Part Two

The Second Generation: Swadeshi, 1905–1917
THREE
The Swadeshi Movement

The Swadeshi period, from 1904, inaugurates a new age in which a challenge to the legitimacy of British rule and of the dominant nationalist leadership surfaced. New spokesmen and political workers came forward, including both a fresh generation of students and men who had been marginally involved in politics earlier, who had criticized the Congress leaders for more than a decade, but had not made available an effective alternative.

The agitation was set off by the refusal of British officials, particularly the viceroy, Lord Curzon, to respond to Indian complaints regarding proposed administrative changes.1 The failure of methods which were long considered proper for political expression brought a breakdown of respect for governmental authority. British political prototypes were called into question, setting off a search for new patterns in indigenous, Asian, and continental European sources. This quest brought with it the confusion that accompanies the rejection of established views and the construction of a new perspective.

Conflict with the Raj, or the "bureaucracy," drove Indian leaders, both old and new, to minimize their differences. They joined in meetings and demonstrations and took the first steps toward a boycott of British goods. But differences within the nationalist movement proved fundamental and could not be contained. The new nationalist leaders, the Extremists, felt themselves representative of a higher stage in Indian nationalism. They embodied nineteenth-century cultural and religious trends which were barely evident in the views and work of the earlier Moderates.2 Some called for a return to ancient Indian ideals, widening the scope of nationalism to include all aspects of culture, and called for
national revival in art, education, literature, historical research, and morality. Among the major influences on the new nationalism were the temple priest of Dakshineswar, Ramakrishna, with his disciple Swami Vivekananda, and the premier man of letters in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.

Ramakrishna, though devoted to the goddess Kali, experimented with other religions and proved to his satisfaction that there were several equally viable paths to God. Using earthy wisdom and parables, Ramakrishna persuaded Westernized Bengalis that there was much value in their own Shakta and Vaishnava traditions. He taught toleration of other faiths and pride in one's own religion. Although he did not engage in social reform or politics, Ramakrishna encouraged his close disciples to undertake God's work in the world through social service; and after his death in 1886, they founded the Ramakrishna Order and Mission. The most influential of these young men, Narendranath Datta, who became known as Swami Vivekananda, wandered around India as a sannyasin (mendicant holy man) and traveled to the West spreading the teachings of revitalized Hinduism. Like Keshub Sen before him, Vivekananda asserted that the West was spiritually deficient and that India had a religious message for humanity. The fundamental truth of Hinduism, according to Vivekananda, was the unity of all human and animal life, joined by the immanent Brahman within each creature. This Hinduism was the faith that could save the world; it was the most scientific and the only moral religion.

The militant Hinduism taught by the mature Vivekananda differed from the tolerant faith preached by his guru. The former thought that although India lagged in material culture, she was always advanced in religion. Vivekananda wanted to preserve the "spirituality and purity of the race," i.e., of the Hindus, and spread their message; but he was also envious of Western vitality, skill in coordination, self-confidence, and strength. Exhorting his listeners to utilize the powers within themselves to build their country, he made remarks that were often taken in a political sense:

We speak of many things parrot-like, but never do them; speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause of that? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything: we must strengthen it. First of all, our young men must be strong. Re-
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Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends . . . You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita . . . You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Krishna better with a little strong blood in you.7

Vivekananda criticized Bengalis for sectarianism, neglect of the Vedas, and overattraction to foreign ideas, but he gave a special role to young Bengal:

I have faith in my country, and especially in the youth of my country. The youth of Bengal have the greatest of all tasks that has ever been placed on the shoulders of young men. I have travelled for the last ten years or so over the whole of India, and my conviction is that from the youth of Bengal will come the power which will raise India once more to her proper spiritual place. Ay, from the youth of Bengal, with this immense amount of feeling and enthusiasm in the blood, will come those heroes who will march from one corner of the earth to the other, preaching and teaching the eternal truth of our forefathers.8

Just as Bengalis had moved out across India as collaborators with the Raj and as professional men, so Vivekananda envisioned them spreading a message of renewed strength to all Indians.

The Ramakrishna Order and Mission has retained an ideology which is militantly Hindu, yet has a certain flexibility which allows it to incorporate features of other religions. Although both the order and the mission have remained outside politics, they have provided inspiration for political activity. The route from the selfless, autonomous, energy-generating sannyasin to the resourceful political worker was not a long one.9

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the second major influence upon the new nationalism, consciously channeled religious discussion in a political direction and helped to bring about the fusion of religion and politics which so excited many young Hindu Bengalis and so disturbed officials early in the twentieth century. His use of Bengali as a medium of expression and his particular concern with the Bengali “jati” or people, sharpened regional feeling. While in government service, he wrote popular novels and essays and turned his readers’ interest in the 1870s and 1880s to Bengali literature. Chatterjee wanted to link the
Western-educated few and the Bengali-educated many through their common language.\(^\text{10}\)

One nineteenth-century trend he encouraged was the use of historical knowledge and traditions as tools for instruction and exhortation toward future goals. He was aware that history might be a crucial weapon in the battle for social and political advancement in Bengal. Certain myths and misunderstandings—for example, the weakness and cowardice of the Bengalis—had to be criticized through a new reconstruction of the past.\(^\text{11}\)

In this view, Bengalis had had great achievements as well as shortcomings. Among the feats were stopping the advance of Alexander and colonizing remote areas. But in his assessment of Bengal in the present, Chatterjee was concerned with physical and intellectual vitality, showing the fear of inadequacy which runs through modern Indian thought. Since the Bengalis were held especially responsible for allowing the British conquest, Bankim Chandra felt that they had to be defended as well as urged to unusual deeds.\(^\text{12}\)

His message was spread most widely through his historical novels. In them, he created Hindu heroes, Rajput and Bengali Hindus, who could stand alongside Muslim and British heroes in strength and courage. In the most politically influential of these novels, \textit{Anandamath}, Bankim Chandra fuses religious and patriotic symbolism as he minglesthe two significant religious traditions of Bengal, Vaishnavism and Shaktism.

The basic doctrine of Shaktism is that there is a power called “shakti” underlying and energizing all reality. A female deity, who is usually a consort of Shiva—Durga, Kali, Chandi, or Shakti—may be understood to embody and express this power and may thus be worshipped as the single and highest deity. This form of religion is widespread among the high castes of Bengal and among lower castes such as kumars, or ironsmiths, coppersmiths, and saltmakers. Religious practice involves “puja” (worship with offerings) and special observances during the year. At these festivals, and also in times of particular need, devotees sacrifice animals and other things to the deity.\(^\text{13}\) The concept of shakti underlies a concept of physical strength that emerges as well in the writings of Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghose, and Rabindranath Tagore.

\textit{Anandamath} tells of an order of sannyasins in the 1770s who orga-
nize and take arms against their Muslim rulers. They call themselves devoted children of the Mother, who is both the divine Mother and the Motherland. Although they worship Krishna and claim to be Vaishnavas, their guiding principle is power rather than love, and they believe that violence is necessary to recover the Motherland from its depressed state.\textsuperscript{14}

The response to \textit{Ānandamāth} continued long past its immediate publication in 1880. It was read by Bengal revolutionaries decades later; and the song “Bande Mataram” (Hail to the Mother) sung in the first chapter became the anthem of Bengali Hindu nationalists.\textsuperscript{15}

In \textit{Ānandamāth}, the violence of the Hindu patriots is directed against Muslim rulers. Considering this novel and his work as a whole, Bankim Chandra is without question a Hindu nationalist who views Muslims as disruptive and often ruthless foreigners who did not merge their culture with that of the indigenous Hindus and who had nothing to contribute to Indian life.\textsuperscript{16} But from \textit{Ānandamāth} and other writings, it is clear that Chatterjee believed in a grand scheme of development for India in which Western thought and technology could be utilized within an essentially Hindu framework.\textsuperscript{17}

Although Bankim Chandra often took a deprecating tone in his description of the Bengali babu, he thought that Bengalis could go beyond their limitations and play a crucial role in the regeneration of India.\textsuperscript{18} He stands at the junction between the old effeminate image of the Bengali and a new image of strength and accomplishment.

To his countrymen, Bankim Chandra offered the model of a devoted order of sannyasins and Krishna as the archetype of complete spiritual and worldly fulfillment. He defended Bengali customs and presented schemes for education, scientific development, physical training, and the utilization of folk culture to instruct the masses. Through his fiction and essays, he offered a range of guides to national and personal growth.\textsuperscript{19} The symbolism he used had a rich and continuing appeal to Hindu readers and simultaneously served to alienate the Muslims.

While Bengali ideologues were discussing India’s mission and Bengal’s great role, the British viceroy, Lord Curzon, had a different perspective:

He never doubted . . . that behind the achievements of his fellow countrymen in India was the invisible hand of God. . . . In such a
view of India there was no room for an Indian Intelligentsia aspiring to lead and speak for the masses; and in so far as the Indian educated classes claimed to be the prophets of what they themselves spoke of as "the new Nationalism" which was stirring in the land, he simply brushed them aside. . . . And it was more than anything else his openly expressed assumption that it was in him, as the representative of the race chosen by God for its loftier standards—administrative, cultural and moral—to be His instrument in leading India along the road to higher things, that reposed the sole right of speaking for the Indian peoples, that earned for him the dislike of the educated classes.20

Between 1899 and 1905 conflict ensued over three issues: the Calcutta Municipal Bill, the Universities Bill, and the partition of Bengal.

Surendranath Banerjea commented on the Congress resolution regarding the first of these measures: "The Calcutta Municipal Bill was a local measure, but it had an all-India interest as it affected the principle of Local Self-government, in the growth and development of which all India felt a concern." 21 It was still possible for Bengali leaders to give local issues a national turn and assert that the cause of Bengal was the concern of India. But the petitions and agitation fell on deaf ears and the Calcutta Corporation was, as Banerjea wrote, "officialized." This was a blow not only to the Moderates' belief in the power of public opinion and their own influence, but also to their faith that steps would be taken toward progressively greater self-government. With the passage of the act in 1899, twenty-eight elected Indian commissioners resigned. The second measure, the Universities Bill, led to stricter control of colleges and universities, and it too passed over Indian protest.22

The third enactment and the one which caused the greatest uproar was the division of the Bengali-speaking area into the new provinces of Bengal (with Bihar and Orissa) and Eastern Bengal and Assam. Protests began immediately when word slipped out that this move was contemplated in 1904. The final decision was announced on July 20, 1905,23 and during the latter half of that year protest meetings were held in at least 300 cities, towns, and villages throughout Bengal. A rough analysis indicates that more meetings were held in districts close to Calcutta and Dacca, particularly Mymensingh, Midnapur, and Khulna.24

After initial hesitation on the part of the older nationalists and of
prominent men entering politics for the first time (Bhupendranath Basu, for example), a boycott of British goods was decided upon. The boycott spread and was fairly effective for some months, but no central organization or leadership emerged with systematic plans for political action. Opponents of the partition were the politically conscious Hindus and students throughout both parts of Bengal and some Muslims in western Bengal. The students were the most active in implementing the boycott. The movement was called the Swadeshi, or "own country," agitation because it was to encourage not only the boycotting of British goods, but also the production and use of Indian-made goods.25

The first days of the Swadeshi agitation were an exhilarating time. Apolitical men were swept into politics, many students joined the movement, and even a veteran like Surendranath Banerjea was moved to say,

Swadeshism will bring the classes and the masses upon the same platform. Swadeshism is of Divine origin. The Swadeshi leaders are humble instruments in the hands of Divine Providence walking under the illumination of His Holy Spirit. . . . The spirit of self-reliance is abroad. . . . The Bengal of today—Bengal after the partition is a very different place from Bengal before the partition. . . . Bring back the ancient days of purity and self-sacrifice. Restore the Aryavarta of olden times when the Rishis sang the praises of God and did good to men.26

But even Banerjea, struggling to retain his central place as more radical men rushed to the stage, realized that "It is the young men who were in the forefront and who have been our martyrs in the Swadeshi cause." 27 This went with the general spirit of rebellion of the time, and with the revulsion against older leaders and political methods. For the young men, the Swadeshi agitation was both an end in itself and a preparation for later forms of political involvement. Students working in organizations shortly banned by the government were putting their education and their future careers on the line for a cause in which they believed. Some turned from the individualistic, achievement-oriented life of school and career to the more expressive and community-oriented activity of the nationalist movement. Nationalist careers, lifelong work for the movement outside the usual spheres of government ser-
vice and the professions, were envisioned. The activity of the young was related to the feeling expressed by many at the time that the Swadeshi years marked a new time, a rebirth, a regeneration. The call went out for a new type of man, a more Indian type of political worker who would revitalize his country.28

Although many sophisticated proposals for action and new institutions were drawn up and presented to public meetings, few were implemented. One enduring group was the National Council of Education. The council owed a debt to two earlier experiments, the Dawn Society of Satish Chandra Mukherjee and Rabindranath Tagore’s school, Santiniketan, both of which were developed to put Bengali youth in closer touch with their surroundings and indigenous culture. The National Council progressed beyond officially funded institutions in using Bengali as the medium of instruction and stressing technical and industrial education; there was also a concern for Indian culture and religious education.29

During the same period there was some important work done in the districts, especially in Bakarganj under the leadership of Aswini Kumar Dutt. He led the Swadeshi Bandhab Samiti as it founded numerous branches in the district and did such social service work as distributing food in hard times. The organization grew from Dutt’s base at Barisal College, where he was proprietor and professor, and included many students. As a zamindar, Dutt could also make use of networks of ties into the countryside. But we do not know how effectively this organization reached peasants beyond its utilization of the superordinate powers that zamindars had long had over their peasants.30

There was also some effort to try to reach industrial workers in the Calcutta area and those lower caste groups who serviced Europeans. Aswinoomar Banerjee and Premtosh Bose were pioneering labor organizers. Aurobindo Ghose and other popular journalists hailed the labor strikes as signs of widespread support for the movement.31 Aurobindo talked of the Indian proletariat and Surendranath Banerjea of the union of the “classes and the masses” that had taken place as if by magic. But the strikes did not result in politically oriented unions with continuity into later periods of nationalist agitation; economic grievances were not effectively worked into the nationalist program of the day.

With the partition and the following Swadeshi agitation, Bengal be-
The Swadeshi Movement came the temporary cynosure of Indian politics. The agitation marked a new high for nationalist activity. Surendranath Banerjea said to the Calcutta Congress in 1906:

Let the Government know that when one province is injured, all the other provinces share the woe and the grief. The moral significance of such a demonstration, it would be impossible to exaggerate. . . . It will invest the public opinion of a province with the potency of the national voice of All India. It will intensify the solidarity between province and province by making them the participators in their mutual sorrows and anxieties. . . . to such an appeal made by afflicted Bengal to United India, there can be but one reply. . . .

Lajput Rai wrote in Young India that “What was done in Bengal found its echo in the rest of the country.” Mohandas Gandhi, sailing home from South Africa to his native land, noted in Hind Swaraj that the spirit of Swadeshi started in Bengal and spread to the rest of India. G. K. Gokhale pleaded the case for a united Bengal in London to Lord Morley and insisted that the revocation of the partition was one of the most important issues for Indians.

POET IN POLITICS

The activities of Rabindranath Tagore, India’s greatest modern writer and her most subtle and unheeded ideologue, may serve as an example of the Bengali focus of the movement, the new orientation of the period, and the difficult role of an apolitical man in politics. Born in 1861 into one of the most prominent families of nineteenth-century Calcutta, Tagore turned from concentration on the arts in his youth and early manhood to a greater concern for public affairs in the 1890s. He later described himself both as part of the mainstream of Indian culture and as an outlaw or outsider. This dual perspective allowed him to participate in the national movement and to write illuminating critiques of it. During the 1890s he made attempts to have the proceedings of the Bengal Provincial Conference conducted in Bengali, and in 1898 at Dacca he himself read out his presidential speech in Bengali. He examined social and political questions writing in Bengali and with Bengal his principal frame of reference.

During 1905 he took part in many partition protest meetings and in October initiated the political use of the “rajdhibandhan” ceremony
symbolizing the unity of divided Bengal. Threads, symbolizing brotherhood, were fastened from Bengali to Bengali, and on a day of fasting, purification, and work stoppage, Tagore led a huge procession through the Calcutta streets singing a song he had composed for the occasion.\textsuperscript{38} He drew upon Bengali culture and his own work for symbols appropriate to the crisis in Bengal's life. Although he addressed meetings and participated in organizations, his primary work was suggesting plans, criticizing false leads, and expressing the feelings of the community.

Tagore had an image of an idyllic rural past, before European penetration, during which small units of the society undertook all the functions necessary to social welfare. For the present state of degradation Tagore blamed British imperialism and, even more, his own ancestors. Indian society had "lost interest in itself"; its mind had become distracted and dried up; fear and restrictiveness had become the familiar elements of social life.

If we had only kept ourselves acquainted with our country, that would have been something,—but so lazy are we, we know next to nothing about her. The foreigner writes our history, we translate it; the foreigner discovers our grammar, we cram it. If we want to know what there is next door, we have to look into Hunter. We gather no facts first hand,—neither about men, nor commerce, nor even agriculture. And yet, with such crass indifference on our own part, we are not ashamed to prate about the duties of others towards our country.\textsuperscript{39}

Tagore bitterly attacked the rulers. He felt that their milking of the Indian cow for their own ends was warping the character of the milker as well as the cow. Their morality had become debased through service to conquest, efficiency, exploitation.\textsuperscript{40} But Tagore held that Bengali self-help was much more important than blaming the rulers and sinking into self-pity. In some passages he made use of the old concept of hidden forces or shaktis within man and society which had to be released in order for Bengalis to regain control of their own lives and society. Tagore linked the shakti within to India's unique gifts or essence and to the ways in which God structured the flow of modern history.

If there had been some centre of our shakti, where all could unite; where thinkers could contribute their ideas, and workers their efforts; then there the generous would find a repository for their gifts. Our ed-
ucation, our literature, our arts and crafts, and all our good works would range themselves round such centre and help to create in all its richness the commonwealth which our patriotism is in search of.

I have not the least doubt in my mind that the rebuffs which we are meeting from the outside are intended by Providence to help this centre of our shakti to become manifest within the nation; our petitions are being thrown back to us in order that we may turn our faces towards such centre; and the pessimism which is spreading amongst the feeble, workless critics of the government is due, not to the smart of any particular insult, or the hopelessness of any particular concession, but to the growing insistence of an inward quest for this centre.41

Deriding petitioning, Tagore called on Bengali political groups to rally under the leadership of one man.42 He saw the waste of time, energy, and passion that came from intramovement conflict. He may also have been drawing on Hindu traditions of the autocratic raja and zamindar. When he put forth his plan for the Swadeshi Samaj in 1904, he suggested that the society which was to take over many of the welfare, social, political functions in Bengal should have one leader, both a concrete functionary and a symbol of the whole. He wrote,

If the community is to protect itself, it must take its stand on united strength. The best way would be to invest a strong personality with leadership and rally round him as our representative; to submit to his rule would mean no loss of self-respect, for he would be a symbol of freedom itself. . . . If we in Bengal succeed in selecting a leader of the samaj and making our social liberty bright and permanent, then the rest of India will follow.43

His blithe assumption that the rest of India was waiting to accept the lead of Bengal is a typical Bengali assumption of the period; there is a strong element of ethnocentricity in Bengali writing of the Swadeshi period to which even the most insightful were prone. Tagore laid out many proposals for reconstruction, trying to draw his countrymen’s attention away from the actions of the British and day-to-day crises. He asked men to shift their gaze to the long-term goals and needs of Bengali society.44

The plan for the Swadeshi Samaj was aimed at the educated men and leaders of the society. Although Tagore may not have wished it, political and social problems were discussed from the top downward only. He himself had a predilection for thinking of leadership in so-
ciety in traditional ways, according to which the rajas initiated change and controlled it. Tagore wanted a flow back into the countryside of educated Calcutta men using fairs and district conferences as occasions for making contact with the masses of Indian peasants. The educated men were to contribute part of their income to the samaj and to help devise ways of meeting local needs with indigenous, nongovernmental resources. They were to be a vehicle for reclaiming the responsibility for social welfare and transferring it from the state to the society, from foreigners to the Bengalis.⁴⁵

Tagore noted a widespread fear of change in Indian society among all groups. But the peasant was the core of the problem: if rural society could be improved, India would advance. The problem was how to get the peasant to understand that change was needed and possible and that even the most insignificant men in the society would have to contribute. The peasants also had shaktis within—Tagore assumed that all individuals and groups had shaktis—and the impulse for change would eventually have to come from within the peasant community as well as from within the educated section of society. On his own estates, Tagore addressed the peasants in their language to try to persuade them to act.⁴⁶

The Swadeshi Samaj never took on life. Tagore was well aware that initial enthusiasm was seldom followed by sustained achievement. The ideas may have been imaginative and even appropriate, but Tagore was not the leader to work at bringing the samaj to fruition. Disturbed by divisions within the movement, upset at the primacy given politics, and racked by personal tragedy, Tagore spent the five years from 1907 to 1911 mostly at his school, Santiniketan, and at Shelidah, his country home.⁴⁷ Some years later, Tagore wrote to C. F. Andrews,

I do not belong to the present age, the age of conflicting politics. Nevertheless I cannot repudiate the age which has given me birth. I suffer and struggle. I crave for freedom and yet am held back. I must share the life of the present world, though I do not believe in its cry. I sit at its table, and while it fills its cup with wine to slake its unnatural thirst, I try to listen, through the noisy carousel, to the murmur of the stream carrying its limpid waters to the sea.⁴⁸

From the center of activity, Tagore moved to the periphery. He continued his own small experiments in education and village work and
commented on events in the great world, but he did not have to suffer the stings of factional strife.

DIVISIONS IN THE MOVEMENT

Amidst the exaltation of the first Swadeshi years, differences were submerged in order to present a united front of Bengalis against the Raj. By 1906, however, cleavages began to show. These were not temporary lines of division but fundamental conflicts of generation, of views about the ends and means of nationalist action, and of political power. A majority of the politically conscious Muslims were separated from the antipartition agitation. Three years or so after the beginning of the agitation, some young Bengalis turned to violent resistance, particularly political murders and robberies, and this cut them off from many of those involved in the Swadeshi movement who would not countenance violence.49

The most celebrated split was between the Moderates and the Extremists, divided along ideological lines and shortly struggling for control of the Congress. The Extremists, who were a loosely organized group, challenged the authority of the British to rule India. They wanted to protest strongly against the basis of this rule and to set up parallel institutions outside the scope of the British Raj. The Extremists were also more concerned with the fate and development of Indian culture than the older, often more Anglicized Moderates. One aspect of the Extremist challenge was a critique of the Moderates’ politics, values, cultural positions, and even their personal habits and behavior. In Bipin Pal’s assessment of Surendranath Banerjea, we may discern Pal’s conceptions of negative and positive nationalist identity:

By no means an unaccommodating person, Surendra Nath has never learnt the secret of converting a private surrender to a public victory. He is not a far-seeing statesman either—he does not see all the possibilities of a situation long before they become manifest. He is not even an idealist, who can be oblivious of all practical consequences in his quest for the ideal. He is not a hero who can bravely face the direst personal losses at the call of duty. He is not even a Nationalist in the true sense of the term, for he never learnt anything of his country, its ancient literature and special culture, neither as a youth when he went to school among Anglo-Indians and Eurasians to the Deveton College, nor in later life; and thus, both by training and heredity, he has been
like so many of his contemporaries far too much denationalised to make a true and ideal patriot.\textsuperscript{50}

Years earlier, Pal’s journalistic and political colleague Aurobindo Ghose maintained that the timid methods of the Mehta-Banerjea Congress showed its members to be less than men, particularly when compared to French and Irish revolutionaries who had been purified by blood and fire.\textsuperscript{51}

The Congress, in Bengal and nationally, was an organization within which a dominant faction fought off the challenges of competing factions. Some, like Lajpat Raj and Motilal Ghose of the \textit{Amrita Bazar Patrika}, moved between the main factions without tying themselves irrevocably to either side. Since the 1880s the \textit{Patrika} had been shooting barbs into the sensitive skin of Surendranath Banerjea and it argued in 1904:

In the first place, the Congress has no constitution and is consequently nothing but a three-day ceremony; whereas its work should be steadily continued throughout the year and the masses made to take an interest in the movement which should be made much less costly.\textsuperscript{52}

Once Bipin Pal and Aurobindo Ghose joined in producing the daily and weekly paper \textit{Bande Mataram} in 1906, the attacks grew more intense. Pal wanted to break up what he called the “old lawyer rings” of the Congress and plant new seeds of democracy from which would flower a new leadership.\textsuperscript{53}

The challenge was stated, but it was still necessary for the Extremists to organize and act on their belligerent words. The New Party, as the Extremists called themselves, had plans for a democratic and representative organization running from the province to the district and village levels. Such an organization, however, never existed except on paper, although some groups called “National Volunteers” appeared.\textsuperscript{54}

By 1906, Gokhale wrote, Calcutta had become a

regular pandemonium—Surendranath’s inexcusable excesses, the \textit{Patrika}’s vindictive pursuit of Surendranath, the fierce quarrel between Surendranath and Bipin Chandra Pal and the latter’s unscrupulous ambition to play at all costs the role of a new leader, the Anglo-Indian ferocity let loose against Indians, Mohamedan ill-will stirred up against Hindus . . . \textsuperscript{55}
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Gokhale stressed the base motivations of the Moderates' enemy Pal; with such perceptions it is explicable why the collisions of Moderates and Extremists at national and provincial Congress sessions in 1907 were marked by mutual lack of capacity for understanding or for compromise.

The Extremists did compromise at the 1906 Calcutta Congress; but the following December at the Midnapur District Conference, and then at the Surat Congress, differences proved unbridgeable. At Midnapur, the Moderates had to call in the local police so that they could run the meeting as they desired. The showdown came at Surat. The Moderates put up Rash Behari Ghose, a wealthy Bengali barrister, as their candidate for president and pushed his selection through the reception committee. The presidency had in the past been decided on by a coterie of Moderates, but at Surat the Extremists challenged this method as autocratic and demanded a role in preparing resolutions for the Subjects Committee.

The Extremists, led by Tilak and Aurobindo Ghose and supported principally by delegates from Bengal, Maharashtra, the Punjab, and the Central Provinces, protested the selection of Rash Behari Ghose and the meeting was suspended. The following day efforts at an orderly meeting failed, disorder ensued, shoes flew, hired club-wielders entered. The Moderates and Extremists then met separately, the former calling their meeting a "convention" and laying down rules for participants. The Moderates drew up a new constitution and an oath confining members to political action by constitutional means only. From 1908 to 1914, the Moderates met, with declining attendance and enthusiasm, in what one of their number called a "rump Congress."  

The New Party was hampered by the imprisonment of many of its important leaders and the departure of others from the political field. Bipin Pal, disturbed by the violence and hatred engendered by the movement and differing with colleagues on Bande Mataram, left Bengal for England in August 1908. He returned in 1911 more moderate and idiosyncratic in his ways and unable to work effectively with an organized party during the remaining twenty years of his life. Aurobindo Ghose was imprisoned in 1908 for a year while awaiting and on trial, and in the same year, Tilak was sentenced to a long term of im-
prisonment for sedition. In December 1908, the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed; this allowed the government to cast its net widely, sweeping up nonviolent Extremists and a few Moderates as well as young revolutionaries.

After Surat some efforts were made to reconcile the Congress factions. Aurobindo Ghose met Surendranath Banerjea at the Bengal Provincial Conference at Hooghly and also at Sylhet in 1909, but Ghose was not willing to abide by the new Congress constitution. Ghose shortly left for seclusion and religious activity in Pondicherry, but the internecine warfare within the nationalist movement continued. The Nayak maintained in 1911 that

Their deliberations are nowadays held in camera in the rooms of the Indian Association. One no longer sees the faces of men like Sures Chandra, editor of Basumati, Sakharam, editor of Hitavadi, Upendra Nath Sen, Asvini Kumar Dutta, Syam Sundar Chakravarti, Hemendra Prasad Ghosh, Chitta Ranjan Das and A. Rasul in their meetings and conferences.

Of even greater long-range consequence than the temporary split and long ineffectualness of the Congress was the absence of any appreciable Muslim representation in the nationalist ranks. In 1904, Lord Curzon toured eastern Bengal explaining to Muslim leaders how they would benefit from the proposed partition. One important convert was the Nawab of Dacca, Khwaja Salimulla, a recognized leader of Bengal Muslims until his death in 1915. Salimulla and other Muslim notables joined in the Simla deputation to the new viceroy, Lord Minto, and then combined to form the Muslim League in 1906. The league's main object was the protection of Muslim interests, and a London branch was soon opened by Ameer Ali and the Aga Khan.

Some Muslims from western Bengal, including Guznavi Rasul, Abdul Gafur, Liaquat Hussain, Abul Kasem, and Dedar Bux, supported the Swadeshi movement. Even though Surendranath Banerjea and others called for Muslim support, most politically active Muslims and even the remnants of the Fara'idi movement (composed of poor, rural Muslims) accepted the partition and opposed Swadeshi. Antagonisms engendered by the boycott campaign, antizamindar feeling among Muslim peasants in eastern Bengal, where the zamindars and moneylenders were mostly Hindus, and incitement by Maulvis led to a
number of communal disturbances in a few districts of Eastern Bengal and Assam during 1907.67

The lack of Muslim participation in the Swadeshi agitation became a great concern to Tagore, Pal, and a few Hindu spokesmen from 1907. In 1908 Tagore wrote,

When our speakers failed in Mymensingh and other areas to win the heart of the Mussalman peasantry, they felt very indignant. They never thought for a moment that we have never given proof of our real interest in the welfare of the Mussalmans or of the common people of our country. We cannot, therefore, blame them if they are rather suspicious of our professions of goodwill. A brother does, of course, suffer for the sake of another brother, but if somebody just turns up from nowhere and introduces himself as brother, he is not very likely to be straight away shown into his share of the inheritance.68

Tagore’s realization of the communal gap and its significance was not shared by many Hindu Bengali leaders. At the Bengal Provincial Conference in 1908, Tagore called for Hindus to support special concessions to the Muslims in order to bring about a healthy relationship between the communities.69 Such an effort was not made until C. R. Das’s Bengal Pact in 1924. In the meanwhile, the fusion of Hinduism and nationalist politics was making the recruitment of Muslims to the common nationalist cause increasingly difficult.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES: REPRESSION, REFORM, REALIGNMENT

In the complex interaction between the government (of India and of Bengal) and the nationalist groups, officials, especially in the Home Department, saw law and order as one of their primary functions. During these years the efforts of the CID burgeoned and many political leaders were under constant surveillance. Thus the government, soon armed with special powers and seeking to extend them, determined who was capable of engaging in politics. Surendranath Banerjea notes wistfully in his memoirs that in the 1870s political men worked freely without being watched, while in the new century, officials were fearful and the European population of Calcutta was often on the verge of mass hysteria. The threat of revolution and anarchy arose periodically, along with memories of rebellion half a century earlier, and as long as
the viceroy was close to Calcutta’s Europeans, he had to act strongly against any breaks in the wall of order.\textsuperscript{70}

Lord Minto argued that “government by the strong hand is what appeals to the majority of the different populations of this country.” \textsuperscript{71} He believed, as did many later officials, that if the small band of troublemakers was suppressed and concessions were made to those calling for reform, then all would be quiet. Before the outbreak of political murder and robbery, the main moves of the government were directed against those harsh critics of British rule whom they called “seditionists.” Several leaders of the Extremists, especially Tilak, suffered from both the special measures and new uses of the old regulations.\textsuperscript{72}

With the rise of the Extremists and then the revolutionaries, the Moderates and the government were pushed together by circumstances outside their own making, and in time the Moderates began to look more like loyalists. Minto wrote to Morley after meeting Surendranath Banerjea:

It was simply marvellous, with the troubles and anxieties of a few months ago still fresh in one’s memory, to see the “King of Bengal” sitting on my sofa with his Mahommedan opponents, asking for my assistance to moderate the evil passions of the Bengali, and inveighing against the extravagances of Bepin Chandra Pal.\textsuperscript{73}

Under the pressure of agitation, the Morley-Minto reforms were written into law as the Government of India Act of 1909. But the advance was limited. In a memorandum to Morley, Minto insisted that

The Government of India must remain autocratic; the sovereignty must be vest in British hands and cannot be delegated to any kind of representative assembly. No such assembly could claim to speak on behalf of the Indian people so long as the uneducated masses, forming ninety percent of the adult male population, are absolutely incapable of understanding what ‘representative government’ means and of taking any effective part in any system of election. . . . There is all the difference in the world between the arbitrary autocracy of the Asiatic despotism and the constitutional autocracy which binds itself to govern by rule, which admits and invites to its councils representatives of all the interests which are capable of being represented, and which merely reserves to itself, in the form of a narrow majority, the predominant and absolute power which it can only abdicate at the risk of bringing back the chaos to which our rule put an end.\textsuperscript{74}
Minto maintained that the reforms were not a capitulation to the agitators, although he did admit that one goal of the reforms was to help rally the Moderates. The Moderates pressed for the reforms by lobbying in Calcutta and London, as did the newly organized Muslim League. The Muslim Leaguers wanted separate electorates and reserved seats because, as the Aga Khan wrote, the Congress had chosen Muslim yes-men to represent Madras and Bombay in the Imperial Legislative Council, and Muslim hopes had been “dashed again and again” by the Congress. R. C. Dutt and other congressmen argued against separate electorates as divisive. In the end, Minto and the league won their point. Morley and the congressmen were more concerned with the advances toward representative government, which although small, were welcomed by Surendranath Banerjea and the Congress.

The imperial and provincial legislative councils were expanded and Indian members were added to Morley’s and Minto’s councils. For all their criticism of the Bengalis (especially Minto’s), several Bengalis were considered for these posts, including R. C. Dutt and Sir Asutosh Mookerjee. Finally, two Bengalis were chosen: K. G. Gupta, ICS, for Morley’s council; and Lord Sinha, advocate-general of the government of India and a leading barrister, for Minto’s council. Pleased though the Moderates were at the advance, they were critical of the regulations following the reforms, of separate electorates, and of official control that would be maintained even with a slight majority of nonofficials in the Bengal council. But however hamstrung they were, the Moderates accepted, as always, the British and Indian government groundrules and cooperated.

To the Extremists, the reforms were petty advances not worth the consideration of serious nationalist leaders. Aurobindo Ghose wrote in the Karmayogin:

The mountains have again been in labour, and the mouse they have produced this time is enormous in size and worthy of the august mountains that produced him, but not the less ridiculous for all that. What is it that this much-trumpeted scheme gives to a people which is not inferior in education, or intellectual calibre to the Turk, the Persian and the Chinese who already enjoy or are in sight of full self-government? There are four elements which have always to be considered in a change of this kind, first the nature of the electorate, second, the
composition of the body itself, thirdly, the freedom of election, fourthly, the scope, functions and powers of the assemblies. There is not one of these points in which the people have really gained and there is hardly one of them in which they are not worse off than under the old system.\textsuperscript{80} 

In the elections for the reformed Bengal Legislative Council, the Moderates did fairly well contesting the general seats. Although they worked under the reformed constitution, they wished to gain greater powers, such as full provincial autonomy. The Extremists remained outside the gate.

Under the new team of Lord Hardinge and Lord Crewe, replacements for Lord Minto and Lord Morley respectively, just one year after Minto’s departure the partition of Bengal was annulled and provincial boundaries were realigned. Bengal proper, containing most of the Bengali-speaking districts in eastern India, was constituted as a province with a governor like Bombay and Madras. At the same time, the capital of British India was shifted to Delhi. The announcement, rumored for some time, brought forth a tumult of joy and anger. Some alliances of previous years were reversed: the Moderates and the Bengalee warmly praised the government; the Muslims of Bengal felt that they had been betrayed after being the “favorite wife” of Lieutenant-Governor Bamfylde Fuller of Eastern Bengal and Assam; the European press of Calcutta criticized the government. The Bengalee, defending the government, suggested the editor of the Statesman be hauled in for sedition, and the Statesman attacked the government for not consulting public opinion.\textsuperscript{81} 

For the Moderates of Bengal, the nullification of the partition was the cherished goal of many years of petitioning and an action which they said vindicated their political methods. Some of them wrote an open letter to the public which was printed in many papers. It read in part:

There may be differences of opinion regarding the removal of the capital to Delhi, but it must not be forgotten that it is a most necessary adjunct to the establishment of provincial autonomy in Bengal. It affords as a result, a good opportunity for the realization of our high political ambitions. In particular, every patriotic and loyal citizen will realize that this removal of the capital conduces to the upholding of the dignity of the country, for, in the distant past, it was Delhi which was
The seat of Hindu and Moslem empires. The most glorious memories of us Hindus and Moslems are associated with the old historic city of Delhi. It is desirable in every way that those ancient glories of Delhi should be revived under British rule.82

The letter ended with the hope that the announcement would bring forth the loyalty and gratitude of all Bengalis. The Hitavadi and Sanjivani, two important Bengali newspapers, said it was a great day for Bengal and for the Bengali people, and the Nayak printed its comment in purple.

The strongest critics of the moves were the loyalist Hindus, the European community in Calcutta, and the Muslims. Mr. W. A. J. Archbold wrote in a life of Lord Carmichael, the first governor of reunited Bengal,

The Europeans of Calcutta felt that they were being sacrificed; and the Indian landowners were fearful that the value of their property would suffer. As a witty Indian told his fellow Bengalis: 'You have been crying for the moon, and they have given it to you; they have at the same time taken away the sun.' 83

The Englishman and the Statesman, organs of the European community, and the Hindoo Patriot, an organ of loyalist Hindus in the British Indian Association, assailed the government and particularly the viceroy and were joined in their criticism by Lord Curzon and the journalist Lovat Fraser.84

The Europeans and the Indian landed and business interests thought they would lose economically by the transfer. They saw as well that their political influence would be diminished if the imperial government were no longer stationed for at least six months of the year in Calcutta. After the first rapturous moment, some of the Moderates and of the Indian press came to agree with this point of view and regretted the transfer.85

The other group most unhappy about the two actions, especially the nullification of the partition, was the Bengali Muslim press. The Moslem Hitaishi tempered its criticism with loyalist restraint:

The news that our most respected King-Emperor has placed the two Bengals under the rule of one Governor has caused delight to us, for we have no right to object to any arrangement which Government may make for good government. Our sole object is to live happily and
peacefully under the protection of the Government. The Partition of Bengal was advantageous to the Musalmans of Eastern Bengal in all ways. This is why we rejoiced at the Partition and prayed to the Government to uphold it. However that may be, the present arrangement of placing the two Bengals under one Governor has satisfied the Musalmans of Bengal; but their prayer to the Government is this that the advantages which the Partition gained for the Musalmans of East Bengal in District Boards, Local Boards and Municipalities and in the public service and the field of education, may be maintained. In short, it is the earnest desire of all Musalmans in Bengal that a system of separate representation, like that for election of members to the Legislative Councils may be introduced regarding election to District Boards, Local Boards and Municipalities also. Besides this, it is desirable that Government should see to the distribution of posts in the public service in a district amongst Hindus and Musalmans according to their respective numerical strength.86

Some more severe Muslim comments were published in the Calcutta-based Comrade, edited by Mohammed Ali, a non-Bengali Muslim with an Oxford degree:

As for the Musalmans of East Bengal, they must derive what cold comfort they can from the well-known lines:

Laugh, and the world laughs with you.
Weep, and you weep alone.

After all they are only "loyal and contented" and as a reward of their loyalty and contentment they have been given a generous helping of the humble pie.87

In the same issue of Comrade:

Except in Bengal, where it touches certain vested interests too closely, the transfer of the Government seat to Delhi has been received with considerable satisfaction in every other part of the country. Calcutta had made it possible for the Bengali to loom beyond all proportions in Indian affairs, and it is no fault of the Indian Government if it viewed public questions affecting the whole of the country sometimes in a false perspective and consequently blundered. In Delhi, while perpetuating a great Imperial tradition and finding an appropriate capital for a great Empire, the Government will find the necessary detachment for the impartial conduct of Indian affairs. The Anglo-Indian press in Calcutta is up in arms against the change. The non-official community in this city is as a class very powerful and the Anglo-Indian press is ever ready to dance to its tune.88
As the Comrade observed, many non-Bengali and non-Calcutta groups and interests were pleased with the transfer. As one high civil servant pointed out in his memoirs, they had long been jealous of Calcutta’s influence on the affairs of the empire and were glad to see it reduced.

The shift of the capital did mark a turning point in the history of Bengal’s role in Indian history. It was only with the coming of the Europeans and the establishment of the British Raj that the Bengalis and Bengal were placed at the center of a vast empire. The possibility for the conversion of parochial issues into Indian ones gave the leaders of nonofficial Calcutta and Bengal a prominence in Indian affairs that was in part a product of geographic circumstance. There were, of course, other factors, such as the rapid development of Western education, the press, and the professions in Bengal, but these were also related to the importance the British gave to the area by settling their imperial government there. The adaptability of Bengalis in taking to a new culture and to changes in administration was involved as well. When the governmental seat changed, the special place of Bengal was seriously impaired. Moreover, in their inability to sustain the Swadeshi agitation or to build an effective, on-going organization, the Bengali politicians had failed as national leaders, a fact that also was to have important consequences for the history of Bengal in the Indian nationalist movement.

But there were several positive results of the Swadeshi period. It marked a much more developed stage of agitational politics than could be seen in previous Bengali nationalist activity. For some, verbally at least, it meant the end of the legitimacy of the Raj and the realization that only Indian self-government would foster their rights and interests. There was, too, the growth of both the Bengali and the English-language press, spreading news of the movement to most of the important district towns of Bengal and, in turn, reporting the agitation going on in outlying districts. The press of the time was filled with Swadeshi poems and songs heralding an emotional release and expressiveness which became a feature of nationalism in Bengal. The cry “Bande Mataram” and the adoption of this song from Chatterjee’s novel symbolized the confluence of cultural currents and political activities and the mood of defiance which characterized the Swadeshi years.

Although most Muslims and ordinary Bengali villagers remained outside the nationalist movement, the Swadeshi period did see a further move toward the creation of a genuine nationalist political party, even
though its activities were limited. More realistic proposals for party-
building were put forward, even if they were not implemented. The
idea that nationalist politics involved devoted work and the possible
sacrifice of one's career spread among the younger men in the colleges.
Probably many more Bengalis were made aware of contemporary po-
litical developments, if only by a brief public meeting in their towns or
villages, than at any earlier time under British rule. To more fully ex-
plore this period, the career and personality of the Extremist Auro-
bindo Ghose are analyzed in the next chapter.
Aurobindo Ghose, Extremist leader and secret revolutionary, participated in Bengali and nationalist politics for less than four years, but his writings and ideas then and at other times in his life made a sharp impression on many political workers in Bengal. During this brief and exciting period, he also became one of the Indian politicians most feared by the Home Department of the government of India, and its constant surveillance and treatment of him may be taken as a case study of its new policy of repression.¹

In 1910, in the midst of intense political activity, Aurobindo suddenly left the public stage to become a yogin and guru. His shift to the religious life has increased the difficulties for critical biographers of his career. Many of those who have gathered information about Aurobindo Ghose (or Sri Aurobindo, as he was called later in his life) have been disciples. Almost without exception, they have given readers the life of a saint, who they assume was an avatar. The human characteristics and personal drama have been lost in the process.² To this difficulty has been added another: Aurobindo was secretive about his personal life and feelings. He wrote and spoke of himself in the third person, lengthening the distance between himself and his actions. Aurobindo and his disciple-biographers wrote about his political career years after it had taken place and read back the holy man into the earlier stages of his career, viewing the political activities as preparatory to the religious and ascetic stage.³
PREPARATION AND EDUCATION, 1872–1892

Aurobindo’s father, Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose, came from a Kayastha family associated with the village of Konnagar in Hooghly District, near Calcutta. After training in Edinburgh, Dr. Ghose became a civil surgeon and was posted to Bhagalpur, Rangpur, and Khulna during his career in the government service. He married Swarnalata, the daughter of Rajnarayan Basu, a prominent Brahmo Samaj leader and an important figure in the cultural life of Calcutta. Basu participated in the Hindu revival of the later nineteenth century and helped to found the Hindu Mela festival. His daughter Swarnalata has been said to have suffered from “hysteria” and fits of violence and depression which made life for her husband and children extremely difficult. It is unfortunate that more specific examples of the behavior of Swarnalata have not been recorded. The term “hysteria” seems to imply that she went into melodramatic fits which brought her much attention. Although it often appears that a hysterical person is weak because of such fits, it is possible that they function as a means of getting power over others. It seems justifiable to suggest that Aurobindo’s lifelong obsession with mother figures dates from his childhood. In his writing, especially his writing about himself but even in his writing about the clash of cultures in modern India, there is a melodramatic quality that may stem from the scenes of childhood.

Aurobindo was the third of five children, having two older brothers, Binoybhushan and Monomohan, a younger sister, Sarojini, and a younger brother, Barindra Kumar. He was born in 1872 and spent the first seven years of his life shuttling between his family’s home in Khulna, his maternal grandfather’s home in Deogarh, and the Loretto Convent School in Darjeeling. Aurobindo’s father is said to have become an atheist after a brief period of interest in the Brahmo Samaj. He was firmly attached to Anglicized personal habits and beliefs. He decided to give his children a completely English education and sent them to English private schools during their early years. In 1879 he took the family to England, where he left three of the young boys in the care of English families to obtain a Western education. They remained there alone for some thirteen years, the only contact with their parents through the mail. Aurobindo frequently had the company of
his brothers, but, according to his own account, made few friendships in England, and those few inconsequential. Writing of his early years at the school in Darjeeling, Aurobindo described a dream in which he was enveloped in darkness, or "tamas" in the philosophical terminology he adopted in his later writing. The life of the Ghose brothers was so difficult and unusual for children of a high-caste, fairly well-to-do family that perhaps Aurobindo could only see a life of darkness before him.10

Aurobindo's father was caught between two national identities and tried to resolve this problem for his sons by encapsulating them in an English environment. But the father and his sons remained in a bipolar dilemma. The father implicitly or explicitly laid down certain ideals for his sons, but even these had a bipolar quality. They were to succeed in English schools and institutions as adjudged by English standards. When it came to career choices, however, their Indianness came into play. Aurobindo was to try for the Indian Civil Service, not the English civil service. Monomohan did teach English literature and write poetry in English, in India. In part, both father and sons were trapped without a country with which they could fully identify. The Indian nation, as an independent entity at least, was just in the process of creation. They had to try to make good in the English world, the world of the rulers and, as Aurobindo and many other Indians came to believe, of the oppressors of India. Identification with the oppressor had tragic potential for many Indians; grasping the English rose, they might be pierced by the thorns.

The loneliness of the Ghose brothers in England came during the crucial period of adolescence. At this time one usually forms important and sometimes lasting ties to one's peers, but Aurobindo, by his own admission, did not.11 This may have hampered the formation of relationships with others throughout his life and may partially account for his tendency to retreat into himself at times of stress.

Aurobindo lived in Manchester from 1879 to 1884, in London from September 1884 to July 1890, at Cambridge from 1890 to 1892. He spent his last months in London before returning to India at the end of 1892. While in Manchester, he was tutored by the Reverend William H. Drewett, with whose family he was staying, and his two older brothers attended the Manchester Grammar School. Aurobindo dis-
played a high aptitude for classical studies and was admitted to St. Paul's School in London and later to Cambridge University mainly on the basis of his abilities and achievements in languages and literatures. In his own account of himself as a youth, he wrote:

In those days I was not particular about telling the truth and I was a great coward. Nobody could have imagined that later on I could face the gallows or carry on a revolutionary movement . . .

A more prosaic and neglected account appeared amid Home Department files concerning the seditionist and conspirator Aurobindo, written by Mr. A. Wood, ICS, who had attended St. Paul's School with the Ghose brothers in the 1880s:

Aravinda Acroyd Ghose attended St. Paul's School as a day-boy from about 1884 to 1890. He joined with a brother M. M. 5 years older, but apparently grounded with him and not so bright, so that Aravinda soon left him behind and reached the top of the school very rapidly, on the classical side. Unlike his elder brother, he knew no Indian language: he mispronounced oriental names in the same ways as an Englishman, but talked English with an Indian accent. Though Aravinda seems to have dropped his 'Acroyd' since, both brothers in their school-days used to attend prayers and were understood to be Christians, though where or how they lived or who looked after them, I think none of us knew or cared. We only noticed that Aravinda especially grew more and more dirty and unkempt and looked more and more unhealthy and neglected. Neither of them played any games or made any friends that I ever saw, except that some boys used to patronize Aravinda a little because he was so childish. That continued, his characteristic—and 'Baby Ghose' his nickname—all his school-days. At Greek and Latin he was brilliant, but no use at anything else, and seemed to have no ideas in his head.

Mr. Wood went on to detail how Monomohan began to write “revolutionary and erotic lyrics in English” and grew wilder and shabbier as he grew older. He found it hard to believe that “Baby Ghose” had become a revolutionary leader and that his older brother was uninvolved. Mr. Wood's account shows the loneliness and poverty in which the Ghose brothers lived in England, when their father's remittances were irregular and infrequent. Aurobindo wrote poetry and read a great deal. For all his academic achievements and prizes for classical studies, he was still an outsider. As Mr. Wood pointed out, he did not engage
in games or make friendships and so become one of the crowd either at St. Paul’s or at Cambridge. It should be noted that similar themes run through the lives of Aurobindo and his older brother Monomohan. Both went through periods of rebellion and both had to try to find some compromise between their English training and their Indian nationality. Both wrote English poetry but turned more to Indian themes. In their youth Monomohan was the more rebellious; in his mature years he found his niche as a professor of English literature in India. Aurobindo came to rebellion in his mature years and it became a more dominant theme in his life.

The extent to which Aurobindo was “denationalized” by these English years has been overstressed. He lived in an English environment, but his main social contacts were with his brothers, who were older and had lived longer in India. Dr. Ghose wrote to his sons and sent clippings from the Bengalee describing English injustices in India. At Cambridge, Aurobindo joined the Indian Majlis, an organization of Indian students, and he said he made nationalist speeches to this group. A check of Aurobindo’s records as an ICS candidate reveal that in the final examination he received 298 marks out of a possible 400 in Bengali, 167 out of 500 in Sanskrit, and high marks in the history and geography of India. Mitra says that Aurobindo tried to learn Bengali and Sanskrit on his own and read many volumes in the Sacred Books of the East series.

Some biographers of Aurobindo claim that his father endured some disappointments during his career in the medical service, and that his embitterment compounded that of his sons. It appears that the fruits of Aurobindo’s education were a thorough knowledge of several Western languages, an elegant English prose style, and an extreme hostility to the rulers of India. Before he left England, Aurobindo, probably at his father’s urging and with the encouragement of his brothers, took the ICS examination. He scored high on the academic and linguistic portions but was not passed because he did not appear for the riding test. Mr. A. Wood claimed in his note on Aurobindo in 1908 that it was said that Aurobindo had an unspecified physical defect which was one of the reasons he was failed. But a search of the relevant files showed that although he was at first failed in the medical examination, he did subsequently pass it. Aurobindo said years later that certain "revolu-
tionary” speeches he had made at the Indian Majlis probably led to his disqualification, but a consideration of such speeches is nowhere to be found in the government files.\(^{21}\)

In the Judicial and Public Proceedings there are several letters by Aurobindo to British officials, including one to the Earl of Kimberley, then Secretary of State for India, in which Aurobindo pleaded for a second chance at the riding test.\(^{22}\) After this appeal was granted and he failed to appear again, he sent a request to receive the £150 usually given to probationers for expenses during the testing and preparatory period. The files contained as well a letter from one Jas. S. Cotton to Sir Arthur Macpherson, an official in the relevant department, begging that Aurobindo be given a third chance at the riding test:

> As you may know, Mr. Ghose was disqualified for failing to pass his examination in riding, or perhaps I should say, for failing to keep the appointment made for him by the examiner, after he had previously shown similar want of punctuality and disregard for the requirements of the examiner. His excuse (such as it is) is that want of money prevented him for [from?] taking the needful lessons in riding, and that, at the last, anxiety and moral cowardice made him lose his head.—He tells me that he did turn up at Woolwich for the examination, half an hour late.\(^{23}\)

On the surface at least, it seems that Aurobindo was eager to join the ICS at that time and that it was a very real possibility for him. He suggested in retrospect that God did not mean him to join the ICS because He had other important work for him to do.\(^{24}\) This explanation, however, seems to be completely ahistorical. Aurobindo had worked hard to develop intellectual skills and linguistic capabilities but had never participated in games or any active form of physical exertion. Rather than openly show his incompetence, he was conveniently late for the test. It seems to have been the fear of failure rather than God’s call or nationalist speeches that kept him out of the ICS.

There is also a high probability that Aurobindo had considerable ambivalence about joining the ICS. By the time he began training for the examination, he was receiving the Indian press clippings sent by his father. He was in touch with other India-students at Cambridge and probably had begun to shape out his nationalist opinions. He may have found it hard at that point in his life to deal with what one might call
the double message of father to son: do well by English standards, but also be an Indian man.

EDUCATIONAL WORK AND BARODA YEARS, 1892–1906

The same Mr. Cotton who had written to the government on Aurobindo's behalf arranged a meeting with the Gaekwar of Baroda.25 Aurobindo was offered and accepted a position in the service of the Gaekwar. Thus after thirteen years in England separated from family and country, Aurobindo returned to India. For the next fourteen years, the state of Baroda in Western India served as his home and base of operations.

He soon published one series of articles on the state of Indian politics and another on Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, with the aid of an Indian acquaintance from Cambridge, K. G. Deshpande.28 The articles on Indian politics, entitled "New Lamps for Old," were published in the Indu-Prakash, a Bombay weekly, from mid-1893 to early 1894. The Chatterjee series was published from July 16 to August 27, 1894. Both contributions were printed without the author's name.27 These articles show the continuity of Aurobindo's political opinions from his early twenties through the intense political phase of his life. The pieces on Bankim Chandra give cultural opinions, which shifted considerably through time.

The political opinions were couched in a pugnacious and provocative style. In arrogant tones, the author gave examples from ancient and modern European history to show the narrowness of other political commentators and the limitations of the Moderates' adherence to British models for political organization and ideology. Aurobindo asked why the Indians should copy the British when they were really more like the French and the Athenians.28 Although Aurobindo had had considerable training in English literature, his concentration on classical studies had turned him more to classical and continental European history and literature. All his political writing is filled with references to Greek and Roman history and also to French history. He helped to widen the range of organizational and ideological possibilities for his generation of Indian nationalists.

The "new men," or representatives of the new middle classes, as they described themselves, seemed to Aurobindo to represent a narrow
sliver of Indian society, with a mendicant political policy as well as a limited historical perspective. Still under the influence of his Western education, Aurobindo was more prepared to borrow from Western experience than he was later in life, when he found ancient Indian models more congenial. He always displayed an antipathy for British institutions. He attacked the legalistic constraints upon Indian political activity, attributing them to the prevalence of lawyers in politics. He was among the first Indian writers to call for connection to the masses. Here he was borrowing words more from the political vocabulary of continental Europe than from England. Noting and playing up the slightest signs of turbulence, he described the reactions of an Indian peasantry which he had never seen: the “fierce pain of hunger and oppression cuts to the bone.” In his image of society, he saw a decadent nobility, narrow-minded burgesses on the English model, and a torpid but potentially powerful proletariat which, he thought, represented “our sole chance.” By “our” he probably meant the politically conscious group within Indian society. He wanted a leadership group more radical than the Moderates, but as yet he could point to no group or individual as an example. Thus he looked to the field of letters and picked the Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee as a heroic model.

Aurobindo portrayed Bankim Chandra as a demigod, a gigantic figure astride the mid-nineteenth century, the central figure of the Indian renaissance. While he derided Anglo-Indian babus, the servile imitators of the haughty, greedy, rude, and ambitious British bureaucrats, Aurobindo held up Bankim Chandra as the one Indian hero who could stand comparison with the great leaders and literary men of Europe. This is another example of the colonial “need for the conviction of cultural equivalence.” In this phase of life, Aurobindo was still under the influence of the thought and standards of the West and even referred to the “hideous grotesques of old Hindu art.” He was searching for men as well as works of art and literature that would bear comparison with Western examples.

For all his harsh criticism of the Moderates and the contemporary generation of political leaders, Aurobindo was not ready to offer any thoughtful alternative or to plunge into political organizing himself. The years at Baroda have most often been viewed by his biographers as
a period of “Indianization” or renationalization to recover from the English years of “denationalization.” There seems no doubt that Aurobindo did spend much of his time working at Bengali and Sanskrit. A young Bengali who helped Aurobindo with his Bengali in this period described his appearance:

[His] footwear was a pair of nagra sandals of the primitive type; his dhoti half-tucked at the back of the waist, was coarse-spun Ahmedabad-mill khadi with an ill-looking border; a coarse banian covering the trunk; thin, long hair, parted half-way on the head, hanging down to the neck; ... eyes soft and dreamy; complexion a shade dark ... a living fount of English, French, Latin, Hebrew, Greek ... 35

Trained in classical studies, Aurobindo was able to turn to the study of Indian classics and progress rapidly. He read extensively in Sanskrit literature and philosophy and, in the course of time, adopted ancient Indian philosophy and values, as he interpreted them, for his own. What Aurobindo’s biographers seem to have overstressed is the discontinuity with his previous education. He had already begun to study Bengali and Sanskrit and to read Indian philosophy in England, and the training in Western intellectual disciplines undoubtedly facilitated his Indian studies in Baroda. His work on Shakespeare and Homer prepared the ground, one might well argue, for his researches on Kalidasa and the Bhagavad Gītā.

At Baroda, Aurobindo was employed as an English professor at the college in the state’s capital and also handled some of the Gaekwar’s correspondence. But he also led a kind of secret religious and political life. He made contact with political workers in Maharashtra who formed one wing of the Extremist or nationalist party and so came in touch with Indian politics in a concrete way. 36 He traveled to Bengal to visit his family and also to marry, but he does not seem to have thought of living and working in Bengal until the early 1900s. 37 He met some revolutionary workers from the Bombay Presidency, where such activity had begun in the 1890s and where the first anarchist acts were committed. He had held up the examples of Irish, American, Italian, and French revolutionaries in his first published political writings as men purified by blood and fire. 38 In his political ideology two general strategies always seem to be considered: the line of mass movement and the path of secretly plotted violent revolution. When he surfaced at the
end of his Baroda period, he was to work at both these strategies; but in the Baroda years he was slowly feeling his way and working toward an elaborate and viable alternative to the political models of the Moderates.

Aurobindo’s preparations at Baroda may be divided into two parts that eventually run together: the spiritual and the political. At Baroda and in other parts of western India, Aurobindo participated in seances, searched for a guru, and began to practice yoga. In his memoirs, Aurobindo wrote that he was told by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in one of the seances to make a temple and worship the Mother as strength. He was visited by Sister Nivedita, a disciple of Vivekananda who was later to become one of Aurobindo’s political collaborators in Calcutta.

It is not clear just when Aurobindo began his practice of yoga, but it was undertaken to gain strength and self-control. Although one might see this as a new chapter in his life, culminating in his withdrawal into a religious vocation in 1910, it is also possible to see it as a further step in developing and expanding his inner resources. During his youth in England, he had been forced by circumstances to draw heavily on his inner resources and intellect. He made his principal contacts with his environment by utilizing these carefully developed abilities to gain academic prizes and advancement at St. Paul’s School and Cambridge. In an Indian setting, not as cut off by circumstances from social and political contacts, he was making an effort in a new way to control and to use his inner talents and drives to win victories in an often hostile (and English-dominated) environment. It is not so surprising that one thrown back on himself for thirteen years should have continued the habit of long periods of withdrawal and “inner work” to be later expended in the world of activity. With such careful preparations, one might hypothesize, went fears of premature and uncontrolled personal exposure. Putting one’s self on the line was potentially threatening to one who as a youth had been ridiculed and demeaned in a foreign setting with which he was not altogether able to cope. In the Baroda period and afterwards, we can see in the pattern of life Aurobindo chose elaborate and secret preparations and then, in the field of politics, careful and controlled exposures to the outside world. There were, of course, good reasons for this, since he was engaged in yoga
and revolution, but it is interesting that he chose to involve himself in fields that necessitated withdrawal and secrecy.

In his memoirs, which are partially in the form of answers to questions of his disciples and were meant to correct false impressions of his life, Aurobindo placed the stress on spiritual "sadhana" (discipline) in the Baroda that some had described. He said in part:

Sri Aurobindo had some connection with a member of the governing body of the Naga Sannyasis who gave him a mantra of Kali (or rather stotra) and conducted certain kriyas and a Vedic yagna, but all this was for political success in his mission and not for Yoga.43

The priorities are clear: in the later years at Baroda and the first two or three years in Calcutta (perhaps 1900 to 1908 or 1909), Aurobindo placed politics before religion, although he often couched his political writing and speeches in religious phraseology.44

During the Baroda years, he began slowly to emerge onto the political scene. He sent emissaries to Bengal and was in touch with developments in Maharashtra, for he met Tilak and several revolutionary workers from that part of India.45 He turned to his native region as the logical ground for his political work. In his articles in the Indu Prakash, Aurobindo had described the position of Bengal:

In politics, the Bengali has always led and still leads. But the Congress in Bengal is dying of consumption; annually its proportions sink into greater insignificance; its leaders, the Bonnerji's and Banerji's and Lalmohan Ghoses, have climbed into the rarefied atmosphere of the Legislative Council and lost all hold on the imagination of the young men. The desire for a nobler and more inspiring patriotism is growing more intense; and in the rise of an indigenous Trade Party we see the handwriting on the wall. This is an omen of good hope for the future; for what Bengal thinks tomorrow, India will be thinking tomorrow week... let Bengal only be true to her own soul, and there is no province in which she may not climb to greatness.46

Bengal had the capacity to lead India if she had the right leaders, and Aurobindo identified himself with Bengal as one of the men who could lead her forward.

In the missions to Bengal, Aurobindo employed a young Bengali who served in the Baroda military service, Jatin Banerjee, as well as his younger brother, Barindra Kumar Ghose. Banerjee went to Bengal in
1903 and began to make contacts with the societies of young men that had been formed for both political and apolitical reasons since the later years of the nineteenth century. Aurobindo himself is said to have visited Bengal and given an oath to P. Mitra, one of the earliest of the revolutionary organizers, as a Maharashtrian had given him a revolutionary oath in 1901. By 1904 and 1905, centers for later revolutionary work are said to have been set up in Khulna, Rangpur, Dacca, and Midnapur.\textsuperscript{47} In addition to this secret political work, Aurobindo attended the 1902 session of the Congress in Ahmadabad and the 1904 Congress in Bombay. Sisirkumar Mitra maintains that at this time, Aurobindo laid plans for the eventual capture of the Congress organization by a more extreme political group.\textsuperscript{48}

While still in Baroda, Aurobindo wrote a short pamphlet called \textit{Bhawani Mandir} (Temple of Goddess Bhawani). Years later, Aurobindo said that he wrote it at the urging of his brother Barin rather than from any motivation of his own.\textsuperscript{49} Most of his biographers treat it with full seriousness, but it is possible that it was a facade for very different aims. In any case, the pamphlet was secretly published and circulated. It was an assessment of the Indian situation and a plan for the revival of India using religious concepts. It has been connected to Chatterjee's \textit{Anandamath} and to the tradition of Tantric religious practice and philosophy.\textsuperscript{50}

The world in \textit{Bhawani Mandir} is described as being created anew in each epoch and energized by a different aspect of the female principle. “In the present age, the Mother is manifested as the Mother of Strength. She is pure Shakti.” \textsuperscript{51}

The deeper we look, the more we shall be convinced that the one thing wanting, which we must strive to acquire before all others, is strength—strength physical, strength mental, strength moral, but above all strength spiritual which is the one inexhaustible and imperishable source of all the others.\textsuperscript{52}

The view of the world as shakti is linked to the Indian nation:

\textit{What is our mother-country? It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty Shakti, composed of the Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation, just as Bhawani Mahisha Mardini sprang into being from the Shakti of all the millions of gods assembled in one mass of force and welded into unity.}
The Shakti we call India, Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of the Shaktis of three hundred million people; but she is inactive, imprisoned in the magic circle of tamas, the self-indulgent inertia and ignorance of her sons. To get rid of tamas we have but to wake the Brahma within.  

The terms and concepts used by Aurobindo in this pamphlet and especially in this passage are drawn in large measure from the *Markandeya Purana*, which was a Brahanical text with Tantric influences. The other influence obviously seems to be Bankim Chandra’s *Anandamath*, where there is a mingling of Shakti and Vaishnava traditions. Here and in his later writing, Aurobindo showed much more of an affinity for Shaktism over Vaishnavism and for devotion to the Mother Goddess than did Bankim Chandra. The political sannyasins of Bhawani Mandir are to build a temple to the Mother as Shakti (see p. 80) and to work for the regeneration of India. They are to put aside all personal gratifications while striving to achieve a greater end. Their work is divided into practical tasks to be carried out in conjunction with the “people,” “the Middle Class,” and “the Wealthy Classes.”

In this treatise, the religious and the political, according to modern Western categories, are fused. Aurobindo has set the dilemmas of the nationalist in a religious setting so that the deterioration of the world in the Tantras becomes the deterioration of India. Kees W. Bolle, in relating Aurobindo to the Tantric tradition, has noted that in *Bhawani Mandir*, as in the Tantras, the urge for emancipation and the urge for power go together. Aurobindo, demonstrating what Bolle calls “the urge to incorporate everything,” has syncretized religious elements and national messianism. Aurobindo gives fallen India a mission to “aryanise the world.” In designing a world historical mission for India, he has followed in the tradition of Keshub Sen and Vivekananda. In the early twentieth century not only Aurobindo, but also Tagore and Bipin Pal were all sketching out a world role for India, providing different ideological frameworks and practical proposals for their countrymen.

In *Bhawani Mandir* the British are not present and are not held responsible for the fall of India. Rather, Indians abandoned Shakti and therefore were abandoned by her. Aurobindo is trying to arouse the necessary emotions of pride, pity, hope, and devotion to the Mother as
Shakti and as he does so, he separates the Arya shaktis from the mleccha (foreign) shaktis. It would seem from both internal evidence and wider information about Aurobindo's thought that he either completely ignored the Muslims or would include them with the mleccha shaktis. In doing this, he was following the implicit or explicit anti-Muslim line of the Hindu nationalists and religious ideologues of the later nineteenth century. As British officials realized, and pointed out in memoranda they exchanged with each other, by encouraging nationalism in a religious direction men like Aurobindo were exploiting the religious sentiments of many Hindus but alienating the Muslims.

The passages quoted from Bhawani Mandir and the pamphlet as a whole may appear wild, abstract, and irrelevant to practical politics. But the assessment of fallen India, the evaluation of responsibility for the fall, the division of Indian society into three large classes, and some of the directions for revival are quite similar to the views Aurobindo couched in secular terms in "New Lamps for Old." He may have erected a religious facade to make his pamphlet more innocuous to the censors, but it is not so far out of line with his later writings.

It is possible to interpret the conflict described in Bhawani Mandir as one going on within Aurobindo. Perhaps he felt inside himself the battle between the Arya shaktis and the mleccha shaktis. From his first political articles and certainly from the later years at Baroda, it is clear that Aurobindo wanted to purge the foreign elements from within himself and from his country. He saw his individual conflicts writ large in English-Indian relations.

The Baroda period, then, might be seen as a training period. He learned a good deal about Indian culture and studied Bengali and Sanskrit; he chose lieutenants to help him in his political work; he made contact with both political and spiritual advisers in western India; and he made trips to Bengal and to Congress sessions that helped him to understand Indian politics more concretely. During the same years, Aurobindo began to write about Sanskrit literature, to do some translations, and to write his own poetry.

After the partition of Bengal and the start of the Swadeshi movement, Aurobindo decided that the moment was right and emerged onto the political stage in Bengal. He felt that partition was a great blessing in disguise, for it awakened many Bengalis to political life who
had previously been ignorant or uninterested. Unlike Rash Behari Ghose or Gurudas Banerjee, who had felt that politics was not their proper sphere of activity, Aurobindo had displayed nationalist passion in his early twenties; but he had waited for what he considered the opportune moment, when he could help achieve the goals in which he believed. As the Swadeshi movement brought in the young and the apolitical, it captured middle-aged men like Aurobindo and Tagore, who decided that the time had come for active participation.

POLITICAL CAREER IN CALCUTTA, 1906–1910

In a speech on August 22, 1907, to the students and teachers of the Bengal National College, Aurobindo said: “the experience I am going to undergo was long foreseen as inevitable in the discharge of the mission that I have taken up from my childhood, and I am approaching it without regret.” 61 The mission Auróbindo was imagining at this point was his role in Indian politics. He later conceived of an even more difficult mission of raising the consciousness of mankind. His sense of mission may be linked to his lonely and unusual adolescence, which may have led him to believe that he was specially and even divinely chosen. The shifts in his activity followed long periods of preparation and, one might suppose, fantasy of greatness.

Now Aurobindo had to establish contacts for himself in Calcutta and in Bengal, the home of his family and his birthplace but a region in which he had spent little time since the age of seven. In March 1906, on leave from his position in Baroda, he had attended the Barisal Conference and toured east Bengal, and in July 1906 he left Baroda permanently. 62 His brother Barin and several others, including Bhupendranath Datta, younger brother of Swami Vivekananda and lifelong revolutionary, started the Extremist paper Jugantar (New Era), for which Aurobindo seems to have served in a supervisory capacity. Mitra mentions conflicts on the staff involving Barin that Aurobindo settled against Barin’s position. 63 In doing this, Aurobindo was fulfilling one important role of traditional Bengali political leaders: he was moving rather autocratically to settle internal disputes. It was in such a supervisory capacity, as well as in the role of theoretician, that Aurobindo was to do much of his political work. He often left concrete plans and actions to his brother or other subordinates.
One contact that Aurobindo made in Bengal was with Subodh Mal-lik, one of the important financial backers of the National Council of Education and of the paper Bande Mataram. Aurobindo accepted the position of first principal of the Bengal National College, which gave him a legitimate position in Calcutta and brought him to public attention. He received a small salary; it appears that after he gave up his post in Baroda he did not have much money, and he lived a rather simple life in Calcutta. Aurobindo was forced to resign his principalship while under trial in the Alipore bomb case (see below) in 1908.

From 1906 to 1908, Aurobindo wrote a great number of articles on the political issues of the day and gave several speeches of a political nature. The most coherent and organized statement of Aurobindo's political ideas in this period can be found in The Doctrine of Passive Resistance, which appeared as a series of articles in Bande Mataram from April 9 to April 23, 1907. The final article was seized by the police before it could be published. The significant themes in Aurobindo's writing during this period were the Indian past, the present Indian situation, the rise of Indian nationalism and the nature of the Indian nation, the Bengali role, the priority of politics, the methods and rationales of the struggle, ideals for the nationalist worker, and the destiny of nation, party, and self.

Following the ideas set forth in Bhawani Mandir, Aurobindo stated in many articles that India was a unique culture and civilization. In "Spirituality and Nationalism" he wrote:

A great light is drawing on the East, a light whose first heralding glimpses are already seen on the horizon; a new day is about to break, so glorious that even the last of the avatars cannot be sufficient to explain it, although without him [i.e., Ramakrishna] it would not have come. The perfect expression of Hindu spirituality was the signal for the resurgence of the East. . . . The East alone has some knowledge of the truth, the East alone can teach the West, the East alone can save mankind. Through all these ages Asia has been seeking for a light within, and whenever she has been blessed with a glimpse of what she seeks, a great religion has been born, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Mahomedanism with all their countless sects. But the grand workshop of spiritual experiment, the laboratory of the soul has been India, where thousands of great spirits have been born in every generation. . . . Of all these souls Sri Ramakrishna was the last and greatest. . . . What Christianity failed to do, what Mahomedanism strove to ac-
complish in times as yet unripe, what Buddhism half accomplished for a brief period and among a limited number of men, Hinduism as summed up in the life of Sri Ramakrishna has to attempt for all the world. This is the reason of India’s resurgence, this is why God has breathed life into her once more. . . . The movement of which the first outbreak was political, will end in a spiritual consummation.67

This passage links Aurobindo to the Bengali religious leaders and ideologues of the later nineteenth century as well as to the other spokesmen of the Swadeshi movement. Rather than stressing the mixing and combining of traditions, as did Tagore, Aurobindo stressed the religious aspects. Aurobindo saw the political phase as a prelude, a necessary first step, to the spiritual stage to follow. As God had chosen Asia, and especially India, to be the source of religious leadership and religious ideals, so also God was behind the Indian nationalist movement, which was divinely inspired. Aurobindo was trying to bring together religion and politics by his stress on the divine nature of not only Indian nationalism and the message of his own party, but finally his own thought. More and more frequently, he employed concepts and terms from Indian religion in his writing.68 In the Calcutta period he asserted the priority of politics, but by 1910 he had reversed his priorities and decided that spiritual and moral regeneration would have to precede political advance.

In this period, he viewed nationalism as a religion. The Almighty, he said, was the leader of the national march forward.69 He conceived of the nation itself in several different ways:

a nation cannot be made,—it is an organism which grows under the stress of a principle of life within. . . . A nation is indeed the outward expression of a community of sentiment, whether it be the sentiment of a common blood or the sentiment of a common religion or the sentiment of a common interest or any or all of these sentiments combined.70

In Bhawani Mandir he had stressed the combined shaktis of the 300 million Indians who composed the nation. Here he stressed the organic nature of the nation through which the religious-cum-nationalistic life-blood pulsed. He was implicitly seeking to refute the British writers who said India had never been a nation and was only now becoming something like one because of the British-run political and administra-
tive framework. Aurobindo maintained that the common sentiment which all Indians were gradually coming to feel would have to be linked with political independence.

To be content with the relations of master and dependent or superior and subordinate would be a mean and pitiful aspiration unworthy of manhood; to strive for anything less than a strong and glorious freedom would be to insult the greatness of our past and the magnificent possibilities of our future.\textsuperscript{71}

Aurobindo's contemporary, Rabindranath Tagore, stressed that national reconstruction should be the first task and need not follow political independence; but Aurobindo in his political phase insisted that independence from Britain had to come first. Only after such a separation could men turn their energies without fear of reprisal to the work of village redevelopment, national art and literature, and the restructuring of the educational system. Aurobindo offered rationales from Indian religious texts, most often the \textit{Bhagavad Gītā}. Turning from the lofty rhetoric of India's spiritual mission in the modern world, Aurobindo argued that Indians were not saints and that loving other races—especially one's foreign rulers—was against Nature.\textsuperscript{72} India was faced with national death and emasculation, or what one might call the white peril.\textsuperscript{73} At such times, men should not laboriously debate the proper means to be employed in political action, because all methods were permissible. He stated:

\begin{quote}
The school of politics which we advocate is not based upon abstractions, formulas and dogmas, but on practical necessities and the teaching of political experience, common sense and the world's history. . . . We recognize no political object except the divinity in our Motherland, no present object of political endeavour except liberty, and no method of action as political good or evil except as it truly helps or hinders our progress towards national emancipation.\textsuperscript{74}
\end{quote}

Aurobindo listed three kinds of resistance: armed revolt, aggressive resistance short of armed revolt, and defensive resistance, whether passive or active.\textsuperscript{75}

\begin{quote}
[T]he circumstances of the country and the nature of the despotism from which it seeks to escape must determine what form of resistance is best justified and most likely to be effective at the time or finally successful.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}
Since the Indian people were unarmed and not prepared in any way for an armed struggle,

The present circumstances in India seem to point to passive resistance as our most natural and suitable weapon. We would not for a moment be understood to base this conclusion upon any condemnation of other methods as in all circumstances criminal and unjustifiable.\textsuperscript{77}

The main feature of passive resistance was to be total boycott of British-run administrative, economic, educational, and judicial institutions. The concomitant of boycott was to be self-help, or Swadeshi. At the same time Indians were to try to bring the British-controlled system to a halt, they were also to build an indigenous system, more suited to Indian conditions. Aurobindo was not offering anything new in this program. Tagore, Bipin Pal, Subodh Mallick, and others had been advocating these same ideas for several years; Aurobindo was simply restating them in an orderly fashion.\textsuperscript{78}

At the same time, however, Aurobindo was offering a slightly disguised but visible rationale for the use of violence that could scarcely escape any reader of \textit{The Doctrine of Passive Resistance}. He wrote:

Under certain circumstances a civil struggle becomes in reality a battle and the morality of war is different from the morality of peace. To shrink from bloodshed and violence under such circumstances is a weakness deserving as severe a rebuke as Sri Krishna addressed to Arjuna when he shrank from the colossal civil slaughter on the field of Kurukshetra.\textsuperscript{79}

He was ready to answer those Englishmen or Indians who offered what he called “the cant of the oppressor”:

It is the common habit of established Governments and especially those which are themselves oppressors, to brand all violent methods in subject peoples and communities as criminal and wicked. When you have disarmed your slaves and legalised the infliction of bonds, stripes and death on any one of them, man, woman or child, who may dare to speak or to act against you, it is natural and convenient to try to lay a moral as well as a legal ban on any attempt to answer violence by violence. . . . But no nation yet has listened to the cant of the oppressor when itself put to the test, and the general conscience of humanity approves the refusal.\textsuperscript{80}

In presenting his case for the justifiable use of violence, Aurobindo offered backing from the \textit{Bhagavad Gītā}, from comparative historical
experiences of many peoples, and from "the general conscience of humanity." The Indian tradition as well as Western, or simply human, traditions were mentioned in support of his arguments. Although he felt Indians had an unusual penchant for enduring suffering which made passive resistance particularly appealing to them, they were no strangers to the use of violence should circumstances demand it. In his vision of the use of violence as an important and necessary aspect of the Indian experience, Aurobindo was reading this experience differently from Tagore, Bipin Pal, and the whole school of Indian Moderates, as well as the Gandhians of a decade and a half later. But Aurobindo would have answered that all these men were subject to the "cant of the oppressor," and thus were misunderstanding Indian history. Although there has been much mixing and blurring of lines in Bengali religious traditions, it can be maintained that willingness to use violence when necessary is more in accord with the Shakta than with the Vaishnava tradition. Thus Aurobindo was closest to the Shakta tradition, although he held up the Krishna cult as one of India's greatest achievements. In selecting those aspects of Krishna's teaching that were important, however, he chose the Bhagavad Gītā, rather than the more peaceful Bhāgavata Purāṇa, and interpreted the Gītā in a particularly literal way.

In analyzing the contemporary Indian situation, Aurobindo blurred the dividing lines between the definitions of aggressive and passive resistance which he had set down at the beginning of The Doctrine of Passive Resistance. In the last article, which was partly an answer to a call by Tagore for love, understanding, and self-help, Aurobindo wrote:

The morality of the Kshatriya justifies violence in times of war, and boycott is a war... Aggression is unjust only when unprovoked; violence, unrighteous when used wantonly or for unrighteous ends. ... The sword of the warrior is as necessary to the fulfilment of justice and righteousness as the holiness of the saint. ... To maintain justice and prevent the strong from despoiling, and the weak from being oppressed, is the function for which the Kshatriya was created. "Therefore" says Sri Krishna in the Mahabharata, "God created battle and armour, the sword, the bow and the dagger."  

Aurobindo could not have offered a much more direct rationale for the use of violence. With Rabindranath, he saw that many were impli-
cated in the use of violence by a few Bengalis, including the rulers of India. He disagreed with Rabindranath, however, on the appropriateness of aggressive resistance in the Swadeshi period. Rabindranath felt that the use of arms was not in keeping with Indian traditions and would be an ineffective political shortcut. Aurobindo saw armed resistance as perfectly compatible with those Indian traditions which were meaningful to him. Both men intermingled religion and politics. It becomes obvious that Indian religious traditions can be used to sanction a variety of viewpoints.

Although Aurobindo supported the boycott and the national education movement, he felt by 1907 that "the Boycott is not yet effective except spasmodically and in patches." [F]

For the want of a central authority to work for the necessary conditions, to support by its ubiquitous presence the weak and irresolute and to coerce the refractory, it has not been properly carried out. For the same reason national education languishes . . . it requires also an iron endurance, tenacity, doggedness, far above anything that is needed for the more usual military revolt or sanguinary revolution. . . . Boycott has been admitted as permissible in principle to all parts of India though the recommendation to extend it in practice as an integral part of the national policy was not pressed. It only remained to develop the central authority which will execute the national policy and evolve with time into a popular Government.

Like Rabindranath, Aurobindo saw that the Bengalis were adept at formulating plans but had not developed the ability to organize or to carry them out effectively. In the passage above, Aurobindo spells out the norms which he thought should guide nationalist activity: a strong central organization on the political level, tenacity, capacity for and individual self-denial, suffering, and sacrifice. In specifying these general guides, he was following the prescriptions of Vivekananda and other religious ideologues of the late nineteenth century. The religious currents of the nineteenth-century Bengal flowed rather directly into the nationalist movement in several ways. For instance the ideals of conduct for Brahma Samaj preachers and for members of the Ramakrishna Mission were being taken over as role models for the political or nationalist worker.

Though Aurobindo could easily rise to heights of generality and speak of India's mission or the role of Asia in regenerating the world,
his primary concern was Bengal. In a speech to an audience in Bombay on January 19, 1908, after the Surat Congress, Aurobindo described the place of Bengal:

Nationalism is immortal; Nationalism cannot die; because it is no human thing, it is God who is working in Bengal. . . . Let me tell you what it is that has happened in Bengal. . . . You know very well what you yourselves used to say of the Bengali. . . . If anybody had told you that Bengal would come forward as the saviour of India, how many of you would have believed it? . . . What has made the Bengali so different from his old self? One thing has happened in Bengal and it is this that Bengal is learning to believe. Bengal was once drunk with the wine of European civilization . . . Bengal became atheistic. . . . But still in Bengal there was an element of strength. Whatever the Bengali believed, if he believed at all, . . . there was one thing about the Bengali, that he lived what he believed.\(^8\)

He was concerned to show the moral and religious superiority of the Bengali, but he wanted even more passionately to demonstrate equality of strength which would help to bring independence from the rulers who not only oppressed his country but also derided its inhabitants. Especially for the ridiculed Bengali, a special role in turning out the foreigner was essential. Aurobindo felt called upon to answer British characterizations of the Bengali, and thus he responded to the Times:

For sometime past its columns have been disgraced by the most foul suggestions and insinuations against Indian character, especially against the character of the Bengalees who have perhaps been showing a more unconquerable determination to bring its pretences to the ground than their countrymen in other parts of the country. . . . Utterly confuted in its favourite theory of moral incapacity as an inherent failing of the Bengalee character, by the self-devotion of our workers who have demonstrated to a certainty the moral superiority of the National movement in Bengal to the alien bureaucracy that rules over the country, the Times has now laid desecrating hands upon the sanctity of our inner life. Frustrated in its lying criticism of our men, it has now turned to a shameless and brutal attack on our women.\(^9\)

The Times article indicated that some widows in Dacca allowed themselves to be abducted rather than commit suttee or endure the hardships of traditional Indian widowhood. Aurobindo answered with a spirited defense of Indian women, marriage, and treatment of widows, and verged on defending suttee, a custom which British officials and
liberal Indians had worked so hard to abolish in the nineteenth century.

Aurobindo and some of his contemporaries spoke more directly and bluntly in their articles and speeches than had been usual for the early nationalists. Aurobindo openly expressed his hatred and aggressive feelings. After the call of Surendranath Banerjea and the Moderates for order, restraint, and conciliatory tones at all times, the Swadeshi period and the writings of the Extremists show an outpouring of passion. Many songs and poems arousing and celebrating the new enthusiasm were written. The cry of “Bande Mataram” was the most common call of defiance; in some parts of Bengal, the British forbade it. The era of careful petitions and conciliatory words was fast drawing to a close.

When Aurobindo returned to Bengal, according to both his own memoirs and his biographers, he had planned for himself a threefold program of action. First, he would help to educate the public through his writings; second, he would work with other Extremists to capture the Congress organization from the Moderates; and third, he would secretly help prepare for violent insurrection. When he came to Calcutta in 1906, he joined with Bipin Pal and others in founding Bande Mataram and collaborated more indirectly with Barin in editing the even more revolutionary paper Jugantar. Both papers lasted less than two years, but they had some impact on Indian readers and succeeded in bringing down the repressive hand of the Home Department. To the government, particularly to the Home Department, which was concerned with law and order, Aurobindo was an editor of “seditious papers” and a “dangerous character.” They were worried about his influence on “impressionable youths” with whom he was popular by 1907. Whatever his failures in political action, Aurobindo, together with Barin, Bipin Pal, and Bhupendranath Datta, coeditor of Jugantar, helped to increase political consciousness among literate Bengalis—especially the young men—during the early Swadeshi years.

At the same time, Aurobindo joined the political Extremists in the Congress and tried to capture control of that organization. He had been a spectator at Congress sessions in 1902 and 1904, and in 1906, while visiting Bengal, he happened to attend the conference at Barisal which led to the arrest of Surendranath Banerjea and a few other Congress leaders. The split in the Congress camp was becoming wider
with each passing year and was publicly obvious by 1906. Aurobindo joined a movement already under way, but he and Bipin Pal soon became leaders of the Extremist party in Bengal. Aurobindo claimed that he tried to organize the Extremists into a more tightly knit, more coherent party before the Calcutta Congress of 1906. Both Aurobindo and his biographers recount a meeting held prior to the Congress session:

He called a meeting of the forward group of young men in the Congress and they decided to organise themselves openly as a new political party joining hands with the corresponding group in Maharashtra under the proclaimed leadership of Tilak and to join battle with the Moderate party which was done at the Calcutta session.

In *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, Aurobindo described the organizational plans of the New Party:

It was for this object [i.e., setting up a central authority of the nationalist movement] that the New Party determined not to be satisfied with any further evasion of the constitution question, though they did not press for the adoption of their own particular scheme. It is for this object that a Central National Committee has been formed; that Conferences are being held in various districts and sub-divisions and committees created; that the Provincial Conferences are expected to appoint a Provincial Committee for all Bengal.

It is clear from Congress histories that the Extremists did organize a caucus-type group within the Congress and press for the adoption of their program both at the 1906 and 1907 sessions of the Congress and at provincial sessions from 1906 to at least 1909. What is not satisfactorily analyzed in any account is the extent to which the Extremists developed the beginnings of a mass party organization in these years. The leaders, including Tilak and Aurobindo, had been complaining for years that the Congress was a narrowly based party and needed mass support. This was a central theme in Aurobindo's early article, "New Lamps for Old," and was a continuing theme during his Calcutta period. It does not seem that Aurobindo either gave much of his time to the details of organizing or sent men into the districts, towns, or villages to do such work. Volunteer groups formed in many districts which often did Swadeshi work and spread the message of the Swadeshi leaders in Calcutta. Some of these groups were aiming at revo-
lutionary action, but some also worked for passive resistance, boycott, and Swadeshi. Although their success seems to have been limited, they did bring into politics many young men who were to have lengthy careers in the nationalist movement. To a great extent, however, the Extremists, like the Moderates, remained a small and elitist party. Aurobindo was more adept at small-scale, clandestine organization than at large-scale mass organization. He would have preferred success at the latter, but like other Swadeshi leaders, he was denied it.

During 1907, Aurobindo was a prominent Extremist spokesman and leader at the Midnapur District Conference and at the Surat Congress in December. At these meetings both the Nationalists and the Extremists failed to put through their programs or to gain control of the sessions. They left the meetings amid considerable uproar. Both parties saw the Surat session as a showdown meeting and sent large numbers of delegates. In his account Aurobindo gave himself a considerably larger role than any other contemporary observer ascribed to him. As usual, he portrayed himself as manipulating things from behind the scenes.

History very seldom records the things that were decisive but took place behind the veil; it records the shown front of the curtain. Very few people know that it was I (without consulting Tilak) who gave the order that led to the breaking of the Congress and was responsible for the refusal to join the new-fangled Moderate Convention which were the two decisive happenings at Surat.

After the Nationalists left the opening meeting of the Congress, the two parties met separately, with Aurobindo presiding over the meeting of the Extremists. Although he believed that it was important for the Congress to show a united front to the British, he and his colleagues would not agree to the new loyalty oath (demanding nonviolence) or to the constitution devised by the Moderates.

After the fiasco at the Surat Congress, Aurobindo left the public eye to obtain some spiritual help. With the assistance of a Maharashtrian yogin, Aurobindo arranged to meet Vishnu Bhasker Lele at Baroda. Aurobindo had been practicing yoga for about three years, but he still wanted assistance from a guru in his sadhana. In his memoirs, Aurobindo described his instruction at the hands of Lele:
The results were remarkable. Many visions of scenes and figures I used to see. I felt an electric power around my head. My powers of writing were nearly dried up; they revived with a great vigour. I could write prose and poetry with a flow. That flow has never ceased since then. If I have not written afterwards it is because I had something else to do. But the moment I want to write it is there. Thirdly, great health. I grew stout and strong, the skin became smooth and fair and there was a flow of sweetness in the saliva. I used to feel a certain aura around the head.107

After this encounter Aurobindo claimed that his mind was blank before writing and speaking, but then a message “from a new status of mind” came to him and the words flowed easily.108 He gave a few speeches on his way back to Calcutta and from this time felt more strongly that he was an instrument of God.

During this same period Aurobindo was also working with his brother Barin and others to prepare for “universal unrest” and “national insurrection.”109 Before he came to Calcutta, his goal was a central organization extending all over Bengal and eventually throughout India that would secretly prepare for armed resistance in case the mass Swadeshi and swaraj movements failed.110 He tried to establish such an organization and met with others in a central committee, but it never seems to have gotten off the ground.111 A small group was formed with Barin and other young men as the organizers and actual working revolutionaries. Aurobindo served as theoretician and probably helped to make important decisions. The government, in a Home Department report, described his role:

Lieutenant-Governor . . . has no doubt . . . that he is the master-mind at the back of the whole extremist campaign in Bengal. He is not only a fluent and impressive writer, but an organizer of great ability and ingenuity; and it is probably to him more than to anyone else that it is due the extraordinary mingling of religion with politics which has imparted such a dangerous character to recent developments . . . he is hopelessly irreconcilable.112

The intelligence officials probably overestimated Aurobindo’s organizing abilities, for the only specific result of his revolutionary career was the abortive Alipore bomb plot. This was a scheme of Barin’s to train revolutionaries and equip them with arms and bombs; the plotters were working at a garden house in Maniktola when the police raided.113
They linked these trainees to a number of murders which had recently occurred and arrested several dozen Bengalis, including Barin and Aurobindo. In the previous year Aurobindo had been arrested for sedition but released because of insufficient evidence. In May 1908, however, Aurobindo was seized at his home at 48 Grey Street, Calcutta, in the early hours of the morning. He wrote an account of the arrest and the subsequent year in jail in a short Bengali work entitled *Karākāhinī* which is a major source for the following discussion. The arrest marked the temporary curtailment of Aurobindo’s political work and a further stage in his spiritual activity.

After consulting all the available sources, including Home Department files, histories of the Bengal revolutionary movement, and memoirs and biographies of Aurobindo, I think it is evident that Aurobindo never directly participated in revolutionary acts. As with the editorship of *Bande Mataram*, he was careful never to endanger himself. Barin, for example, was much more exposed and was convicted in the Alipore bomb case, while Aurobindo was acquitted and released with the aid of his lawyer Chittaranjan Das, one of the leading figures of the Calcutta bar and a member of the Extremist party in the Congress. The government argued that Aurobindo was in close contact with the plotters and used a letter from him to Barin referring to the distribution throughout the country of “sweets,” which they held referred to bombs. The letter was later disallowed as evidence. Barin, along with six others, was sentenced to imprisonment in the Andamans and remained there for almost fifteen years. Under the stresses of imprisonment he confessed, and with the weight of direct evidence against him, he was forced to suffer the consequences of his actions.

The account of Aurobindo’s year in jail is one of the most personal of his writings. It was written immediately after his release, and it seems reasonable to assume that it approximates Aurobindo’s state of mind and feelings while in prison. One striking feature of the account is the melodramatic way in which Aurobindo described the arrest and the conditions of his imprisonment, writing of his great “sufferings” and “sacrifices.” He was “tortured by British opinions” of the Indians. Rather than demonstrating the dauntless courage he felt Indians should have, he seems to have shown more continuity with the fears and anxieties of his youth. Rather than showing selflessness and passion for the
cause of his country and the welfare of others, he recounted a very personal and constant concern for his bath, his room, his bowels, his comfort, his food, and for special luxuries.\textsuperscript{118}

There is a strange quality to \textit{Kārākāhīni}, for Aurobindo alternated descriptions of depression and of religious joy. He claimed that while he was in prison, God protected him; at one point he described himself in the lap of the World-Mother, cared for like a child\textsuperscript{119} He called the prison both an ashram (religious hermitage) and a torture-home.\textsuperscript{120} It was a scene both of inhuman and cruel treatment and of ecstatic moments in which he saw the divine in all things and heard the voice of Vivekananda.\textsuperscript{121}

In another interesting passage, Aurobindo claimed that the revolutionary prisoners looked like young supermen, their strength and courage visible.\textsuperscript{122} They were the equals of their British captors, while the regular prisoners looked like puny and inferior men.\textsuperscript{123} For all his advocacy of democracy and the raising of the masses, Aurobindo showed a lack of consideration for ordinary men and a concern that he be accorded the special treatment due him as a political leader and a high-caste Bengali. A similar concern for caste status is displayed in Barin Ghose's \textit{The Tale of My Exile}. Barin was describing the process of learning rope-making in prison:

\begin{quote}
None could best Upen on that day. Such a natural gift of workmanship as his was considered by all as a rarity. However, he was a little mortified when he found that I did as a matter of fact have the longest rope. He said, "You must have worked then secretly at home," as if I, a scion of the House of the Ghoses, was no better than a \textit{dom} [rope-maker, sweeper, etc., by caste]. The insinuation set fire to all the blood in my veins! But we were in the Blessed Land of Prison and I could only gnash my teeth and pocket the insult! \textsuperscript{124}
\end{quote}

Aurobindo and his brother both felt that they had by right, or had earned, a high place in the society of their Bengal. To Aurobindo this place was the result of birth, training, political role, martyrdom by imprisonment, and especially the fact that he was chosen by God for glorious and important work. While in prison, he said he learned from an inner voice that he was to have a worldwide purpose.\textsuperscript{125} His visions and communications with God were the good that came out of the evil of imprisonment and were the basis for his claim that a new man, a
new Aurobindo emerged from the Alipore Ashram in May 1909. When Aurobindo came out of prison, he faced a changed situation. He was in agreement with Home Department officials that the movement for Swadeshi and swaraj was passing. Some leaders had been deported, others had left the movement, and only the Moderate group of Surendranath Banerjea and the beginnings of a small revolutionary movement were left on the scene. But perhaps more importantly, the fairly wide public support for Swadeshi among significant segments of the Hindu population that had contributed to the effectiveness of the boycott during its first year had fallen off. Calls for the revocation of partition still appeared in the press, but these were the only remaining sparks of the protest.

Still, Aurobindo set to work after his release. He founded two papers, *Karmayogin* and *Dharma*, and wrote many articles during his last years in politics. He attributed both his release and his renewed activity to divine power:

> I attribute my escape to no human agency, but first of all to the protection of the Mother of us all who has never been absent from me, but always held me in her arms and shielded me from grief and disaster.

He said he had received an “adesh,” or command, in prison:

> I have given you a work, and it is to help to uplift this nation . . . I give you the adesh to go forth and do my work . . . I am giving them [the Indian people] freedom for the service of the world.

The government was determined not to make him a martyr. One official insisted, “let the moribund agitation die in peace” and held that “many of the older politicians consider him to be deranged.” But the government was wary of his impact on the young men and students:

> No one can doubt what Aurobindo’s aims are [i.e., use of violence and independence] or how his ambiguous phrases are interpreted by the students and young men who crowd to hear him. It may be admitted that he carries little weight with elderly men, but it is not they who furnish the agents for outrage and dacoity.

A constant debate continued behind the scenes in the Home Department as to whether to deport or arrest Aurobindo for sedition. He un-
doubtlessly knew that he was under constant surveillance, and he seems to have cut down on his communications with revolutionaries during his last year in Calcutta.

Aurobindo attended the Bengal Provincial Conference at Hooghly and also met privately with Surendranath Banerjea to try to work out a rapprochement with the Moderates and so unite the Congress against the British. But the refusal of Aurobindo and the Extremists to subscribe to the new Congress constitution and oath, coupled with the unwillingness of the Moderates to relax their terms, made an agreement impossible. Aurobindo saw a need for organized action rather than speeches or ineffectual resolutions, but he was not capable of directing such activity. His words inspired some, but the movement needed more than talk. Some young men, seeing the failure of the mass effort, were turning to secret plots of murder and robbery for political ends.

PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS WORK, 1910–1950

As he witnessed the failing movement and the ineffectiveness of his own political work from May 1909 to February 1910, Aurobindo turned to yoga, and retired more into silence and isolation. In his account of his life, he noted a number of occasions when “he drew back into silence” or “took refuge in silence.” Sometimes these temporary retreats followed failures of others to respond to what he had done or written. From 1907 or early 1908, when he met Lele, he spent more time practicing yoga and, as he wrote, “I kept all that went on in me to myself.”

An important concomitant of this pattern of behavior during the last year in Calcutta was a change in his ideology from the advocacy of the priority of politics to a stress on the moral and religious preconditions for political activity and the achievement of political goals. He wrote an essay in the Karmayogin entitled “The Strength of Stillness” in praise of the quiet and power of the yogin. Aurobindo was shifting from a political to a cultural position. He was also shedding the role of political ideologue and revolutionary and putting on the garb of the guru.

Then, seemingly with great suddenness, Aurobindo disappeared from Calcutta and politics at the end of February 1910 and did not reappear until April in the French territory of Pondicherry. He had
first gone to French-held Chandernagore near Calcutta and then traveled secretly by steamer to Pondicherry. This is Aurobindo’s own account of the reason for his withdrawal:

Sri Aurobindo one night at the Karmayogin office received information of the Government’s intention to search the office and arrest him. While considering what should be his attitude, he received a sudden command from above to go to Chandernagore in French India. He obeyed the command at once, for it was now his rule to move only as he was moved by the divine guidance and never to resist and depart from it; he did not stay to consult with anyone, but in ten minutes was at the river ghāt and in a boat plying on the Ganges; in a few hours he was at Chandernagore where he went into secret residence. . . . At Chandernagore he plunged entirely into solitary meditation and ceased all other activity. Then there came to him a call to proceed to Pondicherry.¹³⁸

By some standards, Aurobindo’s flight might be adjudged an act of cowardice. Under the pressure of possible police action against him, he left political involvement and fled. But, if we grant that he may well have felt that he heard a call inside himself that he identified as divine, and if we place his action in an Indian context, then it may be viewed as a culturally legitimate solution to a personal dilemma. It has been common in India for men in many walks of life to experience a sudden leap of faith and to retire to a meditative life. At any rate, the political phase of Aurobindo’s life had ended, and he resisted all entreaties to return and again take up a position of political leadership.¹³⁹

Aurobindo stayed with a few disciples in Pondicherry, living in poor circumstances for the first years there. In 1914 he agreed to collaborate with Paul and Mira Richard, a French couple, in writing and publishing a journal called Arya. The journal continued for about six years, and a good deal of each issue was written by Aurobindo. After a four-year silence, words and ideas poured forth in a great torrent, and out of his Arya articles several massive volumes were collected.¹⁴⁰

Through these years a small religious community began to develop around Aurobindo. After a few years, Mira Richard became his disciple and some years later he elevated her to a position nearly equal to his own. She gradually took over all the practical details of running the burgeoning ashram. She also came to be called the Mother by Aurobindo and his disciples, and he wrote of her:
There is one divine Force which acts in the universe and in the individual and is also beyond the individual and the universe. The Mother stands for all these, but she is working here in the body to bring down something not yet expressed in this material world so as to transform life here—it is so that you should regard her as the Divine Shakti working here for that purpose. She is that in the body, but in her whole consciousness she is also identified with all the other aspects of the Divine.\textsuperscript{141}

In 1901 Aurobindo had married Mrinalini Bose in a house belonging to the Hatkhola Dutt family. Aurobindo was 29 and his bride was 14 at the time.\textsuperscript{142} Aurobindo lived with his wife on and off during the next nine years and wrote a series of letters to her explaining that he had been marked out by God for special work.\textsuperscript{143} In one letter, dated December 6, 1907, Aurobindo wrote:

This suffering is your inevitable lot, since you have married me. At intervals there is bound to be separation, because, unlike ordinary Bengalis, I am unable to make the happiness of the relatives and of the family the main aim of my life. In these circumstances, what is my Dharma is also your Dharma; unless you consider the success of my mission as your happiness, there is no way out.\textsuperscript{144}

It does not seem that Aurobindo formed a satisfactory relationship with his wife; Mrinalini died in 1918 en route to Pondicherry from Calcutta. He did form a much more lasting relationship with Mira Richard, the Mother, and some time after her permanent return to the ashram in 1920, she moved into quarters adjacent to Aurobindo’s and lived there for the rest of his life. In his public writing, at least, he idealized her as the Mother of Gods and the concrete manifestation of vast forces at work in the universe, maintaining that she had been sent by God to him and the ashram.\textsuperscript{145} One might suggest that after the violent and disruptive relationship with his own mother that relationships with mother figures assumed continuing significance for him. Instead of carrying out a more normal relationship as a husband to a Bengali girl, he devoted himself to abstractions of the Mother Goddess and the politically linked concept of the Motherland. Later, when a strong, intellectual woman came into his life and devoted herself to him, he began to see her as a manifestation of the abstractions of which he had written. So the relationship to the Mother may have served as a
substitute for the marriage tie, and even more, the solution to his problems with female figures. Goddesses play a predominant role in Bengali culture, and Aurobindo's concern with mother figures was to some extent part of his sharing in a common culture; but he went beyond the ordinary in seizing upon a French woman, bringing her into a permanent role in his life, and trying to persuade his countrymen and disciples that she was the equal consort of an avatar, i.e. himself, and the Mother of Gods.

In Pondicherry, Aurobindo devoted himself to yoga, writing, and the training of his disciples. He felt that he had tremendous power, and that he could shape the workings of the world by his soul-force. He carried out what Mircea Eliade has called "ritual interiorization" of the cosmic process. He believed that he and the Mother were determining the course of world forces by their yoga. Rather than arguing that he was seeking solitary salvation, he said he was doing a wider work.

After long searching, he had found an adult role psychologically and culturally satisfying to him. In none of these did he expose himself to the scorn either of his countrymen or their foreign rulers. The secret, behind-the-scenes work that he preferred was now his life. His only contacts were with his immediate disciples, some others who wrote to him, and those who responded to his writings.

Aurobindo's views in the *Arya* period and during the remainder of his life became increasingly spiritualized and abstract. In writing of Indian culture, he emphasized its more spiritual essence compared to other civilizations. The Vedic and Upanishadic age in particular seemed to him mankind's first period of greatness. Calling for inner freedom, Aurobindo pointed to a new age which men should work toward. One means of reaching the pinnacle of human destiny which lay ahead was yoga and the gathering of men's inner forces. Although he called himself a "spiritual anarchist," Aurobindo wrote a good deal about world affairs. What he wanted was a confederation of all men and all social units which would pass beyond the limiting bounds of individuals and nations.

Whatever the importance of his later philosophical and political writing, he had forsaken the field of ordinary political action forever. He was watched by the CID for years and was often asked by Indian nationalists to return to political work. But Aurobindo had found a sat-
isfying place and believed that his was the highest course that any man could follow. To the Home Department, it must have been a happy moment when they realized that the man whom they had considered so dangerous had left the political field of his own volition and become simply another, although a renowned, Indian holy man. Aurobindo's writings and his ashram have had some influence in India, but he left the concrete work of organizing and revitalizing his native land to others.
Once the mass agitation efforts were foundering and the divisions within the nationalist camp were manifest, some young men together with a few older leaders turned to violence to catalyze sentiment in favor of national independence. In the nationalist period, the use of violence for political ends was important in only a few areas of the subcontinent, namely Bombay, Bengal, Punjab, and later the United Provinces. The leaders and most of the participants were from a few social groups and castes to whom violence was a culturally acceptable means of political action.

The first outbreaks were in the Bombay Presidency, and this was the arena for the nationalist use of violence until the Bengali movement got under way in the first decade of the twentieth century. The Bengal revolutionaries were active from 1907 to 1915 and later in the early 1920s and 1930s. The timing of these stretches of revolutionary action was linked to the rhythm of the nationalist movement as a whole, to events outside India, such as the two world wars, and to the effectiveness of government campaigns of repression.

The illusion that the Indian and Bengali past was nonviolent has been nurtured by the British notion that there were “non-martial races,” including the Bengalis, and by a misunderstanding of the place of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian history. The political life of pre-British India was permeated by violence; local rajas and zamindars had private armies that were used in carrying out judicial, administrative, and police functions. First the Mughals and then the British gradually curtailed their military strength, but we hear of bands of lathials, or club-wielders, still at work in the nineteenth century. Further, there was a long-standing association of violence with Shaktism in Bengal.
In ascribing meekness and cowardice to the Bengalis, British writers and others who have shared their attitude have ignored continuities of religion, social structure, political organization, and values from the pre-British period to modern times. Bengalis did not suddenly give up their language and culture, or their social and political forms. The older culture was reshaped under changed circumstances, but not forsaken. The predilection for Shaktism and the awareness that many Bengali political leaders of earlier times had used violence for political ends remained with many nineteenth- and twentieth-century Bengalis. In the writings of many leading literary figures of the nineteenth century, historical situations in which violence was used were recounted and idealized. A further element was the growing awareness of revolutionary movements in other parts of the world, which became more important in India as some of the politically conscious became disillusioned with British models of political activity. Thus Naren Bhattacharya, whose career is to be examined in detail, studied what he and his friends envisioned as “the whole revolutionary history of the world.” The knowledge that others had thought the use of violence legitimate under certain circumstances supported the feeling of these young men that the use of violence was within Indian traditions as they understood them.

A CASE STUDY OF NARENDRANATH BHATTACHARYA

Narendranath Bhattacharya, later known as M. N. Roy, was in his youth a devoted revolutionary and lieutenant to a famous Bengali revolutionary leader, Jatin Mukherjee. A description of the career of Roy is useful and appropriate for several reasons. First, Roy is one of the few revolutionary Bengalis about whom interesting data is available. Second, Roy followed a pattern that was often repeated among Bengali political workers during the twentieth century: from terrorist and insurrectionary activity to communism and then to open Congress work. Third, both the data collected about Roy and some of his own writings give graphic pictures of two important features of Bengali revolutionary politics: the “dal” or faction and the “dada” or leader of such a group.

Narendranath Bhattacharya was born in Arbela in 24-Parganas, Bengal, in 1887. He was the fifth child and third son of Dinabandhu
Bhattacharya. Dinabandhu was in the main branch of a family of officiating priests for the village of Kheput in Midnapur district. Dinabandhu left Kheput in search of employment and found it as a Sanskrit teacher first in a junior high school in Arbelia and later in a school in Kodalia, a village near Calcutta. Dinabandhu's first wife, Kodhonkumari, died in 1868, and in 1872 he married Basanta Kumari of Kodalia, by whom he had 7 children, a son Sushil, a daughter Sarojini, then 2 sons Narendra Nath and Phonibusan, 2 daughters, Mohanaya andJaydurga, and finally a son Lalit.7

Naren went to school in Arbelia until 1898, when the family moved to Kodalia. In "The Dissolution of a Priestly Family," written just before his death in 1954, Naren describes his memories of the annual visits to Kheput, where his father, as head priest of the village, would officiate at certain ceremonies in honor of the goddess Durga. Naren's essay recounts two village myths about how the Shakti temple came to be built in Kheput and how a particular line of Brahmins came to be responsible for officiating at ceremonies in her honor. Dinabandhu apparently continued to return to the village annually until his death in 1905, but after that the goddess and the village languished without the presence of a head priest. When Naren, now the famous political leader and ideologue M. N. Roy, visited Kheput in 1938, the village elders asked him to return once a year to propitiate the goddess. But Roy was an atheist and fierce priest-hater, and steadfastly refused the discarded mantle of his father.8

Dinabandhu is said to have moved to Kodalia in 1898 in order to take over some property of his second wife's family. In Kodalia, Naren attended school, studying Sanskrit, English, and Bengali. Here he discovered politics and the possibilities of revolution. Naren's best friend of those days and a confidant later in life as well was Hari Kumar Chakravarty. Professor Robert North's notes from a 1958 interview with Mr. Chakravarty describe the young Naren:

Mr. Chakravarty's mother and Roy's mother were the closest of friends, talked together, ate together, sewed together, and Chakravarty and Roy were the best of friends from small boyhood. . . . As a boy, Roy was very religious. In 1905, at the time of the Bengal partition, Chakravarty organized a meeting in the school compound . . . and Chakravarty prevailed upon Roy to conduct the meeting. The two of
them, and two other boys were arrested and this was the start of Roy's political career. Released, the boys determined to read every book they could find on revolutions . . . the whole revolutionary history of the world including the American revolution. Gradually, they gathered a considerable library and attracted a group of young men, who gathered, read, and discussed—a kind of debating society. . . . The group also read other kinds of literature, seeking broad culture, and they studied various religions of the world. Particularly they were influenced by the Bengali cult of Sanwasi [?] This word is obviously incorrect. It might refer to Shakti or Sarasvati, or it might be sannyasi, which could mean a free and disciplined man.] The cult of Shree Chaitanya, of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, and the cult of love. . . . The group tried to achieve a rebirth of the early 19th century Bengali unitarianism of Raj Ram Mohan Roy. . . . From boyhood, Roy had a thirst for knowledge. He used to say as a young man that knowledge is freedom, that the urge for freedom is inherent in every man, that freedom must be achieved through knowledge. 

Chakravarty also mentions Roy's attachment to the cult of the Mother Goddess. Ellen Roy (Roy's widow) told North of Roy's claim that members of his group had devotee relationships with older women.

The lengthy list of influences mentioned by Hari Kumar Chakravarty shows how difficult it would be to demonstrate that any one religious, intellectual, or political current was decisive in shaping these young men. One example of the actions that were inspired by religious reform teachings was discussed by North and Chakravarty:

I asked Chakravarty if he could corroborate a story Ellen (Roy) heard from Roy re: the group volunteering to carry corpses of plague victims to the burning ground. . . . Yes, Chakravarty said, the group, most of them Brahmins, used to carry corpses to the burning ground irrespective of caste—as protest against the concepts of caste.

The date and context of these activities are unclear, but such service, partly out of devotion and partly as a form of protest against certain kinds of authorities, was common in the period.

During the last years of the nineteenth century and the first few years of the twentieth, a few men in Maharashtra and in Bengal began to plot revolutionary violence against the British Raj. The Chaipkar brothers had assassinated a British official in Poona, and P. Mitra and Barindra Kumar Ghose were seeking to channel the activities of restless
young men along revolutionary lines. In Bengal, "samitis," or societies, were formed, sometimes secretly, to practice physical culture and to inculcate Hindu doctrines. They can be related to the Hindu revival and to the attempt by Indian youths to demonstrate their physical manliness, which they felt the English had called into question.¹³

In 1905 Naren's father died and he and his brothers came to Calcutta to make their own way. Naren had finished his course at the local school about this time. At various times during the next ten years, he lived with one or another of his nonpolitical brothers or moved in with one of several revolutionary comrades.¹⁴ According to Sibnarayan Ray, in 1907 Naren "was a student of the Bengal Technical Institute and had passed the Entrance Examination from the newly founded National College." ¹⁵ There is no other information about Roy's education and it is doubtful that he attended many classes in Calcutta.

The first recorded "action" (the name given by participants to political dacoity, or robbery) in which Roy took part was at Chingripota, a railroad station near Kodalia. Phanindra Kumar Chakravarty, a compatriot of Roy's in Jatin Mukherjee's group, described the action:

Naren took up the idea; he himself, Sailen Bose, and Nipen Bose happened to be great pals of the Station Master with whom they were quite free in regard to their political sentiments. Naren took the Station Master into confidence, and the latter agreed to hand over the key of the safe to the dacoits on the condition that the dacoits were to pretend to use force, but were not actually to do so. On the appointed day, these three men accompanied by some more men from Calcutta, turned up at the station. At the last moment the Station Master's heart failed him, and he refused to hand the keys over. Naren and his men then proceeded to use real force. They locked the Station Master and his wife in a room and started looting the safe. The station people, hearing the row, turned up and assaulted the dacoits. In the fight some of the station people were wounded or injured, and then they all ran away and Naren and his party carried about six hundred rupees in cash away.¹⁶

Although we do not learn much about the structure of the revolutionary group or its leadership from the account, the reaction of the "public" should be noted. It seemed to them that dacoits were dacoits and robbery was robbery. Patriotic motives were not written on the fore-
heads of the group. Especially after political assassinations began, it was
difficult to raise money from the public, and robbery seemed the only
alternative source.\textsuperscript{17}

Naren was arrested, as is noted in a Home Department political file:
“The station-master complained at once and Narendra was put in his
trial but discharged by the Deputy Magistrate of Sealdah . . . at the
time of his arrest a most seditious manuscript was found on his person
and a book on modern warfare.”\textsuperscript{18} Before 1930, Roy was arrested nu-
merous times, but either escaped while on bail or was released. The lit-
erate mentioned probably included \textit{Bartaman Rananiti} (or \textit{The Modern
Art of War}), written by either Abinash Chandra Battacharyya or
Barin Ghose, which was circulating among Bengali revolutionaries at
the end of 1907.\textsuperscript{19} Two types of literature were circulated by the revo-
lutionaries: theoretical and religious tracts, like the \textit{Bhagavad Gītā} or
\textit{Bhawani Mandir}, and practical manuals—how to make bombs or
conduct warfare. The former, as Professor Richard Park has suggested,
were often in English, and were for the more educated among the rev-
olutionaries, while the latter were more likely to be in Bengali.\textsuperscript{20}

During his Calcutta years—1905 to 1915—Naren went from job
to job, house to house, living on the edge of respectable society. He
even tried to start a restaurant that could serve as a rendezvous for rev-
olutionaries. One of his residences was in a boarding house run by the
Anushilan Samiti in Calcutta. The Calcutta Samiti operated in the
open until the government cracked down and dissolved it and the
other samitis in 1909 after the CID uncovered revolutionary plotting.\textsuperscript{21}

Naren was next involved in a much larger revolutionary conspiracy,
the Howrah gang case, which was brought before the public in 1910
and 1911. Quite a few revolutionary groups were implicated in this
case. Naren was among those arrested, but the case against him was
weak. Although the Home Department noted both the earlier case and
the fact that he carried with him copies of inflammatory literature, in-
cluding issues of Aurobindo’s \textit{Karmayogin} and another paper called
\textit{Dharma}, he had to be released.\textsuperscript{22}

It was apparently just after the Howrah gang case that Naren left
Calcutta in the guise of a sannyasin and went to Banaras and other
parts of North India. He was shadowed by the police and soon re-
turned to Calcutta. Whether he had religious motivations in going or was simply trying to stay out of sight is not clear.\textsuperscript{23}

A number of informants have told me that Roy was initiated by a Vaishnava guru during this period, but the evidence for this is too sketchy, and several different gurus have been suggested as the man in question.\textsuperscript{24} An important relationship was formed at this time with the revolutionary leader Jatin Mukherjee which lasted until Naren left India in 1915.

Jatin Mukherjee, who is known in the annals of Bengali revolutionary history as “Bagha Jatin” or “Jatin-Bagh”—Jatin the Tiger—came from Kustea subdivision in Nadia District, according to Home Department records. Jatin-da, as his followers called him (from “dada,” elder brother, a term used for political leaders), was for some time a shorthand typist in the Bengal Secretariat. It was said that Jatin worked actively “for the circulation of \textit{Jugantar}” in his home district. Jatin seems to have kept his job in the Bengal Secretariat even after becoming involved in revolutionary work. Only with the Howrah gang case did he become well known to the CID.\textsuperscript{25}

Phanindra Chakravarty mentions in his confession that he had met Jatin in Darjeeling some years before when Jatin was giving instruction to youths in athletics and the \textit{Gītā}.\textsuperscript{26}

It is not clear when Naren met Jatin Mukherjee. Naren wrote in 1949,

Once I overheard a few sentences of a conversation. I still belonged to the entourage of another Dada, and heard him rebuking a Chela presumably of wavering loyalty. The latter had been visiting some other Dada. Ultimately, in exasperation, the rebuked apostate rejoined mildly: “Dada, why do you want me not to see him, when he has never asked me to join his party; he has no party.” I was curious to know who was that strange sort of Dada, and buttonholed the rebuked Gurubhai after he was dismissed by the extremely annoyed Dada. The next day I was taken to the unusual Dada who did not play the game of “Cheledhara,” and was caught for good.\textsuperscript{27}

“Chela” is a term referring to a disciple of a revolutionary leader; “Gurubhai” means a coreligionist, a follower of the same spiritual guide; “cheledhara” means one who snares “cheles” (children) or “che-
las" (disciples), i.e., a kidnapper. It was a mark of Roy's attachment to his dada that many years later, an older, more secular, and often cynical man, he could still write,

All the Dadas practiced magnetism; only Jatin Mukherjee possessed it. Therefore he was a puzzle and a despair to the rivals engaged in the game of "cheladhara." He never cast out his nets; yet he was loved by all, even the followers of the other Dadas.28

The political system referred to above probably dates back many centuries in Bengal.29 The basic unit of action is the "dal," organized around a single dada and often bearing his name. On a second level there are somewhat unstable alliances of dals, where the heads of single factions might act as followers of one superior leader or as equals trying to attain common goals. As in the segmentary political system of the Nuer described by Evans-Pritchard, there could be either fission (of the larger alliances or of a single dal) or fusion of two or more dals into a larger alliance or party.30 Single factions, at the lower level, were localized, while alliances could extend over a fairly wide territory.

The dals as well as the alliances of dals were conflict groupings with the primary aim of opposing the British Raj and working for Indian independence. Although allied dals cooperated in the utilization of men, weapons, and money, there were also conflicts between dals. The dal as a unit of political organization in Bengal villages and rural areas has been described by a nineteenth-century ICS officer, Robert Carstairs, and also by a contemporary anthropologist.31

The revolutionaries' political organization shows several kinds of relationships. In addition to his primary function as a political leader, the dada seems to hold something of the neoparental authority which the older brother would exercise in a Bengali family.32 All evidence indicates that the dada was older than his followers. The relationship also seems to reflect an important religious concept: the guru-shishya relationship, where the disciple is to give his complete loyalty, devotion, and respect to his teacher. Idealization of the guru, particularly among the esoteric but numerous religious cults of Bengal, may be seen in the following quotation taken from the text of one such cult by Sir John Woodroffe:
Guru is Brahma. Guru is Viṣṇu. Guru is Deva Maheśvara himself. Guru is the place of pilgrimage. Guru is the sacrifice. Guru is charity (that is, the religious merit acquired by means of charity). Guru is devotion and austerities. Guru is fire. Guru is Sūrya. The entire Universe is Guru.33

Followers call the dada their preceptor, and 'dadas often engaged in teaching practical skills, ideology, and political strategy to their followers.

In theory, the disciple or follower of a dada was completely devoted and loyal. For example, the Sedition Committee Report quotes from the initiation oath of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti: "I will carry out the orders of the authorities without saying a word. I will never conceal anything from the leader and will never speak anything but the truth to him."34 In one standard history of the revolutionary movement in Bengal, N. K. Guha mentions that one is to follow exactly the commands of the leader. Guha also presents a long description of how a leader persuaded a would-be member to join his dal, using the argument that to serve the country is to serve God.35 Thus the dada presented himself, as a guru might have done, as the intermediary or representative of God to ordinary men. Also, it must be noted that a number of tracts were distributed, read, and explained to give a religious rationale for worldly acts—e.g., Aurobindo's Bhawani Mandir and the Bhagavad Gītā, which was interpreted in an activist, literal way as sanctioning all acts for a righteous cause, including murder.36

The acts to be performed by the disciples were most often violent—robbery and murder—and were often only vaguely related to the goals of India's independence. Guha gives a long account of how the first political dacoity was permitted by the Dacca Anushilan Samiti's dada, P. Mitra. The disciples complained that they had given up all for the cause and for their dada, and they were slowly starving. P. Mitra did not like the idea of dacoity, but finally decided that it was necessary under the circumstances. According to Guha, once the first dacoity was committed, 'the floodgates opened and every dal was out doing one.37

Nirad C. Chaudhuri has suggested that there was a tradition among well-to-do Bengali families of private murder for revenge. He claims that the means used by the revolutionaries grew out of this tradition
and resemble those for which zamindars in earlier, more anarchic times had hired retainers or kept private armies. There was a hostile response from the public, both rural and urban, to the earlier acts of the revolutionaries, which were seen by all but their perpetrators as criminal actions. Later commentators, including Bipin Pal and Lord Ronaldshay, viewed these acts as guided by idealistic ends but performed by evil and perverted means.

Roy mentions that his dada differed from the other dadas in that:

1. Jatin-da never set out nets to snare disciples, and yet they came.
2. He was loved by all, including disciples of other dadas.
3. He had no air of condescending superiority.
4. "In what he said, there was no hint (a usual trick of the trade of Dadaism) of an extensively ramified secret organisation accumulating vast quantities of arms and money for the Day of Liberation."
5. He gave advice; "he never issued orders."
6. He opposed premature and indiscriminate violence.
7. He was the first revolutionary to die fighting.
8. "He was kind and truthful as well as bold and uncompromising."
9. He was not a great, but a good man.

Roy had become a "radical humanist" by the time he wrote his reminiscences of Jatin-da. At the end of the article, Jatin-da too became a humanist:

Like all modern educated men of his time, he tended to accept the reformed religion preached by Swami Vivekananda—a God who would stand the test of reason, and a religion which served a progressive social and human purpose. He believed himself to be a Karmayogi, trying to be at any rate, and recommended the ideal to all of us. Detached from the unnecessary mystic preoccupations, Karmayogi means a humanist. He who believes that the self-realisation can be attained through human action, must logically also believe in man's creativeness—that man is the maker of his destiny. That is also the essence of Humanism. Jatinda was a Humanist—perhaps the first in modern India.

To generalize about dadas and their disciples it would be necessary to get comparable data for other dals, including more statements from
leaders and followers. At this point such data is only available in anecdotal form. However, a number of further points can be dealt with here: the relationships between dals, the internal differentiation of dals, and an evaluation of the dal as a form of political organization. Most of these points will be discussed in the context of a history of Naren Bhattacharya and Jatin Mukherjee’s dal from about 1912 to 1915.

Although dals were the usual basic unit of revolutionary political organization, they were too small and too localized to carry out larger “actions.” Some groupings were composed of a large number of branches with a more or less central headquarters and leader. These included the Dacca Anushilan Samiti and the Jugantar Party after 1912 and 1913. It is not always clear what the relationship was between branches and center in these organizations. Often larger parties or revolutionary forces were formed by the alliance of dals. The Jugantar party was organized originally in this way.42

The members of many dals in Bengal—no one has ever tried even to guess their number—were recruited from a small stratum of the society, and the figures given by caste, age, and occupation in the Seditious Committee Report for “persons convicted in Bengal of revolutionary crimes or killed in commission of such crimes during the years 1907–17” are probably proportionately correct. The tables given in the Report are listed below.43

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{AGE} & \text{10–15} & \text{16–20} & \text{21–25} & \text{26–30} & \text{31–35} & \text{36–45} & \text{over 45} & \text{not recorded} \\
\hline
2 & 48 & 76 & 29 & 10 & 9 & 1 & 11 \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{CASTE} & \text{Brahman} & \text{Kayastha} & \text{Baidya} & \text{Rajput} & \text{Tanti} & \text{Mahishya} & \text{Subarnahanik} \\
\hline
65 & 87 & 13 & 1 & 1 & 3 & 1 \\
\text{Vaishya} & \text{Karmakar} & \text{Kaibarta} & \text{Barui} & \text{Saha} & \text{Mudri} & \text{Sudra} & \text{Uriya} \\
\hline
1 & 1 & 3 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\
\text{Europeans and} & \text{Eurasians (in arms traffic)} & & & & & & \\
\end{array}
\]
### PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>students</th>
<th>teachers</th>
<th>landowners</th>
<th>persons of no occupation</th>
<th>trade and commerce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clerks, persons in government service</td>
<td>newspapers and presses</td>
<td>cultivators</td>
<td>opium smugglers</td>
<td>not recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is obvious that almost 90 percent of the revolutionaries came from among the high castes of Bengal, Brahman, Vaidya, and Kayastha, and that most were between 16 and 30 years old. These high castes formed only about 5.6 percent of the total population of Bengal, but contributed a very high percentage of those attending schools and colleges and those counted as literate.44

The figures for occupation or profession must be taken more warily. It is not at all clear what the different categories mean; for example, who is a landowner? Was Jatin Mukherjee counted as a government servant? It does make sense, however, that at least 45 percent of the convicted revolutionaries were students or teachers. The schools and colleges and the towns and cities in which they were located were probably, as the Rowlatt Committee argued in its report, fertile recruiting grounds for revolutionaries.45 Young men probably learned of a revolutionary group by word of mouth and were invited to meet the dada or other leading members. Persuasion and promises followed, with visions painted of a romantic and exciting life devoted to the service of the country. The different dals had their "adda," or rendezvous spots, where they would talk politics and throw out suggestions for future actions. Phanindra Chakravarty mentions that the adda of Jatin Mukherjee's dal shifted from place to place, as did the living quarters of the members. Once the members and their adda became known to the police, they had to keep on the move.46

The training of dals varied from group to group. Phanindra Chakravarty mentioned that Jatin-da instructed his followers in athletics and in the Gītā. Members practiced "lathī" or club play and also target shooting whenever they could obtain pistols and ammunition. Guha and Nirad C. Chaudhuri also describe the military drilling that some of these groups practiced.47
The Sedition Committee Report, which has been taken as an accurate record by almost all later writers on the revolutionaries, systematically excludes certain kinds of information. Particularly, it eliminates information appearing in Home Department records that was used by the Committee in compiling its account of the rivalry and antagonisms between revolutionary dals and competition for resources of men and weapons. To build a more fearsome picture of the danger of the revolutionaries to the British Raj and to inspire more severe legislation for their control, the Rowlatt Committee did not mention that revolutionaries often argued and opposed each other, sometimes refused to make alliances, and even came to the brink of violence against each other.

This point can be illustrated by the accounts of the distribution of Mauser pistols in 1914, an event considered important by the Sedition Committee:

The theft of pistols from Rodda and Co., a firm of gunmakers in Calcutta, was an event of the greatest importance in the development of revolutionary crime in Bengal. . . . The 10 missing cases contained 50 Mauser pistols and 46,000 rounds of Mauser ammunition for the same. . . . The authorities have reliable information to show that 44 of these pistols were almost at once distributed to 9 different revolutionary groups in Bengal, and it is certain that the pistols so distributed were used in 54 cases of dacoity and murder subsequent to August 1914. It may indeed safely be said that few, if any, revolutionary outrages have taken place in Bengal since August 1914 in which Mauser pistols stolen from Rodda and Co. have not been used.48

Later in the Sedition Committee Report, the names of some of the groups which used Mauser pistols are mentioned:

The persons in whose possession the Mausers were found must also be noted. These included members of the Madapur party, Jatin Mukharji of Western Bengal, of the Chandernagore group of Bepin Ganguli’s party, and of the Mymensingh, Barisal, North Bengal and Dacca parties. That arms were interchanged between the several groups is shown by various statements.49

The last quotation comes from a section of the Sedition Committee Report headed “Co-operation of Groups”; and, indeed, there was such cooperation. But some of the bitterness engendered by the distribution of pistols is evident in this passage from the confession of Phanindra
Chakravarty. The predicament he mentions is the need of money to send an agent abroad to make contact with the Germans.

Whilst we were in this predicament we suddenly came into possession of 28 Mauser pistols, and some 20 or 22 thousand rounds of ammunition out of Rodda’s theft. I am not sure how exactly they came into our possession, but I will tell you what I heard then. Of course you know that Bepin Ganguli had committed the theft of the arms. Bepin lodged the arms with a Marwari in the first place. The former had just been able to dispose of about 22 of the pistols when the Marwari became restive and demanded the removal of the remainder from his house. The Marwari handed him 28 pistols and a part of the ammunition. Noren made them over to me, and I kept them in my house in Mir Jaffer’s Lane. . . . Soon after the arms came into our possession, Bepin Ganguli came to my house and demanded his pistols. I refused to make them over. He was so angry about it that he actually threatened to shoot some of us with the revolvers he had. I defied him to do so, and there was much soreness on both sides over the matter for some time. We refused to part with the arms because we had the idea of using them in committing dacoities for the purpose of raising money to send people out of India. 50

Several sections later, Chakravarty mentions that, “The disagreement existing between Ganguli and us was smoothed over by Dada by taking charge of all the arms. The taking charge of the arms was nominal only, and did not involve transfers. He merely said he was responsible for the custody and use of the arms; and we bowed to his decision.” 51 The Sedition Committee described the cooperation but not the controversies over the arms. The settling of the dispute by Jatin Mukherjee and the acquiescence to his decision by Bepin Ganguli, the leader of another dal, should also be underscored. Dadas might deal with each other as equals—either rivals or friends—or some dadas or one particular dada might gain priority or prominence in an alliance made to carry out a larger action.

**GERMAN CONSPIRACY**

The more extensive action that several dadas and dals cooperated with Jatin Mukherjee to carry out was the famous German conspiracy of 1914–1915. The origins of the Jugantar Party of which Jatin Mukherjee was the leader are described in a valuable history of the Bengal revolutionaries by Gopal Halder:
Jugantar, the suppressed weekly had served as rallying point for the Aurobinda-Barindra group of Calcutta, and the title stuck to others of different groups who came later to be connected with the close or distant work of the paper, like Abinash Bhattacharya, Dababrat Basu etc. So in 1910, the members of these different groups ("Bagha Jatin" or Jatinindranath Mukherji was then their leader) who were being tried together in the Howrah Conspiracy Case were designated by the prosecution, presumably to strengthen its case, as members collectively of the 'Jugantar Party' (as distinct from those of the Anushilan Samiti by which were meant the members of the Dacca Anushilan only and its branches). The authorities gave a name perhaps to a thing which came into existence, though these groups never merged, and the Jugantar, unlike the Anushilan, never meant anything more than a federation of revolutionary groups. What the Jugantar thus lacked in centralised leadership it made up for by a certain flexibility of mind and method and by probably the intellectual quality of its cadre.52

The Jugantar Party does not seem to have been formed until late 1914 or early 1915. It meant an alliance between groups for the largest revolutionary "action" yet planned. The groups involved were mentioned in Phanindra Chakravarty's confession:

I have mentioned to you before the men who were actually working in this cause at this time. They were mainly (1) Bepin Ganguli's party, (2) Noren Chowdhery's party, (3) our own (this is Dada's party). The Dacca or Moti Lal Roy's party was out of this as Moti Lal refused to take part in our original deliberations. The Faupar or Puran Das's party was so completely merged into our own that we two were practically one.53

The members of the groups in the conspiracy met to plan an armed revolt to seize control of eastern India. In the action described below, Jatin Mukherjee lost his life and the dal disintegrated, but the loose federation of groups, the Jugantar Party, continued in operation for several decades under other leaders.

One aspect of revolutionary activity which has not yet been mentioned is the network of overseas connections. In the two decades preceding 1915, many revolutionaries had traveled in England and in Europe trying to gain support and assistance for their efforts. Naren Bhattacharya, in the years following the failure of the German conspiracy, became one of the most famous overseas revolutionaries, propagandists, and organizers.54
It was from several Indians who had been abroad that Jatin Mukherjee and his followers learned that the Germans, who were then at war with the British, were willing to supply Indian revolutionaries with arms, money, and military instruction. Several steps were necessary to set the plan into operation:

1. Funds had to be raised to send agents abroad to make direct contact.
2. The agents then had to determine with the Germans just when arms and money were to be sent and in what quantities.
3. The plans for a general uprising had to be made more specific and timed to coincide with the arrival of the supplies.
4. An alliance of several groups had to be made to gather sufficient manpower to begin the uprising and detailed assignments agreed upon by participants.\(^8\)

The operations were set in motion by two daring dacoities at Garden Reach and Beliaghata during February 1915. The Sedition Committee called these the "taxi-cab dacoities and murders." A CID man, Nirod Haldar, who came upon Jatin Mukherjee and his men while he was searching for Naren, was shot at Jatin's order.\(^6\) And during one of the dacoities, a taxi driver who was not a revolutionary but had simply been used as a driver was shot so that he could not talk. As was usually the case, Indians on both sides rather than Englishmen lost their lives at the hands of the revolutionaries, although a few English officials were murdered. N. K. Guha mentions in his history of the revolutionaries that men who were working directly against the revolutionaries were killed, and that a few others were murdered as a warning to the public to acquiesce in their violent deeds and not to inform or cooperate with the officials.\(^7\) It is not at all certain that Naren killed anyone during these revolutionary days, but he was an intrepid and poised revolutionary and probably would not have hesitated to kill if necessary.

There is not too much known specifically about the internal differentiation and specialization of the dal. But there are a number of references to "departments" within the dal, namely the "finance department," the "violence department," and the "foreign department." It is also well known that certain men were sent to Europe to learn how to make explosives. We do not know whether they were called mem-
bers of the “research department.” The “financial minister” was probably responsible for keeping records and for the protection of the dal’s money.\textsuperscript{58}

N. K. Guha writes that the leaders of the dals never actually took part in actions and in fact constantly moved from place to place to avoid endangering themselves. It is probably true that dadas did refrain from taking unnecessary chances and that the theoreticians of the revolutionaries, like Aurobindo Ghose, never participated in any action.\textsuperscript{59} But in the larger plots where field direction was needed and the whole dal was involved, the commanders were probably present.

Naren was described as a trusted lieutenant of Jatin Mukherjee. He was especially favored by his dada because during 1915 he made two trips to Batavia to meet with the German Consul there and arrange the arms shipments. On his first voyage, Naren, traveling under the name “C. Martin,” persuaded the German officials to send the S. S. \textit{Maverick} with 30,000 rifles, 400 pounds of ammunition for each, and two lakhs of rupees to Rai Mangal in the Sundarbans. The revolutionaries used a firm called “Harry and Sons” in Calcutta as a front, and the Germans, via “Martin,” wired Rs. 43,000 to the firm, of which the revolutionaries actually received Rs. 33,000.\textsuperscript{80}

The rest of the plan may be quoted from the Sedition Committee \textit{Report}, which seems to be based on Phanindra Chakravarty’s confession, since all the details are the same.

They decided to divide the arms into three parts, to be sent respectively to—

(1) Hatia, for the Eastern Bengal districts, to be worked by the members of the Barisal party.

(2) Calcutta.

(3) Balasore.

They considered that they were numerically strong enough to deal with the troops in Bengal, but they feared reinforcements from outside. With this idea in view, they decided to hold up the three main railways into Bengal by blowing up the principal bridges. . . . Naren Chaudhuri and Phanindra Chakravarti were told to go to Hatia where a force was to collect, first to obtain control of the Eastern Bengal districts, and then to march on to Calcutta. The Calcutta party, under Naren Bhattacharji and Bepin Ganguli, were first to take possession of all the arms and arsenals around Calcutta, then to take Fort William,
and afterwards to sack the town of Calcutta. The German officers arriving in the Maverick were to stay in Eastern Bengal and raise and train armies.\textsuperscript{61}

One more detail should be added from Phanindra Chakravarty’s confession. He describes how the revolutionary army was to grow:

We had expectations of about 50,000 joining in the first rising. They were to join us from all parts of Bengal. We had counted upon 5,000 men in Calcutta itself to start the rebellion and we had every hope of nearly 20,000 youths, mainly students, joining hands with us immediately afterwards.\textsuperscript{62}

The Maverick was delayed; the revolutionaries then heard that another ship with far fewer supplies was being sent. Frustrated and worried, they sent Naren and Phanindra Chakravarty to Batavia in August 1915 to see what was going on. They found that the British had uncovered the plot. The police were searching for Jatin Mukherjee and some of his dal in connection with the Garden Reach and Beliaghata dacoities, and he and a few of his men were tracked to Balasore, where they were hiding. During the resulting gun battle, Jatin Mukherjee and another revolutionary were killed.\textsuperscript{63} Eventually many of the other conspirators were captured, including Phanindra Chakravarty, who was held first by the French in Shanghai and then turned over to the British officials. The British transferred him to Singapore, where he learned of Jatin-da’s death. He was terribly confused and upset. It was only some nine months later that he was able (and willing) to give an accurate confession.\textsuperscript{64}

Naren Bhattacharya escaped the British and traveled first to Japan and then to the United States. He met some of the Indian nationalists and revolutionaries in exile during his American tour, and he attended meetings and studied in New York. While in California, Naren took the name Manabendra Nath Roy or M. N. Roy. He was arrested in New York as a member of a revolutionary conspiracy and fled while on bail to Mexico; there he met Mexican leaders and a cosmopolitan, international set of radicals, including the American radicals Mike Gold and Carleton Beals.\textsuperscript{65} In Mexico, Roy wrote several pamphlets in Spanish, an open letter to President Woodrow Wilson in English, and a lengthy book in Spanish entitled \textit{La India, su pasado, su presente y su}
Much later in life, Roy wrote his memoirs, covering the years 1915 to 1923, beginning with his journey across the Pacific to the United States. From these writings, a few points may be suggested about Naren's outlook and personal style. The caution must be added that these observations are made about him at the end of his revolutionary career and just before his communist career was to begin. The Memoirs were written near the end of his life, and his view of his own young manhood is seen through the prism of later values and conceptions of the world.

Roy wrote about this period as one of transition from narrow or "cultural nationalism" to international communism. Although he liked to think of himself as a heretic, Roy held fervently to each new faith that he adopted until disillusionment set in. Several passages like the following show him looking back and looking ahead.

I was tormented by a psychological conflict between an emotion (loyalty to old comrades) and an intelligent choice of a new ideal. I could not forget the injunction of the only man I ever obeyed almost blindly. Before leaving India for the second time, I personally escorted Jatinda to the hiding place where he later on fought and died. In reply to the thoughtless pledge of a romantic youth—"I will not again return without arms"—the affection of the older man appealed: "Come back soon, with or without arms." The appeal was an order for me. He was our Dädâ, but the Commander-in-Chief also.

Jatinda's heroic death had absolved me from the moral obligation to obey his order. Already in the autumn of 1915 while passing through Manila. I had received the shocking news. But then, my reaction was purely emotional: Jatinda's death must be avenged. Only a year had passed since then. But in the meantime I had come to realise that I admired Jatinda because he personified, perhaps without himself knowing it, the best of mankind. The corollary to that realisation was that Jatinda's death would be avenged if I worked for the ideal of establishing a social order in which the best of man could be manifest.

The older Roy saw the young Naren Bhattacharyya as a romantic, idealistic, ignorant of social theory and the world of letters, a rather stiff and silly puritan and teetotaler. He thought his earlier faith in India's mission to be constrictive and immature as he passed first into his communist and then into his humanist phase. He describes in the Memoirs how he learned to overcome his awkwardness in society and among women, and how he moved from the puritanical world of his
youth to the cosmopolitan society of the Third Communist International in its early years, the world Roy called "a community of free human beings." It is difficult to obtain independent confirmation of Roy's transition from puritanism to liberation (in his terms); but Carleton Beals has told me that Roy was loath to taste alcohol in Mexico, and he thinks he handed Roy his first glass of wine. It is also known that Jatin Mukherjee preferred his men not to marry, and it was in California, not India, that Roy met and married his first wife, Evelyn Trent. Though he was aware of his social awkwardness during this period, he was also conscious that he was a tough and battle-hardened revolutionary.69

Roy's writings in 1916-1917, mostly in Spanish (and probably done with the assistance of an anonymous native Spanish writer) present a black-and-white view of India and her past. The pamphlets and letters are frankly written as political propaganda to counteract views of India which Roy said were completely incorrect. But his lengthy book, La India, is a little more scholarly and factual, although it gives essentially the same vision of India's glorious past and her bondage under British rule.

Pre-British India, according to Roy, was a thriving nation with all its young men at schools and universities and with commerce and industry growing apace. Although the Mughal emperors were despot, they were more benevolent than their contemporaries in Europe. And India was the land of great cultural achievements with writers greater than Tagore.70 With the British came the end of that happy and bounteous age. The British came to power by trickery and deceit, and under their rule the country fell from its previous state. By Roy's time, it had become a land of famines and uneducated men, a land whose commerce and agriculture benefited only the men of another nation. India, said Roy, was a land of beggars. He mentioned the drain of resources from India and claimed that there had been no benefits from British rule. Even the railways were not constructed to benefit India, but only to suit British military convenience. Roy asserted that the reforms granted to give the beginnings of self-government were a sham and that the men elected were toadies of the rulers, not representatives of the people.71

Roy went to some lengths to defend the nationalists and revolution-
aries, especially in his letter to President Woodrow Wilson. He compared the Indian revolutionaries to the American revolutionaries of the eighteenth century and equated German assistance to the Indians with French assistance to the Americans during their war for independence. “Liberty,” wrote Roy, “is the innate right of every human being.” 72 If Wilson supported “the noble ideal of liberating the Belgians, the Serbs, the Poles, the Slavs, the Bohemians, the Magyars,” why should he not also support the liberation of Indians from the British yoke? 73 Roy even listed the betrayals of despotic Indian princes by the British as a mark of Britain’s bad faith; it is as if all that is Indian is good, all that is British is evil. All his writings are larded with quotations from Western writers. Roy seemed to feel that Western readers would accept Western authorities on Indian questions.

The Roy of these writings has a very simple view of politics, society, and history. It is still a long step from these earliest works with their rationalization of nationalist revolution and anarchism to the Marxist analysis of India that Roy was to write a few years later. India, to Roy, still had a mission. Part of this global historical role was stated in the title of one section in his letter to Wilson: “The freedom of India will be a great step toward world peace.” 74

Despite the efforts of Naren and many young men, the British were able to crush the revolutionaries, at least momentarily, and they were continually able to prevent outbreaks of violence from enveloping large sections of the country. This can be explained in large part by the weaknesses existing within the revolutionary movement.

The dada organizational system that was widespread in Bengal contained several inherent deficiencies. Although devotion and loyalty to the leader of the dal were valuable in sustaining the group, the death of the dada would bring disintegration to his immediate faction. Thus Phanindra Chakravarty broke down and confessed after Jatin-da’s death. Naren Bhattacharya went his own way, since his promises and loyalty were bound up with the person of the leader and death ended these obligations. The looser alliance of groups, called Jugantar, did continue, with Jadu Gopal Mukherjee as the new leader of the party. Phanindra Chakravarty’s confession also indicated another problem for the revolutionaries connected with loyalty. Although Jatin Mukherjee’s death might have ended Phanindra’s connection to the revolution-
ary movement, he did not have to offer a full confession which implicated dozens of revolutionaries still in the field.

Moreover, if the loyalty of members is to a small group headed by a charismatic leader, how is a larger revolutionary movement to be built? Larger units were undoubtedly constructed, but it is evident that considerable rivalry and antagonism hampered the movement. Gopal Halder describes the debilitating rivalry of the Anushilan and Jugantar groups over a long period of time. As was indicated earlier the revolutionary workers in Bengal were drawn from a small spectrum of the population. They were almost all high-caste Hindus and excluded, for the most part, low-caste Hindus and Muslims. We can only speculate as to whether they might have secured wider popular support if they drew their membership from a more representative cross-section of the population. The Hindu symbolism, rites of initiation drawn from Hindu sects and Hindu beliefs, and especially the conception of the Mother Goddess and the Motherland fused as an object of devotion and a cause generating action, must have prevented any kind of Muslim support. Most nationalists, even sophisticated and Westernized ones, were quite oblivious to the Hindu character of their nationalist symbols, heroes, and beliefs.

The revolutionaries often acted on impulse and emotion without proper plans or precautions and had only short-term goals. The link between specific acts of violence and the independence of India was at best a hazy one. Perhaps it is in the nature of revolutionary activity not to have well-formulated conceptions of past or future. They lived in their present plots and “actions.”

The connections between the revolutionaries and public movements like Swadeshi and Noncooperation have never been completely or systematically spelled out. It is clear that the revolutionaries participated in these public works and that some public leaders often counted on the support of the revolutionaries.

It may be further observed that the Bengal revolutionaries were very Bengali. Naren told the Germans who were about to send the Maverick to Karachi that it was no place to make a revolution. Bengali was the center of real “actions” and wide support for revolution. Bengali revolutionaries drew upon their own symbols and beliefs in rationalizing revolution. There were similarities and sympathies with revolution-
aries elsewhere in India, but few direct connections. The Bengalis did send out some revolutionary "colonists," especially to Bihar and Orissa, to show these lesser folk how to do revolutionary work, and Rash Behari Bose went to the Punjab and the United Provinces to help lead revolutionary activity there. But for the most part, Bengal was the center of activity and the model from which other Indians and other areas might learn. At least, that is what her revolutionary sons thought.  

At the beginning of the revolutionary period, a number of important Swadeshi leaders offered assessments of the revolutionary movement. In the spring of 1908, after several murders and revolutionary "actions" had taken place, Tagore felt called upon to make his position known. He wrote two essays on the situation at the time, entitled "Path opatheya" (The way and the means) and "Samasya" (The problem). While other figures like Surendranath Banerjea were proclaiming that these murders and robberies were the work of a few deranged men, Tagore felt that matters were much more complicated and that all Bengalis had to take responsibility for these acts. He noted that, previously, violence of words combined with a lack of commensurate action had made the Bengali an object of ridicule. But even beyond this ridicule, all Indians felt humiliated and alienated from their rulers. The British had used their power indiscriminately and were insensitive to native opinion. They did not allow the Indians to be human. Tagore pictured India as a prison house in which it was often hard to hear more than the clanking of chains. He said that in France before the French Revolution the people had paid for the luxuries of a few, but in India the situation was much worse and more humiliating because India was paying for the luxuries of a whole nation of foreigners. Thus Tagore was placing a good share of the blame for the violent acts on the ruling power and the whole European community in India.

Tagore then turned his attention to the perpetrators of the acts themselves and asked whether the acts were for the good of the country and whether they went against the basic values of Indian civilization. He characterized the revolutionary acts in the same way that he described many other political activities in the Swadeshi period: they were all attempts at short-cuts. "Just because I am in a hurry," wrote Tagore, "the road does not shorten." In the variety of expressions that an artist has at his command, Tagore described the revolutionaries and
all exclusively political nationalists as sudden sparks, storms, people who wanted to fly instead of walk, and people taking a drink who might fall into the unfortunate situation of making the alcohol an end in itself. Their actions, these sudden spurts of energy, were not equal to the tasks confronting India. They were no substitute for the creative process and the sustained arduous work that was needed. Tagore's point was not that their action was an evil to be condemned without reflection, but that it was not the best way to achieve the goals on which all might agree.

One of the main thrusts of Tagore's argument against the revolutionaries and political nationalists was that their actions were not in keeping with the spirit of Indian culture. He thought that India was a unique experiment in the mixing of cultures; cultural forces or shaktis were at work during long epochs. Harmonizing these forces was a slow and difficult process and required mutual tolerance and understanding. Sudden and sometimes violent actions would not substantially contribute to the real task at hand.

The antagonism of the Moderates and the searching critique of Tagore had little impact on the revolutionaries. The government of India and of Bengal succeeded in temporarily halting the movement during the First World War. Many young men were imprisoned and the repression was effective. But by the early 1920s, many of the prisoners were released. Though a majority worked in the mass movement to see whether it would be effective in achieving their goals, they soon began plotting, organization, and violent action.

THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR I AND POLITICAL SHIFTS

Other politically active men reacted differently to the outbreak and progress of the war. The Moderates in the Indian Association and Congress supported the British war effort, participated in the Bengal Legislative Council and attended sessions of the rump Congress. The loyalist attitude of the Muslim notables was shaken by the revocation of partition and by growing pro-Turkish, pan-Islamic feeling. At its 1912 session, the Muslim League shifted its major aim to "a form of self-government suitable to India." This change in program opened the way for a Congress-League agreement which was achieved in the Lucknow Pact of 1916. By this scheme for political advance, the Con-
ggress agreed to the principle of separate electorates and reserved seats for the Muslims. Bengal's Muslims were to receive 40 percent of the nonofficial seats in the legislature. A. K. Fazlul Huq, a rising star in the Muslim firmament, and other league leaders signed the pact, but its provisions were criticized by some Bengali Muslim leaders. The defectors left the Bengal Muslim League, worked through the Central National Mohammedan Association, and then formed their own organization, the Indian Moslem Association. They thought Bengali Muslims were entitled to the percentage of seats coincident with their 52.6 percent of the Bengali population.

The Nawab of Dacca, a leading Muslim spokesman in Bengal, had died in 1915. In his last years he gave Fazlul Huq a lift along the road to political prominence. Huq, from a family of vakils in Barisal, was an honor-winning student and vakil in Calcutta, professor at Raychandra College, editor of the Bengali magazine Balak, and protégé of the Nawab from the partition period. Huq, with the Nawab's help, held a government post from 1906 to 1912 and then was returned to the Dacca Muslim seat in the Bengal Legislative Council 'unopposed in 1912. From 1913 to 1916 he served as secretary of the Bengal Presidency Muslim League, well launched on a political career that was to span more than fifty years. In the combination of family status, achievement, and fortunate connections, he resembled the Hindu establishment men involved in the Congress. Huq was an emotional, eloquent, ambitious Bengali who could never be called an outsider in Bengal, as Ameer Ali or the Dacca Nawab were.

Besides new life on the Muslim side, Indian politics was revived through the efforts of Tilak, recently emerged from prison, and Annie Besant, newly turned to politics. They organized the Home Rule movement in different parts of the country and moved to capture the Congress from the lingering Moderates. B. Chakravarty, Jitendralal Bannerjee, and a group around C. R. Das supported Mrs. Besant in Bengal, but Surendranath Banerjea waited outside to watch and see. Several years before his death in 1915, G. K. Gokhale had written of Bengal:

the conduct of the Bengal Moderates is hastening disintegration. They have no leader on our side. Surendra Nath is an orator, but without energy and backbone, and cannot keep in hand the unruly pack whom
he professes to lead... the whole feeling in Bengal is towards Extremism.\textsuperscript{80}

By the end of World War I, a concerted challenge was mounted to Banerjea’s bastion in the Indian Association and Bengal Congress, led by C. R. Das, lawyer and Extremist.

During the years 1904–1917, Bengal loomed large on the national scene as the focal point of the Swadeshi agitation; but as that movement was not very successful, and as the capital had been transferred to Delhi, Bengal seemed to have become just another area of India by the post–World War I period. There was a serious failure of leadership in both the Extremist and the Moderate parties in Bengal in these years, for neither provided sustained national leadership. Surendranath Banerjea confined himself too much to the affairs of Bengal and insisted that the only goal of the Swadeshi agitation was the nullification of the partition of Bengal. This was not a suitable aim around which to arouse national support. Although Bengal was the cynosure during the Swadeshi years, none of the spokesmen for Swadeshi remained on the scene long enough or demonstrated enough ability to be a national leader or to reach the goals the Extremists set forth. Surendranath Banerjea was the only Moderate who enjoyed widespread prominence, but as Gokhale said, he could not keep his own followers in line, let alone bring about unity with the Extremists in Bengal. The activities of the revolutionaries in Bengal had been crushed by 1917, by either prison, exile, or death.

The Bengalis had proven resourceful in trying out the strategies of passive resistance and conspiratorial revolution. But they proved better at words and sporadic actions than at sustained work and organization. Too often they confined themselves to Bengali issues. The Muslims and the vast majority of Bengalis were still outside nationalist politics. New leadership, commitment, and organizing skills were needed to bring new thousands into the movement for swaraj.