of the religious consciousness of humanity. Keshab Chandra Sen, with rare and marvellous insight., saw the fundamental error of this method; and boldly declared the essential unity of religions not at the lowest and the simplest, but in the highest and most complex stages of their growth; and interpreted their difference as these of different types of the same religious consciousness of the race. This is his greatest and most fruitful discovery in the domain of the science of Religion." (Character Sketches—Keshab Chandra Sen, p.13)

But the great apostle of religious unity could not prevent yet another schism within the rank of the Brahmos. The lack of a proper constitution for the guidance of the Samaj as well as the episode of the Cooch Behar marriage in violation of Act 3 of 1872 (of which Keshab himself was an
advocate) were the weapons used against him. On May 15, 1878 the party, opposed to him and known as the secularists, convened a public meeting in the Town Hall and proclaimed the inauguration of the Sadhram Brahmo Samaj. The foundation of its place of worship was laid on the 11th Magh, 1800 Saka Samvat. Maharshi Debendranath and the veteran Raj Narayan Bose blessed its congregation. Its missionaries, headed by Sivanath Sastri, increased within the next few years, the number of existing Samajas by fifteen.

But the split in the rank of the Brahmos did much to weaken their organisation as a whole. Besides the emphasis placed on the essential and ultimate unity of all religions, taught alike by the leaders of revitalised Hinduism and of Brahmoism, tended to obliterate the distinction between the two. The story of Brahmoism, in its last phase, is the story of its progressive absorption within the older religion from which it had sprung. Through its emphasis on freedom of individual conscience and intensely rationalistic approach, Brahmoism infused a new spirit into the nineteenth century religious life of India and hastened the march towards social and political regeneration of the country.
(iii) ISLAM IN BENGAL

(1757-1905)

1. Introduction: Spread of Islam in Bengal

To understand the state of Islam in mid-eighteenth century Bengal it is necessary to look backwards. Unfortunately the religious history of medieval Bengal is yet to be written from a synthetic use of all classes of sources. True, the religion of Islam began to make headway in Bengal, consequent on and subsequent to the establishment of political Islam and no doubt there were forced conversions. But Bengal’s contact with the Muslims, especially in the field of trade, colonization and missionary work, began much earlier than its conquest in the thirteenth century. Thus sometimes the missionary preceded the soldier, and the activity of the former was no less significant than that of the latter. In Northern India, the spread of Islam was largely confined to cities and urban centres; and few villagers, comparatively speaking, embraced Islam in spite of the efforts of some Muslim rulers. Even in the rural areas round Delhi or Agra, the Muslim population was not excessive, because Islam proselytisation was stoutly opposed by ‘powerful Hindu tribes like the Jats and Rajputs.’ In Eastern Bengal, on the other hand, Islam spread mostly in the villages. H.H. Risley held that the converts were recruited from the aborigines, judging from their manners and customs, physical appearance and retained caste distinctions. Those who embraced Islam came from different ranks in society, viz., the lower classes and occasionally from the higher as well.

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries formed the heyday of the Sufi missionaries in spreading Islam in Bengal. In fact Bengal became a Sufi stronghold during the early medieval period. Meanwhile the religious life of the Hindus in Bengal, Orissa and even Assam, came to be electrified and transformed by a vigorous Hindu revival under the energetic Vaishnava preachers like Chaitanya (1486-1533), Nityananda and the development of a special theology by the Sapta-Goswami. Vaishnavism not only effected a moral reformation among the upper and middle classes but it proved to be the saviour of the poor. It influenced the medieval Muslim society in Bengal also, in as much as it tended to weaken the force of Islamic influences there, especially in the interior regions outside the chief urban centres. Further, it helped to create a new, popular but vigorous Bengali literature, centering round the two epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which tended to influence Muslim society. Again, the propagation of Islam in Bengal had not been followed by a corresponding widening of knowledge of the religion among the masses of the people. The Muslim scriptures were in Arabic and were not
translated into Hindusthani or Bengali. Thus the mental background of
the Bengali Muslim was more Hindu than Muslim. Bengali Muslims
organized a literary movement under Sayyid Sultan about the end of the
sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century, to write in Bengali
about the lives of the Prophet and saints. He wrote the *Nabi-Vamsa* to
educate the ignorant masses in the essentials of the religion because "All
the Bengalis do not understand Arabic. None understands the words of
your religion. Everyone remains satisfied with (Hindu) tales. . ." (as he
wrote in his *Wafati Rasul*).

2. Characteristics of a popular Islamic religion in Bengal.

Centuries of contact between the two communities had gradually led
to the evolution of a popular religion in India, and especially in Bengal
and Bihar, where the Muslim population was more numerous than in many
other parts of India. Here the social and religious life of the Muslims, nay,
the very outlook on life of the Bengali Muslims came to be profoundly
influenced by Hinduism and marked by interpenetration of many local
manners and customs of the Hindus, and incorporation of certain beliefs,
rites and ceremonies which were inconsistent with the Quran. If there was
no absorption, there was undoubtedly assimilation between the two
communities. So great was the extent of this assimilation that the *Hidayat
ul Mominin*, a Sayyid Ahmadite treatise of the early nineteenth century,
oberves that in India, more than in any Muhammadan country, Islam and
*Kufr* had been mixed up like *Khichri*. Various factors were responsible for
this remarkable transformation in Indian Islam. Converted Muslims
remained wedded to their time-honoured beliefs, manners and customs.
The Census Report of 1911 records the existence of communities which
were "neither Hindus nor Muslims but a mixture of both." Aulechand
(d. 1769), the founder of the Kartabhaja sect, in the Nadia district of
Bengal, had as his disciples Muslims as well as Hindus. Gracin de Tassy
speaks of this amalgam as a concession which Islam made arising from
circumstances.

Saint Worship (Pirism) was perhaps 'the most important element of
popular Islam in Bengal' in every town or village. This belief in saints and
worship at their shrines did not originate in India but were imported from
Afghanistan and Persia by immigrants along with their religious orders.
But in India there were certain factors which facilitated the penetration of
the concept of saint-worship into Muslim society. Gracin de Tassy held
(1831) the saints (called in Hindusthani *Pir or Wali*) to be "substitutes for
the Musulmans, in the place of the numerous gods of the Hindus. . . As
amongst the saints, venerated by the Musulmans, there are some
personages who professed the faith of the *Vedas*, so several of the
Musulmans saints of India, are venerated by the Hindus." To the converts
the *Pirs* resembled the Trantric Gurus and their tombs and dargahs
(shrines) were paralleled by the chaityas or stupas of the Buddhists. The
'saints' of Islam established *dargah and khanqhas* deliberately on Hindu or Buddhist sites. The Sufis and Pirs were believed to possess supernatural power,—to give relief to the poor, destitutes and patients, to be present at different places at the same time, to rejuvenate the dead, or kill people and to fortell the future. By the beginning of the 19th century 'belief in efficacy of prayers to saints had become almost universal' among the Indian Muslims. Of the numerous tombs of the saints of all-India fame, some were specially venerated by people of Bengal and Bihar, e.g., Farid-ud-din, Saikh Nizamuddin of Delhi and Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti. Further there were patron saints associated with each province or each district. Of the numerous saints in Eastern Bengal, the following were comparatively more important than others, e.g.,

(i) Shah Jalal of Sylhet (to be distinguished from Shah Jalal of Gaur and Pandua)
(ii) Panch Pir
(iii) Munnah Shah Darwish
(iv) Khondkar Muhammad Yusuf of Sonargaon
(v) Shah Wali Baghdadi of Mirpur
(vi) Pir Badr of Chittagong
(vii) Shah Jalal Dakhini of Dacca
(viii) Adam Shahid of Vikrampur
(ix) Shah Langar
(x) Akhi Siraj ud din
(xi) Alauddin Ala ul Huq
(xii) Nur Qub Alam
(xiii) Chisal Ghazi
(xiv) Badr ud din Badr i Olam
(xv) Makhdum Shah Jalal and
(xvi) Quth Shah of Malda

Supporting and endowing *dargahs* was considered to be a pious act by the rich aristocracy of the land. The Muslim pilgrims to the *dargahs*, like their Hindu counterparts to Jagannath and Brindaban, came either for religious merit or fulfilment of vows or of worldly desires (children, health, fortune or honour). Worship of the dead Pir was paralleled by or even excelled by devotion to the living Pir. Every Pir belonged to a mystic order. The Muslim veneration for the living Pir (*Pir-i-Muridi*) had its counterpart in the pre-existing *Guru-Chela* relationship, Hindu reverence for the *Guru* or *Gosain*. The *Sijdah* (prostration of the *murid* to the *Pir*) was comparable to the *sastanga pranipat* of the Hindu chela to the Guru.

*Footprints:* Mosques containing the footprints of the Prophet (*Qadam Rasul*) as on the bank of the Lakhya, east of Dacca, may be compared to the Vishnupada temple of Gaya and *Dharma Paduka* in Burdwan district and the *mutawalli* to the Gayawali Brahman.
**Religion**

_**Qadam Rasul**_ building of Gaur exists today. The dargah of Shah Langar at Muazzampur containing his footprint attracted crowds of pilgrims. Monuments were erected over the relics of Ismail Ghazi at Pirganj in North Bengal.

Various mystic cults grew up in Bengal with traditions and legends round some Pirs and mythical personages of uncertain identity, which became very popular alike among the Muslims and Hindus. Khwajah Khizr was believed to have "discovered the source of the water of life", be an expert in prediction and the protector of marines from shipwreck. His festival (Khawaj, Bera or Bhera) was observed in Bhadra (Aug.-Sept.) by Muslims and Hindu boatmen and fishermen, floating lights on the water. This festival was celebrated by Sirajuddaulah and witnessed by William Hedges (180-83) near Murshidabad on the Bhagirathi. It was also observed by the Nawab of Murshidabad in 1821. The name of one Pir Badr (as water god) was invoked by every sailor or fisherman before journey or during storm in Bengal. The legends centering round Zindah Ghazi, Ghazi Miyan and Sat Pir are similar and identification is difficult. The forests and rivers of Sundarbans being infested with tigers and crocodiles, the woodcutters, Hindu or Muslim, worshipped mythical heroes for protection from tigers and crocodiles,—Muhurra Ghazi in the 24 Parganahs, Zindah Ghazi on the banks of the Lakhya river in Eastern part of the Delta, Kalu Rai or Dakhin Rai (riding on a tiger) of the Hindus. Shrines dedicated to Muhurra Ghazi existed in every village in the 24 Parganahs. Before entering the forest or sailing on the water one must offer worship to the shrines, little earthen mounds, raised by Hindus and Muslims. On the banks of the Lakhya river in Eastern Bengal, two mounds represented the Ghazi and his brother Kalu. The manner and the articles of worship among the Hindus and the Muslims were similar. The followers of Shaikh Madar (Sayyid Badruddin Madar) were known as Madaris. The festival of Madar Jhanda was celebrated by the lower classes of Muslims and Hindus alike. Buchanan found numerous families of Madari faqirs in Purnea and Rangpur. Many Madaris dressed or were naked like Hindu Sannyasis and passed through fire like the Hindus. The worship of _Panch Pir_ or Five Pirs, invoked to avert danger, was very popular among the Hindus and Indian Muslims, especially in Bengal and Bihar. The identity of the five Pirs is uncertain, varying in different parts of India. In Bengal, we hear of Manik Pir, Ghora Pir, Kumhira Pir, Madari Pir but there are no special ceremonies or festivals. James Wise found a Panch Pir shrine of 5 unfinished tombs in Sonargaon worshipped by Hindus and Muslims. It has been regarded as an example of fusion of Islam and animism, i.e., of 'Muslim hagiology grafted on animism.' The followers of this sect were called Panch Piriyas. This cult may be traced to the Five Pandavas of the Mahabharata or to five Dhyani Buddhas. In some West Bengal districts (Midnapur, Burdwan) the Panch Pir is worshipped even today. The mystics of Bengal in the 19th century were of two kinds, judged by
conformity or otherwise to the Shariah. The first type, whose practices conformed to it (bashara', also salik), was more respected than the second (beshara', also mazhub) whose practices did not.

The Indian Muslims had adopted the practices of Hindu asceticism, with numerous and bewildering groups of faqirs. Four major orders of such faqirs existed in Bengal by the 19th century,—Arjunshahi, Jalali, Madari and Benawaz, with numerous divisions and subdivisions. Jafar Sharif refers to a class of Shahajiya faqirs who dressed like women and sang and danced before their murshid. The growth of Mullaism or priestly influence is referred to in contemporary Bengali literature.

The religious life of the Sunni Muslims of Bengal was influenced not only by Hindu practices and beliefs but also by the Shiahs. The Muhurram festival exercised an emotional influence on the Muslims, and this is reflected in the puthi literature, zari gan (or Bengali song) and pompous observances. The Taziyah processions held with pomp and splendour and grief, to celebrate the Muhurram in every Muslim village in Bengal and Bihar came to be regarded by the nineteenth century reformer as idolatrous and sacrilegious as they were similar to the Durga Puja or Rath Yatra processions. Similarly the mummeries in Imambaras also resembled Hindu practices. Out of 14,000 taziyas in Patna and Bihar city 600 were made by Hindus.

As a result of long contacts between the two communities, the lower classes of both Hindus and Muslims came to have common objects of worship. Buchanan found such mutual worship among the Brahmans, Mulas and Faqirs and suspected that some qazis and pandits used to do so in Rangpur, while in Gorakhpur even Muslims of foreign origin and of high rank were influenced by Hindu practices through their womenfolk. In Bengal similar was the growth of the cult of Satya Pir (True Saint) and Satya Narayan (True God) among the Muslims and the Hindus respectively, without the use of any image. Among other rites and ceremonies were the birth day celebration of the Prophets (Milad or Mawlid Sharif or Milad un Nabi), the death anniversary of pirs (urs) and rites for remembering dead relatives (faith). These ceremonies, unsanctioned by hadis, were non-Bengali in origin, being conducted in Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages even now. The life of an ordinary Muslim, like that of the Hindu from birth to death, was hedged within local customs and superstitions. The Indian Muslims' adoption of the Hindu belief in astrology was reflected in the growing importance and influence of the astrologer (Najum or Najoom) who came to be consulted by all, high or low, on all things, great or small. This is referred to by Mr. Meer Hasan Ali. Fear of evil spirits pervaded the mind of the Indian Muslims as described by Jafar Sharif. The goddess Sitala or goddess of small-pox, was worshipped in the Punjab, Bengal and other parts of India by the lower classes of the Muslims. They also had a great fear of Matri or Umm i Sibyan, a spirit which was believed both by Hindus and Muslims to cause convulsion to a child up to 18 months. The simplicity of Muslim
marriage ceremony came to be given up in favour of growing pomp and expensive displays, including music, dancing and drinking. The dowry system, denounced in Islam, invaded the Muslim society. The birth of a daughter was regarded as a burden—both by Hindus and Muslims.

Islam teaches brotherhood and social equality. But the Indian Muslims came to imitate the caste distinctions of the Brahmins and the exclusiveness of the Rajputs. The earliest reference to social differentiations among the Muslims is found in Inshai Mahrur (1353). Casteism came to have a "complete practical ascendancy" over the Muslims in certain areas and created subdivisions with prohibitions regarding inter-marriage and inter-dining. The Sayyids, Shaikhs, Mughals and Pathans formed the Ashraf (aristocratic) class, but inter-marriage was unusual, not only among them, but even within the same order.

3. Influence of Islamic Reform Movement of 18th Century on Islamic Revivalism in Bengal of 19th Century.

Thus, after a lapse of several centuries and as a result of various forces—political, economic and social, and religious—some of which were natural and logical, Islam in India and especially in Bengal developed certain popular characteristics. All these, however, came to be regarded by orthodox reformers of the 18th and 19th centuries to be abuses or "innovations in religion and the mode of performing religious duty and worship", which must be shunned by every true Muhammadan, because they constituted aberrations from orthodox Islam. Thus Maulavi Ismail Haji found the Indian Muslims in early 19th century to be deeply plunged in the vices of 'shirk' or Association with God or at least heresy. The Quran and Hadis ceased to be their chief guides. The association of Islam with Kurf was thus commented upon by Sir Muhammad Iqbal: "Surely we have out-Hinduced the Hindu himself; we are suffering from a double caste system—religious caste system, sectarianism and the social caste system which we have learned or inherited from the Hindus. This is one of the quiet ways in which the conquered nation revenged themselves on the conquerors."

To understand this attitude it is necessary to refer to the Islamic revivalist doctrines of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab in Arabia and Shah Waliullah in India, the two great thinkers of the 18th century. In the field of doctrine Wahhabism was "the first and still the strongest fundamentalist reaction in modern times to the spread of innovations and mystical tendencies among the mass of Muslims". Its followers claimed that they were "followers not innovators". They aimed at reducing Islam to a pure theism. They were Sunnis, following the school of Hanbal as interpreted by Ahmad Ibn Taimiya (d. 1328). In positive theological system they were unitarians (Muwahhidun) reviving emphasis on tauhid or unity of God which has two aspects: uniqueness as master of creating; uniqueness as entitled to worship. So syntheism, or association of anyone and
anything with God constitutes the greatest sin, which even God does not forgive and which justifies war against the sinners, even though Muslims. This restoration of Islam to its original purity meant—(i) rejection of all innovations (bidat), i.e., all beliefs and practices, outward forms and superstitious observances and ceremonies, introduced since the time of Prophet Muhammad and the early generation of righteous Muslims (al-Salaf al Salih): (ii) rejection of intercession, i.e., discarding all intermediaries between God and man. denunciation of the cult of and worship of saints, visitation of tombs and offering of prayers and appealing to them in emergencies as tantamount to polytheism (shirk) and equated with pre-Islamic paganism. Hence they were called the Puritans of Islam. They admitted the right of private interpretation (ijtiham) of the Quran and Hadis (Traditions) and hence of independent judgement, rejected the four orthodox schools of canon law, and adherence to their prescriptions (taqlid).

Sharply contrasted with the Wahhabis of Arabia stood Shah Waliullah (1703-62), one of the greatest Sufi philosophers of Islam in India, an encyclopaedic scholar of tradition, theology and jurisprudence and a moderate reformer, who taught devotion to the Sunna of the Prophet and the value of tolerance and compromise in interpreting the Holy Law. Waliullah's Islam was richer, more comprehensive, and more flexible than Wahhabism. In that age of political disintegration, moral collapse, sectarian conflict, socio-economic decay, Waliullah was responsible for the religious revival of Indian Islam. He tried to restore the unity of the Muslim community and create sound leadership. He also endeavoured to reconcile the differences between the Sufis over the question of monism coming down from the time of Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi (Mujaddid i Alfi-Sani 1563-1624). While counselling avoidance of rigidity in interpretation of religious injunctions, Waliullah endeavoured to establish pure monotheism and purge the Muslim society of all polytheistic and un-Islamic social practices, beliefs, customs, etc., which had grown up in Hindu environment, because the purity of Islam, its doctrines and values, must be maintained. Thus did Shah Waliullah seek to effect the moral and political regeneration of the 'decadent, demoralized, be-wildered and disorganised' Muslim society in India.

European writers hold that the movements of Sayyid Ahmad of Rae Bareli and of Shariat Allah, Dudu Miyan, Titu Mir and Karamat Ali were nothing but Wahhabi offshoots in India and that Shayyid Ahmad was the apostle in India. Some modern scholars like Dr. I. H. Qureshi and Ikram have objected to this view and tried to show that the Indian Muslim revivalists were not Wahhabis. Others hold that the Indian movements were influenced more by Shah Waliullah than by Wahhabism. On the other hand, Dr. A. R. Mullick has used the term 'Indian Wahhabis' while Dr. Q. Ahmad has also written on 'the Wahabi Movement in India'. While it is true that there are some differences between the Arabian and the so-called Indian Wahhabis, the fact remains that some of the ideas like
rejection of the innovations and un-Islamic beliefs and practices, advocated by the Wahhabis and Shah Waliullah, were also emphasized in the 19th century purificationist religious reformation movements among the Muslims in India and Bengal.

4. Tarqah i Muhammadiyah of Sayyid Ahmad Brelvi in Bengal.

Of all the reform movements in Indian Islam during the early 19th century that of Sayyid Ahmad Brelvi (1786-1831) and Shah Ismail Shahid (1782-1831) was unequalled in vigour, in the extent of the area affected and in the influence exerted. Its fortunes as a political force have been dealt with elsewhere in this volume. As a religious force it stirred the entire Indian Muslim society to its foundations. It was Bengal which largely supplied men, money and resources for the movement in the northwest, while Patna in Bihar formed its organisational centre. The fact that two near relations of Shah 'Abdul' Aziz, the nephew (Shah Muhammad Ismail) and son-in-law (Muhammad Abdul Hai), peerless learned men ('Alim Benazir), became the disciples of their illiterate (Ummi) co-disciple Sayyid, greatly advanced the movement. Patna became a permanent headquarters of the movement, with four Khalifahs (Wilayet Ali, Inayat Ali, Murtum Ali, Farhat Hussain), and one Imam (Shah Muhammad Husain).

An idea of the principal reforming tenets of Sayyid Ahmad may be had from the Sirat ul Mustaqim (or True Path), the Taqwiatul Iman (Support of the Faith), both written by Maulavi Muhammad Ismail, and the Hidayat ul Mominin, another Sayyid Ahmad work. Most important were: (i) emphasis on the unity of God (Tauhid) and restoration of the simplicity of classical Islam and (ii) rejection of shirk (idolatry), which presupposes rejection of all innovations, superstitions and abuses pervading Indian Islam whatever their source. The Sirat bewailed the darkness overspreading the land: "Compare the state of Hindustan with that of Rum and Turan! Compare it even with its own condition two or three hundred years ago. Alas! where are now the Oulis and Ulama of those times? "If the Hindus have their Gyah, their Mathura and their Kashi, the Mahomedans have their Makwanpur, their Bheraich, and their Ajmer. The one set builds maths over their idols; the other, not to be behind hand, raise domes over their saints' tombs. In the maths you will find mahants and Gosains; at Mahomedan shrines, Khadims, Mijawirs and Pirzadas." Hence the Taqwiatul Iman exhorts: "Follow no one, be he mujahid, Imam, Ghaus, Kuth, Moulavi, Mushaikh, King, Minister, Padri or Pandit, against the authority of the Quran and the Traditions." "Follow the example of Mohammad of Arabia and relinquish all the usages of Hind and Sind, of Fars of Rum". Sayyid Ahmad termed his doctrine Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah (The Way of Muhammad). The influence of his tenets was extensive, as they were intended to "awaken the sincerity of religious zeal and gratify the pride of Mahommedan feeling."
On the other hand they also roused much opposition as they struck at the root of long established customs, beliefs and practices. So henceforth the Muhammadans of India came to be divided into two parties. Those who did not accept the Sayyid's creed were called Mushriks (Polytheists). His opponents, consisting of orthodox maulavis and khadims and others, derided his followers as Wahhabis.

5. The Faraizi Movement

Nineteenth century Bengal witnessed a new Islamic religious movement in the hands of a few devoted local reformers and scholars in Eastern Bengal, collectively called the Faraizi sect, for their insistence on the performance of faraiz, i.e., obligatory duties enjoined in the Quran, especially the five fundamental institutions (bina). The Faraizis emphasized the performance of all religious duties. They availed of steamship journeys to Arabia and tried to introduce some Wahhabi ideas into India early in the nineteenth century, without calling themselves Wahhabis. This complex socio-religious movement started about 1818, by Haji Shariat Allah (1781-1840), a Bengali Muslim belonging to a petty taluqdar family of Shamail village in Madaripur subdivision, visiting Mecca twice.

The Faraizi movement was the earliest and foremost of all other religious reform movements in Bengal. The Faraizis aimed at 'self-correction', enforcing the original teachings of Islam and purging the Muslim society of superstitious rites and ceremonies. To realise these objectives, the Haji formulated certain main principles. He replaced Pir-i-Muridi (a sinful innovation implying a complete submission of the disciple to the preceptor) by the relationship between ustad (spiritual guide) and shagird (pupil). A would-be disciple had to express repentance (tawbah or taubs) for past sins and take a vow to lead a righteous and godly life in future. The formula, couched in Bengali language, was administered by ustad without touching the shagird (istighfar or iqari baiyat). Unity of God (Tauhid) was to be firmly practised, and His partnership must not be ascribed to any one else. This struck at the root of all beliefs, actions, resembling infidelity (Kufr), polytheism (shirk) and innovation (bidah). So all popular, un-Islamic rites and ceremonies, e.g., saint-worship, urs, participation in Muharram etc. were denounced. In consonance with the Hanafi law which decreed that congregational prayers of Juma and Id were not permissible except in misr-al-jami' (i.e., where the administrator and the judge appointed by a lawful Muslim sovereign are present), he prohibited these in Bengal as British India was Dar ul harb, not Dar ul Islam. In this the Faraizis differed from other Muslims. With his puritanical attitude Haji Shariat Allah ruled that the socio-religious celebrations of the Muslims must be in strict conformity with Islam. On the social plane, the Faraizis denounced caste prejudices as a deadly sin, being contrary to the spirit of the Quran, and emphasized the equality of all members of the reformed creed. This attracted the
lower orders of the society, cultivators, weavers, oil-grinders, etc. chiefly in the villages. But their appeal was ineffective in towns and cities, like Dacca, Comilla and Chittagong, where the upper classes were influential.

It was remarkable that Haji Shariat Allah was the first in Bengal to denounce the various practices of popular Islam there and to rouse the Bengali peasant. He made various purges and sweeping reforms without much opposition or hindrance. But opposition came from two quarters, viz., the traditional or Sabiqi Muslims for his crusade against the time-honoured institutions,—pirism, caste prejudices and employment of the dai (mid-wife) caste; and the zaminder or landowning classes for his emphasis on social equality. This twofold clash came to a head in 1831. But his life-long movement continued, thanks to his caution and prudence, till his death. By his life-long mission Shariat Allah revived Islam in Bengal from its stupor. A contemporary writer estimated that one-sixth of the total Muslim people of Faridpur, Bakarganj, Dacca and Mymensingh districts, a vast majority of the uneducated and most excitable classes, were converted to his fold. It also spread to Tipperah. The success of his mission paved the way for Sayyid Ahmad.

The original Faraizi movement, lacking all political colour, did not attract much attention during the life-time of its founder. But under his son, Haji Muhammad Muhain (or Muhain ud din Ahmed), popularly known as Dudu (Dudhu) Miyan (1819-62). The sect came to be further consolidated and developed, and transformed from a predominantly religious to a religio-socio-economic-political body, a resistance movement of the Muslim peasantry of Eastern Bengal against the Hindu landlords and European indigo-planters. Dudu Miyan was born at Mulfatganj in Madaripur sub-division of Bakarganj district (now in Faridpur) in 1819. He asked his followers to eat the detested common grasshopper (phanga) just as the locust (tiddi) was taken as food in Arabia.

The distinctive advance made by Dudu Miyan was his organization of a society. Asserting the equality of mankind, he put equal emphasis on the welfare of the lowly and poor and of the high and rich. In the absence of a legitimate Muslim government in Bengal, he tried to set up a community capable of discharging some of the essential functions of a communal life. He had a twofold aim. To protect the Faraizi peasantry from Hindu zamindars and European indigo-planters, he raised a volunteer body of lathials for affray parties. To secure social justice for the Muslims, he revived the traditional panchayat system. These two branches (siyasi and dini) were co-ordinated by an hierarchical Khalifat system under the direct control of the Ustad. He divided Eastern Bengal into circles (halqas), consisting of 300-500 families. He insisted upon every member's obligation to render mutual assistance in times of distress for which no action would be criminal or unjustifiable. He took upon himself the task of settling disputes, administering justice in a summary way. With an organised espionage system, working over Eastern Bengal, he kept himself
acquainted with everything. Terror tactics was effectively used. With his death at Dacca in September, 1862, ended the vigour of the movement. Dudu Miyan's name became 'a household word' throughout the districts of Faridpur, Pabna, Bakarganj, Dacca, Noakhali, Baraset, Jessore and Malda—almost in the whole of East Bengal and also in some areas of West Bengal. The thoroughness of the methods of the father and the son was testified to by the number of the Faraizis in 1927. Dudu Miyan's social reform would remain his most solid achievement and lasting contribution to the movement.

6. Influence of Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah on Bengal

(a) Titu Mir: Practically synchronous with the Faraizi movement in East Bengal, was the mass movement of reformers, peasants and artisans in West Bengal villages, led by Nasr Ali alias Titu Mir (or Miyan) of Chandpur, south-west of Narkulbaria in Baraset district, a disciple of Sayyid Ahmad about 1827. His ideas of religious reform were similar to those of Shariat Allah and of Sayyid Ahmad, viz., emphasis on the unity of God and restoration of the original purity of Islam. Both Titu Mir and Shariat Allah came from lower strata of the Muslims in Bengal, and both were supported by the rural masses. Both conformed to the Hanafi School. But there were certain doctrinal and basic differences between Titu Mir and the Faraizis. While Shariat Allah held that the Friday and Id prayers were not obligatory in India, Titu and his followers (and also Karamat Ali) said these prayers. The religious reformer soon became the leader of 'an infuriated peasant rising', in three districts of 24 Parganahs, Nadia and Faridpur. The progress of the sect, however, roused the opposition of some Muslim peasants (especially the Hanafis) and Hindu zamindars. Starting as a religious movement it developed into a socio-economic struggle of the Muslim peasantry against the Hindu zamindars. Teaching passive non-cooperation among the masses by refusing to serve under the English and refusing to go to the English courts it became a religious, economic, political and communal movement.

(b) The Patna School of Wilayat Ali and Enayat Ali: After the death of Sayyid Ahmad in 1831, his movement was rescued by his Patna Khalifahs, Wilayat Ali and Enayat Ali of Sadiqpur family with their 'missionary zeal' and 'immense pecuniary resources'. But differences of opinion arose among the Sayyid's principal disciples over the relative emphasis on the two principles which formed the central feature of the Sayyid's doctrine, the emphasis on the Prophetic Tradition (Ittiba-i-Sunnah) and the rejection of the prescriptions of the Schools of Law. (Ittiba-i-fiqh). Maulavi Wilayat Ali of Patna re-affirmed the principle of Tariqah, i.e., Prophetic tradition (in his book 'Amal bi'l Hadis, probably written before 1837). Maulana Karamat Ali of Jaunpur refuted Wilayat Ali (in his book Quwwat al Iman, 1837), remained firm on taqlid and followed the Hanafi school of law. Maulavi Abdul Jabbar of Calcutta, though a Hanafite, reasserted emphasis on Prophetic Tradition, refuting
Karamat Ali and supporting Wilayat Ali (in his book *Taqwiyat ul Muslimin fi ittiba-i-Sunnat-i-Sayyid al Mursalin*, 1840). Hence Abdul Jabbar may be regarded as belonging to the Patna School. Thus arose a split in Sayyid Ahmad's sect between the School of the Patna Khalifahs and the *Taaipuni* School of Karamat Ali. In course of time a third group arose by leaving the Patna School, the *Ahl i Hadis*. "Indefatigable as missionaries, careless of themselves, blameless in their lives, supremely devoted to the overthrow of the English Infidels, admirably skilful in organising a permanent system of supplying money and recruits, the Patna Caliphs stand forth as the types and exemplars of the sect. Much of their teaching was faultless and it had been given to them to stir up thousands of their countrymen to a purer life and truer conception of the Almighty."

(Hunter)

From the headquarters station of Patna radiated out numerous agents to preach *jihad* and collect funds, recruits and provisions. But it was Bengal which became the "chief field of propaganda and recruitment." Of course it took some time for intensive propaganda to stir the Muslims of Bengal and Bihar, long enjoying peace under British rule. But once stirred, their intellectual superiority prevailed and the movement became to a great extent a Bengali Muhammadan revival. In Bengal the Sayyid's Khalifahs and their agents were commissioned to work in jurisdictions of their own. The districts of Chittagong, Noakhali, Dacca, Mymensingh, Faridpur and Barisal in Eastern Bengal were the field of activity and touring of Maulavi Karamat Ali of Jaunpur. Central Bengal and especially the districts of Faridpur, Pabna, Rajshahi, Maldah, Bogra, Nadia and even Barasat became the chief ground of Enayat Ali of Patna for more than ten years. During 1840-44 he made Hakimpur village in Jessore district his headquarters. He built mosques and appointed teachers (and 'Muhammadan Mullahs') to spread the creed and preached the jihad. Zainul Abedin, a Hyderabadist convert, was commissioned to preach in the eastern districts of Bengal (particularly Dacca and Sylhet) and converted the peasantry of Tipperah and Sylhet. The effort of Enayet Ali and his agents (1830-70) succeeded in rousing a strong religio-political consciousness among the Bengal Muslims, and fostering the growth of a civic and corporate spirit, a policy of civil disobedience to government and boycott of government organs, especially the courts. The village mosque under its Imam became the centre of this corporate spirit. The remotest villages in Bengal came to be electrified by the *Tarigah i Muhammadiyah*. In 1850 Enayet Ali was found preaching *jihad* in Rajshahi in North Bengal with the assistance of the headmen of many villages. The influence of the Patna School extended mainly in the Northern and Western districts of Bengal—Dinapur, Maldah, Rajshahi, Murshidabad, Nadia, Burdwan, West Jessore and Twenty-four Pargana. The school was the strongest in those areas traversed by the Ganges and the Bhagirathi. Nevertheless the school did not make appreciable headway and its progress was retarded in Eastern Bengal.
(c) Taaiyuni Movement of Karamat Ali (1800-1873): Sayyid Ahmad's reform movement was further developed by Maulavi Karamat Ali, who largely prepared the ground for the recent organisation, the Ahli-i-Hadith. Born at Jaunpur (c. 1800) he chose Bengal as the field of his mission and came here in 1835. Never an extremist and always moderate in his ideas, this orthodox reformer worked in Bihar and Bengal, especially in Eastern Bengal. He insisted on the principle of taqlid or conformity to the schools of law (mazhab). He identified himself with a particular school of law (or mazhab) viz., the orthodox Sunni Hanafi School. Hence his group was called Taaiyuni (Arabic taaiyun, to identify). He held that the congregational prayers (Juma and Id) were not only lawful but obligatory. He also accepted that doctrines of Tasawwuf and Pir-i-Muridi. He accepted the tradition of the emergence of a mujaddid (renewer of faith) in every century and regarded Sayyid Ahmad to be a mujaddid of 13th century A.H. to be followed till the 14th. Karamat differentiated between shirk (negation of Islam) and bida (an error in doctrine) and between a fasik (sinner) and a kafir (infidel). His life constituted a "double struggle" against un-Islamic practices and heterodoxy, both of which he attacked in his books. A skilful organiser, Karamat Ali showed great power throughout his life for regenerating Islam and revitalizing Islamic life in East Bengal. Sailing on the rivers for a period of nearly forty years on his flotilla constituting a travelling (residential) college, he conveyed the message of Islamic reform and regeneration to the Nagas of Assam and the people of the Bay of Bengal islands, and exercised a 'living influence' on certain districts of Bengal.

(d) The Ahl-i-Hadis: The moderation and wisdom of Wilayat Ali (d. 1852) sufficed to maintain unity among the conflicting principles of ittiba-i-sunna and ittiba-i-fiqh. After Wilayat's death (1852) one group definitely clung to Hanafi school, and the other repudiated taqlid or prescription of the schools of law. About 1864 Sayyid Nazir Hussin (b. 1805) of Balthawa in Monghyr district wrote a treatise Thabut i Haqq al Haqiq (establishment of the truth) which marked the complete breach. Known as the Ahl-i-Hadis (People of Tradition or Partisans of the Prophetic Tradition) this new vigorous school came to absorb most of the reformist tendencies of the nineteenth century Islamic revivalism. The creed of the sect is to go back to the Quran and the authoritative Traditions (Ahadis Sahih). Emphasis is therefore put on (a) reassertion of Tauhid (unity of God), denial of occultism (ilm-ul-ghaib), rejection of pirism; (b) rejection of taqlid, i.e., blind acceptance of the four schools of law, and of the ijma (agreement) of the Islamic community; (c) individual interpretation (ijtihad) of the Quran and Traditions which implies that the person must be sufficiently learned. This is a principle of far-reaching importance. (d) Eradication of all polytheistic innovations or un-Islamic customs. This opponents called them la mazhabi (not belonging to any recognised Sunni schools of law). They called themselves 'Muhammadi' indicating their succession to the Sayyid Ahmad community. The Ahl-i-
Hadis never became a mass movement in the villages of Bengal, perhaps because of its intellectual character. This relatively small sect, however, finds regular mention in the Census of India. There is an all-India body, All-India Ahl-i-Hadis Conference, which holds annual sessions and there are district organisations in Bengal, Bihar, the Punjab and other parts of Northern India.

7. State of Islamic Religion during the second half of the 19th Century.

By the close of our period the Bengal Muslims could be broadly classified into five religious groups, the Sabiqi (or the Traditional), the Faraizi, the Patna School, the Taaiyuni and ahl-i-Hadis. The Sabiqi, the followers of the old customs of the ancestors, consisted of a majority of landlords and generally the descendants of old Sunni families, representing a composite culture in which the various strains of local and foreign traditions were fused. The other four represented the reformist groups, aiming at reforming the old religious and social order, purging it of un-Islamic elements, and also at winning over the Sabiqi. The Faraizi movement, after effecting some permanent changes in the religious life of Bengal for nearly half a century, gradually began to decline in importance. The death of Duddu Miyani in 1862 was a crisis in the history of the Faraizo. For some time the organisation was kept up by the central hierarchy of the triumvirate (the attorney, mutawalli and mufi), established by Duddu Miyani. In 1879, his second son, Abdul Ghafur alias Naya (1864-1883) formally assumed leadership and established, according to Nabin Sen, 'a state of his own within the British regime', but he followed a policy of cooperation with the Government. His brother, Saiddin Ahmad (1884-1906) continued his policy of cooperation with the government and supported the partition of Bengal. The death of Wilayat Ali in 1852 and of Enayat Ali in 1858 caused a general setback to their school but it was continued by other agents, as stated before. In the Taaiyuni camp, the work of Karamat Ali was continued by his son (Maulavi Hafis Ahmad, d. 1898) and nephew (Muhammad Muhsin).

Thus there ensued a triangular struggle in Islamic revivalism in Bengal between the Patna School, the Faraizis and the School of Karamat Ali, some of the main points of dispute being the emphasis on prophetic tradition, taqlid and authority, and prescription of schools of law, ijtahid (or private interpretation), prayers and food. Not only did Karamat Ali criticise the superstitious beliefs and practices of the Sabiqi, he also denounced the radicalism of the Faraizis, the Patna school and Ahl-i-Hadis. He at first criticised the Faraizis as Kharijis and later on as Wahhabis 'in reality'. Some progress towards a compromise between the two schools of the Faraizis and Taaiyuni was made by 1855. Karamat, who introduced an era of religious debate, met Duddu Miyani about 1860. At the Barisal debate (Bahas) in 1867 the Faraizi representative, Maulavi
Abdul Jabbar, did not yield on the question of prayers though Karamat agreed on certain points with him. In 1879 another debate was held at Madaripur over the question of Juma prayer between the Faraijis under Naya Miyan and Hafiz Ahmad, son of Karamat Ali, the Taaiyuni leader, which was called Jamar Yuddha (or battle of the Juma) by Nabin Sen. In 1903 there was another debate at Daud Kandi between the Faraijis and the Sabqis over the question of Juma’ prayer, leading to a split between the Juma’ wallah and bejuma’ wallah. In spite of this prolonged debate over the question of Juma’, linked up with that of the country being Dar ul harb or Dar ul Islam, prayers continued to be held by majority of the Muslims. The Faraijis, however, revived their congregational prayer only after 1947.

Thus Islamic reformation movements did not result in the establishment of religious peace or unity in the land. On the one hand, even the vigour of the revivalist movements did not succeed in wiping out the vestiges of un-Islamic practices and beliefs which had become traditional among large number of Muslims. Heresies and superstitions survived. On the other hand, internal differences between the religious reformers caused splits in the monolithic uniformity of some movement or ranged the different sects in hostile opposition on account of doctrinal conflicts.

Notwithstanding this internal conflict within the bosom of Islam in Bengal, it must be admitted that the Islamic religious revivalist and reformation movements of the 19th century outlined above introduced a new life among the Muslims, in Bengal. During a period of political and economic decline of the Muslims, the reformers not only tried to revitalise Indian Islam in Bengal by stricter religious observances, prohibiting un-Islamic practices and emphasizing austerity in life but also to rouse the political consciousness of the Muslims by their call to jihad and peasant resistance movements in protest against the British administration and economic exploitation of the masses of the Muslims. Thus religious reform became a many-sided affair,—social, economic, political and communal. The growing process of assimilation between the Hindus and the Muslims during nearly 700 years received a setback. All this encouraged the growth of a spirit of socio-religious as well as political exclusiveness among the Muslims, which assumed a political colour in the next half century.

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IV. Christian Missionaries in Bengal

Missionary writings give a frightful picture of Calcutta and its environs in the mid-eighteenth century, of human corpses lying in various stages of decay all around the bank of Hooghli, of the horrible carnage of Hindu widows at the funeral pyre of their husbands, of half-naked fakirs roaming viciously in the streets, of Hindu mothers casting their infants into the streams and of disgusting celebrations in honour of evil-looking idols. This according to Christian writers, made out a case for missionary enterprise in India, the great work of converting the millions of people enslaved by a mighty system of superstition and cruelty the supreme 'Knowledge of salvation through a crucified Saviour'; 'The monster of Hinduism, the enemy of both God and man' has to be scotched and the country and the people to be delivered from the hold of its hateful and yet formidable influence.

But to see missionary activities in their true perspective, it is, however, necessary to set them not only against the background of prevailing heathenism of India as reflected in missionary writings, but also against the dissolute atmosphere of Anglo-Indian society. The English settlers of early times usually led a godless life. In their personal lives they were a reproach to their countrymen. Immorality, gambling, violence and drunkenness of the British traders had tarnished the fair name of Christianity and made the faith extremely odious to the Indians. Complaints were made about their way of life, particularly against the excesses committed by the early British traders which were too well-known, by interested members of the Company's staff, who pressed home the demand for Christian ministers to look after the moral welfare of the servants of the Company. Indeed, the new charter granted to the second East India Company in 1698 had a clause in it which required the Company to maintain a chaplain and a school master wherever a European regiment was stationed. It was further enacted that the chaplains of the Company should qualify themselves to afford Christian instruction to their Hindu and Portuguese servants in their native languages. But the new chaplains were hardly able to improve the moral standard of the European settlements. They received small salaries and were obliged to eke out a livelihood by engaging in business. Some of them even amassed big fortunes which could hardly have been accumulated from the ordinary wages of clerical labour. The few clergymen who were in Bengal before the battle of Plassey could not leave any mark in the field of their work and two of them, as Richter says, perished in the Black Hole tragedy of 1756.

The chaplains were also debarred from embarking upon any missionary activities as the Protestant nations who had recently overthrown the power of the Spaniards and the Portuguese could not possibly share the Catholic idea of preaching the Gospel among the conquered people. The East India Company also had other reasons to discourage missionary
enterprise because the ascendancy in Bengal which they were struggling to maintain could hardly have been possible by strict adherence to the doctrine of Ten Commandments or by pressing the 'Gunboat' into the service of Christianity. The idea that the work of conversion was God's worked well with the servants of a private commercial enterprise. Therefore, the clause in the charter regarding chaplains, as mentioned above, though indicative of somewhat of a recognition to the need of Christian instruction was, however, not followed up and the evangelists made it a point of complaint against the Company that they seem to have forgotten that such a provision had ever been made.

This anti-missionary policy of the Company found expression in various statements of the authorities particularly in the one issued by a member of the Court of Directors in 1793 which ran as follows:

The sending of the missionaries to our Eastern territories is the most wild, extravagant, expensive, unjustifiable project that was ever suggested and that it would affect the ultimate security of our Eastern possessions. The Company's Government allowed itself to adopt this view which was also reflected in the behaviour of the Company towards the missionaries. It was even proposed that a servant of the Company would be proscribed who should offer pecuniary aid or countenance to missions but the order was not enforced. These despotic proceedings contrary to the principles of religious liberty were very much resented by the evangelists in England led by Wilberforce.

But the latter half of the eighteenth century brought about a change in the attitude of the Englishmen who now realised the need of propagating the Gospel in India. In quick succession three important proselytizing societies were founded, the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, the London Missionary Society in 1795 and the Church Missionary Society in 1799. The zealous and ardent missionaries now came forward to challenge the government that while the non-Christian rulers in Asia gave the missionaries permission to preach the Gospel in their kingdoms, it remained for the Protestant Christian England alone to deny this right to their missionaries. The missionary view of life was further strengthened by a humanitarian spirit stemming from the nineteen years' struggle for the abolition of slavery in the English colonies now brought to a successful termination in 1807.

So in course of time evangelical zeal had influenced the British people for a proper appreciation of missionary work and the climax was reached in 1813 when the question of the renewal of the charter of the East India Company came up before the Parliament. The missionaries demanded full permission to preach the Gospel in India and they fought out their case in the pulpit and in the press.

On the missionary side Wilberforce stood at the head of the movement. He was assisted by Charles Grant and Claudius Buchanan, Lord Teignmouth, William Smith and a host of other pro-missionary speakers like Forbes, Whitbread and Pratt. Sati, infanticide, idolatry.
religious suicide, the wild scenes connected with Jagannath at Puri and other such things were all urged in favour of the entry of the evangelist Christian missionaries into India, and thus the won the day.\textsuperscript{15}

The relevant clause inserted in the Charter of 1813 ran to the effect that it was the duty of this country to promote the introduction of useful knowledge and of religious and moral improvement in India, and that facilities be afforded by law to persons desirous of going to and remaining in India to accomplish these benevolent designs. The Charter also provided for the establishment of an Indian bishopric, and three archdeacons, and required a sum of not less than a lakh of rupees to be set apart each year for the improvement of literature and promotion of a knowledge of science.\textsuperscript{16} The result was that the episcopal system of the church of England was transferred to India and the missionaries gained a footing and a recognition of their position in India. By 1833 their work had made great progress towards evangelization and reform.\textsuperscript{17}

Missionary work of the Protestant church in Bengal had been of a very intensive nature even at the initial stages. Started by Kiernander and organised by Carey it bore fruit in the time of Duff and throughout the period from Kiernander to Duff (1758-1863) missionary enterprise received constant accession of strength from other evangelists who arrived at intervals, like Brown, Buchanan, Martyn and Middleton, great names in the ecclesiastical history of India. Christian missionary society and the East India Company functioned in Bengal, undoubtedly enough, as two distinct and separate organisations but a close similarity nevertheless existed in the nature and scope of their work in many a field. A Protestant mission and the Company both secured a footing in Bengal in about the same time 1757-1758, and both attained the height of their power, one in the field of religious evangelism, and the other in the field of political ascendancy by the middle of the nineteenth century, and both in their own ways became the means of projection of Western ideas and influences in the social and cultural life of Bengal. The post-Mutiny period was a period of consolidation for the British Empire in India and no less for its religious counterpart, the episcopal society of the church of England.

The first Protestant missionary to work in Bengal was Rev. John Kiernander of the Danish mission at Cuddalore, who landed in Calcutta on 29 September 1758. He was a Swede by birth and was originally sent to Madras in 1740 under the auspices of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. In 1750 he welcomed the apostolic Schwartz, but eight years later he was compelled, on surrender of Cuddalore to the French, to quit his post in order to escape from the Jesuits. Kiernander was warmly welcomed in Calcutta by Colonel Clive who was impressed by the work of the missionary at Cuddalore. Clive gave him a dwelling house and showed him much personal kindness. Kiernander made Bengal his home, his adopted country and never turned his back on it.

His first step was to open a school to which were admitted a cross
section of people, Portuguese, Armenians and Hindusthanis who were taught through the medium of Indo-Portugese. The number of the students attending the school rose to 185 at the end of a year. The work of translating the English Prayer book into Bengali was also taken up by one Padri Bento while brisk conversion, it seems, was also going on. It is quite manifest from authentic records that between 1767 to 1776 as many as 495 Indians appear to have been converted including the famous 'Ganesh Das' who was the Persian translator to the Supreme Court. Kiernander also built, what is called the 'Old Mission Church' in Calcutta in 1770 at a cost of £8000 sterling and met the whole of it nearly from his own resources. This church of Kiernander, it is claimed, continued until 1784 as the only Christian church in Bengal. The Mission established by Kiernander grew in strength and in ten years ending in 1776, 495 persons were added to it. Several affecting notices given in 1786 of the pious exemplary lives and happy death of various members of mission congregation afford a glimpse of the nucleus of a growing native Christian community, which Kiernander brought into existence. He laboured on till old age and died in 1800 when he was 92.

Kiernander's work did not quite die with him. Contemporaneously with Kiernander, Moravian Brethren worked for a space of fifteen years (1777-1792) in Serampore (then called Frederviksnagar). They learnt Bengali, compiled a dictionary, but were not successful in their mission and eventually retired to Tranquebar in 1791.

This was a period when there was little or no enthusiasm in favour of missionary enterprise. But from 1786 when Rev. David Brown reached Calcutta a succession of distinguished chaplains (ministers sent out for Europeans) of the East India Company continued to arrive at intervals. Protestant missions in India were much indebted to these men of earnest piety and great zeal who by their labours advanced the cause of missionary work in Calcutta. Rev. Brown of this brilliant constellation of evangelists came out as a chaplain of the European Asylum for children, but later on in the declining years of Kiernander, he undertook many of the duties of his mission by giving up his former position. Later on he became the Provost of the Fort William College and earned a name for his zeal in projecting Christian ideals. Dr. Claudius Buchanan, another of the chaplains, came to Calcutta in 1797 and later on served in the Fort William College till 1806. His evangelical efforts knew no bounds. He was a patron of the Serampore missionaries and heavily subsidised their activities.

The age of the chaplains was followed by the age of the missionaries in which the Danish settlement of Serampore, a place about 15 miles from Calcutta took the lead. When the Baptist Missionary Society was formed in 1792, a Leicester cobbler, William Carey offered to become its first missionary. Carey landed in Calcutta in 1793 in defiance of the Company's orders and was poorly equipped and badly handicapped to carry on the evangelical mission which he had taken up. But Carey was a man of faith,
a faith that could remove mountains and subdue kingdoms. His natural talents were great, his intellectual powers were wonderful, and his ability to conquer strange and difficult tongues was almost unique. Unable to do anything in Calcutta he shifted to Sunderbans where life become a veritable hell for him. At this point he was helped by Mr. Udny, the owner of an indigo factory in the Maldah District, who appointed Carey as Manager of the factory and also gave him permission to preach and convert. Meanwhile four Englishmen inspired by the newly kindled missionary spirit responded to Carey's call but unable to land in Calcutta they repaired to Serampore. Their presence excited the suspicion of the authorities and Lord Wellesley, the Governor-General, demanded the 'surrender of the fugitives in order to deport them to England' but the Danish Governor of Serampore refused to surrender them and the matter was not pursued further. The hostility of the British authorities to organised missions obliged Carey to migrate to Serampore where he eventually settled in 1799 and built up the famous Serampore Baptist Mission with the help of William Ward and Joshua Marshman, two members of the team who came from England to join him. These three veritable pioneers lived together on the lines of Moravian brotherhood by throwing all their earnings into a common stock 'each bringing into the mission what he got and receiving what he needed."

The missionary effort of Carey and his colleagues was the embodiment of all that was best in Christian missionary enterprise in India. For over thirty years, Carey laboured with a crusading zeal and catholic enthusiasm for Christian evangelism and Western enlightenment.

It is possible not to be impressed with the record of the work done by the Serampore missionaries. Indian languages were studied in feverish haste and the New Testament had been actually printed into 31 Indian languages and dialects. "In no country in the world," says Sherring, "and in no period in the history of Christianity was there ever displayed such an energy in the translation of the sacred scriptures into other tongues." The millions of people,' as Wilberforce reflected, 'now got the Bible in their own languages which undoubtedly became the most effective means of propagating the gospel among all classes of people. The proselytizing spirit received further impetus from occasional tours undertaken by Carey and his associates to distant places which soon developed into an itinerating system inevitable in missionary work. Their direct and evangelistic labours resulted up to 1816 in baptizing about 700 Indian converts. The more important effect of rendering the Bible into Indian languages was that it led to the development of vernaculars in different parts of India, and the development of Bengali prose in particular owes much to the translations and treaties of scholars working under their direction. All this again was made possible because of the printing house that was established through the labours of Ward. That historic machinery was now pressed into the service of evangelism and reform and soon it became a useful institution for the dissemination of learning and
knowledge and the whole complex of Western ideas and influences. The Serampore Press founded in 1818 the first Bengal newspaper called *Samachar Darpan* and an English magazine *The Friend of India* which during its lifetime of 57 years (1818-1875) became a most influential organ of the public life of Bengal.

If Carey and his associates gave the first impulse to the Indian press, they likewise remained pioneers in the field of education in India. The social evils of the country stemming from ignorance and superstition were sought to be liquidated by spreading Christian knowledge. By the year 1818, the mission possessed 126 vernacular schools with 10,000 pupils, all receiving elementary education and Biblical instructions. Furthermore, in 1821, Carey established the famous Serampore College for the study of English and oriental classics which ranked among the most splendid educational edifices in India. In so doing, he anticipated the work of Dr. Duff. As in education, Carey also remained a pioneer in the field of social reform. The earliest movement against widow-burning was made by Carey, who brought the subject before the Bengal Government by carrying out an unofficial census of 'Suttees' occurring within thirty miles of Calcutta.

But the energy of this cobbler-saint, the prince of missionaries, flowed into different channels. Carey took a commanding place in the field of scientific research in an era of varied changes. He founded the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of Bengal which soon became one of the most influential societies of India. He and his colleagues also tried their hands in setting up the first steam engine in India and harnessing it to the manufacture of paper on a large scale. Carey also attempted other secular innovations of establishing the system of Savings Banks to counter-act the tendency to get into debt.

Besides his Serampore work which covered a wide field ranging from Christian evangelism to material progress Carey's Fort William work was no less fruitful of results. Wellesley founded the Fort William College in 1800 to enlighten the oriental world; 'to give science, religion and pure morals to Asia'. Carey was made the Master and later Professor of the college. The missionaries thought that they could utilise the institution to promote missionary interest to evangelize India and to produce translations of the scriptures into all the languages from 'the borders of the Caspian to the Sea of Japan.' To Carey, his association with the college gave him the opportunity to embellish his scholarly talents and to give a more mature shape to his philological studies. Apart from the Translation of the Bible which was his lifework, he advanced the field of Oriental studies by the impetus he gave to Sanskrit learning. With the assistance of the pundits of the college, Carey published a Sanskrit grammar and dictionary, edited the Ramayana and other Sanskrit works. At Fort William College, Carey was the centre of the learned Bengalis and the encouragement and direction he gave to them
made possible the work of early Bengali scholastics like Mrityunjoy, Rajiblochan, Ramram Basu, Golaknath and others.

The age of the missionaries in Bengal was rendered memorable not only by the activities of William Carey but by the contributions of another celebrated missionary, Alexander Duff and the two together, Carey and Duff, gave undoubted distinction and vigour to the Christian cause in Bengal. Carey was to the Christian missionaries in India what John Wesley was to England. A more fiery spirit was necessary to make the influence of the Christian missions more effective. This was accomplished by Duff who made the most striking impact on Bengal society.

In 1813 when the ban on entry of the missionaries was raised and free entry allowed, the number of Christian bodies at work in India began to multiply. There followed the establishment of a network of British missions to be reinforced shortly by the Americans. Of all the missions that worked in Bengal, the Scottish mission was by far the most well known. Rev. Alexander Duff, who was the first missionary of this mission, the Church of Scotland, came to Calcutta at the end of May, 1830.

Rev. Alexander Duff (1830-1867) was a man of vision. He realised that Christian missions in Bengal had reached a 'Cul de sac' owing to the conversion of lower classes into Christianity whose presence in the society as he found it, was more of a hindrance than a help to missionary organisation. He therefore thought that the only means of getting out of this rut was to bring the upper and influential classes under Christian influence in order to make Christian community attractive to the Hindu neighbours. This he thought could be achieved by opening schools and colleges through the popularity of which he would be able to gain entrance to the first circles of society who led a developed intellectual life and were the privileged leaders of the country. Furthermore these institutions would be effective instruments for the dissemination of Christian culture in India which would undoubtedly add to the strength of Christianity as a great spiritual force holding its own against the challenge of Hinduism.

So long the missionaries were in favour of Indian vernaculars which were indispensable to them at every turn of their work and indeed they were the first to learn Bengali and reduce it to writing but Duff struck out in an entirely new direction. Missionary circles were interested in the project of establishing an Anglo-Indian University at Bangalore on the model of Scottish institution even before Duff took up the work, but Duff, to whom mission was a kind of education work, took up this line of Christian enterprise with a new vision. In direct opposition to, and surprise of other Bengal missionaries, he set out to influence the upper classes of Bengal by spreading Christian knowledge through the adoption of English language as the medium of instruction (which through the efforts of Macaulay and others had already been accepted as such by the Government). Duff expected that India would be vitalised by the powerful stream of Christian learning communicated to the people by
means of the English language. The vehicle of this new learning, he thought, would be the most potent means of offering the Indians, with great intellectual force, the view that the Western conception of life was also truly idealistic rested as it did on the highest truth, the noblest morality and the sublimest ethical virtues like piety and charity.

The quarter of a century from 1830 to 1857 is, from the educational point of view, the age of Duff. No fewer than 8 other Colleges were founded in different parts of India during Duff's life time on the model of the General Assembly's Institution of Calcutta. Only five years after his school had been opened the new policy of reform based on his ideas had been adopted by the Government of Bentinck in the famous Resolution of the 7th March 1835. Duff's views that English was the best channel for letting in full stream of European knowledge on the minds of those who were destined to direct the public life of India, was also reflected in Lord Hardinge's Educational Despatch of 10th October, 1844 which made acquaintance of the English language and Western ideas essential to anyone who aspired to rise in public life. The cause of English education which he espoused was further reinforced by the Government's policy of grant-in-aid system (1854) which gave an impetus to the rapid growth in the number of Christian schools and colleges.

Quite in accordance with the permissive clause of 1813, Thomas Fanshaw Middleton (1814-1822), a distinguished Greek scholar, was appointed the first English Bishop of Calcutta. Bishop Middleton organised the Calcutta Diocesan Committee and formed the excellent design of founding a Missionary College where the Indian Christians could be trained as preachers and teachers and the work of translating the scriptures could be undertaken. The college situated on the bank of the Hugli could not, however, be completed during the lifetime of Middleton. Reginald Heber who succeeded him as Bishop in 1823 was a distinguished student of Oxford and had a place among English poets. His famous Indian Journal gives an excellent account of the state of the country at that time. Among his successors mention may be made of Bishop Wilson, who built the Calcutta Cathedral, and Bishop Cotton, who imbibed the spirit of Dr. Arnold. But Bishop's College had difficult times owing to its inconvenient situation and later on it was shifted to Calcutta in 1880 under Rev. H. Whitehead.

When the men of Serampore separated from the Baptist Missionary Society in 1816 a new society, the General Baptist Missionary Society was founded in the same year. The new society continued the work of the Serampore missionaries. The Bengali translation of the Bible of Carey was vastly improved by Dr. Yates, while Dr. Wenger took charge of the Sanskrit version. In 1893 there were connected with the Baptist Mission 35 missionaries, 3,991 church members, 11,056 Christians and 3,702 children at school.

The activities of other missions were no less encouraging. The London Missionary Society, founded in 1795, was first established at
Chinsurah in 1798 with Rev. N. Forsyth as its first missionary. He was succeeded by Rev. May who took up education as the field of his operation. By 1815 he had 20 schools with 1651 students of whom there were some Brahmins. The number of schools increased later on. This scheme of education was highly approved by Gordon Forbes, the Commissioner of Chinsura and by Marquis of Hastings who even appropriated a monthly grant of Rs. 600/- for the Missionary schools. Rev. May was soon joined by Rev. J. D. Pearson. In 1816 the Society, however, transferred its headquarters to Calcutta where they erected a building in the Dharmatala Street, called the Union Chapel, mainly in the interest of the English dissenters. The building was completed in April 1821, but as a centre for its Calcutta work the Society chose Bhowanipore and then in 1826 they extended their work in other areas. At this time they occupied 21 stations in and about the city and had charge of 13 schools. The villages to the south of Calcutta were worked up by Rev. Messrs Henry Topnley and J. Keith. Another famous missionary of the Society was Rev. A. F. Lacroix who laboured for 32 years in the metropolis. The Educational Institution founded at Bhowanipur in 1837 also progressed satisfactorily. Rev. T. Boaz erected a building for the College in 1853, and Rev. Dr. Mullens, who made a comparative study of Hinduism and Christianity, also remained associated with the College for some time. Mrs. Mullens, a daughter of Rev. Lacroix, took up the cause of female education in India and left her mark in the field of Bengali literature as the author of *Phulmani and Karuna*, describing the faults and virtues of Indian Christians. In 1894 there were connected with the Mission 9 English missionaries, 473 Church members, 1757 adherents and 2875 children at school.

The *Church Missionary Society* founded in 1799 with many distinguished men stepped into the field immediately after the revision of the charter in 1813. Its Corresponding Committees already formed in 1812 in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay quickly commenced operation. In Calcutta, schools were founded at Kidderpore and Dum Dum in 1815 and with the arrival of Greenwood and Schroeter, an Englishman and German respectively, the first mission station was opened at Garden Reach. In 1816, a devout soldier Lieutenant Stewart established a station at Burdwan which during the years 1831-1852 became widely known through its missionary Rev. J. Weitbrecht. Another famous missionary of this Society was Rev. J. Long. He was a man of varied talents. He was in charge of many excellent village schools and yet delighted in antiquarian and historical researches. In 1821, the Church Missionary Society established its headquarters in Mirzapore through the labours of Daniel Corrie. The object in selecting this site in the heart of the native town was to enable the missionaries to come into contact with those wealthy and intellectual people who had the most extensive influence over the country. Schools were opened and a printing press was established. Among others who were associated with the Church Mission in Calcutta the name of
Habermans stands conspicuous. He was indefatigable in his efforts among the educated youth, preaching in Bengali and English.

The most important branch of the Church Missionary Society was established at Krishnagar in the district of Nadia in 1831. The Rev. W. J. D. Dear and others who worked there planted numerous schools throughout the district and the gospel was steadily pushed. A phenomenal success was achieved in 1838 when about three thousand persons embraced Christianity. It was thought that prospects of succour and help at a time of famine induced the people to embrace the alien faith. The branch of the Mission at Thakurpukur also thrived considerably. In 1893 the Church Missionary Society had 7 English ordained missionaries working among Bengalis, 1581 native Christians, 1254 communicants and 4157 children at school.

In the extensive work of evangelization in Calcutta and in its neighbourhood which was receiving the attention of various missionary bodies, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel took a prominent share. The Society which was in existence for over a century took charge of the Bishop's college in 1820 and also of other schools made over to them in 1828 by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge which altogether withdrew from missionary work in 1825. The Gospel Society soon sprang into the front rank of missionary societies then labouring in Calcutta. The first missionary sent by this Society, Rev. W. Morton reached Chinsurah in 1829. In the same year they occupied Tollygunge and in 1837 the mission was extended to villages in the 24-Parganas and Suderbans and very quickly a series of stations and outposts were founded.

Closely related to the Gospel Society was the Calcutta Bible Society which was founded mainly through the labours of Buchanan and Brown who contributed munificently to fund in aid of the translation of the scriptures. Buchanan, as already noticed, had a princely heart and was not zealously intolerant of other faiths like other missionaries. He firmly believed that the seeds of moral obedience and social order which are in Christianity have to be propagated which led him to the venture of founding an ecclesiastical institution like the Bible Society. When he returned to Europe in 1807 he lamented that he had done nothing for evangelization and realising that the scheme connected with the College of Fort William would eventually fail, he became all the more convinced of the need of founding a Bible Society. Many opposed the scheme including Lord Minto whose attitude was not favourable to missionary projects. Minto threatened the withdrawal of the patronage of the government from the translation of the Holy scriptures into the oriental tongues. But Buchanan submitted a memorial in a very firm and yet temperate tone defending the gospel which he was not ashamed to profess. The Society which was founded in these circumstances flourished under the patronage of Christian officials who were in full sympathy with the scheme.

The Scottish Missionary Society's activities rendered memorable by
the association of Dr. Duff have already been noticed. In 1893 there were 5 ordained missionaries, 86 Communicants, 15 baptised adherents and 1708 scholars connected with the Church of Scotland. The other organisation of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, had in Bengal in 1893, 7 ordained missionaries, 21 communicants, 298 baptised adherents and 3474 pupils under instruction. The Wesleyan Mission began to work in Calcutta in 1829 when Rev. Messrs. P. Percival and T. Hudson were appointed to take charge of the Mission's work. They preached, built a native chapel and established schools but the work of the mission had to be stopped owing to some unavoidable circumstances and was not reopened till 1859 when the Wesleyans established themselves at Barrackpore. A centre was also opened in Calcutta in 1862. At the end of the 19th century there were 8 English missionaries, 451 Church members and 2657 school children connected with the mission. The Oxford Mission Society came late in the field. It was founded in 1880 mainly by the alumni of Oxford University with a view to work particularly among the educated Hindus of Calcutta. Lectures were delivered and visits to the mission house were invited. The mission was also interested in education and circulated a pamphlet called Epiphany among the non-Christians. Equally important in the Indian mission field was the well-mannered and richly financed work undertaken by the American societies specially by the Baptists (American Baptist Union) by the Congregationalists (American Board), and by the Presbyterians (Americans Presbyterian Mission Board). But they went mainly in the direction of Burma, Ceylon, Assam, and Madras.

These missionary societies, as described above, engaged themselves in many types of activity from pure evangelism to educational and medical work. Down to 1830 they were wholly occupied with proselytizing activities, and since the time of Duff top priority was given to educational missions. But a change came over in the post-mutiny period when old hazards were gone and missionary work became free from handicaps and other difficulties experienced in the early period. The missions now addressed themselves to all sorts of philanthropic activity in the form of hospitals and medical work, of famine relief and rural uplift and industrial welfare. Another very important feature of missionary work in the post-mutiny period was that strenuous effort was made to bring education within the reach of mature girls and women. By founding schools and by arranging local meetings in private houses women workers of the different missions came into contact with the ladies of harem and sought to improve their approach and broaden their outlook. Apart from individual societies, many female members of these organizations became pioneers in this field of work.

It cannot be denied that the very presence of the missionaries produced influences in favour of the Western outlook and the missionaries stood for the whole complex of Christian Weltanschauung and were therefore regarded as apostles not only of Christian religion but in general of Western culture as well. The missionaries of the different evangelical
societies thus formed an important channel for the transmission of Western values and Western knowledge.

Conversion is not the field where the missionaries attained any very great success. Conversion came largely from among the lowest castes who were attracted less by the Gospel and more by the prospects of material and social advance. Quantitatively, the number of converts was very few even though missionary efforts were successful among the primitive tribes, and qualitatively also, the converts to Christianity from educated classes were fewer still. But the effect of missionary work was undoubtedly felt particularly in the field of social development where its influence worked in various ways. Yet nationalist impulses of reascent Bengal have tended to ignore or obscure this aspect of the question by linking up the whole history of social progress to the sophisticated ideology of the Brahma Samaj. The movement of the Brahma Samaj was, however, not an isolated phenomenon in the 19th century history of Bengal, it was admittedly thoroughly 'suffused' with Christianity. Moreover, missionary enterprise in India was older than any of the indigenous West-orientated experiments.  

The fact is that the missionaries constituted an overt challenge to Hinduism. Never before was the Hindu ideal of life, its whole apparatus of social organisation, subjected to such ruthless criticism as was done by the missionaries. The vast missionary literature in India which is mostly full of invectives against Hindu religion is an evidence of the highest value regarding the attitudes of the Christian proselytisers towards this country.  

The challenge became all the more fundamental and also intellectual because Christianity, unlike Islam, relied upon monastic agencies and not upon military agencies in its evangelical missions, thus leaving the people chance to react in their own way. The contemporary literature of Bengal, partly newspapers of that time, will bear eloquent testimony to the intense reaction that followed the introduction of Christianity. The civilization and religion of the West were assailing every phase of heathenism, its idolatry, its mythology, its castes and other absurdities and everything relating to Hinduism was subjected to a scathing criticism and a merciless exposure.  

Debates, discussions and lectures on Christian theology and religion became the most usual feature of the public life of Bengal; the whole class of educated gentry was in ferment.  

This being the situation, it will not therefore appear unlikely that the missionaries provided the first impulse towards social reform. But this has to be admitted that at a time when both the government and the people were either allergic or apathetic to social reform these foreign agencies focused the supreme need of social changes and pressed the demand for a policy of reform so forcefully that it became ultimately necessary for the government of India not only to appreciate the attitude of the missionaries but also to intervene and participate more extensively in the scheme of social reform.
But at no stage in the progress of these social innovations was there any tendency to rely exclusively on missionary agencies and the increasingly important part played by the Bengalis themselves in the new reforming movements since the thirties of the last century reduced to insignificance the external promptings of reforming zeal of reascent Bengal, so much so, that in the eventual execution of the series of reforms of the 19th century, the evangelical flavour with which they were couched, gradually receded to the background and indigenous theories and methods remained to impart a spirit of individuality to these social reforms. It will thus appear that the missionaries were an external force in the life of Bengal.

The secular activities of the missionaries are often lost sight of owing to the religious character of their missions. Their share in the improvement of the social condition of the peasantry of Bengal was not less inconsiderable. They took up the cause of the oppressed peasantry who were suffering from many forms of oppression and discussed these matters in the missionary conferences, frequently held. These matters were dealt within the petition submitted to Parliament in 1882, in their farewell address to Lord Dalhousie in 1856, and in their memorial to the Lieutenant-Governor in the same year. In 1856 they even asked for a special inquiry on agrarian matters which was refused. They again submitted a petition to Parliament in 1857 and another to the Legislative Council on behalf of the Rent and Sale Bills. In the memorial submitted to the Lieutenant-Governor in 1861, they advocated the same cause.

The missionaries also stood by the side of the aboriginals and other unsophisticated elements to save them from falling a prey to the exploitation of the moneyed classes, revenue-farmers and land-grabbers. They sympathised with the Santals in their hour of distress and firmly protested against the forced system of indigo planting. When Rev. James Long was prosecuted by the Indigo Planters Association for the version of Nil Darpan in English, the missionaries came forward to help him. The tone of the planters' press of that time and the arguments of the prosecuting counsel left no one in doubt that both the government and the European planters and businessmen very much resented the interference of the missionaries in these social questions. Long's case was a stern warning to the missionaries not to espouse the cause of the social destitutes.

The attitude of the missionaries towards Indian religions was, however, one of uncompromising hostility; they were neither very scrupulous in regard to their proselytizing methods, nor restrained in their denunciation of Hindu religion. Even a great educationist of the eminence of Dr. Duff shared to a large degree the prevailing prejudices of the time and assailed Hinduism as a false religion 'a perverse product of the ingenuity of fallen men.' No doubt Bishop Heber and others have recorded their appreciation of Hindu institutions but in general the missionaries of Bengal steadily pursued an anti-Hindu policy. A justification of this attitude, however, rests on the fact that the main object of the missionaries
being evangelization they could not remain uncritical of the Hindu religion and the social system which it represented. It was further urged that the progress of the Christian mission itself depended on the extent to which the indigenous institutions could be undermined by slanderous and scurrilous attacks.\footnote{47}

This policy naturally created ill-feeling and distemper between the people and the missionaries, though it does not agree to the general situation because the educated gentry, on the whole, looked with favour upon the English community and the evangelists and did not appear to have connected the latter closely with the Company's government despite their European origins. The fact that the missionaries were not widely supported by the government also tended to neutralise an attitude of direct hostility towards them. Nevertheless, the missionaries were foreigners and it was obvious that they could not fail to gain some prestige from their personal and social connection with the society of the ruling classes.

All these may account for the unsympathetic attitude of the general public of Bengal towards the missionaries and most of the elites of that time including Raja Rammohun Roy, who was not otherwise disrespectful to Carey and Duff, had not much opinion about the 'body of English gentlemen' going out of their way to convert the Hindus. The great Raja reflects: "It is true that the apostles of Jesus Christ used to preach the superiority of the Christian religion to the natives of different countries. But we must recollect that they were not the rulers of those countries where they preached. Were the missionaries likewise to preach the gospel and distribute books in countries not conquered by the English such as Turkey, Persia, etc. which are much nearer England, they would be esteemed a body of men truly zealous in propagating religion and in following the example of the founders of Christianity. In Bengal, where the English are the sole rulers, and where the mere name of Englishmen is sufficient to frighten people, an encroachment upon the rights of her poor timid and humble inhabitants and upon their religion, cannot be viewed in the eyes of God or the public as a justifiable act."\footnote{48} Even the great English philanthropist David Hare felt distressed like Ram Mohun Roy and Radhakanta Deb at the Christian missionaries' policy of gaining converts in educational institutions. David Hare's hostility to the Gospel had alienated the Christians to such an extent that on his death he was not given a burial in a Christian cemetery. But it was Debendranath Tagore who gave the most articulate expression to the anti-missionary feelings of reascent Bengal. His aversion for the proselytizing activities of the Christian missionaries came from the realisation of the fact that the Christian evangelists were undermining the Hindu religion and society. This drove him to the necessity of establishing some such institutions which would counteract this tendency. Thus the \textit{Tattvabodhini Sabha} which he founded steadily worked in the direction of driving home to the Hindu youths the richness of their culture and the greatness of their religion. In course of time it became a powerful forum for both the
progressives and the conservatives and a great force to combat the activities of the Christian missionaries. Many other elites of Bengal of that time were unbending opponents of the missionaries and considered it to be a patriotic duty to wean away the impressionable young men of Bengal from the influence of the Christian evangelists. They were, to refer to only a few of the far-sighted leaders of the 19th century Bengal, Prasanna Coomer Tagore (1801-1868), Tarachand Chakravarti (1804-1855), Rasik Krishna Mullick (1810-1858), Motilal Seal, Girish Chandra Ghose and others. To counteract the influence of the free missionary schools which tended to become a fertile ground for conversion, the Hindu Charitable Institution was founded in 1849, mainly through the labours of the leaders described above, which effectively checkmated conversion to Christianity.

Rev. Lal Behari De, the famous Bengali Christian and a great writer, made out a case for the establishment of the United National Church in Bengal on the ground that European Christianity appeared to be too exotic, too alien in Bengal as it was modified by European modes of thought and feeling. The ecclesiastical polity was also purely European taking its colour and complexion from Rome and Geneva which led to the establishment of native churches on European models. This apparently was not liked by the intellectual Christians of Bengal who felt that they were not bound to accept the dicta of an Augustine or Aquinas or Calvin. Lal Behari De in particular was convinced that the native churches were like so many 'forcing gardens' and commented: "But it is not difficult to see that native Christianity cannot develop itself under such artificial and foreign forms. . . . If you wish to see Bengali Christianity develop itself freely and naturally, you must free it from its European trammels, you must remove it from the hot-house of European Church organisation and plant it in the genial soil of Bengali modes of thought and feeling; or in other words, you must make Christianity indigenous in Bengal".49

The overtone of a national sentiment as reflected in the above statement cannot be missed. Lal Behari De was the foremost of those nationalist Christians who showed that it was possible to love one's country, his spiritual compliance with Christianity notwithstanding. Madhusudan's famous Ode to Motherland and Reverend K. M. Banerjee's herculean work on Mahabharat reflect the same attitude of the devout love of Bengali Christian for the cultural heritage of his country.

REFERENCES

4. Hugh Murray in his History of British India gives an authentic account of the outrages committed by the Christian traders, and what is significant, adverts to the fact that actually a mission was sent out to India "to put an end to the exactions of presents by British officials who had enriched
themselves at the expense of native princes." (Vol. I, pp. 277-282). This view is fully endorsed by a missionary writer Rev. Hollis Read who places the 'Mutiny' of 1857 as a nemesis of British rule in India and quotes copiously from many known authorities to bear testimony to the oppressions committed by the officers of the Company which justified missionary interference if only to rectify the moral tone of the early Christian rulers. (India and its People, London, 1858, pp. 43-60).

5. J. Richter—History of Missions in India (Transl.) Edinburgh, 1908, p. 129.
10. Rev. J. Chamberlain, a Baptist missionary was expelled from India on account of preaching at Hardwar. The opinion was general even amongst enlightened British officials in the country that there could be no more dangerous means of estranging the hearts of the people from the Government than by attempts to meddle with the religious concerns of the Hindus. Furthermore, the Missionaries were forbidden under threat of grave consequences not to speak to the sepoys about religion under any circumstances whatsoever. (Richter—op. cit. pp. 131-32).
12. For a more forceful argument of the missionaries, See Weitbrecht—op. cit. p. 29 as follows: "There was no instance in history of a people governing a conquered nation by abjuring its own religion, at least the history of the Tartars, the Mahomedans, the Portuguese, the Spanish, the French and the Dutch would not support this principle though this principle itself may not be wholly defensible."
14. The religious views and anti-Indian attitudes of the missionaries have been subjected to severe criticism by Major Scot Waring as noted above. Though not free from prejudice, his opinions are valuable from the point of view of a contemporary observer. His estimate of the work of Claudius Buchanan is both informative and critical.
15. For a critical analysis of the attitudes of the various religious groups and Parliamentary parties on this issue, see Ingham—op. cit., pp. 11-12.
17. The removal of the missionary clause was but the first round of the struggle. The Christian Knowledge Society was particularly vehement in its denunciation of the Company's association with Hindu temples and idolatry and all these features including the pilgrim taxes were later on discarded. (Thomas—op. cit., p. 182; Richter—op. cit., pp. 189-90).
19. M. A. Sherring—The History of Protestant Missions in India, London, 1884, p.55 ff. Ganesh Das who was baptized in 1774 was named after Sir Robert Chambers who stood prominently for his evangelical pursuits. (Weitbrecht—op. cit., p. 11).
22. Long—op. cit., p. 130. Weitbrecht mentions of a Protestant Christian Church which was erected as far back as the year 1715. It was situated at 50 yards distance from the Old Fort at the West End and was raised by the munificence of merchants and seafaring men. A hurricane which occurred in 1757 attended by a violent earthquake levelled the first Calcutta Church
to the ground but it was soon rebuilt and continued standing till 1756 when, among other devastations committed by the army of the Nawab of Bengal, the church was demolished and the two Government chaplains then at Calcutta perished. (pp. 4-5).


24. History of Christianity etc. A young German missionary, Rev. J. C. Deimer, was sent to the assistance of Kierandar in 1793 but he does not appear to have remained long. Kierandar remained at his post for 28 years (1758-1786). (Richter—op. cit., p. 130).


26. For an account of the daily routine of the missionaries, see Sherring—op. cit., p. 62.

27. Sherring—op. cit., p. 75.

28. For the routine work of the missionaries, see Sherring—op. cit., p. 62.

29. Ibid., p. 76.


33. Sherring—op. cit., p. 64.

34. Ibid., p. 81.


36. Lacroix was considered to be one of the most eloquent and effective vernacular preachers in India. (Sherring, p. 108).

37. History of Christianity etc., p. 33.

38. The Garden Reach near Calcutta at that time covered an area of 7 sq. miles and contained 400,000 inhabitants. It is really interesting to find that within this small compass there was a wide variety of Christian organisations. Thus the Church of England maintained 8 churches, Church of Scotland 1 Church and the Free Church of Scotland 1 church. The Independents maintained 2 churches and the Baptists 3 churches. The various missionaries in Calcutta worked in a friendly spirit in a wonderful union of heart and purpose and constructed a fraternity for furthering a holy cause. It is specially interesting to find that Calcutta in the early part of the 19th century was a truly cosmopolitan city which harboured people of all faiths. This was reflected in the astonishing variety of places of worship with which the city abounded. In addition to the above churches, there was a Greek church, 1 Armenian church, 5 Roman Catholic chapels, 1 Jewish synagogue, 1 Chinese temple, 167 Hindu temples and 74 Muhammadan mosques. (Weitbrecht, pp. 47-48).


40. Weitbrecht—op. cit., p. 43; Sherring—op. cit., p. 67.


43. Sherring—op. cit., p. 96.


45. A. Duff—India and Indian Missions.
46. Weitbrecht—op. cit., p. 73, cf. also the statement of the Madras lawyer, Mr. Marsh, quoted in Thomas—op. cit., p. 129. Ballhatchet has also drawn attention to the pro-Hindu attitude of some of the missionary writers. (C. H. Phillips—Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, p. 345 ff).

47. Ingham—op. cit., p. 4.


49. The Desirableness and Practicability of organizing a National Church in Bengal:

A lecture delivered at the Bengal Christian Association on Monday, the 13th December, 1869 by the Rev. Lal Behari Dey, Calcutta, 1879.