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Imagining a Hindu Nation

Hindu and Muslim in Bankimchandra's Later Writings

Tanika Sarkar

The author explores the location of the Muslim and the Hindu nation in Bankimchandra's works as an interlinked formation that has to be situated simultaneously within his novelistic and his discursive prose. The two set up an internal dialogue and self-interrogation that moved across his earlier, relatively open-ended and often radical phase and later more dogmatic and recognisably revivalist work. The paper is centrally concerned with the profound breaks in thinking and expression as well as with the fundamental continuities that were preserved through certain narrative tropes and devices by which Bankim continued to destabilise his seemingly unambiguous agenda of a triumphalist Hindu people.

The focus is on Bankim's last five years when he composed three historical novels on Hindu-Muslim antagonism and two polemical essays on an authentic and reinvigorated Hinduism to be attained through a disciplinary regime that Bankim spelt out in some detail.

I

BANKIMCHANDRA CHATTOPADH-YAYA (1838-1894) was the real founder of the Bengali novel as well as of serious discursive literature on political theory. He took the infant prose to new heights and wrote originally and acutely on world religions, on class and gender relations in Bengal, on the history of nations and on the absence of both history and nationhood in Hindu traditions. He was also a brilliant humorist and satirist who laughed at most traditions, agendas and social types. Generally regarded as the most powerful formative influence on 19th century political thinking in Bengal, he is a difficult author to read with any absolute certainty since he seems to straddle very different positions with equal felicity at different times:¹ and also because he seems to mock at convictions and resolutions that he himself had constructed.²

Scholars generally regard Bankim as a crucial force in the making of both a nationalist imagination and a Hindu revivalist polemic. A particularly striking instance of this dual impact is his celebrated hymn to the Motherland—'Bande Mataram' (salutation to the Mother),³ which became the most potent patriotic slogan at peak points in 20th century mass nationalist struggles⁴ as well as the Hindu rallying cry in moments of Hindu-Muslim violence.⁵ The dual use has its dangers. Nationalism, which many influential scholars tend to treat as a non-historicised, undifferentiated monolithic category, may be read, rather too easily and quickly, as a variant of Hindu communalism and vice versa, both composing a hard and a soft face of the same phenomenon and both produced by western epistemic and ontological operations.⁶ Elsewhere, Bankim's work has been split up into different components which are isolated from one another and his concept of Hindu nationhood is then read on its own as an exercise in nationalist imagining without any reference

to the Muslim in the discourse.⁷ Finally, Bankim's polemical references to the Muslim are sometimes detached from his novels. They can then be seen as a seamless whole, without internal shifts. The communal impulse is then related to his nationalism as its displaced and disfigured form.⁸

I would like to explore the location of the Muslim and of the Hindu nation in Bankim's works as an interlinked formation that has to be situated simultaneously within his novelistic and his discursive prose. The two set up an internal dialogue and self-interrogation that moved across his earlier, relatively open ended and often radical phase⁹ and later, more dogmatic and recognisably revivalist work. I would be centrally concerned with the profound breaks in thinking and expression as well as with the fundamental continuities that were preserved through certain narrative tropes and devices, through which, I believe, Bankim continued to destabilise his seemingly unambiguous agenda of a triumphalist Hindu people. My focus will be on his last five years when he composed three historical novels on Hindu-Muslim antagonism; and two polemical essays on an authentic and reinvigorated Hinduism which needs to be attained through a disciplinary regimen that Bankim spelt out in some detail.¹⁰

In sharp contrast to his prolific earlier production, Bankim wrote much less in this period. There is little use of satire, caricature or humour. For the first time in his life, his prose remains uncompromisingly solemn, weighty and ponderous, all of which, at least overtly, seems to embody a single and authoritarian polemical thrust rather than an argument that continuously poses new questions and issues to itself. One of the essays, in fact, is written in the form of a guru preaching to his disciple.¹¹ The authorial voice is intrusive and cast as that of a self-proclaimed proselytiser-cum-pedagogue.

It is this phase that is considered to be a decisive component of Hindu revivalism.

And Hindu revivalistic concerns and arguments had, in their turn, been a vital political resource for the contemporary Hindutva phenomenon and its Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh leadership. I prefer to treat this phase of Bankim more as constituting the link between 19th century Hindu revivalism in Bengal whose Hindu supremacist agenda was not primarily turned against the Muslim or Islam: and the hard, aggressive Hindutva politics that started organising itself from the 1920s on an exclusively and explicitly anti-Muslim platform.¹² Apart from this role within the ideological lineage of aggressive Hindutva, Bankim has a more direct imaginative bearing on the RSS combine. His 'Bande Mataram' hymn is, for this combine, the authentic national anthem, a truer one than the 'Jana Gana Mana' of Rabindranath which is the accepted version for the Indian state. The hymn is daily sung in its entirety (including all the Bengali passages) at RSS and Rashtrasevika shakhas.¹³ Any change or abbreviation is strictly forbidden since the song symbolises the undivided, inviolate body of the pre-partition Motherland, and, hence, an abridgement amounts to a symbolic mutilation of the sacred body, a repetition of the partition: As soon as the Bharatiya Janata Party, the electoral front of the combine, came into power in Delhi after the state elections of 1993, it made the song compulsory in all state-run schools of Delhi. I would, however, be as concerned with what was not taken from Bankim's thinking on the Muslim and the Hindu nation as with what was taken: and also with how differently the themes were negotiated even when the broad conclusions seem to point in the same direction.

II

It is important to recall that till the end of the 1870s, Bankim had very boldly and thoroughly probed the specific forms of

caste, class and gender oppressions within pre-colonial Indian traditions. He had occasionally questioned the need for self-rule and nationhood for Hindus, given these internal and structured power relations, which might even be loosened up some-what under foreign rule.¹⁴ In *Samya* (Equality), which was published in 1879, he moved well beyond the modest confines of the notion of companionate marriage that the liberal reformers would advocate for the new, educated woman. He also made startling suggestions about her future economic independence and about sharing of housework between the sexes. He questioned the supreme emphasis that reformers, revivalists and the colonial state equally placed upon the absolute chastity of the Hindu wife who was situated within a framework of male polygamy.¹⁵ He saw caste, class and gender hierarchies as interlinked facets of a system that embodied the most absolute form of inequality anywhere in the world.¹⁶

Even in *Samya*, however, certain kinds of freedom and oppression are dealt with in a rather cursory manner. British rule and the notion of progress had been questioned in relation to peasant poverty,¹⁷ but the entire question of foreign rule and political freedom had been rendered a lesser priority by counterposing to it the issue of internal stratification and oppression within Indian society. The peasant, moreover, is the object of enlightened social engineering but political initiative is obviously beyond him. In his historical novels, too, political change is invariably initiated by kings and ascetics; when the ordinary folk initiate direct action, it degenerates into mob rioting.¹⁸ Demands for freedom and welfare for victims of social oppression are powerfully articulated but the agenda is left without an agent.¹⁹ It is the colonial state which, after all, is asked to assume a corrective role.

In the 70s, when Bankim was writing his socially aware and courageous prose, the absolute vulnerability of all categories of tenants on issues of rent increase, illegal cesses and the arbitrary powers of eviction that the landlord enjoyed had hardly been breached.²⁰ From 1880 onwards, however, plans for substantive amendments in tenancy laws had been set afoot²¹ and the state, moreover, was systematically compiling and classifying information about low castes, with a view to intervening in improvement measures in the near future. This was in the context of rethinking in official policies about social groups after 1857, when there was a marked suspicion about upper castes in general among government officers. Bankim was, in fact, selected by H H Risley in 1881 to assist in the preparation of an *Ethnographic Glossary* with detailed research on castes and tribes for the district of Howrah where he was then posted.²² It also became

increasingly difficult to regard peasants the way Bankim had portrayed them—as passive victims. Since the mid-70s powerful forms of peasant self-organisation and movement against arbitrary landlord exactions had become a central feature of the agrarian scene. The spread of the commercial cultivation of jute, moreover, benefited the small peasants of Muslim or low caste categories rather than the rentier groups who constituted the base of the new middle class.²³ Moreover, the failure of Bengali entrepreneurship to find space for itself in the higher rungs of trade, business and industries was definitively established by the 70s.²⁴ There was a keen sense of exclusion from the commanding heights of the civil society for Bankim's own class. His earlier critique of the oppressive privileges of a parasitic upper caste-middle class now seemed to require a further deepening of these processes of exclusion, leading, conceivably to a partial reversal of power relations rather than the benevolent and responsible paternalism of upper caste landowners that Bankim had prescribed in the 70s. There was now a real problem of choice.

After the late 70s Bankim would never return to the themes of peasant poverty and caste oppression. He would repudiate *Samya* and refuse to bring out a new edition.²⁵ Even without necessarily imputing narrow motives to this choice, we have to reckon with this absence and the implications this holds out for a possible radical social agenda at a time of limited but real social change. We have to recognise that the choice was made and exercised through a silence, through certain excisions from his earlier concerns. It is also a fact of considerable significance that the definitive transition from a predominantly liberal to a markedly Hindu revivalist discourse was made within Bengal around the same time and against this context. Sumit Sarkar has already pointed out a somewhat similar predicament in the 1920s that partly enabled a turn towards organised communalism.²⁶

The posing of the problem of power and exploitation was, therefore, unambiguously radical but Bankim's radical imagining failed or refused to construct a resolution that could be adequate to itself. If the peasant or the dispossessed low caste was not to be the subject of his own history, then the immediately realisable and convincing agency for self-improvement within Indian society—an agency that, moreover, already seemed activated—could be the middle class with its western education, liberal values and a reformist agenda. If reform of Hindu patriarchy was the major concern for this group, Bankim, too, had his own critique of Hindu domestic norms which, if anything, was far sharper than that of the reformists. Bankim, however, was relentlessly critical

of its aspirations and methods of work. He saw its dependence on colonial legislation for initiating improved family laws as a basic moral flaw since this neither generated a will for change within wider society, without which reform would be doomed, nor did it make 'men' of modern Hindus by vesting them with independence of effort and hegemonistic capabilities. Any dependence on foreign rulers perpetuated and exemplified for him, the lack of a will to freedom and nationhood which had kept Hindus subjected for centuries. Bankim spared no effort at mocking this dependence on alien legislation²⁷ as well as the emasculation it produced. He also mocked the surrender of the new middle class to Orientalist forms of knowledge on India, although he retained great respect for strands within mainstream western social and political philosophies.²⁸

Since he saw it as a class that was born retarded, Bankim refused the middle class its demands for political freedom and rights. He made himself extremely unpopular by supporting British moves to muzzle the vernacular press to suggest that it was behaving irresponsibly and that it needed controls.²⁹ He used the entire and formidable resources of his satire and caricature to make fun of the politics of associations and organisations, of the mimicry of imported political models that was involved in such exercises and the ridiculous misadventures in handling them.³⁰ He, therefore, undercut precisely the struggle for democratic and public spaces where Indians could grow through debates and experiences of organisation and protest. Neither a radical nor a liberal form of democracy was compatible with the heroic agenda that held his imagination. In fact, if Bankim prefigures the trajectory of some features of *Hindutva*, he also powerfully embodies some aspects of a far softer and pluralistic form of liberal indigenism. The latter, out of its commitment to a non-'alienated' authentic politics, and its suspicion of liberal rights or radical social protest that derive some of their terms from the post-Enlightenment political radicalism and democratic traditions, finds itself in the same space as aggressive, intolerant *Hindutva* in its critique of secular democratic politics. This, in the final analysis, emerges as a far more consistent and powerful strain than its critique of *Hindutva* which is sporadic and milder.³¹

The thrust towards a pure and authentically Hindu site for generating the social will for change complicated his social concern, his sharp criticism of the traditional, pre-colonial form of Hindu domesticity and his daring imagining of the non-domesticated, strong, passionate woman that had earlier created a marked distance between him and the contemporary Hindu revivalist-nationalist.³² While he grew intellectually through a

simultaneous and interanimated imbibing of Enlightenment universalism and Hindu philosophical resources and used the resources of both to interrogate both—and here lies the ineptness of the notion of hybridity that misses out on the criticality and the mutually transformative nature of this intellectual encounter—the compulsion to opt for a pure site of exclusively Hindu knowledge triumphed after his exchanges with Reverend Hastie.³³

In 1882, Reverend Hastie of the General Assembly wrote a tract that was brutally critical of Hinduism. Bankim, who had always ridiculed Orientalist pretensions about scientific knowledge on India, prepared a long, careful and angry reply. It was after this that he repudiated *Samya* and, in his discursive prose, became exclusively preoccupied with the theme of a reconstructed Hindu form of knowledge and leadership. The anger was probably fuelled by the changing political environment since the mid- and late-70s. The post-Mutiny repression, clearly racist in nature, had initiated serious self doubt among the Bengali middle class that had been entirely loyal in 1857. The escalation in discriminatory colonial policies during Lytton's era³⁴ was followed by the violent racist backlash at the time of the Ilbert Bill agitation. Apart from the exposure to the most extreme and naked form of white racism in a concentrated dose, the middle class was also troubled by a reversal of trends that had promised a milder climate at the time of Northbrooke's, and later, of Ripon's liberal policies³⁵ which were on the point of opening up a few minor but real opportunities of incorporation within the colonial decision-making process.³⁶ This led to an intensification of both liberal and Hindu revivalist forms of anti-colonial critiques and organisation. Liberal nationalists formed secular, open organisations for self strengthening and formulated economic critiques of the colonial drain of wealth, Indian poverty and deindustrialisation that remained the foundational concepts for all nationalist economic thinking down to Gandhi.³⁷ Hindu revivalists, on the other hand, used their anti-western rhetoric to close off all interrogation and transformation of power relations within the Hindu community as false knowledge contaminated by alien forms of power knowledge.³⁸ It thus assumed a markedly fundamentalist kind of defensiveness. Faced with this crisis of conscience, Bankim reacted by repudiating *Samya* and by excising the frontal contestation of Hindu caste, class and gender hierarchies from his prose. The excision, despite his best efforts, remained somewhat incomplete and Bankim reinserted some of his earlier critiques insidiously in his later novels.³⁹

Historical developments as well as certain earlier political choices, then, blocked off,

for Bankim, any inclination to consider the liberal reformers as a vehicle for Hindu self-improvement. As class, caste and gender abruptly disappear in his work as central concerns, their absence is filled up in the 80s by a new and coherent problematic: What constitutes authentic Hinduism, what possibilities exist within Hinduism of the past and in the re-authenticated Hinduism of the future for nation building, what precisely was the culpability of the Muslim in Indian history and how and why had Hindu power capitulated to it. It is not that these problems were not reflected on in his earlier prose, but there they had locked horns with an equally powerful set of social concerns.⁴⁰ Their centrality now becomes absolute and uncontested. Bankim looks for an ethico religious site for the Hindu people whose dominant priority is not what is socially just but what is truly indigenous—i.e. Hindu.⁴¹

With the reoriented problematic, the obvious agency could now be restored to the brahmanical forms of knowledge and upper caste social leadership. This, however, presents equally powerful problems. Bankim continues to believe that past traditions of Hinduism had not generated any impulse for freedom and nationhood. If, then, these new changes need to be improvised, then old forms of knowledge or rule will not automatically yield them. Even in this later discursive phase, he continued to polemicise against certain forms of Hindu knowledge and devotion, as earlier he had critically reviewed Sankhya and Nyaya traditions.⁴² At no phase had he shown much sympathy for the Vedic-Vedantist philosophies, perhaps because their quietist, reflective modes were inappropriate for a politically militant, even violent heroic agenda, and also because these were resources that Brahma reformers had celebrated.⁴³ He conducted a relentless polemic against the dominant Bengali form of devotion—Bhakti, especially its Vaishnav form which worshipped Krishna as a figure of great erotic excess.⁴⁴ He chose the Puranic tradition and put together from them the figure of a heroic, vindictive, wily and violent saviour figure. He used as his model mythical—epic dimensions of the later life of Krishna when he was no longer the shepherd boy or the great lover, but when he had grown up into the king, the politician, the warrior.⁴⁵ Throughout his life he held lively arguments with the orthodox repositories of brahmanical knowledge—the pandits of Bhatpara.⁴⁶ He cast doubt on the learning of the doyen of the Hindu orthodoxy of his times—Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachuramani.⁴⁷ The criticality and intellectual and polemical energies which continued to shape his writings even of the later period, would be something that contemporary Hindutva entirely eschews.

Even in the *Dharmatattva*, the guru preached to a well read, argumentative disciple. RSS pedagogic principles, on the other hand, are entirely exhortative and rhetorical, and internal debates and productive differences find no space there. It is not for nothing that they select recruits from very young children who lack the capacity to argue.⁴⁸

The existing representatives of the old Hindu ruling groups—the upper caste landowners and rentiers who opposed the new western learning, the leaders of Hindu religious establishments, the pundits—failed to convince him as in any way deserving of their privileges or as offering potential for active leadership. In his later novels he returned to his sharp satirical bite in portraying the classic figure of the traditional Hindu patriarch—the upper caste parasitic landlord paterfamilias.⁴⁹ The virtuous founder of a Hindu power that he imagined in *Sitaram* could sustain neither his virtue nor his power.⁵⁰ Contemporary sexual and financial scandals about the Mohunt of the celebrated Shaivite pilgrimage centre at Tarakeswar that rocked Bengal in 1873⁵¹ and the earlier scandal about the Maharaja of the Ballabhachari sect in Gujarat probably made him unable to imagine the present representatives of organised religion as saviours. Even the ascetics of *Anandamath*, the quintessentially militant patriotic novel, astonish the ordinary devout Hindu who keeps on asking them what kinds of Vaishnavs or sanyasis they are.⁵²

It is notable that in this phase, as earlier, virtue, activism and heroism are more effortlessly embodied by the woman as almost a characterological trait.⁵³ Bankim had stopped polemicising against the subordination of women and the bold feminist of *Samya* had buried himself. In *Krishnacharitra*, in fact, he devoted much space to justify an act of force committed by Arjuna in abducting the sister of Krishna on his advice. Krishna convinces Arjuna, and Bankim tries to convince us, that male guardians can and should override the question of the woman's consent in the interests of her own larger welfare that they necessarily comprehend better.⁵⁴ The disproportionately large space that he devotes to justify this, rather minor incident in the life of Krishna, however, tells us how difficult he found it to persuade himself. In *Dharmatattva* he overturns his earlier images of conjugality as the equal and mature mutual passion between two adults that had deconstructed the revivalist nationalist celebration of non-consensual infant marriage between a polygamous male and an utterly monogamous child wife.⁵⁵ At the same time, even in the later phase, the woman remained the locus of the nation in a far more activist way than the passive, iconic role ascribed to her by revivalist nationalists who saw in her submission to

prescriptions and in her total insulation from new alien norms a measure of her symbolic capacity to embody and sustain the nation.⁵⁶ In Bankim, however, the only approximation of the figure of Saviour Krishna is the figure of the dacoit queen Prafulla who earns this capacity not by being faithful to Hindu domestic prescriptions but by surviving outside her household and by fighting against British forces. Even though the pedagogic training for the new Hindu that Bankim filled out in *Dharmatattva* is imparted to a male disciple, it is the dacoit queen of the novel who is shown to be actually undergoing the training.⁵⁷ In *Sitaram*, too, the woman causes virtuous action, the woman tries to save Hindu power and the woman is wrongfully tried and humiliated in a striking parallel with and an implicit critique of Ram's trial of Sita.⁵⁸

The woman's activism, however, is occasional and exceptional even when it sustains some of the critical energies of the earlier Bankim. It is certainly not a sign of an investiture of the woman with leadership of the patriotic agenda. It is also something that happens entirely within his fiction. In the directly polemical prose, on the other hand, the critical energy is well contained, and even the feminine figuration of the Motherland that Bankim achieved in *Anandamath* is absent. The new Hindu is emphatically a Hindu man with a difference. He is the embodiment of a rigorous, disciplinary schedule that will eventually transpose discipline from an external ethico religious authority to the self monitoring ethical agent who has internalised reinterpreted concepts of Hindu knowledge and devotional practices (Bankim's explanation of Bhakti and Anushilandharma). It is the process of training which incorporates knowledge, dispositions, physical capabilities and devotion and which replaces privileges of birth and ritual expertise, that mark out the new brahmin who is the ideal patriot and nation builder from the old, unreformed Hindu authorities. Inherited and normative control are replaced with hard earned leadership and brahmanical authority is revived as intensively cultivated hegemonic aspirations. A return on a higher plane, maybe, but a return, nonetheless. The imagined Hindu nation cannot, even in imagination, be made and ruled by agents that are not male and not upper caste.⁵⁹

III

Let us now turn to some specific dimensions within the construction of the new Hindu. We shall begin with a theme that we touched on in the first section: the *Bande Mataram* hymn. We shall use it as an illustration of the imaginative and rhetorical

devices with which a militant Hindu form of patriotism is constructed. Bankim had originally composed this as a song in 1875. Later, when he had finished the highly influential novel, *Anandamath*, he inserted it within the story and vested it with highly significant narrative functions.⁶⁰ The song, on its own, would have made an original move towards a deification and fetishisation of the country. That sense was further heightened by other resonances within the novel which spent much effort in constructing a sequentialised imagery of the deified Motherland.⁶¹ Apart from that, the narrative framing, acquired from the novel's plot, endowed it with additional and very new properties. The hymn, subsequently, was detached from the novel and achieved a life of its own as a slogan in mass nationalist rallies, and later, in communal violence. The novel, however, remained contained within the slogan as implied resonances, associations and emotions and provide a reference point for larger messages.

The song begins in Sanskrit, then turns into Bengali and ends with Sanskrit passages again. It begins with an evocation of the bounteous, lovely land that generously nurtures its children. Then bounty and physical richness turn into an image of latent strength, derived from the image of Durga, the demon slaying goddess, from the numerical strength of the population, compiled from Census statistics, and from the supreme sacred significance that Bankim ascribes to her within the Hindu pantheon: "It is your image that we worship in all temples".⁶² The land, for a while, is at one with the icon of Durga. The image of Durga then quickly and insidiously transforms itself into that of Kali, another manifestation of the Mother goddess, but as a destructive, angry force. It ends with a reiteration of the original sense of bounty and nurture, and an exhortation to her children to enrich her strength with their own. In between, there is just a suggestion of her present weakness—"with such strength, why are you helpless?"—but the overwhelming sense is one of power. The power is undifferentiated and flows back and forth from the mother to the sons, though it certainly originates with the mother. The song encapsulates, in an unbroken musical flow, the three distinct images of the nurturing mother of the past, the dispossessed mother of the present and the triumphant mother of the future that are developed at much greater length within the novel.⁶³ Later nationalists clearly saw the demon slayer as pitted against the colonial power and used the song as an abbreviated history of the growth of colonial exploitation and the patriotic struggle for liberation. The RSS, on the other hand, certainly took it to imply a 'historical' struggle against the Muslim, since from their inception, they had stayed away from the anti-colonial

movements and had devoted themselves to an exclusively communal agenda. As a matter of fact, in the song itself, the demon is nonspecified and is eclipsed by the image of the armed Mother. What is of importance is the reiteration that the patriotic son is quintessentially a soldier at war.

The novel itself is ambiguous about whom the Mother is fighting. It is set in the transitional historical moment of the late 18th century, against the backdrop of the famine of 1770 and the armed combat by marauding ascetics of Naga Dasnami orders against the puppet Muslim Nawab and the indirect control of the British in Bengal.⁶⁴ Bankim makes no mention of the role of Muslim fakirs who also led plundering bands of starving people. Even though the sanyasis were from Saivite orders, here they are worshippers of Vishnu, with a brand of militant, war-like bhakti of their own. Leaders are recruited from Bengali, upper caste, landed origins and they have transformed themselves with devotional and rigorous physical and martial training, with the vocation of ascetic celibacy for the duration of the struggle, which is ment to restore Hindu rule. Even though they do accomplish the ouster of the puppet Nawab, they also are instrumental in ushering in direct and complete British dominion. A divine voice tells the supreme leader that this is providential since Hindus need apprenticeship in modern forms of power. The leader, however, remains disconsolate and unreconciled and considers the historical mission of santans—the ascetic leaders—aborted since one foreign ruler is exchanged for another. Nationalists took this bitterness as a call for struggle against the colonial power, while to the RSS brigade, the divine command would indicate sanction for staying away from the anti-colonial struggle, since the divine purpose is stated to be the elimination of Muslim power.

Within the novel, the song initiates a number of political breaks and innovations. It is meant to be a sacred chant or 'mantra'. Yet, chants are compulsorily composed in 'debbhasha' Sanskrit—the language of the gods—to which women and low castes do not have access. They are also enunciated within a prescribed ritual sequence, always in front of the deity and always by the brahman priest or the initiated brahmin male householder. The novel ascribes it to an act of worship. Yet it is first heard during the aftermath of a battle between the British-led troops of the Nawab and the Santans who lead a mob of villagers. The hymn, then, enters the emergent cultic order of a new form of Mother worship as a chant that is unconventionally detached from the sacred ritual sequence and that can also function as a song on its own, as congregational devotional music that is accessible to all in Vaishnavite gatherings. Yet, unlike those

occasions, it enters into public use at a moment of war, not of pietistic contemplation of the earthly sports of Krishna. Devotional music, loosened from its original chant form, sacralises a war through this transference of indicated use—and, simultaneously, the hymn/song, which is also a battle cry, transforms the congregation of devotees into the monolithic single body of a disciplined army; “Then, in a single, resounding voice, the thousands of santan soldiers... sang out to the rhythms of the canon—Bande Mataram”.⁶⁵ If a Hindu community-for-itself is being visualised, then, from the moment of inception it is a people at war, unified by violence against a shared enemy. The ascetic figure of the Santan, who first pronounces the words and who initiates the act of worship, immediately merges into the figure of the military commander and strategist who leads the holy war.

There is, however, a crucial difference between the older figure of the priest and the new priest-cum-commander. Unlike the former, the commander raises the song but he no longer remains in custody of the sacred ritual or chant. Others—including the motley army of villagers of all castes—enter into the act of singing and the hymn now moves into the vernacular. And, along with this, a further transformation of purpose takes place. First, a chant, then successively a song and a command, the hymn now passes into a battle cry—and forms the first ever political slogan in the Bengali language. The commander emerges as the political leader, the organiser *par excellence*. The importance of the enterprise to aggressive Hindutva lies in its explicitly political violence that can express itself convincingly as a religious purpose. It is underlined in the novel when, inspired by santans, the mob begins to articulate an agenda that goes beyond simple loot. “Unless we throw these dirty bastards [that is, the Muslims] out, Hindus will be ruined...When shall we raze mosques down to the ground and erect Radhamadhav’s temples in their place?”⁶⁶

The imaginative resources of a violent political agenda are immensely enriched, however, precisely by the ability to simultaneously lay claim to gentle and peaceful images.⁶⁷ The song is held in place by a tension between contradictory impulses which constitute a delicately poised unity. The tension and the tense unity are effected at the level of both sound and meaning. The land is beautiful and the mother is smiling, tender and youthful. At the same time, she becomes the ruthless warrior, triumphing in battle. Her loveliness, her smiles and grace are evoked in lush, flowing, elongated, rich sound effects; ‘shubhrajyotsnapulokita yamineem phullakusumitadrumadalashobhineem, suhasineem, samadhurabhashineem, sukhadam baradaam mataram’ (to the mother

whose nights are gorgeous with silvery moonlight, who is decked out with trees that bloom happily with flowers, whose smile is beautiful, whose words are bathed in sweetness, who is the giver of pleasure, of bliss...). The sensuousness of the soft, liquid syllables is abruptly replaced with a quicker, jagged rhythm, by an arrangement of harsh, strident, strong words; ‘saptakotikantha kalakala ninadakarale, dwisaptakotirbhujairdhitakharakarabale... bahubalaharineeem, namaami tarineem...’ (seven million voices boom out words of doom, 14 million arms wield the sharp swords...we salute the saviour mother, possessor of many kinds of strength).⁶⁸ Classical rhetorical conventions matched sounds with moods. But Bankim went beyond them in the dramatic art of juxtaposition, of shocking and astonishing transitions within a brief and continuous space. The rhetorical charge and power of the Hindutva project are very often trivialised by assuming a simple transition from gentle quietism to violence. The song, which remains a powerful imaginative resource for the Hindutva project, complicates and widens the notion of a binary opposition between peaceful, traditional Hinduism and violent Hindutva. Bankim’s militant bhakti let go of nothing and its language was supple and inventive enough to effect many movements between opposites.⁶⁹

In the process, a great transgression takes place—of inserting the profane vernacular and a political, modern purpose into a sacred order of worship which violently transforms its original nature and purpose. The seemingly democratic extension of esoteric holy words to slogans and songs to be used by all, however, has its structured limits. The leader—mob distinction is carefully underlined in the way in which each military encounter turns into chaos unless it is carefully calibrated by ascetic leaders. The leaders, whether here, or in the later two novels, are carefully trained in leadership qualities through a pedagogical scheme that certainly is not available to or meant for the mass following, which joins up out of sheer starvation and mob instincts. It is true that the ascetic leaders give up caste codes in times of war, and recruit soldiers from all social strata. But along with celibacy and asceticism this is the last sacrifice that they must impose on themselves until the final victory is achieved. It is also described as the most difficult of sacrifices.⁷⁰ Presumably, with victory, the restoration of the normal order would absolve them of the pledge. The point, then, is not to overturn the social hierarchy, but to qualify it in times of war. Established leaders of Hindu society may thus renew and extend their control by coming closer to the ordinary folk and by actually leading them to victory in a violent war against a common enemy. The temporary,

yet close intimacy that the liminal space of war offers would provide real and felt legitimacy for what had been mere custom and prescribed power. The comprehensive training with which leaders approach the work of organisation ensures that the continued exercise of power has a far more secure base.⁷¹

IV

We had used the hymn and its function within the novel as an entry point into the rhetorical operations and a structure of feelings with which Bankim proceeded to delineate the politics of the reconstructed Hindu. Since the old Hindu had suffered from the absence of a combination of physical prowess and desire for self rule, the new Hindu will only have arrived when he proves himself in a final battle that will overwhelmingly establish his superiority over the Muslim, who had, in the past, always defeated the Hindu.⁷² Since the British have something to impart to the Hindu, Hindu empowerment, it seems, must unfold within an overarching colonial framework. It is the Muslim, the vanquisher of generations of past Hindus, who will be the great adversary of the new Hindu.⁷³

The Muslim was to be the adversary for yet another reason. I would like to suggest that Bankim made a distinction between the historical experience of Muslim rule on the one hand and Islam as an organised religion and the Muslim as a personality type on the other. Muslim rule, he considered, brought neither material nor spiritual improvement to India, and merely emasculated defeated Hindus. Yet, Islam, and the Muslim with his supposedly violent commitment to his religion and his desire for power, had much to teach to the Hindu.⁷⁴

In his polemic on world religions, Bankim seemed to grant a perfection to Hinduism only in historical times, whereas, through a series of oblique half statements, Islam is endowed with perfection in historical times. If universal love is taken to be the highest human ideal, then, says Bankim, Hinduism has it in the largest degree. Yet, throughout history, that has led to a dangerous quietism, to an inadequate comprehension of national dangers, to subjection and to degeneration of the community. As far as Islam and Christianity are concerned, they have both avoided that particular problem. Between the two, however, Islam went far ahead of Christianity in attaining greater unity within its own boundaries and emerged as a more successful political model. By combining the different sets of values, we can construct a single uniform scale, wherein Islam transcends the particular problems of both Christianity and Hinduism even though, Hinduism and Islam are not directly compared with each other.⁷⁵

In a crucial and conclusive part of *Dharmatattva*, Islam is dropped from the explicit comparative scheme and there is a new triangular contest for virtues among Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. "If Jesus or Sakya Singha had been householders and yet leaders of world religions, then their systems would have been more complete. Krishna as ideal man is a householder. Jesus or Sakya Singha are not ideal men".⁷⁶ If Hinduism scores over the two other religions on this ground, then there is also a third, unmentioned presence, another leader of a world religion who, too, was a householder and who yet transcended his mundane ties—that is Mohammad. Islam, or rather, the figure of the Prophet, is the sunken middle term in the diagram. If he implicitly shares the honour of having founded a perfected religion with Krishna, he has the further advantage of being so within the accepted hagiography of Islam, and in the universally acknowledged version of Islam as well.⁷⁷ Bankim was, however, painfully aware that his ideal type Krishna was an appropriation and construction solely of his own heroic intellectual efforts, and that here he was going against the grain of dominant Hindu interpretative schemes.⁷⁸ Bankim's Krishna is a householder-king, a warrior, a politician. He is overwhelmingly a man of action, strong enough to be wily in a higher cause, to resort to seemingly amoral strategies for the higher good of his people. He is entirely unlike the morally pure of philosophically questioning Christ or Buddha. He is equally unlike the figure of total love and play that is celebrated in Vaishnavite hagiography. Of all the world religions that Bankim knew about, his Krishna stands as the closest approximation to Mohammad. In fact, the silent influence on Bankim's construction is so exact in particular features as well as in the total conception, that one may even be tempted to speculate if Bankim's Krishna is not, indeed, modelled on the biography of Mohammad.⁷⁹

If the discursive prose of later years obliquely draws upon what Bankim regarded as the enviable resources and energies of Islam, and if he did not engage in sustained polemic against Islam in his essays on religion, he certainly evolved a mode of extremely denunciatory speech about Muslim rule in India in his novels. While his notions of ideal Hinduism informed 19th century Hindu revivalism, the particular language that he, more than any other contemporary, developed to describe the Muslim, certainly inflected the rhetoric and the aspirations of violent Hindu communalism of the next century.

Bankim bestowed on the Muslim an unprecedented centrality in his historical and political scheme, thereby starting a tradition. The revivalist climate of the times was shaped far more decisively by

anti-reformist and anti-missionary propaganda and there were even a few clashes with missionaries in the early 90s.⁸⁰ During the Age of Consent Bill agitation of the 80s and early 90s, Muslims were written about as fellow sufferers and victims of colonialism.⁸¹ The nationalist vernacular press usually took care to distinguish between the integrated, indigenised nature of "Muslim rule" and what they described as the entirely alien nature of the colonial government.⁸² This is not to say that Bengal was completely immune from the communal violence that was sweeping across parts of northern India in the 1890s.⁸³ Muslims had recently gained a few educational concessions, Hunter's thesis on Muslim backwardness promised more, and with Muslim self-modernisation moves of the Aligarh variety, the possibility of sharpened competition in the sphere of the new education and jobs, where Bengali Hindus had so far enjoyed a decisive edge, seemed imminent.⁸⁴ So far, however, that remained a rather marginal worry and Hindu revivalism had not yet targeted the Muslim as the main enemy.⁸⁵

Bankim bequeathed a set of historical judgments on the nature and consequences of Muslim rule in Bengal: "How does our Muslim ruler protect us? We have lost our religion, our caste, our honour and family name, and now we are about to lose our very lives...How can Hinduism survive unless we derive out these dissolute swine?"⁸⁶ These ideological moves do not need proper historical authentication since they are posed in a fictional space: the

pseudo historical comments, however, carry an immense weight of conviction, nonetheless, particularly since Bankim was known for a highly historicist thrust in his discursive prose. They are, therefore, insidiously authenticated and then they justify political rallying cries of extreme virulence: "Kill the low Muslims"⁸⁷ is the refrain that is repetitively raised in *Anandamath*. Even though Bankim never made use of the recent theories of the colonial drain of wealth, he used the same motif to describe the flight of money from Bengal to Delhi in the form of a heavy revenue burden in Mughal times.⁸⁸

Perhaps the most significant way in which Bankim served as a bridge between 19th century Hindu revivalism and the later, anti-Muslim, violent politics was by providing an immensely powerful visual image of communal violence and by giving it the status of an apocalyptic holy war. He stamped the image indelibly on the imagination of communal politics by fusing the impulse of community violence and revenge with the spectacle of a feminine body. In his last novel *Sitaram*, Gangaram, the brother of the heroine Shree is unjustly charged and sentenced to execution by a tyrannical Muslim fakir and a Qazi. Unable to stop this mockery of justice, Shree goes to the place of execution where a big crowd, including many Hindus, had gathered to watch the event. In despair, Shree tries to rally them to save a fellow Hindu, to instil a sense of brotherhood and mutual responsibility by evoking the fact that a man of their

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community is being killed by another community. Shree does not invoke the theme of justice, nor does she try to rally subjects against tyranny and misrule. Quite spontaneously, the words that rise to her mouth are words of community solidarity and violence. "Then Gangaram saw a goddess-like figure among the green leaves of the huge tree. Her feet resting on two branches, the right hand clutching a tender branch, the left hand swirling her sari, she was calling out: Kill, kill..." Her long, unbound tresses were dancing in the wind, her proud feet were swinging the branches up and down, up and down, as if Durga herself was dancing on the lion on the battlefield. Shree had no more shame left, no consciousness, no fear, no rest. She kept calling out—"Kill, kill the enemy... The enemy of the country, the enemy of Hindus, my enemy... kill, kill the enemy... That straining arm was such a lovely arm... such beauty in her swollen lips, her flaring nostrils, sweat drenched stray locks falling across a perspiring forehead. All the Hindus kept looking at her and then streaming towards the battlefield with 'glory to Mother Chandike' on their lips".

In an instant, Shree had transformed a scattering of Hindus who had no previous sense of mutual connectedness, into an army with a single violent purpose, into a community-for-itself that can be realised only through invocation of vengeance against another. It is as if, to imagine a community of Hindus, Bankim can only imagine a spectacle of violence, of war. That is the only passion that brings the community into being. But the spectacle of violence is derived from the image of a passionate feminine body which literally gives birth to the violence. If political passion is produced through a feminine agency, there is little doubt about the kind of image in which this passion is cast. The woman's body moving "up and down, up and down"... the "straining arms, the swollen lips, the flaring nostrils, the sweat drenched locks and the perspiring forehead"—all are well remembered classical conventions for describing the woman at the moment of sexual climax. The superimposition of the icons of Durga and of Chandika, the goddess of war, on this body provides a sacred frame that tightly controls yet obliquely heightens the flow of sexual energy from which the visual image derives its power. The beginnings of a violently communalised imagination may, then, have something to do with a kind of male fantasising that encompasses sexual passion and political violence in a single impulse of pleasure.

V

Yet the consequences of such imagination do not entirely exhaust the logic of Bankim's

discourse on the Muslim. We have already seen that his serious discursive prose referred to Islam with respect. In his novels, too, Bankim had been writing about Hindus and Muslims, and their relations with one another, all his life. They are ranged side by side, against one another, in dramatic and tense encounters between man and man, man and woman, woman and woman, as communities, nations, armies, as loving, fighting, making peace, arguing, negotiating. If all the novels on this theme are taken to compose a single novel, and the arrangements between people of the two religions are relations between two composite individuals, then the obvious simile is that of a conjugal or wildly emotional, dangerously fluctuating sexual relationship that may simultaneously include great intimacy along with great violence. A far cry from the way white people encounter Indians in his novels which provide moments of sheer comicality,⁸⁹ here is invariably material for high drama or for tragedy.

In his first novel *Durgesh Nandini* there is a striving for an almost mechanical symmetry of virtues and vices on both sides. The aim is to establish a shared code of conduct, be it for the heroes, the heroines, the villains or the cowards. Neither are Hindus and Muslims two monolithically integrated peoples and political alliances and expediency cut across religious boundaries.⁹⁰ Interestingly, Bankim, who experimented boldly with rather transgressive possibilities in sexual relationships beyond Hindu domestic and conjugal prescriptions, found in the Muslim woman, unbounded by norms of being faithful to only one man in an entire lifetime, a productive ground for playing on utterly new registers of sexual morality and commitment.

From the third novel, *Mrinalini*, the possibility of a shared enterprise vanishes and the Muslim becomes the great historical adversary of the Hindu. Battles between individuals are now loaded with destiny for nations. In *Rajsingha*, the Muslim adversary is not just an adversary but a hated and dreaded enemy—no less a man than the fanatical Aurangzeb. "He was born to hate the Hindus, he found Hindu offences unpardonable..." There are references to all his well-thumbed sins in the opening chapter itself—jeziya, temple wrecking, cow slaughter, forced conversion. This seems a typical case of stereotyping. Yet, let us remember the first appearance of the presumed enemy of Hindus. We meet an elderly man in white, quiet, dignified, assured, respecting strength in an enemy. All the characteristic historical associations had been revived and refamiliarised in the first chapter. Gradually, however, over the entire text, the stereotype is defamiliarised, redeemed and humanised, especially by Aurangzeb's gentle, melancholy love for a Hindu serving maid. It is no monster but a

great adversary that had been defeated in the historical battle and herein lay the true glory of Mewar. Unlike the anonymous, faceless English troops, Muslim adversaries, even the worst of them, wear human faces where complex emotions are often delicately sketched in.

It is in *Sitaram*, the last novel, that the Muslim combatant is largely an abstraction, an absence; yet battles with him fill up the entire novelistic space. Has Bankim, then, at the end of his life, managed to formulate and congeal an agenda at the point of blind hatred, when the enemy sheds his human features and is reduced to a simple figure of hatred? I think that Bankim found it impossible to form and celebrate an agenda with sustained conviction even in his last, dogmatic, markedly authoritarian phase. If the agenda seems to be coherent and complete, he then proceeds to fracture it from within, to dissolve his own statement of conviction. *Sitaram* is defeated by his own inner flaws. The Hindu leader, whether a commander, a king, a brahmin or a patriarch, remains weak, treacherous, greedy and cowardly across historical and social differences. The most significant thing about the last novel, I think, is *Sitaram's* brutality against Hindu women—which is conventionally ascribed to the stereotypical Muslim. When *Sitaram's* Hindu kingdom breaks up, Hindu women celebrate the event with vindictive glee. An erstwhile tolerant Muslim fakir leaves his kingdom, vowing never to live under Hindu rule. The stereotyped notion of Muslim intolerance is turned upside down, for it is *Sitaram* who, by his own villainy, had forced this conclusion on him.

The novel, charged with shrill intensity, ends with uncharacteristic bathos. Bankim had never before used the device of a chorus composed of ordinary people. Here we find two common men, Ram and Shyam, having the last words.

"Ram: 'How goes it, brother? Have you heard any news about Mohamadpur? [*Sitaram's* kingdom].'

Shyam: 'Different people say different things. Some say the king (*Sitaram*) and the queen could not be captured... The wretched Muslims executed a false king and a false queen.'

Ram: '...That sounds like a Hindu fiction, a mere novel.'

Shyam: 'Well, who knows whose story is a fiction. Your story may well be a Muslim tale. Anyway, we are ordinary people, all this doesn't concern us. Let us enjoy a smoke in peace.'

Let Ramchand and Shyamchand enjoy their pipe of tobacco. We shall end our narrative at this point."

An uncharacteristic narrative closure for Bankim who had always been intensely concerned about historicity, with problems of political bias and partisanship vitiating

historical truth. All his familiar concerns are blown away with a few puffs of smoke, with rumours recounted by two ignorant and rather uninterested men who dismiss all history as ultimately unknowable, as equally uncertain versions, and, finally, as supremely irrelevant to the likes of them. What exactly is involved in this untypicality, this major departure?

One can only speculate at several levels. It can denote a final failure of hope in the heroic, redemptive exercise, in the possibility of nation building. It may be a criticism of the Hindu masses who have forever stayed away at decisive moments in wars, have never identified themselves with the nation. It can, on the other hand, indicate a recognition of the autonomy of the imaginative domain. The Brechtian alienation device, the underlining of the fictional nature of the work by talking about "novels and fictions" may point to the constructedness of all writings, historical and fictional. Or is it, after a long gap, and after many changes, a return to the theme of *Samya* which, in the meantime, had been overtaken by dreams of Hindu glory? Does it question the materiality of notions like political freedom and nationhood in the context of the everlasting peasant problem and ground the failure of the nation in the disjunction between the two?

Bankim thus formulates and fills out a violent Hindu agenda and immediately proceeds to deconstruct it. He powerfully projects religious militancy as a resolution to the problem of colonisation. He has an equally powerful certainty about its untenable future. It is inevitable, then, that he has to simultaneously underscore the agenda in intensely heightened colours, to proclaim its message with a brutal stridency that nearly reaches a breaking point in the last novel: and immediately counterpose to it an alienation device that drags the shining vision of Hindu triumph into the realms of idle rumour and gossip.

Notes

- 1 In the recent literature on Bankim in English, the shifts in stance have hardly been recognised, and Bankim's writings are treated as a monolithic whole. An exception to this tendency is Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Delhi, 1988.
- 2 Tanika Sarkar, 'Bankimchandra and the Impossibility of a Political Agenda: A Predicament of Nineteenth Century Bengal', article forthcoming in Kaul and Loomba (eds), *Oxford Literary Review*.
- 3 Amales Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge: India between 1890 and 1910*, Calcutta, 1967.
- 4 Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal: 1903-1908*, New Delhi, 1973.
- 5 It was used as a slogan in the riots of 1926. I owe this reference to Pradip Kumar Datta.
- 6 This slant is marked in Gyan Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Northern India*, Delhi, 1990.
- 7 'The Myth of Praxis: The Construction of the Figure of Krishna in Krishnacharitra',

Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, *Occasional Papers on History and Society*, First Series, L.

- 8 Partha Chatterji has completely ignored Bankim's novels as important ways of negotiating with political themes. Even the reading of the discursive prose is severely limited by a literal reading of texts in complete disregard of his literary strategies and devices that were significantly deployed here. See *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, Delhi, 1988. Sudipta Kaviraj, in a series of unpublished monographs on various texts of Bankim, has also chosen to read each text as a fairly isolated, autonomous unit, although he is extremely sensitive in his reading strategy.
- 9 Tanika Sarkar, op cit.
- 10 *Anandamath* (first published 1882, fifth and final version, 1892); *Debi Choudhurani*, 1884; *Sitaram*, 1887. The two discursive essays are, *Krishnacharitra*, 1892; *Dharmatattva*, 1888. Two incomplete manuscripts were posthumously published: his commentary on *Shrimadbhagavat Gita* in 1902 and *Devatattva O Hindudharma*, 1938. Since both were incomplete and since Bankim extensively revised his writings before the final publication, I have not made any use of them here.
- 11 Whereas in DT (ibid), the master and the disciple proceed through arguments and counter-arguments, in RSS daily training sessions, small boys are told stories which have the right messages. Since stories need a suspension of disbelief and questions by

their very form, listeners get used to silent and implicit acceptance.

- 12 Basu, Datta, Sarkar, Sarkar and Sen, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right*, Delhi, 1993.
- 13 My interview with Rashtrasevika leader Asha Sharma in Delhi, December 1990.
- 14 *Bharatbarshe Swadhinata Ebong Paradinata, Vividha Prabandha*, p 244, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 2, Calcutta, 1954.
- 15 *Samya*, ibid.
- 16 "Our country is the land *par excellence* of inequalities, any kind of discrimination springs into life and flourishes as soon as the seed is sown", ibid, p 399.
- 17 This theme is especially developed in *Bangadesher Krishak* (first published, 1875), *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 2, ibid.
- 18 See *Anandamath* and *Sitaram*, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, Calcutta 1953.
- 19 *Bangadesher Krishak*, ibid. It is interesting that although he asks the foreign rulers to protect the tenants, he refused to seek their help that reformers were demanding, for the protection of women.
- 20 B B Chowdhury, 'Agrarian Economy and Agrarian Relations in Bengal, 1859-1885' in N K Sinha (ed), *The History of Bengal, 1757-1905*, Calcutta, 1967, pp 241-43.
- 21 Ibid. See also Sugata Bose, *Peasant Labour and Colonial Capital: Rural Bengal since 1770*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, Chapter 3.
- 22 Sekhar Bandyopadhyaya, *Caste Politics and the Raj: Bengal, 1872-1937*, Calcutta 1990, p 33.
- 23 Ibid, Chapter 2.

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- 24 Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, 'Traders and Trade in Old Calcutta', Sukanta Chaudhuri (ed), *Calcutta: The Living City*, Vol 1, Calcutta 1991.
- 25 Jogesh Bagal, 'Introduction', *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 2, op cit.
- 26 Sumit Sarkar, op cit.
- 27 See his argument against the strategy of Vidyasagar in 'Bahuvivaha' in *Vividha Prabandha*, op cit.
- 28 Satirical pieces in *Lokrahasya* (1874) make fun of the English educated Babu quite mercilessly. *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 2, op cit. He criticised Indologists like Max Mueller in *Bangalir Bahubol*, *Prabandha Pustak*. 1879. He was extremely sarcastic about dependence on western reflections on Indian history and religion in *Dharmatattva*, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 2, op cit. At the same time, his affiliation to western political theories, especially that of radical utilitarian and French revolutionary and socialist thinkers was openly asserted, not just in *Samya* but even in *Dharmatattva*, op cit.
- 29 Bagal, 'Introduction', *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, op cit.
- 30 See, for instance, *Byaghracharya Brihallangul* in *Lokrahasya*, op cit.
- 31 This thrust was particularly well developed by Ashis Nandy in *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of the Self under Colonialism*, Delhi, 1983. The framework is extended by Gyan Pandey in *Construction of Communalism*, op cit, and by Partha Chatterji, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories*, Delhi 1994.
- 32 I have explained this term in 'Rhetoric against Age of Consent: Resisting Colonial Reason and the Death of a Child Wife' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 1993.
- 33 Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered*, op cit.
- 34 See Anil Seal, *Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, and S Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858-1905*, Cambridge, 1965.
- 35 S Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon, 1880-1884*, London, 1953.
- 36 See Seal and Gopal, op cit.
- 37 Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India: Economic Policies of Indian National Leadership, 1880-1905*, New Delhi, 1966.
- 38 See my 'Rhetoric against the Age of Consent', op cit. Dipesh Chakrabarty has recently reiterated the logic and politics of this revivalism in the same terms in his critique of contemporary 'secular feminists' in 'The Difference Deferral of (A) Colonial Modernity: Public Debate on Domesticity in British Bengal' in *History Workshop*, Special Issue, Autumn, 1993.
- 39 See my *Bankimchandra and the Impossibility of a Political Agenda*, op cit.
- 40 Themes of Hindu history and nationhood were taken up in *Prabandha Pustak*, op cit. Many of the concerns of *Dharmatattva* and the form of its presentation had been anticipated in *Gaurdas Babajir Bhikshar Jhuli*, *Vividha Prabandha* (1874). *Krishnacharitra* was originally written to form a part of *Vividha Prabandha*, but was later much altered and extended. Bagal, 'Introduction', *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 2, op cit, p 21.
- 41 This is explicit in both *Krishnacharitra* and *Dharmatattva*. The latter, in fact, begins with the theme of poverty and hunger—a deliberate invocation of his earlier concerns. Then the guru persuades the disciple that both can be overcome by the cultivation of the right Hindu disposition and knowledge. He thus relocates the roots of these problems within the individual disposition and mind-set—away from social structures. *Dharmatattva*, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 2, op cit, pp 585-86.
- 42 'Sankhyadarshan' in *Vividha Prabandha*, op cit.
- 43 "Vaidic religion lacks the concept of devotion... there are only propitiatory sacrifices to attain one's earthly desires". *Dharmatattva*, *Bankim Rachanabali*, op cit, p 623. It polemically asserts all major Hindu religious philosophies to assert the correctness of the reoriented bhakti.
- 44 See his strong repudiation of this form in *Krishnacharitra*, op cit. He was also critical of the quietism of Kali-based devotion that his contemporary saint Ramakrishna preached. See Sumit Sarkar, 'Kaliyuga, Chakri and Bhakti' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 18, 1992.
- 45 *Krishnacharitra*, op cit.
- 46 See Shyamali, 'Bankimchandra O Bhatpar Panditsamaj', *Baromash*, Autumn number, 1988.
- 47 See my *Bankimchandra and the Impossibility of a Political Agenda*, op cit.
- 48 See Basu, Datta, Sarkar, Sarkar and Sen, *Khaki Shorts*, op cit.
- 49 This is embodied in Haraballabh's patriarchal inhuman orthodoxy and lack of a sense of honour and dignity in *Debi Chaudhurani*, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, op cit.
- 50 *Sitaram*, op cit. Also see below.
- 51 See reports in *Bengalee* and the *Statesman*, 1873.
- 52 Dialogues between Mahendra and Santan leaders in *Anandamath*, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, op cit, pp 724-37.
- 53 This is true of all the three novels. See Shanti and Kalyani in *Anandamath*, Prafulla, Diba and Nishi in *Debi Chaudhurani*, and Shree and the Sanyasini and Nanda in *Sitaram*, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, op cit.
- 54 *Krishnacharitra*, op cit, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 2, pp 498-504.
- 55 *Dharmatattva*, op cit, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 2, p 620.
- 56 See my *Rhetoric against the Age of Consent*, op cit.
- 57 Prafulla in *Anandamath*, op cit.
- 58 *Sitaram*, op cit, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, pp 944-48.
- 59 See the concealed yet very real Maharashtrian brahmin origins of the RSS in *Khaki Shorts*, op cit.
- 60 Bagal, 'Introduction', *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, op cit, p 23.
- 61 *Anandamath*, op cit, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, pp 728-29.
- 62 *Ibid*, p 726.
- 63 *Ibid*, p 728.
- 64 *Ibid*, p 726.
- 65 *Ibid*.
- 66 *Ibid*, p 768.
- 67 This was especially evident in the way the Vishwa Hindu Parishad ideologues simultaneously evoked the figures of the serene and the angry Ram. See Pradip Kumar Datta, 'VHP's Ram: The Hindutva Movement in Ayodhya' in Gyan Pandey (ed), *Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today*, Delhi, 1993. The other, very important point this article establishes is the way Ram is invoked as a role model. In bhakti philosophies, however, the deity's life is an object of contemplation for the devotee, it is not for emulation. Here, too, Bankim makes the crucial transition, by insisting that Krishna's life provides the desired pattern for all Hindus.
- 68 *Anandamath*, op cit, p 726.
- 69 In his interview with the VHP mohunt at Ayodhya, P K Datta was told that this movement is the essence of Rambhakti. Datta, op cit.
- 70 *Anandamath*, op cit, p 751.
- 71 For a discussion of these themes at the time of the founding of the RSS, see Sumit Sarkar.
- 72 The agenda of the war with the Muslim always occurs only in the novels.
- 73 This is the concluding note and message of *Anandamath*, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, op cit, p 787.
- 74 "By imbibing these principles... the Hindu will be... as powerful as the Arabs in the days of Mohammad...", *Dharmatattva*, op cit, p 647.
- 75 *Ibid*, p 648.
- 76 *Ibid*.
- 77 This is the image of Mohammad in a very well known western text that was much used in Bankim's time. See T P Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*. First published 1885, Indian edition, Rupa Publishers, 1988.
- 78 *Krishnacharitra*, *Dharmatattva* and *Anandamath* have to argue hard against other models of bhakti.
- 79 By asserting that with a correct application of bhakti, Hindus will be transformed into Muslims of Mohammad's time, (see above) Bankim hoped that the reinterpreted life of Krishna will play the same historic role as the original pattern.
- 80 There are references to an attack on missionaries at Tarakeswar in 1891. *Dainik O Samacharchandrika*, April 19, 1891. There were other minor attacks that were reported from Calcutta and Bankura. See *Report on Native Papers*, Government of Bengal, January to March 1891.
- 81 *Ibid*, see also RNP, Bengal 1890.
- 82 *Anandamath*, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, op cit, p 727.
- 83 *Ibid*, p 784.
- 84 *Bangalar Itihash*, *Vividha Prabandha*, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 2, op cit, p 332.
- 85 *Sitaram*, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, op cit, p 881.
- 86 See *Chandrasekhar*, for instance, for the encounter between Saibalini and Forster, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, op cit, p 405. Also see *Muchiram Gurer Jibancharit*, for the encounter between a peasant and Meanwell, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 2, pp 126-27.
- 87 See Durgeshnandini, his first novel, 1865, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, op cit.
- 88 Ayesha in *Durgeshnandini* (above), Zeb Unnisa in *Rajsingha* (1882) and Dalani in *Chandrasekhar* (1875) will be very striking and diverse examples. See *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, op cit.
- 89 *Rajsingha*, *ibid*, p 664, pp 672-74.
- 90 *Sitaram*, *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol 1, op cit, pp 957-58.