

URBAN SOCIETY IN BENGAL, 1850-1872,  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CALCUTTA.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the main aspects of social stratification, control and relationships within the urban Bengali society and with the attitudes and activities of the mid-nineteenth century urban Bengalis.

The effects of urbanism upon Bengali society, particularly with reference to the phenomenon of increasing social mobility involving the institutions of caste and the joint family, have been discussed. The growth in the areas and frequency of interaction between different sections, groups and individuals in society has also been dealt with, in the context of various municipal, social, religious and other movements of the time. The Brahma Samāj, the prominent socio-religious movement which mainly appealed to the educated urban Bengalis, has been studied in detail, mainly in view of the nature of the reactions to the West and the role of traditionalism in the changing society in urban Bengal. An attempt has been made to analyse the background of the leaders of society, the major forces which influenced them, the various groups through which they functioned, the associations and alliances which they formed and the media and methods which they used in responding to the major contemporary political, social, religious and other questions. Calcutta, the most important city in Bengal, has been given most attention, with some reference to the differences between modern and pre-modern cities.

This work is primarily based upon contemporary and near-contemporary sources including the papers and records of various government officials, missionaries, societies and associations, as well as newspapers, journals, tracts, pamphlets and books - both in Bengali and English. Later sources such as published books, articles and unpublished theses have also been used.

CONTENTS

		pages
Abstract	.. .. .	2
Abbreviations	.. .. .	5
Introduction	.. .. .	6
A Note: The Urban Areas in Bengal	.. .. .	11
Chapters: 1	Urbanism and the Bengali Society ..	24
2	Municipal Government and Police ..	76
3	Urban Bengali Reaction to the West ..	135
4	The Persistence of Traditionalism ..	181
5	Experiments in Westernization .. ..	216
6	Experiments in Indianization .. ..	282
Conclusion	.. .. .	345
Tables: 1	Classification of students of the Presidency College according to their geographical and socio-economic background or the position of their parents, 1861-1862: percentage of total student population in the College. .. ..	349
2	Classification of students in schools according to the socio-economic background of their parents, 1861-62: percentage of total student population in each category .. .. .	350
3	The major sources of municipal income in Calcutta: percentage of total municipal income .. .. .	351
4	The major items of municipal expenditure in Calcutta: percentage of total municipal expenditure .. .. .	352
5	Receipts and charges: percentage of Police Fund in Calcutta in 1872 ..	353
6	The major items of municipal income and expenditure in the Suburbs of Calcutta, 1872-73: percentage of total municipal income and expenditure .. .. .	354
7	The major items of municipal income and expenditure in Calcutta, Dacca and Murshidabad in 1873-74: percentage of total municipal income and expenditure ..	355

		pages	
Tables:	8	The major items of municipal income and expenditure in Bengal in 1873-74: percentage of total municipal income and expenditure .. .. .	356
	9	Number of Pupils in Government Colleges, 1861-1872 .. .. .	357
	10	Number of Students in Aided Colleges, 1866-1871-72 .. .. .	358
	11	Classification of under-graduates in Government Colleges according to the social position of their parents, 1867-68: percentage of total student population in each college .. .. .	359
	12	Classification of under-graduates in Colleges aided by Government according to the social position of their parents, 1867-68: percentage of total student population in each college .. .. .	360
Appendices: I		Municipalities, Townships and Chowkidari Unions, in urban areas with more than 5,000 population in 1873-74 .. .. .	361
	II	Some nineteenth century Bengali works based on social themes .. .. .	368
	III	Some examples of "Vernacular Christian Literature" .. .. .	370
Glossary	..	.. .. .	372
Bibliography	..	.. .. .	381
Maps:	1	Bengal Proper at the time of the Census of 1872, showing the Major Cities and Towns .. .. .	430
	2	The Brāhma Samājes and Christian Missions in Urban Bengal in 1872 .. .. .	431
	3	The Environs of Calcutta .. .. .	432
	4	Plan of Calcutta (Source <u>The Administration Report of the Calcutta Municipality, 1872</u> ) .. .. .	433

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>BMS</u>	Baptist Missionary Society
<u>FP</u>	B. B. Gupta, <u>Purātan Prasanga</u>
<u>SAB</u>	W. W. Hunter, <u>A Statistical Account of Bengal</u>
<u>SBS</u>	B. Ghosh, <u>Sāmayikpatre Bānglār Samāj-citra, 1840-1905.</u>

## INTRODUCTION

This study is mainly concerned with the attitudes and ideas of the mid-nineteenth century urban Bengalis. It attempts an analysis of the physical and social framework within which these people lived and worked, the various changes which were taking place in the social structure of the urban areas, in the pattern of urban relationships and in the nature of the responses of the urban Bengalis to the major contemporary social, religious, political and other questions.

Bengali urbanites were more easily and effectively exposed to various agencies of social change such as Westernization than their rural counterparts. In spite of their strong regard for tradition and in spite of the continuing importance of family and caste in the determination of elite status, the urban situation encouraged various forces which undermined the traditional institutions of caste and the joint family. To some extent, in the urban situation, family and caste were being replaced by new social groups - mainly inter-caste in composition - which better satisfied the demands and interests of the new urban Bengali elite who were becoming involved with a large number of public issues which involved men from different castes. The growing desire for participation in municipal affairs among the urban Bengalis - whether to protect their traditional religious and semi-religious practices which were being threatened by municipal innovations or to protect their new economic interests - was an evidence of the widening interests and activities of the mid-nineteenth century Bengali urbanite.

While leadership was still essentially confined to men from

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upper Hindu castes, there were signs of important changes taking place within the urban Bengali society. A study of the membership of the new groups through which the leaders of society worked, for instance, gives an indication of the existence of greater social mobility than before within Bengali society - a phenomenon which utilized the processes of both Sanskritization and Westernization, mainly Western education. Class was often supplementing - if not replacing - caste. This happened because the urban situation, by providing its residents with numerous and new occupational, educational and other opportunities - theoretically irrespective of caste and family connections, and by encouraging various types of interaction, gave impetus to both physical as well as social mobility. The Brāhma Samāj movement, which was led by educated urban Bengalis who were dissatisfied with the existing state of Hindu religion and society, was closely connected with most of the issues mentioned above, primarily with the question of caste.

The urban Bengali elite responded to the forces of change within society in various ways which sometimes involved a fundamental reassessment of their values. Sometimes the Western ideas and techniques which they derived from their growing contact with the West in the urban areas were used without much change - a circumstance which evoked strong reactions from the traditional elements within society. Sometimes Western interpretations and arguments were attached to Indian ones and used to reinforce the tendencies towards change already existing within Indian society. Sometimes this situation was reversed and new ideas and values were supported by traditional Indian values and attitudes which were

deliberately rediscovered and adapted to the changing needs and circumstances by far-seeing Bengalis like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar.

In this study of urban Bengali society, the emphasis has naturally been laid upon society in Calcutta, the relatively modern city which, compared with the pre-modern urban areas such as Dacca and Murshidabad, was more open to change. Calcutta acted as the focal point for social movements in Bengal and set the main trends in political, social, cultural and religious matters. But Calcutta society also contained some pre-modern elements and tolerated contradictions in attitudes and reactions as could be seen in the nature of responses to various municipal and other issues, particularly those with socio-religious implications. To a lesser extent, the other major urban areas like Dacca, Burdwan and Midnapur also exerted considerable influence upon the neighbouring regions. The widening and deep influence of the urban, particularly the metropolitan, society upon the rest of the country was ensured by factors such as the growth in physical mobility. The urban population, especially in Calcutta and its suburbs, contained a large percentage of non-indigenous population, mainly males of working age. Rural-urban migration was motivated by economic factors as well as by non-economic factors such as the location of the new institutions of higher learning in the urban areas and the attraction for the Brāhma Samāj, the socio-religious movement which was primarily an urban movement with its centre in Calcutta. The links between the urban and the rural areas also remained strong on account of the continuing strength of kinship and family ties.

The period of study is an important one from various points of view. It was a period during which Calcutta was undergoing a

phase of transition from a pre-modern to a modern society. It was a period during which, on account of increasing economic, educational and other opportunities in the urban areas, there was greater physical and social mobility - resulting in the formation of open groups and associations of a distinctly modern type. Traditional authority gradually gave way to modern leadership and traditional responses were frequently replaced with relatively modern responses to issues. The period under study was a particularly significant one for the Brāhma Samāj, a major force of social change in Bengal at this time, being the period during which it established a distinct and separate identity in relation to Hindu society - with the publication of its basic religious manual in 1850 and with the passing of the Native Marriage Act which legalized Brāhma marriages in 1872. The period between 1850, when the Caste Disabilities Removal Act, or the Liberty of Conscience Act, which allowed Christian converts to inherit the property of their Hindu predecessors was passed, and 1872, when the Native Marriage Act, which legalized inter-caste marriages was passed, witnessed various important movements connected with religion, caste and the position of women. In politics, beginning with the establishment of the British Indian Association in 1851 and the increasing political awareness among the educated urban Bengalis following the Sepoy Mutiny and the transfer of power from the East India Company to the Crown, this period saw various important agitations in connection with the growing Indian demand for better jobs and equality before the law.

This study is primarily based upon contemporary Bengali sources, mainly Bengali newspapers, journals, tracts and pamphlets. Since the Bengali Press was controlled by the major social groups and since the leaders of society were very often prominent authors



and journalists, these sources are very useful in studying the attitudes and responses of the urban Bengali elite. In spelling Bengali sources as in spelling Bengali terms and names throughout the thesis, an effort has been made to keep as close to the original Bengali as possible, except in some cases of already familiar names and terms. The study is also based upon papers and reports of various Christian missionaries who worked in Bengal, letters of Governors General and Lieutenant Governors, government records, works by contemporary European observers and English newspapers. Later sources, including published books, journals and unpublished theses have also been used. In this connection, I wish to thank the staff of the India Office Library, the British Museum, the National Library of Scotland, the School of Oriental and African Studies Library, the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., U.S.A., and the Library of the University of California, Berkeley, U.S.A. I am grateful to my friends at the University of California, Santa Cruz, U.S.A., for their support. Above all, I am deeply indebted to Professor K.A. Ballhatchet for his valuable guidance and help.

## A NOTE: THE URBAN AREAS IN BENGAL

It is often difficult to maintain a rigid rural-urban dichotomy<sup>1</sup> since the different elements of urbanism might be present in different degrees, "depending on the relative mixture of ruralism and urbanism in particular areas."<sup>2</sup> Instead, the idea of a rural-urban continuum where there is a continuous gradation from rural to urban<sup>3</sup> has its benefits. But for the sake of convenience, some sort of a rural-urban dichotomy has been used in this thesis. In the Indian Census Reports prepared in the nineteenth century, the definitions of "city" and "town" are quite vague, much having been left to the discretion of the census officials. Generally speaking, a "town" indicated a place of five thousand or more inhabitants and a "city" indicated a place of one hundred thousand or more inhabitants.<sup>4</sup> The criterion of five thousand inhabitants to denote an urban area has been generally accepted in this thesis. However, various other factors such as the density and pattern of settlement, the nature of economic and other activities, the stage of development of municipal, educational and other institutions, the extent of social mobility, are often of greater importance than the mere size of the population in determining the extent of urbanization.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See C. Rajagopalan, "The Rural-Urban Continuum: A Critical Evaluation", Sociological Bulletin, vol. 10, no. 1, March 1961, pp. 61-74.

<sup>2</sup>N. Anderson, Urban Community, pp. 22-23.

<sup>3</sup>K. Davis and H. H. Golden, "Urbanization and the Development of Preindustrial Areas", in P. K. Hatt and A. J. Reiss (eds.), Cities and Society, p.121; R. Mukherjee, The Sociologist and Social Change in India Today, pp. 34-35.

<sup>4</sup>A.F.Weber, Growth of Cities in the 19th Century, pp. 46, 124 (quoting Census of India, 1891); K. Davis, Population of India and Pakistan, Appendix H, p.249.

<sup>5</sup>R. I. Crane, "Urbanism in India", American Journal of Sociology, vol. 50, no. 5, March 1955, p.465; R. Mukherjee, op.cit., p.26; K. Davis,

An attempt to classify the cities and towns of Bengal according to their various features such as location, size, age and function - factors which determined their place in the "rural-urban" scale" - reveals certain aspects of the relative importance and significance of these urban centres.

The distribution-pattern of the major urban areas<sup>6</sup> shows a marked concentration of urban population in the Central and Western districts - especially along the River Hooghly - for example, the districts of Twenty Four Parganas, Howrah and Murshidabad. In Eastern Bengal, where urban centres were much fewer, the largest concentration of urban population was in the Dacca and Mymensingh Districts. Dacca and Chittagong, both of which were ideally situated for commerce, were the only two urban areas in the east with more than twenty thousand inhabitants each. The unique position held by Calcutta in the hierarchy of cities and towns in Bengal was to a large extent due to its geographical situation, its docks and harbour facilities. It was the main port of India, providing a maritime outlet for the important export staples of jute, tea and indigo. Calcutta's very existence as the capital of the British Empire in India was due to its position "at the entrance of the English seaways into India."<sup>7</sup> A contemporary British journalist observed in 1864:

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op.cit., p.127; L. Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life", in P. K. Hatt and A. J. Reiss (eds.), op.cit., p.48; G. S. Sjoberg, "Theory and Research in Urban Sociology", in P. M. Hauser and L. F. Schnore, The Study of Urbanization, p.164.

<sup>6</sup> See Map. 1.

<sup>7</sup> O. H. K. Spate, "Factors in the Development of Capitals", Geographical Review, vol. 32, 1942, pp. 127-128. This was particularly true before the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 gave Bombay "an advantage in distance for England.", ibid.

"It [Calcutta] is impregnable, it occupies a commanding position near the sea, it is the centre of the railway system of Eastern Bengal and Central Asia, all the trade of Assam and of Northern and Central India must pass through it and nothing but the improbable event of the entire closing of the Hooghly can alter the fact that it is geographically marked out for the chief seat of the empire."<sup>8</sup>

The contemporary newspapers - both English and vernacular - were deeply interested in problems and issues connected with the river and the port at Calcutta, for instance, the improvement of the Ferries, the erection of a bridge over Hooghly to connect Calcutta with the opposite bank and the creation of an auxiliary port at Mutlah.<sup>9</sup>

Calcutta which had originated with and grown at the initiative of the British power in India was a new city compared with the old and "decaying" urban areas like Dacca and Murshidabad<sup>10</sup> which were the traditional seats of Muslim power and still the centres of Muslim social and cultural life in Bengal.<sup>11</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century, Calcutta had concentrated within its limits various economic functions and, according to contemporary observers, had become the "common centre of all commercial operations".<sup>12</sup> It had an extensive

<sup>8</sup> Friend of India, 18 February 1864.

<sup>9</sup> Friend of India, 25 July 1850; 19 May, 28 July 1853; 30 October 1856; 18 March 1858; 21 July 1859; 26 March 1863; 21 January 1869; 28 December 1871; Sambād Prabhākar, 17 June and 29 December 1865; Sambād Pūrna Chandrodaya,<sup>4</sup> July 1865. The need for an auxiliary port because of the silting of the River Hooghly was finally met about a hundred years later in the 1960s with the building of a port at Haldia about forty miles south of Calcutta.

<sup>10</sup> Dacca News, 2 January 1858. For the decline of commerce in Dacca, see J. Taylor, Topology and Statistics of Dacca, pp. 188-191.

<sup>11</sup> See P. B. Calkins, "The Role of Murshidabad as a regional and sub-regional centre in Bengal", in R. L. Park, Urban Bengal, pp. 19, 27. B. Chunder, Travels of a Hindoo, vol. I, p.72; M. Mujeeb, Indian Muslims, p.507.

<sup>12</sup> Friend of India, 8 June 1854. Also, Som Prakāś, 7 December 1863; Overland Friend of India, 22 August 1864 (from Friend of India, 11 August 1864).

hinterland sprawled on both sides of the River Hooghly, with "satellite towns" like Howrah, Hooghly and Chinsurah, Serampore, Naihati, Baidyabati, Bansberia and Agarpara.<sup>13</sup> Dacca and Chittagong in the east and Howrah, Serampore, Hooghly and Murshidabad in the west, though not as prominent as Calcutta, were supported by populous hinterlands and combined commerce with small industries. Thus, Dacca was famous for its weaving, embroidery, gold and silver work, manufacture of brass and other metals, boat-building, manufacture of oil, soap and paper.<sup>14</sup> Murshidabad continued to have the small industries which had developed here under the patronage of the Nawab's court, for example, silk-weaving and ivory-carving, as well as its manufacture of coarse cotton cloth.<sup>15</sup> Serampore was reported to have "a brisk trade in silk and jute" and a hinterland of "a thriving rural population and wealthy zamindars".<sup>16</sup> The smaller towns, in addition to serving their usual function as local points of distribution, produced either one type of commodity<sup>17</sup> or diverse types of goods.<sup>18</sup>

In 1872 almost twenty per cent of the total urban population of Bengal proper lived in Calcutta which could be regarded as a "Primate

<sup>13</sup>Cf. M. Guha, "The Development of Urban Functions of Calcutta", Journal of Social Research, vol. 5, no. 1, March 1962, p.93. See Maps 1 and 3.

<sup>14</sup>A. L. Clay, Principal Heads of History and Statistics of Dacca Division, pp. 29-32; J. Taylor, op.cit., pp. 175-180.

<sup>15</sup>Capt. Gastrell, Statistical and Geographical Report of Moorshedabad District, p.19.

<sup>16</sup>Friend of India, 8 January 1863.

<sup>17</sup>P. M. Hauser (ed.), Urbanization in Asia and Far East, p.7.

<sup>18</sup>Khulna, for example, was a forwarding mart with a few sugar refineries. J. Westland, A Report on District of Jessore, p.283. Shantipur was famous for the manufacture of "fine cotton cloths". B. Chunder, op.cit., vol. I, p.21.

City" or "a city with many times the population of the next largest city and a multiplicity of functions and attractions which gave it dominance."<sup>19</sup> Calcutta had approximately four hundred and fifty-eight thousand inhabitants in 1872<sup>20</sup> and the suburbs of Calcutta were described as "highly populated" as well as the living quarters of the "true gentle society" (bhadrasamāj) by a leading vernacular journalist of Calcutta.<sup>21</sup> Howrah on the right bank of the River Hooghly opposite Calcutta and selected as the site for the terminus of the railroad from Calcutta to the N.W.P.<sup>22</sup> and Dacca, the most prominent city in Eastern Bengal, had fifty thousand inhabitants each, followed by Murshidabad, the old capital, which had about forty-six thousand inhabitants, and Hooghly, Chinsurah and Burdwan - three towns in Western Bengal each having more than thirty thousand inhabitants. The Calcutta-Howrah region was fast becoming the main focus of population concentration in Bengal. The population of Calcutta<sup>23</sup> was growing steadily<sup>24</sup> as in the case of the

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<sup>19</sup> N. S. Ginsburg, "The Great City in South East Asia", American Journal of Sociology, vol. 50, no. 5, March 1955, p.455.

<sup>20</sup> W. W. Hunter, Statistical Account of Bengal [SAE], vol. I, p.44; Bengal Christian Herald, 2 February 1872; Friend of India, 26 February 1872; Statistical Reporter, 21 March 1873.

<sup>21</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 5 December 1865. Also see Friend of India, 26 February 1872.

<sup>22</sup> The first lines were opened in 1853 and by 1871 Calcutta was linked with Bombay and Madras.

<sup>23</sup> Apart from the Report on Census of Calcutta, 1850 (the Census was taken by the Superintendent of the Police), F.W. Simms' Report on the Survey of Calcutta, 1851, the Report on Census of Calcutta, 1866, and the Report on Census of Bengal, 1872, some of the earlier estimates of the population of Calcutta were Hamilton's Gazette of 1815, the Report on Census of Calcutta, 1831, taken by Captain Steel and the Report on Census of Calcutta, 1837, taken by Captain F. W. Birch, Superintendent of Police.

<sup>24</sup> Friend of India, 25 July, 1850; 5 April 1866. Sambād Prabhākar, 31 March 1866; R. M. Martin, The Indian Empire, vol. 3, p.69. The population of Calcutta was reported to have grown from 413,182 in

other port cities in Asia.<sup>25</sup>

A study of urban population from the points of view of religion and sex yields certain interesting results. The major urban areas in Bengal were predominantly Hindu and generally male-oriented. In Calcutta, the largest city, about sixty-five per cent of the population were Hindus, about thirty per cent Muslims and about five per cent Christians in 1872.<sup>26</sup> In Dacca, an old Muslim city and, more important, situated in an area where the Muslims were predominant, also, the Hindus formed the majority, being a little more than fifty per cent of the population, while the Muslims were a little less than fifty per cent of the population.<sup>27</sup> As far as the male-female ratio was concerned, the larger

1850 to 447,601 in 1872, having dropped to 377,924 in 1866. Report on Census of Calcutta, 1866, p.22; Report on Census of Bengal, 1872, General Statement IB, pp. xxxii-xxxiii. The population of Dacca was reported to have grown from 50,000 in 1856 to 69,212 in 1872. Dacca News, 26 July 1856; Report on Census of Bengal, 1872, General Statement VIII, p.clxxxix.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. H. Tinker, South Asia, a Short History, p.119.

<sup>26</sup> Report on Census of Bengal, 1872, General Statement IB, pp. xxxii-xxxiii, xlvi-xlvii. In the Presidency Division, the Hindus were fifty-one per cent and the Muslims were forty-eight per cent, which was close to the situation in Bengal taken as a whole where the Hindus were about fifty per cent and the Muslims about forty-nine per cent of the population. Report on Census of Bengal, 1872, General Statement IB, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

<sup>27</sup> Report on Census of Bengal, 1872, General Statement IB, pp. xxxii-xxxiii; General Statement IX, pp. cxcii-cxciii. In Dacca District as a whole, the Hindus were in the minority, being about forty-three per cent of the population while the Muslims were about fifty-seven per cent. Report on Census of Bengal, 1872, General Statement IB, pp. xxxii-xxxiii. The disproportion was greater in the wider area of the Dacca Division where the Hindus were about forty per cent and the Muslims were about fifty-nine per cent. Ibid. The Muslims were generally the larger section of the population in the central and the eastern districts of Bengal. Report on Census of Bengal, 1872, pp. 130, 143. In Murshidabad, another leading Muslim city, the Hindus constituted the majority, being about fifty-nine per cent of the population while the Muslims were about forty per cent. Report on Census of Bengal, 1872, General Statement IX, pp. cxcii-cxciii.

and the relatively more urbanized areas attracted more males than females from rural and distant areas. Calcutta showed a striking disproportion of sexes, approximately sixty-seven per cent of its population being male, whereas in Bengal as a whole the males were only a little more than fifty per cent of the population.<sup>28</sup> In Dacca the males were about fifty-four per cent of the population, whereas in the surrounding districts the females were predominant, being about fifty-two per cent.<sup>29</sup> In Howrah in Western Bengal and Chittagong in Eastern Bengal, places which were relatively more urbanized than their surrounding areas, the males were fifty-five and fifty-nine per cent of the population respectively, although the surrounding regions showed female predominance.<sup>30</sup> There can be two arguments against the view that the disproportion of the sexes could have been a result of the tendency among the Indians to conceal information about their women, first, in Bengal as a whole the females and the males were almost equal in proportion; second, the excess of males was generally greater among the Hindus than among the Muslims although the Muslims might be expected to be more if not equally unwilling to declare the true number of their women.

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<sup>28</sup> Report on Census of Bengal, 1872, pp. 138-139; General Statement IB, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

<sup>29</sup> Report on Census of Bengal, 1872, General Statement IB, pp. xxxii-xxxiii; General Statement IX, pp. cxcii-cxciii. In Murshidabad also the males were larger in number, being fifty-one per cent of the population, while in the Murshidabad District the females were the majority, being fifty-two per cent. Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Report on Census of Bengal, 1872, General Statement IB, pp. xxxii-xxxiii. In the districts in which Howrah and Chittagong were situated, namely, Hooghly with Howrah and Chittagong, the females were fifty-one per cent and fifty-two per cent respectively. Ibid.



The socio-cultural and educational importance of an urban area, although difficult to measure, has great significance in an analysis of the hierarchy of urban areas. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the transfer of the socio-cultural leadership of the Bengali society from Dacca and Murshidabad to Calcutta was almost complete. However, Dacca retained its importance as the source of social control in the Muslim society of Eastern Bengal and even regained some of its importance as a cultural centre with the establishment of its Press<sup>31</sup> and with the growth of both the Brāhma Samāj movement and the Dharma Sabhā movement. As in other spheres of life, the smaller cities and towns were, on the one hand, recipients of new directions and ideas from Calcutta, and, on the other hand, centres of socio-cultural changes in the surrounding areas.

Calcutta acted as the focal point for social movements and change in Bengal. In 1855 the Baptist missionaries of Bengal concluded that

"whatever is done for Calcutta is done in a measure, for surrounding districts, and even distant provinces."<sup>32</sup>

Calcutta set the main trends in political, cultural, social, literary and even religious matters, for instance, the Brāhma Samāj movement. The other major urban areas such as Dacca, Midnapur and Burdwan, some of the most important centres of the Brāhma Samāj movement, also exerted considerable influence upon life and society in the surrounding areas, although less than Calcutta which was the political as well as the cultural centre of Bengal. Dacca and Murshidabad, the seats of Muslim

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<sup>31</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 25 September 1865.

<sup>32</sup> Reports of a Baptist Missionary Conference, Calcutta, 1855, p.78. BMS Papers.

aristocracy in Bengal, were important centres of social control among the Bengali Muslims. Even smaller towns such as Jessore, Kumilla, Barisal, Khulna and Rangpur influenced their surrounding areas and often acted as links between the countryside and the bigger urban areas. The town of Jessore, for example, maintained a market to supply the wants of the many people who visited the Headquarters of the district on business.<sup>33</sup> The town of Khulna acted as a ground mart for all Sundarban trades.<sup>34</sup>

In the case of Calcutta, as in Bombay, in the latter half of the nineteenth century there was considerable growth at the periphery and overflow to the suburbs.<sup>35</sup> In 1859 it was reported that

"already it is cheaper for householders to leave Calcutta every night by rail than to pay rent and taxes on the metropolitan scale ... already the movement of the population, so marked in London, is perceptible in Calcutta."<sup>36</sup>

In 1862 most of the houses available in Barrackpore near Calcutta were occupied by "Calcutta merchants, who submit to the toil of crossing the Hooghly twice and using the East Indian Railway."<sup>37</sup> In 1870 further population movement out of Calcutta was considered to be one of the remedies against "the rising cost of living in Calcutta".<sup>38</sup> The dominant position of Calcutta and its growing influence upon the

<sup>33</sup>J. Westland, op.cit., p.250.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. , p.283. Cf. H.Tinker, op.cit., p.119.

<sup>35</sup>A.F.Weber, Growth of Cities in the 19th Century, p.459.

<sup>36</sup>Friend of India, 16 April 1857. Cf. A.F.Weber, op.cit., p.429.

<sup>37</sup>Friend of India, 13 March 1862.

<sup>38</sup>Friend of India, 26 May 1870.

rest of the Bengali society were fortified by the fact of the concentration within its limits of numerous facilities in connection with banking, insurance, light industry, docks, railways, administration, law courts, English, vernacular and Sanskrit/Classical education, theatre and other recreations. In 1863 a contemporary British journalist observed:

"In a higher sense than London is said to be England, in the same sense as Paris is declared to be France, Calcutta embodies the political and commercial activities of British India. It reflects English supremacy just as Lahore and Agra and Delhi have successively marked Moghul dominion and as Benares represents Hindoo wealth and superstition."<sup>39</sup>

Calcutta was, however, more than a mere political and commercial centre; it was also the nerve-centre of Bengali society and culture.

The urban areas in mid-nineteenth century Bengal were not strictly "non-farm" or "non-agricultural" areas and there were peripheral farms and cultivated fields as well as farming and cultivation within the urban areas.<sup>40</sup> Even in Calcutta in the late 1870s, a considerable portion of the "occupied male population" of the city was engaged in agriculture and with animals.<sup>41</sup> The crafts were mostly hereditary and specialized and trading was mostly in local produce and with neighbouring areas. The urban areas in general had certain elements which could

<sup>39</sup>Friend of India, 22 January 1863.

<sup>40</sup>In this context, it is important to point out "the danger of confusing urbanism with industrialism and modern capitalism". L. Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life", in P. K. Hatt and A. J. Reiss (eds.), op.cit., p.50. Cf. W. Bascom, "Urbanization amongst the Yoruba", American Journal of Sociology, vol. 50, no. 5, March 1955, p.450.

<sup>41</sup>Report on Census of Calcutta, 1876, p.30. However, the percentage of occupied males working in non-agricultural pursuits was considerably high within the urban communities, for example, ninety-seven per cent in Calcutta in 1871-72. Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, pp. xxxiv-xxxv.

be termed "pre-industrial" such as segregation and congestion in the sphere of ecological organization, the concentration of social control and social power in the hands of a literate elite, the separation between the elite and the masses and the restriction of formal education to the male elite.<sup>42</sup> The persistence of pre-industrial elements in the urban areas helped to maintain closeness between the urban and the rural communities.

Contact between urban and rural areas was also maintained by the circumstance that the growth of the urban population in Bengal in the second half of the nineteenth century could be mainly attributed to rural-urban migration.<sup>43</sup> Such migration mainly involved males<sup>44</sup> and was motivated by economic<sup>45</sup> as well as other factors, for instance the attraction for the Brāhma Samāj, which was primarily an urban movement with its centre in Calcutta, and the comparatively high standard of living in the urban areas, especially in Calcutta.<sup>46</sup> Calcutta and its suburbs, the most populous and commercialized area in Bengal, naturally contained the largest percentage of non-indigenous population,<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Cf. G. Sjoberg, "The Preindustrial City", American Journal of Sociology, vol. 50, no. 5, March 1955, pp. 438-445.

<sup>43</sup>J. Long, Vernacular Education in Bengal, p.158; SAB, vol. III, p.284 vol. V, p.286; Sambād Prabhākar, 28 June 1865; Sambād Purnachandrodaya, 6 July 1865.

<sup>44</sup>A. L. Clay, History and Statistics of Dacca Division, p.8. SAB, vol. I, pp. 50, 51; vol. III, pp. 48, 282, 284; Vol. V, p.190; vol. IX, p.42; Sambād Prabhākar, 10 November 1865; 6 February 1866. Cf. P. M. Hauser (ed.), Urbanization in Asia and Far East, p.15; A. Bopegamage, "A Demographic Approach to the Study of Urban Ecology", Sociological Bulletin, vol. 9, March 1960, pp. 82-93.

<sup>45</sup>SAB, vol. I, p.51. Cf. R. I. Crane, "Urbanism in India", American Journal of Sociology, vol. 50, no. 5, March 1955, p.463.

<sup>46</sup>Friend of India, 29 May 1862. Cf. P. M. Hauser (ed.), op.cit., p.44.

<sup>47</sup>SAB, vol. I, p.51; Friend of India, 4 May 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 28 June 1865. Cf. M. Guha, "The Development of Urban Functions of Calcutta", Journal of Social Research, vol. 5, no. 1, March 1962, p.94; N. K. Bose, "Social and Cultural Life of Calcutta", Geographical Review of India, vol. 20, December 1958, pp.11-72. A.F. Weber, op.cit., pp.259-60.

including a growing European community.<sup>48</sup> Generally speaking, the pattern of population composition in the urban areas showed the predominance and increase of the male section of the population between twenty to forty, that is, men of working age,<sup>49</sup> mainly due to the fact that the urban areas attracted men from the rural areas whose families continued to live in their original homes.<sup>50</sup> Contemporary sources reported that a large section of the residents of the urban areas, especially in the case of Calcutta and its suburbs, were born outside the boundaries of these areas and that a large number of the rural-urban migrants, especially the labourers, constantly moved between the rural and the urban areas.<sup>51</sup> These men helped to maintain a close connection between these two regions. Those migrants who began to permanently reside in the urban areas retained certain characteristics of their previous habitat,<sup>52</sup> while those who returned to the rural areas carried back with them certain typically urban attitudes and habits, often influenced by contact with the West.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1859-60, part I, p.93; SAB, vol. I, p.50; vol. III, p.282; Friend of India, 9 December 1858: 21 July 1859; 17 and 29 May 1862.

<sup>49</sup> Report on Census of Calcutta, 1876, p.26.

<sup>50</sup> In 1866 the average proportion of males to females was about 158 to 100 and the proportion of adults to children was about 486 to 100. Report on Census of Calcutta, 1866, p.130. Cf. R. Lethbridge, Ramtanu Lahiri, p.47; G. O. Trevelyan, The Competition Wallah, p.82.

<sup>51</sup> F. W. Simms, Report on the Establishment of Waterworks to Supply the City of Calcutta, pp. 25-27.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. R. Mukherjee, The Sociologist and Social Change in India Today, p.20; H. Tinker, The City in Asian Polity, p.19; M. S. Gore, "Some Problems of Urban Growth", Social Welfare, vol. 9, no. 7, October 1962, p.7; P. Sinha, "Social Change", in N. K. Sinha (ed.), History of Bengal, vol. 3, pp. 404-405.

<sup>53</sup> R. I. Crane, "Urbanism in India", American Journal of Sociology, vol. 50, no. 5, March 1955, pp. 463-467; S. Kaldate, "Urbanization and Disintegration of Rural Joint Family", Sociological Bulletin, vol. 11, nos. 1 and 2, March-September 1962, p.105.

Caste, for instance, continued to be a strong force in the urban areas. It influenced even the pattern of urban residence,<sup>54</sup> especially in old cities like Dacca where, as it was observed in 1867, the Sāṅkhārīs (shell-cutters), for example, "all reside in one bazar which derives its name from them (Sankharibazar) where they have been settled since the foundation of the city."<sup>55</sup> The links between the urban and the rural areas remained particularly strong on account of the strong kinship and family ties which still characterized nineteenth century Bengali society, but were put under strain in the urban environment.<sup>56</sup> Generally speaking, the urban areas in Bengal had begun to acquire certain "modern" characteristics and facilitate social change, including acculturation.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> B. Chunder, Travels of a Hindoo, vol. I, pp. 147-148; M. Singer, Traditional India, p.194; N. K. Bose, Modern Bengal, p.28; N.K. Bose, Culture and Society in India, p.392; A. K. N. Karim, Changing Society in India and Pakistan, pp. 70-73.

<sup>55</sup> A. L. Clay, History and Statistics of Dacca Division, p.4. Also see J. Taylor, Topography and Statistics of Dacca, p.88.

<sup>56</sup> Som Prakāś, 19 Aświn 1287 (1887) in B. Ghosh, Sāmayikpatre Bāṅglār Samāj-citra [SBS], vol. 4, p.298; N. K. Bose, op.cit., p.28; S. Kaldate, op.cit., Sociological Bulletin, vol. 11, nos. 1 and 2, March-September 1962, pp. 106-107.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. R. E. Park, Human Communities, p.118; G. Sjoberg, "Theory and Research in Urban Sociology", in P. M. Hauser and L. F. Schnore, The Study of Urbanization, p.163; L. Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life", in P. K. Hatt and A. J. Reiss (eds.), Cities and Society, p.50.

## 1 URBANISM AND THE BENGALI SOCIETY

### I Caste, mobility and social change

The people living in the urban areas of Bengal were more easily and effectively exposed to the various agencies of social change such as education and Westernization, than the people living in the villages. Within the urban society, the position of Calcutta, the capital of British India and a prominent port city, was quite unique. It was a relatively new city and as such was less burdened with the controls and pressures of the traditional society than the old cities like Dacca and Murshidabad. The urban areas in Bengal, particularly Calcutta and its neighbourhood,<sup>1</sup> witnessed the beginnings of most of the socio-religious, intellectual and cultural movements of nineteenth century Bengal.

The attitudes and ideas of Bengali urbanites in the mid-nineteenth century contained both "old" and "new" traits. Although in general "ideal-type descriptions of city-dwellers" present them as "less conservative in their behaviour than their rural counterparts,"<sup>2</sup> yet the nineteenth century Bengali urbanite frequently exhibited a strong attachment for traditionalism. The caste system occupied a significant place in urban as well as rural Bengal, although the urban environment influenced it in many ways.<sup>3</sup> Often, as in the case of the South Indian Brāhman̄s, in the "first phase of their Westernization", the nineteenth

<sup>1</sup>See Map 3.

<sup>2</sup>P. K. Hatt and A. J. Reiss (eds.), Cities and Society, p.633.

<sup>3</sup>Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 3 and 28 July (citing Sambād Prabhākar) 1865. Cf. M. N. Srinivas, Social Change in Modern India, p.94.

century Bengali urbanite led a dual existence in which "their professional life was lived in the Western world while their domestic and social life continued to be largely traditional".<sup>4</sup> During this period numerous treatises were written and published on caste themes,<sup>5</sup> many of them before the Census of 1872 which is supposed to have acted as an important factor in promoting caste mobility, by raising or lowering the position of a particular caste or group of castes. That caste and conformity to caste rules continued to be important determinants of a person's social status was also shown by the social persecution faced by Ramtanu Lahiri and his family in Krishnanagar and Burdwan, in spite of Ramtanu's immense social prestige, when he defied caste rules regarding food and the sacred thread.<sup>6</sup> The rejection of the sacred thread by Ramtanu created tension between him and his father who felt that his son was a heretic and could "hardly hold up his head in public."<sup>7</sup> The restrictions regarding marriage were in many ways the strongest<sup>8</sup> and issues such as Kulīn (high caste) polygamy gave rise to long and frequent discussions and agitations in urban Bengal.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> M.N. Srinivas, op.cit., p.57.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Lal Mohan Vidyanidhi, Sambandha Nirṇaya [The determination of relationships, a social history of the principal Hindu castes in Bengal], Calcutta, 1865; Hak Chand Ghatak Churamani, Biṣam Samasyā [A difficult problem, a satire on the impact of Westernization on the caste system], Calcutta, 1866; Ishan Chandra Basu, Hindu Jātī [Hindu castes], Calcutta, 1872.

<sup>6</sup> R. Lethbridge, Ramtanu Lahiri - Brahman and Reformer, pp. 116-117, 122-123; Appendix I, p.165. quoting Kshetra Mohan Basu.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>8</sup> See P.N. Bose, A History of Hindu Civilisation, vol. II, p.35.

<sup>9</sup> Paridarśak, August 1861; Friend of India, 22 March 1866; Sambād Bhāskar, 27 March 1866. See below, pp. 252 - 260.



Various castes, obviously strengthened by their economic position, began to claim higher caste status for themselves.<sup>10</sup> Such attempts to rise higher in the caste hierarchy often utilized Western techniques<sup>11</sup> such as the writing of pamphlets and petitions in support of individual or group claims.<sup>12</sup> In most cases, those individuals and groups seeking higher caste status had already acquired social prominence by taking an interest in Western education<sup>13</sup> and by taking up modern professions.<sup>14</sup> In general, urbanization and associated processes such as migration and Westernization, especially Western education, gave impetus to caste mobility.<sup>15</sup> The greater social mobility present within urban society as well as the changes in the agencies determining social status, social control and social attitudes enabled many low caste groups which migrated to the urban areas, such as the Subarṇa Baṅiks or Sonār Benes<sup>16</sup> (bankers, money-lenders, goldsmiths), the Tantu Baṅiks or Tāntis<sup>17</sup> (weavers, cloth-merchants),

<sup>10</sup> See SAB, vol. I, p.59; vol. VIII, p.160.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. M. N. Srinivas, op.cit., p.91.

<sup>12</sup> N. N. Seth, Kalikātāstha Tantu Baṅik Jātir Itihās, pp. 86-87, 188-189.

<sup>13</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1867-68, p.115; SAB, vol. IX, p.225; N.N. Seth, op.cit., pp. 144-146; P. N. Mullick, History of the Vaisyas in Bengal, pp. 114-118, 142-143.

<sup>14</sup> SAB, vol. I, p.59; vol. II, pp. 47, 195; vol. III, p.53; vol. IV, p.225; vol. III, p.44; vol. VIII, p.43.

<sup>15</sup> SAB, vol. I, p.58; vol. II, pp. 49-50, 285; vol. V, pp. 190, 288.

<sup>16</sup> The Malliks (for example, Yadu Lal, Nil Mani, Mati Lal, Raja Rajendra Nath), the Adhyas (Gour Mohan) and the Lahas or Lahas (Maharaja Durga Charan and Shyama Charan) were some of the leading Subarṇa Baṅik families of Calcutta.

<sup>17</sup> Some of the prominent Tantu Baṅik families of Calcutta who succeeded in accumulating considerable wealth and prestige, mainly as a result of their success in trade and commerce, were the Basaks (Guru Das, Rash Bihari), the Seths (Ray Bahadur Radha Krishna, Bihari Lal, Priya Nath, Dr. Uma Charan) and the Haldars (Madan Mohan). N. N. Seth, op.cit., pp. 95-98.

and the Sahas<sup>18</sup> (mostly dealers in grain, sugar and salt) to acquire considerable wealth and prestige.<sup>19</sup> However, persons belonging to certain low castes failed to attain higher social status and prestige, in spite of their growing wealth, on account of the stigma attached to their castes, for example, the Sunḍīs (wine-sellers), many of whom became very rich as a result of the increasing consumption of liquor in the urban areas of Bengal, especially in Calcutta.<sup>20</sup> Even the Subarṇa Bāpiks mentioned above were sometimes held to be an impure and degraded caste, perhaps owing to "their propensity of pilfering the gold entrusted to them to work upon" and their association with the money-lending business.<sup>21</sup>

Sanskritization was an important means of social mobility in mid-nineteenth century urban Bengali society. It involved the use of traditional Sanskritic symbols which were generally used by higher castes, the taking up of professions which were unusual for the people of one's caste - mainly those which were followed by higher castes,<sup>22</sup> the practice of rituals which were usually monopolized by higher castes<sup>23</sup> and the adoption of customs which were appropriate to higher castes - mainly those related to food restrictions such as vegetarianism and to marriage and the condition of women such as the prohibition of widow-remarriage. These and other signs of caste mobility were visible

<sup>18</sup> SAB, vol. VI, p.146.

<sup>19</sup> SAB, vol. II, p.48; vol. IX, p.51; A. L. Clay, Principal Heads of History and Statistics in Dacca Division, p.5; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 6 June 1865; Sambād Bhāskar, 22 August 1865.

<sup>20</sup> SAB, vol. I, p.69.

<sup>21</sup> SAB, vol. I, p.59; vol. VIII, p.160.

<sup>22</sup> SAB vol. VII, pp. 215, 377.

<sup>23</sup> See Sambād Bhāskar, 22 August 1865.

in nineteenth century Bengali society even before the Census stimulus of the 1870s which is generally considered to be the main factor behind caste mobility. The varṇa model was Brāhmaṇ, Kāyastha or Vaiśya, depending on the particular caste which sought higher status, but it was most often the Brāhmaṇ model. In Bengal, some of the Kulin Kāyasthas tended to wear the sacred thread (upabīta/paitā) as did some Baidyas who called themselves "Baidya-Brāhmaṇs". In the urban context, it even became possible for the Subarṇa Bapiks to launch a movement for the purpose of having their caste invested with the sacred thread.<sup>24</sup> Leading Subarṇa Bapiks such as Maharaja Durga Charan Laha (Law) and Gour Mohan Adhya and Tantu Bapiks such as Priya Nath Seth and Ganga Narayan Datta of Calcutta were famous for their religious fervour and numerous charities conducted in the fashion of upper caste Hindus.<sup>25</sup> The Subarṇa Bapiks and the Sad Gops (milk-men) also tried to raise their position by claiming Vaiśya status.<sup>26</sup> The Teli (oil-presser) caste claimed the right to perform the religious ceremonies which could be performed by the Nabasāks or the members of the nine higher Śūdra castes and received the sanction of the pandits of Nadiya who declared that the Telis were Nabasāks.<sup>27</sup> This and similar caste decisions were obviously influenced by the increased wealth and social position of the

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<sup>24</sup> SAB, vol. I, p.68.

<sup>25</sup> N. N. Seth, op.cit., pp. 84, 95-98; P. N. Mullick, op.cit., pp. 114-118, 142-143.

<sup>26</sup> SAB, vol. I, p.68; vol. IV, p.226; vol. IX, p.51; Balai Chand Sen, Subarṇa Bapik /A tract on the Subarṇa Bapik caste stating that they belonged to the Vaiśya division of the Hindus/, Calcutta, 1870; Dhruvananda Tarkabagish, Kāyastha Sadgop Saṅghitār Pratibād /A treatise offering arguments in support of the assertion that the Kāyasthas are of lower caste than the Sad Gops/, Calcutta, 1878.

<sup>27</sup> SAB, vol. I, p.61.

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caste involved.<sup>28</sup> The Brāhman-Śūdra issue which involved the Brāhman assertion that there were no Kshatriyas or Vaiśyas in Bengal and that the Kāyasthas were merely higher grades of Śūdras,<sup>29</sup> was a particularly important one, because of the generally high economic and social status of the Kāyasthas.<sup>30</sup> Numerous pamphlets and articles were published during this period, mainly in and around Calcutta, claiming higher ritual status, sometimes Kshatriya status, for the members of this caste.<sup>31</sup> These pamphlets, again, were very often published before the Census of 1872,<sup>32</sup> and mainly appealed to ritual practices and Sanskrit texts and often took the form of genealogies (vamsāvalīs) to show that a particular caste group was descended from a revered sage.

Participation in the social and religious movements of the time had important effects on caste mobility. Priya Nath Seth, a Tantu Banik of Calcutta, took part in the movement against Kulin polygamy;<sup>33</sup> Gour Das Basak, another prominent Tantu Banik of Calcutta, supported Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's movement for the remarriage of "child-widows" (bala-bidhabās).<sup>34</sup> Such action served the dual purpose of bringing the low caste participants in closer contact with other members of the urban Bengali elite, often of high caste, as well as of enabling them

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> A. L. Clay, op.cit., p.4.

<sup>30</sup> SAB, vol. II, p.47; vol. III, p.53; vol. IV, p.49; vol. V, pp. 191, 404; vol. VI, p.380; vol. VII, p.215.

<sup>31</sup> For example, Raj Narayan Mitra's Kāyastha Koustubh /A treatise on the Kāyastha caste in support of their claim to belong to the Kshatriya caste/, Calcutta, 1845; Thakur Das Basu, Kāyastha Rasāyan /A treatise on the Kāyastha caste/, Calcutta, 1848; Madhab Chandra Choudhury, Kāyastha Dipika /A treatise on the Kāyastha caste/, Calcutta, 1852.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> N. N. Seth, op.cit., p.84.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. pp. 144-146

to challenge some of the prerogatives of the higher castes.

Some amount of social change was inevitable as a result of urbanization, modernization and various aspects of Westernization which developed in the urban situation. Changes in attitudes towards caste as well as in the functioning of caste as a system of behaviour were thus bound to take place in the urban areas where society was generally freer than in the villages, and where the urban Bengali interacted with people of different castes and races, attended "open" educational institutions where he was exposed to Western and modern ideas and earned his own living, thus escaping from some amount of social control. While this trend was particularly true in and around Calcutta, it was also visible in other major urban areas in Bengal, even in old cities such as Dacca. In 1856 a Dacca newspaper wrote on the changing attitude to caste even in that old city and noticed that there were frequent discussions "of questions which strike at the root of ... caste" among the Hindus, primarily the "higher and educated classes".<sup>35</sup> Urban society encouraged caste mobility in various ways, for instance, by offering a variety of educational, economic, political and other opportunities to people irrespective of caste.

The urban situation in which a man frequently lived by himself or with his immediate family and away from the larger family which was left behind in a village or in a smaller town also slowly but surely undermined the Hindu joint family system. The urban areas, being economic, political and educational centres, attracted men who, being

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<sup>35</sup>Dacca News, 27 September 1865.

often employed in low paid jobs, could not afford to have their families living with them. The relative scarcity of females,<sup>36</sup> who generally show more interest in preserving existing social and family structure, meant some amount of relaxation of family ties, customs and traditions. Moreover, the economic changes taking place in the urban areas often meant that the most educated, enterprising and successful member of the family, and not necessarily the oldest male, became the real head of the family, thus destroying one of the fundamental concepts of the joint family system. The increased earning capacity, sometimes even the economic independence, of one or more members of the family and their lessening dependence upon family resources for survival along with their Western education often gave them the desire to demand a certain amount of freedom of thought and action, sometimes in sensitive areas such as religion, marriage and the position of women. Conversion to Christianity or Brāhma Dharma, often on the part of the younger member or members of the family, also had a great impact upon family structure and relationships. The joint family system was closely linked with the caste system and the influence of urbanization upon one institution generally led to significant changes in the other.

The Brāhma Samāj movement was one of the major forces of social change in nineteenth century Bengal. In theory, the Brāhma Samāj stood for opposition to caste restrictions in all spheres of society. In practice also, at least the younger Brāhmas who followed Keshab Chandra Sen remained steadfast in their resistance to the caste system. The

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<sup>36</sup>See above, pp. 16-17.

Bhārat Varshīya Brāhma Samāj (Brāhma Samāj of India), which was the result of a partition of the Brāhma Samāj in 1866 mainly on the question of caste,<sup>37</sup> and was led by Keshab Chandra Sen, a Baidya, took the initiative in controversial issues such as the promotion of inter-caste marriages, the removal of the sacred thread or the symbol of Brāhmaṇattva (the essence of Brahmanism), the throwing open of the post of the Pradhān Ācārya (chief priest/preceptor) of the Brāhma Samāj to all castes, and had perhaps more faith in the processes of Westernization and modernization than in the introduction of traditional Sanskritic symbols and ideas. The Ādi Brāhma Samāj (old/original Brāhma Samāj), however, was less willing to defy caste. It seems to have contained the majority of the Brāhmins within the Brāhma Samāj and was led by Debendra Nath Thakur (Tagore), a Brāhmaṇ who was a strong believer in Brāhmaṇattva.

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, the Brāhma Samāj was rapidly growing in size,<sup>38</sup> especially in Calcutta and Dacca.<sup>39</sup> The 1850s, 1860s and 1870s witnessed extensive missionary activities on the part of the Brāhmins, especially among the followers of Keshab Chandra Sen.<sup>40</sup> In 1850 the Calcutta Brāhma Samāj (established in 1830), the Dacca Brāhma Samāj (established in 1840), the Krishnanagar

<sup>37</sup> See below, pp. 206-209.

<sup>38</sup> Paridarśak, August 1861; Sambād Prabhākar, 8 July 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 3 August 1865.

<sup>39</sup> A. L. Clay, Principal Heads of History and Statistics of Dacca Division, p.17; SAB, vol. V, p.58.

<sup>40</sup> Som Prakāś, 6 November 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 8 January 1866; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 2 March 1866; Dhākā Prakāś, 27 Bhādra 1277 (1868).

Brāhma Samāj (established in 1844) and the Brāhma Samāj at Kumarkhali (established in 1848) were the only Brāhma Samājes in Bengal.<sup>41</sup> By 1870 there were forty-five big Samājes in Bengal, Calcutta and Chandernagore having two Samājes each and Dacca having three Samājes, and by 1877, eleven more Samājes were established in Bengal.<sup>42</sup> The Brāhma Samāj mainly appealed to the urban Bengali kritavidyas (educated, cultured men),<sup>43</sup> especially to the Western-educated kritavidyas. Most of the converts were young men who had been, or were still being, educated in the District Schools and the Government Colleges.<sup>44</sup> A large proportion of the Brāhmas were professional men belonging to the new middle classes<sup>45</sup> who enjoyed a considerable amount of mobility. Some of the leading members, even founders, of the various Samājes outside Calcutta, were migrants from other parts of Bengal, often far from Calcutta. Being away from their families, they had some amount of social freedom over and above their economic freedom. The majority of the members of the Brāhma Samāj in English Bazar, for instance, were Bengali government officials from the outside who were stationed there temporarily.<sup>46</sup> The members of the Dinajpur Brāhma

<sup>41</sup> SAB, vol. V, p.410.

<sup>42</sup> Som Prakās, 23 March 1863: 19 September 1864; S. N. Sastri, History of Brahma Samaj, vol. II, pp. 548-549. See Map. 2.

<sup>43</sup> SAB, vol. III, p.58: vol. V, p.409: vol. IX, p.59; vol. X, p.260; Hindoo Patriot, 24 October 1861; Som Prakās, 28 July 1862; Sambād Pūrna Chandrodaya, 21 July, 25 November 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 3 November 1865.

<sup>44</sup> SAB, vol. II, p.51: vol. V, p.197; Som Prakās, 3 August 1863.

<sup>45</sup> SAB, vol. VI, p.283: vol. VIII, pp. 52, 383: vol. IX, p.59: vol. X, p.260. Most Brāhmas seem to have been able to meet the expenses of their own Samājes, SAB, vol. V, p.48.

<sup>46</sup> SAB, vol. VII, p.47.



Samāj mostly came from Dacca and other Eastern Districts.<sup>47</sup> In 1870-71, among the twenty-seven members of the Rampur Boalia Brāhma Samāj, only two were natives of Rajshahi.<sup>48</sup> This tendency was particularly prevalent in the case of the Brāhma Samājes in the remote areas of Bengal where the local Hindu population generally tended to be more conservative, for instance, in Chittagong and Noakhali.<sup>49</sup> Often, the Samājes declined and disintegrated after the leaders, who were employed in government service, were transferred to other areas.<sup>50</sup>

The Brāhma Samāj movement mainly attracted those Bengalis who were dissatisfied with the existing state of Hindu religion and society, especially with the caste system.<sup>51</sup> This dissatisfaction often arose because of a disparity between the economic and educational position of some of the urban Bengali kṛitavidyas and their ritual status in the caste system. Debendra Nath Thakur and his family, for instance, in spite of their abhijāt<sup>(aristocratic)</sup> status and wealth, obviously suffered socially from the fact that they belonged to the degraded Pirāli Brāhmaṇ community. Association with the Brāhma Samāj movement gave Debendra Nath and his family more fame and power and established Debendra Nath as one of the leaders of Calcutta society. The traditional Hindu society reacted strongly against the Brāhma Samāj movement, and the social penalties and opposition faced by the Hindus who accepted Brāhma

<sup>47</sup> SAB, vol. VII, p. 382.

<sup>48</sup> SAB, vol. VIII, p. 51.

<sup>49</sup> SAB, vol. VI, pp. 147, 149, 283.

<sup>50</sup> SAB, vol. VII, pp. 180-181; vol. IX, p. 288.

<sup>51</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 24 March 1855 (quoting the Christian Advocate); Som Prakās, 20 June 1864; 7 August 1865.

Dharma were often quite severe.<sup>52</sup> In certain areas such as in the small towns of Kumilla and Pabna, the orthodox opposition almost succeeded in extinguishing the Samājes.<sup>53</sup> Some of the Hindu sabhās (associations) formed mainly to oppose the movement were the Dharma Rakshīṇī Sabhās (societies for the protection of religion, obviously the Hindu religion) in Dacca, Pabna and Rampur Boalia, and the Dviya Dharmopadeśīṇī Sabhā (Brāhmaṇ/Hindu religious society) in Kumilla which almost succeeded in breaking up the Brāhma Samāj movement in that town.<sup>54</sup>

## II The urban Bengali elite, goṣṭhīs and dals

In the urban areas of mid-nineteenth century Bengal, as in pre-industrial cities,<sup>55</sup> belonging to the "correct family" was still an important factor in determining a person's social status. This is evident from a contemporary description of Kali Prasanna Sinha, an abhijāt kṛitavidya of Calcutta who was well-known for his public activities and experiments in Bengali literature as

"a leading Hindu, whose family is one of the leading families in Calcutta and who himself is rich in wealth and man power."<sup>56</sup>

However, it was perhaps an unmistakable sign of social change that the

<sup>52</sup> Som Prakāś, 16 February 1863; Friend of India, 21 July 1864; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 27 January 1866.

<sup>53</sup> SAB, vol. VI, p.381; vol. IX, p.288.

<sup>54</sup> SAB, vol. VI, p.381; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 18 May, 21 July, 16 August 1865; 24 January 1866; Sambād Bhāskar, 18 May 1865.

<sup>55</sup> G. Sjoberg, "The Preindustrial City", American Journal of Sociology, vol. 50, no. 5, March 1955, p.441.

<sup>56</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 22 November 1865, SBS, vol. 3, p.336.

members of the nineteenth century urban Bengali elite did not always belong to the "correct families" and that often men other than Brāhmins, Kāyasthas and Baidyas were becoming leaders of society. The examples of low caste Hindus who had risen to high positions within the urban society such as Mati Lal Seal, a Teli (oil-presser); Gour Das Basak, A Tantu Bapik (weaver, cloth-merchant), Rajendra Lal Mallik, a Subarna Bapik (goldsmith, gold-merchant) and Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar, a Sad Gop (cowherd), although still comparatively few in number, were very significant, particularly in view of the continuing control of caste over urban Bengali society.

An important question which arises in this connection is the question of the distinction between the bhadralok (literally, gentlemen) and the elite. While J.H. Broomfield's description of the Bengali bhadralok at the beginning of the twentieth century as

"a socially privileged and consciously superior group, economically dependent upon landed rents and professional and clerical employment; keeping its distance from the masses by its acceptance of high-caste proscriptions and its command of education, sharing a pride in its language, its literate culture, and its history; and maintaining its communal integration through a fairly complex institutional structure that it had proved remarkably ready to adopt and augment to extend its social power and political opportunities" <sup>57</sup>

has many elements of truth, it is open to a few criticisms. Broomfield's assertion that the bhadralok were "the common dominant elite" in Bengal <sup>58</sup> is also open to question. While it is true to say that most of the members of the Bengali elite have traditionally come from the bhadralok section of the population, the Bengali elite has

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<sup>57</sup> J.H. Broomfield, Elite conflict in a Plural Society, pp. 12-13.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.5.

always constituted only a small proportion of the large group of people commonly known as bhadralok in Bengal, that is, not each and every bhadralok could be considered a member of the Bengali elite. For instance, an illiterate and impoverished Bengali Brāhmap or a rich and idle son of a Kāyastha - both of them undoubtedly belonging to the bhadralok section of the population as opposed to the section considered to be the chotalok (literally, low people)<sup>59</sup> - could have little claim to the membership of the Bengali elite. Thus, the members of the bhadralok did not always have a "command of education",<sup>60</sup> although it was undoubtedly a desired attribute for the son of a bhadra-paribār (gentle family). Ultimately, membership of the bhadralok category was closely linked with one's birth. S.N. Mukherjee's assertion that "caste had no part in the selection" of the bhadralok<sup>61</sup> is inconsistent with the realities of the situation since within the Bengali society the term bhadralok is generally used in the same sense as the term ūcu-jāt (upper-caste) as opposed to nīcu-jāt (low caste), that is, to denote the members of the Brāhmap, Kāyastha and Baidya castes, and often without consideration of criteria which are usually considered in the determination of elitehood, such as education, social awareness and attitude to social movements and change. The examples of low caste men cited by Mukherjee in support of his statement<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> S. N. Mukherjee's statement that "the majority of the Brahmins and Kāyasthas, poor and illiterate, were not considered as bhadralok" is highly questionable since such men could hardly be termed "chotalok". Cf. S. N. Mukherjee, "Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815-38", in E. Leach and S. N. Mukherjee, Elites in South Asia, p.57.

<sup>60</sup> J. H. Broomfield, op.cit., p.13.

<sup>61</sup> S. N. Mukherjee, op.cit., in E. Leach and S.N. Mukherjee, op.cit., p.56.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

were obviously exceptional, being cases of men who would generally be considered chotalok and who had risen in society, taking advantage of the changing urban situation and by adopting bhadralok or upper caste practices. The bhadralok can neither be equated with the new middle class<sup>63</sup> since the Bengali abhijāts (aristocrats) constituted a very important section of the bhadralok.

Since the term bhadralok as it has been used by themembers of the Bengali society, especially by the members of the bhadralok themselves, obviously denotes a very large and loose category, it would be hardly possible for "all bhadralok" to be "brought ... together" by economic, political or other interests and act as a group as suggested by S. N. Mukherjee.<sup>64</sup> It is perhaps useful to discuss some other categories which were more relevant in the context of the nineteenth century urban Bengali society. The kritavidyas (educated, cultured men) who were smaller in number than the urban Bengali elite and constituted an important section within it, played a very significant role in social movements and change. The abhijāts or the traditional elite were very strong in the old cities like Dacca and Murshidabad, the concentration of the abhijāts in the centres of power being an accepted feature of the pre-modern way of life. The court of the Nawab of Murshidabad, for instance, still retained some of the pomp and ceremonies of the past and the Nawab, surrounded by a large number of stipendiaries, maintained close contact with other aristocratic Muslim families of India such as the royal families of

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. P. Sinha, "Social Change", in N.K.Sinha (ed.), History of Bengal, vol. 3, pp. 410-41.

<sup>64</sup> S.N.Mukherjee, op.cit., in E. Leach and S.N. Mukherjee, op.cit., p.76.

Delhi and Oudh.<sup>65</sup> Even the new cities, particularly Calcutta and its suburbs, attracted many abhijāts, mostly upper caste absentee landlords, for instance Raja Radha Kanta Deb, Raja Satyananda Ghoshal and Rama Nath Thakur.<sup>66</sup> But the leadership of the abhijāts, many of them Brāhmins, such as the Thakurs (of Jorasanko),<sup>67</sup> and the Debs<sup>68</sup> of Calcutta, was being challenged by the kritavidyas, many of them non-Brāhmins such as the Sens (family of Keshab Chandra), the Mitras (family of Pyari Chand) and the Malliks (family of Rajendra Lal) of Calcutta and the Mitras (family of Braja Sundar) of Dacca, as well as by the navya abhijāts (new aristocrats) such as the Ghoshes (family of Ram Gopal Ghosh)<sup>69</sup> of Calcutta and the Lahiris (family of Ramtanu Lahiri),<sup>70</sup> of Krishnanagar. Even among the Bengali Muslims, a "new" Muslim aristocracy was rising in Calcutta and Dacca, mainly consisting of businessmen, government officials, lawyers and educationists such as Abdul Latif Khan and Amir Ali Khan of Calcutta, Khaja Ahsanulla and Khaja Abdul Ghani Mia of Dacca. A large number of the abhijāts had to acquire "new" achievements such as English education and participation in social, intellectual and other movements of the time, in order to retain their dominant position in society. This was true even

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<sup>65</sup> Bengal Political Proceedings, 8 December (nos. 78-80) 1853; 7 May (nos. 120-122) 1857.

<sup>66</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 31 July 1865.

<sup>67</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 2 and 3 November 1865; Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in B.B.Gupta, Purātan Prasanga, PP7, p.9; Dwijendra Nath Thakur, as quoted in PP, p.284.

<sup>68</sup> Friend of India, 22 November 1860; Dwijendra Nath Thakur, as quoted in PP, pp. 284-285.

<sup>69</sup> Ram Gopal's English-educated contemporaries declared him to be their "uncrowned king", the Ēdu-rāj" (king of the educated), R.N. Basu, Ātmacharit, p. 19.

<sup>70</sup> Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p.9; R. Lethbridge, op.cit., pp. 126, 132.

in the case of the members of some of the oldest and established families like Raja Radha Kanta Deb Bahadur,<sup>71</sup> Kali Prasanna Sinha,<sup>72</sup> Sri Krishna Sinha<sup>73</sup> (of Jorasanko) and Raja Satish Chandra<sup>74</sup> (of Krishnanagar). In the early 1860s, among the students of the Presidency College, the leading institution of English education in Bengal, the largest group (comprising almost thirty five per cent) consisted of the sons of "zamindars, talukdars and persons of independent income".<sup>75</sup> As in preindustrial cities, the main "threat", if at all, to the urban elite came from the residents of smaller urban areas, rather than from the city's lower classes. The Calcutta elite, for instance, included many migrants like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar<sup>76</sup> who achieved high status in society mainly because of their educational and other achievements and contributions to social change.

The kritavidyas or the men who had succeeded in educating and refining themselves were generally expected by their contemporaries and by themselves to take the initiative in matters of social reform - "in removing the innate defects in society, in protecting against future dangers and in opening the eyes of the community to their responsibilities and potentialities".<sup>77</sup> When the widow-remarriage movement<sup>78</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Rangpur Dik Prakās, 14 June 1850; Friend of India, 22 November 1860; Paridarsak, 4 September 1861 (quoting Sajjan Rañjan).

<sup>72</sup> Rangpur Dik Prakās, 14 June 1860; Samāchār Chandrikā, 2 November 1865.

<sup>73</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 16 October 1865.

<sup>74</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 29 January 1866.

<sup>75</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1861-62, p. xxii, Table K3. See Table 1.

<sup>76</sup> Dwijendra Nath Thakur, as quoted in PP, p. 293; Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, pp. 9, 16, 20, 111, 125-126, 131, 142, 312.

<sup>77</sup> Som Prakās, 23 October 1865. Also, Som Prakās, 28 December 1863; Sambād Prabhākar, 28 August, 20 October 1865.

<sup>78</sup> See below, pp. 319-338.

began in full force in the 1850s, a contemporary Bengali kritavidya observed that "all the English-educated Bengalis were on the side of Vidyasagar",<sup>79</sup> the leader of the movement. The first widow marriage was reported to have been attended by "most of the English-educated men of Calcutta including the great Ram Gopal Ghosh".<sup>80</sup> This movement, like many socio-religious movements of this time, originated in Calcutta and then spread to other urban areas such as Midnapur and Krishnanagar, where English-educated Bengalis organized themselves into groups in order to combat opposition.<sup>81</sup>

The presence of social mobility in the urban areas led to the formation of several gosthīs (groups),<sup>82</sup> mostly inter-caste in composition and mainly located in Calcutta. The members of the elite interacted with each other mainly through various dals<sup>83</sup> (factions) and gosthīs<sup>84</sup> - which lacked the regularity and system of associations of the modern type and were informal groups without features such as formal membership, regular meetings and systematic minutes. The gosthīs were usually of a more permanent nature than the dals whose members often came together on a temporary basis to serve a particular purpose.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the members of a gosthī were on a more equal footing with each other than in the case of a dal, whose members had hardly any position

<sup>79</sup>R.N.Basu, op.cit., p.64.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid. Also, Dacca News, 20 December 1856.

<sup>81</sup>R.N.Basu, op.cit., p.64; R. Lethbridge, op.cit., pp. 114-115.

<sup>82</sup>This view is more acceptable than the one that the urban elites in nineteenth century Bengal could be easily divided into "two contesting groups" or "two leading dals". S.N.Mukherjee, op.cit., in E.Leach and S.N.Mukherjee, op.cit., pp. 70-74.

<sup>83</sup>S.N.Mukherjee, op.cit., in E.Leach and S.N.Mukherjee, op.cit., pp. 70-74.

<sup>84</sup>Sambād Bhāskar, 11 November 1856; SBS, vol. 3, p.334.

<sup>85</sup>Sambād Bhāskar, 17 and 31 January, 9 December 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 291-292, 345.



of their own apart from the dalapati (leader of a dal).<sup>86</sup> The goṣṭhīs, being relatively more flexible than closed groups such as caste and family, allowed social mobility and flexibility of action on the part of the kṛitavidyas. These goṣṭhīs were formed around various topics which interested the urban Bengalis such as education, religion, politics, social reform or even a mixture of several of these. One of the earliest goṣṭhīs of this type was Ram Mohan Ray's Ātmīya Sabhā (society of relatives)<sup>87</sup> which was established in Calcutta in 1815 with the aim of encouraging discussion on some of the major social problems faced by Bengali society.<sup>88</sup> Its members were some of the leading abhijāts of Calcutta such as Dwaraka Nath Thakur, the father of Debendra Nath, Gopi Mohan Thakur and his son Prasanna Kumar. Some of the goṣṭhīs were formed around more formal associations, for instance the Tatva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī around the Tattva Bodhinī Sabhā and the Dharma Sabhā-goṣṭhī around the Dharma Sabhā; whereas other goṣṭhīs lacked such nuclei, for instance the Derozio-goṣṭhī.

The Derozio-goṣṭhī or the Young Bengal<sup>89</sup> was a group which became a leading force in Bengali society in the early nineteenth century, especially after the 1830s. It was formed almost entirely of Western-educated kṛitavidyas, mainly of upper caste and upper and middle class background, who attended the Hindu College of Calcutta

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<sup>86</sup> A. I. Clay, Principal Heads of History and Statistics of Dacca Division, p.10.

<sup>87</sup> This Sabhā, although it was sometimes known as the Brāhma Sabhā, was quite distinct from the Brāhma Samāj of later years.

<sup>88</sup> Calcutta Review, 18 May 1819, as quoted in B. Ghosh, Vidyāsāgar o Bāngālī Samāj, vol. 1, p.83.

<sup>89</sup> This group was also known as the "Young Calcutta", the "Derozians" and the "Chakrabarty Faction".

Some of the most prominent members of this group were Tara Chand Chakrabarty, Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyaya, Jnanendra Mohan Thakur, Ram Gopal Ghosh and Pyari Chand Mitra. Their main organs of expression were the Enquirer, the Jñānānveṣaṇ, the Bengal Spectator, the Sādhāraṇ Jñānopārjikā Sabhā (society for the acquisition of general knowledge) and the Academic Association established by David Hare.<sup>90</sup> In many ways the Derozio-goṣṭhī symbolized the tendency towards Westernization,<sup>91</sup> and took a prominent part in many social reform movements of this period,<sup>92</sup> mainly using Western arguments to criticize the existing social structure.<sup>93</sup>

The Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī which was closely associated with the Brāhma Samāj represented the attachment for Sanskritic traditions among the urban Bengali kṛitavidyas. It was formed mostly of upper and middle class urban Bengali kṛitavidyas who were members of or in some way associated with the Tattva Bodhinī Sabhā (society for the investigation of truth) established in 1839.<sup>94</sup> Among them were leading Brāhmas of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj such as Debendra Nath Thakur, Raj Narayan Basu and Akshay Kumar Datta and non-Brāhmas like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who was associated with the Som Prakāś,<sup>95</sup> Ishwar

<sup>90</sup> R. Lethbridge, Ramtanu Lahiri, pp. 81-82; "Peary Chand Mitra", Calcutta Review, vol. 120, April 1905, pp. 238, 240.

<sup>91</sup> The Young Bengal themselves were very much aware and proud of their Westernization and their modern "accomplishments". See Krishna (Kristo) Das Pal's speech, as quoted in Friend of India, 28 August 1858.

<sup>92</sup> R.N. Basu, op.cit., p.76; Krishna Das Pal's speech, as quoted in Friend of India, 28 August 1858.

<sup>93</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 1 July 1858; 10 February 1866; R.N. Basu, op.cit., p.76.

<sup>94</sup> The Sabhā was earlier known as the Tattva Rañjinī Sabhā (society taking pleasure in truth) and in May 1859 it was attached to the Brāhma Samāj. R.N. Basu, as quoted in SBS, vol. 2, pp. 604-605. The Sabhā started with only ten members but, by 1845, it was reported to have more than five hundred members. Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Phālgun 1767 (1845), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 523-524.

<sup>95</sup> SBS, vol. 2, p.605; B. Ghosh, Vidyāsāgar o Bāngālī Samāj, vol. 3, p.373.

Chandra Gupta of the Sambād Prabhākar,<sup>96</sup> Pandit Madan Mohan Tarkalankar<sup>97</sup> and Ram Gopal Ghosh.<sup>98</sup> Some of the contemporary journals, groups and organizations associated with this goṣṭhī were the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā established in 1843, the Sarba Śubhakarī Patrikā of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Pandit Madan Mohan Tarkalankar,<sup>99</sup> the Jātiya Gourab Sampādanī Sabhā (society for the promotion of national feelings) of Raj Narayan Basu and the Hindu Melā (the fair of the Hindus) or the Chaitra Melā (fair held in the month of Chaitra).<sup>100</sup>

In the 1860s and the 1870s, the impetus for social reform and change often came from the young Brāhmas and Hindus who formed the Keshab-goṣṭhī<sup>101</sup> which, like the Derozio-goṣṭhī, was formed around an outstanding personality, and as such was similar to a dal from the point of view of the relationship between the leader and the other members of the group. However, the definite socio-religious ideas and goals of this group made it distinct from the dals which were generally more loose in their structure and aims. The members of this group were familiar with and generally sympathetic to the process of Westernization and used mainly Western arguments in support of religious and social reform. They expressed their opinions and ideas primarily through the Indian Mirror, an English-language newspaper established in 1861, and the Indian Reform Association established in the early 1870s after Keshab's return from England.

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<sup>96</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 27 September 1848: 20 April 1849: 30 June 1856, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 303, 366-367, 414.

<sup>97</sup> R.N. Basu, op.cit., p.21.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p.71.

<sup>99</sup> SBS, vol. 3, p.62.

<sup>100</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 10 Bhālgun 1285 (1878), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 259-260.

<sup>101</sup> This group was sometimes known as the Kaishab Sampradāya (Keshab's group).

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The forces against social change were also strong within the Bengali society and often crystallized themselves into gosthīs. The Dharma-Sabhā-gosthī, formed around the Dharma Sabhā,<sup>102</sup> for instance, was mainly formed of upper caste Hindu abhijāts who were strongly in favour of conservatism in society.<sup>103</sup> Some of the leaders of this gosthī were Baidyas, for instance, Ram Kamal Sen. A few were members of lower Hindu castes<sup>104</sup> who had obviously risen in society as a consequence of Westernization and other aspects of urbanism in Bengal, but still depended largely upon Sanskritization to establish the fact of their rise in the social hierarchy. One of the major objects of the Dharma Sabhā which was originally established in 1830 to oppose the agitation against Satī (the burning of widows)<sup>105</sup> was to protect Hindu religion and society from Christianity and Brahma Dharma. The Samāchār Chandrikā, Bhabani Charan Bandyopadhyaya's conservative journal, was the mouthpiece of this sabhā.<sup>106</sup> Radha Kanta Deb, belonging to the abhijāt Deb family of Calcutta, was undoubtedly the most prominent and active member of this gosthī. Apart from being a well-known Sanskrit scholar and the author of the Śabda-Kalpa-Druma, the voluminous and scholarly Sanskrit dictionary, he had also studied Persian and English and was actively interested in various aspects of Westernization, especially with reference to education. However, he obviously placed his deep attachment for traditional Hindu Dharma above everything else and was primarily known

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<sup>102</sup>The Calcutta Dharma Sabhā split up into two Sabhās, namely, the Dharma Sabhā in Simulia led by Radha Kanta Deb and the Dharma Sabhā in Kalutala attended by other leading conservatives such as Raja Shib Krishna Bahadur, Asutosh Deb and Raj Krishna Bandyopadhyaya who edited the Samāchār Chandrikā. See Sambād Prabhākar, 16 April 1848, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 167-170.

<sup>103</sup>See "Radhakant Deb", Calcutta Review, vol. 45, August 1867, p.325.

<sup>104</sup>For example, Subarna Bapiks like Gokul Nath Mallik, Ram Gopal Mallik, who became the President of the Sabhā, Baishnab Das Mallik its treasurer.

<sup>105</sup>"Radhakant Deb", loc. cit., p.329.

<sup>106</sup>Sambād Prabhākar, 16 May 1849, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 168-170.

as the leader of the movement for the revival of orthodox Hindu ideas and values. In 1850 he severed all connections with the Hindu College after the conversion of a teacher and a student to Christianity led to a serious dispute over the policy of the College in such matters.<sup>107</sup> In 1851 he presided over the first Patitoddhār Sabhā (society or meeting for saving "lost souls") which aimed at restoring the Hindus who had been converted to Christianity to the Hindu society.<sup>108</sup>

Contemporary newspapers and journals testified to the violent clashes between the members of the Dharma Sabhā and some of the reformers of the Hindu society, mainly over religious and semi-religious issues such as Hindu marriage and female education.<sup>109</sup> According to the Sambād Prabhākar of Calcutta which was highly critical of the activities of the Dharma Sabha,<sup>110</sup> such clashes were "at the root of all kinds of disaster".<sup>111</sup> However, there were many occasions of contact and co-operation between individual members belonging to the various goṣṭhīs mentioned above. Radha Kanta Deb of the Dharma Sabhā-goṣṭhī, for instance, came into close contact with some of the members of the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī and even of the "radical" Derozio-goṣṭhī, through his interest in the spread of English education in Bengal, particularly in

<sup>107</sup> Friend of India, 5 June 1851, as quoted in S.K. Gupta, Unavimśa Śatābdite Bānglār Nava-jāgaran, p.122.

<sup>108</sup> "Radhakant Deb", loc.cit., pp. 323, 325.

<sup>109</sup> See Sambād Prabhākar, 16 May 1848: 23 Pous 1257 (1851), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 168-70, 174-175.

<sup>110</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 16 May 1858, SBS,

<sup>111</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 23 Pous 1257 (1851), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 174-175.

connection with the Hindu College<sup>112</sup> and through his involvement with the British Indian Association, of which he was the President from the date of its establishment till his death in 1867. Pyari Chand Mitra, a prominent Calcutta kritavidya of the Derozio-gos̥thī was closely associated with prominent members of the Tattva Bodhinī-gos̥thī and of the Keshab-gos̥thī through his interest in theism and in the British Indian Association of which he was an Honorary Member.<sup>113</sup>

These gos̥thīs seem to have largely replaced caste groupings and acted as groups through which the urban Bengalis expressed themselves. In an article written in 1865, the editor of the Samāchār Chandrikā, the mouthpiece of the Dharma Sabhā-gos̥thī, mentioned the lessening of the social control of the caste system in Calcutta, as one of the consequences of urbanization.<sup>114</sup>

### III Education as a factor in social mobility and change.

Education, particularly English education, was recognized by contemporary Bengali kritavidyas to be a promoter of social mobility<sup>115</sup> and the main factor behind the social prominence of low caste Hindus who had risen in society like Bholā Nath Chandra and Rasik Krishna Mallik.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>112</sup> See "Radhakant Deb", Calcutta Review, vol. 45, August 1867, pp. 318-320. Radha Kanta, however, was quite conservative on the question of female education, advocating "zenānā but not school-instruction, for females of respectable classes." Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>113</sup> "Peary Chand Mitra", Calcutta Review, vol. 120, April 1905, pp. 243-244, 254, 257-259.

<sup>114</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 28 December 1865.

<sup>115</sup> Som Prakās, 23 June 1862; Sambād Prabhākar, 28 August 1865.

<sup>116</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 28 August 1865.

The Derozio-gos̥thī considered the spread of English education to be a sure means of eliminating the "superstitious attachment towards caste system among the Hindus".<sup>117</sup> Modern education also encouraged occupational mobility. Thus, although medical education of the new type raised sensitive questions related to caste, for instance, with reference to the dissection of dead bodies, yet high caste Hindus not traditionally connected with the medical profession were becoming interested in it. In the 1850s, a large number of Brāhman̥s and Kāyasthas, but very few Baidyas, or members of the traditional medical caste, were employed as Sub-Assistant Surgeons.<sup>118</sup> Brāhman̥s and Kāyasthas were even engaged in teaching medicine.<sup>119</sup>

But in spite of increasing social mobility, the relation between one's social origin and one's occupational opportunity and achievements remained strong and even in the urban areas, educational differences remained closely connected with social stratification. The sons of the upper or aristocratic classes (abhi-jāt śreṇī), as in previous times, generally had the best opportunities of education.<sup>120</sup> The composition of students at the Presidency College, the most prestigious educational institution imparting modern education in Bengal, seems to have been particularly one-sided. In the early 1860s, the largest

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<sup>117</sup> Bengal Spectator, 1 November 1842, SBS, vol. 3, p.110.

<sup>118</sup> Bengal Public Proceedings, 29 September (nos. 6, 42), 29 December (no. 43) 1853; 31 May (no. 39), 2 August (nos. 41, 45), 23 August (nos. 20, 21, 25), 27 December (no. 104) 1855; 28 February (no. 43), 5 June (no. 150), 3 July (no. 16) 1856; 21 May (no. 44) 1857; 7 January (nos. 7, 8), 25 February (nos. 25, 26, 27) 1858; Bengal Education Proceedings, 11 June (nos. 59, 60) 1857.

<sup>119</sup> For example, Surya Kumar Chakrabarty and Jaga Bandhu Basu were appointed to teaching posts at the Calcutta Medical College. Bengal Education Proceedings, 19 May (nos. 65, 68) 1853; 9 August (no. 108) 1855; 28 May (nos. 56-59) 1857.

<sup>120</sup> Som Prakāś, 9 June 1862.

single income group (about thirty-five per cent of the students) from which the students of the Presidency College came was that of "zamindars, talookdars, and persons of independent income".<sup>121</sup> Raj Narayan Basu, an ex-student of the Hindu College, admitted that the students of the Hindu College were generally rich (baramānuṣ) and stood apart from the poor students of neighbouring educational institutions such as the Hare School.<sup>122</sup> Even the Bengali Pāṭhśālā (primary school) attached to the Hindu College, while theoretically open to the public, remained out of bounds for the common people (sādhāraṇ) because of high fees.<sup>123</sup> The Hindu College - which in 1855 became the Presidency College - was not an isolated case. Financial reasons kept the poor away from even private institutions such as the school attached to the Oriental Seminary.<sup>124</sup> In 1872, the Som Prakāś, with which leading educationists like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar were associated, challenged a Christian missionary statement which claimed that the children of Kāmārs (metalworkers), Kumārs (potters), Chutārs (carpenters) and Dokāndārs (shopkeepers) were earning B.A.s and M.A.s in Bengal and argued that "higher education (ucca-sikṣā) was still the prerogative of Brāhmaṇ-Kāyastha santāns (children)."<sup>125</sup> Contemporary official reports corroborated this view and stated that higher education was restricted to the members of "the upper and literate classes of Bengal";<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1861-62, p.xxii, Table K3. See Table 1.

<sup>122</sup> R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, p.10.

<sup>123</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 6 August 1860, SBS, vol. 1, p.319.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Som Prakāś, Baisakh 1279 (1872), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 554-555.

<sup>126</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, p.227.



"The higher class of English schools ... which educate up to the standard of the University Entrance Examination ... are attended for the most part by the sons of comparatively well-to-do people, who can afford to pay monthly fees ranging from Rs. 1 to Rs. 2.8 per month, and reaching even to Rs. 4 or 5 in some of the Calcutta schools."<sup>127</sup>

But significant changes were beginning to take place in the composition of the students, especially at the institutions of higher learning. Government scholarships<sup>128</sup> were enabling poor students to attend relatively expensive institutions such as the Presidency College.<sup>129</sup> In 1870, the Som Prakāś expressed pleasure at the changed situation at the Presidency College:

"How many sons of rich men (dhanī lok) are there at the Presidency College? Hardly three or four out of a hundred. We can confidently say that the majority of the students at the College come from the middle classes (madhyabitta śreṇi). They often come from far away regions and are entirely dependent upon their scholarships which enable them to study at the Presidency College."<sup>130</sup>

Even in those cases where the students continued to come from "well-to-do" families, these families were often different in character and composition from the "well-to-do" families of earlier times, as a result of the various socio-economic changes taking place in nineteenth century Bengal, particularly in the context of urbanization. The middle classes, mainly those associated with Government, were increasingly in favour of giving Western education to their sons.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p.149.

<sup>128</sup> These scholarships were instituted in the late 1830s by the General Committee of Public Instruction in order to encourage higher, especially Western, education.

<sup>129</sup> Although the Presidency College had higher fees than other colleges, the fees were reduced by half for the scholars at the Presidency College.

<sup>130</sup> Som Prakāś, 3 Śrāvaṇ 1277 (1870), SBS, vol. 4, p.548.

<sup>131</sup> Saṅbād Prathākar, 17 February 1864, SBS, vol. 1, p.384. See Table 2.

The members of the middle classes even in remote areas of Eastern Bengal wanted to give English education to their sons, even though it involved more expenses as a result of increase in college fees.<sup>132</sup> In the 1860s, the student population of the Presidency College showed a marked increase in the percentage of sons of "government servants and pensioners" (from about fourteen per cent in 1861-62 to about twenty nine per cent in 1867-68) as contrasted with an almost constant percentage of sons of "zamindars, talookdars, and persons of independent income".<sup>133</sup> The percentage of sons of "merchants, bankers, banians and brokers" (about nine per cent) and of "professional men" (about fifteen per cent) remained almost constant throughout the 1860s.<sup>134</sup> In the late 1860s, the sons of "shopkeepers" were significant enough as a group (about two per cent) to be mentioned separately.<sup>135</sup> The Sambād Prabhākar attempted to give a socio-economic explanation of the circumstance that "the sons of middle income/position (madhyamābāsthā) men constitute the majority" at the Presidency College.<sup>136</sup>

"The sons of wealthy men (dhanādhyas) although they might join the Presidency College, soon leave the College without completing their studies and engage in looking after their parental zamindari (estate) or other business. Some become bābūs (fashionable men without any fixed job or purpose) quite early. Only very few students from the upper classes have completed their studies and passed their examinations."<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Pallī Bijān, May 1868, p.12.

<sup>133</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1861-62, p.xcii; Bengal Administration Report, 1867-68, p.102.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1867-68, p.102.

<sup>136</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 17 February 1864, SBS, vol. 1, p.384.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

Religion and caste continued to dominate discussions and decisions related to education. In the 1850s, the proposal of the Council of Education<sup>138</sup> "for throwing open the Hindoo College to all classes of the community irrespective of religious differences"<sup>139</sup> was greeted with "sadness" and "horror" by the conservative section of the Bengali elite, particularly the members of the Dharma Sabhā.<sup>140</sup> The main fear was that the exposure of the Hindu boys to boys of other religions and the possible introduction of Christian missionary teachers and the Bible would aid the spread of Christian missionary ideas and values.<sup>141</sup> The members of the elite saw no contradiction between their attitude to the proposal for the admission of non-Hindus to the Presidency College<sup>142</sup> and their professed liberalism. They viewed this aspect of the Government's educational policy, on the one hand, as an open act of breach of faith against the Hindu community whose money had been useful in the establishment of the Hindu College,<sup>143</sup> and, on the other hand, as only the first step in the ultimate conversion

<sup>138</sup>In 1823, the Hindu College, which was administered by a Committee of Managers and was having serious financial problems, was placed under the supervisory control of the General Committee of Public Instruction which became the Council of Education in 1842.

<sup>139</sup>Despatch to India (Public), 13 September (no. 62) 1854, p.530.

<sup>140</sup>Sambād Prabhākar, 21 December 1852: 11 and 26 February 1853: 3 September 1858: 16 August 1860 (quoting Samāchār Chandrikā), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 336-340, 348, 376-377.

<sup>141</sup>Sambād Prabhākar, 21 December 1852, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 335-336.

<sup>142</sup>Bengal Education Proceedings, 27 October 1853, pp. 99-102.

<sup>143</sup>Sambād Prabhākar, 21 December 1852: 11 and 26 February (quoting the Bengal Hurkaru): 23 November 1853, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 335-336, 338-340, 348-349.

of the Hindu and Brāhma youth to Christianity.<sup>144</sup> In 1853, the conflict between the Managing Committee of the Hindu College and the Education Council reached a critical point over the moral question involved in the admission of a particular student who was considered to be an outcaste by the conservative Hindu community.<sup>145</sup> Thereupon the Hindu College was taken over by the Government and the senior department which was thrown open to all communities formally became known as the Presidency College on 15 June 1855. On 2 May 1853, Hindu and Brāhma educationists established a new college named the Hindu Metropolitan College (later known as the Vidyasagar College) in Calcutta, with money donated by the foremost wealthy Hindus of Calcutta, which was incorporated with Seal's Free College and Gour Charan Datta's David Hare Academy, two other private Hindu educational institutions.<sup>146</sup> Unlike the Hindu College, it was under the direct and exclusive management of the Hindus themselves.<sup>147</sup>

Even among the urban Bengali Muslims, important changes were taking place - mainly in connection with modern education, indicative of social mobility. Thus, the Muslim students who yielded to the tendencies towards Westernization in education, with a few exceptions, belonged to middle class and in some cases even lower class urban Muslim families, many of them living in and around Calcutta.<sup>148</sup> The Anglo-Persian

<sup>144</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 21 December 1852, SBS, vol. 1, p.336.

<sup>145</sup> The boy was rumoured to be the son of a North Indian woman "of ill repute" living in Calcutta, Sambād Prabhākar, 11 February, 21 July 1853, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 337, 342-343.

<sup>146</sup> Friend of India, 3 May 1855; Sambād Prabhākar, 2 Śrāvaṇ 1265 (1858), SBS, vol. 1, p.373.

<sup>147</sup> In 1872, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Krishna Das Pal and Dwaraka Nath Mitra were the three managers of the college.

<sup>148</sup> Bengal Christian Herald, 2 February 1872.

Department of the Calcutta Madrassa which showed an increasing number of students<sup>149</sup> was reported to have

"a set of pupils mostly belonging to the lower orders of Mahomedans ... With the exception of the sons of some of the Professors of the College and of the higher Mahomedan Law Officers in the Honble Company's Courts, the pupils belonged chiefly to the classes of petty shop-keepers, retailers, attornies and moonshies, and that with but a very few exceptions, the study of English had failed to make any impression on the better class of Mussalmans."<sup>150</sup>

The Colingah Branch School of Calcutta was a special institution which was established in 1854<sup>151</sup> "with the avowed object of giving the sons of the lower classes of Mahomedans (tailors, coachmen, kidmutgars, petty tradesmen etc.) an English education up to the University Entrance standard".<sup>152</sup> It was thus intended to be

"a place of education for Mahomedan boys of a lower class; such boys, in fact, as could not be admitted into the Anglo-Persian Department of the Mudrassah owing to their inability to produce the necessary certificate of respectability."<sup>153</sup>

In actual fact, the students turned out to be the sons of petty land-holders, shop-keepers, sarkars, daftaris, native doctors, munshis, mukhtars, and writers, tailors and police officers.<sup>154</sup> In 1869 Kali Prasanna Chattopadhyaya, the Hindu Head Master of the school remarked:

"The Mahomedan boys are chiefly from the middle class, but we have also sons of menial servants."<sup>155</sup>

<sup>149</sup>Correspondence on Education of Mahomedan Community, p.31.

<sup>150</sup>Papers relating to the Foundation of the Presidency College, Appendix I, pp. 2, 7.

<sup>151</sup>Correspondence on Education of Mahomedan Community, p.41.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., p.9.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., p.41.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., p.6.

Contemporary official sources emphasized the fact of the poverty of the substantial number of students "who came from all parts of Bengal to the Calcutta Madrassa" and who were, "while prosecuting their studies there, lodged, fed and clothed by the beneficence of Muhammadan residents of Calcutta."<sup>156</sup> In the mid-1860s it was reported that

"From 15 to 24 pupils have of late been provided with residence free in the Madrassah building, being supplied from time totime with funds by their fathers or guardians, or fed by friends outside. The others live with friends or with charitable Mahomedans, who provide them with food and lodging gratis, or at the out-offices attached to Mosques, etc., some few managing to eke out a difficult subsistence by giving instruction during leisure hours in Persian and the elements of Arabic to the children of Mahomedans of Calcutta or to anyone who applies to them."<sup>157</sup>

But, on the whole, higher education, especially traditional Muslim education, remained the prerogative of aristocratic Muslims often based in the rural areas. The majority of the students attending the Arabic Department of the Calcutta and the Hooghly Madrasses came from Chittagong, Tripura, Noakhali, Sylhet and some other remote districts of Eastern Bengal far from the Metropolis.<sup>158</sup> No student was admitted without a sharafatnamah (certificate of respectability), and as a result, these students constituted "a set of pupils belonging to the learned and highest class of Mahomedans."<sup>159</sup> They were mostly sons of petty zamindars, talukdars, munsiffs, kazis, merchants and munshis, many of them living in rural areas and nearly all belonging to abhijāt, if declining, Bengali Muslim families.<sup>160</sup> The Calcutta Madrassa

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<sup>156</sup> F.J.Mouat, Secretary to the Council of Education, quoted in Papers Relating to the Foundation of the Presidency College, p.11.

<sup>157</sup> Letter from C.H.Campbell, J. Sutcliffe, and A. Latif to the Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 1 December 1864, in Correspondence on the Education of Mahomedan Community, p.22.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. Also, W.W.Hunter, Indian Musalmans, p.199.

<sup>159</sup> Papers relating to Foundation of Presidency College, p.2.

<sup>160</sup> Correspondence on Education of Mahomedan Community, p.22.

Commission, which included Bengali Muslim kritavidyas like Abdul Latif, was in favour of the perpetuation of this system through the continuation of the sharafatnamah and stated:

"The great object is to attract Mahomedan boys of good parentage of the institution [Calcutta Madrassa], but nothing could have a worse effect than the admission of the boys of tradesmen, petty shopkeepers, etc. etc. For such the [Colingah] Branch School is specially intended."<sup>161</sup>

#### IV Social interactions

In the urban areas, on the one hand, the increased contact and cooperation between the members of different Hindu castes was made possible by the various changes associated with urbanization; on the other hand, such interaction and cooperation contributed towards greater social mobility and change. Generally speaking, the urban milieu favoured an increase in different types of interactions, particularly in connection with various religious, socio-cultural and literary movements such as the Brāhma Samāj movement. The new urban recreational movements such as the growing interest in amateur theatre among the urban Bengali kritavidyas also encouraged interactions between the members of different Hindu castes. Gour Das Basak, a Tantu Banik of Calcutta, for instance, was one of the founders of the Native Theatre at Belgachia and took part in the dramatization of Madhu Sudan Datta's Ratnābalī in 1858.<sup>162</sup> Priya Nath Seth, another Tantu Banik, was also an enthusiastic supporter of the Belgachia Theatre and took part in the dramatization of Madhu Sudan Datta's Śarmisthā in 1859 along with Rajendra Lal Mitra, Yatindra Mohan Thakur and other upper caste

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<sup>161</sup> Letter from Campbell, Sutcliffe, Latif, dated 1 December 1868, in Correspondence on Education of Mahomedan Community, pp. 47-48.

<sup>162</sup> N.N.Seth, Kalikātāstha Tantu Banik Jātir Itihās, pp.144-146.

Hindus.<sup>163</sup> Upper caste urban Bengali abhi-jāts and kritavidyas such as Rama Nath Thakur and Ram Gopal Ghosh, who were interested in civic activities, also came into close contact with some of the members of low castes who had risen to prominence in the urban areas, especially in Calcutta, mainly through their participation in the growing trade and commerce, for instance, Yadu Lal Mallik, a Subarna Bapik who became an Honorary Magistrate and Justice of the Peace of Calcutta and the Twenty-Four Parganas,<sup>164</sup> Gour Das Mallik, a Tantu Bapik of Barabazar in Calcutta who became a Deputy Magistrate and was the first man of his community to become an Honorary Magistrate of Calcutta,<sup>165</sup> Durga Charan Laha (Law), a Subarna Bapik who became a J.P. and an Honorary Presidency Magistrate and the first Indian member of the Port Commissioners of Calcutta<sup>166</sup> and his brother Shyama Charan Laha (Law) who was a Commissioner of the Suburban Municipality and an Honorary Magistrate of Calcutta and the Twenty-Four Parganas.<sup>167</sup> In Calcutta, the presence of numerous contacts and the increasingly wide area of interaction created greater complexity than anywhere else in Bengal. Here professional and educational kinship often tended to act in a more forceful manner than other kinship ties. In the smaller cities and towns of Bengal, the diversity of the contacts and the dimensions of the areas of interaction, although less than in Calcutta, were definitely more than in the rural communities.

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<sup>163</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>164</sup>P.N. Mullick, History of the Vaisyas of Bengal, pp. 114-118.

<sup>165</sup>N.N. Seth, op.cit., pp. 144-146.

<sup>166</sup>P.N. Mullick, op.cit., pp. 142-143.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid.



Urban Bengali society also experienced conflicts between different social groups, classes and generations.<sup>168</sup> In 1866 a leading vernacular journalist of Calcutta remarked that the Bengali parents sent their sons to English education institutions hoping that they would become educated and respectful towards their own culture; but instead, the sons lost faith in their national religion and customs and became totally alienated from their disappointed parents.<sup>169</sup> The contemporary vernacular newspapers were full of articles on the dilemma of the educated young Bengali urbanite, such as on "The Pains of the well-educated Hindu Youth",<sup>170</sup> "The Family Troubles and Mental Unhappiness of the Educated Youth".<sup>171</sup> The choice before these young men seemed to be either to stay within the circle of their relatives and friends and attempt to remove their "superstitions" by "friendly advice and guidance", or to give up society altogether and live "as their conscience directed them".<sup>172</sup> The vernacular journalists, who were themselves often members of the "suffering urban elite", tried to publicize the "injustice of the situation", particularly the "isolation of the elite" and pointed out that the traditional family life, meaning the joint family, was very often "like a prison" to the educated urban Bengali.<sup>173</sup> One of the strongest complaints against the traditional

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<sup>168</sup> Cf. P. Sinha, "Social Change", in N.K.Sinha (ed.), History of Bengal, p.400.

<sup>169</sup> Som Prakāś, 2 April 1866.

<sup>170</sup> Som Prakāś, 29 May 1865.

<sup>171</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 1 June 1865.

<sup>172</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 30 August 1865.

<sup>173</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 1 June 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 30 August 1865.

family - a complaint which was obviously derived from the West - was that it tended to stand between the educated man and his wife by imposing various restrictions upon their relationship.<sup>174</sup>

Contemporary British observers noticed a marked estrangement and deterioration in relations between the Bengalis and the Europeans, particularly the English.<sup>175</sup> Even the testimony of the contemporary Vernacular Press seemed to suggest that there was a decline in the relationships between the Indians and the Europeans living in India. According to a Bengali journalist of Calcutta, the desire to maintain distance was very often mutual.<sup>176</sup> The Indians, particularly the Bengali Hindus, traditionally disliked the idea of living close to the Europeans whom they called "mlecchas" (followers of an alien religion) and, as a result, the "Bāngālī Parā" or the Bengali locality in Calcutta was rapidly growing in density.<sup>177</sup> This overcrowding of the Indian quarters indirectly contributed towards a decline in relationships, by leading to feelings of resentment against Europeans who had a lot of space.<sup>178</sup> The vernacular journalists generally tended to blame the British, especially the British officials, for their feelings of "contempt", "distrust" and "suspicion" towards the Indians.<sup>179</sup> However, some Bengali journalists expressed hopes such as "there will be friendly and brotherly relations between the Hindus and the British".<sup>180</sup>

<sup>174</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 1 June 1865.

<sup>175</sup> Friend of India, 27 July 1854: 13 December 1855: 23 April 1857: 5 July 1860: 2 May 1863.

<sup>176</sup> Paridarsāk, 16 August 1861.

<sup>177</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 19 March 1866. See below, pp. 102-103.

<sup>178</sup> See below, pp 103, 125-126.

<sup>179</sup> Paridarsāk, 16 August, 6 November 1861; Som Prakās, 18 July 1864; Sambād Pūrna Chandrodāya, 11 May, 31 August 1865: 5 February 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 17 June, 21 October 1865. Cf. K.A. Ballhatchet, Social Policy and Social Change in Western India, p.102.

<sup>180</sup> Paridarsāk, 16 August 1861.

But the fear of being discriminated against on the basis of race and colour seemed to dominate the writings and thought of the urban Bengali kritavidyas of this period.<sup>181</sup> On the occasion when the Rev. Lal Bihari De was called an "Asiatic nigger" by a British military officer, the editor of the Sambād Prabhākar remarked:

"Now we know that pride and colour-prejudice are more thoroughly established in Europe than in India and that Christianity has been unable to remove these evils."<sup>182</sup>

Kali Prasanna Sinha, a Calcutta abhijāt who became an Honorary Magistrate and J.P. of Calcutta, remarked in the course of his protest against the "injustices" committed by a British medical officer:

"The Court of Justice is not an instrument for social revenge."<sup>183</sup>

The increase in the number of Europeans, mostly of "low social rank",<sup>184</sup> coming to India, Bengali journalists feared, would lead to a further deterioration in relations between the two races.<sup>185</sup> The Vernacular Press also accused the English journalists in Bengal, particularly the editors of the Bengal Hurkaru and the Englishman of being "vastly prejudiced" against the Bengalis, and of thus causing ill-feelings between the two communities.<sup>186</sup>

In an indirect way, Westernization, mainly Western education, was said to have contributed towards the declining relations between the two communities.<sup>187</sup> In an editorial published in 1866, the

<sup>181</sup> Paridarsak, 17 and 19 April 1861; Sambād Prabhākar, 21 June, 21 October 1865; Sambād Pūrna Chandrodaya, 11 May, 29 August 1865; 5 February 1866.

<sup>182</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 21 June 1865.

<sup>183</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 21 September 1865.

<sup>184</sup> Sambād Pūrna Chandrodaya, 9 April 1866.

<sup>185</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 21 October, 29 November 1865.

<sup>186</sup> Paridarsak, 19 September, 10 October, 11 December 1861; Sambād Pūrna Chandrodaya, 17 June, 25 August 1865.

<sup>187</sup> Friend of India, 23 April 1857; Som Prakāś, 2 April 1866.

Som Prakāś declared "the independent spirit of the educated Bengalis" to be "the primary reason behind this situation":<sup>188</sup>

"In the earlier days, the British did not observe any desire among the Indians to be treated as equals, and hence, they treated the Indians with kindness and pity. But now the situation has been reversed. At present, in their relations with the educated Indians, the British discover the Indian tendency to behave as their equals and this disturbs as well as angers the members of the ruling community."<sup>189</sup>

The majority of the Hindu and Brāhma elite reacted strongly against the Christian missionary attempts to introduce Christian ideas and values into the Bengali society and gain converts to Christianity.<sup>190</sup> The identification of Christian missionary education with Christianization in the minds of many contemporary Bengalis - both Hindu and Muslims - was an important factor behind many of the socio-religious and cultural movements of this time, including the Brāhma Samāj movement. In the urban areas of Bengal, those who were exposed to the teachings and activities of the Christian missionaries were mostly upper and middle class Hindu and Brāhma youth. As a result, the leading vernacular journals of this time which were run by urban Hindu and Brāhma abhijāts and kritavidyas were more concerned about this aspect of Christianization than about the mass conversion of low caste Hindu communities which was more common in the rural areas of Bengal.<sup>191</sup> Calcutta was the centre of agitations in this connection since most of the controversial conversions to Christianity involving Hindu and Brāhma students

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<sup>188</sup> Som Prakāś, 2 April 1866.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Som Prakāś, 17 August 1863; 3 July 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 20 July, 19 October 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 28 December 1865.

<sup>191</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 19 May 1853, SBS, vol. 1, p. 342; Som Prakāś, 3 July 1865; 3 Srāvan 1277 (1870), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 545, 547; Samāchār Chandrikā, 19 October 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 30 October 1865.

took place in the metropolitan area.<sup>192</sup> The Christian missionary whose name appeared in many of these cases was Alexander Duff, the Scottish missionary who was known among the Bengalis as "a very strict Christian ... the leader of the Christian missionary pāl (gang)".<sup>193</sup> The event which made Debendra Nath, an important figure in the anti-Christian missionary campaign, finally take direct action against Christian missionary activities was the conversion of a young Hindu student and his wife by Duff in 1845.<sup>194</sup> The propaganda against Christian missionary education was primarily carried on through modern media such as the Press, public meetings and schools.<sup>195</sup> The arguments used, however, were generally drawn from Sanskrit sources and finally rested upon the belief in the greatness of "pure" Hinduism. This growing faith in the Indianization of society and culture among the urban Bengali elite and the alliance, however temporary, between the Dharma Sabhā-gosṭhī led by Radha Kanta Deb, the Tattva Bodhinī-gosṭhī led by Debendra Nath Thakur and even some members of the Westernized Derozio-gosṭhī like Ram Gopal Ghosh<sup>196</sup> against the spread of Christianity among the urban Bengali youth were the two major factors in the success of the anti-Christianization movement in the mid-nineteenth century. Debendra Nath claimed that, in the 1850s, the "current"

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<sup>192</sup> See below, pp. 162-163.

<sup>193</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 27 April 1850, SBS, vol. 1, p. 318.

<sup>194</sup> D.N. Thakur, Ātmajībanī, p. 62.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., pp. 63-65.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

(srot) of Christianization through education was stopped as a result of the earnest efforts of some of the "aristocratic (sambhrānta) and respectable men (mānyas)" of Calcutta.<sup>197</sup> Even Duff noted a definite "falling off in the number of students" attending Christian missionary educational institutions such as the Free Church Institution in Calcutta in the 1850s.<sup>198</sup>

The British, obviously influenced by Christian missionary propaganda, generally condemned the Hindu social customs and habits, especially the "law of caste" with its restrictions on inter-dining<sup>199</sup> as the major hindrances to greater interactions between the Indians and the British in India.<sup>200</sup> However, the many changes in attitudes towards caste which were taking place in the urban Bengali society, especially in Calcutta,<sup>201</sup> must have led to some improvements in the relations between the Indians and the foreigners. During this period, the contemporary Press - both English and Vernacular - published many reports on the parties and gatherings which took place both at the houses of the abhijāt Bengalis such as Maharaja Kali Krishna Bahadur of Calcutta and Abdul Ghani Mia of Dacca, as well as at the Governor General's house in Calcutta and the Lt.-Governor's house in Belvedere, and were attended by abhijāt and kritavidya Bengalis and prominent British officials.<sup>202</sup> The tone of the Bengali journalists - representing both conservative and liberal sections of the urban Bengali community -

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., pp. 62-65.

<sup>198</sup> Letter from Alexander Duff to Dr. Tweedee, dated 17 May 1858, Calcutta Duff Papers (MSS).

<sup>199</sup> Cf. K.A. Ballhatchet, op.cit., p.102.

<sup>200</sup> Friend of India, 23 April 1857, citing Hodgson Pratt, the Inspector of Education in Bengal, 21 May 1863.

<sup>201</sup> Paridarsak, 16 August 1861.

<sup>202</sup> Indian Daily News, 8 February 1857; Samāchār Chandrikā, 28 August, 9 October 1865; Sambād Bhāskar, 30 January, 29 March 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 28 March, 13 November 1866.

was one of approval.<sup>203</sup> The few visits paid by Europeans along with their families to the houses of Calcutta abhijāts such as Kali Prasanna Sinha of Jorasanko and Bholā Nath Mallik of Barabazar on the occasion of the Durgā Pūjā festival, in spite of the intervention of Christian missionaries who condemned the Europeans who attended Hindu socio-religious ceremonies, were reported by Bengali journalists with obvious pleasure.<sup>204</sup>

It is difficult to determine to what extent the theory of the deterioration in relationships between the Europeans and the Indians was merely an aspect of the tendency of every generation to look back upon the past as a "golden age" in comparison with the present and how far it was based upon actual fact. The growing involvement of the urban Bengali elite in municipal affairs,<sup>205</sup> politics<sup>206</sup> and education<sup>207</sup> must have brought them into closer contact with the British. In May 1862 a meeting held at the Dalhousie Institute in Calcutta with the aim of developing "brotherly friendship" was attended by prominent Europeans such as the Governor General Lord Elgin and the Lt. Governor Cecil Beadon and, according to a popular vernacular newspaper of this time, followed "the increasing trend among the British

<sup>203</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 28 August, 9 October 1865; Sambād Bhāskar, 30 January, 29 March 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 28 March, 13 November 1866.

<sup>204</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 21 September 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 9 October 1865. The gradual decline in this and similar practices was regretted by vernacular journalists. See Sambād Bhāskar, 6 July 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 24 February 1866.

<sup>205</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 16 May 1865.

<sup>206</sup> Som Prakās, 25 May 1863; Samāchār Chandrikā, 13 April 1865.

<sup>207</sup> Friend of India, 14 November 1850; Som Prakās, 23 March 1863; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 15 August 1865: 7 and 23 March 1866.

of arousing friendly feelings towards the rulers in the minds of the Indians, especially the educated Indians, in order to facilitate the ruling of the country."<sup>208</sup> In 1864 the same newspaper remarked that the main aim of the Bethune Society of Calcutta was to improve relationships between the Indians and the Europeans, and that the Society had succeeded considerably in this.<sup>209</sup> A study of the membership lists and activities of the growing number of voluntary societies, associations and meetings such as the Bethune Society and the Mahomedan Literary Society indicate that there were many occasions of interaction between the two communities, more specifically between the prominent Europeans and the urban Bengali elite. In the case of the Western-educated urban Bengali kritavidyas, their proximity to the English officials and educationists in the urban areas and the similarity of interests created by their Western education enabled many of them to have contacts and friendships with Europeans. Ramtanu Lahiri, the leading Brāhma educationist, for instance, had many prominent Englishmen as his intimate friends, including educationists such as David Hare and Roper Lethbridge, writers such as William Wilson Hunter and leading men in the Government such as Lt. Governor Frederick James Halliday, Ashley Eden, James Westland and Henry Cotton.<sup>210</sup> The British Indian Association was one of the many organizations which encouraged interactions between different goṣṭhīs and communities and acted as a link not only between the Indian elite but also between the Indians and the British residents of urban Bengal.<sup>211</sup> It seems that by the

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<sup>208</sup> Som Prakāś, 19 May 1862.

<sup>209</sup> Som Prakāś, 25 January 1864.

<sup>210</sup> R. Lethbridge, Ramtanu Lahiri, Appendix III, pp. 221-227.

<sup>211</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 13 April 1865.



1860s, the frequently expressed British hope regarding the emergence of "native" leaders and "interpreters" had been largely satisfied.<sup>212</sup> The idea of an enlightened and mixed "native" and European society evolved around the urban Bengali kṛitavidyas, particularly the products of the new urban educational institutions such as the Calcutta University.<sup>213</sup>

In spite of the increasing social mobility in the urban areas, the distance between the elite and the masses remained pronounced as in preindustrial cities.<sup>214</sup> The fact that the members of the elite were often Westernized<sup>215</sup> emphasized their isolation. The Sambād Bhāskar of Calcutta wrote in 1856:

"The English-educated youth (navya) do not mix with any other class (śreṇī) and have continued to exist like a separate class (śreṇī)."<sup>216</sup>

In 1872 Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, a graduate of the Calcutta University and a rising Bengali novelist, wrote:

"whether for good or bad the English language has become our medium today. And, as a result, the cleavage between the upper and the lower strata within the Bengali society is widening day by day."<sup>217</sup>

The traditional Sanskritic practices and values of a large number of the members of the elite, most of them belonging to the upper Hindu caste,<sup>218</sup> also stood in the way of greater interactions between the elite and the masses.

<sup>212</sup> Friend of India, 30 March 1865.

<sup>213</sup> See the address of Vice Chancellor Henry Maine delivered at the 1866 Convocation of the Calcutta University, as quoted in Friend of India, 22 March 1866.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. G.Sjoberg, "The Preindustrial City", American Journal of Sociology, vol. 50, no. 5, March 1955, p.441.

<sup>215</sup> R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, pp. 147-148.

<sup>216</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 15 January 1856, SBS, vol. 3, p.438.

<sup>217</sup> Letter from Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya to Sambhu Mukhopadhyaya, dated 16 March 1872, as quoted in S. Banerjee, Patra Sāhitya, p.81.

<sup>218</sup> R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, pp. 17-19.

## V The Vernacular Press

During this period, the Vernacular Press was becoming increasingly popular and influential among the urban Bengali kritavidyas. Numerous journals and newspapers, most of them in the Bengali language, were born - mainly in and around Calcutta.<sup>219</sup> While the urban Bengali kritavidyas were the creators of the Bengali Press, the Press in its turn became an important force in the formation of public opinion among the kritavidyas. Many important social, religious and political issues of the time were first exposed and discussed in the Press. Sometimes journals and newspapers were even published for a particular section of the urban Bengali society, for instance, the periodicals published for Bengali women<sup>220</sup> and for "Native Christians".<sup>221</sup> Journalism also gave social control and power to various individuals and groups within the urban society and was a factor in promoting social mobility. For example, Advaita Charan Adhya, a Subarna Banik, became the editor of the influential Bengali journal Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya [Full-moon of news] and enjoyed an important position in Calcutta society. The journal Jñānārūḍaya [rise of the sun of knowledge] was edited by Keshab Karmakar of the low blacksmith caste.

Often, the different journals and newspapers represented different gosthīs (groups) and different sets of opinion. The Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā [paper for the understanding of knowledge], for example, was the mouthpiece of the Tattva Bodhinī-gosthī which was dominated by the leaders of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj; the Keshab-gosthī, most of whom belonged to the Bhārat Varshāya Brāhma Samāj, established and managed

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<sup>219</sup> See Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 22 April, 26 April (letter), 15 May, 19 June (letter) 1865; Samāchar Chandrikā, 4 September 1865: 29 January 1866; Indian Mirror, 1 August 1861.

<sup>220</sup> For example, Sarba Subhakarī [For the good of everyone] (1850); Māsik Patrikā [monthly journal] (1854), a monthly; Subhakarī [Beneficial] (1862), a monthly; Jyotirangan [a courtyard of light] (1867), an illustrated monthly; Abalā-bandhab [a friend of women] (1869), first published from Dacca and then, in 1874, when it became a monthly, from Calcutta; Nārī-Sikshā [Journal for the education of women] (1870), a monthly published from Dacca.

<sup>221</sup> For example, Sudhansu [sun] (1850); Santānik Sambād [weekly news],

the Indian Mirror and the National Paper, both in English, and the comparatively cheap Sulabh Samāchār [cheap newspaper] in Bengali. Apart from these journals and newspapers which had a wide circulation among the urban Bengali kṛitavidyas, the Brāhma Samāj also published a few journals mainly for the members of the Samāj, for instance, the Dharma Prachāriṇī Patrikā [paper for the propagation of the Religion] (1864), established by Abinash Chandra Mukhopadhyaya and Rajendra Nath Guha; the Satya-jñāna Pradāyini [giver of true knowledge] (1865), published by the Jorasanko Brāhma Samāj; the Sudhā Sādhini [giver of nectar] (Baisākh 1277 or 1870), published by the Brāhma youth of Dacca and edited by Kali Prasanna Ghosh; and the Dharma Tattva [religious knowledge] (1864).<sup>222</sup> The Brāhma journals frequently clashed with the Hindu-dominated newspapers. Thus, there was a long feud between the Indian Mirror and the Som Prakāś.<sup>223</sup> In Dacca, the Hindu Hitaishiṇī [Benefactor of the Hindus], which was published every Saturday and issued the maximum number of copies for a weekly - whether English or vernacular - in Dacca, was the mouthpiece of the Hindu Dharma Rakshiṇī Sabhā (society for the protection of Hinduism) of this city.<sup>224</sup> From the early days of its publication, the Hindu Hitaishiṇī entered into a journalistic battle with the Dhākā Prakāś.<sup>225</sup> The Samāchār Chandrikā [News of the moon] of Calcutta was associated with the famous Bengali author Bhabani Charan Bandyopadhyaya,<sup>226</sup> and was the mouthpiece

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published from Bhowanipur in Calcutta. See Saptāhik Sambād, January 1869.

<sup>222</sup> See Dharma Prachāriṇī, Jaiṣṭha 1786 (1864).

<sup>223</sup> See Som Prakāś, 23 March 1863.

<sup>224</sup> A.L. Clay, Principal Heads of History and Statistics of Dacca Division, p.122.

<sup>225</sup> See Sambād Pūrpa Chandrodaya, 25 August 1865.

<sup>226</sup> Among his most famous works were Kalikātā Kamalālaya, Nava Bābu Bilās and Nava Bibi Bilās, all of which were based on social change in nineteenth-century Calcutta.

of the Dharma Sabhā (religious association), the foremost association of the orthodox Bengali Hindus. It generally represented the opinions of the members of the Dharma Sabhā-gos̥thī and strongly criticized the Brāhma Samāj movement and the processes of Westernization and Christianization in Bengal.

Calcutta and Serampore where the Baptist Mission Press was situated, were the main centres of journalism in mid-nineteenth century Bengal. Among the Bengali kṛitavidyas, the Calcutta journals and newspapers such as the Som Prakāś [exposure of the sun] (1858), the Sambād Prabhākar [news of the sun] (established in 1830, became a daily in 1839), the Sambād Bhāskar [news of the sun], the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā (1843), the Samāchār Chandrikā (1821) and the Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya became the most popular.<sup>227</sup> Many kṛitavidyas considered the Som Prakāś to be the most important Bengali newspaper of this time - a newspaper which had fulfilled "most of its initial promises", namely, "supporting social reform, protesting against political injustices and discussing the defects in administration and justice".<sup>228</sup> A prominent Bengali educationist remarked:

"The maximum work was done by the Som Prakāś. It published articles, debates and discussions in every field - politics, sociology and religion. Vidyasagar

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<sup>227</sup> See Paridarsak, 28 August (letter), 23 September (letter) 1861; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 26 April (letter) 1865. According to a contemporary official report, the most prominent "native newspapers" in the late 1860s were "among the dailies, the Sambād Prabhākar, the Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, the Samāchār Sudhā Barshan; among the tri-weekly papers, the Sambād Bhāskar; among the bi-weekly papers, the Samāchār Chadrikā, the Bārta Baha, the Sambād Rasa Rāj; among the weeklies, the Som Prakāś, the Dhākā Prakāś, the Hindu Hitaishinī, the Bijñāpanī, the Education Gazette, the Bhārat Ranjan, the Rangpur Dik Prakāś and the Amrita Bazar Patrikā; among the monthlies, the Sikshā Darpan, the Grāma Bārta Prakāśikā, the Pallī Bijñāpanī, the Rājshahī Patrikā; and the Bagga Vidya Prakāśikā, published in Bengali, English and Hindi. Bengal Administration Report, 1867-68, p.229.

<sup>228</sup> Paridarsak, 28 August (letter), 23 September (letter) 1861.

was the first to maintain that an excellent newspaper could be published in the vernacular. The Som Prakās ushered in a new age in literature and society."<sup>229</sup>

The reading public was quite large in the context of the state of education. An official report of the mid-1860s estimated that apart from the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, the scholarly Brāhma monthly, there were at least three other Bengali newspapers (the weekly Education Gazette, the daily Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya and the weekly Som Prakās) which had between three hundred and four hundred subscribers, two newspapers (the tri-weekly Sambād Bhāskar and the bi-weekly Samāchār Chandrikā) with about four hundred subscribers, and two newspapers (the daily Sambād Prabhākar and the Brāhma weekly Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā) with about five hundred subscribers.<sup>230</sup>

Outside Calcutta, Dacca and Mymensingh in the east, Rangpur in the north, and Hooghly and Murshidabad in the west were some of the important centres of journalistic activity. Dacca was a particularly important centre, witnessing frequent journalistic clashes between its strong Brāhma community and strong conservative Hindu community gathered in the Dharma Sabha.<sup>231</sup> In the 1860s, there were three Bengali weeklies published from Dacca, namely the Bijñāpanī, the Dhākā Prakās and the Hitaishinī or the Hindu Hitaishinī, the first two being considered by the contemporaries to be competent rivals of the Calcutta papers.<sup>232</sup> Among the Mofussil newspapers, there were two (the weekly Bijñāpanī of Mymensingh and the weekly Rangpur Dik Prakās of Rangpur) which had between one hundred and two hundred subscribers, three (the weekly

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<sup>229</sup> Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p.53.

<sup>230</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1865-66, p.159.

<sup>231</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 19 April 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 10 November 1865 (quoting Dhākā Prakās).

<sup>232</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 19 April 1865.

Dhākā Prakāś of Dacca, the weekly Bhārat Rañjan of Murshidabad and the monthly Grāma Bārtā Prakāśika of Pabna) with between two hundred and three hundred subscribers, and one (the weekly Hindu Hitaishīnī of Dacca) with about four hundred subscribers, and the monthly Śikshā Darpaṇ of Burdwan with seven hundred subscribers.<sup>233</sup>

The Bengali journalists were almost entirely urban-based, urban-educated and urban-oriented in outlook and temperament. A large percentage were Western-educated and had received their education in the schools and colleges in Calcutta. Some of them were eminent educationists like Dwaraka Nath Vidhyabhushan, a Professor of the Sanskrit College of Calcutta, who founded the weekly Som Prakāś. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, the foremost educationist of the time, was closely associated with the Tattva-Bodhinī Patrikā, the Hindoo Patriot and the Som Prakāś edited by his friend and colleague Dwaraka Nath - perhaps the three most influential newspapers run by Bengalis in the second half of the nineteenth century. The urbanism of the journalists was apparent from their style of writing, involvement with urban topics and obvious pre-occupation with the urban reading public. The journalists as well as the urban reading public belonged almost entirely to the Hindu and Brāhma communities.<sup>234</sup> High caste Brāhmins seem to have dominated Bengali journalism during this period. Thus, among the twenty editors of the "newspapers in existence" mentioned in a contemporary newspaper report,

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<sup>233</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1865-66, p.159.

<sup>234</sup> Some of the important exceptions were: Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyaya, the Bengali Christian who published the Sudhāngsu; Mir Mosharaf Hussain, the Bengali Muslim who was closely associated with Hindu-dominated newspapers like the Sambād Prabhākar and the Grāma Bārtā Prakāśika; and Allah Dad Khan, another Bengali Muslim who edited the Faridpur Darpaṇ. J. Long, Correspondence relating to Vernacular Education in the Lower Provinces of Bengal, 1855, p.306; Kazi A. Odud, Bānglār Jāgarāṇ, p.116.

there were eleven Brāhmins, four Europeans, three Baidyas, one Kāyastha and one Subarṇa Bāpik.<sup>235</sup>

The vernacular journalists saw themselves, most often rightly, as the creators of public opinion with reference to most of the social, religious and other important questions of the time.<sup>236</sup> Social reform was one of the major aims of most Bengali journalists.<sup>237</sup> The Government realized the importance of the Vernacular Press as a source of "native public opinion"<sup>238</sup> and made careful and repeated arrangements for the translation and compilation of portions of the important Bengali journals and newspapers.<sup>239</sup> The Rev. J. Long wrote:

"Surely the mental food of the Indian people ought to be examined, as also its purveyor, the Native Press. In the present position of India, the Native Press ought to be attended to; if the sound part of the Native Press be encouraged by the authorities, it will become the instrument of much good; if it be left in the hands of ill-designing, ignorant men, it will be the source of much evil."<sup>240</sup>

<sup>235</sup> Friend of India, 1 May 1851.

<sup>236</sup> See Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 22 April 1865.

<sup>237</sup> See Banga Vidyā, Kārtik, Agrahāyan 1262 (1855); Som Prakāś, 28 December 1863; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 22 April, 20 September 1865; Sarba Śubhakārī Patrikā of Madan Mohan Tarkalankar and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, as quoted in R.N. Basu, Ātmacharit, p.21.

<sup>238</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1863-64, p.105.

<sup>239</sup> Bengal Public Proceedings, 1 February (nos. 46, 48, 49) 1855; 19 September (no. 64), 21 September (no. 657), 24 September (no. 73), 19 October (no. 75), 5 December (no. 98), 20 December (no. 105) 1864; 7 January (nos. 1, 2, 3), 21 January (nos. 9, 10), 8 February (nos. 13, 14), 20 February (nos. 17, 18), 4 March (no. 27), 6 March (no. 28), 11 March (no. 33), 14 March (no. 34), 5 April (no. 43), 6 April (no. 44), 7 April (no. 45), 13 April (no. 48), 18 April (no. 49), 8 May (nos. 53, 54), 13 May (no. 59) 1865; India Public Proceedings, 6 January (no. 28), 12 January (nos. 1, 2), 31 January (no. 51) 1872; Bengal Administration Report, 1863-64, p.105; Bengal Administration Report, 1867-68, p.229; A.L. Clay, op.cit., p.122; Friend of India, 10 September 1863; Sambād Prabhākar, 25 October 1865.

<sup>240</sup> J. Long, as quoted in Hindoo Patriot, 11 July 1860.

In the late 1850s, the Government sanctioned an annual grant of two thousand and four hundred rupees for the publication of a cheap weekly newspaper in Bengali, "designed to induce the people to take an interest in public events, and to encourage among them a taste for general literature", to be under the control of the Education Department.<sup>241</sup> This paper was expected to be "specifically the organ of the Education Department"<sup>242</sup> and was published under the name of the Education Gazette. According to Brahma Mohan Mallik, a well-known scholar in mathematics and literature, the journal succeeded in attracting the respect of the "educated community" (śikṣita samāj) in Bengal.<sup>243</sup>

The Vernacular Press became the most important and popular medium for the expression of public opinion, although a section of the urban Bengali kṛitavidyas favoured the English newspapers.<sup>244</sup> Even the members of this group seem to have changed their opinion with the publication of scholarly journals such as the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, whose journal Banga Darśan (picture of Bengal) (1872) created "an unprecedented excitement" among the Bengali kṛitavidyas,<sup>245</sup> wrote to a friend:

<sup>241</sup> Bengal Education Proceedings, 24 April (nos. 63, 64) 1856; 30 April (nos. 48, 49), 2 July (nos. 269, 270) 1857; Despatch to India (Public, Education), (no. 35) 1857, p.582; Despatch to India (Public, Education, Bengal), 26 May (no. 74) 1858, p.1308.

<sup>242</sup> Despatch to India (Public, Education, Bengal), 26 May (no. 74) 1858, p.1308.

<sup>243</sup> Brahma Mohan Mallik, as quoted in PP, p.195.

<sup>244</sup> Friend of India, 10 April 1851; Paridarsak, 29 August 1861; Som Prakāś, 20 August 1865 (letter); Samāchār Chandrikā, 29 January 1866.

<sup>245</sup> R.N.Thakur, Chelebelā, pp. 70, 73.



"I think that we ought to 'disanglicize' ourselves, so to speak, to a certain extent, and to speak to the masses in the language which they understand. I therefore project a Bengali magazine."<sup>246</sup>

Bengali journalists and kritavidyas in general saw a close and necessary link between the success of the Vernacular Press and the progress of the Bengali society.<sup>247</sup> In 1862 the Hindoo Patriot commented on the Bengali journalists' "responsibilities not only as members of the Fourth Estate, but also as exponents of the nation, which for the most part is under the present order of things represented by the Press to the great body of the European community."<sup>248</sup> The work of an editor was viewed seriously and a high standard was set up by the Bengali journalists themselves:<sup>249</sup>

"The work of an editor is very serious... the newspaper is the representative of the country and it is the duty of the editor to express the public opinion openly and clearly. He should do this even if it goes against the wishes of a particular sampradāya (community, group)... the newspaper, after all, is the main ally of the social reformers."<sup>250</sup>

"It is the duty of the editor to reform society, remove injustices, advise the ruler to govern in keeping with the interests of the ruled, advise the public to do their duty, compare the customs of this country with those of foreign countries and remove the misconceptions of the public."<sup>251</sup>

The Rev. James Long, a keen observer of nineteenth century Bengali

<sup>246</sup> Letter from Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya to Sambhu Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, dated 14 March 1872, as quoted in S. Banerjee, Patra Sāhitya, p. 81.

<sup>247</sup> See Paridarsak, 23 September 1861 (letter); Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 15 May, 30 August (letter), 25 September 1865; Sambād Bhāskar, 23 May 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 29 January 1866.

<sup>248</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 22 December 1862.

<sup>249</sup> Paridarsak, 10 December 1861; Sambād Bhāskar, 23 May 1865.

<sup>250</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 22 April 1865.

<sup>251</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 4 January 1866.

society, wrote on the "Native Press":

"The mind of the masses in awakening from its torpor and the activity of the Vernacular Press is one of its signs."<sup>252</sup>

"This power, though young at present is generally rising to a giant's strength, and even Young Bengal is coming to acknowledge it to be a power ... The publication of half a million copies of Bengali works in Calcutta annually for sale cannot be without its effect."<sup>253</sup>

He concluded that "the opinion of the Native Press may often be regarded as the safety valve which gives warning of danger",<sup>254</sup> and considered the suppression of the "Native Press" or the establishment of "a rigorous censorship as suggested by some officials" to be "suicidal ... to the interests of good government and sound education."<sup>255</sup> The editor of the Hindo Patriot wrote on the difficulties of the "native journalist":

"Incomparatively hard is the task of the native journalist in India who has the novel problem of representing and reconciling the ruled to the ruler and the ruler to the ruled, both of whom are aliens in birth, religion, language, habits, customs and what not."<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> J. Long, General Conference of Bengal Protestant Missionaries. On Vernacular Christian Literature, p.1.  
<sup>253</sup> J. Long, Five Hundred Questions Requiring Investigation, p.62.  
<sup>254</sup> J. Long, Returns relating to Publications in Bengali Language, as quoted in Hindoo Patriot, 11 July 1860.  
<sup>255</sup> Ibid. In his review of Long's observations, the editor of the Hindoo Patriot generally agreed with the views of the missionary educationist. Ibid.  
<sup>256</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 21 April 1862.

## 2. MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AND POLICE

### I. The municipal situation and urban problems in mid-nineteenth century Bengal.

The modern system of municipal government - with its system of election by rate-payers and distinct powers of administration and taxation vested in the local bodies - was introduced by the British, in Madras in 1687 and in the other two Presidency towns in 1727. The Royal Charter of 1727 created a Municipal Corporation in Calcutta with a Mayor and nine Aldermen who were entrusted with local public works and had the power to collect taxes. The experiment had little success and came to an end in 1794. Between 1794 and 1847 the municipal government in Calcutta was in the hands of the Justices of the Peace who looked after conservancy, roads and police and collected a house-tax. In the early nineteenth century, the Justices were aided in their work by two Committees which used lottery money for municipal work - primarily for sanitation work, namely, the Fever Hospital and the Town Improvement Committee (1803-1836) and the Lottery Committee (1817-1836). Between 1847 when the conservancy functions of the Justices were transferred to a Board of Improvement Commissioners<sup>1</sup> and 1863 when the Justices regained their position, the municipal affairs of Calcutta were controlled by the Improvement Commissioners. As the

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<sup>1</sup>Act XVI of 1847 provided that the Board of Improvement Commissioners would consist of seven members of whom three were to be appointed by the Government and one elected by the rate-payers - both European and Indian - of each of the four Divisions of Calcutta. Section II of Act XVI of 1847.

municipal reports published in the late 1840s indicated, the major municipal functions in Calcutta were health-oriented, being the cleaning of the town, especially the streets and the drains, the supervision and control of the markets and preventing the existing practices relating to the disposal of waste-material and the dead among the "native" population.<sup>2</sup> Between 1847 and 1867, all expenses connected with the Police rested with the Government under Act XVI of 1847.

In the rest of Bengal, that is, in the Mofussil, the Bengal Act X of 1842 tried to introduce some form of modern municipal government by permitting the formation of local municipal committees on the application of the inhabitants of a particular area.<sup>3</sup> The Government, however, retained the final power of actually granting municipal government and appointing the municipal committees.<sup>4</sup> Act XXVI of 1850, which repealed Act X of 1842, put the matter of popular "desire" for municipal government in even vaguer terms<sup>5</sup> and placed the power of the appointment and dismissal of Municipal Commissioners entirely in the hands of the Government.<sup>6</sup> But these Acts were generally unsuccessful and till the 1860s the urban areas in the Mofussil were still governed largely along pre-modern lines.

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<sup>2</sup>First Half-Yearly Report of Commissioners for Improvement of Town of Calcutta for 1848, pp. 39-40; Second Half-Yearly Report of Commissioners ... for 1849, Statement no. 2; Third Half-Yearly Report of Commissioners ... for 1849, pp. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup>Section 1 of Act X of 1842.

<sup>4</sup>Section II of Act X of 1842.

<sup>5</sup>Section II of Act XXVI of 1850.

<sup>6</sup>Section VI of Act XXVI of 1850.

Although in the 1850s the Home Government tended to agree with the view of the Government of Bengal that the existing Municipal Acts and Municipal Commissioners afforded "ready means of introducing such local improvements as might from time to time be found practicable"<sup>7</sup> and viewed the working of the municipal system, particularly in Calcutta, with satisfaction,<sup>8</sup> yet the real situation was far from being satisfactory. In 1852, for example, the Court of Directors found the sanitary condition of the city of Murshidabad to be deplorably bad.<sup>9</sup>

With the progress of urbanization, the major concern of the municipalities in mid-nineteenth century Bengal was the improvement of the physical conditions of the urban areas. Water supply was an important issue which, on the one hand, was closely related with the question of conservancy in view of the climate and the ecological situation, and, on the other hand, had deep caste and religious implications.<sup>10</sup> These issues together with the prevention of fire were urgent concerns in the old and congested cities such as Dacca and Murshidabad, but also became significant in the new and rapidly growing urban centre in and around Calcutta. In 1864 the Governor General wrote to the Lt. Governor of Bengal:

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<sup>7</sup>Despatch to India (Legislative), 2 July (no. 9) 1851, pp. 851-852.

<sup>8</sup>Despatch to India (Judicial, Bengal), 15 October (no. 43), 1856, p. 742.

<sup>9</sup>Despatch to Bengal (Public), 3 November (no. 34) 1852, pp. 907-914.

<sup>10</sup>See below, pp. 133-134.

"These constant fires must do much harm and ruin many poor people. It is difficult to predict to what extent a conflagration may not extend someday. The other night near Sealdah, it only went out because the wind was not strong and it met with some impediment in the shape of a pucca brick-built bazaar. Could you not manage to make the owners tile their houses and sheds if they cannot or will not construct them pucca?"<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, Calcutta had many of the characteristics of the older cities and many of its parts - mostly the Indian localities - were ill-planned, congested and unhealthy.<sup>12</sup>

But Calcutta also had some special problems for instance with relation to crime, mainly because of the mixed nature of the population, the high proportion of men living on their own and away from their families, and the rising prices. The crime situation as well as the higher expectations regarding living conditions which attracted a large number of abhijāts from all over Bengal to the metropolis gave rise to special needs such as the need for better lighting and for a better system of police. The growing number of liquor shops in Calcutta and its neighbourhood which resulted in a marked increase in "the crime of drunkenness"<sup>13</sup> constituted a major source of trouble and posed the additional problem that the attempts made by the Municipal Police to control these shops frequently brought them into direct conflict with the Revenue Department which was interested in keeping them open.<sup>14</sup> The thriving port in Calcutta,

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<sup>11</sup> John Lawrence to Cecil Beadon, dated 15 April 1864. John Lawrence Collection, MSS.Eur.F90/51. In 1872-73, the Suburbs of Calcutta had 5,451 pākā (solid, brick-built) houses and 39,644 kēñca (mud) houses. Administration Report of the Municipality of the Suburbs of Calcutta, 1872-73, p.40. The proportion of brick-built houses to tiled and thatched houses was one to seven in the Suburbs as a whole, one to nine in the older Northern Division, one to six in the Southern Division and ten to six in the newer Central Division. Ibid., p.41.

<sup>12</sup> J.Long, Calcutta and Bombay in their Social Aspects, pp.4-5, 8, 22.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from G.F.Cockburn, Chief Magistrate of Calcutta, to the Secretary to Government of Bengal, Judicial Department, 30 April 1856. Report on the State of Police of Town of Calcutta for 1855, p.7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-9; Report on the State of Police of Town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for 1862-63, pp. 7-8.

the distance between the business quarters in the city and the residential areas in the suburbs and the growth in the number of carriages,<sup>15</sup> among other factors, required the better maintenance of roads and the provision of better means of communication. Most of the municipal needs mentioned above became magnified in the case of Calcutta because of the rapid growth in population and commerce. In view of the growing population of Calcutta and the recurrent epidemics, the drainage system was found to be inadequate and "a source of great anxiety" to the municipal authorities.<sup>16</sup> In the early 1850s, the main purposes for which the Commissioners for the Improvement of the Town of Calcutta were required to spend the municipal income were: first, the maintenance of roads; second, drainage; third, conservancy; fourth, water-supply; fifth, building of streets and squares; and sixth, general improvement of the city.<sup>17</sup> In the late 1860s, the major municipal concerns in Calcutta as reflected in the Special Committees formed within the Calcutta Municipality were - drainage, water supply, roads and illumination of the city.<sup>18</sup> In the early 1870s, Special Committees were founded to supervise the two matters which were of particular importance around this time, namely, measures for the prevention of fire and the Census of Calcutta.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>In 1872, the Justices issued licences for 610 carriages drawn by two horses, 3040 carriages drawn by one horse and 377 buggies. Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1872, p.9.

<sup>16</sup>Tenth Report of Commissioners for Improvement of Calcutta for 1853, p.8. Also, J.Long, op.cit., pp. 5, 22-23.

<sup>17</sup>Section LXV of Act X of 1852.

<sup>18</sup>Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1869, p.1.

<sup>19</sup>Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1871, pp. 1, 28.

The growing Suburbs of Calcutta<sup>20</sup> had many problems in common with the city itself. Since a large portion of the residents travelled to Calcutta for the purposes of work, the Suburban Municipality was greatly concerned with communication. A considerable proportion of municipal activities consisted of the establishment and repair of roads, the filling up of sewers and the laying of lines of Tramway in the suburban areas of Bhowanipur and Khidirpur - two thriving "native" localities.<sup>21</sup> In the early 1870s, the Commissioners in charge of the Suburban Municipality felt that "the four great wants" to be supplied before the sanitary condition of the region could be improved were: first, an improvement in the drainage system; second, a better system of water supply; third, the filling up of holes and puddles and the cleaning of tanks; and fourth, the cleaning and remodelling of the slums.<sup>22</sup>

The old cities such as Dacca also had special problems. Since Dacca was an ill-planned, and congested city which was notorious for its narrow and filthy "gullies" (alleys), the building, widening and repairing of roads were works of great importance and constituted a major portion of the municipal functions in Dacca.<sup>23</sup> The tanks and the khāls (canals) which served as important water-ways were also old and needed to be deepened and cleaned.<sup>24</sup> The city also had

<sup>20</sup>From the geographical point of view the Suburbs of Calcutta surrounded the city "on the north, east and the south side, the remaining boundary being formed by the river Hooghly or port of Calcutta". Administration Report of the Suburbs of the Municipality of Calcutta, 1872-73, p.40. See Map 4.

<sup>21</sup>Administration Report of the Suburbs of the Municipality of Calcutta, 1872-73, pp. 12-15.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p.24. The bustees or slums, especially those inhabited by buffalo and cow-keepers were considered to be "a standing menace to the health not only of the Suburbs but of the city". Ibid., p.25.

<sup>23</sup>A.L.Clay, Principal Heads of the History and Statistics of Dacca Division, pp. 87-89.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p.88.



many old buildings and wells which were found to be "in a ruinous state".<sup>25</sup> Sanitation was in a bad state and in the 1860s, the main object of the Municipal Commissioner of Dacca was reported to have been "to improve the sanitary condition of Dacca".<sup>26</sup> Some of the problems arising out of congestion and physical deterioration faced by old cities such as Dacca were also becoming visible in the relatively new urban areas, but were obviously difficult to deal with in the older cities where the problems were deeply rooted. For example, the problem of prevention of fire, which was made acute by the unsophisticated nature of fire prevention arrangements and by the fact that most of the houses were thatched with straw and hence highly combustible, was great in congested old urban areas such as Dacca. As in the case of Calcutta, the disposal of the dead - an important religious issue to both Hindus and Muslims - was a delicate problem before the municipal authorities of Dacca.

## II The evolution of municipal government, police and finance

During this period several pieces of legislation were passed which indicated a shift towards greater governmental control over municipal affairs in Calcutta than before. This control was mainly exerted through the manner of appointment of the Municipal Commissioners and through the Chairman or the chief municipal officer over whom the Government exercised a close control. Act X of 1852 decreased the effectiveness of the elected members within the Board of Commissioners for the Improvement of the Town of Calcutta by reducing their number from four to two and by thus turning them into a minority.<sup>27</sup> Even the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.87. Act III of 1864 provided that no burial or burning place could be formed without the permission of Government or of Municipal Commissioners and that the Municipal Commissioners could order certain burial or burning places to be closed if they wished. Acts of Lt. Governor in Council for 1864, p.238.

<sup>27</sup> Section IV of Act V of 1852; India Legislative Proceedings, 6 February (nos.78,80-82,86), 1856, pp.89-93; Despatch to Bengal (Judicial), 15

system of election was of an essentially limited nature since the electorate was restricted to the owners and occupiers of relatively expensive establishments, that is, owners of houses, buildings or grounds paying not less than ten rupees' tax and occupiers of the same paying a monthly rent of not less than seventy rupees.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, only those persons who were qualified to vote in the election were qualified to be candidates for election as Commissioners.<sup>29</sup>

The Government felt that the elective principle had failed and it was totally suspended by Act XXVIII of 1854 which empowered the Lt. Governor to fill up vacancies on the Board of Commissioners.

Act XXVIII of 1856 or the Police Act reduced the number of Municipal Commissioners to three, all of whom were to be appointed by the Lt. Governor and be "removable at his pleasure."<sup>30</sup> One of

the Commissioners was to be appointed President of the Board by the Lt. Governor.<sup>31</sup> Act VI of 1863 made the Justices of the Peace - all nominated members - into a Corporation and there was a further transfer of executive powers from the Corporation to the Chairman.<sup>32</sup> The

Lt. Governor explained the benefits of the measure thus:

"While a popular character is given to the Municipality by the selection as Justices of a large number of the leading citizens and ratepayers ... the evils of election (which has once before been tried and failed) are avoided and the advantages of a strong, able, and responsible Executive are as far as possible secured."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> October (no.43), 1856, p.725.  
Section VI of Act X of 1852.

<sup>29</sup> Section XIII of Act X of 1852.

<sup>30</sup> Section IV of Act XXVIII of 1856.

<sup>31</sup> Section V of Act XXVIII of 1856.

<sup>32</sup> Some of these powers were the grant of licences for horses and carriages and for trades and professions, the assessment of properties and the hearing of appeals against assessments.

<sup>33</sup> Cecil Beadon to Elgin, 14 May 1864. Indian Papers of the Eighth Earl of Elgin (MSS. Eur. F.83).

Act IV of 1875 which followed Lord Mayo's Resolution of 1870 on provincial finance encouraging the development of local self-government, finally introduced the elective principle in Calcutta - four years after Bombay - and invested the affairs of Calcutta Municipality in a body of Commissioners, two-third of whom were to be elected by the rate-payers of the city. But the electorate was still restricted to affluent male residents of the city. Government control over the municipal bodies was also considerable, since the Chairman who could also hold the office of the Commissioner of the Police was to be appointed by the Lt. Governor while the appointment of the Vice-Chairman and all statutory officers was subject to the approval of the Government.

As far as the Calcutta Police was concerned, Act XIII of 1856 made it clear that the Government was in supreme control, having the power of appointment and removal of the Commissioner of Police, and of the Deputies to the Commissioner of Police.<sup>34</sup> The Commissioners had the important powers of framing rules for the Force - subject to the approval of the Government,<sup>35</sup> the appointment, suspension, dismissal, fining and otherwise imposing penalties upon the members of the Force.<sup>36</sup> The main municipal functions performed by the Police were to supervise and grant licences for places of public entertainment,<sup>37</sup> inspect and control the system of weights and measures in

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<sup>34</sup> Sections III, IV, V of Act XIII of 1856. The Commissioner of Police was to be a J.P., but was to act only in certain cases. Section VI of Act XIII of 1856.

<sup>35</sup> Section VIII of Act XIII of 1856.

<sup>36</sup> Sections X, XI, XII of Act XIII of 1856. The Commissioner could also appoint Special Constables when necessary. Section XX of Act XIII of 1856.

<sup>37</sup> Sections L, LI of Act XIII of 1856.

shops,<sup>38</sup> and put a check upon various offences committed in public streets such as drunkenness and negligent driving.<sup>39</sup> Act II of 1866 added to the powers of the Commissioner of Police by creating a single urban police area consisting of Calcutta and its Suburbs under the final control of the Commissioner of Police of Calcutta. The Bengal Act IV of 1866 or the Calcutta Police Act further clarified the municipal functions of the Commissioner of Police by specifying that he was to act as a Justice only so far as might be necessary for "the promotion of peace, the prevention of crimes and the detection, apprehension and detention of offenders."<sup>40</sup> As recommended by the Sanitary Commission for Bengal in 1864,<sup>41</sup> certain offences such as those relating to weights and measures were "summarily triable" by the Magistrate, being offences which carried the punishment of less than six months in jail and less than two hundred rupees as fine.<sup>42</sup> The Commissioner's control over the granting of excise licences was again emphasized.<sup>43</sup> Another important Act in view of the growing need for better communications in Calcutta and its neighbourhood was the Bengal Act V of 1866 which gave the Commissioner of Police power over the registration and punishment for negligence to register.<sup>44</sup> The drivers

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<sup>38</sup>Section LXXVI of Act XIII of 1856.

<sup>39</sup>Section LXXXI of Act XIII of 1856.

<sup>40</sup>Section VII of Act IV of 1866.

<sup>41</sup>Minute on the Sanitary Condition of Calcutta, by the President of the Sanitary Commission for Bengal, dated 5 March 1864, in Parliamentary Papers (H. of C.), vol. 40 (Paper 68), p.4.

<sup>42</sup>Section XXVI of Act IV of 1866.

<sup>43</sup>Section XXXVI of Act IV of 1866.

<sup>44</sup>Sections II, VIII, XII of Act V of 1866.

of Hackney Carriages were required to be licensed<sup>45</sup> and could be punished for offences such as drunkenness, refusal to be hired, demanding more than the correct fare.<sup>46</sup>

The municipal authorities of Calcutta derived their power of taxation from various Acts of Government. Act X of 1852 authorized the Commissioners for the Improvement of the Town of Calcutta to impose a tax on houses, buildings and grounds at the rate of six and a quarter per cent.<sup>47</sup> Acts XXV and XXVIII of 1856 extended the scope of municipal taxation by sanctioning taxes on vehicles and animals,<sup>48</sup> a lighting-rate of two per cent of the annual value, imposed upon all houses, buildings and lands,<sup>49</sup> and a drainage-rate on houses.<sup>50</sup> Act XXVIII of 1856 increased the house-tax to seven and a half per cent<sup>51</sup> and also specified a Municipal Fund to which fines - a further source of income - were to be paid.<sup>52</sup> In the late 1860s, the Municipal Fund was primarily made up of house-rate at ten per cent, followed by licences for trades and professions, carriage and horse licences and registration of carts and hackeries.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Section XVIII of Act V of 1866.

<sup>46</sup>Section XXXIII of Act V of 1866.

<sup>47</sup>Section XXIV of Act X of 1852.

<sup>48</sup>Section XII of Act XXV of 1856; Section XIII of Act XXVIII of 1856.

<sup>49</sup>Section XXI of Act XXVIII of 1856.

<sup>50</sup>Section XXVI of Act XXVIII of 1856.

<sup>51</sup>Section IX of Act XXVIII of 1856.

<sup>52</sup>Sections XXX, XXXI of Act XXVIII of 1856.

<sup>53</sup>Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1867, p.2.  
See Table 3.

After 1870, corresponding with the increase in water supply, the water-rate became the primary source of municipal income, followed by the police-rate and licences on professions and trades, the lighting-rate, licences for carriages and horses and registration of carts and hackeries.<sup>54</sup> Corresponding with the major sources of income, the major items of expenditure were conservancy, roads and lighting and later, water supply and police.<sup>55</sup> The Government was generally reluctant to give financial assistance to the Calcutta Municipality on a major scale and wished that the Municipality would, if necessary, be able to raise money on its own credit. This became clear during discussions on the Calcutta Hospital, the Calcutta drainage scheme and the water supply project.<sup>56</sup>

In the Suburbs of Calcutta, as in Calcutta proper, the rate on houses, buildings and land - at seven and a half per cent on the annual value in the Suburbs as provided by the Bengal Act III of 1864<sup>57</sup> - formed the foremost source of income.<sup>58</sup> But the relative

<sup>54</sup>Bengal Municipalities Report, 1873-74, Statement I. See Table 3. Some of the other items of income each of which contributed less than one per cent to the total income were notices of demand, warrant fees, other fees and fines, rents and conservancy receipts, the municipal slaughter-house, tramways, jute warehouses, contribution of Suburbs to fire-brigade, Government contribution to censuses and other forms of Government loan.

<sup>55</sup>See Table . Some of the other items of expenditure were hospitals and vaccination, improvement and maintenance of the fire-brigade, slaughter-houses, jute-warehouses, tramways and municipal railways, municipal markets, public squares and various kinds of city improvement.

<sup>56</sup>Letter from John Lawrence, Governor General, to William Grey, Lt. Governor of Bengal, dated 28 May 1867. John Lawrence Collection (MSS. Eur. F90/51). Letter from Grey to Lawrence, dated 2 July 1868. John Lawrence Collection. (MSS. Eur.F. 90/50).

<sup>57</sup>The rate was fixed at seven and a half per cent on the annual value. Section XXVI of Act III of 1864.

<sup>58</sup>See Table 6.

importance of the other major sources of income in the Suburbs was different from the pattern in Calcutta.<sup>59</sup> Thus, whereas in Calcutta in the early 1870s, after the house-rate, the water-rate was the most significant source of income followed by licences on professions and trades and the police-rate - as was natural in view of the commercial importance of Calcutta and the new water supply experiments for which some governmental help was forthcoming, in the Suburbs, where the majority of the affluent Bengalis lived, the major sources of income were fees and fines and tax on carriages and horses, followed by collections for conservancy work and registration of hackeries.<sup>60</sup> In Calcutta, the seat of government and commerce, the major items of expenditure were conservancy, water supply and maintenance of roads followed by police and lighting.<sup>61</sup> These items were also important in the Suburbs where the main residential quarters of Calcutta and its neighbourhood were located.<sup>62</sup>

In Calcutta and its neighbourhood, mainly because of the mixed nature of the population and because of the fact that a large number lived on their own away from their families, the rate of crime was high and consequently the maintenance of an efficient Police was of great importance. The Government of India was keen on the reduction of expenses in connection with the Bengal Police

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<sup>59</sup>See Table 6.

<sup>60</sup>See Table 6.

<sup>61</sup>See Table 4.

<sup>62</sup>See Table 6.

"where it can be done fairly".<sup>63</sup> But it was generally recognized that in order to perform effectively, the Municipal Police required a considerable amount of money. Act XI of 1867 transferred the burden of police expenditure from the Government to the Calcutta Municipality, by authorizing the latter to levy a police-rate of three per cent of the annual value of houses, buildings and lands upon their occupiers. The Justices made the Government agree to bear the whole cost of the River Police and one-fourth of the cost of the Town Police, on condition that the expenses of the Pauper Hospital would be borne by the Municipality.<sup>64</sup> From 1868 all the fines and miscellaneous fees realized under Act IV of 1866 and three-fourths of the fees and penalties imposed under Act V of 1866 were credited to the Police Fund. In the late 1860s and the early 1870s, the two biggest sources of income of the Calcutta Police were: first, the police-rate which supplied more than half of the total amount in the Police Fund, and, second, contributions from the Government.<sup>65</sup> Expenses on the Police establishment constituted by far the biggest item of expenditure.<sup>66</sup>

In the Mofussil, modern municipal government was introduced much later than in the metropolis. Although Acts X of 1842 and XXVI

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<sup>63</sup> Letter from John Lawrence to Cecil Beadon, Lt. Governor of Bengal, dated 2 August 1864. John Lawrence Collection (MSS. Eur. F90/51).

<sup>64</sup> Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1867, p.24.

<sup>65</sup> Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1872, Statement B. See Table 5.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.



of 1850 provided for the establishment of municipalities, the Home Government was anxious that the voluntary principle should be carefully maintained and that "the Act should not be put in force in any place where the bulk of the population have not after full acquaintance with its objects, declared unequivocally in its favour."<sup>67</sup> The Government of India impressed upon the local Governments the necessity of "exercising extreme caution in giving effect to the provisions of this Law".<sup>68</sup> But by 1864, the Government seems to have given up the policy of caution to some extent. The Bengal Act III of 1864 or the District Municipal Improvement Act placed the powers of the appointment and dismissal of the Municipal Commissioners as well as of defining the limits of any particular municipal area in the hands of the Lt. Governor of Bengal.<sup>69</sup> In addition to the Municipal Commissioners appointed by the Government, the Commissioner, the Magistrate and the Executive Engineer were to be ex-officio Commissioners of the Municipality.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, the Magistrate of the District was to be the ex-officio Chairman of the Municipal Committee.<sup>71</sup> This Act further increased the functions and powers of the Municipal Commissioners by giving them control over the Municipal Fund and the purposes to which this Fund was to be applied, the power to set apart out of the annual rate a sum sufficient for the maintenance of

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<sup>67</sup> Despatch to India (Public), 1 November (no. 81) 1854, p.43.

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Under Secretary to the Government of India to the Secretaries to the Governments of Bengal, Madras, Bombay ....., dated 21 June 1850. Board's Collections vol. 2417, 1850-1851, p.231.

<sup>69</sup> Acts of the Lt. Governor of Bengal in Council for 1864, pp. 217-218.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p.218.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

Police Officers, the control over public highways, the power to enter houses and to demand the registration of carts, hackeries and other wheeled vehicles without springs.<sup>72</sup> These were, undoubtedly, important powers giving the Commissioners considerable control over municipal finances and broad rights with regard to the supervision of private property. The British Indian Association of Calcutta criticized this Act for giving the power of appointing Commissioners entirely to the local Government, for paying no attention to the wishes of the local inhabitants and for giving too many powers to the Magistrate.<sup>73</sup>

Whereas the Bengal Act III of 1864 was mainly applied to the larger urban areas in Bengal such as Dacca, Hooghly, Krishnanagar and Midnapur, the Bengal Act VI of 1868 or the District Town Act - which modified some of the provisions of Act III of 1864 - regulated the municipalities of the comparatively smaller towns in Bengal such as Agarpara, Dinajpur, Maldah, Rangpur and Nadiya.<sup>74</sup> Under this Act, the Town Committee was to consist of a minimum of five persons - in keeping with the tradition of the panchāyat system - who owned houses or lands or traded or resided in or near the town. Although the Magistrate had the power to appoint the Town Committee, yet the Government retained the real power in this matter since the Act provided for the municipal appointments to be made by such persons and in such manner as the Government might direct. The Committee had the right to elect their own Chairman and Vice-Chairman only when and

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<sup>72</sup>Sanitation and health were important concerns, particularly in old cities such as Dacca. A.I.Clay, op.cit., pp. 87-88.

<sup>73</sup>Som Prakās, 29 February 1864.

<sup>74</sup>Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, p.180; Bengal Administration Report, 1872-73, p.164.

if the Government did not appoint the Magistrate to be the ex-officio Chairman of the Committee. The basis of taxation was broadened, being levied upon occupiers instead upon owners. The Magistrate was given even more powers under this Act and the Municipal Commissioners merely constituted a governing body.

Under the pressure of pronounced criticisms - mainly from the Bengali elite - to the effect that too much power was concentrated in the Magistrate, an official of the Government, and that the municipalities lacked real self-government, the Government began to reconsider the situation. In the early 1870s the Lt. Governor of Bengal stated:

"We may best supplement our own deficiencies and give the people that measure of self-government and local freedom to which both their old traditional and their modern education alike point, by giving to towns and restoring to villages some sort of municipal or communal form of self-government."<sup>75</sup>

In 1871 a new Municipal Bill which contained provisions regarding roads, canals and education and gave power to the Lt. Governor to introduce elections into any municipality and to make rules for election was introduced in the Legislative Council. But this Bill was also open to various criticisms and there were several petitions against it questioning the sincerity behind the Government's decision to give a liberal measure of self-government to the Bengal Municipalities, in view of the fact that there was no definite provision for the election of the Municipal Commissioners and that all real power would still remain with the Magistrate as the Chairman of the Municipality. The British Indian Association objected to the Bill on the grounds that it imposed new obligations upon the local population by sanctioning the levy of a number of new taxes and that it required the compulsory retirement of the Commissioners every three years, thus

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<sup>75</sup>Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, p.192.

depriving them of the opportunity to establish their position within the municipalities and put up effective opposition to any dictatorial dealings on the part of the chairman.<sup>76</sup> A similar petition was presented to the Government by some of the inhabitants of Dacca. These petitioners obviously feared that the measures sanctioned by this Bill would add to the unpopularity of the municipal bodies among the local people, especially in the smaller towns of the interior. To the concerned Bengalis, on the one hand, the concentration of power in the hands of the Magistrate deprived the offices of the Commissioners of any great interest or attraction among the Bengali elite, while on the other hand, the heavy burden of municipal taxation added an odium to those offices. Even English journalists criticized the Lt. Governor for summarily dismissing the "native petitions" and felt that neither of the two major principles involved, namely, the elective principle and the principle of taxation, were beyond criticism.<sup>77</sup> Public opinion against the Bill proved to be extensive and the Governor-General refused to sanction this Bill. Finally, Act II of 1873 enabled the Government to provide for election by the rate-payers and also contained provisions relating to the establishment of municipal schools.

As in Calcutta, the maintenance of an efficient system of police was a major concern of the municipalities throughout Bengal. In 1851 some of the "respectable landholders and other inhabitants" of some of the major urban areas in Western Bengal, for instance, Burdwan, Hooghly and Krishnanagar, presented a memorial to the Government of Bengal complaining of "the great increase of gang robbery and thefts

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<sup>76</sup> Friend of India, 18 April 1872 (quoting Hindoo Patriot).

<sup>77</sup> Indian Observer, 27 April 1872; Friend of India, 25 July, 5 August 1872.

and the inefficient state of the Police, especially of the village watch."<sup>78</sup> In Eastern Bengal, however, the urban Bengalis generally seemed to favour the continuation and improvement of the panchāyat system.<sup>79</sup> The Magistrate of Dacca - a city which was divided into 150 mahallās (localities) each having a separate panchāyat - advocated the continuation of the system.<sup>80</sup> But the panchāyat system or the local police structure was being modernized and gradually placed under the strict control of the Government by various Acts passed during this period. Act XX of 1856 or the Chowkidari Act, which laid down rules for the organization of the Police in the larger urban areas of Bengal<sup>81</sup> outside Calcutta, gave the Magistrate the power to determine the number of the Police<sup>82</sup> and the amount of tax to be raised for the maintenance of the Police,<sup>83</sup> as well as appoint a panchāyat consisting of three or five "respectable persons residing or carrying on business" in or near the urban area to assist him in police activities.<sup>84</sup> The panchāyats or the majority of them were required to make assessments or rates upon the people liable to be assessed or rated in respect of their occupation and property or revise and amend the existing assessments or rates.<sup>85</sup> Act V of

<sup>78</sup> See Board's Collections, vol. 2691, 1856-57, p.39.

<sup>79</sup> From C.T.Davidson, Commissioner of Circuit, Dacca Division, to Secretary to Government of Bengal, dated 20 December 1854. Board's Collections, vol. 2691, 1856-57, pp. 146-47.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Section II of Act XX of 1856 provided that it should not be extended to any urban area which was under a Police officer of a grade below that of a Jamadar.

<sup>82</sup> Section VII of Act XX of 1856.

<sup>83</sup> Sections IX and X of Act XX of 1856. A charge was levied upon the owners of houses, shops, buildings and grounds and the assessment was not to exceed five per cent on the fair rental of the property rated. Minute by the Hon. Mr. Peacock, dated 6 March 1856. Board's Collections, vol. 2691, 1856-57, pp. 52-53.

<sup>84</sup> Section XIV of Act XX of 1856.

<sup>85</sup> Sections XV and XVI of Act XX of 1856.

1861, mainly inspired by the recommendations of the Police Commission of 1860<sup>86</sup> which emphasized the need for the centralization of the Police in the hands of the provincial governments and the duties of the Police to be entirely civil and not military, further tightened government control over the local police system by vesting the superintendence of the Police in the Local Government, subject to the general control of the Governor General of India in Council.<sup>87</sup> The administration of the Police was to be conducted by the Inspector General of Police who was to have the powers of a Magistrate and the power to appoint and dismiss Police officers aided by District Superintendents and Assistant District Superintendents.

In matters of taxation also the municipal authorities in the Mofussil were under the general control of the Government. Act XXVI of 1850, for instance, gave the Commissioners the power to prepare the rules connected with taxation,<sup>88</sup> but only subject to the approval of the Governor or the Governor in Council or the Lt. Governor. Act III of 1864, while giving the Commissioners considerable powers over taxation and the Municipal Fund, restricted these powers by providing that the rate on houses, buildings and lands was not to exceed seven and a half per cent of their annual value<sup>89</sup> and that the Commissioners had to give public notice of valuation and assessment of property to

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<sup>86</sup> Report of the Indian Police Commission and Resolution of the Government of India (presented to both Houses of Parliament), pp. 10-11.

<sup>87</sup> Section III of Act V of 1864.

<sup>88</sup> Section VII of Act XXVI, of 1850.

<sup>89</sup> Acts of the Lt. Governor of Bengal in Council for 1864, p.223.

be taxed,<sup>90</sup> prepare lists of persons liable to be taxed in connection with carriages and animals<sup>91</sup> and submit estimates and statements to the Government.<sup>92</sup> The Commissioners could only borrow with the sanction of the Lt. Governor.<sup>93</sup>

In the case of the old cities of Dacca and Murshidabad - places where the majority of the population were permanent residents - taxation on houses, lands and buildings<sup>94</sup> constituted the major source of income.<sup>95</sup> In Dacca, which was situated in a region where river transport was an important means of communication, income from ferries and tolls along with income from pounds constituted the second largest source of income, followed by the tax on horses, carriages and carts.<sup>96</sup> While in Calcutta conservancy and various works on public utility were the major items of expenditure,<sup>97</sup> in Dacca and Murshidabad the major items of expenditure were roads, conservancy and police.<sup>98</sup> In Bengal taken as a whole, the major sources of municipal income were: first, taxation of immovable property either in the form of rates upon owners according to the annual value of houses and lands owned in the urban areas which was imposed upon

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p.224.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p.227.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., pp. 222-223.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p.230.

<sup>94</sup>In Dacca the owners were taxed, in Murshidabad the occupiers were taxed.

<sup>95</sup>See Table 7.

<sup>96</sup>See Table 7.

<sup>97</sup>See Table 4.

<sup>98</sup>See Table 7.

Calcutta and the municipalities under the Bengal Act of 1864 or a tax upon occupiers of holdings within the urban areas according to their circumstances and according to the property to be protected which was imposed upon towns under Act XXVI of 1850 and Chowkidari Unions under Act XX of 1856; second, the tax upon movable property in the form of tax upon carriages, carts, horses and elephants; third, various municipal fees and fines; fourth, income from pounds, ferries and tolls; fifth, rents of houses, gardens and markets belonging to municipalities.<sup>99</sup> The biggest item of expenditure in the municipalities as a whole was in connection with the Police establishment, followed in most cases by expenditure on roads, conservancy and various works of public utility.<sup>100</sup>

According to official testimony, the municipal experiments - particularly in Calcutta and the Suburbs of Calcutta - had met with considerable success. By the 1850s it was recognized that the growing needs of Calcutta in fields such as communication and lighting could not be met by old and private attempts. In 1853 the Improvement Commissioners of Calcutta reported:

"The additional 30 public lamps mentioned in our last Report have been brought into use, and have added much to the convenience of the people. For some months past the private lamps have been much better attended to than formerly, but they are of necessity very irregularly placed, and therefore not so generally useful as those which are under the regulation of the Conservancy."<sup>101</sup>

In 1861 the number of oil lamps was seven hundred and thirty-four,<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup>See Table 8.

<sup>100</sup>See Table 8.

<sup>101</sup>Tenth Report of the Commissioners for the Improvement of Calcutta for 1853, pp. 9-10.

<sup>102</sup>Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1861, p.23.



that is, in one year the number of street lamps lit with gas had risen by almost thirteen per cent.<sup>103</sup> During the 1860s, the oil lamps were gradually replaced by gas lamps.<sup>104</sup> During this period major innovations were introduced in connection with water supply in Calcutta in the form of pumps and steam engines.<sup>105</sup> The water supply works which were commenced at the close of 1866, for instance the Palta (Pultah) works, the pipe from Palta to Tala (Tallah) to the north of Calcutta, the works at Tala and Wellington Square in Calcutta and the pipe distribution work throughout the city, were completed by 1870 and were reported to be "regularly working, with ... thorough efficiency."<sup>106</sup> In 1870 the Rev. James Long observed that "the recent introduction of fresh water by pipes into Calcutta is improving the general health of Calcutta."<sup>107</sup> By 1867, the drainage works in Calcutta were also reported to have made "rapid progress" but primarily in the area of the city south of Park Street - an area which was primarily inhabited by Europeans.<sup>108</sup> Apart from success in the prevention of crime, in the 1860s, the Municipal Police in Calcutta was credited with considerable success in fields such as the prevention of fires.<sup>109</sup> The success in reducing the

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<sup>103</sup> Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1860, Appendix XII, pp. xv-xvi; Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1861, p.23. Between 1861 and 1866, the number of gas lamps rose from 941 to 1,677 while the number of oil lamps declined from 734 to 567. Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1861, p.23; Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1867, p.17.

<sup>104</sup> Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1867, p.19.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., pp. 20-22.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> J.Long, Calcutta and Bombay in their Social Aspects, p. 5. fn.

<sup>108</sup> Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1867, p.17.

<sup>109</sup> Report on the State of Police of Town of Calcutta for 1860-61, p.9; Report on the State of Police of Town of Calcutta for 1861-62, p.9. See chart below.

number of fires was primarily the result of the strict enforcement of laws regarding the removal of inflammable roofs from huts in the "Native" parts of the city.<sup>110</sup> In 1868, only five fires were reported to have taken place in Calcutta - all in 'pucca' (brick-built) godowns.<sup>111</sup> In 1869 the annual Police Report commented on the excellent conduct of the Calcutta Police Fire Brigade as the major factor behind success in this area.<sup>112</sup>

Prevention of fire in Calcutta, 1859-62

	1859-60	1860-61	1861-62
Number of fires	41	25	5
Houses destroyed	1,351	317	11
Pucca	48	7	0
Tiled	263	285	7
Thatched	1,060	25	4

Sources: Report on the State of Police of Town of Calcutta for 1860-61, p.9; Report on the State of Police of Town of Calcutta for 1861-62, p.9.

As in the case of Calcutta, in the Suburbs of Calcutta the lighting situation improved considerably during the late 1860s and the early 1870s, the number of street lamps rising from fifty in 1868-69 to one hundred and eighty seven improved kerosene lamps in 1872-73.<sup>113</sup> In the early 1870s there was a steady increase in the amount of work done in watering the streets, thus serving the

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Report on the State of Police of Town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for 1868, p.11.

<sup>112</sup> Report on State of Police of Town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for 1869, p.17.

<sup>113</sup> Administration Report of the Municipality of Suburbs of Calcutta 1872-73, pp. 15-17.

dual purpose of increasing the "comforts of the residents" and ensuring the "saving effected in the wear and tear of roads".<sup>114</sup> Similarly, the Commissioners agreed to help in the building of tramways between Calcutta and the Suburbs because it would be "a great boon to the residents" as well as "an advantage to the Municipality in saving of wear and tear of roads".<sup>115</sup> Efforts at vaccination were also increasingly successful, the ratio of success being more than ninety per cent for both Calcutta and the Suburbs in 1872-73.<sup>116</sup>

In the Mofussil also the official reports spoke of general success. In Dacca, for example, the Commissioners were said to have succeeded in compelling the owners of old buildings and wells either to repair or to take them down, several tanks and khāls (canals) were cleaned, public gardens were laid out, tiled huts which were an improvement upon thatched huts from the point of view of fire prevention were built, and better arrangements were made with regard to the maintenance and supervision of the Muslim burial grounds.<sup>117</sup> In 1866 the Municipal Police system in the Twenty-Four Parganas was praised for its all-round efficiency.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.18.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., pp. 12-15.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p.35.

<sup>117</sup> A.L.Clay, Principal Heads of History and Statistics of Dacca Division, pp. 80-82, 88.

<sup>118</sup> Report on Police of Presidency Division for 1866, p.5.

But contemporary reports - both official and non-official - described how the urban areas of Bengal - both old and new - in general suffered from a wide range of problems arising out of circumstances such as the inadequacy of measures for the prevention of fire<sup>119</sup> and epidemics,<sup>120</sup> the miserable condition of roads and embankments,<sup>121</sup> the absence of good arrangements for transportation, marketing, health, sanitation, drainage and water supply,<sup>122</sup> accidents and deaths connected with horses and carriages,<sup>123</sup> and problems arising out of crime and lawlessness, mainly in Calcutta,<sup>124</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Report of Committee on Drainage of Calcutta, 1857, p.30; Samāchār Chandrikā, 23 November, 13 December 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 9 December 1865: 1 March 1866; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 12 and 20 December 1865: 13 March 1866; Samāchar Chandrikā, 22 February 1866; Friend of India, 30 May 1872; J.Long, Calcutta and Bombay in their Social Aspects, p.21.

<sup>120</sup> J.L.Sherwill, Geographical and Statistical Report of Dinagenore District, p.8; Friend of India, 14 February 1850: 2 May 1872; Sarba Subhakarī Patrikā, August 1855; Paridarsek, 19 November 1861; Som Prakās, 15 Baisakh 1270 (1863); Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 28 July, 23 August, 18 November, 19 December 1865: 2 February and 30 March 1866; Sambād Bhāskar, 20 May, 7 September 1865: 20 and 22 March 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 25 November 1865: 6 March 1866; Samāchār Chandrikā, 13 November 1865: 19 March 1866; J. Long, op.cit., p.23.

<sup>121</sup> Despatch to Bengal (Public), 29 June (no. 24) 1853, p.1089; J.L.Sherwill, op.cit., p.8; J.Taylor, Topography and Statistics of Dacca, p.88; J.J.Pemberton, Geographical and Statistical Report of District of Maldah, p.43; Dacca News, 2 January 1858; Friend of India, 8 January 1863; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 29 January 1866.

<sup>122</sup> SAB, vol. V, p.361; A.L.Clay, History and Statistics of Dacca Division, p.80; Friend of India, 10 October 1861: 8 January 1863; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 25 May, 23 August 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 13 November 1865; Sambād Bhāskar, 22 March 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 24 March 1866; B.Chunder, Travels of a Hindoo, vol. 1, p.147; J.Long, op.cit., pp. 4-5, 22-23; G.O.Trevelyan, The Competition Wallah, p.207.

<sup>123</sup> Report of Commissioners of Calcutta for 1855, p.38; Sambād Bhāskar, 1 June 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 8 and 9 August 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 11 November 1865.

<sup>124</sup> Dacoity in Bengal, 1854, pp. 2, 35; Friend of India, 14 July 1853; 15 June 1854; 21 August 1850; 7 April 1859; Sambād Bhāskar, 10 August 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 323-324; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 6 May, 6 July, 10 and 14 September: 28 October 1865: 5 April 1866; Sambād Bhāskar, 3 June, 2 November, 16 19 and 21 December 1865: 4 January, 2 March 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 3 July, 5, 9, 12, 16 and 22 August, 13 September, 19 October 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 2 November, 4 December 1865.

Dacca,<sup>125</sup> and some of the densely populated urban areas in Western Bengal such as Hooghly, Barasat and Chandernagore.<sup>126</sup>

A substantial amount of the problems, especially those relating to the question of health, arose from overcrowding as well as from the defects in - sometimes even the total lack of - town-planning.<sup>127</sup>

Calcutta suffered most from these problems,<sup>128</sup> mainly because of its growing population and the poverty of a large portion of this population which resulted in the growth of slums, mostly inhabited by poor migrant groups, for example, Bihari labourers and Muslim leather-workers.<sup>129</sup> Officials of the Calcutta Municipality blamed the Bengali zamindars of the "parahs" or villages which extended over both the "Native" and European parts of the town and were inhabited by "lower classes of natives" for the extremely insanitary condition of these areas.<sup>130</sup> But apart from these slums, the city of Calcutta was divided into the White or European Quarter (śvet-pallī/pārā) and many of the problems faced by the Bengali residents of Calcutta were said to be derived from this apparently

<sup>125</sup> Dacca News, 26 July 1865.

<sup>126</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 3 June 1865.

<sup>127</sup> A.L. Clay, op.cit., pp. 80-82; J.J. Pemberton, op.cit., p. 43; Friend of India, 30 October 1856; 27 June 1861; 26 March 1863; 17 May 1866; Hindoo Patriot, 1 September 1862; Sambād Prabhākar, 28 June, 11 July 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 13 July, 23 August, 21 September, 19 December 1865; 23 February, 28 March 1866; R. Lethbridge, Ramtanu Lahiri, pp. 49-50; G.O. Trevelyan, op.cit., pp. 199-200, 207, 223, 224-245.

<sup>128</sup> Minute on the Sanitary Condition of Calcutta, by the President of the Sanitary Commission for Bengal, dated 5 March 1864, in Parliamentary Papers (H. of C.) 1865, vol. 40 (Paper 68), pp. 1-2.

<sup>129</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 28 June, 1865; Friend of India, 17 May 1866; J. Long, op.cit., pp. 4-5, 8, 22-23.

<sup>130</sup> Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1868, p. 33.

rigid division of Calcutta.<sup>131</sup> The Bengalis were traditionally concentrated in the Northern region of the city<sup>132</sup> which according to contemporaries was the most filthy, shabby and densely populated area in the city.<sup>133</sup> The Europeans, on the other hand, were mostly settled in the sparsely populated and hence healthier Southern region of the city.<sup>134</sup> In the Suburbs of Calcutta also there was a marked demarcation between the European and the "native" places of residence.<sup>135</sup> The typically "English Suburbs" were Alipur, Garden Reach and Ballyganj, while the "bulk of the middle class European and Eurasian population" lived in Entally.<sup>136</sup> The principal "native quarters" were Bhowanipur, Kalighat, Tallyganj, Beliaghata, Maniktala, Shambazar, Chitpur, Kashipur and Khidirpur<sup>137</sup>. Leading Bengali journalists felt that the neglect of the Bengali Quarter by the municipal authorities, who were mostly Europeans, was at the root of most of the municipal problems in Calcutta and its neighbourhood.<sup>138</sup> In 1870, the Rev. James Long, speaking at the Bengal Social Science Association, pointed out that the Bombay Municipality had not

"as in Calcutta sacrificed to so great an extent the welfare of the native town to the European quarter."<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Letters from Alexander Duff, July 1846. Duff Papers (MSS); E. Thornton, A Gazetteer of the Territories under the Government of the East India Company etc., vol. 1, p.236; Friend of India, 30 October 1856; 27 June 1861; 5 April 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 5 June 1861, SBS, vol. 1, p.175; 28 June 1865; Sambād Bhaskar, 25 April, 25 May, 17 June 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 6 July, 2 November 1865; Church Missionary Atlas, p.33; G.O.Trevelyan, op.cit., p.200; R.Pearson, Eastern Interlude, pp. 220-221, 231-232; J.Long, op.cit., pp. 22-23.

<sup>132</sup> F.W.Simms, Report on the Survey of Calcutta, pp. 37-41; Report on the Census of Calcutta, 1876, p.20; Friend of India, 25 July 1850.

<sup>133</sup> Minute on the Sanitary Conditions of Calcutta, by the President of the Sanitary Commission for Bengal, dated 5 March 1864, in Parliamentary Papers (H. of C.) 1865, vol. 40 (Paper 68), p.1; F.W.Simms, op.cit., pp. 37-41; A.L.Clay, op.cit., pp. 80-82; Friend of India, 10 October, 1861; J.Long, op.cit., pp. 22-23.

<sup>134</sup> F.W.Simms, op.cit., pp. 37-41; Friend of India, 7 April 1859; 23 November 1868; Statistical Reporter, 21 September 1871; R.Pearson, op.cit., pp. 230-232; J.Dunbar, The Golden Interlude, p.47; H.Caunter,

"The authorities, however, generally attributed the "miserable condition" of Calcutta<sup>140</sup> and of most of the urban areas in Bengal to various factors beyond their control, for instance, the limited funds available to the municipalities,<sup>141</sup> the congested living areas,<sup>142</sup> the Bengali aversion to taxation,<sup>143</sup> certain habits of the people such as throwing filth in rivers and prejudices such as objecting to the use of water passing through iron pipes.<sup>144</sup>

The Oriental Annual, p.253.

- <sup>135</sup> Administration Report of the Municipality of the Suburbs of Calcutta, 1872-73, pp. 42-44.
- <sup>136</sup> Ibid., p.44.
- <sup>137</sup> Ibid. Bhowanipur was a thriving locality, being "a favourite place of residence of the native members of the legal profession".  
Ibid.
- <sup>138</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 14 Śrāvan 1265 (1858); 5 June 1861, SBS, vol.1, pp. 176, 240; 28 June 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 6 July 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 25 December 1865; Pakshik Sambād, 1 February 1871 (citing Som Prakās).
- <sup>139</sup> J.Long, op.cit., pp. 22-23.
- <sup>140</sup> V.V.Schalch, Chairman of the Board of Improvement Commissioners of Calcutta, as cited in Sambād Prabhākar, 28 June 1856.
- <sup>141</sup> Bengal Political Proceedings, 15 January (nos. 130 and 131) 1857; Despatch to India (Public Works, Judicial) 1 July (no. 22) 1857), pp. 123-124; F.W.Simms, Report on the Establishment of Water-works to supply the City of Calcutta, p.50; Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, pp. 182-183; Friend of India, 5 December 1850; 8 June 1854.
- <sup>142</sup> V.V.Schalch, as cited in Sambād Prabhākar, 28 June 1856. In 1868-69 the density of population in Calcutta was 47,240 to the square mile, that is, more than double the density of the population of London. Parliamentary Papers (H. of C.), vol. 46 (Paper 332), p.17.
- <sup>143</sup> Friend of India, 5 April 1855; 24 September 1863; 18 April 1872.
- <sup>144</sup> Fourth Half-Yearly Report of Commissioners for the Improvement of Calcutta for 1850, p.4; Seventh Half-Yearly Report etc. for 1851, p.6; Report of the Commissioners for the Improvement of Calcutta for 1855, p.38; Report of the Committee on the Drainage of Calcutta, 1857, p.2; Appendix V, p.lxix; Bengal Administration Report, 1863-64, p.88; Bengal Administration Report, 1865-66, p.132; Bengal Administration Report, 1867-68, p.189; A.L.Clay, op.cit., p.80. Minute on the Sanitary Condition of Calcutta, by the President of the Sanitary Commission for Bengal, dated 5 March 1864, in Parliamentary

and the apathy of the leading members of the Bengali community.<sup>145</sup>

In Calcutta, the negligence of the "native" land-owners was blamed for epidemics.<sup>146</sup> In 1869 the Justices of the Peace reported:

"The importance of keeping the 'Parahs' [literally, localities but here referring to 'those portions of the Town inhabited by the lower classes of natives'] will be better understood when it is mentioned that it was in the villages between Dhurumtollah [Dharamtala] and Park Street, that a serious epidemy of cholera broke out in August last, and in spite of the measures taken by the Health Officer and his subordinates, the land-owners of the villages in which the fatal scourge appeared, had done nothing to improve the sanitary condition of their tenants or the land occupied by them."<sup>147</sup>

The "Native Quarter" or the Northern Division of Calcutta presented acute problems connected with drainage and water supply because of its fast growing population.<sup>148</sup> Generally speaking, Calcutta seemed to require more water than any English town of this time - probably because of its climate, over-crowding and other related factors.<sup>149</sup> River water was declared to be particularly bad for health and "corrupted not only by impure matters but also by dead bodies of men and animals".<sup>150</sup> Repeated attempts by the municipality to prevent

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Papers (H. of C.) 1865, vol. 40 (Paper 68), p.2.

<sup>145</sup>Minute on the Sanitary Condition of Calcutta, etc., loc.cit., p.3.

<sup>146</sup>Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1868, p.33: Appendix 8, p.1.

<sup>147</sup>Letter from C.Fabre Tonnerre, Health Officer of Calcutta, to Stuart Hogg, Chairman of the J.P.s for the Town of Calcutta, dated 22 February 1869, in Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1868, Appendix 8, p.1.

<sup>148</sup>F.W.Simms, Report on the Establishment of Water-works to Supply the City of Calcutta, p.35; Report of Committee on Drainage of Calcutta, pp. 26-28, Appendix I, pp. xiv-xvi.

<sup>149</sup>Report of Committee on Drainage of Calcutta, pp. 26-28.

<sup>150</sup>F.W.Simms, Report on the Establishment of Water-works to supply the City of Calcutta, p.35.



"harmful practices" such as bathing and the washing of clothes and animals in the aqueducts were reported to have been repeatedly frustrated.<sup>151</sup> The Committee on the Drainage of Calcutta admitted that although the tanks and the pools in the Northern Division were dangerous and insanitary, yet "their abolition would be a hardship (to the natives) until water in some other form was supplied to the Town".<sup>152</sup> Accordingly, in the early 1860s an engine was set up at Nimtala Ghāṭ in Calcutta with the specific purpose of supplying the "native part of the town" with water.<sup>153</sup> In 1867 a new water-works scheme was begun at Palta which, by the early 1870s, placed "an ample supply of pure water at the services of the poorer classes of natives free of cost."<sup>154</sup> Yet, the prejudices and superstitions of the Hindu residents - more specifically caste taboos connected with drinking water - stood in the way of their taking advantage of the new water supply system.<sup>155</sup> The urban Bengalis generally referred to Hindu religious practices and caste in their arguments against municipal innovations and changes such as the removal of the burning ghāṭ (embankment) from Nimtala to some place outside the city.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup>Fourth Half-yearly Report of the Commissioners for the Improvement of Calcutta for 1850, p.4.

<sup>152</sup>Report of Committee on Drainage of Calcutta, Appendix I, p.iii.

<sup>153</sup>Bengal Administration Report, 1863-64, p.87.

<sup>154</sup>Bengal Administration Report, 1865-66, p.176.

<sup>155</sup>See below, pp. 133-134.

<sup>156</sup>See below, pp. 130-133.

and various conservancy measures. The attempt of the Justices to make the Hindus build their houses or alter them "so as not to be open nuisances to the street" was opposed by Ram Gopal Ghosh on the ground that it was contrary to the Hindu religion to allow a low-caste sweeper to enter the house of upper castes.<sup>157</sup> The "native papers" started complaining, but the Lt. Governor observed that their "real objective" was, "as in the case of the burning Ghats, the expense involved in the change, not anything connected with religion".<sup>158</sup> The English newspapers - both in India and abroad - created special problems by generating "false impression made in England both as to the nature of the order [regarding the prohibition against throwing dead bodies into the Hooghly and the proposal to remove the burning Ghāts to some place on the river outside the Towns] and as to the possible or probable consequences of it."<sup>159</sup> The municipal authorities often had conflicts of interest with affluent Bengalis who owned land, markets, shops and slaughter-houses in Calcutta over the question of the extension of municipal control over such properties.<sup>160</sup> According to official opinion, the Bengali character was mainly to blame for the failure of specific municipal projects as well as of the municipal system in general. In connection with the matter of the introduction of new conservancy measures in Calcutta, the Lt. Governor - protesting against the allegations made

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<sup>157</sup> Letter from Cecil Beadon to John Lawrence, dated 3 June 1864.  
John Lawrence Collection (MSS. Eur. F.90/48A).

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Acts XII of 1852, XIV of 1856 and VI of 1863 invested the Municipal Commissioners with broad powers with reference to the inspection of markets, shops and slaughter-houses and the punishment of "offenders".

by native journalists that the Bengalis had not been informed in advance - wrote:

"Everybody knew that it was the intention of the Justices to put the Law in force, and notices to that effect have been published in all parts of the Town. But many natives partly from procrastination, partly from stinginess, partly from a vague hope that the law would still remain a dead letter, have neglected to comply with the reasonable requisitions of the Law and when fined for their neglect pretend of course that they knew nothing at all about them."<sup>161</sup>

With regard to the municipal situation in the Mofussil, the Lt. Governor remarked in 1864:

"For years past we have been able to do nothing towards improvement in towns in the Mofussil simply because the law forbade the introduction of municipal arrangements unless it appeared to the Government that the inhabitants of any town desired it. It generally happened that while most of the respectable people were anxious that a municipality should be formed and taxes levied for local improvement, a majority, consisting chiefly of the lower classes opposed the measure."<sup>162</sup>

With the passing of Act III of 1864, however, the Government had the power to establish municipalities without the previous consent of the inhabitants and the Lt. Governor took steps "to introduce this Law into every Town which is the Sudder Station of a District"<sup>163</sup> although he was aware that it would be "a measure very distasteful to great numbers of people, who have been accustomed to live in filth all their lives and are quite indifferent to it."<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Letter from Beadon to Lawrence, dated 22 June 1864. John Lawrence Collection (MSS. Eur. F.90/48A).

<sup>162</sup> Letter from Beadon to Lawrence, dated 3 June 1864. John Lawrence Collection (MSS. Eur. F.90/48A).

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

The Lt. Governor concluded:

"Of course all prejudices must be treated tenderly and in a general humoured way: but without firmness nothing can be accomplished. The Bengali is all talk and no action. He likes to have everything done for him, and to pay nothing. While you are doing it he abuses you roundly especially if you touch his pocket. But he does not resist, and when the thing is done he is thankful."<sup>165</sup>

As in Calcutta, the sanitary situation in the old city of Dacca presented serious problems. A contemporary official observer reported:

"At present the sanitary condition of the town varies in different localities. The main thoroughfares and places of public resort are, as a rule, clean and well kept, as are also the streets in the neighbourhood of the river; it is in the back streets and unfrequented by lanes and alleys in the centre of the town, that nuisances are still rife, and here many very objectionable localities are still to be found."<sup>166</sup>

Various factors such as the lack of outlet for drains and their consequent stagnation, the unhealthiness of the River Buriganga, the Indian practice of throwing refuse into mud wells and the overcrowded poor localities consisting of houses and huts with poor ventilation were mentioned as some of the factors which contributed towards the extreme unhealthiness of Dacca.<sup>167</sup>

III Bengali involvement with and responses to the municipal system

But apart from questions concerning the presence or absence

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> A.L. Clay, History and Statistics of Dacca Division, p.80.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., pp. 80-82.

of specific municipal amenities, the major issue involved was the question of the elective principle. A gradual shift in policy away from electoral participation, which essentially meant away from participation by Indians who formed the majority of residents, was noticed and resented by the urban Bengali elite. The Som Prakās expressed the need for a change in the municipal system, preferably in the direction of municipal self-government in the form of the election of the Justices of the Peace by the rate-payers and the complete control of municipal finances by the Justices.<sup>168</sup> It was felt that the Government always sided with the Chairman of the Municipality - a government appointee and an European - in situations of conflict between him and the other Justices of the Peace.<sup>169</sup> The Sambād Prabhākar criticized both the Government and the Justices, the former for their almost "dictatorial" dealings with the Justices and the latter for their "servile attitude" towards the Government.<sup>170</sup> However, in the early 1870s, official reports complained that the Justices of the Peace had become a "sort of life-peers, directly responsible neither to any constituents nor to the Government" and "far independent of the Government".<sup>171</sup> R.C. Sterndale, the Vice-Chairman of the Municipality of the Suburbs of Calcutta in the 1870s, more or less supported the official view when he described the majority of the Municipal Commissioners - particularly the Bengali Commissioners - as

"a few self-seeking self-nominated would-be representatives of the rate-payers ... sham representatives who pose as exponents of the popular feeling..."

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<sup>168</sup> Som Prakās, 22 August 1864.

<sup>169</sup> Som Prakās, 8 August 1864.

<sup>170</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 18 July 1865.

<sup>171</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, p.190; Bengal Administration Report, 1872-73, p.29.

designing intriguers, office clerks, idlers and the third-rate legal practitioners of the local courts."<sup>172</sup>

He opposed the election of the Municipal Commissioners since he believed that

"these are the men who would be elected were the Government weakly to give way to the clamour raised and fomented by themselves and the small and insignificant section of the Press with which they are connected, or are able to influence."<sup>173</sup>

Thus, the official view seems to have been that the Indian municipal officials were inefficient and incompetent. The "inefficiencies of the Native Police"<sup>174</sup> and "the extraordinary difficulties which beset every attempt to enlist a superior class of men and keep them when enlisted",<sup>175</sup> particularly in Calcutta and its Suburbs where the pay was lower and living more expensive than in the Mofussil,<sup>176</sup> were often pointed out. On both physical and psychological grounds, men from various parts of Northern India, especially from the U.P., were preferred to the Bengalis,<sup>177</sup> the latter being generally found to be "as a rule unsuited for service in the Municipal Police of large towns, either as an Officer or Constable".<sup>178</sup> The authorities

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<sup>172</sup>R.C.Sterndale, Municipal Work in India, pp. 7-8.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., p.8.

<sup>174</sup>Report on Plice of Town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for 1868, p.13; Report on Police of Town of Calcutta etc. for 1867, p.13.

<sup>175</sup>Report on Police of Town of Calcutta etc. for 1863-64, p.6. A large portion of the Force was "always fluctuating". In 1863-64, for example, there were 886 changes out of 1,400 appointments". Ibid. Also, Report on Police of Town of Calcutta etc. for 1867, p.16.

<sup>176</sup>Report on Police of the Lower Provinces of Bengal Presidency for 1868, vol. 1, p.4.

<sup>177</sup>Report on Police of Town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for 1867, p.161 Report on Police of the Lower Provinces of Bengal Presidency for 1868, vol. 1, p.4.

<sup>178</sup>Report on Police of the Lower Provinces of Bengal Presidency for 1868, vol. 1, p.4.

in charge of the Municipal Police in Calcutta were strongly opposed to the employment of the local population on similar grounds.<sup>179</sup> What was of particular importance was that the Hindus from Northern India were found to be very disciplined, even in cases of conflict between caste injunctions and police duties.<sup>180</sup>

But in view of the enormous interest shown in municipal affairs by the urban Bengali Press and the increasing participation of an important section of the urban Bengalis in municipal matters, the Government could hardly expect to be able to uphold the argument of Bengali apathy. The frequent discussions of various aspects of municipal government and police in the Vernacular Press - particularly in connection with the so-called bias against Indians manifested in municipal policy and the possibility of official encroachment upon the religious and caste practices of the local people through the municipalities as in the case of the burning ghāṭs - caused great excitement within the urban Bengali society. During this period, an increasing number of urban Bengalis became aware of the impact of municipal affairs upon their lives and felt the need to associate themselves with the municipalities. In the city of Calcutta in 1849-50, the "Native Commissioners" were only slightly less in number than the European Commissioners.<sup>181</sup> These men, however, came from a particular section of the Bengali community, being members of two high Hindu castes, namely, Brāhmaṇ (Tarini Charan Bandyopadhyaya) and Kāyastha (Bhuban Mohan Mitra and

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<sup>179</sup>Report on state of Police in Town of Calcutta for 1860-61, p.7.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid.

<sup>181</sup>The proportion of European to "Native" Commissioners was four to three both in 1849 and 1850. Third Half Yearly Report of Commissioners for Improvement of Town of Calcutta for 1849, p.5; Fourth Half-Yearly Report etc. for 1850, p.4.

Dina Bandhu De ).<sup>182</sup> But by the late 1860s, in keeping with the changing situation in the urban areas especially in Calcutta, two lower caste Hindus (Krishna Das Pal, a Kumbhakār or potter, and Hira Lal Seal, a Teli) and one Muslim (Maulavi Abdul Latif Khan) became very prominent in the municipal organization in Calcutta.<sup>183</sup> The majority of the Indians who actively participated in the municipalities still belonged either to the Brāhman caste (for example, Yatindra Mohan Thakur, Rama Nath Thakur, Satyananda Ghoshal) or to the Kāyastha caste (Rajendra Lal Mitra).<sup>184</sup> Not surprisingly, most of these men were Bengali abhijāts and navya-abhijāts who were associated with the British Indian Association.<sup>185</sup> Thus, this period saw a gradual increase in the number of urban Bengalis connected with municipal government - a situation which reflected both a growing interest among the Bengalis in such matters as well as governmental dependence upon these members of the Bengali elite for the familiarization and acceptance of the municipal system among the local population. The membership pattern of some of the Special Committees set up during this period to consider matters which required the close cooperation of the local population, for instance, reflected this trend.<sup>186</sup> Thus, in 1871, the Committee to consider means for the prevention of fire - a very real problem in Calcutta at this time - had eight European Justices and seven "Native Justices".<sup>187</sup> The Special Committee on the Census of the Town of

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Krishna Das Pal and Abdul Latif Khan served on the Special Committee for the reduction of Establishment and General Expenditure, Hira Lal Seal acted as a Trustee of the Fund for the gradual liquidation of the Municipal Loan. Administration Report of Calcutta for 1868, pp. 1-2.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>185</sup> For example, Yatindra Mohan Thakur, Honorary Secretary, and later, President of the Association; Rama Nath Thakur, President of the Association.

<sup>186</sup> This was particularly true in pre-industrial urban societies such



Calcutta founded in the same year even showed a predominance of Indian Justices, who were nine in number, as opposed to the European Justices, who were seven in number.<sup>188</sup> The Brāhman caste still held a leading position in the Calcutta Municipality through abhijāts, mostly landlords, like Raja Satyananda Ghoshal, Yatindra Mohan Thakur and Rama Nath Thakur. But they faced stiff competition not only from the Kāyasthas who all along showed an interest in municipal affairs, but also from lower caste navya-abhijāts and kritavidyas like Hira Lal Seal and Durga Charan Law (Laha).<sup>189</sup> Not only was prominence in municipalities a logical extension of the prominence of these men in other spheres of native society, but sometimes it was even a necessary condition of their urban leadership. Moreover, a large number of these men were vitally interested in controlling municipal affairs because they owned land, houses, bazars or markets,<sup>190</sup> horses and carriages.

The Bengali elite were more powerful in the Suburbs of Calcutta where most people owned the houses which they occupied<sup>191</sup> and where the houses of many Bengali abhijāts and navya abhijāts were located.<sup>192</sup> In 1872-73, the Suburban Municipality had a large

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as Dacca where mixed committees were set up to look after matters like conservancy and water supply. Bengal Administration Report 1871-72, p.183; Sambād Furā Chandrodaya, 17 and 18 April 1865.

<sup>187</sup> Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1871, p.1.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p.28.

<sup>189</sup> The Baidyas seem to have taken little interest in municipal activities in Calcutta, perhaps because relatively speaking they constituted a small proportion of the owners of immovable property in Calcutta who were the persons most interested in controlling the municipal bodies and committees.

<sup>190</sup> Hira Lal Seal and Yatindra Mohan Thakur, for example, owned large markets in Calcutta. Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1866, p.8; Bengal Municipalities Report, 1873-74, Appendix I, p.2.

<sup>191</sup> Administration Report of Municipality of Suburbs of Calcutta, 1872-73, pp. 41-42.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., pp. 44, 49.

majority of "native members".<sup>193</sup> The Bengali members were very active within the Municipality. Apart from F.B.Peacock, the Chairman, and R.C.Sterndale, the Vice-Chairman, and two other European Commissioners, the Commissioners attending more than fifty per cent of the meetings were: Maulavi Abdul Latif Khan, Raja Satyananda Ghoshal, Rajendra Lal Mitra and Yadu Lal Mallik.<sup>194</sup> After the Vice-Chairman who disposed of about twenty-three per cent of the cases, the major load of the judicial work was carried by Yadu Lal Mallik who disposed of about eighteen per cent of the cases and Rajendra Lal Mitra who disposed of sixteen per cent of the cases.<sup>195</sup> Among the Hindu Commissioners, the Brāhmins and the Kayasthas were almost equal in number. A third important category consisted of lower caste Hindus such as Yadu Lal Mallik, Shyama Charan Mallik, Bhola Nath Mallik, Debendra Mallik, Hira Lal Seal and Kali Mohan Das - primarily Subarna Baniks, an affluent community in Calcutta and its neighbourhood. Because of the nature of municipal functions such as scavenging and sweeping which were considered "low" from the point of view of caste, both in Calcutta and its Suburbs, the lower municipal workers were mostly lower caste Hindus or Muslims. Many of them were migrants from remote and impoverished regions of Bengal and neighbouring provinces such as Bihar and Orissa. The Conservancy Establishment of the Suburban Municipality, for example, included a large number of low caste Doms (men working with dead bodies), Mehtars (sweepers) and coolies (bearers).<sup>196</sup> The

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<sup>193</sup>The Municipality had 16 Europeans and 26 Indians in 1872-73.  
Ibid., Appendix A, p.60.

<sup>194</sup>Calculated from Administration Report of Municipality of Suburbs of Calcutta, 1872-73, Appendix A, p.60.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid., p.17.

"natives" who were appointed as subordinate officers of the Municipality, however, were almost always Bengalis belonging to higher Hindu castes. Thus, some of the subordinate officers of the Suburban Municipality who were considered to be "worthy of mention" by the authorities in 1872-73 were: Ambika Charan Gangopadhyaya (Ganguly), Assessor, Aghor Nath Mukhopadhyaya (Mukherjee), Collector and Gobinda Prasad Basu, Jute Inspector.<sup>197</sup>

In the early 1870s, as in the Suburbs of Calcutta, in the municipalities of Bengal taken as a whole,<sup>198</sup> the non-official and the "native" elements largely outnumbered the official and the European elements in the municipal committees.<sup>199</sup> The officials formed the majority of the members in the Western and Central urban areas of Serampore, Uttarpara, Krishnanagar, Jessore, Tamruk and Ghatal and in Chittagong in the East; elsewhere, the non-official element dominated. The Europeans were predominant only in the municipalities of Calcutta and Howrah near Calcutta and in all other cases the "native" element constituted the overwhelming majority.<sup>200</sup> Although governmental control over the municipal bodies was very real, an outward show of independence was retained by letting the non-official members outnumber the official members in the cities of Calcutta, Dacca and Murshidabad, especially in Calcutta where the non-official element was four times the size of the official element.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p.58.

<sup>198</sup> At this time, the various municipalities in Bengal existed under Act XXVI of 1850 which created Municipalities, Act XX of 1856 which created Chowkidari Unions, Bengal Act III of 1864 which created Municipalities and Bengal Act VI of 1868 which created Townships. See Appendix I.

<sup>199</sup> Bengal Municipalities Report, 1873-74, Statements I, II, III, IV. See Chart below and Appendix I.

<sup>200</sup> See chart below.

<sup>201</sup> See chart below.

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Composition of Municipal Committees in the  
Municipalities, Townships, and Chowkidari Unions  
formed under various Acts: percentage of total  
members

	Europeans and Indians		Officials and Non-Officials	
	Europeans	Indians	Officials	Non-Officials
Act XXVI of 1850	88	12	12	88
Act XX of 1856	5	95	7	93
Act III of 1864	43	57	44	56
Act VI of 1868	18	82	28	72

Source: Calculated from Bengal Municipalities Report, 1873-74, p.5.

Composition of governing bodies of municipalities  
in Calcutta, Dacca and Murshidabad: percentage  
of total members

	Europeans and Indians		Officials and Non-Officials	
	Europeans	Indians	Officials	Non-Officials
Calcutta	57	43	18	82
Dacca	35	65	30	70
Murshidabad	40	60	33	67

Source: Calculated from Bengal Municipalities Report, 1873-74,  
Appendix I, p.2.

In the case of the Municipal Police the higher police authorities, constituting a small percentage of the Force,<sup>202</sup> were almost always Europeans. But the increasingly busy Executive Police Force, especially in Calcutta and its Suburbs, required a substantial number of "native" officers and constables in order to function effectively.<sup>203</sup>

<sup>202</sup> In 1869, for example, the total strength of the Municipal Police Force stood at 6,789 of which only five per cent were officers. Report on Police of Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for 1869, p.13.

<sup>203</sup> In 1861-62, for example, the Executive Police Force of Calcutta

During the 1860s there was a rapid increase in the Police Force in keeping with the growing need for a large and efficient Police Force in the urban areas. The majority of this Force were Indians,<sup>204</sup> representing three linguistic groups, namely, Urdu, Bengali and Hindi-speaking people.<sup>205</sup>

The Municipal Police Force in Bengal in 1868

Number	Rank	Percentage of total annual cost
7	Inspectors at 250,200 and 100 (rupees per month)	2
20	Sub-Inspectors at 80, 70, 60 and 50	3
348	Head Constables at 25, 20	10
3	European Constables at 90, 85	less than 1
5,637	Constables at 9, 8, 7, 6 and 5	81
307	Chowkidars at 4-8, 4, 3-8, 3 and 2-8	3

Source: Calculated from Report on the Police of the Lower Provinces of Bengal Presidency for 1868, vol. 1, p.3.

and the Suburbs consisted of 1 Commissioner, 1 Deputy Commissioner, 7 Superintendents of Divisions, 52 European Inspectors, 45 European Serjeants and Constables, 156 Native Officers, 2,715 Native Constables, 6 Mounted Police and 116 Manjees, Dandies and Peons of the River Police. Report on State of the Police of Town of Calcutta for 1861-62, p.8. Also see chart below.

<sup>204</sup>In 1868, for example, about eighty-nine per cent of the Municipal Police as enrolled under Act V of 1861 consisted of Native Constables. Report on the Police of the Lower Provinces of Bengal Presidency for 1868, vol. 1, p.3.

<sup>205</sup>This is evident from a study of the languages in which the manual for the constables was translated. Report on Police of Town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for 1868, p.13.

Since the argument of the indifference of the Indians to the municipal system was untenable and thus could not provide a real explanation of the Government's attitude towards Indian participation, it is possible to argue that in fact the Government was alarmed at the extent of Indian involvement and feared an Indian take-over of the municipal system. The European Municipal Commissioners often spoke out against the elective principle, for instance, in connection with Act X of 1852 which reduced the number of the elected members within the Board of Commissioners for the Improvement of the Town of Calcutta from four to two.<sup>206</sup> In a memorandum written in 1851, Dr. I.J.Pearson, one of the members of the Board of Commissioners of Calcutta, wrote:

"Would not the expenses and trouble of ... the elections ... deter the more respectable natives from becoming candidates?"<sup>207</sup>

Longueville Clarke, a prominent barrister of the Calcutta Supreme Court, criticized the "Native Commissioners" and remarked:

"Never was the business worse done than by elective Commissioners, the worst had been chosen and the worst had been done."<sup>208</sup>

But the real fear was expressed by H.E.Watts, Commissioner of the Fourth Division of Calcutta:<sup>209</sup>

<sup>206</sup> See above, pp. 82.

<sup>207</sup> Memorandum from Dr. Pearson, enclosed in letter from Under Secretary to Government of Bengal to Under Secretary to Government of India, Home Department, dated 14 January 1851. India Legislative Consultations, 6 February 1852.

<sup>208</sup> Report on meeting of inhabitants of Town of Calcutta. India Legislative Consultations, 6 February 1852.

<sup>209</sup> He wanted that Calcutta should be divided into three Divisions namely, Native (North), Trade (Central) and European (South), instead of two, namely, North and South. Note by H.E.Watts, India Legislative Consultations, 6 February 1852.

"The present scheme would throw the whole elective franchise into the hands of the Natives of a class of inhabitants, it must be confessed, who from their habits and prejudices are either ignorant or regardless of the benefits of cleanliness and improvement and consequently blind to any nuisances other than private and peculiar ones."<sup>210</sup>

The prospect which created alarm was that the "Native ratepayers" who were in the proportion of 50 to 1 to the Europeans would "swamp the few of the latter who possess houses in the Southern parts of the Town".<sup>211</sup> A partial solution to the problem was to give the right to vote to the occupiers of expensive establishments since the Europeans generally lived in rented houses rather than owning them.<sup>212</sup>

However, if this was the whole picture, it would be hard to explain the return to the elective principle - in whatever form - in the 1870s. It is true that persistent Indian criticism of municipal policy - which sometimes even appeared as a deliberate attempt at misrepresentation<sup>213</sup> - was resented by the Government. But during this period the authorities also seem to have made genuine attempts to analyse the reasons behind the "inefficiency" or "apathy" of the Indians. R.C. Sterndale, the Vice-Chairman of the Suburban Municipality, for instance, admitted that under the existing situation, "good men" were "deterred from giving their time, their talents and their experience to the service of local municipalities, partly from

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<sup>210</sup>Note by H.E. Watts, Commissioner of Fourth Division of Calcutta. India Legislative Consultations, 6 February 1852.

<sup>211</sup>Ibid.

<sup>212</sup>Minute by the Honble. C.R.M. Jackson. India Legislative Consultations, 6 February 1852.

<sup>213</sup>Letter from Beadon to Lawrence, 22 June 1864. John Lawrence Collection (MSS. Eur. F. 90/48A).

the notorious waste of time and temper involved in sitting out the interminable harangues ... and partly from the knowledge that the Commissioners as a body corporate have no real substance, but are simply a medium through which to register the decrees of government."<sup>214</sup> In 1870 the Health Officer of Calcutta, commenting on the inadequacy of the salaries of the Overseers, wrote:

"I was allowed the very poor number of 6 Overseers, on salaries so very inadequate that no competent person could be induced to accept the appointments."<sup>215</sup>

Many Police Commissioners in Bengal held the opinion that "municipalities require rather a better than a worse class of men than the regular police"<sup>216</sup> and that the need for "a comparatively highly-paid and highly-organized police" was "absolutely necessary in the neighbourhood of Calcutta".<sup>217</sup> While inadequate accommodation and heavy duty were undoubtedly two major reasons behind the unpopularity of the Municipal Police Force,<sup>218</sup> by all accounts, the main reason behind the unpopularity and consequent low quality of the Force and the high rate of change within it was its low pay.<sup>219</sup> In 1871 the Inspector General of Police of Bengal observed:

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<sup>214</sup> R.C. Sterndale, Municipal Work in India, pp. 6-7.

<sup>215</sup> Letter from C. Fabre Tonnerre, the Health Officer of Calcutta, to S.S. Hogg, chairman of the Justices of the Peace for Calcutta, dated 10 March 1870, in Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1869, Appendix E, p.1.

<sup>216</sup> Report on Police of Lower Provinces of Bengal for 1874, p.5.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Report on Police of Town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for 1863-64, p.6; Report on Police of Town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for 1864-65, p.8; Report on Police of Town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for 1867, pp.5-6.

<sup>219</sup> Minute by the Lt. Governor of Bengal, dated 30 April 1856, in Papers relating to the System of Police in the Bengal Presidency, pp. 49, 61;



"The Municipal Police in Bengal do not come up to the standard of the Regular Police. There are two causes for this: first, they are not so well paid, and secondly, the work is particularly irksome to them. There is nothing a Bengalee dislikes so much as doing 'pahara' [watch and guard], and it is therefore with the greatest difficulty that any respectable Bengalee can be induced to enter the Municipal Police".<sup>220</sup>

The low pay of the Municipal Police was particularly inadequate in the context of the various job opportunities which existed in the urban areas. The fact that the pay was often lower than that earned by a common day-labourer was a major obstacle to recruitments for the Force. In Calcutta, in particular, the "difficulty experienced in obtaining recruits" was largely attributed to "the high rate of wages which prevails in Calcutta".<sup>221</sup> When coolies could obtain five annas and more a day for six hours' work, they were naturally "reluctant to join the Police Force in which they not only receive a far lower rate of pay but are subject to irksome restraint and discipline".<sup>222</sup> This was also a problem in large urban areas in the Mofussil. Thus, it was reported that

"Inadequate pay is generally assigned as the reason for the dislike to this service in such towns as Dacca and Howrah, and in the district of the 24-Pergunnahs, where the earnings are less than those of day labourers."<sup>223</sup>

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Despatch relating to the System of Police in the Bengal Presidency (Judicial Department), 24 September (no. 4) 1856, in Papers relating to the System of Police in the Bengal Presidency, p.3; Report on State of Police of Town of Calcutta for 1860-61, p.7; Report on Police of Town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for 1863-64, p.6; Report on Police of Town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for 1864-65, p.6; Report on Police of Town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for 1867, p.14.

<sup>220</sup> Report on Police of Lower Provinces of Bengal Presidency for the year 1871, p.7.

<sup>221</sup> Report on the Police of the Town of Calcutta and its Suburbs for 1867, p.16.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Report on the Police of the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency for the year 1875, p.5.

The District Superintendent of Dacca complained that he found "great difficulty in obtaining qualified men at Rs. 5 per month, while they can earn nearly double as much as coolies."<sup>224</sup> In Jessore, the Municipal Police were paid five rupees while common day-labourers earned from seven to eight rupees per month.<sup>225</sup>

It is, however, possible that the Government's attitude towards the issue of the desirability of having Indians as higher municipal officials underwent a change during this period - probably as a result of contact with efficient Bengalis such as Ram Gopal Ghosh, Rama Nath Thakur and Abdul Latif. The various controversies during this period also revealed the enormous hold of the largely upper caste urban Bengali elite upon the urban Bengali society in general and convinced the authorities of the need to "carry the leading Hindoos" with them.<sup>226</sup> In connection with the burning ghat question in Calcutta, John Lawrence reproached Cecil Beadon:

"Had you sent for half a dozen of the leading men of the Municipality, and talked the affair over with them, matters would have run much smoother. With all our 'zuberdustee', we carry men much more with us in the Punjab and North West: because we do so much by personal communication."<sup>227</sup>

As far as the Police was concerned, Lawrence wrote:

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Report on Police of Lower Provinces of Bengal Presidency for 1871, p.11.

<sup>226</sup> Letter from John Lawrence to Cecil Beadon, dated 31 May 1864. John Lawrence Collection (MSS. Eur. F.90/51). Also, Beadon to Lawrence, dated 22 June 1864, John Lawrence Collection (MSS. Eur. F.90/48A).

<sup>227</sup> Letter from John Lawrence to Cecil Beadon, dated 31 May 1864, John Lawrence Collection (MSS. Eur. F.90/51).

"I should also like to see you take in some Bengalee Police Officers, if you can find any fit for the work."<sup>228</sup>

Cecil Beadon's reply to John Lawrence revealed his awareness of the importance of Indian cooperation and involvement:

"I think you are under some misapprehension on supposing that we dont act in counsel with the Natives in Bengal. For myself I can say that I do scarcely anything without consulting them. The Municipal Act which I brought into the Bengal Council passed in 1864 is based upon the principle that the natives should have a fair voice in the Municipal Government of Calcutta and in the disposal of the funds raised principally by taxation from them. The Mofussil Municipal Bill just proposed is based on the same principle."<sup>229</sup>

According to Beadon, this municipal policy was part of general government policy with reference to Indian participation:

"My object through life has been to bring the natives forward as much as possible, and free them, as it were, to take a part in the management of their own affairs. Numbers of them come to see me every week and speak their opinions freely on all subjects. And my practice on this subject is followed generally by all the officers of the administration."<sup>230</sup>

The urban Bengalis, however, continued to feel that they were generally discriminated against by the municipal authorities in conflicts of interest between, on the one hand, the Government and the European community and, on the other hand, the Bengali population. Even the method of the appointment of Bengali municipal officials was not totally satisfactory. The Bengali Justices were often criticized for their "lack of sympathy for the common people".<sup>231</sup> This was not

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<sup>228</sup> Letter from John Lawrence to Cecil Beadon, dated 2 August 1864. John Lawrence Collection (MSS, Eur. F.90/51).

<sup>229</sup> Letter from Cecil Beadon to John Lawrence, 22 June 1864. John Lawrence Collection (MSS. Eur. F.90/484).

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 18 April 1865 (criticizing Kashi Prasad Ghosh, a J.P. of Calcutta and the ex-editor of the Hindoo Intelligencer); Samāchār Chandrikā, 19 March 1866.

surprising because although at the time of the introduction of the Calcutta Municipal Bill of 1863 the Lt. Governor claimed that the Justices were to be "selected from all classes",<sup>232</sup> in reality, the Bengali justices were invariably selected from a particular section of the urban Bengali society, that is, the abhijāts and the navya abhijāts. The Som Prakāś of Calcutta which generally upheld middle class Bengali interests strongly criticized the virtual monopoly of the few posts available to the Indians by affluent Bengalis:

"At the moment only such men hold the posts of Honorary Magistrates. There is virtually no one from the middle class (madhyam śreṇī). But there is little chance of good work or progress without the representation of the middle class. The rich Bengalis belong to the upper class (pratham śreṇī) and are unaware of the conditions of both the middle class and the lower or the third class (tritiya śreṇī)."<sup>233</sup>

But, perhaps the most pronounced fear was that of an "European bias" in municipal policy.<sup>234</sup> The "deplorable" sanitary condition and other drawbacks such as the scarcity of water in the Bengali Quarter in Calcutta as compared with the "improved conditions" of the European Quarter was a recurrent theme in the pages of contemporary Bengali journals and newspapers".<sup>235</sup> In 1865 Krishna Das Pal, a prominent kṛitavidya journalist of Calcutta of Kūmbhakār (potter) origin, wrote a letter to the members of the British Indian Association

<sup>232</sup> Letter from Cecil Beadon to Elgin, dated 14 May 1864. Elgin Collection (MSS. Eur. F.83).

<sup>233</sup> Som Prakāś, 30 March 1863.

<sup>234</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 17 June, 18 December 1865; Friend of India, 17 February 1870; 28 December 1871.

<sup>235</sup> Bengal Spectator, June, 1842, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 86-88; Sambād Bhāskar, 14 Śrāvan 1265 (1858), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 240-241; 25 April, 25 May, 17 June 1865; Manohar, 25 November 1861; Samāchār Chandrikā, 11 May, 5 June, 6 July, 25 December 1865; 19 March 1866; Som Prakāś 15 May 1865; 2 April 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 28 June, 16 September (letter), 6 November 1865; Sambād Purṇa Chandrodāya, 6 July 1865; 22 March 1866.

in which he pointed out the disparity in the number of tanks in the Northern Division where the majority were Bengalis and the Southern Division where the Europeans lived.<sup>236</sup> According to the Sambād Prabhākar, the three main reasons behind municipal problems in Calcutta were: first, the partial policy of an English-dominated municipal body; second, the ineffectiveness of the opinions of the "Native Justices"; and, third, the absence of strict official control over the Conservancy staff who extorted money from people illegally.<sup>237</sup> The municipal taxes, particularly the house-tax,<sup>238</sup> were also considered by Bengali journalists to be examples of a "biased" municipal policy.<sup>239</sup> A major criticism against the house-tax - obviously put forward on behalf of the house-owners mostly belonging to the upper class - was that the increase in house-tax was particularly directed against the Bengalis since they owned the houses, while the English "live in rented houses and do not have to pay the tax."<sup>240</sup>

Throughout this period, the urban Bengalis were generally opposed to the idea of taxation.<sup>241</sup> The Home Government was aware that under

<sup>236</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 9 May 1865. Also, Sambād Prabhākar, 9, 15 and 16 May 1865; Som Prakās, 15 May 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 18 May 1865.

<sup>237</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 5 April, 30 November 1865.

<sup>238</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 17 February 1851, SBS, vol. 1, p.51.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.; Som Prakās, 6 April 1863; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 8 June 1865.

<sup>240</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 17 February 1851, SBS, vol. 1, p.51.

<sup>241</sup> Friend of India, 27 February 1851; 5 April 1855; 24 September 1863; 18 April 1872; Sambād Prabhākar, 19 Rāṣāḍh 1259 (1852), 30 Baisakh, 5 Kārtik 1260 (1855), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 82-83, 195, 197; 24 January 1866; Som Prakās, 27 April, 18 and 25 May 1863; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 8 June 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 21 September, 25 December 1865; Indian Observer, 6 April 1872 (letter). The dislike for censuses and other methods of estimating the population partially generated from the belief that censuses preceded new taxes. Bengal Administration Report, 1865-66, p.134; Memorandum regarding the Proposed Census of Lower Bengal in 1871, p.2; A.Latif, Public Life, p.27; Indian Daily News, 25 December 1865.

the various Acts passed during this period, municipal functions were continuously increasing, with a simultaneous increase in taxes - generating hostile Indian reactions.<sup>242</sup> Act XXVI of 1850 laid down that a fund could be raised for municipal purposes "either by a House Assessment or by the levy of Town Duties".<sup>243</sup> The second method of taxation was said to have been introduced into the Law "in consequence of the extreme feeling of dislike" which was known to have existed in many parts of India to the imposition of a house-tax.<sup>244</sup> The Local Governments were cautioned

"It should be left entirely to the people themselves, to decide in every instance which mode of taxation they prefer and great care should be taken by the Local officers and by the Government that the Act is not put in force in any place contrary to the general wish of the inhabitants."<sup>245</sup>

Act XX of 1856 commonly known as the Chowkidari Act raised considerable hostility among the urban Bengalis.<sup>246</sup> In 1856 the tax which was imposed upon the looms and silk-cloth in Serampore was remitted when the weavers petitioned the Government.<sup>247</sup> The Home Government admitted that the tax was "open to the objection of being partial and of oppression bearing on a particular class"<sup>248</sup> and emphasized that

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<sup>242</sup>Despatch to India (Legislature), 10 December (no. 2) 1856), p.1008; Despatch to India (Revenue), 2 June (no. 3) 1858, pp. 164-165.

<sup>243</sup>Letter from Under Secretary to Government of India to Secretaries to Governments of Bengal, Madras and Bombay, dated 21 June 1850, in Board's Collections, vol. 2417, 1850-51, p.233.

<sup>244</sup>Ibid.

<sup>245</sup>Ibid.

<sup>246</sup>Som Prakāś, 23 November 1863.

<sup>247</sup>Despatch to Bengal (Judicial), 30 September (no. 54) 1857, p.1419.

<sup>248</sup>Ibid.

"We regret to see any attempt made to levy taxes upon a population even for municipal purposes, which subsequent experience proves to be ill-devised and obnoxious to their feelings and habits."<sup>249</sup>

The Bengal Act III of 1864 or the District Municipal Improvement Act was resented by many urban Bengalis for introducing more taxes and the Bengali elite put up a strong opposition to various aspects of this Act, mainly through the British Indian Association.<sup>250</sup> In view of the scarcity of money available for municipal purposes, it was considered to be particularly unjust that the Police should be maintained from municipal funds.<sup>251</sup> In 1868 the Governor General-in-Council concluded that in view of the fact that the people of Bengal disliked any form of direct taxation, the best course was "to combine direct with indirect taxation, for, by this means alone can a sufficiently broad base be secured for raising a sufficient income without undue pressure on individuals."<sup>252</sup> The Municipal Bill of 1871 which was finally rejected was again opposed by the British Indian Association mainly on the ground that it sanctioned the levy of a number of new taxes.<sup>253</sup> In 1872 a contemporary British observer cautioned the Government that, in the eyes of the Indian people, the "chief fault" of the British Government was its "capacity for discovering new forms of taxation."<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Som Prakās, 29 February 1864.

<sup>251</sup> Som Prakās, 23 November 1863; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 4 December 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 7, 11 and 26 December 1865; 2 January, 27 March 1866.

<sup>252</sup> Resolution of Government of India, Home Department, dated 6 November 1868, published in Gazette of India, 14 November 1868, reprinted in Statistical Reporter, 21 August 1871.

<sup>253</sup> Friend of India, 18 April (quoting Hindoo Patriot), 25 July, 5 August 1872.

<sup>254</sup> Indian Observer, 6 April 1872 (letter to editor).

While the house-tax<sup>255</sup> and the police-tax<sup>256</sup> were strongly disliked by the urban Bengalis, particularly the abhijāts, the local population was most disturbed by those aspects of municipal taxation which had religious implications. Thus, the tax on processions created "much remonstrance from people who feared an undue interference with their social customs".<sup>257</sup> The Hindus of Calcutta opposed the imposition of the water-rate since they considered the water supplied by the new water-works to be unacceptable on religious and caste grounds.<sup>258</sup> They also resented the refusal of the Justices to meet the costs involved in improving the burning ghāts of the Hindus from municipal funds.<sup>259</sup>

Broadly speaking, the responses of the urban Bengali elite to municipal issues can be divided into two categories, namely, traditional Indian and Western. But, each category contained elements of the other. The complexity of the situation was enhanced by the fact that any particular goṣṭhī or individual could react differently to two different but related issues. For example, Ram Gopal Ghosh of the Derozio-goṣṭhī and a Western-educated Justice of the Peace of Calcutta, condemned the practice of throwing dead bodies of men

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<sup>255</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, p.201; Bengal Administration Report, 1872-73, p.171. The abhijāts of Calcutta were naturally anxious for a reduction in the house-rate since, like the Shetias of Bombay, they had invested heavily in houses, especially in and around the metropolis. Cf. C.Dobbin, "Competing Elites in Bombay City Politics in mid-19 Century", in E.Leach and S.N. Mukherjee, Elites in South Asia, p.85.

<sup>256</sup> See Petition of British Indian Association, dated 20 December 1855, in Board's Collections, vol. 2691, 1856-57.

<sup>257</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, p.201. Also see Despatch to India (Legislative), 9 November (no. 18) (1853, pp. 1300-1301; Indian Observer, 27 April 1872.

<sup>258</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 25 April 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 4 and 15 May 1865; Som Prakās, 15 May 1865.

<sup>259</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 13 July 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 17 July 1865.



and animals into the River Ganges<sup>260</sup> and supported the removal of the skinning ghāt from Nimtala to a less populated neighbourhood.<sup>261</sup> But neither Ram Gopal nor kritavidya newspapers like the Hindoo Patriot could afford to be as progressive on sensitive issues such as the transfer of the burning ghāt from its traditional spot at Nimtala in North Calcutta.<sup>262</sup> The depth of Ram Gopal's feelings on the subject was apparent from his description of the government order for the removal of the ghāt as "arbitrary", "irregular if not illegal", "objectionable", "wounding and exasperating" and "a dire calamity".<sup>263</sup> His appeal to the authorities raised the important question of the extent to which the Government could interfere in the socio-religious affairs of its subjects:

"Call it wisdom or call it usage, or if you prefer call it a superstitious prejudice, I submit you are equally bound to respect it.... Is it consistent I ask, with due regard to our usages, to tell us to resort to other than the localities so long used for the cremation of our dead?"<sup>264</sup>

Rama Nath Thakur, a Bengali abhijāt who was a leading figure in the British Indian Association and a Justice of the Peace of Calcutta, warned that it would be "highly impolitic on the part of the Government to insist on this measure."<sup>265</sup> He pointed out that this question had

<sup>260</sup> Report of the Proceedings of an Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal Corporation, held at the Town Hall on 7 March 1864, pp. 2-3. The other "Native Justices" agreed with Ram Gopal, a Special Committee of the Justices agreed with the proposal of the Government of Bengal to put an end to the practice, and, as a result, it came to an end by the mid-1860s. Ibid., p.1; Bengal Administration Report, 1865-66, p.133; Saṃbād Prabhākar, 27 July 1865.

<sup>261</sup> Ram Gopal Ghosh's speech, quoted in Report of the Proceedings of an Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal Corporation, p.2. Also, Report of Improvement Commissioners of Town of Calcutta for 1855, p.57.

<sup>262</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 29 December 1862.

<sup>263</sup> Ram Gopal Ghosh's speech, quoted in Report of the Proceedings of an Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal Corporation, pp. 4-5.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7. Ram Gopal's speech created a sensation within the Hindu community and he was praised by the orthodox Dharma Sabhā-gosṭhī

important religious implications for the Hindus who believed in reincarnation.<sup>266</sup> The Hindoo Patriot, the mouthpiece of the British Indian Association, had earlier warned the Government:

"Let the native community be not at any rate be interfered with in burning the dead."<sup>267</sup>

The Som Prakāś emphasized the necessity to treat this particular question with great caution:

"This is a matter related with the religion of the Hindus. The Justices should consider whether it is within their authority to introduce changes in connection with the religious practices of the Hindus."<sup>268</sup>

It is surprising that even after detailed discussions of the socio-religious implications of the issue in the Press and at meetings such as the one held on 7 March 1864 at the Town Hall of Calcutta,<sup>269</sup>

the Lt. Governor wrote to the Governor General:

"There is no peculiar sanctity attaching to either of the Calcutta burning Ghuts, so that the question of removing them beyond the limits of the Town is one of custom and convenience, not of religious observance, except in so far as the observance of religious rites depends upon the distance one has to go to perform them."<sup>270</sup>

for his "adherence to the Hindu religion" which was held to be synonymous with "patriotism". Samāchār Chandrikā, 1 and 15 February 1866.

<sup>265</sup> Rama Nath Thakur's speech, quoted in Report on the Proceedings of an Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal Corporation, p.9.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 29 December 1862.

<sup>268</sup> Som Prakāś, 6 June 1864.

<sup>269</sup> See Proceedings of an Ordinary Meeting of the Municipal Corporation held at the Town Hall... on 7 March 1864.

<sup>270</sup> Letter from Cecil Beadon to John Lawrence, dated 3 June 1864. John Lawrence Collection (MSS. Eur. F. 90/48A).

Beadon attributed the entire problem to the action of Ram Gopal Ghosh,<sup>271</sup> thus indicating his failure to comprehend the real nature of this problem. However, even he recognized the fact of the enormous impact of Ram Gopal's speech "upon the majority of his timid fellow justices" who "voted a special Committee to devise means for making the Ghut as unobjectionable as possible".<sup>272</sup>

The Special Committee was composed of seven Justices, among them Rama Nath Thakur, Ram Gopal Ghosh and Chandra Mahan Chattopahyaya - three high-caste "Native Justices" who were well-known for their influence within the urban Bengali society. The urban Bengalis continued to agitate over this issue, aided by the urban Bengali Press.<sup>273</sup>

Ultimately, some of the richest Hindus of Calcutta contributed towards the installation of "improvements" such as the special incinerators at the Nimtala Burning Ghāt.<sup>274</sup> Prominent among them were representatives of lower caste groups - who obviously hoped to rise higher in society by siding with and helping high caste Hindu leaders on this important issue - such as Hira Lal Seal, a Teli and Shyam Krishna Mallik and Yadu Nath Mallik of the Subarna Banik caste. The agitation spread to the Mofussil where the Hindu communities, although generally "less prosperous than the Hindus of Calcutta",

<sup>271</sup> Letter from Cecil Beadon to Lawrence, dated 22 June 1864. John Lawrence Collection (MSS. Eur. F.90/48A).

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Som Prakās, 6 June, 23 October 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 19 October, 28 November, 24 December 1865; 17 January 1866; Samachar Chandrikā, 23 October 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 13 July 1865; 18 January 1866.

<sup>274</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1865-66, p.133; Sambād Prabhākar, 17 July 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 7 December 1865; Sambād Bhaskar, 6 February 1866.

strongly opposed every municipal attempt to control Hindu burning ghāṭs.<sup>275</sup>

The question of water supply was another important issue which, on account of various caste implications and the strong feelings generated by the question, interested both traditional abhijāts as well as Western-educated kṛitavidyas of the Derozio-goṣṭhī. The meeting held at the Town Hall of Calcutta to discuss the new water-works at Palta, thus, was attended by the representatives of various goṣṭhīs and interests, for example, Yatindra Mohan Thakur, Rama Nath Thakur, Hara Chandra Ghosh, Shri Krishna Sinha, Kali Prasanna Sinha, Digambar Mitra and Krishna Das Pal.<sup>276</sup> The new water-works gave rise to a serious controversy among the Hindus of Calcutta and led to the formation of various outwardly improbable alliances, for instance the one between some of the members of the Dharma Sabhā-goṣṭhī and the Derozio-goṣṭhī, against the use of the water supplied by the new system. Most of the conservative Hindus, including journalists like the editor of the Sambād Prabhākar,<sup>277</sup> were opposed to the new scheme on socio-religious as well as financial grounds.<sup>278</sup> Most of them, along with Western-educated kṛitavidyas like Ram Gopal Ghosh, Krishna Das Pal and Digambar Mitra, preferred the construction of new tanks in North Calcutta to the bringing of water from Palta through iron pipes.<sup>279</sup> The opposition to this view

<sup>275</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 6 February 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 20 February 1866; Samāchār Chandrikā, 22 February 1866.

<sup>276</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 15 May 1866.

<sup>277</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 16 May 1865.

<sup>278</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 25 April 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 15 May 1865; Som Prakās, 15 May 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 15 and 16 May 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 2 August 1865.

<sup>279</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 25 April 1865; Som Prakās, 15 May 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 9, 15 and 16 May 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 18 May 1865.

was led by progressive kritavidyas like Kali Prasanna Sinha, Tara Nath Bhattacharya and Rajendra Chandra Mallik.<sup>280</sup> Apart from Western arguments such as the issue of health,<sup>281</sup> the argument which was most effective in finally bringing about a change of mind among the Hindus was the Sanskritic argument of the absolute purity of the Ganges water as laid down in the Hindu Scriptures.<sup>282</sup> Tara Nath Bhattacharya, a respected Brāhmaṇ scholar, issued a byasthā-patra (sanctioning document) in the traditional style upholding the use of water from the Palta Water-works which was read at a well-publicized and well-attended meeting held at the Town Hall of Calcutta on 11 May 1865.<sup>283</sup> The increasing support for the new water supply system among a large section of the Bengali population of Calcutta was indicated by the growing demand for filtered water and by the fact that an increasing number of premises throughout the city were being connected with the water-works.<sup>284</sup> The pattern of this and other agitations revealed that Calcutta society encouraged various contradictions in attitudes and reactions to both traditional practices and modern innovations.

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Samāchār Chandrikā, 15 May 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 16 May 1865.

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Samāchār Chandrikā, 15 May 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 15 May 1865 (citing Digambar Mitra); Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 24 October 1865.

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Sambād Prabhākar, 15 May 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 2 August 1865.

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Samāchār Chandrikā, 15 May 1865.

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Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 2 August 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 3 February 1866.

### 3. URBAN BENGALI REACTION TO THE WEST

The urban areas of Bengal generally encouraged more frequent and numerous contacts with the West than the rural areas, either through direct personal contacts between the Europeans and the Indians<sup>1</sup> or through media such as modern education and familiarity with the British legal system and administration. Two important circumstances which resulted from these contacts and reactions to them were: first, the formation of various alliances - both temporary and permanent - between individuals and gosthīs (social groups),<sup>2</sup> and, second, the emergence of a belief in the importance of public opinion in the minds of the urban Bengalis, especially the elite. The growing belief in public opinion also led to a feeling among some urban Bengalis that the Government was often, if not always, reluctant to take into account Indian opinion and was generally discriminatory in its policy.

Bengali reactions to contacts with the West can be broadly divided into two - the political, concerned mainly with British policy and the lack of opportunities, mainly for attractive jobs, under British rule, and the socio-religious, concerned with British policy in social and religious matters and with Western influence upon Bengali society. In the political sphere, Bengali reactions began to take the form of various demands and protestations. In the socio-religious sphere, the reactions were generally more critical and suspicious of the desirability of Western influence upon Bengali society. The two major forms taken by these reactions were, first, the revival of Hindu and Muslim orthodoxy and, second, the reform of the existing society through

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<sup>1</sup>See above, pp. 59-66.

<sup>2</sup>See above, pp. 41-47.

movements such as the Brāhma Samāj. In both spheres, Calcutta society contained elements of all the various types of reactions. As a new society compared with the pre-industrial societies in old cities such as Dacca and Murshidabad, Calcutta society could be expected to react favourably to Western contacts whereas the old societies could be expected to be generally unfavourable in their reactions to Western influence. But in reality the social situation was much more complex than this both in the old and the new urban areas. Both Calcutta and Dacca were important centres of two of the rival movements of this time, namely, the Dharma Sabhā which stood for the revival of Hindu orthodoxy and the Brāhma Samāj which stood for the reform of the Hindu society.

The Muslims who had been the rulers of Bengal before the British came to power, had virtually drawn away from politics, perhaps because of their feelings of pride and lack of adjustment to the changing circumstances. Bengali Hindu journalists of this period felt that the Bengali Muslims were out of favour with the Government, particularly following the Sepoy Mutiny<sup>3</sup> and the Wahhābī movement.<sup>4</sup> Hindu journalists also took care to point out that, comparatively speaking, "the Mahomedans are less well-disposed towards the Government than the Hindoos."<sup>5</sup> But the urban Muslim abhijāts and kṛitavidyas, even in the traditional Muslim cities like Dacca, tried to show their loyalty to the British rule in various ways. In 1857 leading Muslims of

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<sup>3</sup>The abhijāt Bengali Muslims seemed to be generally suspected by the British Government of being sympathetic to the rebels who aimed at restoring the Muslim Emperor to power. Sambād Bhāskar, 18 June 1857, SBS, vol. 3, p.390.

<sup>4</sup>Hindoo Patriot, 5 September 1861.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

Calcutta made arrangements to circulate "loyal resolutions" denouncing the rebellious Sepoys.<sup>6</sup> Khaja Abdul Ghani, perhaps the most prominent Muslim of Dacca, made a large subscription to the Government Loan in 1857<sup>7</sup> and as a result was made a Companion of the Order of Star of India in 1871. Indeed, throughout this period, the educated urban Bengali Muslims, especially of Calcutta, repeatedly professed their loyalty to the British rule<sup>8</sup> and denounced anti-British movements such as the Fara'izi or Faraidi<sup>9</sup> movement and the Wahhābī movement which reinforced Government's attitude of suspicion towards the Muslims. Both these movements were in the nature of unfavourable reactions to the British influence and rule and had important political as well as socio-religious implications for the Bengali Muslims. The Fara'izi or Faraidis were the followers of the puritanical and primarily rural Fara'izi movement, popular among the Muslim lower classes, which was started by Hazi Shariat Allah of Faridpur in Eastern Bengal and continued by his son Dudu Miya and declared that India under British rule was a 'dār-al-hārb' (land of warfare) and as such a place where every true Muslim had the religious duty of resisting the "infidel".<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Despatch to India (Public), 26 August (no. 120) 1857, pp. 1043-1044.

<sup>7</sup> Dacca News, 3 July 1858.

<sup>8</sup> Public and Judicial Correspondence with India, Public no. 1620: 24 March (no. 33) 1864; letter from E.C. Bayley, Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated 23 April 1867, as quoted in Indian Daily News, 26 April 1867; "The Mahomedan Address" to Cecil Beadon, dated 25 April 1867, as quoted in Indian Daily News, 29 April 1867; Friend of India, 13 May 1869 (from a Muslim correspondent); Indian Daily News, 27 August ("A few words from a Mahomedan"); M. Khan, An Account of the Loyal Mahomedans of India, 1860; Abdul Latif Khan, A Short Account of My Public Life, p.24, Appendices E and F; G.O. Trevelyan, The Competition Wallah, p.365.

<sup>9</sup> 'Faraid' refers to obligatory ordinances of the law and religion which are believed by the Muslims to have been established by God himself.

<sup>10</sup> M.A. Khan, Faraidi Movement, pp. xxiv-xxv; A. Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, p.310.



The Wahhābī movement put renewed emphasis on tauḥīd (the unity of God), adherence to the principle of ijtihād (the tradition), opposed the worship of saints which was held to be a form of shirk (polytheism) and aimed at removing all traces of the practices of their earlier faith from the worship of the Hindu converts to Islam.<sup>11</sup>

This movement declared British India to be 'dār-al-ḥārb' or a non-Muslim state where the Muslims could not enjoy amān-i-awwal or the security and religious status which Muslims enjoyed under rulers of their own faith.<sup>12</sup> Although the "generality of the Muslims seemed to have no intercourse with the Wahhābīs in either religious or social matters,<sup>13</sup> yet this movement could not but affect the lives of all Bengali Muslims since it appeared to the contemporary British observers as a broad-based Muslim movement amounting to jihād (religious war) against the British rule and as "the Great Mussalman Conspiracy".<sup>14</sup> The members of the urban Muslim elite tried their best to establish the fact of their loyalty to the British. The Mahomedan Literary and Scientific Society of Calcutta,<sup>15</sup> founded by Maulavī Abdul Latif, acted as the platform for loyalist Muslim speeches such as the one delivered by Abdul Latif on 30 November 1870 based on an exposition by Maulavī Karamat Ali of Jaunpur. Karamat Ali challenged the theory that British India was 'dār al-ḥārb' and declared instead that it was 'dār al-Islam' (land of Islam).

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<sup>11</sup>M.T. Titus, Islam in India, p.186.

<sup>12</sup>K.Odud, "Mussalmans of Bengal", Visva-Bhāratī Quarterly, vol. 14, 1948-49, p.24.

<sup>13</sup>Som Prakāś, quoted in Friend of India, 7 January 1869.

<sup>14</sup>Friend of India, 5 October 1871. Also, Friend of India, 31 August 1865, 4 January 1872; W.W.Hunter, Indian Musalmans, pp. 10, 108-109.

<sup>15</sup>See below, pp. 234-235.

and that as such it was unlawful and even irreligious for Muslims to preach or carry on jihād against the British Government in India.<sup>16</sup> The Government was pleased with Abdul Latif's "efforts to calm the excited feelings among the Mahomedans of Lower Bengal or certain of them, about the end of 1870."<sup>17</sup>

#### I Reactions connected with politics

The introduction of the British legal system and the spread of Western education generated belief in equality before the law and various expectations connected with this belief. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the progress of Western education in the urban areas led to the growth of an influential group of Western-educated kṛitavidyas, mostly belonging to the middle classes, but also having a few abhijāts and navya abhijāts among them, who were interested in Government jobs.

Higher education which was often synonymous with Western education was almost entirely urban in character. Even the new educational policy of the Government of India based upon the 1854 Despatch of the Court of Directors, while providing for vernacular education, in fact perpetuated this urban-centred system of higher Western education. This was done through the foundation of the Calcutta University in 1857 which was followed by a growing response to University education.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> A.Latif, op.cit., pp. 28-29; W.W.Hunter, op.cit., p.121, Appendix III, p.215.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from E.C.Bayley to Abdul Latif, dated 4 April 1878, as quoted in A.Latif, op.cit., pp. 28-29.

<sup>18</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1865-66, p.14; Despatch to India (Public, Education), 18 August (no. 123) 1858. The number of candidates for the University Entrance Examination almost doubled in ten years from 759 candidates (out of whom 399 passed) in 1860-61 to 1473 candidates (out of whom 579 passed) in 1871-72. Bengal Administration Report, 1860-61, p.46; Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, Statement IVB, p.cxxxiii.

the expansion of secondary education through financial aid to missionary and other educational institutions located in the urban areas,<sup>19</sup> and through various other means such as the award of graduate scholarships to students attending the elite institutions of higher learning such as the Presidency College.<sup>20</sup> Since the governmental machinery and other semi-governmental organizations were mostly located in and around Calcutta, the metropolitan region showed the greatest proportionate increase in education. Among the other factors contributing to the generally urban character of the educational framework were: the growth of the urban middle classes, the presence of the affluent Bengalis who were concentrated in the urban areas, mainly in Calcutta and its suburbs and in Dacca, and the existing traditions of education and learning in many of the urban areas.

Apart from the metropolitan institutions of higher learning which attracted a proportionately large number of students<sup>21</sup> and occupied a special place in the educational system because of their generally higher standard of education,<sup>22</sup> other urban educational

<sup>20</sup> In 1861-62, for example, there were 52 scholarships at Presidency College, 29 at Dacca College, 17 at Medical College, 12 at Hooghly College, 12 at Krishnanagar College, 11 at Berhampur College, 7 at Free Church Institution, 6 at Civil Engineering College, 6 at Doveton College, 2 at Sanskrit College and 1 at St. Paul's College. Bengal Administration Report, 1861-62, Statement K2, p.xxi.

<sup>19</sup> For example, government grant to the London Missionary Society School at Behala in the suburbs of Calcutta. Bengal Education Proceedings, 12 November (nos. 52-54) 1857.

<sup>21</sup> In 1871-72, the number of students at all colleges fell, possibly because of the unusual strictness of the Entrance Examination, but increased at the Presidency College and the General Assembly's Institution in Calcutta. Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, p.23. See Tables 9, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Friend of India, 1 June 1854; Sambād Prabhākar, 4 and 10 September 1854, SBS, pp. 360-361, 378-379. According to an official report, the Presidency College was "made a model for imitation, as far as possible, by the Mofussil Colleges". Bengal Administration Report, 1855-56, p.44.

institutions were also showing rapid progress.<sup>23</sup> The Hooghly College, for instance, was a popular and growing institution in the 1860s.<sup>24</sup> The Dacca College had a special position in Eastern Bengal, attracting students from various rural and urban areas in this part of Bengal.<sup>25</sup> It had a growing number of students<sup>26</sup> who were showing a high rate of success in the University examinations.<sup>27</sup> The Dacca elite made various attempts to improve the educational situation in this city compared with Calcutta. The almost total absence of Muslims from the membership of the Local Committees of Public Instruction, even of abhijāts and navya abhijāts such as Khaja Abdul Ghani of Dacca was resented.<sup>28</sup> The student community of Dacca began to demand special and better arrangements in educational matters, "Dacca being at a greater distance from the Presidency (Calcutta) than other Mofussil Colleges".<sup>29</sup> The students of the Dacca College requested the Lt. Governor for professors who would prepare them for the B.A. Examination.<sup>30</sup>

At the school level also there was a steady increase in education.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See Table 9.

<sup>24</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 3 January 1851, SBS, vol. 1, p.324. Its student population more than doubled between 1 January 1860 and 30 April 1862. Bengal Administration Report, 1867-68, p.102. See Table 9.

<sup>25</sup> However, students from Eastern Bengal also attended the Presidency College which had about 57 per cent Mofussil students in 1861-62. Bengal Administration Report, 1861-62, Statement K3, p.xxii.

<sup>26</sup> Between 1 January 1860 and 30 April 1862 there was a more than four-fold increase in the number of students attending the College. Bengal Administration Report, 1861-62, p.25. See Table 9.

<sup>27</sup> Friend of India, 14 May 1857: 30 January 1868.

<sup>28</sup> Dacca News, 31 May 1856.

<sup>29</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 6 October 1862.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Bengal Education Proceedings, 18 November (nos. 10,11) 1864; Friend of India, 6 July 1871. Between 1855 and 1861-62, for example, the number

The urban Bengali society, particularly in Calcutta and its suburbs, showed a remarkable enthusiasm and "earnest desire" for better and more schools.<sup>32</sup> The Government responded to this enthusiasm in the 1850s and the 1860s by showing interest in vernacular schools<sup>33</sup> and in English and Anglo-vernacular schools in response to the changing needs of the urban society and the necessity of making primary education relevant to higher Western education.<sup>34</sup> English education spread beyond the metropolitan limits. In 1853 Government recommended the establishment of English schools in various corners of Bengal far from Calcutta, such as Mymensingh, Barisal, Pabna, Noakhali, Dinajpur, Faridpur and Sylhet.<sup>35</sup> The changing needs felt by the urban society also resulted in the growth of a number of Normal (teachers' training) schools,<sup>36</sup> girls' schools<sup>37</sup> and a considerable demand for "special

of schools in Bengal rose from 147 to 2,108 and the number of students rose from 12,865 to 91,203. Bengal Administration Report, 1859-60, p.37; Bengal Administration Report, 1861-62, p.23.

<sup>32</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, p.198; R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, pp. 8-10.

<sup>33</sup> Bengal Education Proceedings, 29 January (nos. 11, 12), 11 March (nos. 14-17), 18 March (no. 26), 8 April (nos. 8, 9) 1852: 13 September (nos. 84, 85) 1855: 3 January (nos. 30-35), 24 January (nos. 86-89) 1856: 22 January (no. 135) 1857: 18 November (nos. 10, 11) 1863.

<sup>34</sup> Bengal Education Proceedings, 17 November (nos. 68, 69) 1853: 17 April (nos. 111, 114) 1854; Sambād Bhāskar, 6 March 1856; SBS, vol. 3, p.440; Som Prakās, 1 September 1862.

<sup>35</sup> Bengal Education Proceedings, 15 July (nos. 79, 80): 17 November (no. 69) 1853.

<sup>36</sup> Bengal Education Proceedings, 7 February (no. 33), 27 March (nos. 77, 78) 1856. The number of Normal Schools rose from 11 schools (715 pupils) in 1863-64 to 28 schools (1871 pupils) in 1871-72. Bengal Administration Report, 1863-64, p.49; Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, Statistical Returns, pp. cxxxiv-cxxxv.

<sup>37</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1867-68, p.114; Bengal Administration Reports, 1872-73, p.148; Friend of India, 29 April, 10 July 1862: 7 April 1864; Som Prakās, 20 May 1864; Samāchar Chandrikā, 12 March 1866. The number of girls' schools rose from 16 schools (395 pupils) in 1861-62 to 344 schools (9,518 pupils) in 1871-72. Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, p.243.

education" such as law, engineering and medicine. Medical education made rapid progress, the number of medical students increasing sixteen-fold in ten years between the mid-1850s and the mid-1860s.<sup>38</sup>

The major Government Colleges had law departments, the Presidency College having the majority of students.<sup>39</sup> The Presidency College also had the only Civil Engineering College.<sup>40</sup>

Enthusiasm for higher education, particularly English education, was thus largely confined to the major urban areas, and even there, to the upper and the middle classes.<sup>41</sup> This is evident from a study of the socio-economic background of the students attending the colleges.<sup>42</sup>

The growing interest in higher education among the members of the urban Bengali elite was directly connected with their desire for more and better jobs. The success of the students of the Presidency College in getting coveted jobs with the Government was increasingly being resented by those associated with the other urban educational institutions. In the early 1850s, the Principal of the Sanskrit College wrote a letter to the Government "soliciting that the

<sup>38</sup>The number of students attending the Medical College, rose from 8 in 1855-56 to 128 in 1865-66. Bengal Administration Report, 1855-56, p.44; Bengal Administration Report, 1865-66, p.76.

<sup>39</sup>In 1865-66, Presidency College had 262 law students, Dacca College had 36 students, Hooghly College had 36 students, Krishnanagar had 16 students and Berhampur College had 19 students. Bengal Administration Report, 1865-66, p.76.

<sup>40</sup>In 1865-66, the Civil Engineering Department at Presidency College had 40 students. Bengal Administration Report, 1865-66, p.76.

<sup>41</sup>Moreover, the majority belonged to the Hindu community. In 1871-72, for example, about 83 per cent of the total number of candidates for the Calcutta University Examinations were Hindus, about 4 per cent were Muslims, about 4 per cent were Christians. Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, Statement IVB, p. cxxxiii.

<sup>42</sup>See Tables 11, 12.

distinguished pupils of his College might obtain similar appointments as pupils of the Hindoo and Madrassah College."<sup>43</sup> In the late 1860s there was a growing movement among the Bengalis in favour of abolishing the standard of age for admission to the University and in 1870 some of the parents and guardians of aspiring students presented a petition to the Syndicate of the Calcutta University praying for the abolition of the limit of age so that "clever industrious boys can pass the test at an earlier age than sixteen".<sup>44</sup> Obviously, the main reason behind this movement was to give the Bengali candidates more time to prepare for the Civil Service Examination.

The fact that the British Government in India needed educated men to run the different departments and fill various offices was particularly favourable to the urban Bengali Hindu and Brāhma kritavidyas. In the 1850s - at the time when discussions were going on connected with the foundation of the Presidency College and the establishment of the Calcutta University- the Home Government approved of the instructions issued by the Lt. Governor of Bengal for "promoting the employment, in the higher branches of the public administration, of the young men who have gained distinction in their educational course."<sup>45</sup> in order to bring forward "an increased number of young men from the Government Colleges qualified for the higher branches in the Public Service."<sup>46</sup> It was felt that

<sup>43</sup> Bengal Education Proceedings, 15 April (nos. 2 and 3) 1852.

<sup>44</sup> Friend of India, 27 April 1871.

<sup>45</sup> Despatch to India (Public), 12 September (no. 92) 1855, pp. 191-192.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

"those who have reached the highest place in the Colleges, and who may be well informed and good scholars, are excluded from the higher Government appointments by the prospect of attaining which it has been interded to stimulate both the industry of the College students and the general desire for education, for the want of some practical instructions necessary to the holders of such appointments, and which the colleges afford so good an opportunity of imparting to them."<sup>47</sup>

In 1863 the Hindoo Patriot, representing the politically-minded urban Bengalis - many of them belonging to the British Indian Association, was pleased to observe that the Government's attitude towards "native" involvement in political matters was marked by "a singular spirit of conciliation":<sup>48</sup>

"To conciliate Native feeling Her Majesty's Government have admitted Natives to the Council, have invested them with the powers of Honorary J.P.s and have raised one of them to the bench of the High Court, thus opening to them the highest judicial positions in their own country."<sup>49</sup>

"Native appointments" to the Bengal Councils particularly those of navya abhijāts such as Ram Gopal Ghosh and Maulair Abdul Latif along with those of traditional abhijāts such as Prasanna Kumar Thakur were praised by the progressive Brāhma newspaper the Indian Mirror on the ground that "such appointments signified that our Government is realizing its promises".<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 197-198. There is a note in pencil on the margin, perhaps written by a representative of the local Government, commenting on the "difficult" attitude of the "native scholars": "I fear in many cases they are above accepting appointments of low grade in the service, in which the necessary political instruction can be acquired. They will not gradually ascend from the bottom, but expect to reach the summit at once." Ibid., p.197.

<sup>48</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 5 June 1863.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. Vernacular journalists welcomed the appointment of "native judges" such as Dwaraka Nath Mitra and Anukul Chandra Mukhopadhyaya. Pākshik Sambād, 1 February 1871.

<sup>50</sup> Indian Mirror, 1 February 1862.



But government encouragement given to "native" participation in administration was essentially of a limited nature, at least in the view of a large section of the urban Bengali elite. A major area of friction in this period was the question of Indians entering the Indian Civil Service, perhaps the most coveted service in the eyes of the ambitious Western-educated urban Bengali kritavidyas. A contemporary Bengali journalist described the attractions of the Service thus:

"The people of our country frequently express their frustration at the scarcity of high posts available to them ... Most well-educated people fall into the abyss of either a teaching job yielding a mere thirty rupees or a clerkship of fifteen rupees .... The only way of remedying this situation is to try for the Civil Service Examination."<sup>51</sup>

To the kritavidyas, entry into the Indian Civil Service together with success in the legal profession represented "the height of gain, primarily financial gain, and prestige."<sup>52</sup> Success in the Civil Service Examination was also closely linked with the questions of "natural pride" and political independence.<sup>53</sup>

But admission to this coveted service remained generally out of the reach of the Indian community. The existing system of examination was criticized by the urban Bengali elite, often through the newly established political associations such as the British Indian Association, mainly on two grounds. First, it was argued that Indians should be allowed to sit for the entrance examination in a Presidency town in India instead of being forced to go to England since such a trip

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<sup>51</sup>Paridarsak, 2 December 1861. Also, Paridarsak, 3 December 1861.

<sup>52</sup>Sambād Prabhākar, 13 December 1865.

<sup>53</sup>Paridarsak, 2 and 3 December 1861.

involved financial difficulties as well as "caste fears" (jāti bhay) and "social fears" (samāj bhay), more specifically, the fear of becoming "outcaste" (jāti-chyūta).<sup>54</sup> Second, the examination itself was felt to be a difficult one for the Indians and the Government was urged to reserve a portion of the covenanted posts for Indians.<sup>55</sup> In 1853 some of the "native gentlemen" of Calcutta, including leading Calcutta abhijāts and kṛitavidyas such as Raja Radha Kanta Deb, Ram Gopal Ghosh, Pyari Chand Mitra and the Rev. Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyaya (Banerjee) held a meeting and drew up a resolution protesting against "the virtual exclusion of the educated natives "from the Civil Service."<sup>56</sup> In 1857 the British Indian Association sent a memorial to the President and Members of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India "calling the attention of the Honble Board to the position of Her Majesty's Hindu and Mahomedan subjects in relation to the Public Civil Service of the India Government."<sup>57</sup>

Two things convinced the Bengali elite that the Government wanted to keep them out of the Service: first, the lowering of the age limit for the Civil Service Examination from twenty-two to twenty-one in 1865 was seen as a deliberate attempt to exclude the Indian contestants and was severely criticized by the Calcutta branch of the British Indian Association.<sup>58</sup> The Sambād Prabhākar of Calcutta sarcastically remarked that soon one would be able to see five year old "competition-wallahs".<sup>59</sup>

<sup>54</sup>Friend of India, 4 August 1853; Sambād Bhāskar, 22 January, 1857, SBS, vol. 3, p.367; Som Prakās, 18 September 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 23 October 1865; 2 February 1866; Samāchār Chandrikā, 9 November 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 1 and 4 December 1865.

<sup>55</sup>Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 2 February 1866.

<sup>56</sup>Friend of India, 4 August 1853.

<sup>57</sup>Bengal Public Proceedings, 29 January (no. 67) 1857.

<sup>58</sup>Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 10 August, 12 September 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 4 December 1865.

<sup>59</sup>Sambād Prabhākar, 8 September 1865.

Bengali journalists frequently blamed the "young age" of the British Civil Servants for their "immature behaviour" and "hot temper" as well as for their lack of knowledge of Indian culture, languages and legal system.<sup>60</sup> But obviously what concerned the educated Bengali most was that the lowering of the age limit would place the Indian contestants at a disadvantage compared with their British counterparts, more specifically with the products of the leading British universities. The British Indian Association of Calcutta proposed that the age limit be raised to twenty-five years in order to give the Indian candidates more time to prepare. The Vernacular Press of Calcutta greeted the success of Satyendra Nath Thakur, one of the brilliant sons of Debendra Nath, at the Civil Service Examination as a source of great pride and hope for the Bengali kritavidyas.<sup>61</sup> But at the same time the failure of Man Mohan Ghosh which, according to Indian sources, resulted from a sudden change in the examination rules,<sup>62</sup> raised serious doubts about the impartiality with which the examination was supposedly conducted.<sup>63</sup> In 1872 the Som Prakās boldly suggested that perhaps the British were becoming afraid at the prospect of an increasing number of Indians in the Civil Service.<sup>64</sup> The Som Prakās felt that such an attitude on the

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<sup>60</sup> Som Prakās, 29 June 1863; 10 September 1865; 13 December 1866; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 10 August, 12 September 1865.

<sup>61</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 12 September 1865; 2 February 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 13 December 1866.

<sup>62</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 2 February 1866. The lowering of the maximum marks for Sanskrit and Arabic followed Satyendra Nath's success at the examination. J.M.Compton, "Indians and the Indian Civil Service", Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, 1967, parts 3 and 4, p.100.

<sup>63</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 27 November, 5 December 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 1 December 1865; Som Prakās, 4 December 1865.

<sup>64</sup> Som Prakās, 22 Āsvin 1279 (1872), SBS, vol. 4, p.265, citing the Englishman. Also, Som Prakās, 4 December 1865. Contemporary official sources seemed to support the view that the changes in the examination rules resulted from the fear of "native" success. See J.M.Compton, op.cit., Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, 1967, parts 3 and 4, p.100.

part of the Government should make the educated Bengalis more determined, and urged them to try to introduce the Civil Service Examination in India and extend their opportunities in the Service in every way possible.<sup>65</sup> In 1871 the Som Prakās observed that attitude towards trips to Europe, a matter which raised sensitive religious and social questions, had become generally tolerant, at least in the urban areas of Bengal.<sup>66</sup>

The Bengali kṛitavidyas also began to express their resentment against the fact that the Indians were being deprived of their legitimate share in the improved prospects of the Uncovenanted Service.<sup>67</sup> That the "native officers" received lower salaries than their European or Eurasian counterparts was pointed out.<sup>68</sup> Among the offices which the "native officers" most coveted and had lost were the Junior Magistracy of Calcutta, the Deputy Collectorship of Customs, the Principalship of the Sanskrit College in Calcutta and the Inspectorship of vernacular schools.<sup>69</sup> To the Bengali observer, all this clearly constituted "a crime of colour".<sup>70</sup>

Apart from expressing frustration with reference to jobs, the mid-nineteenth century urban Bengali elite also began to express their dissatisfaction with various aspects of British policy in India which

<sup>65</sup> Som Prakās, 4 December 1865. Also Sambād Prabhākar, 3 May 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 10 and 29 August 1865; Som Prakās, 18 September 1865.

<sup>66</sup> Som Prakās, 16 Phālgun 1277 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p.223.

<sup>67</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 12 May 1862.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

they considered to be discriminatory. The Western-educated kritavidyas, mainly the members of the politically-conscious Derozio-gos̥thī, took a leading part in these agitations. The desire for equality before the law was the main motivating force.

In the 1850s, a great deal of excitement and controversy centred round the so-called "Black Acts" which were drafted by J.D. Bethune and sought to remove some of the judicial inequalities between the Europeans and the Indians. Most Europeans were greatly disturbed by the prospect of being tried by Indian judicial officers. In early January 1850, about five hundred of the European residents of Calcutta attended a meeting where a memorial was drawn up against the Acts.<sup>71</sup> In late January a deputation consisting of some of the British residents of both Calcutta and the Mofussil waited on the Deputy Governor with a memorial which maintained that "it was beyond the power of the Legislative Council of India to pass the Act for subjecting British subjects to the Company's Courts in matters of felony."<sup>72</sup> The Bengali kritavidyas, led by Ram Gopal Ghosh, the prominent navya abhijāt of the Derozio-gos̥thī, gave voice to their reactions to the Black Acts in a pamphlet entitled Remarks on the Black Acts discussing European oppression in the Mofussil and supporting the draft proposals. On 6 April 1857 there was a meeting in the Calcutta Town Hall at which leading members of the Derozio-gos̥thī including Ram Gopal Ghosh, Kishori Chand Mitra and Digambar Mitra spoke in support of the Acts.<sup>73</sup> Digambar Mitra voiced the demand of the urban Bengali kritavidyas for the removal of all "real" and "implied" distinctions

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<sup>71</sup>Friend of India, 3 January 1850.

<sup>72</sup>Friend of India, 24 January 1850.

<sup>73</sup>Dwijendra Nath Thakur, as quoted in PP, p.284.

between the British and the Indians and their growing faith in the Western concept of equality before the law.<sup>74</sup> The urban Bengali Press generally supported the Acts and favoured the principle of equality before the law.<sup>75</sup>

Although the measure proposing to place Europeans living in the Mofussil under the jurisdiction of Mofussil Criminal Courts was ultimately withdrawn, yet the Black Act's controversy served several important purposes from the point of view of the rising political consciousness of the urban Bengali elite. It was a major factor in the formation of the British Indian Association in 1851<sup>76</sup> which increasingly took the lead in political discussions and agitations. The membership of the new organization was significant from two aspects. First, it was an exclusively Indian political organization, a fact which reflected the intensity of political frustration experienced by the urban Bengali elite around this time. Second, it stood for an alliance between different sections of the urban Bengali elite. The list of the first Committee included the names of both conservative abhijāts such as Raja Radha Kanta Deb, Raja Kali Krishna Deb and Raja Satya Narayan Ghoshal and progressive navya abhijāts and kritavidyas such as Ram Gopal Ghosh and Pyari Chand Mitra. This affair generally served as the rallying point for the members of diverse goṣṭhīs within the urban Bengali society, for instance, the Dharma Sabhā-goṣṭhī which consisted of orthodox Hindus like Radha Kanta Deb and the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī

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<sup>74</sup>Public Meeting in Favour of Extension of the Jurisdiction of Mofussil Criminal Courts, pp. 38-39.

<sup>75</sup>Som Prakāś, 21 Bhādra 1266 (1859), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 55-58; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 29 August 1865.

<sup>76</sup>See below, pp. 224-227.

which included leading social and religious reformers like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Debendra Nath Thakur.<sup>77</sup> The meeting held in Calcutta in 1857 in favour of "the extension of the jurisdiction of Mofussil Courts" was attended by some of the most prominent and influential men in the urban Bengali community, including abhijāts such as Jay Krishna Mukhopadhyaya and Rama Nath Thakur and kṛitavidyas such as Digambar Mitra and Kishori Chand Mitra, conservatives like Radha Kanta Deb and progressives like Rajendra Lal Mitra.<sup>78</sup>

But the urban Bengali elite, profiting from the new system of education and other changes taking place in the new urban situation and having a vested interest in the continuation of British rule, was on the whole loyal to the Raj. The Sambād Prabhākar, representing the educated middle classes, praised the Government for its "great interest in the cause of the education of the subjects and for various benefits enjoyed by the people such as good roads and bridges" and claimed that the subjects had been generally happy since the country came under British rule.<sup>79</sup> The educated section seems to have taken pride in the apparent "invincibility" of the British Empire.<sup>80</sup> Contemporary British observers saw a direct connection between education, especially English education, which was received by the urban Bengalis, mostly upper and middle class Hindus, and loyalty towards the British Government.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Dwijendra Nath Thakur, as quoted in PP, p.284.

<sup>78</sup> Public Meeting in Favour of Extension of the Jurisdiction of Mofussil Criminal Courts, pp. 2-88.

<sup>79</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 28 Jaiṣṭha 1256 (1849), SBS, vol. 1, p.173.

<sup>80</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 17 Jaiṣṭha 1261(1854), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 202-203.

<sup>81</sup> Dacca News, 24 October 1857; 8 May 1858; Friend of India, 13 January 1859.

Bengali kṛitavidyas themselves saw a causal link between English education and the loyalty of the Bengali bābu.<sup>82</sup>

The loyalty of the Bengali elite was particularly gratifying to the British Government during and after the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857.<sup>83</sup> Neither the abhijāts nor the madhyabittas (middle classes) in Bengal, as the Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya of Calcutta later reported, had shown any sign of sympathy towards the mutineers.<sup>84</sup> Instead, at a meeting held in the Hindu Metropolitan College of Calcutta in 1857, some of the leading Hindu "aristocratic gentlemen" (sambrānta mahāsayas) of Calcutta like Raja Radha Kanta Deb (chairman), Raja Kamal Krishna Bahadur, Kali Prasanna Sinha, Rajendra Datta and Hara Chandra Ghosh, deplored the actions of the sipāhīs (sepoys) and offered to help the Government in "the preservation of peace."<sup>85</sup> The minutes of the meeting were sent to the Governor General and translated copies were sent "everywhere".<sup>86</sup> Leading vernacular journalists advised the affluent Bengalis to give financial help to the Government and thus ensure future British patronage.<sup>87</sup> The rebellion was generally condemned in the Bengali Press and it was frequently pointed out with some amount of sarcasm that the "ever-loyal" and "rice-eating" (hence lethargic) Bengalis did not even "dream about rebellions".<sup>88</sup> The Sambād Prabhākar and the Sambād Bhāskar,

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<sup>82</sup> Som Prakāś, 25 May 1963; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 8 September 1865.

<sup>83</sup> Dacca News, 3 July 1858; F.J.Halliday's Minute of 19 November 1858 November 1858 and Duke of Argyll's speech of 15 April 1859 in the House of Lords, as quoted in T.R.Metcalf, The Aftermath of Revolt, pp. 124-125.

<sup>84</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 8 September 1865.

<sup>85</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 26 May 1857, SBS, vol. 1, p.223.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 3 February 1857, SBS, vol. 3, p.378.

<sup>88</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 13 April 1858.



the two leading vernacular dailies of Calcutta, published several editorials and letters praising the British rule in India and denouncing the sipāhīs.<sup>89</sup> The tone of these articles and letters was often Hindu nationalistic and anti-Muslim.<sup>90</sup> According to a contemporary Bengali report, both the Hindu rich men (dhanī lok) and the middle classes (madhyabittas) of Calcutta, especially the former, sided with the Government and took great effort to protect themselves and the city during the Mutiny:<sup>91</sup>

"The rich gentlemen of the city have made 'war preparations' as they had promised to the Government at the Metropolitan College and the British Indian Association. To the North of Calcutta, the Rajas of Paikpara-Raja Pratap Chandra Sinha and Raja Ishwar Chandra Sinha - have stationed two thousand armed men, among them forty to fifty gorās (white/British soldiers), on the main road in front of their palace ... Within Calcutta, there are many sipāhīs (Indian soldiers) and gorās guarding the palaces of Shobhabazar, the house of the Dattas of Malanga and the palace of Rani Rasmani in Janbazar. From Kolutala (Colootola) in Central Calcutta to Bagbazar, at the houses of wealthy men such as the Sens, Seals, Dattas, Malliks, Thakurs, Sinhas, Ghoshes, Mitras, Basus and Debs, both Indian and white soldiers are playing martial music."<sup>92</sup>

Feelings against the Sepoys seemed to have spread in every section of the urban society:

"Every subject (prajā) has bricks on his roof. Rich and poor - everyone is on the side of the Government."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 24 January, 3 and 7 February, 1, 18 and 20 June 1857, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 368-369, 376, 379, 386-393; Sambād Prabhākar, 20 and 23 June 1857: 1 and 15 Baisākh 1265 (1858), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 226-240.

<sup>90</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 24 January, 3 and 7 February, 1, 18 and 20 June 1857, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 368-369, 376, 379, 386-393; Sambād Prabhākar, 20, 23 and 29 June 1857: 1 and 15 Baisākh 1265 (1858), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 226-240.

<sup>91</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 18 June 1857, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 389-390.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

The urban Bengali elite continued to voice their support of Government policy against the Sepoys, and thus remove any "feelings of enmity" which might have been generated in the British mind against the Indians, in meetings such as the one held on 3 November 1858 at which Radha Kanta Deb of the conservative Hindu Dharma Sabhā-gos̥thī was one of the main speakers,<sup>94</sup> and through their organizations such as the British Indian Association.<sup>95</sup> On the occasion of the beginning of Queen Victoria's rule, elaborate and expensive celebrations were held both in Calcutta and its suburbs as well as in old urban centres such as Murshidabad, Burdwan and Krishanagar.<sup>96</sup>

The "policy of oppression" carried out by the British indigo-planters in Bengal with the support of a large section of the British journalists and government officials was a political issue which greatly excited the urban Bengali elite belonging to different classes and gos̥thīs (groups).<sup>97</sup> To them the indigo situation symbolized the inequality inherent in the British rule. The "indigo troubles" (nīl-hāngāmā) of the 1850s and the 1860s, apart from revealing the growing political awareness of the urban Bengali elite, was also significant for the important role played by the urban Bengali literature and Press.

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<sup>94</sup> Friend of India, 11 November 1858.

<sup>95</sup> See The Proceedings of British Indian Association, June 1859.

<sup>96</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 21 Kārtik 1265 (1858), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 244-247. An interesting feature of these celebrations which were initiated by abhijāt Bengalis was the use of traditional Indian "auspicious signs/decorations" (māngalikchinhas). Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Agrahāyāṇ 1772 (1850), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 125-132; Sambād Prabhākar, 4 July 1859: 18 January (citing Hindoo Patriot), 12 March 1860: 30 March 1864 (citing Hindoo Patriot and Som Prakās), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 98-99, 102-103, 105-106, 109-113, 119-121: 24 May (citing Dhākā Prakās and Bijñāpanī), 29 and 31 May, 2 and 7 June 1865; Som Prakās, 21 Bhādra 1266 (1859): 2 Baisākh and 24 Bhādra 1269 (1862: 9 and 16 Chaitra (letter) 1270 (1864): 14 and 21 Baisākh, 28 Agrahāyāṇ 1271 (1864): 4 Māgh 1271 (1865), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 55-58, 62-66, 68-69, 75-84, 90-94; Rangpur Dik Prakās, 8 August 1861; Paridarsāk, 16 and 31 August, 28 October, 21 November, 6 and 20 December.

The controversies surrounding the Bengali drama Nil Darpan /Indigo mirror/ (1860) written by Dina Bandhu Mitra, a Western-educated Bengali Inspector in the Postal Department, gave the maximum publicity to the question. In 1861 the Indian Mirror, the English-language newspaper published by the progressive Brāhmas, reported:

"The Nil Darpan drama has earned a celebrity which it is not given to ordinary pamphlets to obtain. It forms now the staple of conversation in every society, and commands the attention of the official and non-official European and native alike."<sup>98</sup>

The dramatic presentation of Nil Darpan in Calcutta in 1872 was greeted with enthusiasm by the Bengali community in Calcutta.<sup>99</sup> Its criticism by British journalists<sup>100</sup> representing the interests of the indigo-planters led to the writing of a few other popular farces and dramas criticizing British civil servants, journalists and police.<sup>101</sup>

According to the leading Bengali journalists of this time the main reason behind the miserable condition of the indigo cultivators was the partiality of the British government officials towards the planters.<sup>102</sup> The officials were accused of being indifferent to stories of oppression by the planters.<sup>103</sup> In view of this situation, the appointment of indigo-planters to the post of Honorary Magistrate was naturally resented by the Bengalis and in 1858 the British Indian Association under the chairmanship of Raja Pratap Chandra Sinha formally

1861; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 22 June, 13 July (citing Bijñapanī 26 July 1865; 1 February 1866; Śikshā Darpan, Bhādra 1272 (1865); Samāchār Chandrikā, 29 January 1866.

<sup>98</sup> Indian Mirror, 1 August 1861. Also, Umesh Chandra Datta, as quoted in PP, p.174; Charles Wood to Governor-General in Council, Judicial no.111, 25 July 1861, in Parliamentary Papers (H.of C.), 1862, vol.40 (Paper 17)  
<sup>99</sup> Amrita Lal Basu, as quoted in PP, pp. 223, 245.

<sup>100</sup> For example, Indian Empire, 10 July 1861. The Vernacular Press of Calcutta criticized the support given to the indigo-planters by the English journalists, primarily the editors of the Englishman and the Bengal Hurkaru. See Paridarsak, 6 November 1861; Samāchar Chandrikā, 2 November 1865.

<sup>101</sup> Amrita Lal Basu, as quoted in PP, p.174.

<sup>102</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, June 1848, 23 Chaitra 1255 (1849), 23 Phālgun,

protested against the measure.<sup>104</sup> The Sambad Prabhākar pointed out how the situation improved remarkably whenever Bengali kṛitavidyas were posted as high government officials in the Mofussil.<sup>105</sup> Another major complaint of the members of the urban Bengali elite involved in this agitation was that the Government tended to consider the opinions of the British journalists and the British indigo-planters to be the public opinion of the country, whereas in reality, they argued, the opinions expressed by kṛitavidya Bengali journalists such as the editors of the Som Prakāś and the Dhākā Prakāś constituted the "true public opinion".<sup>106</sup>

An important aspect of this affair was the close cooperation between the urban Bengali elite taking part in the anti-planter agitation and the Rev. James Long of the Church Missionary Society - a circumstance which contributed towards better understanding between the Indian community and the British. In 1861 the trial and imprisonment of Long for his responsibility in the translation and publication of Nīl

27 Chaitra 1258 (1852), 4 Kārtik 1261 (1854), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 50-51, 81-82, 98-99, 102-103; 1 June 1865; Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Agra-hāyan 1772 (1850), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 130-132; Sambād Bhāskar, 13 March 1856, SBS, vol. 3, p. 310; Hindoo Patriot, 26 August 1858; Som Prakāś, 24 Bhādra 1269 (1862): 9 and 16 Chaitra 1270 (1864): 21 Baisākh, 1 Aṣāḥ and 4 Asvin 1271 (1864), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 68-69, 75-78, 81-85, 89; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 18 September 1865.

<sup>103</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 7 September 1865.

<sup>104</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 27 Śrāvṇ 1265 (1858), SBS, vol. 1, p. 243.

<sup>105</sup> For example, Deputy Magistrate Chandra Mohan Chattopadhyaya in Murshidabad and Deputy Magistrate Kishori Chand Mitra in Rajshahi. Sambād Prabhākar, 1 Māgh 1265 (1869).

<sup>106</sup> Som Prakāś, 25 May 1863, 21 August 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 2 November 1865; letter from poet Madhu Sudan Datta, dated 16 November 1864, in S.K. Gupta, Madhusudaner Patrābalī, pp. 224-225. The importance of recognizing "true" public opinion was emphasized by the Vernacular Press in connection with almost every political issue, for instance, the taxation policy. See Pallī Bijñān, 21 August 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 25 December 1865.

Darpan,<sup>107</sup> which was accused of slandering the two leading newspapers, namely, the Englishman and the Bengal Hurkaru and the planters as a group,<sup>108</sup> was deeply resented by the urban Bengali elite.<sup>109</sup> Vernacular journalists fondly referred to Long as the "great soul" (mahātmā) and the "great friend" (param bandhu) of India.<sup>110</sup> In July 1861 the Hindoo Patriot of Calcutta, a newspaper whose popularity among the English-educated urban Bengalis could be largely attributed to its role in the indigo agitation,<sup>111</sup> printed an address to the Rev. Long.<sup>112</sup> It was written by "the leading natives of Calcutta", mostly abhijāt zamindars, who resented the prominence enjoyed by the British planters in Mofussil, such as Radha Kanta Deb, Rama Nath Thakur, Raja Kali Krishna Bahadur and Raja Narendra Krishna.<sup>113</sup> They expressed their appreciation of Long's connection with Nil Darpan which, although admittedly a work of fiction, was described as "a genuine expression of

<sup>107</sup> Indian Mirror, 1 August 1861; Paridarsak, 18 September 1861. After the publication of the Bengali drama, in 1960, Long brought it to the attention of W.S. Seton-Karr, Secretary to the Government of Bengal and, after receiving the latter's sanction, employed poet Madhua Sudan Datta to translate it into English and acted as the main contact with the printer. The Landholders and Commercial Association brought legal proceedings against the printed and, later, against Long who was indicted on 19 July 1861 and tried for libel before Calcutta Supreme Court. B.B. Kling, The Blue Mutiny, pp. 201-203.

<sup>108</sup> B.B. Kling, op.cit., pp. 203-204.

<sup>109</sup> Indian Mirror, 1 August 1861; Hindoo Patriot, 8 August 1861; Rangpur Dik Prakas, 8 August, 12 September 1861; Indian Reformer, 10 August 1861.

<sup>110</sup> Paridarsak, 22 and 31 August 1861; Samāchār Chandrikā, 29 January 1866.

<sup>111</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 29 January 1866.

<sup>112</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 17 July 1861.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

native feeling on the subject of Indigo Planting".<sup>114</sup> The importance of "native" public opinion was emphasized in the address:

"Constituted as the British Indian Government is, it is needless for us to dwell on the importance of consulting in matters of legislation and administration. Native opinion and Native feelings, expressed in whatever form and through what medium so ever."<sup>115</sup>

In August 1861 the Hindoo Patriot published an open letter to the Rev. Long from leading Bengalis of Calcutta "expressive of the confidence and regard of the native community of Calcutta"<sup>116</sup> and assuring him that notwithstanding the result of his trial,<sup>117</sup> the July address "accurately represented the sentiments of the multitudes, who then had no opportunity of joining in its presentation."<sup>118</sup> The originators of the July address or the leading Calcutta abhijāts were described as "eminent and honoured members of the native community of the Province, who not only command the confidence of their countrymen, but many of whom have lately received a distinguished mark of confidence of Her Majesty's Representative here."<sup>119</sup> The important question of the role of Indian public opinion was again raised:

"If the result of your [Long's] trial be to establish the principle that no one is to make known to the European community in India or the people of Great Britain the opinions and feelings of the native population unless he is prepared personally to adopt all their opinions and feelings, we fear that our means of reforming any part of our social and political

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 8 August 1861.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Long was sentenced to one month in jail and a fine of one thousand rupees which was paid by Kali Prasanna Sinha, a leading Hindu abhijāt of Calcutta.

<sup>119</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 8 August 1861.

systems are seriously diminished, and that the freedom of the Press is placed in jeopardy."<sup>120</sup>

In September 1861, the Bengali elite of Calcutta presented an address of gratitude to the Rev. Long at a meeting held in the house of Raja Radha Kanta Deb.<sup>121</sup> To a contemporary Bengali observer, this meeting symbolized the new "bond of unity" among the aristocrats and the educated community in Calcutta who ordinarily stood apart from each other.<sup>122</sup> The major Bengali newspapers, representing diverse interests, also showed an almost unprecedented "unity of opinion and purpose" during this affair.<sup>123</sup> Such cooperation between different groups and organizations, a Calcutta kritavidya remarked, was "sure to benefit the country".<sup>124</sup>

## II Reactions connected with religion and society

In the socio-religious sphere also contact with the West led to many frustrations and disappointments, both among the conservatives and the progressives within urban Bengali society. The Som Prakāś of Calcutta which primarily represented the middle class kritavidyas and took a liberal stand on most socio-religious issues, described some of these frustrations:

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Paridarsak, 5 September (letter from Calcutta), 6 September 1861.

<sup>122</sup> Paridarsak, 5 September 1861 (letter from Calcutta).

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

"The conservative/old community (prācīn sampradāya) laments that all our social virtues such as our ancient religion, simplicity of behaviour and moderation with respect to food and drink are being gradually destroyed. The progressive/new community (navya sampradāya), on the other hand, laments that our religion is being destroyed by rituals and that our social behaviour is not tasteful."<sup>125</sup>

The aspect of Western influence which was disliked most by the urban Bengalis, both conservatives and progressives, was the extreme Westernization of some of the urbanites, especially the youth<sup>126</sup>

which sometimes culminated in their conversion to Christianity.

Even relatively liberal Bengali journalists felt that those who renounced Hinduism and "deserted" the Hindu society could not be expected to be of any future help in improving social conditions.<sup>127</sup>

Even the Hindoo Patriot, which was run by Western-educated kṛitavidyas described an apostate as "a public enemy of the community he deserts" and felt that it would "do no good to restore such a man to his society."<sup>128</sup>

The Som Prakāś feared that if Christianity was allowed to spread any further, the Hindus would lose their identity.<sup>129</sup> Both the conservative section and the progressive section of the urban Bengali Press carried on a ceaseless campaign against Christian missionary activities, particularly against the use of education as a means of converting

<sup>125</sup> Som Prakāś, 5 Agrahāyaṇ 1273 (1866), SBS, vol. 4, p.210.

<sup>126</sup> Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Śrāvaṇ 1778 (1856), SBS, vol. 2, p.184; Paridarsak, 6 September (letter), 1 November 1861; Som Prakāś, 29 February 1864; 20 November 1865; 26 Baisākh 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 232-233; Sambad Prabhākar, 20 November 1865. Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p.127; Madhu Sudan Datta, Ekei Ki Bale Sabhyatā?, pp. 104, 111-116; N.C. Gunanidhi, Kali Kutūhala, p.94; N.N.Choudhury, Cālī Balen Sūñc, p.2; Pyari Chand Mitra, Mad Khāoā Baḍo Dāy, p.51.

<sup>127</sup> Som Prakāś, 5 Agrahāyaṇ 1273 (1866), SBS, vol. 4, p.211; Sambad Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 28 March 1866.

<sup>128</sup> Hindoo Patriot, cited in Friend of India, 21 March 1872.

<sup>129</sup> Som Prakāś, 23 October 1865. The Som Prakāś, although generally in favour of social improvements, did not want all the ancient customs and habits to be swept away by "the current of change". Som Prakāś, 28 July 1862.



the urban Bengali youth.<sup>130</sup> The feelings expressed were often optimistic. In 1871 the Som Prakāś expressed faith in the power of modern education and claimed that with the spread of education in general, the urban Bengali youth had become farsighted and as a result looked at the Christianization movement more critically.<sup>131</sup> Christianity, the Som Prakāś declared with obvious relief, had "lost much of its earlier novelty" and, as a result, the youth were "not becoming converted to Christianity in large numbers any more".<sup>132</sup>

Opposition to Christian missionary activities was a factor which bound different goṣṭhīs and individuals within urban Bengali society together, at least occasionally. In the early 1860s, a Bengali kṛitavidya living in the metropolitan area described the general feeling of "religious animosity" felt by the local people towards the Christian missionaries.<sup>133</sup> Cases of conversion to Christianity, especially among the Hindu students of Calcutta and its suburbs, were reported and almost universally condemned by the urban Bengali Press mainly on religious grounds.<sup>134</sup> The conversion of Hem Nath Basu (Bose), the eldest son of Kali Prasanna Basu, a respectable Kāyastha of Calcutta,<sup>135</sup> was one of the most discussed

<sup>130</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 19 October 1861; Paridarsāk, 18 December 1861; Som Prakāś, 3 July 1865; 10 Jaiṣṭha 1277 (1870), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 217-218. The Rev. J. Long was obviously mistaken in his belief that the Vernacular Press was becoming less stringent in its opposition to Christianization. J. Long, On Vernacular Christian Literature, p.7.

<sup>131</sup> Som Prakāś, 23 Phālgun 1277 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 224-226.

<sup>132</sup> Som Prakāś, 23 Phālgun 1277 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p.225.

<sup>133</sup> Paridarsāk, 23 September 1861 (letter from Behala).

<sup>134</sup> For example, Sambād Prabhākar, 15 February 1848; 30 August 1851, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 164-165, 176; 18 and 22 July, 1 August (letter) 1865; Paridarsāk, 26 August, 18 December 1861; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 12 December 1865; Śikshā Darpaṇ, Śrāvaṇ 1272 (1866).

<sup>135</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 18 and 22 July, 1 August 1865.

cases of this kind. The process of Hem Nath's Christianization was spread over a few years. In the first phase, Hem Nath took refuge in the Mission run by Dr. Alexander Duff and the Rev. Lal Bihari De with the intention of accepting Christianity, but at the request of Hem Nath's father and because Hem Nath was legally still a minor, the missionaries were instructed by the Government authorities to send him back to his family.<sup>136</sup> After about two years, in 1865, Hem Nath again went to the Mission and was finally baptized.<sup>137</sup> Before Hem Nath's baptism, his father wrote a letter to Dr. Duff and the Rev. De and sent a copy of the letter to the Hindoo Patriot,<sup>138</sup> the liberal English-language newspaper run by Bengali kritavidyas. In this letter Kali Prasanna mentioned a "mere family quarrel" as Hem Nath's reason for wishing to become a Christian, in an obvious attempt to minimize the importance of this episode.<sup>139</sup> The indignant Vernacular Press of Calcutta considered the action of the Christian missionaries in this case to be further proof of their theory that Christianity in Bengal had taken the form of a "kidnapping trap" (cheledharā phānd).<sup>140</sup> Even the Christian converts, obviously suffering from the bad publicity, disapproved of Hem Nath's baptism without any kind of "character test".<sup>141</sup>

The motives behind conversion were often criticized. Many young Bengalis, the critics claimed, were becoming Christians for reasons which had very little to do with their religious convictions, for example, desire for money, desire to marry white/European women (svetānginī) and the wish to hurt one's family.<sup>142</sup> As a consequence,

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<sup>136</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 22 July 1865.

<sup>137</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 18 and 22 July 1865.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 22 July and 1 August 1865.

<sup>141</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 1 August 1865 (letter from a "Native Christian").

<sup>142</sup> Sambād Pūrva Chandrodaya, 29 March 1866; Śikshā Darpan, Śrāvaṇ 1272 (1866).

it was reported, people were losing respect for converts in general.<sup>143</sup> But the main argument used by the critics of Christian Missionary efforts at conversion was the young age and the consequent "immaturity" of most of the converts.<sup>144</sup> The urban Bengalis, especially the parents of sons of school-going age, were warned against the Christian missionaries who were frequently described as "kidnappers" (cheledharā) and "more dangerous than tigers or robbers".<sup>145</sup>

Although both the conservatives and the liberals were convinced about the need to fight the Christian missionaries, and often worked together for this purpose, the two groups generally used two types of techniques. Broadly speaking, the conservatives had more faith in a return to strict Hinduism, and the progressives believed in reforming the Hindu society in order to remove the reasons behind the criticisms which were frequently made by the Christian missionaries. Conservative Hindu reaction to Christianization, particularly to the "sinful" and "crooked" tactics used by the Christian missionaries to gain converts, primarily took the form of revival of Hindu orthodoxy.<sup>146</sup> The methods used were usually of two kinds: first, the imposition of various difficulties, especially caste disabilities, upon the converts, and second, the more positive method of reviving the traditional Hindu

<sup>143</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 28 March 1868.

<sup>144</sup> Dharma Rāj, Phālgun 1259 (1853); Paridarsak, 26 August, 18 December 1861; Som Prakās, 3 and 31 August 1863; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 12 December 1865; 26 January 1866; Samāchar Chandrikā, 18 December 1865; 15 January 1866. For example, the case of Aghor Nath Mukhopadhyaya, a minor and the "son of a respectable family" (bhadrasantān) Samāchar Chandrikā, 18 December 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 26 January 1866.

<sup>145</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 24 Phālgun 1258 (1852); 9 Baisākh 1260 (1853), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 180-181, 194-195, 22 July 1865; Dharma Prachārīṇī, Phālgun 1259 (1853), pp. 5, 13-14; Paridarsak, 18 December 1861; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 22 July 1865; D.N.Thakur, Ātmajīvanī, pp. 62-65; N.C.Chattaraja, Kali Kutūhala, p.91.

<sup>146</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 28 December 1865.

custom of "atonement" (prāyaścitta) in order to readmit converts into the Hindu caste structure.<sup>147</sup> Alexander Duff, the Scottish missionary, noted the many "difficulties and temptations",<sup>148</sup> "personal inconveniences and discomforts"<sup>149</sup> and the "severe ordeal of trial and even downright persecution"<sup>150</sup> faced by the converts. Many converts, as reported, had no place to live and moved into the Mission house.<sup>151</sup>

The revival of "purification" or other rituals sanctioned by Sanskrit sources for readmitting converts into the Hindu society was discussed at a meeting held on 25 May 1851 at the Oriental Seminary in Calcutta. The meeting was reportedly attended by "a numerous body of Hindoo gentlemen, chiefly of the old and orthodox school" including "the recognized leaders of almost every party in Calcutta except the extreme liberals generally represented by Baboo Ram Gopal Ghosh."<sup>152</sup> The Dharma Sabhā-goṣṭhī led by Radha Kanta Deb controlled this meeting which had been initiated by some of its members who were residents of Bhowanipur. The spokesman of the Bhowanipur party, a pleader in the Sadar Court reported that Bhowanipur, where many Christian missionary educational institutions were located, had been "seriously agitated by the recent conversions" and that it had become evident to the inhabitants

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<sup>147</sup> Friend of India, 21 February 1850 (citing Hindoo Intelligencer).

<sup>148</sup> Letter from Dr. Duff to Dr. Gordon, June 1846. Duff Papers (MSS).

<sup>149</sup> Letter from Dr. Duff to Dr. Gordon, 1 July 1846. Duff Papers (MSS). The frequent references to the "comforts" and "conveniences" of the converts' original homes indicate that they came from fairly well-to-do upper and middle class families.

<sup>150</sup> Letter from Dr. Duff to Dr. Gordon, 1 July 1846. Duff Papers (MSS).

<sup>151</sup> Letter from Duff to Anderson, 2 May 1846. Duff Papers (MSS).

<sup>152</sup> Friend of India, 29 May 1851.

of that quarter that a great Hindoo movement must be organized to resist the progress of the Missionaries."<sup>153</sup> The meeting unanimously accepted a plan sanctioning a "purification" (prayaścitta) ceremony to enable "Native Christians to return to the Hindu community."<sup>154</sup> The "form of purification" seemed to be "the most practical expedient" since it was realized that "any attempt to prevent the rising generation of Natives from paying particular attention to the study of English, would be absurd in principle, and useless in practice."<sup>155</sup> Apart from an "immense majority" of the assembled pandits, the pandits and Maharaja of Nadiya, "the religious oracle of Bengal", who were consulted also sanctioned this plan.<sup>156</sup> Although the plan was ultimately destroyed by differences of opinion among the different urban goṣṭhīs and leaders,<sup>157</sup> yet it laid the foundations for future discussions and plans. In 1854 a "purification" (prāyaścitta) ceremony was arranged in Calcutta to enable Chandra Mohan Thakur, a teacher at a government school in Calcutta and a Christian convert to return to Hinduism.<sup>158</sup> Leading Hindu abhijāts of Calcutta like Rama Nath Thakur and Girindra Mohan Thakur were praised by their contemporaries for reviving this traditional method and for accepting Chandra Mohan back into their community.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 19 Phālgun 1259 (1853) (letter), SBS, vol. 1, p.191. Also, Friend of India, 5 June 1851.

<sup>158</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 25 Āsvin 1261 (1854), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 212-215.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

Primarily as a reaction to Christian missionary activities, the progressive section of the urban Bengali elite began to express the need for reforming Hindu religion and society. This was felt to be essential in order to retain and, in some cases, regain control over the educated urban Bengali youth, a section which seemed to be generally disenchanted with the existing system of Hindu religion and society.<sup>160</sup> Perhaps the greatest obstacle to the Christianization movement in the urban areas of Bengal in the second half of the nineteenth century was the rise of the Brāhma Samāj, a socio-religious movement which was congratulated by contemporary Bengalis including conservatives for its success in diverting many young Bengalis, especially Western-educated kṛitavidyas, away from Christianity.<sup>161</sup> The Christian missionaries themselves were aware of the significance of the competition from the Brāhma Samāj, especially from Keshab Chandra Sen and his followers.<sup>162</sup> They frequently criticized Brāhma Dharma in writings<sup>163</sup> and speeches.<sup>164</sup> In 1864 the Dharma Prachārīnī, a conservative Hindu journal, described the special measures taken by the Christian missionaries to counteract the influence of the Brāhma Samāj:

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<sup>160</sup> Som Prakāś, 29 May 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 30 August 1865.

<sup>161</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 13 Āsvin 1260 (1853) (letter), SBS, vol. 1, p.196, 22 July 1265; Samāchār Chandrikā, 19 October 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 15 February 1866.

<sup>162</sup> Church Missionary Atlas, p.34; Som Prakāś, 17 August 1863 (letter on clash between Lal Bihari De and Keshab Chandra Sen); Indian Daily News, 26 January 1869; Friend of India, 2 February 1874.

<sup>163</sup> The Rev. J. Mullens (London Missionary Society), "Vedantism, Brahmoism and Christianity", cited in Friend of India, 1 April 1852.

<sup>164</sup> Bishop Milman and the Rev. Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyaya, as quoted in Friend of India, 1 April 1852.

"The Christian group (Khrīṣṭān dal), seeing the signs of the progress of Brāhma Dharma on all sides, cannot decide on their course of action. Lately they have arranged a 'free box' of books concerning Christianity. In Behala [ā suburb of Calcutta], they are distributing Christian books from this box in houses and pāṭhsālās (primary schools) in streets and alleys."<sup>165</sup>

The Brāhma-Christian confrontations were not confined to the metropolitan region. At a meeting held on 1 July 1853 in Burdwan and attended by about four hundred people, including Christian priests and Bengali Christians, Kedar Nath Datta, the organizer of the meeting, spoke on the similarities between Christianity and Brāhma Dharma and urged for "unity and cooperation" between the two movements.<sup>166</sup> But the Christian missionaries who were present at the meeting disagreed with him and declined to attend a later meeting,<sup>167</sup> a move which suggests that there was a growing feeling of uneasiness among the Christian missionaries with regard to the Brāhma Samāj. In 1865 the Baptist missionaries of Dacca harshly criticized Kali Prasanna Ghosh, a Brāhma kṛitavidya, at a meeting in which the latter lectured on Brāhma Dharma.<sup>168</sup> The missionaries wrote several letters to people living in various places including Calcutta, criticizing lecturers on Brāhma Dharma.<sup>169</sup>

The urban Bengali attitude to missionary activities was influenced by a feeling that the Government encouraged the Christianization of the Indian society, whether directly or indirectly.<sup>170</sup> In the

<sup>165</sup> Dharma Prachārīnī Patrikā, Āsādh 1786 (1864).

<sup>166</sup> Som Prakās, 17 August 1863 (letter from Burdwan).

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Som Prakās, 14 August 1865, citing the Dhākā Prakās.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 9 Baisākh 1260 (1853); 12 Baisākh 1261 (1854), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 194, 201-202; Dharma Rāj, Phālgun 1259 (1853), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 161-163; Paridarsak, 4 November 1861; Sambād Bhāskar, 16 August 1865, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 324-326; Samāchār Chandrika, 19 November 1865.

early 1850s the Sambād Prabhākar of Ishwar Gupta, a leading journalist and satirist who often sided with the conservatives on socio-religious issues, remarked:

"The problem of Ishu Christi [Jesus Christ] has become more virulent than the danger of cholera ... We do not fear robbers because they are afraid of the Government. But the pādrīs (Christian missionaries) do not fear the Government. Since the ruler supports them, they have become extremely oppressive."<sup>171</sup>

To conservative Hindu journalists, it was even a "natural act" on the part of the Government which, after all, was a "Christian Government" to support the Christian missionaries.<sup>172</sup> Even comparatively progressive Bengali newspapers had similar misgivings. To the Som Prakāś it was evident that Christianity was protected by Government, government protection being the main reason behind the strength and progress of the Christianization movement in India.<sup>173</sup> The Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, the mouthpiece of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj and the Tattva Bodhinī Sabhā which were actively opposed to the Christianization movement, suspected the British government officials of being partial to the Christian missionaries.<sup>174</sup>

Many urban Bengalis felt that the Government's professed policy of religious neutrality,<sup>175</sup> which most of the members of the elite seem to have favoured,<sup>176</sup> was contradicted by certain aspects of

<sup>171</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 9 Baisākh 1260 (1853), SBS, vol. 1, p.194.

<sup>172</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 19 October 1865.

<sup>173</sup> Som Prakāś, 23 October 1865.

<sup>174</sup> Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Bhādra 1773 (1851), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 132-139.

<sup>175</sup> Despatch to India (Public), 3 February (no. 12) 1858, pp. 11-12. Cf. K.A. Ballhatchet, Social Policy and Social Change in Western India, pp. 83-84, 275-280; G.S. Ghurye, Caste, Class and Occupation, p.178.

<sup>176</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 24 Phālgun, 4 and 12 Chaitra 1258 (1852), SBS vol. 1, pp. 180-181, 183-186; 8 July 1865; 9 April 1866; Sambād



Government policy. The Government was frequently warned against the serious complications which might ensue if the policy of religious neutrality was abandoned.<sup>177</sup> According to many English-educated urban Bengali kritavidyas of this time, fear of Government intervention in religious matters was the main reason behind the outbreak of 1857.<sup>178</sup> But the question of Government intervention in social and religious matters came to the forefront mainly in connection with certain pieces of legislation which appeared to be in direct contravention of the policy of religious neutrality. Some of the major points which were raised by the critics of Government policy were: first, that among the Hindus social customs were almost always associated with religion; second, the Government was reminded of its initial promise to honour the religious habits and national customs of the subjects, especially in view of the popular belief that the Government was in favour of the spread of Christian religion and values in India; and third, the fear that Christian converts might be allowed to remarry, a step which would remove a major obstacle to conversion as well as give rise to various complications for the

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Purṇa Chandrodaya, 12 Baisākh 1261 (1854), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 201-202: 29 December 1865; Paridarsak, 4 November 1861; Hindoo Patriot, 29 December 1862; Samāchār Chandrikā, 1 February 1866; Sambād Bhāskar, 6 February 1866. The exceptions were cases such as Charak (a Saiva festival) which were found to be both inhuman and, what was more important, against the Scriptures. Sambād Prabhākar, 9 April 1866. The Bengali Muslims were also found to be generally in favour of the continuation of the policy of religious neutrality on the part of the British Government. Despatch to India (Public, Education), 3 June 1857 (no. 78), pp. 911-912.

<sup>177</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 12 Chaitra 1258 (1852), SBS, vol. 1, p.186: 28 December 1865; Paridarsak, 4 November 1861; Som Prakās, 18 July, 5 September 1864: 28 August, 4 September, 16 October 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 17 April, 11 September 1865; Sambād Bhāskar, 17 July, 6 September 1865; Sambād Purṇa Chandrodaya, 28 July, 1 September 1865.

<sup>178</sup> Ram Gopal Ghosh, as quoted in Friend of India, 11 November 1858; Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p.319.

marriage-partner who remained in the Hindu community.<sup>179</sup>

The controversies surrounding the question of the marriage of Christian converts led to various discussions, interpretations and amendments of existing laws as well as the introduction of new laws.<sup>180</sup> The proposal for the amendment of the "New Act for Marriages in India" in order to enable the Christian converts to divorce their partners and remarry was brought to the notice of the Government in the early 1850s by the Rev. J. Boaz.<sup>181</sup> He pointed out that under that Act, the consent of the father or guardian was required for the marriage of any party under the age of twenty-one years and that the general practice among Indians was to marry at a much earlier age than was customary in Europe.<sup>182</sup> The Hindu or Muslim father of the young convert could be hardly expected to give such consent. The involvement of the Christian missionaries convinced many contemporary Bengalis of the fact that the former were worried that fewer people were becoming Christians because of the absence of a provision for the marriage of converts.<sup>183</sup> This question was particularly relevant in the urban context since in the urban areas of Bengal conversion generally took the form of the isolated act of an individual whereas the conversions taking place in the rural areas were often mass affairs

<sup>179</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 11 January, 28 February 1866.

<sup>180</sup> Bengal Ecclesiastical Proceedings, 8 November (no. 7) 1853; Legislative Letters from India, 9 December (no. 26) 1861; India Legislative Proceedings, August (nos. 67 and 117) 1872; Friend of India, 6 August, 29 December 1853; 12 January 1865; Overland Friend of India, 7 February 1866, from Friend of India, 25 January 1866.

<sup>181</sup> Despatch to India (Legislative), 17 November (no. 20), 1852, pp. 1228-1229.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 20 March 1865.

involving entire families, even villages.

But in the early 1850s, the Home Government could not perceive any means by which "the difficulties regarding marriages among native converts to Christianity" could be removed without "consequences of a more objectinnable nature".<sup>184</sup> Ultimately, however, at the insistence of the Government in India, who continued to press for an amendment of the law relating to marriage and divorce in India,<sup>185</sup> the Home Government was forced to admit that

"except only with reference to marriages contracted before conversion and especially to the case of a plurality of wives, the question adverted to affect all Native Christians, and it seems indeed impracticable, either in fact or in principle, to draw a valid line of distinction, with regard to the rules for Marriage and Divorce between Native Christians and Christians in general."<sup>186</sup>

The Government in India was asked to prepare a Bill and, if necessary, a Draft Act, embodying considerations in this matter. Throughout the 1850s and the 1860s the Legislative Council of India witnessed long discussions on the Bill which sought "to provide for the dissolution of certain marriages entered into by Christian converts before their conversion."<sup>187</sup> The object of the Bill was to remove some of the disabilities affecting the Indian converts to Christianity, mostly practical difficulties arising out of the prevalent custom of early marriages which meant that most converts were married at the time of their conversion. As Sir Charles Jackson described the anomalous situation:

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<sup>184</sup> Despatch to India (Legislative), 17 November (no. 20).  
1852, pp. 1232-1233.

<sup>185</sup> Despatch to India (Legislative), 7 December (no. 20)  
1853, pp. 383-388.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., pp. 384-385.

<sup>187</sup> Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India, vol. V, 31 December 1859, p. 852.

"The consequence of a Mahomedan or Hindoo becoming Christian was simply this, that the Hindoo or Mahomedan who remained true to his own faith was considered freed from the marriage tie, the marriage itself being dissolved, while on the other hand, according to Christian doctrine, the convert was bound by his marriage before conversion and was not able to remarry... such a state of things produced most serious consequences. It either led to concubinage amongst the converts, or else to irregular marriages which gave neither a legal or religious sanction to the subsequent connection."<sup>188</sup>

The situation was further complicated by the circumstance that some Christian missionaries, in their effort to gain more converts and to retain control over their converts often allowed, sometimes even encouraged, the converts to remarry. While such conduct on the part of the missionaries was perhaps to be expected in view of the increasing success of the anti-Christianization techniques being used by both the conservative and the progressive urban Bengalis, it led to further problems for the Christian missionaries in Bengal. First, the convert who remarried was liable to an indictment for bigamy. Second, such marriages led to harsh criticisms of both the reasons and methods of conversion to Christianity.

Throughout the discussions on this question, the Government appeared anxious not to antagonize the Hindus and the Muslims. There were repeated attempts in the Council to establish that the Bill would not in any way affect "either the Mahomedan or Hindoo party to the marriage who remained true to their original faith",<sup>189</sup> although the question of the converts' marriage was one which involved the converts' spouse and, in the context of the joint family system, the entire family. The Converts' Remarriage Bill which was introduced by Henry

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., pp. 852-853 (citing Sir Charles Jackson).

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p. 854.

Maine in 1864 was, as Maine carefully pointed out, expected to be "a law of liberty" which would free the Christian converts from certain disabilities, but involve no encroachment upon the rights of the Hindus.<sup>190</sup> The Indian Divorce Act (Act IV of 1869) which gave converts to Christianity the right to divorce and marry again was applicable only when the petitioner was Christian.<sup>191</sup>

But the whole question and the discussions surrounding it greatly troubled the urban Bengali elite, both Hindus and Muslims. Maulavi Abdul Latif, the leading Bengali Muslim kritavidya of Calcutta, wrote a letter to Henry Maine stating that the new law regarding the marriage of "Native Christians" would force "secluded" women to appear in public.<sup>192</sup> As a consequence, he feared, the guardians of Muslim boys would refuse to allow them to have English education since they would find a direct link between such legislation and the progress of Westernization in India and all the efforts of the Maulavi to spread English education among the members of his community would be rendered fruitless.<sup>193</sup> The urban Bengali journalists, mostly Hindu kritavidyas, were mostly against the Bill.<sup>194</sup> During the 1860s there were many agitations in the metropolis surrounding the Bill and several petitions were sent to the Legislative Council by groups of urban

<sup>190</sup> Henry Maine's Speech of 4 November 1864 in Legislative Council, cited in T.R. Metcalf, Aftermath of Revolt, p.111.

<sup>191</sup> A collection of the Acts passed by the Governor General of India in Council in the year 1869, Calcutta, 1869, p.32.

<sup>192</sup> A. Latif, Public Life, pp. 27-28: Appendix I, p.4; Śikshā Darpaṇ, Poṣ 1273 (December 1866-January 1867).

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. Bengali Hindu kritavidyas, however, pointed out that the Muslims and the Roman Catholics were exempted from the legislation and that it affected only the Hindus. Śikshā Darpaṇ, Māgh 1273 (1867).

<sup>194</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 15 February 1866.

Bengalis, mostly upper and middle class Hindus, protesting against the Bill.<sup>195</sup> Even the Rev. Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyaya, a Bengali Christian kritavidya, wrote a pamphlet criticizing legislation allowing converts to remarry,<sup>196</sup> perhaps because he sensed the depth of hostility felt by the non-Christian Bengali population towards such legislation and feared that such hostility would ultimately hurt the cause of Christianization in urban Bengal. Perhaps for similar reasons, even a few European Christian missionaries of Calcutta petitioned the Legislative Council against it.<sup>197</sup> The Christian missionary opposition to the Bill was based mainly upon two arguments: first, that such legislation would lend support to "wrong" motives for conversion for instance the desire to marry a white woman, and second, that such legislation would stand in the way of the possible conversion of the non-Christian partner in marriage.<sup>198</sup> It would also, they feared, give a wrong impression of the general Christian attitude towards bigamy and divorce to the non-Christians.<sup>199</sup> The Som Prakās suggested that the Bill should include a clause forcing the converted husband to wait till his wife reached the age of twenty - an age at which she could be expected to make an independent decision

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<sup>195</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 29 November 1865 (citing Bengal Hurkaru): 1 January 1866.

<sup>196</sup> Sikshā Darpaṇ, Agraḥāyaṇ 1272 (1866).

<sup>197</sup> Sikshā Darpaṇ, Pous 1272 (December 1866-January 1867).

<sup>198</sup> Som Prakās, 16 January 1866.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

before marrying again.<sup>200</sup> The Bill, the Som Prakāś argued, was particularly aimed against the Hindus since the Muslims were exempted on grounds which were equally applicable to the Hindus, for example the argument that conversion to a different religion was enough ground for the breakdown of a marriage.<sup>201</sup> Moreover, the prevalence of child-marriages among the Hindus was held to be another factor in favour of exempting them, since at the time of the conversion of a husband she would generally be too young to make a decision for herself and the legislation, by allowing the husband to remarry, would close the door to any future change of mind on the part of the wife.<sup>202</sup> The legislation, it was argued, was also partial to the Christians and prejudicial to the Hindus since the existing Hindu family system would make it almost impossible for a Christian husband to get the opportunity to meet his Hindu wife.<sup>203</sup> The Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, a prominent Calcutta daily which was known for its ceaseless campaign against the Christianization movement in Bengal,<sup>204</sup> opposed the Bill using a traditional argument, namely, that it encouraged the forsaking of one's lawful wife - an act which was not sanctioned by any Śāstra and involved unjust Government interference in the social and religious affairs of the Hindus.<sup>205</sup> Moreover, in connection with religious conversion it was argued that such legislation would give support to those

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid. Also, Sambād Prabhākar, 20 March 1865. Later, a new clause was incorporated in the Bill which required a one-year waiting period followed by a meeting between the marriage partners and ample proof before the Court of the wife's refusal to join her husband, before he is granted permission to remarry. Sambād Prabhākar, 5 April 1866.

<sup>203</sup> Som Prakāś, 16 January 1866.

<sup>204</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 20 May, 25 October, 20 November 12 December 1865.

<sup>205</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 15 February 1866.

"undisciplined men" who embraced Christianity in order to marry white women.<sup>206</sup> A practical question was also raised, namely, that it could act as an obstacle to future reconciliation between a Christian husband and his Hindu wife.<sup>207</sup> The Sambad Prabhakar tried to appeal both to the religious sentiments of the Christian missionaries by supporting those among them who felt that the Bill went against the basic tenets of Christianity, and to rationality and justice by arguing that it might give rise to the situation where the wife of a convert later decides to live with him and finds that he has remarried in the meantime, a situation which actually arose in Bhowanipurin Calcutta in the late 1860s.<sup>208</sup> From the socio-economic point of view, the situation was found to be particularly tragic for the Hindu wife who could not remarry and might be left without any means of support.<sup>209</sup> But the main criticism was again based upon general urban Bengali reaction to Christian missionary activities from the point of view of religion. The Bill was criticized for being partial to Christianity and was taken to be a further proof of Government encouragement of the Christianization process.<sup>210</sup>

The Caste Disabilities Removal Act or Lex Loci (Act XXI of 1850) which was intended to protect the property rights of Christian converts raised similar socio-religious feelings among the Bengalis, particularly the upper and middle class Hindus from among whom most young converts came. To complicate matters further, this piece of

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 1 and 9 January 1866.

<sup>209</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 9 January, 4 and 5 April 1866.

<sup>210</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 9 January, 5 April 1866.



legislation was more directly involved with questions related to joint family and caste. The social control exerted by the traditional caste leaders was still very strong and there was considerable opposition to the Act.<sup>211</sup> According to a contemporary British observer, several meetings were held in Calcutta with the aim of petitioning the Court of Directors and eventually the Parliament, being attended by "the highest class in native society ... the most influential, the most wealthy, the best educated, and the most intelligent members of the native community",<sup>212</sup> in short, the urban Bengali elite, mostly abhijāts. A memorial against the Act was drawn up, presenting the orthodox Hindu view that the Christian convert was disqualified from succession to his ancestral property since he was unable to perform the śrāddha (after-death ceremony) which alone entitled him to such succession.<sup>213</sup> The Dharma Sabhā, the conservative Hindu organization and its leader Radha Kanta Deb of Calcutta played a prominent part in the agitation, Radha Kanta being one of the harshest critics of the measure.<sup>214</sup> In 1851 the conservative Hindus of Calcutta led by Radha Kanta sent a memorial to the Home Government opposing the Lex Loci or Liberty of Conscience Act.<sup>215</sup> To the orthodox Hindus, the Act involved

"a breach of faith on the part of the Government which has repeatedly legislated on the supposition that the Hindoo law is to be the sole rule of Hindoo inheritance."<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>211</sup>Friend of India, 7 February, 27 June (citing Hindoo Intelligencer), 1850.

<sup>212</sup>Friend of India, 14 February, 27 June 1850.

<sup>213</sup>Friend of India, 24 January, 7 February 1850.

<sup>214</sup>Friend of India, 10 January 1850; "Radhakant Deb", Calcutta Review, vol. 45, August 1867, p.324; R.Lethbridge, Ramtanu Lahiri, p.179.

<sup>215</sup>Friend of India, 10 July 1851.

<sup>216</sup>The "Hindoo Memorial", as quoted in Friend of India, 6 January 1853. Also, Petition of the Hindoo Inhabitants of Bengal, Behar, Orissa... signed by Raja Radha Kanta Bahadur, Raja Kali Krishna Bahadur, etc. in Parliamentary Papers (H.of C.) of 1857, vol. 29 (Paper 225).

The Sambād Prabhākar expressed the socio-religious fear of many Hindus that this "evil legislation" would make it difficult to preserve "the Hindu way of life" (Hinduttva) and urged all Hindus and Brāhmas to join the protest movement by signing petitions to England.<sup>217</sup> Even the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, the mouthpiece of the relatively liberal Tattva Bodhinī-gosṭhī, felt that Rule XXI of 1850 meant a "grave injustice" to the Hindus from the socio-religious point of view.<sup>218</sup> It was considered to be part of the general attempt of the Christian missionaries to convert Indians to Christianity.<sup>219</sup> The Patrikā discussed a much-publicized case in Madras in great detail in which a Hindu wife was forced by the Madras Supreme Court to live with her husband, a Christian convert, against her wishes.<sup>220</sup> Several Sanskrit sources were cited, offering traditional support to a wife leaving her "fallen" (patita) husband<sup>221</sup> - a view which was obviously influenced by exposure to the Western concept of equality of men and women. The Courts of Justice and the government servants in British India were criticized for their partial treatment of cases connected with Christian missionaries and their attitude was described as "particularly unjust" in view of the Government's promise to honour and protect the religion of the subjects.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 24 Phālgun 1258 (1852), 12 Baiśākh 1261 (1854), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 181, 201-202.

<sup>218</sup> Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Bhādra 1772 (1857), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 132-139.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

On the whole, the urban Bengalis were increasingly in favour of the idea of self-determination, a feeling which sometimes arose out of and was strengthened by their contact with the West. The Som Prakās of Calcutta made a bold and Westernized plea on behalf of this right in the socio-religious sphere:

"Matters which belong to the society by right should remain in the hands of the society... We agree that there are some social matters which require legislation. But when can such legislation be allowed? Only when the members of the society have themselves decided in favour of such legislation and laid the foundations for it...."<sup>223</sup>

It was being increasingly felt that social reform should come from within the Bengali society itself, at the initiative of the urban Bengali kṛitavidyas and helped by favourable public opinion created by the spread of education, mainly of Western education, and of humanitarian ideas.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup>Som Prakās, 19 September 1864. Also, Som Prakās, 5 Agraḥāyaṇ, 1273 (1866), SBS, vol. 4, p.210.

<sup>224</sup>Som Prakās, 5 September 1864; Sambād Prabhākar, 11 January, 28 February 1866.

#### 4. THE PERSISTENCE OF TRADITIONALISM

The pressures of urbanization and modernization sometimes proved to be too strong for the traditionalists within the urban Bengali society. They found the pressures from within the Bengali society such as from the Young Bengal or the Derozio-goṣṭhī and the Brāhma Samāj to be in many ways more difficult to withstand than outside forces such as the activities of the European Christian missionaries. The Dharma Sabhā of Krishnanagar, "an association for the defence of Hinduism", for instance, failed in its efforts to destroy the free English School run by Shri Prasad Lahiri<sup>1</sup> who preached against "idolatry and the evil practices connected therewith".<sup>2</sup> The success of the reformers was very often, as in the case of the Krishnanagar Brāhmas, ensured by the active support of traditional leaders of society themselves, for instance Sirish Chandra, the Raja of Krishnanagar who established a Brāhma Samāj in his palace.<sup>3</sup> But, generally speaking, the orthodox Hindus reacted strongly against the Brāhma Samāj movement, especially against the great influence exerted by Keshab Chandra Sen upon the younger section of the urban Bengali kritavidyas. The Brāhma Samāj was criticized by Hindu journalists and writers who expressed alarm at its rapid growth, particularly in the 1860s before

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<sup>1</sup>Shri Prasad was the brother of Ramtanu Lahiri, the famous Brāhma educationist.

<sup>2</sup>R. Lethbridge, Ramtanu Lahiri- Brahman and Reformer, pp. 112-113.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

the partition of the Samāj,<sup>4</sup> and at what appeared as signs of "permissiveness" and "arrogance" among its members and supporters.<sup>5</sup> The number of Brāhma Samājes rose from four in 1853 to forty in 1863 and to fifty in 1866.<sup>6</sup> Even critics and opponents of the Brāhma Samāj movement admitted that by the late 1860s the number of Brāhmas had risen to about two thousand from about five hundred in 1849.<sup>7</sup> In the 1860s a real struggle for social control and authority seemed to have begun between the traditionalists and progressives in urban Bengal - a struggle which often took the form of a struggle between generations:

"The old/conservative community (prācīn sampradāya) is of the opinion that it is important to maintain the rituals connected with religion as they are and without any change. The youth/modernists (navya-tantra), on the other hand, have the highest respect for the Western concept of rationality (yukti) since the well-educated young men do not believe in anything unless they can see the proof."<sup>8</sup>

The urban Bengali kritavidya was often torn by a conflict between the Hindu beliefs and traditions (samskār) and the teachings of Western education, a situation which created "an alien suffering" in his mind.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 8 July, 10 August 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 3 August 1865; N.C. Gunanidhi, Kali Kutūhala, p.96.

<sup>5</sup> N.C. Gunanidhi, op.cit., pp. 109-113.

<sup>6</sup> By 1863 there were Brāhma Samājes in almost every major urban area in Bengal such as Burdwan, Midnapur, Mymensingh, Barisal and even in some of the remote areas of Eastern Bengal such as Chittagong and Tripura. Som Prakās, 7 December 1863; Sambād Prabhākar, 8 January 1866. See Map 2.

<sup>7</sup> Friend of India, 21 July 1864; Indian Daily News, 1 February 1868 (quoting the Rev. Lal Bihari De and the pamphlet prepared by the missionaries in charge of the Free Church Institution): 23 April 1869.

<sup>8</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 16 December 1863.

<sup>9</sup> Som Prakās, 29 May 1865.

But traditionalism was still a strong force in the urban areas of Bengal in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially in the remote urban areas and the old pre-modern cities and towns such as Dacca and Murshidabad where social control was still largely exercised by the traditional elements in society. Even in the metropolis, religion played a very important role in society. Thus, in 1853, the question of throwing open the Hindu College to non-Hindus<sup>10</sup> created great excitement among the Hindus of Calcutta, leading to the establishment of the Hindu Metropolitan College by some of the leading members of the Hindu society. Special boarding houses were established for the accommodation of the Hindu students attending the various government schools and colleges in Calcutta. A Hindu student from the Mofussil was usually allowed by his guardians to go to Calcutta for his education only on condition that he stayed either with a Hindu family or in a boarding-house reserved for Hindu students.<sup>11</sup> In 1862 even the liberal Hindoo Patriot of Calcutta lamented the fact that with the end of government aid to the boarding-house for Hindu students in Calcutta, there was every chance of its being abolished since its high charges (about ten to twelve rupees per month) were not in proportion to the scholarship (generally five rupees per month) received by the students.<sup>12</sup> The Muslim students going to the metropolis

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<sup>10</sup> Bengal Education Proceedings, 2 June (no. 104), 1853.

<sup>11</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 1 September (letter), 3 November 1862.

<sup>12</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 3 November 1862.

from rural areas or from small towns for higher education suffered from a similar want of special accommodations.<sup>13</sup> The continuing contact with the relatively traditional rural society through the migrants was one of the main factors behind the continuing hold of traditionalism in the urban Bengali society.

I Traditionalism in the Hindu community

Within the urban Hindu community the continuing hold of traditionalism upon society was primarily maintained through the institutions of caste and the joint family. Questions regarding caste and religion were closely connected with each other. When Ramtanu Lahiri finally broke with Hinduism, accepted Brāhma Dharma and renounced the upabīta/paitā (sacred Brāhmapical thread), the Hindu community of Burdwan where he was living seemed to react more strongly to the latter act than to the fact of his accepting another religion and the punishment was also along caste lines.<sup>14</sup> Ramtanu was pronounced "an outcaste" and was deprived of the services of the washerman and the barber.<sup>15</sup> The relaxation of caste restrictions related to food and habitation in Calcutta was said to have given rise to a general fear that "the honour of the Hindu way of behaviour (Hinduāni) was about to be destroyed".<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Letter from C.H.Campbell, J.Sutcliffe and Maulavi Abdul Latif to the Officiating Secretary to Government of Bengal, dated 1 December 1864, in Selection from Records of Government of India: Correspondence in Education of Mahomedan Community, pp. 22, 44; Friend of India, 10 June 1869: 27 April 1871.

<sup>14</sup>R.Lethbridge, op.cit., p.122.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Madhu Sudan Datta, Budō Śāliker Ghāṭe Roñ, p.19.

To contemporaries, Western education and urbanism appeared as the main reasons behind the changes in attitudes towards traditional institutions such as the caste system and the joint family system. With social change mainly as a result of urbanization, the power of the system of excommunication (bahiskār) decreased and the strength of these institutions was being undermined. This process was particularly noticeable among the members of the progressive section who were perhaps most affected by Westernization.<sup>17</sup>

The change in attitudes towards caste on the part of the urban Bengali Hindus was quite remarkable. After the passing of the Liberty of Conscience Act of 1850,<sup>18</sup> some of the leading conservative abhijāts of Calcutta such as Radha Kanta Deb and Kali Krishna Bahadur were in favour of introducing an atonement ceremony (prāyaścitta) for the converts to Christianity who might wish to return to the Hindu society.<sup>19</sup> In 1853 a contemporary British journalist, referring to the caste practices of a group of politically-minded Calcutta kritavidyas gathered at a public meeting, remarked that the majority of those present "violated its rules every day".<sup>20</sup> In 1855 the Rev. James Long, a close observer of nineteenth century Bengali society concluded that caste was "decaying".<sup>21</sup> There were definite signs of relaxation of food

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<sup>17</sup> Sikshā Darpan, Pous, 1272.

<sup>18</sup> See above, pp. 177-179.

<sup>19</sup> Friend of India, 5 June 1854. See above, pp. 164-166.

<sup>20</sup> Friend of India, 4 August 1853.

<sup>21</sup> J. Long, On Vernacular Christian Literature, p.6. Also, J. Long, Calcutta and Bombay in their Social Aspects, 1870, p.3.



habits and rules regarding dining, even among high caste Bengali Hindu families like the Thakurs, the Bandyopadhyayas and the Mitras.<sup>22</sup> In 1866 the Samāchār Chandrikā, the mouthpiece of the conservative Dharma Sabhā, sadly noted that whereas in earlier times the smelling of food cooked by a non-Hindu (yavan) could make one Pirili/Pirāli (degraded Brāhman caste), the situation had changed to such an extent that even the taking of food prepared by a foreigner (yavan) did not necessarily lead to the loss of one's caste.<sup>23</sup> Other caste rules, for instance the restrictions against sea-voyage, were also relaxing. In earlier times, it was argued, even stepping on a ship led to the loss of caste but in the mid-nineteenth century men were travelling by ship to England and Mauritius.<sup>24</sup>

In the case of migration, the physical distance between the urban Bengali and his family was an important factor influencing his attitude to caste. But the relaxation of social control was less significant than could be expected because migrants of the same caste and village background often lived together. The caste system was also deeply affected by the increasing and more numerous contacts between the members of different castes which were encouraged by urbanization in its different facets, such as occupation, communication and recreation. The changes were particularly striking in Calcutta. The Baptist Missionary Conference held at Calcutta in 1855 noted that

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<sup>22</sup> S.N. Banerjee, A Nation in Making, p.25.

<sup>23</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 1 January 1866. Even the taking of English medicine which used to be forbidden before was becoming popular among high-caste Hindus. Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

"frequent unavoidable contact with people of all ranks and countries has, to a considerable extent, weakened the power of caste in Calcutta and destroyed many of those prejudices which continue unimpaired in the Mofussil."<sup>25</sup>

In 1869 Man Mohan Ghosh, an England-trained lawyer of Calcutta, speaking on "the effects of English education on Bengali society" concluded that contact with the West was the main factor behind "the complete revolution that has taken place in Bengalee ideas on the subject of caste-distinctions":<sup>26</sup>

"The Mussulmans introduced the onion centuries ago, and yet that has not found so much favour as potatoes, cabbage and cauliflower. Even animal food has found its way into many Hindoo houses. Instances of inter marriage between persons of different castes have lately taken place."<sup>27</sup>

English education led to a more relaxed approach to caste, both through the introduction of new ideas regarding man and society and through practical changes such as the physical proximity of students from different castes.<sup>28</sup> In 1862 the Hindoo Patriot, representing the Western-educated urban Bengali kritavidyas, reported on the liberalizing influence of English education upon caste system in Bengal, perhaps a little too optimistically:

"As far as Bengal proper is concerned the prejudices of caste have greatly melted away. The people have fully realized the value of English education and they

<sup>25</sup> Reports of a Baptist Missionary Conference, 1855, p.178, BMS Papers.

<sup>26</sup> Man Mohan Ghosh, as quoted in Friend of India, 27 May 1869.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 24 November 1862; J.Long, Calcutta and Bombay in their Social Aspects, p.3; Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p.20; P.N.Bose, A History of Hindu Civilisation, vol. II, pp. 30, 35: vol. III, pp. viii-xii.

care little whether their sons acquire it in a Missionary School open to boys of all caste, or in a Government institution where their religious feelings are justly respected."<sup>29</sup>

But what was actually happening was that caste was being adapted to the changing urban situation. The leadership of Hindu castes in pre-industrial societies was being transformed into a new kind of upper caste leadership in the modern society, through their acquisition and use of new qualifications and training. This was indicated by the fact that even English education, including medical education which raised sensitive caste questions, was being monopolized by the members of Hindu upper castes.

The new urban situation, especially in Calcutta and its suburbs, also led to significant occupational changes in connection with the caste system. This was mainly true in the case of the Brāhman, Baidya and Kāyastha or the three higher castes, whose members were naturally interested in retaining their social predominance, even if it meant changing their caste characteristics radically. Brāhman like Dwaraka Nath Thakur devoted themselves to business; Brāhman and Kāyasthas like Bijay Krishna Goswami and Jaga Bandhu Basu underwent training in medicine; Baidyas like Keshab Chandra Sen in his early life took up jobs in government, private offices and banks. The caste system, thus, showed a surprising resilience and even tolerated, if not encouraged, horizontal mobility.

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<sup>29</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 24 November 1862. The situation was different in the U.P. and other parts of India where caste prejudices were still very strong. Ibid. In Bombay, however, as early as in the 1820s, there was reported to be "such a mixture of classes and inhabitants of various nations that all distinctions of caste are in a great degree confounded." William Chaplin, quoted in K.A. Ballhatchet, Social Policy and Social Change in Western India, p.268.

The caste system and attitudes towards it were also influenced by the various urban socio-religious movements such as the Brāhma Samāj movement and the Christianization movement and by new legislation such as the Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1850.<sup>30</sup> After the Widow Remarriage Act was passed in 1856,<sup>31</sup> a large meeting of Brāhmins was held in Dacca at which the son of a high caste Brāhmin and a widow whom the Brāhmin had married - a boy who had always been considered to be "a pariah, a person without any caste at all" - was admitted into caste.<sup>32</sup> In a remarkable display of the relaxation of strict caste rules, the Brāhmins ate with the outcaste and accepted him into their community.<sup>33</sup> As in the spheres of Western education and the professions, the upper castes, by taking the initiative in the field of social reforms and change were, whether consciously or unconsciously, transforming their traditional caste leadership into leadership of a modern kind and thus trying to adapt the caste system to modern conditions.

Apart from the caste system, several aspects of the traditional Hindu social structure such as the location of authority or the system of social control, the relationship between the generations, and the position of women within the family structure, were undergoing significant changes as a result of urbanization and associated factors. The Som Prakāś observed:

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<sup>30</sup> See above, pp. 177-179.

<sup>31</sup> See below, pp. 329-338.

<sup>32</sup> Dacca News, 17 January 1857.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

"All this time, the members of the old/conservative community (prācīn sampradāya) have been controlling society, but gradually their power and control are decreasing. The members of the young/progressive community (navya sampradāya) do not fear the old/conservative section as before. There is, indeed, a very real obstacle to the social control exerted by the older generation. This is the fact that they have become almost totally subordinate to the youth (navyas) in the matter of earning money."<sup>34</sup>

The Saṃbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, another Bengali newspaper which also generally sided with the progressives, also concluded that the primary reason behind the decline in the social authority of the older members of society was that they were often economically dependent upon their sons.<sup>35</sup> As a consequence, it was observed, the parents did not say anything even if their sons revolted against Hinduism and joined the Brāhma Samāj.<sup>36</sup> Even the Samāchār Chandrikā run by the Dharma Sabhā-goṣṭhī admitted that the traditional dala-patis (leaders of factions)<sup>37</sup> did not wield social control as before.<sup>38</sup> In earlier times, sending a girl to school would make a family out-caste (apāṅkteya, literally meaning, removed from the eating lines), and the mere utterance of the word "bidhabā-bibāha" (widow-marriage) would force one to commit an act of atonement (prāyaścitta).<sup>39</sup> But in 1866, it seemed, "not to support such acts makes one appear as a fool or a knave".<sup>40</sup> In earlier times, the Brāhmaṇ pandits were afraid

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<sup>34</sup> Som Prakāś, 23 October 1865.

<sup>35</sup> Saṃbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 3 November 1865.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> See above, pp. 41-42.

<sup>38</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 1 January 1866.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

to send their sons to the Sanskrit College in Calcutta in case they became atheists (nāstiks), but since the catuṣpāthīs (Sanskrit schools) had lost their prestige, the same Bhattacharya<sup>5</sup> (Brāhmaṇa pandits) were paying the fee of three rupees and sending their sons to the Sanskrit College.<sup>41</sup>

With urbanization and primarily at the initiative of the younger Bengali urbanites, who often enjoyed economic independence and educational and other advantages, there was an increasing trend towards smaller joint families which were generally composed of parents, sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren.<sup>42</sup> The establishment of the Hindu Family Annuity Fund in 1872 by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar with the help of leading Calcutta abhijāts and kṛitavidyas such as Justice Dwaraka Nath Mitra, Rajendra Mitra, Nabin Chandra Sen and Yatindra Mohan Thakur in order to provide some kind of life insurance<sup>43</sup> indicated the decline of the joint family system which had previously fulfilled such needs. The Western-educated urban Bengalis reacted strongly to the restrictions imposed by the joint family system. The "sense of individuality" which they derived from their contact with the West demonstrated to them the "stringency of caste rules"<sup>44</sup> as well as the restrictions of their family structure. The joint family system was criticized by kṛitavidya journals for standing in the way of reforms such as widow marriage and female education, by promoting

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Jaiṣṭha 1872 (1890), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 350-351.

<sup>43</sup> B. Ghosh, Vidyāsāgar o Bāngālī Samāj, vol. 3, pp. 352-353.

<sup>44</sup> P. Bose, op.cit., vol. III, p. 78.

excessive devotion to the family elders who generally tended to be conservative in their attitude to social change.<sup>45</sup> While the humanitarian aspects of the joint family system were praised, the system was criticized for encouraging "defects in the Bengali character" such as laziness, factinnalism, selfishness and lack of discipline and initiative.<sup>46</sup> That contact with the West was behind such criticism was evident from the simultaneous praise of the British, mainly for their "self-reliance" and "boldness of action".<sup>47</sup> Thus, the changing social climate in the urban areas, especially in Calcutta, encouraged the shifting of power and authority from traditional agencies of social control such as caste leaders and family elders to comparatively modern and urban organizations such as voluntary and non-hereditary goṣṭhīs (social groups) and sabhās (societies).<sup>48</sup> Traditional leadership often sought to control these relatively modern institutions and thus retain social prominence.

But the caste system and the joint family system retained much strength even after factors such as urbanization and Christianization intervened. The Friend of India of Serampore viewed the continuing hold of caste upon nineteenth century Bengalis as a major obstacle to the conversions of the young men of Calcutta, who, though not Christians, seemed to be "deeply convinced of the superiority of the Gospel creed to their own".<sup>49</sup> The Baptist missionaries meeting at

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<sup>45</sup>Paridarśak, 20 November 1861; Saṃbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 14 September 1865.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Saṃbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 14 September 1865.

<sup>48</sup>See above, pp. 41-47.

<sup>49</sup>Friend of India, 5 June 1851.

a conference in Calcutta in 1855 observed that even among the Christian converts, although caste was not retained and was "utterly forbidden in the churches", yet

"its influence is felt in a greater or less degree, in some of the social and domestic relationships of life."<sup>50</sup>

A Baptist missionary writing in the 1850s believed that although "the religious power of caste has ... been utterly broken in the bosom of our Christian churches", yet, the caste system retained some influence among the Christian converts with reference to "some social habits and prejudices against certain modes of cultivation and the use of few articles of food, brought over with them from their heathen state."<sup>51</sup>

The Rev. James Long of Church Missionary Society observed:

"It is long before a brahman, though he be a Christian, can erase from his mind the feelings connected with his belonging to the twice born class."<sup>52</sup>

This was obviously true in the case of Jnanendra Mohan Thakur, an eminent Western-educated kritavidya and the son of the abhijāt zamindar Prasanna Kumar Thakur of Pathuriaghata in Calcutta, who thought of himself as a "Brāhman Christian" even after his conversion to Christianity.<sup>53</sup> The Rev. Lal Bihari De, a "Native Christian" missionary who came from the Subarna Banik caste, was anxious to prove that he himself and the Subarna Baniks as a group belonged to the higher Baidya caste.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, the Brāhma converts retained many of their

<sup>50</sup>Reports of a Baptist Missionary Conference, p.60, BMS papers.

<sup>51</sup>Letter from E.B.Underhill to missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society in Bengal, quoted in Reports of a Baptist Missionary Conference, p.108, BMS Papers.

<sup>52</sup>J.Long, On Vernacular Christian Literature, p.8.

<sup>53</sup>Jnanendra Mohan Thakur, as quoted in R.N.Basu, Atmcharit, p.17.

<sup>54</sup>Umesh Chandra Datta, cited in PP, p.180. Lal Bihari blamed the Baidya king Ballal Sen for the social decline of the Subarna Banik caste.



caste prejudices and feelings even after conversion to Brāhma Dharma. Debendra Nath, the leader of the conservative Brāhmas, prized his Brāhmaṇ birth throughout his life. Ramtanu Lahiri of Krishnanagar, a Brāhma convert whose family was of the highest Kulīn Brāhmaṇ descent, gave his daughter in marriage to a Bārendra Brāhmaṇ, although he had previously thrown away the sacred thread as "an act of conviction".<sup>55</sup> Munsiff Kashishwar Mitra, even after he became a Brāhma, used to do praṇām (saluting by touching feet or by bowing low) to Brāhmaṇs out of "courtesy".<sup>56</sup>

The enthusiastic and frequently extravagant observance of various religious and domestic rituals such as those associated with the building of temples, the performance of pūjās (religious festivals) and śrāddhas (ceremonies performed after the death of a relative) by the urban Bengali abhijāts<sup>57</sup> and even by English-educated kritavidyas and navya-abhijāts like Ram Gopal Ghosh of the radical Derozio-goṣṭhī,<sup>58</sup> was another proof of the strength of traditionalism in urban Bengal. To a vernacular journalist of this period, this kind of behaviour on the part of the urban Bengalis was also an indication of the continuing social control of the Brāhmaṇ pandits and adhyāpaks<sup>(professors)</sup>.<sup>59</sup> The conservative Samāchār Chandrikā proudly declared in 1866:

"Even today, the Hindu society (Hindu-samāj) wields such a great amount of influence and power that whatever path one takes, at the proper time everyone has

<sup>55</sup> Umesh Chandra Datta, cited in PP, p.179.

<sup>56</sup> Umesh Chandra Datta, cited in PP, p180.

<sup>57</sup> For example, the śrāddha ceremony of Kamal Krishna Bahadur's mother in Calcutta. Paridarsak, 11 September 1861.

<sup>58</sup> For example, the śrāddha ceremony of Ram Gopal Ghosh's mother in Calcutta. Saṅbād Prabhākar, 10 February 1866.

<sup>59</sup> Paridarsak, 19 November 1861.

to perform the Hindu rituals (kṛityas) without a word of protest."<sup>60</sup>

But primarily under the influence of the Brāhma Samāj and of the Christian missionaries, the urban Bengali Press - both conservative and progressive - began to criticize the kind of extravagance mentioned above and considered such behaviour on the part of the leading Bengalis to be one of the reasons behind the lack of progress, in other words, an obstacle to socio-economic progress and change in Bengal.<sup>61</sup> According to the Som Prakās, the continuation of "extravagant" Hindu institutions and practices such as "the joint family system (ekānna-bartitā), after-death (śrāddha) and marriage (bibāha) ceremonies, eternal widowhood (cira-baidhabya) and caste pride (jātyābhimān)" was the main cause behind the economic backwardness of the Hindu community, particularly of the middle classes (madhyabitta śreṇī).<sup>62</sup>

Generally speaking, the lower caste groups which had risen in society by taking advantage of the new avenues to status, namely, economic superiority (artha-koulīnya)<sup>63</sup> and the increased social mobility in the urban areas, for example, the Subarṇa Baṅiks (gold merchants, goldsmiths)<sup>64</sup> and the Tantu Baṅiks (cloth merchants, weavers)<sup>65</sup> of Calcutta, were orthodox in their attitude to social reform and change,

<sup>60</sup> Samārchār Chandrikā, 15 February 1866.

<sup>61</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 6 July, 4 August 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 26 July 1865; Samachar Chandrikā, 26 December 1865; 15 January, 26 February, 12 April, 10 August 1866.

<sup>62</sup> Som Prakās, 24 Agrahāyaṇ 1280 (1874), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 120-122.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from Madhu Sudan Datta to Gour Das Basak, dated 26 January 1865, in K. Gupta, Madhusudaner Patrābalī, p.47.

<sup>64</sup> SAB, vol. I, p.68; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 6 June 1865.

<sup>65</sup> Som Prakās, 8 Jaiṣṭha (letter) 1279 (1872), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 259-261.

particularly with reference to sensitive questions such as the marriage of their daughters.<sup>66</sup> This was part of their attempt to gain social acceptance by strict adherence to existing social customs in the traditional manner expected of high caste families. But by the middle of the nineteenth century some of the lower caste groups were perhaps feeling secure in their position within the Hindu community and, consequently, felt bold enough to copy the reforming tendencies among the urban Hindu upper caste. Thus, navya abhijāts of lower caste origin such as Mati Lal Seal of the Teli (oil-presser) caste felt secure enough in their position to challenge deep-rooted Hindu traditions like the celibacy of Hindu widows.<sup>67</sup> The members of the Subarna Banik community, an increasingly wealthy and powerful lower caste community in urban Bengal, especially in Calcutta and Dacca, were praised by progressive contemporaries for their boldness in trying to curtail extravagance at marriage ceremonies and abolish some of the extravagant domestic rituals.<sup>68</sup>

Even the objection raised by the Bengali critics of caste were generally directed not against the principles behind the caste system but against some of the outward manifestations and interpretations of caste which often drew criticism from "outside sources" such as the Christian missionaries. That such manifestations and interpretations were seldom sanctioned by Sanskrit sources was emphasized. Even

<sup>66</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 14 Baisākh 1271 (1864), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 206-207.

<sup>67</sup> Mati Lal Seal offered a dowry of Rs. 10,000 to the first widow to get married in Bengal. George W. Johnson, Stranger in India or 3 Years in Calcutta, 2 volumes, London, 1843, as quoted in SBS, vol. 1, p. 514.

<sup>68</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 6 June, 10 August 1865. The Subarna Banik community of Calcutta took the initiative and printed circulars against such rituals for distribution.

197

progressive kṛitavidya newspapers such as the Hindoo Patriot, which since 1861 was edited by Krishna Das Pal of the lower Kumbhakār (potter) caste, lamented the fact that the Christian missionaries could not be "made to respect caste".<sup>69</sup> The critics of caste like Dr. Duff were warned that in denouncing caste they were unconsciously advocating atheism.<sup>70</sup> Caste was described as "coeval with creation... an omnipresent and inevitable institution"<sup>71</sup> and it was supported in principle, primarily on the ground that complete equality of men was not possible:<sup>72</sup>

"Caste is merely the embodiment in the form of a permanent social distinction of the natural inequality between men."<sup>73</sup>

Thus, in spite of the fact that urbanism and various aspects of urbanization such as modern education tend to weaken the strength of institutions such as the joint family and caste,<sup>74</sup> these institutions retained enough strength in nineteenth century Bengal to be considered as important social forces.<sup>75</sup> According to a nineteenth century Bengali kṛitavidya, even the "neo-Hindus" who frequently broke caste rules relating to food and drink generally adopted "a policy of caution" and tried not to go beyond what would be tolerated by their society.<sup>76</sup> Progressive Hindus were particularly cautious on the questions of marriage and family worship. Dwaraka Nath Mitra, a leading lawyer of

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<sup>69</sup>Hindoo Patriot, 24 November 1862.

<sup>70</sup>Hindoo Patriot, 18 June 1859.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Cf. M.S.Gore, "Some Problems of Urban Growth", Social Welfare, vol. 9, no. 7, October 1962, p.6; R. Mukherjee, Dynamics of a Rural Society, p.60; M.Singer, Traditional India, p.xv; N.K.Bose, "Some Aspects of Caste in Bengal", in M.Singer, op.cit., p.201.

<sup>75</sup>Samāchār Chandrikā, 30 November 1865; Dwijendra Nath Thakur, as quoted in FP, pp. 280,284; R.Lethbridge, Ramtanu Lahiri, p.52.

<sup>76</sup>P.N.Bose, A History of Hindu Civilisation, vol. I, p.80.

Calcutta who became a Judge of the Calcutta High Court in 1867 and dined with the Governor General, the Lt. Governor and other British officials, gave his daughter in marriage "in the Hindu way".<sup>77</sup> Both Raja Digambar Mitra who sent his son to England and then took him back into the joint family and Ram Gopal Ghosh who was known to have broken many caste rules, celebrated the Durgā Pūjā in the traditional fashion.<sup>78</sup> In 1869 Man Mohan Ghosh, the famous Bengali barrister, said in a lecture in Calcutta that many Bengali ideas and opinions, for instance those relating to early marriages, had remained unaffected.<sup>79</sup> In fact, the progress of English education seemed to have engendered "fresh antipathy" against Western ideas and institutions.<sup>80</sup>

The continuing strength of traditionalism was often the result of the continuing social authority of traditional abhijāts like Asutosh Deb and Radha Kanta Deb, the acknowledged "protector of Hindu Dharma".<sup>81</sup> This traditional leadership was mainly retained through the continuation, in some cases the revival, of classical traditions. Dwijendra Nath Thakur of the abhijāt Thakur family of Jorasanko described how the traditional abhijāts were accepted as the honoured protectors of the hereditary national (svadeśi) culture.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p.81 fn.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Man Mohan Ghosh, cited in Friend of India, 27 May 1869.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 15 May 1865.

<sup>82</sup> Dwijendra Nath Thakur, as quoted in PP, p.285.

As a reaction against Westernization and Christianization as well as against the Brāhma Samāj movement, the orthodox Hindus, especially of Calcutta and its suburbs where the forces of change were most active, organized various societies for the protection of the orthodox Hindu way of life. The Dharma Sabhā (religious society) of Calcutta was the most prominent organization of this kind, with the journal Samāchār Chandrikā for its mouthpiece<sup>83</sup> and, even according to its critics, exercising a considerable amount of social control over the "respectable (mānya) and gentle (bhadra) Hindus" of Calcutta and its neighbourhood.<sup>84</sup> The Sanātan Dharma Rakshīnī Sabhā (society for the protection of the Eternal Religion, that is, Hinduism) of Calcutta, established by Raja Kamal Krishna Bahadur and Kali Krishna Bahadur - abhijāt zamindars of Calcutta, also drew together the "foremost notable (ganānīya) and respectable (mānanīya) members" of the Hindu community.<sup>85</sup> Similar societies were formed in some of the other major urban areas of Bengal, mainly in Dacca, a centre of Hindu and Muslim orthodoxy as well as of Christian and Brāhma missionary activities. Perhaps the most famous conservative society in Dacca at this time was the Dharma Rakshīnī Sabhā (the society for the protection of religion) whose members had to sign a note promising to ostracize any family member who was connected with any religion other than Hinduism.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 16 May 1848: 23 Pous (1851), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 168-170, 174-175.

<sup>84</sup> Bengal Spectator, 1 September 1842, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 96-100.

<sup>85</sup> Som Prakās, 20 Āṣāḍh 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p. 239. Some of the other societies of this kind established in Calcutta and its neighbourhood were: the Hari-bhakti Pradāyīnī Sabhā (the society for the promotion of faith in Hari) located in Behala, the Nirapeksha Dharma Sañchāriṇī Sabhā (the Society for the propagation of the Independent Religion) of Calcutta which published the journal Nirapeksha Dharma Tattva [The knowledge of the Independent Religion] and the Dvija Dharmopadesīnī Sabhā (the society for the propagation of Hindu Dharma) in Sibpur. Sambād Prabhākar, 19 April 1865; Sambād Bhāskar, 18 May 1865.

<sup>86</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 28 July (citing Som Prakās, 16 August, 3 and

These societies frequently used Western techniques such as the organization of meetings and conferences, the collection of signatures, the preparation of pamphlets and petitions. But, faith in Hindu orthodoxy was the main factor behind their structure, organization and activities.<sup>87</sup> The reactions of the orthodox Hindus to Westernization and Christianization were particularly strong in Calcutta since it was in Calcutta that the "respectably connected and well-educated" young Bengalis "of respectable birth" such as Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyaya, Mahesh Chandra Ghosh, Gnanendra Mohan Thakur and Gour Das Maitra were converted to Christianity.<sup>88</sup>

Some of these societies and journals, such as the Hindu Hitaishinī Sabha (the Society for the benefit of Hindus) and its mouthpiece the Hindu Hitashinī Patrikā /The Journal for the Benefit of the Hindus/ of Dacca were specifically directed against the Brāhma Samāj. The Hindu Hitaishinī Sabhā was established by Jaga Bandhu Basu, a zamindar of Bikrampur who became the President of the Society and by Lakshmi Kanta Munshi, a lawyer of the Dacca Court.<sup>89</sup> Although the Society soon faced trouble among its members, many of whom were local zamindars who had been traditional rivals, yet it was a strong force against the Brāhma Samāj movement. Alarmed by the "daily progress of the well-educated Brāhmas" in Dacca, the members of the Hindu Hitaishinī Sabhā took the positive step of signing a document which contained a promise to sever connections with any relative who might oppose Hindu Dharma.<sup>90</sup> The

21 November 1865; Grāma Bārtā, August 1865.

<sup>87</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 28 July (citing Som Prakās), 11 December 1865.

<sup>88</sup> R. Lethbridge, Ramtanu Lahiri, p.109.

<sup>89</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 21 July 1865.

<sup>90</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 21 July, 1 August 1865.

Brāhmas grew uneasy at the progress of the Dacca Dharma Rakshinī Sabhā<sup>91</sup> which opened branches at Rajshahi, Rampur Boalia and Pabna-- places where Brāhma and Christian missionaries were known to have been active.<sup>92</sup>

## II Traditionalism in the Brāhma community

As the depth of anti-Brāhma feelings and the extent of anti-Brāhma activities among the orthodox Hindus indicated, the Brāhma Samāj was often considered to be a greater threat to orthodox Hindu society than Christian missionary activities in nineteenth century urban Bengal. There was enough cause for alarm. The institution of caste was frequently attacked by members of the Samāj. On the day of their formal acceptance of Brāhma Dharma, Raj Narayan Basu and his friends took biscuits and sherry before taking the vow "to show their opposition to caste restrictions."<sup>93</sup> Even Debendra Nath Thakur of the Adi Brāhma Samān, who showed unwillingness to discard the caste system altogether, defied some of the caste rules, perhaps under pressure from his more progressive Brāhma colleagues. On 23 January 1862, a dinner was held at his family residence in Jorasanko in Calcutta and, as the progressive Brāhma paper the Indian Mirror reported, the contemporaries

"first saw a large party of native gentlemen, numbering by hundreds and composed of various castes, making a bold and formal attempt to root out that pernicious monster - Caste. So large a number of Brahmins and Sudras, sitting promiscuously to dine, was rather a new sight in Bengal."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 16 August 1865 (citing the Bengalee).

<sup>92</sup>Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 16 August, 3 November 1865. The Boalia Sabha published a monthly magazine named the Hindu Rañjika [A Journal to Please the Hindus].

<sup>93</sup>R.N.Basu, Atmacharit, p.28.

<sup>94</sup>Indian Mirror, 1 February 1862.



The members of the Thakur family of Jorasanko, who in spite of their economic status faced many social problems for instance with relation to marriage because of their low Pirāli Brāhmaṇ status, took a leading part in the Brāhma Samāj movement.

But the renunciation of Hinduism did not necessarily put an end to caste-pride (jātyābhimān). Debendra Nath Thakur insisted on retaining some of the major aspects of the caste system, such as the exalted position of the Brāhmaṇs, within the framework of the Brāhma Samāj. Raj Narayan declared that he failed to see how caste-distinctions (jāti-bibhed) could be denounced "in view of the fact that every country and society has and will continue to have caste-distinctions in one form or another."<sup>95</sup> The issues of ritualism and caste created special problems for the Brāhmaṇs. Within the Brāhma Samāj there was a considerable difference of opinion on questions of social change. The early (prāthamik) Brāhmaṇs believed the performance of traditional rituals to be a part of religion and even went to the extent of performing daily pūjās (worship) "in the Hindu fashion" and honouring the sacred symbols of Hinduism such as the tulsī (a plant sacred to the Vaishṇavas) in public.<sup>96</sup> While conservative Brāhmaṇs like Raj Narayan supported such action,<sup>97</sup> the progressive Brāhmaṇs considered such action to be hypocritical and inconsistent with the principles underlying the Brāhma Samāj movement. The Brāhma leadership was deeply divided on this issue. The differences between Debendra Nath, the Brāhmaṇ leader of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj who was primarily interested in the religious aspect of the movement, and Keshab Chandra Sen, the

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<sup>95</sup>R.N.Basu, Atmācharit, p.73.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p.6.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

Baidya leader of the Bhārat Varshīya Brahma Samāj who was mainly interested in social reform was thus described by Debendra Nath's son Satyendra Nath:

"As regards social reformation, he [Debendra Nath] was for adopting a slow and cautious policy, a policy of conciliation; he was in favour of leaving such reforms as were really required to the influence of time, and to the effect of the teachings of a pure religion. Keshab, on the other hand, was a reformer of a more pronounced type. Though for many years he had sat at the feet of the Maharshi [Great sage, Debendra Nath], a time came when he could no longer pull together with his conservatism. Inter marriage, remarriage of widows, abolition of caste distinctions, all these questions of radical reform were started and discussed. On these questions, it would seem, my father yielded as far as conservatism would permit, but when he thought that Keshab's disciples were going too far he drew back in alarm."<sup>98</sup>

Thus, Debendra Nath's behaviour, which could also have resulted from his unwillingness to have a final breach with the Hindu society, was primarily the result of his innate conservatism.

The conservative Brāhmas were frequently criticized and ridiculed by contemporaries for their attachment to ritualism.<sup>99</sup> In the 1850s it was rumoured that some members of the Brāhma Samāj had even "kept up the Durgā Pūjā"<sup>100</sup> and a Christian observer remarked:

"We gather from our contemporaries that the Vedantists call their meetings the church of the Brahma Sabha and that they consider themselves as Dissenters from the orthodox Hindoos. We shall be gratified to find them not only dissenting in theory but practice from what they deem the corruptions of the Hindu faith... The Vedantists must do more than meet and discuss, if they would have any real influence with their countrymen."<sup>101</sup>

<sup>98</sup> D.N. Tagore, Autobiography (Introductory Chapter), pp. 14-15.

<sup>99</sup> Som Prakāś, 25 January, 8 February 1864.

<sup>100</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 1 January 1855 (citing the Christian Advocate).

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

Even liberals who were generally sympathetic to the Brāhmas felt that their rejection of idolatry had not been very firm. The Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya criticized the "ritual-loving" (anuṣṭhān-priya) Brāhmas for performing Hindu ceremonies such as jāta-karma (ceremony after birth) and anna-prāśan (rice-giving ceremony usually performed when an infant is six months old).<sup>102</sup> The Som Prakāś criticized the Brāhmas for leaving "the true path of social reform (samāj-saṃskār)" and for becoming obsessed with the performance of "rituals (anuṣṭhān) which were as expensive and harmful as the existing Hindu rituals."<sup>103</sup>

The crux of the matter was that Debendra Nath and his followers thought of themselves as Hindus and of Brāhma Dharma as a purified form of Hindu Dharma,<sup>104</sup> while the more radical Brāhmas wished to have as little connection with Hindu religion and society as possible. Raj Narayan and the other conservative Brāhmas were obviously influenced by Debendra Nath who believed that Brāhma Dharma was formed of "the main truths contained in the Vedas and the Upanishads"<sup>105</sup> and wrote:

"The Hindu religion is a very wide and liberal religion. It can absorb all kinds of improvement within itself. Hence, the Brāhmas should remain within the fold of Hinduism and spread their religion. The Hindu religion should be purified, and transformed into Brāhma Dharma."<sup>106</sup>

Debendra Nath was obviously trying to adapt the traditional Hindu religion to the changing times by reaffirming those portions of the traditional religion and culture which would appeal to the young Bengalis, including those who had come into contact with the West. Indeed,

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<sup>102</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 9 August 1865.

<sup>103</sup> Som Prakāś, 28 December 1863.

<sup>104</sup> R.N. Basu, Ātmacharit, p.54.

<sup>105</sup> D.N. Thakur, Ātmajībanī, p.180.

<sup>106</sup> D.N. Thakur, Brāhma Samājer Pañca-vimsati Batsarer Parīksita Brittānta, pp. 42-43, as quoted in S.N. Gupta, Unavimsa Śatābdite Bānglār Nava Jāgaran, p.78.

a large section of the urban Hindu kṛitavidyas were attracted by the kind of traditionalism upheld by the Ādi Brāhma Samāj.<sup>107</sup> On the other hand, the Bhārat Varshīya Brāhma Samāj, whose members called themselves the "advanced (unnata) Brāhmas",<sup>108</sup> was often criticized for its attitude of disrespect towards traditional Hindu religion and culture.<sup>109</sup> It was argued with considerable truth, that the members of the Keshab-gos̥thī or the Kaishab-Sampradāya (Keshab's group) had lost much of their effectiveness as social reformers by disassociating themselves completely from the Hindu society/community (samāj).<sup>110</sup>

Debendra Nath's followers supported his acceptance of rituals such as the use of the upabīta and the Gāyatrī Mantra (an ancient Sanskrit prayer meant for the Brāhmas) as signs of "a spiritual aristocracy (ādhyātmik. ābhijātya) inherited from the ancient sages".<sup>111</sup> The Brāhmas were only cautioned to

"see to it that there is no contact with idolatry since the worship of an unlimited number of gods in the place of one God is forbidden for the Brāhmas,"<sup>112</sup>

Debendra Nath's traditionalism, his close associates argued, did not make him blind to the need for adjustments and change. Debendra Nath,

<sup>107</sup> Som Prakāś, 12 Chaitra 1279 (1873), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 269-270.

<sup>108</sup> Chandra Shekhar Basu, as quoted in Som Prakāś, 4 Āsvin 1277 (1870), SBS, vol. 4, p.218.

<sup>109</sup> Som Prakāś, 12 Chaitra 1279 (1873), SBS, vol. 4, p.270.

<sup>110</sup> Som Prakāś, 9 Phālgun 1277 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 222-223.

<sup>111</sup> R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, p.150.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

and not Akshay Kumar Datta as the latter's friends claimed, was said to be the man who was primarily responsible for the ultimate decision taken by the Brāhma leadership in 1851 to give up belief in the infallibility of the Vedas as "revealed by God" (Īsvar-pratyādiṣṭa).<sup>113</sup> This change in Brāhma philosophy was significant for two reasons, first, it established the separate identity of the Brāhma Samāj and, second, it made it possible for the Western-educated urban Bengali kṛitavidyas, who refused to accept the concept of the infallibility and "revealed" nature of the Vedas, to accept Brāhma Dharma.

In the final analysis, caste emerged as the main issue between Debendra Nath and Keshab Chandra. To Keshab and his followers, mostly non-Brāhmins,<sup>114</sup> the renunciation of caste was as essential to the Brāhma Samāj as the renunciation of idolatry. They objected to the policy of appointing only Brāhmins as ācāryas (priests/preceptors) of the Brāhma Samāj which was upheld by Debendra Nath. Another aspect of the issue was Debendra Nath's objection to the inter-caste marriages (asavarṇa-bibāha) which were organized by the Keshab-goṣṭhī in the 1850s. Bengali newspapers expressed concern at the signs of disturbance within the Brāhma Samāj, especially at the signs of disagreement between Debendra Nath, "the pradhān ācārya"

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p.42. In a lecture delivered at the annual meeting of the Brāhma Samāj held in Māgh 1772 (1851), Akshay Kumar Datta declared for the first time that the Vedas were not "revealed by God". Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Some of the leading Brāhma missionaries who belonged to the Keshab-goṣṭhī in the 1860s and the early 1870s, for example, were Baidyas such as Pratap Chandra Majumdar, Aghor Nath Gupta, Uma Nath Gupta, Gour Gobinda Ray, Pyari Mohan Choudhury, Prasanna Kumar Sen and Girish Chandra Sen, and Kayasthas such as Amrita Lal Basu, Mahendra Nath Basu and Kanti Chandra Mitra.

(chief priest/preceptor) and Keshab Chandra, "the leader of the Younger Brāhmas."<sup>115</sup> It was feared that the news of differences of opinion between the leading Brāhmas of Calcutta might reduce whatever respect the Brāhmas of the Mofussil had for the Calcutta Brāhma Samāj.<sup>116</sup>

In the 1860s the members of the Keshab-goṣṭhī began to break caste rules publicly and celebrate marriages between members of different castes, causing great excitement within the Bengali society. The conservative section of the Brāhma Samāj, obviously unwilling to go so far in antagonizing the Hindu society, grew alarmed. The conservatives' alarm increased when their leader Debendra Nath bowed to pressures from the progressives within the Samāj and accepted two men from the younger group who openly defied caste as Assistant Ministers.<sup>117</sup> Faced by opposition within the Samāj, some of the younger members such as Keshab Chandra Sen, Pyari Chand Mitra, Ishwar Chandra Nandi and Shri Nath Bandyopadhyaya organized the Pratinidhi Sabhā or the Representative Assembly through which they wished to control the Samāj.<sup>118</sup> In a significant show of strength outside Calcutta, Keshab and his associates succeeded in gaining support and promise of financial help from the Samājes in both Western and Eastern Bengal such as those in Krishnanagar, Konnagar, Baidyabati, Midnapur, Santipur, Dacca, Mymensingh, Faridpur and Tripura.<sup>119</sup> But the Keshab-goṣṭhī faced strong

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<sup>115</sup> Som Prakāś, 7 November 1864: 14 August 1865; Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 9 August 1865.

<sup>116</sup> Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 9 August 1865.

<sup>117</sup> They were Bijay Krishna Goswami and Annada Prasad Chattopadhyaya, two close friends of Keshab who, although Brāhmas, refused to wear the sacred thread.

<sup>118</sup> Som Prakāś, 19 September, 7 and 14 November 1864.

<sup>119</sup> Som Prakāś, 22 May 1865. See Map 2.

opposition from Debendra Nath and his followers -still a strong force within the Brāhma Samāj -who believed in centralization and felt that the Calcutta Brāhma Samāj, presumably under the leadership of the conservative Brāhmas, should act as the head of the entire Brāhma community in Bengal and that there was no need for a separate "representative assembly" as suggested by Keshab Sen and his followers.<sup>120</sup>

Apart from the questions connected with the relationship between the Hindu community and the Brāhma Samāj and between the Calcutta Brāhma Samāj and the Brāhma Samājes in the Mofussil, the discussions of this period also raised the important question whether only those who openly accepted the main tenets of the Brāhma religion should be called "a Brāhma" or whether a man who believed in Brāhma Dharma but for various reasons did not want to be formally initiated should also be called "a Brāhma".<sup>121</sup> In 1865 Keshab Chandra Sen, along with a few other secessionists, wrote a letter to Debendra Nath Thakur, the official head of the Calcutta Brāhma Samāj, stating the views of the dissidents and expressing the desire to form a separate Samāj.<sup>122</sup> The main proposal contained in the letter centred around the argument that the ācārya (priest) or the upācārya (assistant priest) or a high official of the Brāhma Samāj need not wear the "sacred thread" or any other mark

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<sup>120</sup> Som Prakās, 3 October 1864.

<sup>121</sup> Som Prakās, 5 and 26 September, 24 and 31 October 1864.

<sup>122</sup> This letter and Debendra Nath's reply were published in the prominent Bengali newspapers of Calcutta. Som Prakās, 31 July 1865; Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Śrāvṇ 1787 (1866), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 540-542.

of caste distinction - a proposal which was not acceptable to the conservative Brāhmas.<sup>123</sup> Although the secessionist group included a few Brāhmins such as Yadu Nath Chakrabarty and Nibaran Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, yet its leadership obviously rested with Keshab Chandra Sen, a Baidya, and his non-Brāhman associates such as Uma Nath Gupta, also a Baidya, and Mahendra Nath Basu, a Kāyastha.

The schism was finally and publicly proclaimed on 11 November 1866 at a meeting held at the Calcutta College on Chitpur Road and led to the establishment of the Bhārat Varshīya Brāhma Samāj or the Brāhma Samāj of India. The controversies continued to excite the members of the Brāhma community and to some extent the entire urban Bengali society even after the schism. In 1867, in an open letter written to Debendra Nath which was published in the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā,<sup>124</sup> Keshab Chandra and his followers related the changes which they thought were essential in order to make the Brāhma Samāj acceptable to the well-educated young community. Again, the main demands of the Keshab-goṣṭhī were mostly related to caste questions, being the removal of caste signs such as the upabīta from the appearance of the ācāryas of the Brāhma Samāj, the insistence upon criteria such as character and knowledge rather than caste for the selection of the ācāryas, and a "liberal" and "impartial" interpretation of Brāhma Dharma.<sup>125</sup>

The issue of ritualism was thus an important factor behind the break-up of the Brāhma Samāj and its decline as an effective socio-religious

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Śrāvaṇ, 1787 (1867), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 540-542.

<sup>125</sup> Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Śrāvaṇ 1787 (1867), SBS, vol. 2, p.541.



movement.<sup>126</sup> The śrāddha (after-death ceremony) of Debendra Nath's father in 1847, which was criticized by many Brāhmas for not having been performed "strictly according to Brāhmic rites",<sup>127</sup> gave rise to a long controversy within the Brāhma Samāj. The Som Prakāś considered this affair to be the beginning of the "break-up of the Brāhma family".<sup>128</sup> In the 1860s, the nāma-karaṇ (name-giving) ceremony of Karuna Kumar, the eldest son of Keshab Chandra, was the theme of a long series of newspaper articles on the place of ritualism in the Brāhma Samāj.<sup>129</sup> Thus, by the 1860s there were two major groups within the Brāhma Samāj, the first group consisting of the Brāhmas who were in favour of performing the major Hindu socio-domestic rituals such as jāta-karma (ceremonies after birth), nāma-karaṇ (name-giving ceremony), upanayan (thread-giving ceremony), antyeṣṭi-kriyā (funeral ceremony) and ādya-śrāddha (ceremony after death) and the second group consisting of those who were opposed to the performance of such rituals.

### III Traditionalism in the Muslim community

The force of traditionalism was perhaps nowhere stronger within the urban Bengali society than among its Muslim members.<sup>130</sup> The

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<sup>126</sup> Dwijendra Nath Thakur, "Bhrātrī-bhēb" [Brotherly Feeling], cited in Som Prakāś, 28 September 1863.

<sup>127</sup> R.N. Basu, Ātmacharit, p.36.

<sup>128</sup> Som Prakāś, 15 September, 20 October 1862.

<sup>129</sup> Som Prakāś, 19 January, 2, 9, 16 and 23 February, 9 March, 6 April (citing Indian Mirror), 17 August 1863.

<sup>130</sup> The Bengali Muslims even had many of the characteristics of the Hindu caste system which was not unusual since most of them were converts or descendants of converts. Report on Census of Bengal, 1872, pp. 13-134, 190; SAB, vol. IV, pp. 54, 334; vol. V, p.195; vol. VI, p.279; vol. VIII, p.48; vol. IX, p.289; M.T. Titus, Islam in India and Pakistan, p.175; Kazi Abdul Odud, Hindu Musalmāner Birodh, pp. 22-23, 25-26.

socio-economic degeneration of the Bengali Muslims,<sup>131</sup> which was most striking in the traditional centres of Muslim power and prestige such as Dacca and Murshidabad,<sup>132</sup> was closely connected with the growing impact of urbanization and the various processes encouraged by urbanism such as Westernization and the general Muslim inability to cope with these forces. Both official and non-official sources rightly considered Muslim orthodoxy, more specifically Muslim dislike for Western education, to be the most important factor behind the social and economic decline of the Muslim community in Bengal.<sup>133</sup>

There was little demand for traditional Muslim education in the changing urban Bengali society. In 1869 a Muslim correspondent described how poverty forced many educated Muslims to "turn from intellectual work to manual labour".<sup>134</sup>

"The very education which he (the educated Muslim) had received made him totally unfit for any work..."

<sup>131</sup> J. Long, The Muhammadans of Bengal, pp. 1,6; Friend of India, 8 May 1858; 16 July 1863; Som Prakāś, 28 August, 1865; Englishman, 9 October 1870.

<sup>132</sup> In Calcutta - a new city which grew out of the necessities of British trade and administration - the Muslims had never been able to establish themselves as successfully as the Hindu middlemen, traders and interpreters. Friend of India, 11 February 1869 ("The Bengal Mussalmans" by "One of Themselves").

<sup>133</sup> Despatch to India (Public, Education), 3 June (no. 78) 1857, p. 906; A. Latif, as quoted in J. Long, The Muhammadans of Bengal, pp. 11-12; Sambād Prabhākar, 11 May 1865. The poverty of the Muslims was one of the factors behind Muslim backwardness in the sphere of modern education, but hardly the most important factor as suggested by some. Cf. A.R. Mullick, British policy and the Muslims in Bengal, pp. 157, 162-163, 187-188, 193.

<sup>134</sup> Friend of India, 13 May 1869 (From "A Muslim Correspondent").

The district Cazeeship and law officership being abolished, he has no career open to him."<sup>135</sup>

The Rev. James Long wrote in the 1860s:

"It is a painful truth that they are sinking in the social scale, and that the new rule adopted of requiring a knowledge of English from all candidates for offices of any importance, is plunging them still lower. Hence, in a few Government offices in Bengal are there any respectable Muhammadan officials, but plenty of duffries and peons... The Musalmans have lost the employments they held as conquerors, and are being superseded by Hindus."<sup>136</sup>

After attending a meeting of the "gentry" of Murshidabad summoned by the Dewan of the Nawab Nazim of Bengal,<sup>137</sup> Long concluded that

"There was an immense amount of bitterness and discontent existing owing to the want of a career for Muhammadans. Their fall from political power and the English Government making a book career a test for office had left members poor and proud without any resources."<sup>138</sup>

According to the Rev. Long, an important and necessary step on the part of the Government, in solving the problem of Muslim "backwardness" would be to know more about the Bengali Muslims<sup>139</sup> and generally encourage interactions between the English and the Muslim communities.<sup>140</sup> Contemporary English observers felt that the Muslims had an inherent feeling of dislike and distrust towards the British who had replaced them as rulers<sup>141</sup> and that this factor influenced Muslim attitude towards Westrnization.<sup>142</sup> The Principal of Dacca College wrote in 1853:

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. Also, letter from an ex-student of Calcutta Madrassa to C.H.Campbell, dated 1 September 1869, in Selection from Records: Committee on Education of Mahomedan Community, p.100.

<sup>136</sup> J.Long, The Muhammadans of Bengal, p.2.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> W.W.Hunter's The Indian Musalmans written in the early 1870s at Mayo's suggestion and published in 1871, which largely blamed the British Government for Muslim decline, attempted to supply such knowledge.

<sup>140</sup> J.Long, The Muhammadans of Bengal, pp. 2, 5-7, 9-10.

"The English language is unpopular amongst the Moslems, who have a polished language and literature of their own, of which they are proud, and which they very naturally prefer to that of the strangers, who have deprived them of supremacy and who cannot, therefore, be expected to look upon the English, and their language, but with an evil eye."<sup>143</sup>

In 1857 an official observer noted that "indifference" to education especially to Western education, which among the Muslims as a class was often spoken of as "almost amounting to positive opposition" could be attributed "in great measure to the fear lest the measures in progress should supersede the cultivation of the Arabic language which is to them an object of regard, amounting to veneration."<sup>144</sup>

The Maulavis, who had a great amount of social control within the Muslim community even in the urban areas, in particular, were strongly opposed to "any reform in the teaching afforded at the Indian Madrissas".<sup>145</sup> Maulavi Abdul Latif, an English-educated Muslim, pointed out the importance of traditional learning to a Muslim:

"Unless a Muhammadan is a Persian and Arabic scholar, he cannot attain a respectable position in Muhammadan society, that is, he will not be regarded or respected as a scholar and unless he has such a position, he can

<sup>141</sup> Letter from Cecil Beadon, dated 26 April 1852, quoted in Papers relating to the Foundation of the Presidency College, Appendix V, p.xxix; J. Long, op.cit., pp. 1, 5; W.W.Hunter, The Indian Musalmans, pp. 175-176.

<sup>142</sup> Dacca News, 7 March 1857; W.W.Hunter, op.cit., pp. 175-176.

<sup>143</sup> Note from Principal of Dacca College, dated 9 May 1853, in Papers relating to the Foundation of the Presidency College, Appendix V, p.xlvi.

<sup>144</sup> Note by Lt. Lees, Secretary of the Board of Examiners, Calcutta, in Despatch to India (Public, Education), 3 June (no.78) 1857, pp. 906-907.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., pp. 907-908.

have no influence in the Muhammadan community."<sup>146</sup>

A Muslim studying English was often forced to carry on a simultaneous study of Persian at home.<sup>147</sup> Even in the urban areas, the Muslims were far from enthusiastic in their responses to either English or vernacular education.<sup>148</sup>

In the 1860s the Rev. James Long saw several signs of "a move among the Muhammadans of Bengal" such as the success of the Anglo-Persian class at the Calcutta Madrassa, the success of Muslim candidates at the Entrance Examination of the Calcutta University, the publication of an Arabic grammar by Maulavi Abdulla Al-Obydi, the Anglo-Arabic Professor at the Hooghly College, the foundation of the Mussalman Bengali or Dobhāṣī language and the activities of the Muhammadan Literary Society.<sup>149</sup> The educated Bengali Muslim even showed interest in introducing female education with government help.<sup>150</sup> However, all these signs of change were confined to only a small section of the urban Bengali Muslims, mostly living in and around Calcutta. On the whole, as Hindu journalists were eager to point out, the Bengali Muslims showed "extreme conservatism" in social, religious

<sup>146</sup> Abdul Latif, as quoted in J. Long, The Muhammadans of Bengal, pp. 11-12.

<sup>147</sup> F. J. Mouat, Secretary to the Council of Education, quoted in Papers relating to the Foundation of Presidency College, p. 11.

<sup>148</sup> Letter from Magistrate Raikes of Mymensingh to Dr. Spenger of Calcutta Madrassa dated 28 June 1851, quoted in Selection from Records: Report on Calcutta Madrassa, 1850, p. 7; Correspondence on Education of Mahomedan Community, p. 152; W. W. Hunter, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>149</sup> J. Long, The Muhammadans of Bengal, pp. 13-14.

<sup>150</sup> Friend of India, 11 March 1869 ("The Mussulman Zenana" by "A Mussulman Correspondent").

and other matters: 151

"The Muslim society/community (samāj) is not showing the signs of improvement which can be seen among the Hindus. There are some Muslims who have discarded superstitions. But the Muslim society is so strong that such men are afraid to act openly. Even men like Abdul Latif have been forced to join the conservative section (gōḍa dal) on many occasions."<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup>Som Prakāś, 16 Jaiṣṭha 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 234-237.

<sup>152</sup>Som Prakāś, 16 Jaiṣṭha 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p.235.

## 5. EXPERIMENTS IN WESTERNIZATION

The urban Bengali kritavidyas often refused to accept the traditional authority of religious and semi-religious norms and even rejected their "eternal" customs and habits.<sup>1</sup> This was particularly true in the case of the Western-educated progressives. Education, especially English education, was said to have created the "correct atmosphere" for social reform in nineteenth century Bengal,<sup>2</sup> by endowing the urban Bengali kritavidyas with many Western qualities and by opening their eyes to the defects of the Hindu society.<sup>3</sup> The socio-domestic situation often seemed "unbearable" to these men whose isolation was enhanced by their excessive Westernization".<sup>4</sup> But they were hopeful that all habits and customs were being and would be changed under the liberal influence of English education.<sup>5</sup> In place of traditional responses to political, religious and social questions, these kritavidyas began to express Western responses based upon rationality and liberalism. The most popular medium was

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<sup>1</sup> Som Prakāś, 28 December 1863.

<sup>2</sup> Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 11 October 1865.

<sup>3</sup> Som Prakāś, 19 May 1855, 12 Bhādra 1271 (1864); SBS, vol. 4, pp. 504, 765-767; 6 Śrāvaṇ 1275 (1868); Saṅbād Bhāskar, 15 January 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 437-438; Paridarsak, 6 October 1861; Overland Friend of India, 7 November 1865 (quoting Friend of India, 26 October 1865); N.N.Choudhury, Calni Balen Sūnc, p.10; D. Mitra, Muṣalam Kula Nāsanam, pp. 1-3; Amrita Lal Basu, as quoted in PP, p.200; B.C.Fal, Navayuger Bāṅglā, p.43.

<sup>4</sup> Paridarsak, 18 December 1861; Samāchār Chandrikā, 1 June 1865; Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 11 April 1866; P.N.Bose, A History of Hindu Civilisation, vol.III, pp. 57-62.

<sup>5</sup> Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 14 September 1865; Śikshā Darpan, Chaitra 1272 (1866).

the urban Bengali Press run by the urban kṛitavidyas themselves.<sup>6</sup> The Som Prakās, which was associated with the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī, declared that it was "unjust to say that anything that is old is the object of faith and worship and urged the "young group" (navya sampradāya) to "abandon their attempt to maintain a compromise with the customs of the land" and instead "try to uproot those aspects of religion and society which they considered to be the sources of misery and, more important, opposed to rationality".<sup>7</sup> According to Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, a Western-educated Bengali who taught at the prestigious Presidency College from 1862 to 1872, the Som Prakās did the "most work" towards the creation of a political climate in Bengal.<sup>8</sup> The relatively conservative newspapers such as the Sambād Prabhākar also showed great interest in the political questions of the time and criticized different aspects of British Government in India.<sup>9</sup> Leading Bengali journalists showed an increasing interest in the important questions of the need for self-reliance on the part of the Indians and the location of responsibility for reform and change, mainly with reference to social matters. The Som Prakās cited the British example:

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<sup>6</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 17 July, 8 August 1861; Pūrṇimā, Phālgun 1265 (1859); Ranpur Dik Prakās, 8 August 1861; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 20 February 1866; letter from Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya to Sambhū Chandra Chattopadhyaya, dated 14 March 1872, as quoted in S. Banerjee, Patra Sāhitya, pp. 81-82.

<sup>7</sup> Som Prakās, 28 July 1862.

<sup>8</sup> Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 1 Chaitra 1258 (1852), 10 Āṣāḍh 1259 (1852), 25 Kārtik, 14 and 29 Phālgun 1259 (1853), 6 Bhādra 1261 (1854), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 182-183, 186-187, 189-191, 193-194, 198-200, 206-207.



"It is because we look to the Government that we are not getting the desired amount of progress. We pray that we may soon discard our dependence upon others... We should strive for the establishment of a Parliament on the English model in this country and for the transfer of government into our hands. It is necessary to limit the powers of the Government in India in the same manner as the British Government has limited powers [in Britain]."<sup>10</sup>

The Sambād Prabhākar was also in favour of social change initiated from within:

"In the spread of the Bengali language and in every other social matter, it is necessary [for the Bengali kṛitavidyas] to attempt to introduce reform, independent of government help. Since our countrymen even now remain immobile like lumps of clay, in this matter as in others, we approve of a limited amount of government intervention. But the alien ruler cannot be made responsible for everything. It is not proper that the people of this country will remain today as they were two hundred and sixty five years ago. It is necessary to destroy their fears slowly."<sup>11</sup>

In the mid-1860s, a Bengali journalist of Calcutta reported:

"According to the well-educated men of today, it is their duty to establish associations (sabhās) which they consider to be an act which is beneficial to the country."<sup>12</sup>

#### I Westernization in politics

An important aspect of the impact of Westernization upon nineteenth century urban Bengali kṛitavidyas was the distinct interest which was being shown by an increasingly large number of them in political and economic matters. Bengali kṛitavidyas began to

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<sup>10</sup> Som Prakāś, 19 September 1864.

<sup>11</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 12 June 1865.

<sup>12</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 10 October 1865.

criticize the "economic exploitation" of India by Britain and suggest specific measures for protecting the interests of Indian manufacturers, for example the cotton manufacturers.<sup>13</sup> The phenomenon of rising food prices - which was attributed to government policy - disturbed the urban Bengali kritavidyas, particularly in Calcutta and Dacca, the two biggest cities.<sup>14</sup> In 1857 the Government was presented with a petition "from a number of the native community of Calcutta and its Suburbs, complaining of the dearness of provisions and soliciting the interference of Government in the limitation of prices and therestriction of the export of articles of food."<sup>15</sup> In 1858 a resident of Dacca wrote:

"A protracted dearth of food has seized the town nay the entire district of Dacca ... what a striking contrast with the golden days of Nawab Shaistakhan!"<sup>16</sup>

According to the Friend of India, the situation was quite serious, particularly as far as "the respectable classes" of the urban Bengali community were concerned:<sup>17</sup>

"Everywhere apparently within a hundred miles of Calcutta there has been for the last two years a gradual but rapid rise in the price of provisions... The price of rice was doubled, and among all classes with fixed

<sup>13</sup>The Sambād Bhāskar, for example, suggested that the Indian cotton manufacturers should use machines to lower the cost of cotton. Sambād Bhāskar, 27 May 1865.

<sup>14</sup>Friend of India, 30 September 1858; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 21 June, 2 November, 5 and 19 December 1865; Siksha Darpan, Kārtik 1272 (1865); Samāchār Chandrikā, 30 October 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 1 March 1866.

<sup>15</sup>Despatch to India (Public, Bengal), 17 April (no. 53) 1857, p.278.

<sup>16</sup>Dacca News, 26 June 1858.

<sup>17</sup>For example, Friend of India, 30 September 1858: 15 November 1860.

incomes ... there is a sharp cry of suffering...  
The respectable classes, clerks, Government employees,  
and all who live by fees, declare that food, spices,  
servants, oil and wood, the five great expenses of a  
Bengalee have all increased at once."<sup>18</sup>

The Vernacular Press of Calcutta viewed the phenomenon of the rapidly rising price of food and other essential commodities with great concern.<sup>19</sup> The Government was often blamed for creating this situation, mainly by exporting food grains in large quantities.<sup>20</sup> The lack of interest in commerce on the part of most Bengali abhijāts was held to be another reason behind the lack of commodities.<sup>21</sup> The lack of interest in agriculture was also criticized<sup>22</sup> and prominent Calcutta kritavidyas like Ram Gopal Ghosh and Pyari Chand Mitra began to take an active part in agricultural exhibitions and in the Agri-Horticultural Society in Calcutta, often following the example of prominent Europeans with whom they interacted.<sup>23</sup> Interest in

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<sup>18</sup>Friend of India, 30 September 1858.

<sup>19</sup>Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 23 February, 21 June, 25 October, 2 November, 5 and 19 December 1865; 5 March 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 21 October 1865; 16 February (letter) 1866); Sambād Bhaskar, 25 November 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 22 February 1866.

<sup>20</sup>Sambād Prabhākar, 1 March 1860; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 21 June, 2 November, 5 and 19 December 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 30 October 1865; 22 February 1866; Śikshā Darpaṇ, Kārtik 1272 (1865).

<sup>21</sup>Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 21 June 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 3 February 1866.

<sup>22</sup>Pūrṇimā, Caitra 1265 (1859); Rangpur Dik Prakāś, 5 September 1861; Som Prakāś, 27 June 1864; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 27 June, 2 September, 10 October 1865; 10 January 1866; Samāchār Chandrikā, 3 August 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 3 November 1865.

<sup>23</sup>See "Peary Chand Mitra", Calcutta Review, vol. 120, April 1905, pp.242-243.

commerce and industry was encouraged<sup>24</sup> and the preoccupation with white-collared jobs (masī-jībikā) was considered to be a form of slavery<sup>25</sup> and a major reason behind national backwardness.<sup>26</sup> The wealthy Bengalis, it seemed, were even eager to "buy" such "slavery" and allow the English to prosper with the aid of their capital instead of engaging in commerce themselves.<sup>27</sup> The kṛitavidyas were urged to follow the example of Bengalis like Ram Gopal Ghosh and Dwaraka Nath Thakur who had succeeded in business,<sup>28</sup> to form Joint Stock Companies,<sup>29</sup> participate in overseas trade and navigation by discarding their caste prejudices,<sup>30</sup> and to take a share in the profit derived from trade and commerce in India which seemed to be totally monopolized by the British.<sup>31</sup> The establishment of

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<sup>24</sup> Banga Vidya Prakāśikā, Āsvin, Pous 1262 (1855); Sarba Śubhakarī Patrikā, 15 and 27 September 1859; Rangpur Dik Prakās, 14 June 1860; 28 April 1861; Som Prakās, 11 August 1862: 27 June 1864: 18 September 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 27 June, 10 October 1865; Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Jaiṣṭha 1792 (1871), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 244-251.

<sup>25</sup> Paridarśak, 7 October 1861; Śikshā Darpan, Pous 1272 (1865); Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 9 October, 24 November 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 30 October 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 23 November 1865: 3 February 1866; Sambād Bhāskar, 6 January 1866.

<sup>26</sup> Pūrṇimā, Caitra 1265 (1859); Som Prakās, 7 December 1862: 24 October 1864; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 21 and 27 June, 28 August, 7 October 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 10 November 1865: 3 February 1866; Sambād Bhāskar, 6 January 1866.

<sup>27</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 3 February 1866.

<sup>28</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 27 June 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 3 February, 27 June 1866.

<sup>29</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 3 February 1866.

<sup>30</sup> Som Prakās, 7 December 1862; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 28 August 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 30 October 1865; Sambād Bhāskar, 6 January 1866.

<sup>31</sup> Som Prakās, 24 October 1864; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 7 October 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 10 November 1865.

companies by Bengali urbanites, for instance the Kalikātā Bybasāyī Samāj (Calcutta Businessmen's Association) which was established in 1861 mainly at Kāyastha initiative<sup>32</sup> and the "native" Life Insurance Company which was established in Calcutta in 1865 and was owned entirely by Indians, mostly rich Hindus of Calcutta,<sup>33</sup> was applauded. The list of directors of the Life Insurance Company showed that it was a joint venture of abhijāts such as Raja Satya Narayan Ghoshal, Western-educated kṛitavidyas such as Pyari Chand Sarkar and members of the rising urban mercantile community which included lower caste Hindus such as Hira Lal Seal of the oil-presser caste. The urban Bengalis who were perhaps best known for their commercial pursuits were the highly Westernized members of the Derozio-goṣṭhī like Ram Gopal Ghosh, a member of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce who established the famous R.G. Ghosh and Company, and Pyari Chand Mitra who founded the firm of Pyari Chand Mitra and Sons.<sup>34</sup>

The Western-educated urban Bengalis who were exposed to the forces of urbanization, modernization and Westernization began to show great interest in politics. The various associations and societies

<sup>32</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 10 August, 7 December 1865; Som Prakās, 18 September 1865.

<sup>33</sup> Paridarsak, 3 October (letter), 19 and 23 November 1861; Samāchār Chandrikā, 10 August 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 10 August (citing the Som Prakās), 24 October 1865.

<sup>34</sup> Pyari Chand Mitra was also the Director of the Bengal Tea Company, Durrung Tea Company and was elected the Director of many limited companies, foremost of which were the Great Eastern Hotel Company, Port Canning Land Investment Company, Howrah Docking Company and South Salt Company. "Peary Chand Mitra", Calcutta Review, vol. 120, April 1905, pp. 240, 244. Some of the other well-known "native merchants" were Sagar Datta and Kshetra Mohan Das, Dr. S. Chakrabarty, cited in J. Long, Calcutta and Bombay in their Social Aspects, p. 30.

which were organized in the urban areas of Bengal, especially in Calcutta in the nineteenth century, provided the platform for the politically minded upper and middle class urban Bengalis. These associations began to act as important pressure groups, although caste groupings were still important in political matters.

In many ways, the political and semi-political organizations established in urban Bengal in the second half of the nineteenth century remained as exclusive and detached from the rest of the society as the earlier associations - such as the Academic Association of the Derozio-gos̥thī and the Bhūnyadhikārī Sabhā (Landholders' Society) which consisted of some of the leading abhijāt zamindars of Calcutta such as Radha Kanta Deb, Asutosh Deb, Dwaraka Nath Thakur and Kali Krishna Bahadur, and mainly looked after the interests of upper caste landowners. However, the mid-nineteenth century was a turning-point in that it witnessed the establishment of several primarily political associations which were "almost non-existent" before.<sup>35</sup> The social base of the political and semi-political associations and societies was also being broadened and, at least theoretically, these were "open" groups accepting members from all castes and creeds. But in reality these associations mainly found support among upper caste Western-educated urban Bengali kritavidyas. The pamphlet introducing the Jātīya Gourab Sampādanī Sabhā (society for the promotion of national feeling), for example, clearly indicated that both the Society and the introductory pamphlet were meant for "the educated natives of Bengal".<sup>36</sup> In the 1850s, the Rev. J. Long reported that

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<sup>35</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 31 January 1866.

<sup>36</sup> R.N. Basu, Ātmacharit, p.52.

"the meetings of natives and societies formed among them" had been "all for class interests, increase of salary or position."<sup>37</sup>

The British Indian Association, an exclusively Indian political organization, was established in Calcutta on 31 October 1851 with the object of influencing Government before the renewal of the East India Company's Charter which was due in 1853 and as a result of the interaction between George Thompson of the British India Society in London and some of the prominent "patriotic" urban Bengali kritavidyas.<sup>38</sup> The Bengal British India Society (founded in 1843), which was mainly formed of members of the Derozio-goṣṭhī and was primarily interested in political matters,<sup>39</sup> and the Bhūmyadhikārī Sabhā (Landholders' Society), which mainly consisted of abhijāt landowners, formed the foundation-stones of the British Indian Association. According to a nineteenth century Bengali kritavidya, the "amalgamation" of the Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society was "a wise step that invested the body with weight and authority in the public eye", since "no more could Government urge that there was a split between orthodoxy and enlightenment, between conservatism and liberalism, the two distinguished elements of native society."<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the British Indian Association had among its supporters both abhijāts, most of them conservatives like Radha Kanta Deb, Satya

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<sup>37</sup> J. Long On Vernacular Christian Literature, p.8.

<sup>38</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 31 January 1866.

<sup>39</sup> See Bengal British India Society, Evidences Relative to the Efficiency of Native Agency in the Administration of the Affairs of the Country, Calcutta, 1844. Reprinted with a supplement by British Indian Association. Calcutta, 1853.

<sup>40</sup> Bholā Nath Chunder (Chandra), Raja Digambar Mitra, His Life and Career (Calcutta, 1893), pp. 35-37, as quoted in SBS, vol. 1, p.512. Also, Sambād Bhāskar, 22 July 1865.

Saran Ghoshal, Rama Nath Thakur, Prasanna Kumar Thakur and Debendra Nath Thakur, and navya abhijāts and kritavidyas, most of them progressives like Ram Gopal Ghosh, Pyari Chand Mitra and Umesh Chandra Datta. But on the whole the abhijāts dominated the association. The influence of the zamindars and the desire to protect their interests was reflected in speeches on topics such as "the relationship between the zamindars and his subjects (prajās)" which were delivered by eminent speakers like Kishori Chand Mitra and Rajendra Lal Mitra.<sup>41</sup> A contemporary Bengali journalist observed that the British Indian Association was established by the rich gentlemen of Calcutta, although it was of benefit to a larger population.<sup>42</sup> The Samāchār Chandrikā insisted that the association had a very good chance of "removing the miseries of the people" by virtue of being "a gathering of extremely affluent gentlemen" like Yatindra Mohan Thakur.<sup>43</sup> Ishwar Chandra Gupta, the increasingly conservative editor of the Sambād Prabhākar, also insisted that although the British Indian Association was essentially "a body of local aristocrats", yet the Bengalis in general had begun to depend on this body for guidance and leadership in political matters.<sup>44</sup> Like the editor of the conservative Samāchār Chandrikā,<sup>45</sup> Gouri Shankar Tarkabagish (Bhattacharya), the Sanskrit

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<sup>41</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 11 December 1865.

<sup>42</sup> Sarba Śubhakarī Patrikā, August 1855.

<sup>43</sup> Samāchār Chandrika, 16 November 1865.

<sup>44</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 21 Māgh, 24 Phālgun 1258 (1852), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 178, 180. Similar observations were made by some other contemporary kritavidya writers and journalists. Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 5 December 1865; Shib Nath Sastri, as quoted in S. Banerjee, Patra Sahitya, p.11.

<sup>45</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 3 August, 16 November 1865.



scholar who was the editor of the Sambād Bhāskar, also took a keen interest in and praised the Association's activities.<sup>46</sup> To Gouri Shankar, who had the Derozian Dakshina Ranjan Mukhopadhyaya for his patron and had edited the liberal journal Jñānānveṣan, the British Indian Association symbolized the unity of the various sections of the Bengali elite and was the source of the political strength of the Indian community.<sup>47</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century, with increased physical mobility as a result of urbanization and modernization, large numbers of Bengali kṛitavidyas in the various capacities of teachers, students, government servants, lawyers and so on, moved between different regions of Bengal and helped in the diffusion of ideas and impressions and in the maintenance of links between Calcutta and the Mofussil. The Brāhma Samāj served this function very effectively through its members and missionaries. The British Indian Association made special efforts to establish links with the Mofussil by establishing branches in places like Howrah, Hooghly, Barasat in Western Bengal not too far from the capital and even in distant places in Eastern Bengal like Mymensingh.<sup>48</sup> The influence and control of the Calcutta elite had become quite widespread. A Calcutta journalist observed that

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<sup>46</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 20 November, 9, 23 and 30 December 1856: 6 and 22 January, 10 February 1857, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 335, 347-350, 359-365, 367, 379-380: 22 July, 10 August, 4 December 1865.

<sup>47</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 9 and 23 December 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 349-350, 360, 361.

<sup>48</sup> See Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 3 April 1866 (quoting the Dhākā Prakas); A. Seal, Emergence of Indian Nationalism, pp. 207-208. See Map 1.

the "respectable men" who controlled the Calcutta branch of the British Indian Association, for instance, Raja Satya Saran Ghoshal, Ram Gopal Ghosh, Hira Lal Seal and Pyari Chand Mitra, "held the trust and confidence of almost all good men throughout Bengal."<sup>49</sup>

The impact of Westernization upon the British Indian Association, an association whose founders and members were almost invariably urban Bengalis who had been exposed to the West and closely interacted with Europeans, was quite evident. It mainly utilized the Western techniques of speeches, meetings and petitions to the Government. To a contemporary British journalist, the association appeared to be a manifestation of the Westernization of its members and a result of "the education of the Natives".<sup>50</sup> The Friend of India described the British Indian Association and the Talookdar's Association as "semi-English bodies".<sup>51</sup>

The British Indian Association, although the most striking political organization of this time, was not the sole experiment of its kind. A few other associations (sabhās) established by urban Bengali kṛitavidyas during this period which sometimes discussed political and semi-political matters of interest were: the Bethune Society which was established in 1851 for "the intellectual stimulation and development of the debating faculty of the kṛitavidyas",<sup>52</sup> for "improving relationships between the Bengalis and the Europeans"<sup>53</sup> and

<sup>49</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 5 December 1865.

<sup>50</sup> Dacca News, 22 May 1858.

<sup>51</sup> Friend of India, 3 October 1867.

<sup>52</sup> Som Prakāś, 25 January 1864.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

generally to discuss "worthy topics",<sup>54</sup> and became "a foremost (pradhān) institution for the education of the public";<sup>55</sup> the Bengal Social Science Association which had members of the Derozio-gos̥hī like Pyari Chand Mitra as its leaders;<sup>56</sup> the Serampore Association established by several kṛitavidya youth of Serampore;<sup>57</sup> the Prajā Hitaishīṅī Sabhā (society for the benefit of the subjects) of Dacca led by zamindar Kali Narayan Bahadur;<sup>58</sup> the Unnati Bishayīṅī Sabhā (society concerned with progress) which met at the house of Ram Chand Seal, an affluent member of the lower oil-presser caste, in Kalutala (Colootola) in Calcutta every Saturday and came to be known as the Kalutalā Unnati Sādhīṅī Sabhā (Kalutala society for improvement).<sup>59</sup> The Jātiya Gourab Sampādanī Sabhā established by Raj Narayan Basu, the Western-educated kṛitavidya of the Brāhma Samāj, in Midnapur and supported by many progressive urban Bengalis, however, was more in the nature of an attempt at the Indianization of political activities.<sup>60</sup>

Although the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 did not involve the generally

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<sup>54</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 15 March 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 29 March 1866.

<sup>55</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 15 March 1865.

<sup>56</sup> "Peary Chand Mitra", Calcutta Review, vol. 120, April 1905, pp. 251-252.

<sup>57</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 24 May 1865.

<sup>58</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 8 December 1865.

<sup>59</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 24 July 1865: 2 April 1866.

<sup>60</sup> Som Prakās, 1 August, 5 September (letter), 12 September 1864. See below, pp. 296-297.

loyal urban Bengali elite directly,<sup>61</sup> yet in 1858 the Calcutta society was full of excitement over the issue of the end of the East India Company's rule:

"Wherever one goes in the city [Calcutta] one can hear that the East India Company might soon lose its power. Whether belonging to the 'gentle' (bhadra) community or not, whenever two or four men sit together, they discuss this. Even the Bengali journals and newspapers have begun a great agitation over this question."<sup>62</sup>

Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya observed that the year 1858, that is, the beginning of the rule of Queen Victoria in India marked the point in time from which "the mind of men turned to politics".<sup>63</sup> As a sign of the new enthusiasm for politics, he mentioned the debating club of his class in the Presidency College which was held at the house of Ram Kamal Sen in Calcutta and provided the forum for nationalist speakers and intellectuals like Keshab Chandra Sen and Satyendra Nath Thakur.<sup>64</sup> Krishna Das Pal of the Derozio-gos̥thī and the British Indian Association said in a speech delivered at the Hare Academy in Calcutta:

"The good Angel of a 'Hindoo Patriot' now works in the informed and enlightened souls of Bengal. There are now proud beings in thisland of the sun and plenty, who breathe the breath of a Wallace and a Bruce, a Hampden and a Penn, a Washington and a Jefferson.

<sup>61</sup> Indian Reformer, 25 February 1861; Keshab Chandra Sen, as quoted in W.T. de Bary (ed.), Sources of Indian Tradition, pp. 618-69. Also see above, pp. 136-137, 153-155.

<sup>62</sup> Samāchār Sudhā Barshan, 11 September 1858.

<sup>63</sup> Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p.52.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-53.

We now seldom see an 'educated' native, properly so called, who does not, when his country is wronged, wish an instant vengeance. The tide of patriotism has now run so high that it is hard to stay its course."<sup>65</sup>

The growing interest in politics among the Western-educated Bengalis began to take the shape of the demand for an active and equitable part in politics. In 1859 the Hindoo Patriot, representing the members of the British Indian Association, put forward an unusually bold demand on behalf of the kritavidyas for nothing less than an "Indian Parliament":

"The grievances of India, with every class of her population unrepresented, may easily be imagined... The working people bewail that they are the victims of class legislation. We are more so than even they. The remedy logically would be the admission of Hindu and Muslim members into the House of Commons ... Under any circumstances that is inconvenient, in the existing state of things it is impracticable. The alternative left is to create a Parliament in each of the Presidencies of India ... those of our countrymen who interest themselves in politics are preparing themselves for an agitation for the admission of native members into the Legislative Council. The idea, in the modesty of its aim, is incomplete. What we need is not the introduction of a small independent element in the existing Council, but an Indian Parliament."<sup>66</sup>

In 1861 the Indian Mirror run by the younger Brāhmas, in a column on "How the natives of this country should be treated", appealed to the British sense of justice for the better treatment of the Indians:

"Englishmen should follow the principle of equality and abandon prejudices against and feeling of antagonism towards natives ... The time has arrived when Englishmen in India ought to feel the great necessity that

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<sup>65</sup>Krishna Das Pal, as quoted in Friend of India, 28 August 1858.

<sup>66</sup>Hindoo Patriot, 7 April 1859.

exists for no longer treating the natives as a conquered nation, but as subjects of the same sovereign."<sup>67</sup>

The Vernacular Press - both conservative and liberal - criticized the British government officials in India for their general "attitude of contempt" towards the indigenous population.<sup>68</sup> The Hindu (later Presidency) College which produced the Derozio-gos̥thī was at the centre of the move towards an increased political consciousness on the part of the urban Bengali kritavidyas. It was taken for granted that a Bengali who was exposed to Western influences would be interested in politics. According to Krishna Das Pal, a leading member of the Young Bengal and later the editor of the Hindoo Patriot, a Young Bengal was one who "with the ardour of a patriot pleads his country's cause."<sup>69</sup> The Westernized Bengalis were disturbed by the political discriminations against the Indians under the British rule. The Som Prakās explained:

"They [The progressive group] are annoyed by the political situation. English education tells them that all are equal before the ruler and that merit (guṇ) is the mark of distinction, not colour (varṇa) or race (jāti). But the government officials do not always behave in the liberal manner and in fact we see that colour-distinction (varṇa-bhed) is given precedence over distinctions in merit (guṇ-bhed). This is unbearable to many [Kritavidyas]."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Indian Mirror, 1 August 1861.

<sup>68</sup>For example, Sambād Bhāskar, 8 and 18 March 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 307-308, 311-313; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 6 and 17 June 1865; Samāchār Chandrika, 22 and 26 March 1866; Som Prakās, 10 Jaiṣṭha, 14 Aṣāḍh 1277 (1870), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 536, 540.

<sup>69</sup>Krishna Das Pal, as quoted in Friend of India, 28 August 1858.

<sup>70</sup>Som Prakās, 23 June 1862.

Derozians such as Digambar Mitra clamoured for the application of the Western concept of equality to the Indian situation.<sup>71</sup> The Hindoo Patriot criticized the "unequal situation" which existed within the Uncovenanted Civil Service and particularly attacked the ground on which the distinction in salary between the European and the Indian employees was said to have been made, that is, the ground of the "comparative costliness of European living":<sup>72</sup>

"We can assure the Government that the living of Natives of the class who fill our higher offices is by no means cheap, compared with that of their European or Eurasian rivals in office. They have a position, a family pride to maintain in Society, which their European or Eurasian rivals have not. The European has only to live and lay by; but the Native has not only to support himself and his dependents, but also to sustain a variety of social taxes. One reason why the Native of birth does not enter the service is because the allowance he receives is too small to maintain his position."<sup>73</sup>

The British Government in India was criticized for its strict even cruel treatment of the hard-working Bengali kritavidyas in government service, namely, the Munsiffs in the Justice Department, the Sub-Assistant Surgeons among the government doctors, and the grossly underpaid teachers in the Education Department, especially in the context of rising prices in the urban areas.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Speech of Digambar Mitra, quoted in The Public Meeting in Favour of the Extension of the Jurisdiction of Mofussil Criminal Courts, 1857, pp. 38-39.

<sup>72</sup>Hindoo Patriot, 12 May 1862.

<sup>73</sup>Hindoo Patriot, 12 May 1862.

<sup>74</sup>Som Prakāś, 3 November 1862; 18 July 1864; 21 August, 18 September, 13 November 1865; Śikshā Darpan, Jaiṣṭha, Bhādra 1272 (1865); Samāchār Chandrikā, 29 May 1865; 8 March, 12 April 1866; Sambād Purṇa Chandrodaya, 22 August 1865; 12 February 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 9 November 1865 (citing the Hindoo Patriot): 8 February 1866.

The urban Bengali kritavidyas, particularly the journalists, showed a keen awareness of the importance and effectiveness of Western political techniques such as meetings and petitions.<sup>75</sup> Public speaking was fast becoming a recognized and highly appreciated exercise in the urban Bengali society. Ram Gopal's speeches on various political and semi-political subjects such as the "Black Acts" and the Nimtala Burning Ghāt controversy greatly increased his popularity among his contemporaries.<sup>76</sup> Admittedly, the political discussions and demands seldom went beyond the stage of deputations, petitions and memorials and a few public addresses and meetings, all on the Western model. But the kritavidyas obviously took the preparation and presentation of memorials<sup>77</sup> very seriously and often felt that the only way to institute important changes such as salary increases was to appeal to high government authorities.<sup>78</sup> The memorials were generally presented by the new urban political organizations such as the British Indian Association.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> For example, in 1865 the Sambād Bhāskar urged the British Indian Association to make arrangements in England for protests against the introduction of the Income Tax. Sambād Bhāskar, 29 July 1865. Also, Sambād Bhāskar, 26 October 1865; Sambād Pūrna Chandrodaya, 23 February 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 15 March 1866.

<sup>76</sup> Samāchar Chandrikā, 1 February 1866.

<sup>77</sup> Some of these memorials were: the memorial "from certain native gentlemen ... on the language, used in the transaction of business in Civil and Criminal Courts" referring to and objecting to "the compulsory use of Hindoostanee in the pleadings of the Civil and Criminal Courts"; the petition "of certain landholders, merchants etc. representing the defects of the Judicial system which obtains in the Bengal Presidency"; the memorial sent by the "native inhabitants of Bengal" in 1861 complaining of expressions alleged to have been used by the Junior Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court, Sir Mordaunt Wells, in the exercise of the Judicial Service". Despatches to India (Judicial), 2 March (no. 2) 1853, pp. 400-403. Friend of India, 15 January 1852; Indian Empire, 12 February 1862.

<sup>78</sup> See above, p. 232.

<sup>79</sup> For instance, the memorial "calling the attention of the Honble Board to the position of Her Majesty's Hindoo and Mahomedan subjects, in



Even the new associations, mostly secular and organized on the Western model - sometimes as a result of direct Western influence, were often confined to particular social groups and communities. Perhaps the best example of a semi-political association established for a particular group was the Mahomedan Literary and Scientific Society founded in 1863 by Abdul Latif Khan, a member of the Legislative Council of Bengal and a prominent Muslim kritavidya of Calcutta during this period. It was primarily an association for the urban Muslim elite, although it was supposedly formed with the view of "promoting the general welfare of the Mahomedan community"<sup>80</sup>. The Society aimed at encouraging the Muslims to "better themselves so as not to fall behind their Hindoo rivals"<sup>81</sup> and at creating a Bengali Muslim elite similar to the urban Hindu elite by "arousing the Mahomedan community into literary activity and public spirit" through a society where Muslims might meet for "intellectual enlightenment and social intercourse".<sup>82</sup> But it also had broader aims and purposes. It promoted interactions between Hindu and Muslim abhijāts and kritavidyas as well as between Indians and prominent Europeans.<sup>83</sup>

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relation to the Public Civil Service", and the memorial "praying that measures may be adopted for holding in India the competitive examination of native candidates for admission into the uncovenanted Civil Service." Bengal Public Proceedings, 29 January (no. 67) 1857; Public, Educational and Ecclesiastical Letters from India, Public no. 79, 13 June 1868.

<sup>80</sup> Friend of India, 17 May 1855.

<sup>81</sup> Abdul Latif, as quoted in Indian Daily News, 6 March 1868; A. Latif, Public Life, p.16.

<sup>82</sup> Mahomedan Literary Society: Abstract Proceedings, p.4.

<sup>83</sup> It was said to have been attended by "members of various sections of the people living in Calcutta" and to have succeeded in "promoting good feelings among different classes." Mahomedan Literary Society, p.4.

Its annual "conversaciones" held at the Town Hall in Calcutta were reported to have been well-attended.<sup>84</sup> The Society had a rapidly growing membership list,<sup>85</sup> and, according to the contemporary Bengali Press, was making fast progress within the urban community.<sup>86</sup> It was modelled on the Western style, had discussions and arranged lectures which expressed loyal sentiments towards the British rule and, as a result, was viewed favourably by both English journalists<sup>87</sup> and government observers.<sup>88</sup>

Apart from associations and societies, public meetings arranged on the Western model formed an important and increasingly popular feature of urban Bengali politics in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The "bold" and "fearless" manner in which Ram Gopal Ghosh and the Rev. Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyaya spoke at public meetings during the "Black Acts" agitation inspired their kritavidya contemporaries.<sup>89</sup> The growing interest in public meetings as a medium of political expression was reflected in the large number of urban Bengalis who began to attend the meetings held to discuss the leading political questions of the time. The public meeting held on 29 July 1853 to protest against Charles Wood's India Bill, for instance, was described

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<sup>84</sup> Mahomedan Literary Society, p.4; Indian Daily News, 2 March 1867; Raja V.K. Deb, History of Calcutta, p.123.

<sup>85</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 3 February 1866.

<sup>86</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 6 March 1866; 2 and 4 March 1867; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 8 March 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 10 March 1866; Som Prakāś, 12 March 1866.

<sup>87</sup> For example, Indian Daily News, 2 and 4 March 1867; 5 and 13 February 1868; 27 December 1869.

<sup>88</sup> For example, letter from E.C. Bayley, Officiating Secretary to Government of Bengal, to A. Latif, dated 23 April 1867, as quoted in Indian Daily News, 26 April 1867; John Lawrence's speech at the third annual conversazione of the Mahomedan Literary Society, as quoted in A. Latif, op.cit., pp. 17-18.

<sup>89</sup> Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p.178.

as "the most crowded meeting that has ever been witnessed in Calcutta".<sup>90</sup> The meeting was attended mainly by "Hindus of various castes" and a few non-Hindus such as Manockjee Rustomjee, the prominent Parsi of Calcutta.<sup>91</sup> Although the meeting was chaired by Radha Kanta Deb, the leader of the conservative Dharma Sabhā-gos̥thī,<sup>92</sup> some of the leading speakers were prominent members of the progressive if not radical Derozio-gos̥thī, namely, Ram Gopal Ghosh, Pyari Chand Mitra and the Rev. Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyaya.<sup>93</sup> Thus, this meeting indicated the continuation of the conservative-progressive alliance within the urban Bengali community, at least in political matters, which had been seen in connection with the foundation of the British Indian Association. The conservatives were obviously in a conciliatory mood, their leader Radha Kanta supporting the establishment of English schools, as long as "Oriental literature and science" were not neglected.<sup>94</sup> Pyari Chand Mitra made a bold plea for increased "native" participation in politics.<sup>95</sup> The resolution reached by the meeting mentioned some of the major political frustrations of the educated Bengalis, primarily their continued exclusion from the Civil Service and the Legislative Council<sup>96</sup> and also expressed the growing belief in the importance of Western techniques such as

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<sup>90</sup> Proceedings of Public Meeting 1853: Against Charles Wood's India Bill, by J.F. Bellamy, preface; Friend of India, 4 August 1853; "Peary Chand Mitra", Calcutta Review, vol. 120, April 1905, p.244.

<sup>91</sup> Proceedings of Public Meeting 1853 etc., p.4.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>93</sup> Friend of India, 4 August 1853.

<sup>94</sup> Proceedings of Public Meeting 1853, etc. p.7.

<sup>95</sup> "Peary Chand Mitra", loc.cit., p.245.

<sup>96</sup> The resolution, as quoted in Friend of India, 4 August 1853.

meetings and petitions among the urban Bengali elite:<sup>97</sup>

"That while this meeting considers it the duty as well as the interest of the native British subjects of India to remain faithfully attached to the British Government, it is at the same time of opinion that on an occasion like the present, every legitimate and constitutional means ought to be employed for the redress of their grievances."<sup>98</sup>

The meeting held at the Town Hall in Calcutta on 6 April 1857 in support of the so-called "Black Acts" was another example of the cooperation between conservative abhijāts like Radha Kanta Deb, Rama Nath Thakur and Jay Krishna Makhopadhyaya and Western-educated kṛitavidyas like Rajendra Lal Mitra and Digambar Mitra.<sup>99</sup> The leading speakers, as in most political meetings and debates of this time, were Ram Gopal Ghosh, Digambar Mitra and Kishori Chand Mitra of the Derozio-goṣṭhī. While the majority of the participants were either Brāhman̄s or Kāyasthas, a few Baidyas for instance Gobinda Chandra Sen<sup>100</sup> and lower caste Hindus for instance Rama Nath Saha of the Tantu Banik caste,<sup>101</sup> were also actively involved. The first resolution reached by the meeting expressed faith in the Western concept of equality before the law.

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<sup>97</sup>Proceedings of Public Meeting, 1853, etc., p.7.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Public Meeting in Favour of Extension of Jurisdiction of Mofussil Criminal Courts, 1857, pp. 2-7, 37-40, 67-85.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., pp. 85-87.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., pp. 87-88.

A striking feature of these meetings was the upper and middle class orientation of these meetings which were primarily organized to secure the interests of the urban Bengali elite. In 1859, for instance, a public meeting was organized in Calcutta against the Bill "for the Licensing of Trades and Professions and the System of Taxation entered upon by the Government of His Excellency Earl Canning" - a Bill which was considered to be "incongruous and inconsistent both in form and principle" by the Bengali elite.<sup>102</sup> Initially, a general plea was made for the equal treatment of all classes.<sup>103</sup> However, the petition which was drawn up at the meeting made it clear that those who attended the meeting were ultimately interested in the protection of the new urban Bengali middle class consisting of professionals, merchants and traders.<sup>104</sup> Pyari Chand Mitra, a Westernized middle class kritavidya of Calcutta, wrote:

"Your Petitioners are aware that licences have at different times been established for hawkers, pedlars and itinerants, but to establish them for the liberal and scientific professions such as engineers, barristers and surgeons, and for the general body of merchants and traders throughout the country including the Presidency Towns, appears to your petitioners a Legislative insult to these classes, a parallel to which it would be impossible to find in Imperial colonial legislation."<sup>105</sup>

In July 1870 a "monster meeting" of about five hundred persons was held at the Town Hall of Calcutta, preceded by days during which

<sup>102</sup> Report of Public Meeting of Inhabitants of Calcutta held on 12 September 1859 to petition both Houses of Parliament against a Bill entitled a Bill for Licensing of Trades and Professions etc. by J.M. Goumisse, p.22.

<sup>103</sup> Letter from Pyari Chand Mitra to D. Mackinlay, 12 September 1857, as quoted in Report of Public Meeting of Inhabitants of Calcutta held on 12 September 1859 etc., pp. 4-6.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

according to a contemporary British journalist, Calcutta was "placarded with a Bengali notice calling upon the inhabitants to come forward and protest against the withdrawal of State assistance from all English education."<sup>106</sup> The main speakers were prominent Western-educated kṛitavidyas like Rajendra Lal Mitra and a few ex-Deputy Magistrates, High Court pleaders and others who were joined by abhijāts like Rama Nath Thakur, Jay Krishna Mukhopadhyaya, Raja Narendra Krishna and Raja Satyananda Ghoshal Bahadur.<sup>107</sup>

The arguments which were generally used by the urban Bengali elite in the course of the meetings and discussions were greatly influenced by their exposure to Westernization. The realization of the importance of forming political associations to show their unity of purpose was perhaps one of the major steps in the growth of their political consciousness. Gouri Shankar Bhattacharya, the editor of the Saṃbād Bhāskar of Calcutta who was a striking example of the synthesis of traditional Sanskrit learning and Western influence, emphasized the importance of united appeals to the Government and argued that lack of unity among its different sections was the primary reason behind the "backwardness" of the Bengali society.<sup>108</sup>

## II Westernization in religion and society

In religion, although less than in politics, the attitudes and

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<sup>106</sup> Friend of India, 7 July 1870.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Saṃbād Bhāskar, 23 and 30 December 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 360-364. Also, Saṃbād Bhāskar, 24 August 1865.

ideas of the urban Bengali elite and the movements which they initiated were indebted to the process of Westernization and, to some extent, even to the process of Christianization. Largely as a result of Westernization the urban areas witnessed the beginnings of a tendency towards secularization and a critical attitude towards religion, mainly Hindu religion - an attitude which sometimes led to constructive reform. The conservatives blamed urbanization and the various socio-economic processes associated with urbanization for creating an atmosphere which threatened the existing religious and moral order. Westernization, mainly Western education, was particularly blamed for this situation:

"Day by day, the bond of religion is becoming weaker in the minds of our countrymen, and, the prestige of the customs of our land (deśācār) is also diminishing. Those who have received English education are losing their respect for the natural (jātiya) religion [that is, Hinduism]. Moreover, seeing their example, all [Bengalis] have started to entertain feelings of distrust, disrespect and suspicion [towards Hinduism]. As a result, the control (sāsan) of both religion and customs have become weak."<sup>109</sup>

The conservative Hindus and Brāhmas were convinced that Westernization led to atheism and agnosticism as it did among the students of the Hindu College belonging to the Derozio-goṣṭhī.<sup>110</sup> In his autobiography, Raj Narayan Basu noted that his fellow students at the Hindu College who were either atheists or agnostics were extremely surprised when he accepted Brāhma Dharma:

"It was beyond their dreams that a good student of the [Hindu] College could become a Brāhma."<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Sikshā Darpaṇ, Jaiṣṭha 1272 (1865).

<sup>110</sup> Samāchar Sudhā Barshaṇ, 20 September 1858; Paridarsak, 19 August 1861 (letter); Som Prakās, 23 June 1862; Sarbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 13 November 1865; R. Lethbridge, Ramtanu Lahiri. pp. 75, 81-83, 86.

<sup>111</sup> R.N. Basu, Ātmacharit, p. 29.

Some of the leaders of Calcutta society for instance Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Justice Dwaraka Nath Mitra, Ram Kamal Bhattacharya and Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, were suspected of having lost faith in religion.<sup>112</sup> The Som Prakāś suggested that perhaps English education was the main reason behind the "mental agony" which was being experienced by the Westernized Bengalis.<sup>113</sup>

"English education is totally opposed to the religion, customs and habits which have prevailed in this country for a long time. Those who receive English education develop an attitude of disrespect towards their traditional religion and an attitude of neglect towards their traditional customs and habits. Combined together, these attitudes are bound to result in unhappiness."<sup>114</sup>

It was even suggested that the religious attitude of the urban Bengali kritavidyas, like various other aspects of their life, was largely influenced by the need to conform and by the fact that atheism had become almost "fashionable".<sup>115</sup> The Sambād Prabhākar was more concerned about the "anti-national" aspect of the socio-religious attitude of the urban Bengali youth.<sup>116</sup>

Many Western-educated Bengali kritavidyas began to experiment with religion, as a direct result of their exposure to Westernization, mainly through English education. Raj Narayan Basu, for instance, while still a student of the Hindu College

<sup>112</sup> Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, pp. 131-132.

<sup>113</sup> Som Prakāś, 23 June 1862.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 19 May 1855, SBS, vol. 4, pp. 765-766.



"lost faith in Hinduism ... then became a Unitarian Christian after reading Ram Moham Ray's 'Appeal to the Christian Public in Favour of the Precepts of Jesus'... then became slightly (iṣat) Muslim, and finally, immediately before leaving College, became agnostic after reading Hume."<sup>117</sup>

English education, Raj Narayan claimed, opened his mind and dissuaded him from idol worship (pouttalik pūjā) and, as a consequence, he refused to perform the Sarasvatī Pūjā.<sup>118</sup> Man Mohan Ghosh, the England-returned barrister said in a lecture on "What are the effects of English education on Bengali society" delivered in 1869:

"The minds of the upper and middle classes have been so freed from the trammels of superstition and idolatry, that it would be difficult to find a school boy above sixteen who continues to believe in what is popularly known as Hinduism. The Brahmo Somaj is said to exercise considerable influence over the educated classes, and is daily gaining in strength."<sup>119</sup>

According to the Hindoo Patriot, the membership book of the Calcutta Brāhma Samāj contained the names of some of the most distinguished scholars of the Presidency College - persons holding "the highest positions" both in public and private life - and included "some of the most intelligent and respectable portion of the country's population".<sup>120</sup> A large number of the converts to the Brāhma religion were educated at the missionary educational institutions situated in the urban areas.<sup>121</sup> Alexander Forbes of the Bengal Hurkaru said in a public lecture delivered in Aberdeen in 1864:

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<sup>117</sup>Raj Narayan Basu, Atmcharit, p.24.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., p.10.

<sup>119</sup>Man Mohan Ghosh, as quoted in Friend of India, 27 May 1869.

<sup>120</sup>Hindoo Patriot, 27 January 1861.

<sup>121</sup>Indian Daily News, 27 January 1868.

"The great mass of Dr. Duff's scholars go to swell the ranks of the Vedantists."<sup>122</sup>

The doctrines of the Brāhma Samāj, with the strong emphasis upon the intellectual aspect of religion, the denunciation of Hindu ritualism and idolatry, appealed mainly, if not solely, to the Western-educated urban Bengali kritavidyas, who failed to be satisfied with Hinduism as it existed.<sup>123</sup> The influence of the energetic and persuasive Brāhma missionaries, who frequently lectured and conversed at intellectual gatherings in the major urban areas of Bengal, was an important factor in the conversion of the educated urban youth. The oratory of Keshab Chandra Sen, in particular, appeared as "grand, divine and inspired" to the young Bengalis<sup>124</sup> who were undoubtedly impressed by the fact that even Europeans were impressed by Keshab's annual Town Hall lectures.<sup>125</sup> Another important aspect of the conversions was that a substantial portion of the converts came from the newly-risen urban middle class. The urban Bengali kritavidya, enjoying comparatively greater economic and social freedom and greater mobility than his rural counterpart, was able to reject the socio-religious bonds of the Hindu community and his family with lesser fear of ostracism, although the use of social ostracism mainly in the form of the denial of the use of washerman and barber was not

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<sup>122</sup>Alexander Forbes as quoted in Indian Daily News, 1 February 1868 (letter).

<sup>123</sup>Hindoo Patriot, 24 March, 5 April 1855 (citing Christian Advocate); Som Prakās, 20 June 1864; 7 August 1865; Friend of India, 21 July 1864; 21 September 1868; Indian Daily News, 3 February 1868.

<sup>124</sup>Amrita Lal Basu, as quoted in PP, p.210.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid. Also, Indian Daily News, 25 January 1869. Keshab Chandra Sen was the "ideal man" to many young Bengalis who tried to imitate Keshab in various ways, even by wearing spectacles like him. Amrita Lal Basu, as quoted in B.B.Gupta, op.cit., p.210.

totally unknown to the Brāhma convert.<sup>126</sup> The founders and missionaries of the Brāhma Samāj were mostly Western-educated urban Bengalis who were employed as teachers,<sup>127</sup> government servants,<sup>128</sup> doctors<sup>129</sup> and lawyers<sup>130</sup> and enjoyed considerable social as well as physical mobility.

The religious meetings and societies organized by the urban Bengalis were often structured on models derived from the West. The Brāhma Samāj movement borrowed many ideas and techniques from the process of Christianization, which was one of its main targets of attack, such as devotional singing, prayer meetings, Sunday Schools and special schools for Brāhma children (Brāhma Vidyālayas), travelling missionaries, tracts and journals supporting Brāhma Dharma and the education of women, especially antaḥpur/zenānā (inner household) education. In 1852 the Rev. J. Mullens gave an account of a typical meeting of the Tattva Bodhinī Sabhā, organized by the leading Brahmas, which clearly indicated Christian influence:

"Their long hall has been neatly filled with pews, rising backward from the centre to the two ends and well lighted by chandeliers and wall-shades. In the middle of the hall upon a dais of grained marble, sit the two pandits, the leaders of the worship, and in a recess immediately opposite to them are the musicians. The service commences with the reading of various passages from the Vedas. The

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<sup>126</sup> See Saṃbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 28 July, 12 December 1865.

<sup>127</sup> For example, Raj Narayan Basu, Ramtanu Lahiri, Unesh Chandra Datta, Yadu Nath Chakrabarty, Becha Ram Chattopadyaya, Dina Nath Sen, Bhagaban Chandra Basu, Ishan Chandra Biswas, Gobinda Chandra Guha, Pandit Bireswar Bhattacharya, Shib Nath Sastri.

<sup>128</sup> For example, Shib Chandra Deb, Sambhu Nath Pandit, Ramesh Chandra Mitra, Braja Sundar Mitra, Kashishwar Mitra, Chandi Charan Sen, Yadab Chandra Basu, Gobinda Chandra Basu, Tara Pada Mukhopadhyaya, Raj Kumar Basu.

<sup>129</sup> For example, Gobinda Chandra De, Sub-Assistant Surgeon.

<sup>130</sup> For example, Durga Mohan Das, Annada Prasad Bandyopadhyaya, Rakhai Chandra Ray and Ananda Mohan Basu.

Gayatri [a Vedichymn] is recited and meditated on. A hymn from one of the Upanishads is then chanted by all present. An exposition of texts from the Vedas, or an Essay on some branch of Theology, follows, and is succeeded by a short discourse by some members of the Sabhā, frequently by its President ... The service closes with the singing of Brahmic hymns by the professional musicians who accompany it with their instruments. The whole occupied about an hour."<sup>131</sup>

In 1864 a British journalist described some of the striking features of the weekly meetings of the Calcutta Brāhma Samāj - features which had obviously been borrowed from the Christianization movement:

"A little book of prayers has been published, which is extensively used. .. In a long narrow hall, sloping from the two ends towards the centre, are collected week after week some three hundred young men. The place is well provided with seats and is lighted with gas. On a marble platform are seated the teachers of the assembly; prayers are read; another prayer is chanted by all present; discourses are read or spoken; finally hymns are sung by a professional choir, and the assembly breaks up."<sup>132</sup>

The Bhārat Varshīya Samāj of Keshab Chandra showed a particular fondness for Christianized modes of worship.<sup>133</sup> Christian missionary influence and the influence of other aspects of Westernization could also be seen in the arguments and criticisms put forward by the Brāhma leaders which were often along Christian missionary lines,<sup>134</sup> in their use of special journals and newspapers such as the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, the Indian Mirror, the Satya Jñāna Sanchāriṇī Patrikā, and the Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā, and in their method of working through Western-style societies and associations such as

<sup>131</sup>The Rev. J. Mullens, as quoted in Friend of India, 11 April 1852.

<sup>132</sup>Friend of India, 21 July 1864.

<sup>133</sup>Indian Daily News, 25 January 1869.

<sup>134</sup>See Akshay Kumar Datta, Dharma Nīti, p.12. Brāhma criticisms of Hindu rituals and "supersitions" were often copied from Christian missionary tracts and speeches.

the Bhrātrī Samāj (society of brothers) which reportedly attracted "most well-educated youth" in Dacca and Krishnanagar,<sup>135</sup> the Brāhma Dharma Prachāriṇī Sabhā (society for the propagation of the Brāhma religion) established by some of the leading Brāhmas of Eastern Bengal with the aim of publishing and selling inexpensive books on religious topics.<sup>136</sup>

Between the two branches of the Brāhma Samāj, members of the Bhārat Varshīya Brāhma Samāj relied heavily upon their knowledge of Western religious thought for their strength. Keshab Sen and his followers not only discussed stories from the Bible and the teachings of Christ but, according to a contemporary, even observed Christian holidays such as Christmas and Good Friday.<sup>137</sup> Satyendra Nath Thakur, Debendra Nath's son, gave his explanation of the essential difference between Debendra Nath and Keshab Chandra:

"My father [Debendra Nath]... was intensely national in his religious ideal, whereas Keshab's outlook was more cosmopolitan. While not exactly denationalised, he was better fitted by his training and education to assimilate the ideas and civilisation of the West. Indeed, his whole character was moulded by Western culture and Christian influence. He drew much of his spiritual store from the New Testament."<sup>138</sup>

Primarily as a result of contact with the humanitarian aspect of both Christianity and the English legal system, the ūrban Bengali

<sup>135</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 15 January 1866. Also, Sam̄bād Prabhākar, 3 November 1865; Sam̄bād Pūrna Chandrodāya, 25 November 1865.

<sup>136</sup> Dharma Prachāriṇī Patrikā, June-July 1864.

<sup>137</sup> Chandra Shekhar Basu, as quoted in Som Prakās, 4 Āśvin 1277 (1870), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 219-220. Keshab's open declarations of devotion to Christ led many Europeans including Lord Lawrence to believe that Keshab was soon going to be converted to Christianity. Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in FP, p.53.

<sup>138</sup> D.N.Tagore, Autobiography, p.15 (Introductory Chapter by translator).

kritavidyas began to criticize many Hindu festivals and rituals which appeared to be inhuman such as Charak.<sup>139</sup> Another semi-religious custom which was frequently attacked was the custom of Gangā-yātrā involving the carrying of dying Hindus to the banks of the River Ganges.<sup>140</sup> Most kritavidya journalists were willing to accept the possibility of government intervention in such matters only when the custom was found to be "not approved by the Scriptures" (asāstriya) in addition to being "inhuman".<sup>141</sup> There was little opposition, even among prominent Hindus, to the legal restrictions imposed upon the custom of bāṅ-phōṅā (piercing with rods) associated with Charak, since such custom was found to be not sanctioned by the Śāstras.<sup>142</sup> The majority of the educated Bengalis seemed to support Government on this issue.<sup>143</sup> But the Government's attempt to prohibit the custom of Gangā-yātrā, a custom which seemed to have considerable Sanskritic support,<sup>144</sup> was resented even by liberal Bengali journalists. The Som Prakāś considered it to be another example of government policy based upon insufficient and second-hand information.<sup>145</sup> The ultimate authority in such matters rested with social reformers who were familiar with Sanskrit sources such as Ram Mohan Ray and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar.<sup>146</sup> Even the Sambād Bhāskar, which was perhaps the only prominent Bengali journal which supported the Government on this question primarily on humanitarian grounds, requested the Government to act cautiously and take the advice of "socially prominent"

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<sup>139</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 6, 15 and 18 April 1866. Although the custom of bāṅ-phōṅā on piercing the body with metal-rods was made illegal, yet many people in the Mofussil continued to practice it. Sambād Prabhākar, 9 April 1866.

<sup>140</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 31 August 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 1 September 1865; Indian Daily News, 13 October 1865; Friend of India, 17 May 1866.

<sup>141</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 9 April 1866.

<sup>142</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 18 April 1865.

<sup>143</sup> Som Prakāś, 28 August 1865.

Hindus.<sup>147</sup> The Samāchār Chandrikā of the Dharma Sabhā-gos̥thī condemned this measure, which was finally abandoned because of great opposition to it within the urban Bengali community, as unjust government intervention in religious matters.<sup>148</sup>

In both social and religious reform movements, the reasonings and arguments were often derived from the West. Even when traditional Sanskritic arguments were used for instance in connection with Vidyasagar's movement against polygamy, the supporters of the movement mainly consisted of urban kritavidyas who, as a contemporary Bengali educationist reported, "had learnt to oppose polygamy by reading European works".<sup>149</sup> Some of the main techniques and methods used by the Bengali social reformers to gather support for their cause, such as holding meetings, collecting signatures, writing petitions and pamphlets as well as letters and articles in newspapers and journals, were also influenced by Westernization. The spirit of self-criticism which characterized a large number of the Bengali kritavidyas<sup>150</sup> and contributed towards some of the major social reform movements of this period was also, to a large extent, an aspect of their Westernization and was influenced by Western, mainly Christian missionary, criticisms against Bengali character and society. In the 1860s, for instance, the kritavidyas frequently criticized themselves for certain defects

<sup>144</sup> Som Prakāś, 28 August 1865; Sambād Prabhākar, 28 December 1865.

<sup>145</sup> Som Prakāś, 4 September 1865. Also, Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 1 September 1865.

<sup>146</sup> Som Prakāś, 4 September 1865.

<sup>147</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 31 August 1865.

<sup>148</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 17 April, 11 September 1865.

<sup>149</sup> Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya as quoted in PP, p.122.

<sup>150</sup> Paridarśak, 20 November 1861 (letter); Friend of India, 27 May 1869; Sambād Prabhākar, 24 December 1870, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 257-259; M. Datta, Ekei Ki Bale Sabhyatā?, p.115.

which became relevant in the context of comparisons between the "backward Bengalis" and the "civilized and successful English",<sup>151</sup> namely, lack of unity,<sup>152</sup> laziness and superstitions,<sup>153</sup> extravagance and lawlessness especially during the performance of religious and domestic rituals,<sup>154</sup> lack of physical and mental courage,<sup>155</sup> dependence upon others<sup>156</sup> and the absence of any desire for change.<sup>157</sup> They also blamed themselves for the continuation of various customs of the land (deśācār), and "undesirable" social practices such as child marriage (bālya-bibāha), polygamy (bahu-bibāha) and caste-distinctions (jāti-bhed) - customs and practices which were said to be the main reasons behind the "deplorable condition" of the Bengali society.<sup>158</sup> Social reformation along Western lines in directions such as the education of women, female emancipation, removal of caste distinctions and the introduction of widow marriages, was seen as the only possible way in which India could compete with any other civilized

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<sup>151</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 20 September 1865; Som Prakās, 23 October 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 28 December 1865.

<sup>152</sup> Paridarsak, 20 November (letter), 31 October (letter), 18 December 1861; Som Prakās, 27 June 1864 (quoting Bhola Nath Chakrabarty of Midnapur English School); 23 October 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 15 April, 6 July, 20 September, 23 October 1865.

<sup>153</sup> Paridarsak, 20 September 1861; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 16 June 1865; Som Prakās, 23 October 1865.

<sup>154</sup> Paridarsak, 31 October 1861 (letter); Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 15 Śrāvaṇ 1787 (1865): 26 July 1865; Som Prakās, 23 October 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 28 December 1865: 26 February, 12 April, 10 August 1866. In the urban areas, one of the major occasions of extravagance was a relatively new and typically urban phenomenon, namely, cooperative celebrations (bāro-yāri) mainly in connection with Durgā Pūjā. Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 24 June, 4 August 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 12 April 1866.

<sup>155</sup> Som Prakās, 7 December 1862: 27 June 1864 (quoting Bhola Nath Chakrabarty): 23 October 1865; Man Mohan Ghosh, as quoted in Friend of India, 27 May 1869; Sambād Prabhākar, 24 December 1870, SBS, vol. 1, pp.257-259.

<sup>156</sup> Som Prakās, 8 December 1862; Sambād Prabhākar, 15 Śrāvaṇ 1787 (1865); 13 October 1865; Pūrṇimā, Chaitra 1205 (1869).

<sup>157</sup> Som Prakās, 18 September 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 10 August 1866.

<sup>158</sup> Paridarsak, 20 September 1861; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 17 August,



country, for instance, England.<sup>159</sup> These discussions generally contained references to the history and civilization of the West and specifically to Christianity<sup>160</sup> and were undoubtedly influenced by interactions with Europeans in the urban areas.

In his criticisms against child-marriage Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, the leading advocate of the introduction and use of Sanskritic ideas and values in social reform movements, resorted to Western arguments related to humanitarianism, physiology, education especially female education and common sense.<sup>161</sup> The nineteenth century Bengali kritavidyas, obviously under Western influence, frequently expressed their disgust for the custom and sought to reform it by exposing the "evils" of this system, for instance the disparity in the age of marriage partners, mainly from the humanitarian point of view.<sup>162</sup> This custom, along with the condition of the Hindu widows, was considered to be a major reason behind the existence of immorality in society.<sup>163</sup> On 1 June 1847, at a meeting held at Calcutta Medical College to honour the memory of David Hare which was attended by some of the outstanding Western-educated kritavidyas of Calcutta such as

11 October 1865; Saṅbād Prabhākar, 24 December 1870, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 257-259.

<sup>159</sup> M. Datta, Ekei Ki Bale Sabhyatā?, p. 115.

<sup>160</sup> Som Prakāś, 27 June 1864 (quoting Bhola Nath Chakrabarty of Midnapur English School); Saṅbād Prabhākar, 15 Śrāvaṇ 1787 (1865); Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 14 and 20 September 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 10 August 1866.

<sup>161</sup> See Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, "Bālya-bibāha Doṣ" [The evils of child-marriage], in D.K. Basu, Vidyāsagar Rachanābali, vol. 1, pp. 355-362; Sarba Śubhakarī Patrikā, Bhādra 1772 (1850), SBS, vol. 3, pp. 535-541.

<sup>162</sup> Saṅbād Prabhākar, 4 June 1847, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 406-407; 6 July 1865; Sarba Śubhakarī Patrikā, Āsvin 1772 (1850), SBS, vol. 3, pp. 542-554; Baṅga Vidyā, Kārtik 1262 (1855); Paridarsak, 24 December 1861; Samāchār Chandrikā, 12 June 1865; 12 March 1866; Pallī Bijñān, December 1867; Som Prakāś, 20 Jaiṣṭha 1275 (1868), SBS, vol. 4, p. 213; D. Mitra, Biye Pāglā Buḍo, p. 36; U.C. Mitra, Bidhabā-bibāha Nāṭak, p. 11.

<sup>163</sup> Paridarsak, 20 September 1861; Samāchār Chandrikā, 12 March 1866.

Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyaya who chaired the meeting, Jnanendra Mohan Thakur and Pyari Chand Mitra, the Hare Prize Committee offered its prize money of one hundred rupees to an essay written in Bengali on the effect of child marriage upon Bengali society.<sup>164</sup> In 1850 Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, a Sanskrit scholar who taught at the Sanskrit College in Calcutta and later in 1855 became a Deputy Magistrate, wrote an article in the Sarba Śubhakarī Patrikā urging the kritavidyas to support widow-remarriage and female education and oppose child-marriage on humanitarian grounds.<sup>165</sup> In the late 1860s, the editor of the Som Prakās remarked that many Hindus had become undisciplined and few were concerned with the improvement of the Hindu society through the reformation of institutions such as marriage.<sup>166</sup> He condemned child-marriage mainly on medical grounds.<sup>167</sup>

The movement against child-marriage, however, did not have much success at this time, perhaps because, as a Bengali journalist later suggested,<sup>168</sup> Vidyasagar was less involved with this movement than with other movements, for instance, the widow-remarriage movement. Vidyasagar was obviously unwilling to advocate government interference in such an important socio-religious issue unless he could offer traditional Sanskritic arguments supporting his viewpoint, which

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<sup>164</sup> Saṅbād Prabhākar, 4 June 1847, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 406-407.

<sup>165</sup> Sarba Śubhakarī Patrikā, Āsvin 1772 (1850), SBS, vol. 3, pp. 542-554.

<sup>166</sup> Som Prakās, 20 Jaiṣṭha 1275 (1868), SBS, vol. 4, p.213.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Som Prakās, 8 Pous 1291 (1884), SBS, vol. 4, p.326.

were difficult to find in this case.<sup>169</sup> The Bengali elite were also less willing to give practical support to this movement than to the widow-remarriage movement.<sup>170</sup> Moreover, the Brāhmas who supported this cause—mostly followers of Keshav Chandra Sen—lacked the necessary amount of social control within the urban Bengali society, especially after the schism and the agitations over the Special Marriage Act.<sup>171</sup>

The custom of child-marriages enhanced the problems created by the existence of plural marriages and vice versa. Vidyasagar's desire to abolish the former practice led to his movement against the latter. The movement against Kulīn (high caste) polygamy, which was mostly prevalent among the Brāhmas and the Kāyasthas in Bengal, particularly the former,<sup>172</sup> was primarily based upon the Western arguments of rationality and humanitarianism.<sup>173</sup> In his petition to the Government, Vidyasagar remarked that the Kulīns married "solely for money and with no intention to fulfil any of the duties which marriage involves".<sup>174</sup> The Koulīnya-prathā (Kulinism, Kulīn system) was said to be at the root of many of the problems within Hindu society such as polygamy and the large number of old maids as well as widows.<sup>175</sup> Apart from the Westernized technique of petitioning

<sup>169</sup> Vidyasagar's letter opposing legislation against child marriage, dated 16 February 1891, as quoted in B.Ghosh, Vidyasāgar o Bāngālī Samāi, vol. 3, pp. 403-404.

<sup>170</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 30 November 1865. See below, pp.329-338.

<sup>171</sup> Som Prakāś, 8 Pous 1291 (1884), SBS, vol. 4, p.326.

<sup>172</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 28 February 1866; Sambād Bhāskar, 6 March 1866. All the names which appeared in the list compiled by Vidyasagar of the Hindus in the district of Hooghly who had married more than five times belonged to Brāhmas. S.K.Mitra, Hugli Jelār Itihās, vol. 1, pp. 242-246.

<sup>173</sup> Vidyā Darśan, Bhādra, Kārtik 1764 (1842), SBS, vol. 3, pp. 567-568, 571; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 28 July 1865; Grāma Bārtā, August 1865, petitions dated 27 December 1855 and 1 February 1866, as quoted in B.Ghosh, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, pp. 110, 115.

<sup>174</sup> Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, as quoted in B.Ghosh, op.cit., p.114.

which was frequently used in this movement,<sup>176</sup> the new urban Bengali literature mainly dramas and satires were widely used.<sup>177</sup> Narayan Gunanidhi's popular farce entitled Kali Koutuk [The fun of the Kali Age] pointed out how the Kulīn system encouraged idleness and illiteracy among Kulīn men and usually led to the marriage of a Kulīn girl to a groom who was either too old or too young for her.<sup>178</sup> Bengali plays condemning this system were enacted in Calcutta for instance Ram Narayan Tarkaratna's Nava Nāṭak [The new drama] which was staged before a large crowd at Dwaraka Nath Thakur's house in Jorasanko in 1867.<sup>179</sup>

Some of the leaders of the anti-polygamy movement such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Rash Bihari Mukhopadhyaya were themselves Kulīn Brāhmins who were personally acquainted with this issue. Vidyasagar even received support from some of the prominent upper caste abhijāts such as the Maharaja of Burdwan, Maharaja Satish Chandra Ray Bahadur of Nadiya, the Rajas of Dinajpur and Nator, Raja Pratap Chandra Sinha of Kandi (in Murshidabad district) and Raja Satya Saran Ghoshal of Bhukailas (in Calcutta).<sup>180</sup> The Jorasanko Nāṭya-śālā (Theatre)

<sup>175</sup> Vidya Darśan, Śrāvaṇ 1764 (1842), SBS, vol. 3, pp. 557-560; Paridarsak, August, 30 November 1861.

<sup>176</sup> Petitions against Kulīn polygamy, including the petitions of the inhabitants of Barisal and Faridpur, in Proceedings of Legislative Council, 1854-1855, vol. I, pp. 582, 713, 717; petition dated 27 December 1855 and signed by twenty-five thousand persons, as quoted in B. Ghosh, op.cit., pp. 110-111; Friend of India, 17 July, 3 and 6 August 1856; 30 March 1865; 22 March 1866; Dacca News, 9 June 1858; Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā, Baisākh 1273 (1866); Vidyasagar's letter to the editor of Som Prakās in Som Prakās, 13 Bhādra 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 244-246.

<sup>177</sup> Dacca News, 19 June 1858; Friend of India, 7 February 1865; 24 February 1870. See Appendix II.

<sup>178</sup> N.C. Gunanidhi, Kali Koutuk, pp. 89, 105.

<sup>179</sup> Friend of India, 7 February 1867.

<sup>180</sup> Friend of India, 17 July, 6 August 1856; Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā, Baisākh 1273 (1866).

Committee of Calcutta, which included some of the prominent abhijāts of Calcutta, decided to offer prizes to writers of dramas depicting the condition of Hindu women and the bad effects of polygamy.<sup>181</sup> But the strongest supporters of the movement were Western-educated kritavidyas like Rama Prasad Ray, the son of Ram Mohan Ray, Rash Bihari Mukhopadhyaya, Justice Dwaraka Nath Mitra, Pyari Charan Sarkar and Krishna Das Pal.<sup>182</sup> The Tattva Bodhinī Sabhā led by Debendra Nath Thakur strongly supported this movement, and its journal the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā published several articles denouncing polygamy on grounds of both justice and morality.<sup>183</sup> The Som Prakās, the Sambād Prabhākar and several other leading Bengali journals expressed their support for the movement.<sup>184</sup>

In 1866 the supporters of the anti-polygamy movement, under the leadership of the British Indian Association and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, submitted a petition to the Lt. Governor of Bengal, criticizing Kulīn polygamy and signed by "20,000 Bengalees of all classes, chiefly orthodox and educated".<sup>185</sup> An analysis of the caste of the twenty-three members of the anti-polygamy deputation which met the Lt. Governor on 19 March 1866 indicates a predominance of non-Brāhmins in this movement<sup>186</sup> - a movement which was primarily directed against

<sup>181</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 14 August 1865, citing Dhākā Prakās.

<sup>182</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 26 March 1866; S.K.Mitra, Hugli Jelār Itihās, vol. 1, p.240; B.Ghosh, Vidyāsāgar o Bāngālī Samāj, vol. 3, pp. 236-237. The last three kritavidyas named were, along with Vidyasagar, members of a deputation against polygamy to Cecil Beadon on 19 March 1866. B.Ghosh, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, p.115.

<sup>183</sup> Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Chaitra 1776 (1855), Bhādra 1778 (1856); Baisākh 1788 (1856), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 153-162, 188-196, 234-235. The Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā, a journal run by the progressive Brāhmins, was also actively involved. Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā, Baisākh 1273 (1866).

<sup>184</sup> Paridarsak, 20 August, 21 September 1861; Sambād Prabhākar, 11 January, 28 February 1866; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 22 April, 28 July, 2 August 1865; Som Prakās, 30 Śravan and 13 Bhādra 1278 (1871), as quoted in B.Ghosh, Vidyāsagar o Bāngālī Samāj, vol. 3, pp. 249-252.

<sup>185</sup> Friend of India, 22 March 1866. Also, Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 28

the Kulīn Brāhman̄s of Bengal. The fifty-four signatures to the petition presented to the Lt. Governor in the same year showed a similar non-Brāhman̄ bias.<sup>187</sup> The list of the prominent petitioners also indicated an alliance between diverse groups, for instance, abhi-jāt zamindars such as Maharaja Satish Chandra Ray Bahadur of Nadiya, Pratap Chandra Sinha of Kandi, Jay Krishna Mukhopadhyaya of Uttarpara and Kali Prasanna Sinha of Calcutta; Sanskrit scholars such as Braja Nath Vidyaratna of Nadiya<sup>188</sup> and Bharat Chandra Siromani, Professor of Hindu Law at the Sanskrit College in Calcutta; members of the tradition-oriented Tattva Bodhini-goṣṭhī such as Debendra Nath Thakur and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and leading members of the Westernized Derozio-goṣṭhī such as Ram Gopal Ghosh and Pyari Chand Mitra.<sup>189</sup>

As in the case of the widow-remarriage movement,<sup>190</sup> Raja Radha Kanta Debof the Dharma Sabhā led the conservative opposition to the

February, 24 March (citing the Educational Gazette) 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 26 March, 29 March (citing the Hindoo Patriot) 1866; Sambād Bhāskar, 27 March 1866; Bāmā Bodhini Patrikā, Baisākh 1273 (1866). According to some sources 20,900 persons signed the petition. Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 24 March 1866. The Raja of Burdwan did not sign this petition, but submitted a separate petition to the same effect. Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 24 March 1866.

<sup>186</sup> B. Ghosh, Vidyasāgar o Bāngālī Samāj, vol. 3, p. 288.

<sup>187</sup> Friend of India, 22 March 1866. The list even included the names of four Malliks and one Seal, members of rising lower caste groups. Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> The signature of Braja Nath Vidyaratna, a respected leader of the conservative Hindus and the foremost Professor of Smṛiti in Abdiya, who had opposed Vidyasagar's widow-remarriage movement, was particularly gratifying to the supporters of the anti-polygamy movement. Sambād Bhāskar, 27 March 1866.

<sup>189</sup> Friend of India, 22 March 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 26 March 1866.

<sup>190</sup> See below, pp. 323-324.

anti-polygamy movement.<sup>191</sup> Generally speaking, the members of the conservative section were against the movement,<sup>192</sup> particularly against legislation on this matter.<sup>193</sup> The members of the Aryābarta Sabhā (society of the Aryan land), a conservative organization established by Raja Kamal Kriṣhna Bahadur, opposed legislation on the ground that "time and education will work more smoothly."<sup>194</sup> By 1866, it was reported, a strong movement was "set on foot amongst the orthodox Koolin Brahmins" for memorialising Government against any legislative enactments for prohibiting polygamy and numerous copies of petitions written in Bengali were circulated among "the most staunch supporters of Koolinism" in different parts of Bengal for signature.<sup>195</sup>

Humanitarianism was one of the major arguments used by the urban Bengalis including the leading Bengali writers of this time, who opposed Kulinism (koulīnya-prathā) and polygamy (bahu-bibāha).<sup>196</sup> Vernacular works, particularly dramas written on the subject, pointed

<sup>191</sup>"Radhakant Deb", Calcutta Review, vol. 45, August 1867, p.324.

<sup>192</sup>Ram Narayan Tarkaratna, Nava Nāṭak, p.75.

<sup>193</sup>The Sanātān Dharma Rakshinī Sabhā (society for the protection of the Traditional Religion, that is, Hinduism), which took a liberal stand on this question and in 1863 presented an appeal on behalf of twenty thousand people who were in favour of legislation against polygamy, was an exception. Indian Observer 16 September 1861 (letter); Pākshik Saṃbād, 1 February 1871 (quoting the Som Prakāś); S.K.Mitra, op.cit., p.241.

<sup>194</sup>Indian Observer, 16 September 1861 (letter).

<sup>195</sup>Indian Daily News, 20 September 1868.

<sup>196</sup>For example, Paridarsak, August (letter), 24 December 1861; Saṃbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 30 May 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 12 June 1865; Saṃbād Bhaskar, 6 March 1866; G.P.Banerjee, Punarbibāha Nāṭak, preface; N.C. Guṇanidhi, Kali Kutūhala, pp. 57-60.

out the practical humanitarian problems connected with polygamy, for example, the neglect of older wives, the widowhood of many women with the death of one man.<sup>197</sup> The hereditary nature of the institution of Kulinism was also criticized.<sup>198</sup> In preparing the Bill to check Hindu polygamy, Vidyasagar thus stated his objects and reasons in opposing Kulīn polygamy:

"The unlicensed liberty to marry a plurality of wives has led to many deplorable abuses. Men of wealth and intemperance needless of the grave responsibility of the act, often contract a fresh marriage, from an impulse of the moment, and, among the middle classes, too, instances are not infrequent ... of men multiplying their wives, without the semblance of any reasonable cause, and even in cases where they are unable to afford suitable maintenance to their living consorts."<sup>199</sup>

Bengali journalists supporting the movement often criticized the practice on moral as well as practical grounds. The fact that Kulinism encouraged the practice of polygamy was pointed out and it was felt that the Government should have the power to restrict Kulinism as well as polygamy in order to solve the problem fully.<sup>200</sup>

On 26 March 1866, the Hindoo Patriot, the mouthpiece of the British Indian Association which initiated the movement, commented on the universality of support given to the movement in Bengal.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Paridarsak, 21 September 1861; Ram Narayan Tarkaratna, Nava Nājak, pp. 16-18, 20, 30-46, 56, 75, 118-120.

<sup>198</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 7 July 1865.

<sup>199</sup> Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, as quoted in Friend of India, 30 March 1865.

<sup>200</sup> Sambād Pūrna Chandrodaya, 28 February 1866.

<sup>201</sup> Hindoo Patriot, as quoted in B.Ghosh, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, pp. 116-117.



The movement became popular in Eastern Bengal, especially in Dacca where it was supported by even the conservative Hindu journal Hindu Hitaishīnī.<sup>202</sup> Even some of the British journalists living in Bengal were convinced about the widespread nature of "native" opposition to Kulīn polygamy.<sup>203</sup> However, among the urban Bengalis, even among the elite, opposition to Kulīn polygamy was hardly universal. Even those who were eager to denounce Kulīn polygamy, were not always willing to go to the extent of denouncing polygamy in every form or of supporting legislation against polygamy.<sup>204</sup> The supporters of the movement for the prohibition of polygamy were very much divided on the question of government intervention. In early 1856 about sixteen hundred residents of Calcutta and its neighbourhood sent a petition against the Kulīn practice of polygamy to the Legislative Council.<sup>205</sup> The Sambād Bhāskar of Calcutta expressed impatience with the Government for refusing to legislate against polygamy and said that such legislation was essential for the widow-remarriage movement.<sup>206</sup> But the Som Prakās, a critic of the institution of polygamy, opposed

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<sup>202</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika, 1283 (1876), 20 Samkhyā (issue); Dhākā Prakās, 1281 (1874), 4 Samkhyā; Bhārat Samskārak, 1283 (1876), 12 Samkhyā, as quoted in B. Ghosh, Vidyāsāgar o Bāngālī Samāj, vol. 3, pp. 254-255, 259-260.

<sup>203</sup> Friend of India, 3 and 17 July 1856; 6 August 1863; Dacca News, 19 June 1858.

<sup>204</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 17 August 1865; 28 February 1866.

<sup>205</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 2 February 1856, SBS, vol. 3, p. 292.

<sup>206</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 25 November 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 338-339; 6 March 1866.

government intervention in social matters.<sup>207</sup> It was hoped that with English education the Bengalis would be able to reform themselves without "alien help".<sup>208</sup> In the meantime, it was suggested, polygamy could be checked by taxing men who married more than once.<sup>209</sup> The members of the Sanātan Dharma Rakshīnī Sabhā (society for the protection of the eternal religion) - an association which was in favour of legislation against polygamy - were urged to act against dowry, polygamy and Kulinism themselves instead of petitioning Government for help.<sup>210</sup> In 1871, in a letter written to the editor of the Som Prakāś, Vidyasagar strongly criticized the paper for its views on this question and supported government intervention in order to put an end to "the shameful, hateful, extravagant, irreligious and undisciplined affair of polygamy ... which is the source of limitless evil."<sup>211</sup> But the Som Prakāś, which represented a large number of middle class Bengalis who believed in following a medium path in socio-religious matters, continued to oppose moves to introduce legislation against polygamy on the ground that government intervention in this matter was not acceptable because polygamy had not been proved to be "forbidden by the Śastras" (Śāstra-nisiddha) in the same way as widow-marriage had been proved to be "approved by the Śastras (Śāstra-siddha)."<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Som Prakāś, 30 Śrāvaṇ 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p.242.

<sup>208</sup> Som Prakāś, 30 Śrāvaṇ 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p.243.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Som Prakāś, 20 Āṣāḍh 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 237-239.

<sup>211</sup> Vidyasagar's letter to the editor of the Som Prakāś, dated 8 Bhādra 1278 (1871), quoted in Som Prakāś, 13 Bhādra 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 244-246. Also, letter from Kailash Nath Basu of Calcutta to the editor of the Som Prakāś, in Som Prakāś, 13 Bhādra 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 250-253.

<sup>212</sup> Som Prakāś, 13 Bhādra 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p.247.

Letters written by eminent Sanskrit scholars such as Tara Nath Tarkabachaspati<sup>213</sup> were published stating that polygamy was "approved by the Śāstras" (Śāstra-sammata)<sup>214</sup>. The Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya of Calcutta maintained that the "evils" of Kulinism arose out of the misinterpretation of the original rules set down by Ballal Sen, and opposed government intervention in matters relating to religion and society and hoped that the "evils" of Kulinism would gradually disappear with social change.<sup>215</sup>

The Government was not convinced that the movement had extensive support within the Bengali community and decided against legislation on the matter, at least for the time being.<sup>216</sup> Although a few Bengali kṛitavidyas maintained that the Koulīnya-prathā as it existed in nineteenth century Bengal did not have the support of either the Dharma Śāstras (religious scriptures) or common reasoning (lok-yukti), many believed that polygamy enjoyed Śāstric support. In view of government decision against legislation in this case and in favour of legislation in the case of widow-remarriage, it is possible that the degree of Sanskritic support for a particular social reform movement or the absence of it was a major factor behind government involvement in social reform.

In many ways, the Brāhma Marriage Bill or the Special Marriage Bill which became the Native Marriage Act or Civil Marriage Act (Act III of 1872) was the culmination of the movement for social

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<sup>213</sup>Tara Nath, a colleague of Ishwar Chandra at the Sanskrit College, had earlier supported this movement. Education Gazette and Sāptāhik Bārtābaha, 17 Bhādra 1278 (1861), SBS, pp. 974-976.

<sup>214</sup>Som Prakāś, 13 Bhādra 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 249-250.

<sup>215</sup>Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 30 May 1865: 28 February 1866.

<sup>216</sup>Letter from E.C. Bayley, Secretary to Government of India, to Hon. A. Eden, Secretary to Government of Bengal, Simla, dated 8 August 1866, as quoted in B. Ghosh, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, p. 117, also quoted in Indian Daily News, 6 September 1866.

legislation with reference to marriage, the status of women and other related matters such as caste, in nineteenth century Bengal. The Bill was first introduced as the Civil Marriage Bill "applicable to all non-Christians who had any objection to be married according to the forms of the established Indian religions", that is, to any one "not professing the Christian religion and objecting to be married in accordance with the rites of the Hindu, Mahomedan, Parsi or Jewish religion."<sup>217</sup> Special provisions were made for the Brāhma community whose members initiated the legislation and special marriage registrars who were members of the sect were appointed at Calcutta, Dacca, Hooghly and Bakharganj, some of the main centres of the Brāhma Samāj movement.<sup>218</sup> The promoters of the Bill were the younger and progressive section of the Brāhma Samāj led by Keshab Chandra Sen. The members of this group had a special interest in caste which had been a major factor behind their secession from the older and more conservative Brāhmas. This legislation was said to have finalised the schism by requiring its supporters to declare their non-Hindu status openly.<sup>219</sup> The "two brothers" were thus separated:

"One brother the Adi Brāhma Samāj led by Debendra Nath remained within the Hindu society (Hindu-samāj). the parental mansion. Another brother the Bhārat Varshīya Brāhma Samāj led by Keshab Chandra left the mansion and went outside."<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Friend of India, 21 September 1868: 7 March, 4 April 1872.

<sup>218</sup> Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, p.66.

<sup>219</sup> R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, p.140.

<sup>220</sup> Friend of India, 10 August 1871.

The regulation of inter-caste marriages (asavarna-bibaha) was a primary purpose of this Bill. In the 1860s, several inter-caste marriages were entered into by "highly-placed and aristocratic (sambhranta) Bengalis",<sup>221</sup> at the encouragement of the Keshab-goshti. A society named Bhratri Samaj (society of brothers) was formed whose members signed a "note of promise" (pratiṅṅā-patra) in which they vowed to promote inter-caste marriages and the emancipation of women.<sup>222</sup> In 1865, more than fifty per cent of the members of the Society belonged to the Brāhmaṇ and the Kāyastha castes and a substantial portion - about twenty per cent - belonged to the lower Hindu castes.<sup>223</sup> The majority of the members were residents of Calcutta and Dacca,<sup>224</sup> the two main centres of the Brāhma Samaj movement. But even liberal Bengali newspapers like the Som Prakās opposed inter-caste marriages on the ground that they were untimely and had to be preceded by other kinds of social change.<sup>225</sup> The Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, however, came out openly in favour of inter-caste marriages and urged educated Bengalis to join the Bhratri Samaj.<sup>226</sup> The injustice inherent in a system which did not allow the marriage between "a precious daughter" and "an eligible youth of a different caste" but encouraged her marriage to "an illiterate and poverty-stricken Kulīn youth" was pointed out.<sup>227</sup>

<sup>221</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 11 October 1865: 7 February 1866.

<sup>222</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 20 September 1865.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Som Prakās, 18 September 1865.

<sup>226</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 20 September 1865.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid. Also Friend of India, 3 August 1871.

The validity of the Brāhma marriages which had been performed since the 1850s without adherence to some of the essential rites of traditional Hindu marriage such as the presence of the Śālagrām Śilā (sacred stone) was another important issue. In 1868 Henry Maine obtained leave to introduce a Bill "to legalize marriages between certain Natives of India not professing the Christian religion" in the Governor General's Legislative Council on the ground that "it was not the policy of the Queen's Government in India to refuse the power of marriage to any of Her Majesty's subjects",<sup>228</sup> thus raising the important considerations of the subjects' equality before the law and the Government's policy of religious neutrality. The Bill also tried to put an end to polygamy as far as the converts to Brāhma Dharma were concerned<sup>229</sup> - a measure which would please both the Brāhma reformers and the Christian missionaries, the latter feeling that they were at a disadvantage compared with the Brāhma religion which did not prohibit polygamy.

The conservative section of the Brāhma Samāj led by traditionalists such as Debendra Nath Thakur and Raj Narayan Basu refused to accept the necessity of this Bill and opposed it, causing considerable delay in its passage.<sup>230</sup> Raj Narayan wrote:

"Brāhma marriage was legal (baidha) marriage ... There was no need for a special enactment. If Keshab only waited a little longer, Brāhma marriage would have become the accepted practice of the

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<sup>228</sup> Henry Maine, as quoted in Friend of India, 21 September 1858.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Friend of India, 3 August 1871.

Brāhma community. Then it would have been accepted as legal in the courts of law. But Keshab is always hasty in his actions."<sup>231</sup>

Debendra Nath, while admitting that theoretically there could be no ban to a marriage between Brāhmas,<sup>232</sup> yet felt that the time for legislation on such matters had not yet come.<sup>233</sup> He wrote to Raj Narayan:

"The time to break [The chains of] caste-distinctions (jāti-bhed) has not yet arrived. This is also the opinion of Akshay Kumar [Datta]."<sup>234</sup>

Caste was an important factor in the clashes between Brāhma leaders and the conservative Brāhmas were convinced that Keshab's main intention behind promoting this Bill was the desire to legalize inter-caste marriages.<sup>235</sup>

The movement for the Special Marriage Bill was mainly a result of the Westernization of the progressive Brāhmas. By challenging the caste system - still a strong force in urban Bengali society - they scared a large section of the Hindus as well as the traditional Brāhmas who disliked the idea of a complete break-away from Hindu society and religion. Debendra Nath wrote:

"Hindu Dharma is a very wide and liberal religion - it can absorb all kinds of improvements. Hence, Brāhma Dharma should be propagated by staying within Hindu Dharma and not by disassociating ourselves from the Hindus. Hindu Dharma should be elevated into Brāhma Dharma. Separation from the Hindus will make the propagation of Brāhma Dharma a doubtful matter."<sup>236</sup>

<sup>231</sup>R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, p.139.

<sup>232</sup>Priya Nath Sastri (ed.), Debendra Nāth Thākurer Patrābali [Letters of Debendra Nath Thakur], p.38, in S.K.Gupta, Unavimsa Satābdite Bānglār Navajāgarāṇ, p.75.

<sup>233</sup>P.N.Sastri, op.cit., p.50, in S.K.Gupta, op.cit., p.76.

<sup>234</sup>Ibid.

<sup>235</sup>R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, p.139.

<sup>236</sup>Pradhān Ācārya [Head preceptor, referring to Debendra Nath Thakur], Brāhma Samājer Pañca-vimsati Batsarer Parikṣita Brittānta

The members of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj felt that the Bill would "materially injure the religious reform activities of the Brāhma Samāj, that is, the work of reforming the Hindoo community without separating themselves from it, and thereby converting themselves into an isolated body."<sup>237</sup> The Hindu community was pleased with the reaction of the conservative Brāhmas. The Som Prakās praised the members of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj for trying to reform and improve the Hindu society from within instead of leaving it like the followers of Keshab.<sup>238</sup> The Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya observed:

"If we condemn those who renounce everything to embrace Christianity, we must also condemn the Brāhmas if they leave their mother [that is, the Hindu society], even though Brāhma Dharma is perhaps more desirable than Christianity, being an indigenous and ancient religion."<sup>239</sup>

The controversies surrounding this Bill raised the important question of the desirability of government intervention in social and religious matters. Raj Narayan Basu's main objection against the measure was that it would imply the recognition of the supremacy of legislation over religion:

"My main objection against the Civil Marriage Act is that the product of a marriage which is performed in the name of Brahma and before Brāhmas who are devoted to Brahma (Brahma-niṣṭha) by an ācārya (priest) who is devoted to Brahma (Brahma-niṣṭha) will not be recognized as legal until a registrar who might not have any connection with the [Brāhma] religion says that the marriage is legal. I cannot understand how religious men can accept such a form of marriage."<sup>240</sup>

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[An authoritative account of twenty-five years of the Brāhma Samāj], pp. 42-43, as quoted in S.K.Gupta, op.cit., p.78.

<sup>237</sup> Article sent by "members of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj" and printed in Friend of India, 10 August 1871.

<sup>238</sup> Som Prakās, 6 Bhādra 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p.244

<sup>239</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 7 February 1866.

<sup>240</sup> R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, p.139.



The conservative Brāhmas in general found this legislative attempt on the part of the Government to be an encroachment - an attempt "to improve a Civil form of marriage contrary to the spirit of the Brāhmic form".<sup>241</sup> While they criticized the Bill for considering "the solemnization of Brāhma marriages according to Brāhmic rites a non-essential part",<sup>242</sup> obviously the most important issue involved was the issue of government interference with religion. An Ādi Brāhma Samāj circular entitled "An Appeal to the Brahmos of India" which was printed and distributed in front of the temple of the Bhārat Varshīya Brāhma Samāj, the dissident section of the Samāj, in Calcutta, declared:

"For the first time in the history of India, the Government is going to interfere with the religion of a class of Her Majesty's Indian subjects, by rendering a civil ceremony essential for the validity of a religious one. Who is to be blamed for this? Not Government, but we ourselves who are going to surrender our religious rights into its hand of our own accord."<sup>243</sup>

The Brāhmas were urged to see the "seriousness" of the situation:

"Never before in the history of India did any such instance occur of a body of religious men surrendering their religious rights of their own accord in the way we are doing."<sup>244</sup>

Prominent urban Bengali Muslims led by Maulavi Abdul Latif Khan of Calcutta opposed the Native Marriage Bill. They held a meeting at Taltala in Calcutta on 9 February 1872 to discuss the Bill and sent a memorial to the Council of the Governor-General of

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., p.142.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p.141.

<sup>243</sup> As quoted in ibid., p.142.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., p.143.

India in which they expressed the fear that the Bill might imply the Government's intention to interfere in the religious affairs of the subjects and that it might also "facilitate the contraction of improper marriages, which, under the Mahomedan Law, could not take place."<sup>245</sup> This group expressed particular concern for "an apostate from Mahomedanism" who, "getting married under the sanction of such a law as that proposed", might consider "returning to the faith", that is Islam, and face legal difficulties.<sup>246</sup>

The Brāhma Marriage Bill raised questions regarding various aspects of Hindu and Brāhma marriages which had been disturbing the urban Bengali society for some time. In 1871 the editor of the Som Prakāś asked:

"If a Hindu wife refuses to go with her Brāhma husband [that is, accept Brāhma Dharma], can the husband remarry?"<sup>247</sup>

Even the sensitive issue of divorce was raised:

"If the wife is adulterous or if the husband is cruel, can they leave each other and remarry? Since a new marriage law is being introduced, these defects in the system should be removed. Laws should also be introduced to determine the rights of inheritance of the children of the forsaken wife and of the children of the later marriage."<sup>248</sup>

The question of the marriageable age of a girl and the question regarding the age when a girl could marry "independently" were also raised. In both cases, the Som Prakāś advocated lower age limits than those suggested in the Brāhma Marriage Bill.<sup>249</sup> But the Som

<sup>245</sup> Muslim petition to the Governor General as quoted in Friend of India, 21 March 1872.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Som Prakāś, 5 Baisākh 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p.229. Also, Som Prakāś, 25 Pous 1278 (1871) (letter), SBS, vol. 4, pp.253-254.

<sup>248</sup> Som Prakāś, 5 Baisākh 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p.229.

<sup>249</sup> Som Prakāś, 5 Baisākh 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 228-229.

Prakās, undoubtedly speaking for a large section of the urban Bengalis, opposed legislation on the "correct age" for marriage or on any such "important social matter" on the ground that attempts to take help of official legislation (rāj-bidhi) in connection with social matters always had bad, rather than good, results.<sup>250</sup> It was felt that such matters should remain in the hands of the society (samāj) itself.<sup>251</sup> The Keshab-goṣṭhī, which included the Westernized Brāhmas, again took the initiative in favour of legislation. On 1 April 1871, Keshab Chandra Sen, on behalf of the Indian Reform Association, a Western-style organization of the Bhārat Varshīya Brāhma Samāj,<sup>252</sup> sent a circular letter to leading medical practitioners - both Indian and European - in Bengal, requesting them to give their medical opinion on the earliest marriageable age which would be consistent with the well-being of mother and child under Indian conditions.<sup>253</sup> The frankness and boldness of this letter and the discussions which followed<sup>254</sup> shocked even many progressive Western-educated urban Bengalis. Even the Indian Mirror, the mouthpiece of the progressive Brāhmas, while declaring that "the longer marriage can be delayed the better", admitted the necessity, in view of old customs and habits, "of moving in so great a matter by degrees, and not by change so vast as to amount to a social revolution."<sup>255</sup> No

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<sup>250</sup> Som Prakās, 2 Śrāvaṇ 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p.241. Also, Som Prakās, 6 Bhādra 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 243-244.

<sup>251</sup> Som Prakās, 2 Śrāvaṇ 1278 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p.241.

<sup>252</sup> The Association was established by Keshab Chandra after his return from England where he might have got the idea and aimed at female improvement, education of the working classes, cheap literature, temperance and charity. Bāmā Bodhīnī Patrikā, November-December 1870; Friend of India, 2 May 1872 (citing the Indian Mirror).

<sup>253</sup> Friend of India, 29 June 1871.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid. B.B.Majumdar, History of Indian Political and Social Ideas, pp.17-18.

<sup>255</sup> Indian Mirror, as quoted in Friend of India, 29 June 1871.

doubt, the Brāhma Samāj had to take into account the important fact that

"it would be a serious drawback to Brahmoism if, while the orthodox Hindoo could marry his children in childhood, the Brahmists could not do so till they were eighteen years of age."<sup>256</sup>

In a similar way, the Brāhma Samāj felt restricted in its efforts at female emancipation. The pardā (seclusion of women) was sometimes more strictly observed in the urban areas where threats to tradition were stronger and more numerous, than in the rural areas.<sup>257</sup> Even in Calcutta around the middle of the nineteenth century, upper and middle class Bengali women were "secluded" (pardānaśīn) and anyone inviting them had to send pālkis (enclosed carriages) for them, since "these inhabitants of the inner chambers (antaḥpurikās) could not be expected to walk."<sup>258</sup> In the 1860s, the members of the Keshab-goṣṭhī, with the support and help of some of the leaders of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj such as Ramtanu Lahiri of Krishnanagar<sup>259</sup> and Satyendra Nath Thakur of Jorasanko in Calcutta,<sup>260</sup> began to encourage the public appearance of Bengali women. They were obviously inspired by the example of European women, particularly Christian missionary women, and by the notion of equal rights for men and women. Thus,

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> See J.G.Sena, "Changes in the Status of Women during Nineteenth Century as reflected in Bengali Literature", Ph.D. Thesis, 1923, University of London, p.119.

<sup>258</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 2 August 1865.

<sup>259</sup> R.Lethbridge, Ramtanu Lahiri, p.140.

<sup>260</sup> J.G.Sena, op.cit., p.120.

the Brāhma women of Calcutta were urged to appear in public, not only on religious occasions which was to some extent permissible even among the Hindus, but also at social gatherings. Keshab Chandra took his wife to Debendra Nath's house and even accompanied a few Brāhmikās (Brāhma ladies) to the house of a Christian missionary and had tea with them.<sup>261</sup> In 1866 the attendance of Brāhma women at the prayer-meeting at Debendra Nath's house was noted with surprise by the Sambād Prabhākar.<sup>262</sup> At the time of the opening of the new mandir (temple) of the Bhārat Varshīya Brāhma Samāj - the dissident section of the Brāhma Samāj which naturally took a bolder stand on this issue - special sitting arrangements were made for Brāhma women to indicate the permanence of this measure.<sup>263</sup> During the late 1860s and the 1870s it was reported that women were attending the prayer meetings of the Bhārat Varshīya Brāhma Samāj in greater numbers, sometimes even causing "scarcity of sitting-space".<sup>264</sup> By the 1870s, the question of female emancipation (strīsvādhīnatā) had become an important topic of discussion, not only in the Brāhma Samāj, but, as a contemporary said, "in the entire civilized society (sabhya samāj)" in Bengal.<sup>265</sup>

The movement for a change in the social position of the Bengali women was largely a result of the Westernization of its supporters and of their contact with European Christian missionaries. The wives of the Western-educated sons of Debendra Nath Thakur, mainly

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<sup>261</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 20 November 1865.

<sup>262</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 26 January 1866.

<sup>263</sup> Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā, August-September 1868.

<sup>264</sup> Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā, September-October 1868: January-February 1871.

<sup>265</sup> Ishan Chandra Basu, in Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Śrāvṇ 1794 (1872), SBS, vol. 2, p.251.

Jyotirindra Nath Thakur and Satyendra Nath Thakur, I.C.S., pioneered the free movement of women of respectable families outside their houses.<sup>266</sup> In a lecture on "the effect of English education on Bengali society", barrister Man Mohan Ghosh of Calcutta remarked that the education of Bengali women was being talked of "as a necessity" and that one even heard of "attempts to give the women of this country the liberty to come out in public".<sup>267</sup> Moreover, it appeared that "early marriage, polygamy and a few other ... social customs which were injurious to women" were being denounced, at least in theory.<sup>268</sup> The arguments which were used in support of the public appearance of women such as the equality of men and women were generally derived from the West, although on a few occasions ancient Indian traditions and sources encouraging the free movement and the education of women were also cited.<sup>269</sup>

As in the case of most social questions involving the Hindus, the question of the seclusion of women was closely linked with the question of caste. The Indian Mirror, the English-language newspaper of the progressive Brāhmas, pointed out that

"Ladies of respectable families in Calcutta are strictly confined within the zenana and are not allowed to attend the houses of their friends belonging to different castes."<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Rabindra Nath Thakur, Chelebelā, pp. 56-57, 65. Satyendra Nath's wife Jnanada Nandini Debi even introduced the costume which was suitable for appearance in public. Ibid., p.57.

<sup>267</sup> Man Mohan Ghosh, as quoted in Friend of India, 27 May 1869.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 25 April 1865.

<sup>270</sup> Indian Mirror, 1 February 1862.

But in 1862 an exceptional meeting took place in the house of Debendra Nath Thakur in Calcutta involving the women of his household. The Indian Mirror reported:

"We have been very much pleased to learn that a lady of the [Baidya] Sen family of Colootolah [Kāṭutala], was present on the occasion and dined with the ladies of the [Brāhmaṇ] Tagore family, in spite of the opposition she had to meet from her male and female relatives."<sup>271</sup>

But, on the whole, Bengali public opinion even in the urban areas was still in favour of the seclusion of women. Conservative Hindus as well as the conservative section of the Brāhma Samāj feared that the enthusiasm of the younger Brāhmas of the Keshab-goṣṭhī might lead to "undisciplined behaviour" on the part of the Bengali women, and favoured the continuation of the traditional role of the Bengali women, with slight modifications.<sup>272</sup> The Sambād Fūrṇa Chandrodaya, usually sympathetic to the progressive Brāhmas, opposed the movement on the puritanical ground that the prevalent "immoral atmosphere" in the urban areas made it very difficult for women "to preserve their chastity".<sup>273</sup> The Sambād Prabhākar feared that the gradual increase in the "power" of the Hindu women without a corresponding progress in female education was behind various "domestic miseries", including the break-up of the joint family system.<sup>274</sup> In 1866 when a "converted Native Christian woman" attended a party at the Governor's Palace in Calcutta, the Sambād Prabhākar

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Ishan Chandra Basu, in Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Śrāvaṇ 1794 (1872), SBS, vol. 2, p.251.

<sup>273</sup> Sambād Fūrṇa Chandrodaya, 25 April 1865.

<sup>274</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 1 and 17 March 1866.

remarked that the time had not yet come for such action on the part of Hindu and Brāhma women.<sup>275</sup> The Samāchār Chandrikā of the Dharma Sabhā-goṣṭhī naturally adopted a harsher tone and characterized the new attempts at female emancipation as "nothing but immoral".<sup>276</sup>

The changing urban society in nineteenth century Bengal gave rise to various questions regarding the social role of the Bengali women - an issue which was closely connected with the question of the place of traditionalism in society. The members of the Brāhma Samāj and the entire urban Bengali society were divided into two major groups on this issue. The Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, representing the viewpoint of the traditionalists, advocated the education and emancipation of the Bengali women, but only to a limited extent.<sup>277</sup> The more radical group, consisting of Western-educated young Bengalis who were followers of Keshab Sen, desired more positive steps towards the emancipation of the Bengali women, mainly through the utilization of Western techniques such as the publication of journals like the Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā<sup>278</sup> [Journal for educating women] and societies such as the Bāmā Bodhinī Sabhā (society for educating women) established in 1853 which published the Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā and had four main aims, namely, to publish books and periodicals for "improving the minds of Indian women", to arrange essay-competitions and prize-distributions among educated women, to establish a system of educating

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<sup>275</sup> Sarbād Prabhākar, 15 January 1866.

<sup>276</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 30 November 1865.

<sup>277</sup> For example, Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Pous 1785 (1863): Jaiṣṭha 1798 (1876), Phālgun 1862 (1880), Chaitra 1802 (1881), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 432-434, 440-442, 459-466.

<sup>278</sup> Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā, February-March 1868. The Patrikā publicized Keshab's work on behalf of the emancipation of Indian women, especially for their education, during his trip to England in 1870. Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā, November-December 1870.



grown-up women in their homes and to help in the all-round improvement of the Bengali women.<sup>279</sup> Some of the other societies established by progressive Brāhmas for similar purposes were: the Brāhma Bandhu Sabhā (Brāhma Friends' Association) established in 1863 whose members later formed the Antahpur Strī-sīkshā Sabhā (society for the education of women at home);<sup>280</sup> the Calcutta Brāhmikā Samāj (the society of the Brāhma women of Calcutta) established in 1865 where every Saturday Brāhma women attended lectures on religious topics delivered by Keshab Sen and other leading Brāhmas and European women were appointed to teach geography, arithmetic, arts and crafts;<sup>281</sup> and the Bāmā Hitaishigī Sabhā (society for helping women) established in 1872 to discuss various topics such as religion, education, literature, manners and customs, dress, social and domestic duties. Most of these societies put special emphasis upon the training and appointment of Brāhma women teachers in the antahpur/zenānā (inner quarters of the house) since the teachers engaged in such work at the time were primarily Christian ladies with an obvious interest in the Christianization of the Hindu and Brāhma women. The example of the Brāhma women - or "Brāhmikās" as they were popularly known - created a sensation in the nineteenth century Bengali society. In a lecture delivered on 19 October 1867 in Baranagar, a suburb of Calcutta, a contemporary urban Bengali - claiming to represent the sentiments of a large number

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<sup>279</sup> Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā, Āsvin 1274 (1867).

<sup>280</sup> Som Prakās, 11 May 1863: 15 August 1864.

<sup>281</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 6 July, 16 August 1865; Banga Vidyā, 10 July 1865; Sambād Purṇa Chandrodāya, 15 July 1865; Sīksha Darpaṇ, Bhādra 1272 (1865).

of educated and young urban Bengalis - gave a highly complimentary description of the Brāhma woman as the ideal partner of the urban Bengali kṛitavidya:<sup>282</sup>

"In this small but day-to-day increasing community, the woman is sufficiently cared for. These are the men whose example in respect of zenana education ought to be followed by the rest of our countrymen, because we find these ladies much advanced - able to sympathize with the enlightened views of their husbands and even to take a part in their public duties."<sup>283</sup>

The arguments used in favour of female education<sup>284</sup> such as the equality of men and women and the role of a wife as an intellectual companion of a man were greatly influenced by Christian missionary teachings and activities and by the general Western attitude towards the position of women and towards their education. The younger Brāhmas like Keshab Chandra Sen, Bijay Krishna Goswami and Umesh Chandra Datta, in particular, used various Western, sometimes typically Christian missionary, techniques such as the establishment of societies, for instance the Bāmā Bodhinī Sabhā (society for educating women) (1863),<sup>285</sup> the Calcutta Brāhmikā Samāj (society for Brāhma women of Calcutta) (1865), the Bāmā Hitaishinī Sabhā (society for helping women) (1872), journals for instance the Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā run by the Bāmā Bodhinī Sabhā,<sup>286</sup> teachers training schools and special schools for women for instance the Brāhmikā Vidyālaya (school for Brāhma women) which met at the house of Prasanna Kumar Sen of Calcutta.<sup>287</sup> The

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<sup>282</sup> "Young Women of Bengal", a lecture delivered by Babu Sarada Prasad Bandyopadhyaya at the monthly meeting of the Improvement Society in Baranagar, printed in Indian Daily News, 26 October 1867.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Vidyā Darśan, Aṣāḥand Āśvin 1764 (1843), SBS, vol. 3, pp. 576, 579-80; Sambād Bhāskar, 10 May, 12 June 1849, SBS, vol. 3, p. 398; Sambād Prabākar, 7 August 1850, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 320-321; Sarba Subhakari Patrikā, Āśvin 1772 (1850), SBS, vol. 3, pp. 543-544, 546-549; Friend of India, 14 November 1850: 28 November 1861; Dacca News, 20 June 1857; Education Gazette, 13 May 1859; Som Prakās, 27 June 1864. Radha Kanta Deb, as quoted in Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Jaigṭha 1798 (1876), SBS, vol. 2, p. 440.

<sup>285</sup> Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā, Āśvin 1274 (1867).

supporters of female education were almost invariably urban kritavidyas who had been exposed to the forces of Westernization and who had close relations with leading European educationists in Bengal. For example, Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, the Brāhmap scholar who was one of the first men to send his daughters to the Bethune Female School was a close associate of Bethune.<sup>288</sup> Government help was an important element in the progress of female education in Bengal, both from the financial and the psychological points of view. The patronage of Lady Dalhousie, for instance, was found to be an important factor behind the success of the Bethune School,<sup>289</sup> the leading institution of female education in Bengal at this time. As Bethune himself urged, open and active Government support was bound to have a positive effect upon the attitude of the Bengali kritavidyas towards the question.<sup>290</sup>

From its earliest days, the Bethune School of Calcutta,<sup>291</sup> established in May 1849 with considerable support from the Vernacular Press<sup>292</sup> and situated in what an English journalist described as "the heart of the Native quarter",<sup>293</sup> attracted the attention of the Government.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 20 Nov. 1865 (quoting the Indian Mirror); Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā Baisākh 1273 (1867).

<sup>287</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 26 March 1866; Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā, Baisākh 1273 (1867), pp. 260-261.

<sup>288</sup> R.N. Basu, Atmācharit, pp. 21, 38.

<sup>289</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 21 Dec. 1853, in SBS, vol. 1, p. 336.

<sup>290</sup> Letter from Bethune to Dalhousie, as quoted in B. Ghosh, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, pp. 63-64.

<sup>291</sup> The school was known as Calcutta Female School before Bethune's death in 1851 when it became known as the Bethune School. It was also sometimes known as Victoria Girls' School. Sambād Prabhākar, 7 and 9 May 1849, in SBS, vol. 1, pp. 305, 308.

<sup>292</sup> Friend of India, 14 Nov. 1850.

<sup>293</sup> Friend of India, 9 Jan. 1868.

<sup>294</sup> Bengal Education Proceedings, 6 Nov. (no. 1) 1850; Despatch to India (Public), 4 Sept. (no. 20) 1850.

Bethune always kept the authorities informed about the progress of the school<sup>295</sup> and finally bequeathed the school to the East India Company in his will.<sup>296</sup> The Council of Education made arrangements to carry on the functions of the institution with "efficiency"<sup>297</sup> and in 1854 reported that there were forty girl students at the school.<sup>298</sup> From October 1851 the Government bore all the expenses of the school and in 1856 it became a recognized Government institution.<sup>299</sup> The Bethune School Committee was formed with Vidyasagar as the Honorary Secretary and prominent high caste members of the Hindu community like Raja Kali Krishna Bahadur, Rama Prasad Ray, Pratap Chandra Sinha as its members.<sup>300</sup> The Government felt that "the appointment of a Committee of Hindoo gentlemen for the management of the school is probably more likely to give confidence to the higher classes of the Hindoo community and lead to an increased attendance at the school, than any other mode of management."<sup>301</sup> Indeed, after the Committee began working its report showed "a still further, though small, increase in the number of pupils, and a better average attendance of

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<sup>295</sup> Despatch to India (Public), 4 Sept. (no. 20) 1850, pp. 3-6; Bengal Education Proceedings, 27 Nov. (no. 12) 1850.

<sup>296</sup> Bengal Education Proceedings, 24 March (Nos. 113, 114) 28 April (nos. 136, 137) 1853; Friend of India, 9 Jan 1868.

<sup>297</sup> India Public Proceedings, 3 Feb. (no. 3), 7 April (no. 8), 22 Sept. (no. 9) 1854; Bengal Education Proceedings, 16 March (nos. 134, 135) 1854.

<sup>298</sup> Bengal Education Proceedings, 16 March (nos. 134, 135) 1854.

<sup>299</sup> Bengal Education Proceedings, 10 April (no. 145) 1856.

<sup>300</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 1 Māgh 1263 (1857), in SBS, vol. 1, p.366.

<sup>301</sup> Despatch to Bengal (Public, Education), 26 May (no. 74) 1858, pp. 1300-1301.

those on the books."<sup>302</sup>

The religious and social implications of female education were, of course, widely acknowledged. The Government declared that "with reference to the opinions and feelings of the natives in respect of female seclusion, great caution and prudence will be required" in offering assistance and encouragement to female educational institutions, particularly in the Mofussil<sup>303</sup> where the hold of religion and tradition was generally stronger compared with the metropolitan society. The Government gave grants-in-aid to the zenānā associations or "small missionary societies conducted by ladies with the view of carrying religious instruction into the homes of the natives",<sup>304</sup> but it was claimed that "in making grants to such societies, the principle of perfect religious neutrality is not lost sight of and these associations are only so far recognized by the state as a means of furthering the cause of secular education."<sup>305</sup> A large section of the urban Bengali community favoured the idea of home education for women (antahpur strī-śikṣā), even if it meant employing European Christian teachers,<sup>306</sup> since sending the women of the household to an outside school involved the possibility of loss of social prestige in the opinion of conservatives like Radha Kanta Deb.<sup>307</sup> The Samāchār Chandrikā, the mouthpiece of the Dharma Sabhā, remarked that "it was much better to have the husbands educate their wives rather than send them to schools".<sup>308</sup> Even the Bāmā Bodhinī Sabhā of the

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid., p.1302.

<sup>303</sup> Despatch to India (Public), 4 September (no. 20) 1850, p.4.

<sup>304</sup> A.P.Howell, Note on the State of Education in India during 1866-67, 1868, p.51; Bengal Administration Report, 1872-73, p.148; Friend of India, 28 November 1861.

<sup>305</sup> A.P.Howell, op.cit., p.148.

<sup>306</sup> Sambhā Prabhākar, 31 May 1849, SBS, vol. 3, p.141.

<sup>307</sup> Letter from Radha Kanta Deb to Bethune, dated 20 March 1851, as quoted in B.Ghosh, Vidyāsāgar o Bāngalī Samā, vol. 3, p.115.

progressive Brāhmas sought to establish a system of educating grown up women at home.<sup>309</sup>

But perhaps the strongest argument upon which the advocates of female education based their case was the assertion that female education was in every way "approved by the Hindu Scriptures" (Hindu-Śāstra-sammata).<sup>310</sup> This argument was corroborated by the action of Debendra Nath Thakur whose decision to send his daughters and nieces to the Bethune School was considered to be an event of great social significance.<sup>311</sup> Even though the Westernized urban Bengali kritavidyas were obviously inspired by the Western ideal of womanhood, the supporters of female education felt the need to invoke the classical image of the enlightened Aryan woman helping her sage (ṛiṣi.) husband.<sup>312</sup> Sanskritic symbols and references were repeatedly used in connection with this movement, indicating the ultimate dependence on Indian traditions for the success of socio-religious reform in nineteenth century Bengal. For instance, on the foundation day of the Bethune Female School the doors of the school were decorated with traditional Hindu signs of good fortune such as a water-filled pot (pūrpa-kūmbha) and a branch of the Aśoka tree.<sup>313</sup> The bus which was used to transport the students of the Bethune School was inscribed with a quotation from the Mahā Nirvān

<sup>308</sup> Samāchār Chendrikā, 2 July 1865.

<sup>309</sup> Bāmā Bodhinī Patrikā, Āsvin 1274 (1867).

<sup>310</sup> See Vidyā Darśan, Āsādh 1864 (1843), SBS, vol. 3, pp. 577-578; Sambād Brāskar, 10 and 31 May, 19 June, 12 July 1849, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 400, 408-411, 416-418, 424-426; Sarba Śubhakarī Patrikā, Āsvin 1772 (1850), SBS, vol. 3, p.545; Radha Kanta Deb, "Strī-Sikshā Bidhāyak" [on female education], as quoted in Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Jaiṣṭha 1798 (1876), SBS, vol. 2, p.440.

<sup>311</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 7 July 1851, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 331-332.

<sup>312</sup> See R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, p.39.

<sup>313</sup> R.N.Basu, op.cit., p.38; Friend of India, 14 November 1850.

Tantra:

"Kanyāpebyam pālanīyā śikṣa apīyātiyatnataḥ  
(the daughter should be reared and educated  
with care as well)." <sup>314</sup>

Unlike Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Debendra Nath and some of the other leading Bengali social reformers of the time - mostly members of the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī - for whom belief in Sanskritic traditions was the main basis for socio-religious reformation, the arguments and outlook of the members of the Keshab-goṣṭhī were primarily influenced by Westernization and to some extent even by Christianization. The critics of Keshab Chandra blamed his lack of faith in ancient Indian traditions and his well-publicized attraction for Western culture and Christianity, for the ultimate failure of the reform movement. Debendra Nath's son Dwijendra Nath, a leading member of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj and the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī, voiced the opinion of his associates when he said that

"any attempt to introduce something new will fail  
if the old is completely denied." <sup>315</sup>

Ram Mohan Ray, it was felt, had understood that there would be no success without social reform from within and hence he was largely successful. <sup>316</sup> Keshab Chandra, on the other hand,

"gave such a 'twist' to the whole reform movement that everything was ruined ... He did not care for the Upanishads, did not think it necessary to understand the inner message of the 'culture' of India. Whatever little he understood, he felt ashamed if he did not dress it in Western clothes. He formed a new society and gave it an English name - 'New Dispensation'. This extremely Westernized (bilāti) attitude of Keshab - his turning towards the West -

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<sup>314</sup> R.N. Basu, op.cit., p. 38.

<sup>315</sup> Dwijendra Nath Thakur, as quoted in PP, p. 295.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

ruined the whole reform movement."<sup>317</sup>

Keshab's Westernized ideas and techniques were blamed by many of his contemporaries for causing the rift within the Brāhma Samāj which led to its subsequent loss of strength as a force of social change within the nineteenth century Bengali society. Indeed, Keshab's Westernization, by separating him from traditionalist reformers like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Debendra Nath Thakur, enormously weakened the movements for social and religious reforms during this period.

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid.



## 6. EXPERIMENTS IN INDIANIZATION

Westernization was an effective instrument in the hands of the nineteenth-century urban Bengali elite. Many Western-educated urban Bengali kṛitavidyas dismissed the popular national classics as "imaginary" and clung to English civilization for support.<sup>1</sup> Yet the ultimate strength of the Bengali elite, especially in the spheres of religion and society, lay in their effective use of the process of Indianization, that is, the introduction and use of Indian ideas and techniques. Keshab Chandra Sen, for instance, in spite of his attachment for and indebtedness to Westernization, even Christianization,<sup>2</sup> was well-known among his contemporaries - both Bengali and European - as a man who strongly wished "that his country shall not be denationalised, but that it shall be elevated and improved according to its own nature".<sup>3</sup> Leading vernacular newspapers of Calcutta such as the Som Prakāś, the Saṃbād Prabhākar and the Saṃbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya supported the revival of Sanskrit studies and the introduction of traditional ideas and values into urban Bengali society.<sup>4</sup> In the 1860s, with reference to the conservative Dharma Sabhā, a Bengali journalist suggested that the only chance that the

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<sup>1</sup> Saṃbād Prabhākar, 16 January 1866. Also, Paridarsak, 23 November 1861.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 280-281.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Sharpe to Raj Narayan Basu, dated 28 August 1870, as quoted in R.N. Basu, Atmācharit, p.116. Also, Dwijendra Nath Thakur, as quoted in PP, p.297.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Saṃbād Bhāskar, 23 February 1865; Saṃbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 20 June 7 July 1865; Saṃbād Prabhākar, 12 December 1865.

conservative (prācīn) section had of influencing and commanding the respect of the progressive (navya) section who were beginning to dominate urban society was to resort to a "purer" form of Hinduism and Indian culture.<sup>5</sup> Urban Bengali kritavidyas - both conservative and progressive - pleaded the cause of the "national" (jātīya) language referring to Bengali as the best medium for promoting national pride and prestige and criticized the excessive use of English - the "alien" (bijātīya) language - by a large section of the Western-educated urban Bengalis.<sup>6</sup>

Generally speaking, by the 1860s, the "craze" for English education seems to have declined and the interest in vernacular education increased considerably. Leading vernacular newspapers associated with the traditionalist Tattva Bodhinī Sabhā such as the Som Prakāś and the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā encouraged the growing respect for vernacular education among Bengalis.<sup>7</sup> The modern argument of the inherent difficulties of learning through the medium of a foreign language as compared with the ease and desirability of education through one's "mother language" (mātri-bhāṣā), that is, Bengali, and the "religious language" (dharmā-bhāṣā), that is, Sanskrit, were also pointed out.<sup>8</sup> Even the new interest in science

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<sup>5</sup> Saṃbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 3 November 1865.

<sup>6</sup> Som Prakāś, 1 August 1864 (letter); Samāchār Chandrikā, 18 May 1865: 8 January 1866; Saṃbād Prabhākar, 12 June, 21 November 1865: 6 February, 30 March 1866; Saṃbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 17 November 1865.

<sup>7</sup> Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Jaiṣṭha 1778 (1856); Som Prakāś, 11 July 1864.

<sup>8</sup> See Saṃbād Prabhākar, 5 April, 20 May 1848, 25 December 1850, 30 January 1864, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 297, 301, 323-324, 382-383; Saṃbād Bhāskar, 16 March 1854, 15 January 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 437-438; Education Gazette, 5 August 1859 (letter), Paridarsak, 28 August (letter), 23 September (letter), 14 December 1861; Som Prakāś, 19 May 1862: 12 Bhādra 1271 (1864), SBS, vol. 4, p. 503; Sikshā Darpaṇ, Phālgun 1272 (1866).

and "useful knowledge",<sup>9</sup> for instance, legal and medical education, among urban Bengalis was linked with this desire for education through the vernacular. Perhaps the most striking feature of the early days of Western medical education in Bengal was the attempt to Indianize such education by introducing Bengali and Urdu classes at the Calcutta Medical College<sup>10</sup> and by encouraging the writing of medical texts in the vernacular,<sup>11</sup> with the aim of popularizing it and ensuring its maximum effectiveness.

The process of Indianization or the assertion of Bengali and traditional Indian elements was also influenced by the new forces associated with urbanization. The development of printing in the urban areas, especially in Calcutta and its neighbourhood, helped in the "circulation of classical literature, which had so long been limited to hand written copies, or been confined to a small and exclusive class of literary castes."<sup>12</sup> Through the efforts of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who considered the study of Sanskrit to be an essential element in the success of vernacular education,<sup>13</sup> the Sanskrit College - a semi-exclusive institution which was restricted to Brāhmins and Baidyas on the ground that only those people had the right to learn Sanskrit - was opened to Kāyasthas in 1851 and in 1854 to

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<sup>9</sup> See Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Āsvin 1772 (1850), SBS, vol. 2, p.42; Sambād Prabhākar, 1 February 1851, 24 May 1864, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 328-329, 352; Som Prakās, 7 December 1862: 27 June 1864: 12 Jaiṣṭha 1281 (1874), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 566-567; Samāchār Chandrikā, 3 August, 9 October 1865: 29 January 1866; Friend of India, 28 March, 28 November 1872. Cf. S.N. Mukherjee, "Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, in E. Leach and S.N. Mukherjee, Elites in South Asia, p.61.

<sup>10</sup> See Bengal Education Proceedings, 16 July (nos. 44, 45) 1851: 30 April (no.62) 1857; Bengal Administration Report, 1867-68, pp. 107-108; Dr. Surya Kumar Chakrabarty, as quoted in J. Long, The Muhammadans of Bengal, p.15; Friend of India, 26 February, 8 July 1852; 7 September 1854; Samāchār Chandrikā, 1 May, 28 August 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 21 April, 26 December 1865: 19 March 1866.

<sup>11</sup> Som Prakās, 27 June 1864.

<sup>12</sup> N.K. Bose, Culture and Society in India, p.267. Also see A Catalogue of Sanskrit and Bengali Publications, etc. by J. Wenger.

<sup>13</sup> Letters from Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar to Dr. Mouat, Secretary to the

any Hindu of a "respectable" family. Even the increasingly conservative Bengali newspaper in Sambād Prabhākar viewed the opening of the Sanskrit College to "common castes" (sādhāraṇa varṇas) and the consequent expansion of Sanskrit studies with favour.<sup>14</sup> In some respects, the process of Indianization was as much representative of modernity as the process of Westernization,<sup>15</sup> for instance with reference to social mobility. Even to Western-educated kṛitavidyas like Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, the first graduate of the Calcutta University, the Indianization - more specifically Vernacularization - of literature appeared as an important agent of social and political progress and change.<sup>16</sup>

Like Bankim Chandra, the men of literature in mid-nineteenth century Bengal were often Western-educated urban kṛitavidyas, mostly living in Calcutta, for example, Madhu Sudan Datta, Bhudeb Mukhopadhyaya and Pyari Chand Mitra of the Derozio-goṣṭhī. Their literary style, including their choice of themes and images, was largely influenced by their Westernization and by the changing urban environment. The Western influence upon the new literature which emerged in nineteenth century urban Bengal was inevitable. The Western-educated urban Bengalis showed considerable familiarity with and fondness for English

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Council of Education, dated 7 September and 5 October 1853, as quoted in D.K.Basu, Vidyāsagar Rachanābālī, vol. 3, p.463; Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, "Notes on Sanskrit College", as quoted in B.Ghosh, Vidyāsagar o Bāṅgālī Samāj, vol. 3, p.434; Som Prakāś, 12 January, 21 September 1863.

<sup>14</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 3 September 1858, SBS, vol. 1, pp. 376-377.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. A.B.Shah and C.R.M.Rao, Tradition and Modernity in India, pp. 18-19.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya to Sambhu Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, editor of Mukherjee's Magazine, dated 4 March 1872, in S.Banerjee, Patra Sāhitya, pp. 81-82.

literature.<sup>17</sup> Madhu Sudan Datta's early career - during which he introduced the blank verse (amitrākṣar chanda)<sup>18</sup> and the sonnet into Bengali literature showed this tendency towards Westernization perhaps in its extremest form.

But by the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a marked tendency towards the renewed use of the vernacular as the medium of expression. The need for reaffirming the social and political significance of the vernacular language largely resulted from a reaction to the excessive attachment to the English language and other aspects of Westernization on the part of a large section of the urban Bengali youth.<sup>19</sup> The Saṅbād Prabhākar emphasized that

"Although we are now under the rule of the British, yet we must remember that the English language is not our national language (Jātiya bhāṣā)"<sup>20</sup>

The Śikshā Darpaṇ observed that "the current thirst for English" was like "a fever" and was very harmful to national improvement. Even Madhu Sudan Datta was ultimately converted to the idea of Vernacularization which was an important aspect of the entire Indianization process<sup>21</sup> and concluded:

<sup>17</sup>Som Prakāś, 5 September 1864: 13 and 20 November 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 23 November 1865: 15 March 1866.

<sup>18</sup>Madhu Sudan Datta's Tilottamā-sambhab Kāvya (1860) was the first complete work in blank verse written in the Bengali language.

<sup>19</sup>Som Prakāś, 1 August (letter), 3 September (letter), 12 September (letter) 1864; Saṅbād Prabhākar, 12 June 1865: 30 March 1866.

<sup>20</sup>Saṅbād Prabhākar, 30 March 1866.

<sup>21</sup>He championed the cause of a "National Theatre", hoped to improve the "National Language" and write a "National Epic". Letters from Madhu Sudan to Kshetra Das Gangopadhyayam written between 1856 and 1862, as quoted in K.Gupta, Madhusudaner Patrābalī, pp. 165-167; letter from Madhu Sudan to Raj Narayan Basu, dated 24 April 1860, as quoted in ibid., pp. 128, 130.

"There is nothing like cultivating and enriching our mother-tongue ... Our Bengali is a very beautiful language, it only wants men of genius to polish it up. Such of us, as owing to early defective education know little of it and have learnt to despise it, are miserably wrong. It is, or rather it has, the elements of a great language in it."<sup>22</sup>

He admitted that he had "no idea that our mother tongue would place at my disposal such exhaustive materials..."<sup>23</sup>

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Akshay Kumar Datta, both belonging to the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī whose members were generally interested in the revival of the Classical language and culture, were among the earliest Bengali writers to introduce the highly Sanskritized Bengali style known as the "sādhu bhāṣā" (literary/pure language) as opposed to the "calit bhāṣā" (spoken/colloquial language).<sup>24</sup> Akshay Kumar's experiments with the Bengali language could be seen in the pages of the scholarly journal the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā of which he was the editor. Vidyasagar, who was closely associated with both the Tattva Bohinī Patrikā and the Som Prakāś was also known among his contemporaries as the person who succeeded in freeing the Bengali language from "the shackles of Sanskritic influence".<sup>25</sup> Pyari Chand Mitra and Kali Prasanna Sinha, the editor of the Paridarsak, made further experiments with the Bengali language and succeeded in creating a popular urban style of writing. Pyari Chand's Alāler

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<sup>22</sup> Letter from Madhu Sudan to Gour Das Basak, as quoted in J.C.Ghosh, Bengali Literature, p.146.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Madhu Sudan to Raj Narayan, as quoted in J.C.Ghosh, op.cit., p.146.

<sup>24</sup> See Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Baiśakh 1777 (1856); Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, pp. 31-32.

<sup>25</sup> Rabindra Nath Thakur, as quoted in B.Ghosh, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, p.139. Vidyasagar wrote the Varṇa Paricay (1855), the first primer of its kind in Bengali, made conscious use of local (desaja) words and was "the first Bengali prose writer to introduce marks of punctuation like the comma and the semi-colon into the Bengali language." Ibid.

Gharer Dulāl [The spoilt child of the House of Alāl] (1858), satirizing the traditional and extravagant life-style of the rich urban Bengalis as well as the imitation of the West by the urban Bengalis, received an enthusiastic reception from the urban Bengali reading public mainly because both its language and theme were relevant to contemporary life and society.<sup>26</sup> Kali Prasanna wrote the highly popular Hutom Pyañcār Naksā [the sketch of the owl] (1862) based on the contemporary urban society and was credited with opening

"a new vernacular in the mine of Bengali literature which bids fair to yield rich treasures. Hutom's style is highly idiomatic and immensely popular. It is the style of the Bengali language, the style in which we all speak and for which every Bengali will have some sympathy."<sup>27</sup>

With the growing realization of the importance of vernacular literature as a means of influencing public opinion and introducing social changes, the social satire was fast becoming perhaps the most popular literary form in urban Bengal.<sup>28</sup> Some of the most prominent Bengali writers of this time such as Madhu Sudan Datta, Pyari Chand Mitra, Dina Bandhu Mitra and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, engaged in the writing of social sketches and farces, mostly in the form of dramas.

The influence of the dramas was further enhanced by the fact that they were frequently presented on the new but already popular

<sup>26</sup> Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p.51

<sup>27</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 24 November 1862. Also see Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p.51.

<sup>28</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 7 June 1865; 27 February, 7 March 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 16 November 1865.

stage at Calcutta<sup>29</sup> which was mainly supported by the Calcutta abhijāts<sup>30</sup> like Asutosh Deb ("Chātu Babu"), Raja Pratap Chandra Sinha of Belgachia,<sup>31</sup> Ishwar Chandra Sinha, the Rajas of Paikpara,<sup>32</sup> Kali Prasanna Sinha, Yatindra Mohan Thakur of Pathuriaghata,<sup>33</sup> the Rajas of Shobhabazar<sup>34</sup> and Nilmani Mitra of Bhowanipur.<sup>35</sup> Theatrical associations also began to flourish in Calcutta, for example, the Jorasanko Nāṭya-śālā (theatre), a theatrical society mainly formed of Calcutta abhijāts like the members of the Thakur family of Jorasanko, primarily the sons of Debendra Nath. Thus, the same group of abhijāts who had earlier supported amateur theatricals (sakher yātrā) now supplied the money and location for the new urban Bengali theatre, primarily private,<sup>36</sup> and sometimes themselves participated in the dramatic presentations,<sup>37</sup> thus lending added prestige and attraction to the presentations. By the mid-nineteenth century, in the urban areas, especially in Calcutta, the theatre seems to have largely replaced other forms of recreation such as the yātrā (open theatre

<sup>29</sup> Education Gazette, 27 August 1858 (letter); Sambād Prabhākar, 31 July, 3 August 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 10 August 1865: 23 and 27 February, 7 March 1866.

<sup>30</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 19 February 1866, citing the Hindoo Patriot; Radha Madhab Kar, as quoted in PP, pp. 266-273; Mahendra Nath Mukhopadhyaya, as quoted in PP, pp. 85-91; Amrita Lal Basu, as quoted in PP, pp. 217-231, 236-240.

<sup>31</sup> See Education Gazette, 27 August 1858.

<sup>32</sup> Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p.49.

<sup>33</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 13 February 1866; Samāchār Chandrikā, 19 February 1866; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 23 February 1866.

<sup>34</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 31 July 1855.

<sup>35</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 16 November 1865.

<sup>36</sup> By 1872 a Public Theatre had developed in Calcutta. See Amrita Lal Basu, as quoted in PP, pp. 218, 245; J.C.Ghosh, opcit., p.151.

<sup>37</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 31 July, 3 August 1865.



mainly based on mythical and epic themes), khemtā (song and dance routines) and kabi-gān (poetry sessions). The theatre became an important topic of discussion among the urban Bengalis, particularly the kritavidya youth.<sup>38</sup> The dramatic presentations also acted as important occasions of social interaction.<sup>39</sup>

Social reform through literature<sup>40</sup> was the aim of a large number of the urban Bengali writers. Many contemporary kritavidyas felt that social reform, particularly with reference to issues such as Kulinism, widow-remarriage and caste, should be the primary purpose behind all literary activities. The opponents of social reform and change also used the vernacular for their purposes. For example, a series of books were written, mostly by Brāhmins, against the widow-marriage movement initiated by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar.<sup>41</sup>

The improvement of the Bengali language and literature was also an end in itself. Vidyasagar maintained that "the creation of an enlightened Bengali literature" should be "the first object of those who are entrusted with the superintendence of Education in Bengal."<sup>42</sup> The progress of the Bengali language began to be considered

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<sup>38</sup> Amrita Lal Basu, as quoted in PP, pp. 216-217; Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p.51.

<sup>39</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 3 August, 16 November 1865.

<sup>40</sup> See Appendix II.

<sup>41</sup> For example, Ram Dhan Tarkapanchanan, Bidhabā-bedan Niṣedhak [Forbidding widow-marriage], Rempur Boalia, 1868; Umesn Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, Bidhabā-bibāhe Śeṣ Phal [Final results of widow-marriage], Dacca, 1869.

<sup>42</sup> Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, "Notes on Sanskrit College", dated 12 April 1852, as quoted in B. Ghosh, Vidyāsāgar o Bāngālī Samāj, vol. 3, p.434.

as a sign of as well as an essential element in, the progress of the Bengali society by the urban Bengali kritavidyas.<sup>43</sup> The Rev.

James Long noted in the 1850s:

"The educated natives are, in various ways, awakening to a sense of shame, that their own beautiful language should have been so neglected by them and that they should have looked with such indifference on 35 millions who need European knowledge, but have neither the means nor opportunity to gain it, except through a vernacular medium."<sup>44</sup>

Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, the prominent educationist and scholar, noted that around the middle of the nineteenth century the Bengalis were "gradually being attracted to the Bengali language" and "the foundations were being laid for the improved Bengali language."<sup>45</sup>

Among the urban Bengali Muslims also the nineteenth century was a period of Vernacularization in the sphere of literature.<sup>46</sup> In spite of the continuing popularity of Persian and Arabic, particularly among the Muslim abhijāts of Dacca and Murshidabad, and the fondness for Urdu among the Bengali Muslims in general, particularly in Murshidabad<sup>47</sup> and Calcutta,<sup>48</sup> perhaps the most famous and popular Muslim

<sup>43</sup> See Pūrnimā, Phālgun 1265 (1859); Paridarsak, 28 August (letter), 23 September (letter), 13 December 1861; Sambād Prabhākar, 30 January 1864, SBS, vol. 1, p.384; Som Prakāś, 13 November 1865 (letter); Samāchār Chandrikā, 23 November 1865; 15 March 1866; Sambād Pūrna Chandrodaya, 20 February 1866; Friend of India, 22 April 1852.

<sup>44</sup> J. Long, Vernacular Christian Literature, 1855, p.7.

<sup>45</sup> Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p.21.

<sup>46</sup> Correspondence on Education of Mahomedan Community, p.152.

<sup>47</sup> The Nawab's Court at Murshidabad had long been a centre of Urdu literature in Bengal.

<sup>48</sup> J. Long, Returns relating to Publications in the Bengali Language, p.79.

Bengali writer in the nineteenth century was Mir Mosharaf Husain, mainly noted for his writings in Bengali.<sup>49</sup> An interesting aspect of nineteenth century Muslim Bengali literature was the development of "Mussalman Bengali" or Dobhāṣī - a mixture of Urdu and Bengali with Persian terms and idioms.<sup>50</sup> This style of writing became very popular among the Muslims living in and around Calcutta and Dacca, probably because of its distinctly Muslim character.<sup>51</sup> According to the Rev. J. Long, the growth of this "new literature" showed "an awakening of mind among the lower orders" of Muslims in Bengal.<sup>52</sup> The largest number of books published by and sold among the Bengali Muslims during this period were written in this style. There seemed to be a large demand for these books in Calcutta and its neighbourhood and in Dacca.<sup>53</sup> Even the Bible Society became aware of the popularity of this style among the Bengali Muslims and printed several tracts, including portions of the Bible, in this dialect.

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<sup>49</sup> For example, Ratnābalī (1869), Gorāi Bridge or Gour Setu (1873), Basanta Kumārī Nāṭak (1873), Jamidār Darpan [picture of zamidārs] (1873) and Biṣād Sindhu [ocean of sadness] (1885), the book written on the story of Karbala which became very popular among the Muslims and the Hindus of Bengal.

<sup>50</sup> J. Long, On Vernacular Christian Literature, p.9; W.W. Hunter, Indian Musulmans, p.150.

<sup>51</sup> See K.M.A. Mannan, "The Emergence and Development of Dobhāṣī Literature in Bengal up to 1855", Ph.D. Thesis, 1964, University of London, pp. 283-284.

<sup>52</sup> J. Long, The Muhammadans of Bengal, p.14. These books were mainly written on religious themes and often expressly for women and members of lower classes. J. Long, Returns relating to Publications in the Bengali Language in 1857, p.530.

<sup>53</sup> J. Long, On Vernacular Christian Literature, p.9; J. Long, as quoted in K.M.A. Mannan, op.cit., pp. 93, 195.

The European Christian missionaries were generally convinced of the importance of the vernacular in influencing public opinion. The Christian Vernacular Education Society and the Tract, Bible and Religious Societies published many books in the vernacular.<sup>54</sup> The Protestant Missionary Conference on Vernacular Christian Literature discussed various aspects of this question and concluded that

"there are 35 millions of people knowing only Bengali, whose views of Christianity can be gained only through the medium of their mother tongue. If it is important to raise the mental status of our native Christian readers and catechists who know no English, then it is important to supply them with mental food suited to their condition."<sup>55</sup>

The influence of English education was felt to be of a limited nature:

"Our English teaching, valuable as it is for a certain class, has had little effect on the national language, it has been like an attempt to blend oil and water .... English schools, however useful to the classes attending them, have had little influence on the masses."<sup>56</sup>

The vernacular presses, however, were having considerable success:

"In 1853, 418,278 books and pamphlets in Bengali, issued from the native presses in Calcutta, the greater part of which were sold within the year. Since the commencement of this century more than 1600 works have been printed in Bengali, either original compositions, or translations from Sanskrit, English or Persian .... circulation of probably not less than 20 million copies."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> See Overland Friend of India, 21 March 1863 (from Friend of India, 19 March 1863).

<sup>55</sup> J. Long, op.cit., pp. 1-2.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 2, 4.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.2.

The Government also realized the importance of publications in the vernacular<sup>58</sup> and encouraged the progress of vernacular literature in various ways.<sup>59</sup> In 1851 the Vernacular Literature Committee (later named the Vernacular Literature Society) was formed as a branch of the School Book Society, in order to promote the publication of cheap books in the vernacular and published a very successful monthly magazine of science, literature and art in Bengali entitled the Rahasya Sandarbha [collection of mysterious information].<sup>60</sup> Depots were established in many urban centres in the Mofussil, even in the remote districts of Mymensingh and Tripura in Eastern Bengal, for the sale of cheap vernacular books and maps.<sup>61</sup> In spite of occasional criticisms against the Government's policy on publications in the vernacular,<sup>62</sup> on the whole, the importance of the official stimulus to vernacular literature seemed to be recognized by contemporary urban Bengali kritavidyas,<sup>63</sup> Brahma Mohan Mallik, who joined the Education Department, remarked:

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<sup>58</sup>The publication of Dina Bandhu Mitra's Nīl Darpaṇ (1866) and the nature and extent of reactions to it might have helped to convince the Government of this. See Indian Public Proceedings, 8 August (nos. 34, 37), 17 August (nos. 102-104), pp. 689-692, 753; Indian Mirror, 1 August 1861; Umesh Chandra Datta, as quoted in PP, p.185.

<sup>59</sup>Bengal Education proceedings, 14 August (nos. 20, 21) 1850; 17 May (nos. 33, 34) 1855; 25 June (nos. 267-269) 1857; Despatches to India in Public, Educational and Ecclesiastical Departments, Education no. 3206, 27 January (no. 1) 1870; Samāchār Chandrikā, 9 April, 28 August 1866.

<sup>60</sup>Friend of India, 15 July 1852; 18 May 1854; 15 July 1862; Overland Friend of India, 21 March 1863 (from Friend of India, 19 March 1863).

<sup>61</sup>Bengal Education Proceedings, 7 May (nos. 109, 110) 1857.

<sup>62</sup>Som Prakāś, 11 July 1864; 23 October 1865.

<sup>63</sup>Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Baisākh 1771 (1849), SBS, vol. 2, p.415; Samāchār Chandrikā, 23 November 1865; Saṅbād Frabhākar, 9 January 1866.

"It is my firm belief that many people turned to vernacular literature as a result of the Education Despatch of 1854."<sup>64</sup>

## I Experiments in Politics

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, Bengali literature and Press<sup>65</sup> began to play an increasingly important role in the sphere of politics, by acting as the major media for the spread of nationalist feelings. In 1864 the Som Prakās of Calcutta, in an article on the subject of the need for self-reliance in political matters on the part of the Bengalis, wrote:

"Is it not true that our people have become cowards as a result of being dependent upon others for a long time? Were the ancient Indian cowards like this? Is it not true that the men of this country have lost all their 'traditional qualities' such as strength and bravery through their dependence upon others?"<sup>66</sup>

Dina Bandhu Mitra's Nīl Darpaṅ [Indigo mirror], a play criticizing the indigo-planters in Bengal for their oppression of the indigo-cultivators, created great excitement among the contemporaries.<sup>67</sup> In a letter written to Long, some of the leading Bengali abhijāts like Radha Kanta Deb, Rama Nath Thakur, Raja Kali Krishna and Raja Narendra Krishna acknowledged the political importance of this drama as "an embodiment of popular feeling".<sup>68</sup> The indigo movement

<sup>64</sup>Brahma Mohan Malīk, as quoted in PP, p.197.

<sup>65</sup>See above, pp. 67-75.

<sup>66</sup>Som Prakās, 19 September 1864.

<sup>67</sup>Umesh Chandra Datta, as quoted in PP, p. 174. See above, p. 156.

<sup>68</sup>Letter to the Rev. Long, from the "principal natives of Calcutta", as quoted in Y.C.Bagal, Unaviṃśa Śatābujīr Bānglā, p.281.

of the 1860s<sup>69</sup> also brought to prominence certain Bengali journalists who were deeply involved in politics, such as Harish Chandra Mukhopadhyaya of the Hindoo Patriot and Man Mohan Ghosh and Sisir Kumar Ghosh of the Amrita Bazar Patrika.

The political writings and commentaries of the nineteenth century Bengali kritavidyas as well as the emerging political institutions of this period began to emphasize the concept of nationalism. The members of the Jātiya Gourab Sampādanī Sabhā<sup>70</sup> (society for the promotion of national feeling/pride), founded by Raj Narayan Basu and a few other kritavidyas in Midnapur,<sup>71</sup> encouraged vernacular and Sanskrit education, the use of "pure Bengali" in conversation, lectures and letter-writing, the use of "national" (desīya) dress, the observance of "national" customs and rituals, the patronage of "national" music and drama and participation in "national" games.<sup>72</sup>

Raj Narayan reminisced:

"The members of this society wished each other 'surajanī' (good night) instead of 'Good Night', celebrated 1st Baisākh [first days of Bengali calendar] instead of 1st January, tried to speak in pure Bengali instead of mixing English and the vernacular and fined each other for using English words."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>See above, pp. 155-160.

<sup>70</sup>Some sources refer to this Society as the Jātiya Gourab Sañchāriṇī Sabhā (society for the spread of national pride). See B.B.Majumdar, History of Indian Political and Social Studies, p.7. But Raj Narayan himself has called it Jātiya Gourab Sampādanī Sabhā in his autobiography. See R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, p.52.

<sup>71</sup>Som Prakās, 1 August, 5 September (letter 1864).

<sup>72</sup>R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, p.52.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

Raj Narayan Basu's "Prospectus of a Society for the Promotion of National Feeling among the Educated Natives of Bengal"<sup>74</sup> outlined the Indianization programme in politics:

"Now the European ideas have penetrated Bengal, the Bengalee mind has been moved from the sleep of ages. A restless fermentation is going on in Bengalee Society. A desire for change and progress is everywhere visible. People discontented with old customs and institutions are panting for reform. Already a band of young men have expressed a desire to sever themselves at once from Hindu Society and renounce even the Hindu name. It is to be feared that the tide of revolution may sweep away whatever good we have inherited from our ancestors. To prevent the catastrophe and to give a national shape to reforms, it is proposed that a Society be established by the influential members of native society for the promotion of national feeling among the educated natives of Bengal. Without due cultivation of national feeling, no nation can be eventually great. This is a fact testified by all history."<sup>75</sup>

Urban Bengali kritavidyas felt the necessity of establishing similar societies throughout Bengal, in order to remove the "defects" in the Bengali character which, it was felt, mainly arose out of immature attempts at Westernization, and help the people to Indianize their lives through a rediscovery of their own language and customs.<sup>76</sup>

Another striking experiment in Indianization in politics was the highly popular Hindu Melā (fair of the Hindus), also known as the Jātīya Melā (national fair) and the Chaitra Melā (fair held in the month of Chaitra).<sup>77</sup> It was established in Calcutta by Naba Gopal

<sup>74</sup>The prospectus was published in the National Paper and the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā in early 1866. See R.N.Basu, op.cit., p.52.

<sup>75</sup>As quoted in Y.C.Bagal, Hindu Melār Itibritta, p.91.

<sup>76</sup>Som Prakāś, 1 August 1864 (letter).

<sup>77</sup>A similar Jātīya Melā (national fair) was established by Bhagaban Chandra Basu in Faridpur in the 1860s.



Mitra, a Western-educated Bengali kritavidya, with the help of the Thakur family of Jorasanko<sup>78</sup> and other members of the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī. Raj Narayan Basu claimed that the fair was directly inspired by his "Prospectus of a Society for the Promotion of National Feeling among the Educated Natives of Bengal".<sup>79</sup> The Hindu Melā was supervised by the Jātīya Sabhā (national society) which held its first meeting in 1867 and aimed at encouraging "national arts and crafts" (jātīya śilpa-kalā), "national self-reliance" (jātīya ātma-nirbharatā), "national bravery" (jātīya sāhas) and "national pride" (jātīya gourab).<sup>80</sup> Patriotic poems were read at the fair such as the poem sent by Raj Narayan Basu and his friends to the first meeting from Midnapur.<sup>81</sup> The Melā was held with great pomp from 1867 and was attended and helped by many rich Bengalis.<sup>82</sup> Naba Gopal Mitra, the founder of this "National Melā" and of the popular journal National Paper,<sup>83</sup> became well-known among his contemporaries as the "first Bengali" to popularize the word "national" in Bengal,<sup>84</sup> and as a leader of the Bengali youth who became his

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<sup>78</sup> Amrita Lal Basu, as quoted in PP, p.216.

<sup>79</sup> R.N.Basu, op.cit., pp. 52, 82, 158. Also Sambād Prabhākar, 10 Phālgun 1285 (1878), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 259-260; B.C.Pal, Navayuger Bānglā, p.142.

<sup>80</sup> Gnanendra Mohan Thakur, as quoted in B.Ghosh, Vidyāsāgar o Bāngālī Samāj, vol. 3, pp. 294-295. Also, R.N.Basu, op.cit., p.163.

<sup>81</sup> R.N.Basu, op.cit., pp. 159-163; Sambād Prabhākar, 10 Phālgun 1285 (1878), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 259-260; B.C.Pal, op.cit., pp. 149-150.

<sup>82</sup> R.N.Basu, op.cit., p.163.

<sup>83</sup> Amrita Lal Basu and Dwijendra Nāth Thakur, as quoted in PP, pp. 216, 298; Sambād Prabhākar, 10 Phālgun 1285 (1878), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 259-260.

<sup>84</sup> Amrita Lal Basu and Dwijendra Nāth Thakur, as quoted in PP, pp. 216, 298.

devoted followers (celās).<sup>85</sup>

The word "svadeśī" (belonging to one's own country, that is, svadeś) was also becoming very popular among the urban Bengali kṛitavidyas. Dwijendra Nath Thakur of the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī said:

"I have stuck to the svadeśī culture from the beginning... I have always been a svadeśī. I hate bideśī (foreign) dress, bideśī language and bideśī customs."<sup>86</sup>

Similar feelings were expressed by Raj Narayan Basu.<sup>87</sup> Enthusiasm for the rediscovery of India's past and the re-establishment of traditional ideas and values, often as a reaction to the West, was an important factor in the growing success and popularity of the concept of nationalism in urban Bengali society. The Brāhma Samāj, particularly the traditionalists such as Raj Narayan Basu and Debendra Nath Thakur within it, were at the forefront of this movement. The Thakur family of Jorasanko inspired national feelings among the urban Bengalis in various ways, especially by providing "an all-round ideal or model (ādarsā) of nationalism (jātiyatā) in dress, literature, songs, art, drama, religion and politics."<sup>88</sup> Debendra Nath's son Rabindra Nath later wrote:

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<sup>85</sup> Amrita Lal Basu, as quoted in PP, p. 216.

<sup>86</sup> Dwijendra Nath Thakur, as quoted in PP, p. 297.

<sup>87</sup> R.N. Basu, op.cit., pp. 147-148.

<sup>88</sup> R.N. Thakur, Jīban-Smṛiti, p. 65.

"Outwardly, many foreign customs (bideśī prathā) were practised within our family, but the light of 'national pride' (svadesābhimān) shone in the hearts of everyone. The deep respect for the motherland (svadeś) which was maintained by my father even in the midst of various agitations, sustained this strong feeling of love for motherland among all the members of our family."<sup>89</sup>

## II Experiments in religion and society

While in politics Westernization was perhaps more important as a process than Indianization - at least from the practical aspect of the establishment of societies and associations such as the British Indian Association, the reverse was true in the spheres of religion and society. To a large section of the urban Bengali community, the main appeal of the Brāhma Samāj lay in its emphasis upon ancient Indian traditions. In 1863 a Brāhma correspondent writing to the editor of the Som Prakāś of Calcutta explained how the introduction of Sanskrit into the Brāhma upāsana-praṇālī (system of worship), "apart from helping the dying Sanskrit language by requiring all Brāhmas to learn Sanskrit", would also help the Brāhma Samāj movement in various ways:<sup>90</sup>

"First, since the spread of Brāhma Dharma is one of the objects of the Brāhma Samāj, it can be said with conviction that a Sanskrit set of prayers will ensure the success of this objective. Till today the majority of the people of Bengal have respect for the Sanskrit language. So much so that they do not pay much attention to any advice given in Bengali but they listen attentively to words spoken in Sanskrit.

Second, the Brāhmas do not wish to abandon everything which is respected by the Hindus. They only wish to abandon matters which are false and imaginary. But the

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p.77.

<sup>90</sup> Som Prakāś, 28 September 1863 (letter).

Brāhmas will never abandon anything which is not opposed to truth. So, why should they abandon the Sanskrit language?

Third, the use of Sanskrit phrases used by the ancient ṛṣi-ṛṣi (sages) would indicate the ancient character (prācīnatā) of Brāhma Dharma. The Christians often say that Brāhma Dharma has been taken from the Bible, but those among them who know Sanskrit are ashamed to speak like that and realize the falsehood of such statements. The use of a Sanskrit upāsana-praṇālī (system of prayers) will reveal the ancient character of Brāhma Dharma to the followers of all religions."<sup>91</sup>

Leaders of the Bengali elite frequently emphasized the "national" character of both Hindu Dharma and Brāhma Dharma. Raj Narayan Basu's lecture on "Hindu Dharmer Sreṣṭhatā" [Superiority of the Hindu religion] satisfied the patriotic feelings of both Hindus and Brāhmas and was considered by Raj Narayan himself to be a critical step in Hindu revival.<sup>92</sup> Raj Narayan felt that the Brāhmas should adopt "a national form of divine worship, a national theistic text book and national ritual as far as all this could be done consistently with dictates of conscience".<sup>93</sup>

Debendra Nath and his followers - the traditionalists within the Brāhma Samāj - reacted against and rejected both non-Vedic ritualistic Hinduism, more specifically Hindu idolatry (pouttalikatā)<sup>94</sup> as well as the excesses of Westernization.<sup>95</sup> Debendra Nath's son Satyendra Nath explained:

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> R.N. Basu, Ātmacharit, introduction.

<sup>93</sup> Letter from R.N. Basu to Shib Chandra Deb, Secretary, Sādharan Brāhma Samāj, 15 June, 1878, as quoted in S.K. Gupta, Unavimsa Śatābdite Bānglār Nava-jāgaran, p. 89.

<sup>94</sup> Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Āsvin 1784 (1862), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 217-222.

<sup>95</sup> D.N. Thakur, Ātmajībanī, pp. 62-65.

"My father, though an uncompromising enemy of idolatrous worship, was essentially conservative in his instincts. While endeavouring to revive the lofty theism of the Upanishads, he was not prepared for measures calculated, as it seemed to subvert the social fabric of modern Hinduism."<sup>96</sup>

Devendra Nath performed his father's śrāddha (ceremony performed after death) in 1846<sup>97</sup> and his daughter's wedding in 1861 according to "monotheistic principles" and without recourse to "idolatrous rites",<sup>98</sup> yet in his Book of Brahmic Ritual he consciously retained "such of the non-Vedic portions of the orthodox ritual as can be kept consistently with theistic principles ... with such modifications as are warranted by the exigencies of modern life."<sup>99</sup> As regards marriage, for example, the only major departure from the existing practice which distinguished the new Ritual from the old was the omission of the śālagrām (symbol of Vishṇu) and the homa (sacred fire) ceremony. But the important ceremonies of kanyā-dān (giving away the bride) and saptapadī (walking of seven steps together by the couple) were left intact in the reformed Ritual. What was perhaps most important was that care was taken to see that the new system did not "contravene any of the provisions of the Hindu law as to the rules of consanguinity, the prohibition of Sagotra (inter-clan) and inter-caste marriages."<sup>100</sup> Although Debendra Nath's approach made him unpopular among many progressive Brāhmas who desired the rejection of as many Hindu rituals as possible, yet he continued to insist that the Brāhmas "must beware of proceeding too far in

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<sup>96</sup>D.N. Tagore (Thakur), Autobiography, p.13 (Introduction by Translator).

<sup>97</sup>According to Raj Narayan, "in view of the condition of the Hindu society in those days, it was an act of great moral courage and must be considered as the first act (pratham anuṣṭhān) of Brāhma Dharma ". R.N. Basu, op.cit., p.36.

<sup>98</sup>D.N. Tagore (Thakur), Autobiography, pp. 28, 113-114.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., pp. 29-30.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p.30.

matters of social change, lest we be separated from the greater body whom we would guide and uplift",<sup>101</sup> that is, the entire Hindu community. Unlike Keshab Chandra and many other urban Bengali kṛitavidyas of his time who leaned heavily towards Westernization, even Christianization,<sup>102</sup> Debendra Nath remained deeply committed to the idea of Indianization, more specifically Aryanization, of culture and society in Bengal. Satyendra Nath wrote:

"He cherished an ideal differing from that of the bulk of the educated young men of his day. To him ancient India was the cradle of all that was pure in morale and religion. He was a man more deeply imbued than any one in modern times with the genuine spirit of the ancient Rishis. It is singular that the one field of religious inspiration which was foreign to him was the Hebrew Scriptures. He was never known to quote the Bible, nor do we find any allusion to Christ or his teachings in his sermons. For him the Indian Scriptures sufficed. His religion was Indian in origin and expression, it was Indian in ideas and in spirit."<sup>103</sup>

A concrete example of the differences in attitudes and approach to socio-religious questions between the two groups within the Brāhma Samāj was the controversy surrounding the Marriage Act of 1872.<sup>104</sup> The traditionalists led by Debendra Nath opposed the Act and desired to be exempted from it "deeming themselves as much Hindu as the rest of the community".<sup>105</sup> Keshab Chandra and the progressives, apparently, were willing to declare themselves as "non-Hindus" - a circumstance that shocked the conservative Brāhmas.<sup>106</sup> Debendra Nath was strongly opposed to registration as required by the Act, and never doubted the

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<sup>101</sup> Debendra Nath Thakur, as quoted in W.T. de Bary, Sources of Indian Tradition, p.610.

<sup>102</sup> R.N.Basu, op.cit., pp. 68, 151, 154.

<sup>103</sup> D.N.Tagore, Autobiography, p.13 (Introductory chapter by Translator).

<sup>104</sup> See above, pp. 260-267.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p.31.

<sup>106</sup> R.N.Basu, op.cit., p.140.

validity of "marriages solemnized in the presence of God", that is, the early Brāhma marriages.<sup>107</sup> Leading members of the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī such as Raj Narayan Basu refused to accept the argument put forward by some critics that such attachment to the Hindu community and adherence to Hindu socio-domestic rituals (loukikācār) amounted to hypocrisy.<sup>108</sup> They pointed out that, after all, many of the champions of Westernization like Ram Gopal Ghosh of the Derozio-goṣṭhī suffered from such inconsistencies as refusing to take part in the Durgā Pūjā celebrations but accepting śānti-jal (sacred water of peace).<sup>109</sup> Debendra Nath's followers insisted that his attitude of caution and moderation as seen on the occasion of the rejection of the Vedas as "revealed by God" (Īsvar-pratyādiṣṭa) - an occasion when he accepted "the truth" in spite of his "inherent conservatism" (rakṣaṅśīlatā) was more praiseworthy than the "attitude of rashness" shown by many young Brāhmas.<sup>110</sup> Obviously, the traditionalists felt that enough concession had been made to the forces of modernization by rejecting as important a concept as the revealed nature of the Vedas.

But, on the whole, as Raj Narayan clearly stated in his famous lecture on "Hindu Dharmer Sreṣṭhata"<sup>111</sup> /The greatness/superiority of the Hindu religion/, it seemed eminently desirable to remain identified with Hinduism which in its "original" and "pure" form appeared as

"superior to all other religions, because it owes the name to no man; because it acknowledges no mediator between God and man; because the Hindu worships God as the soul of the soul and can worship in every act of life - in business, in pleasure, and in social intercourse;

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<sup>107</sup> D.N. Tagore, Autobiography, p. 31. Also see R.N. Basu, op.cit., pp. 138-145.

<sup>108</sup> R.N. Basu, op.cit., p. 6.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., pp. 54-58, 150-157. The Som Prakāś remarked that "Hinduism

because while other scriptures inculcate worship for the rewards it may bring or the punishment it may avert, the Hindu is taught to worship God and practise virtue for the love of God and of virtue alone, because, being unsectarian and believing in the good of all religions, Hinduism is non-proselytising and tolerant, as it also is devotion to an entire abstraction of the mind from time and sense, and possesses an antiquity which carries it back to the fountain head of all thought."<sup>112</sup>

Raj Narayan declared that he considered himself to be a Hindu and Brāhma Dharma to be only a "noble form of Hinduism".<sup>113</sup> He objected to the theory which held the Brāhma Samāj movement to be a "non-Hindu" (a-Hindu) movement:<sup>114</sup>

"We consider the Brāhma Dharma Grantha which is a collection from the Hindu Śāstras (scriptures) to be our main religious text and conduct our worship (upāsana) with the help of many Vaidik-bākyas (Vedic sayings). Then how can we be 'non-Hindus' (a-Hindu)?"<sup>115</sup>

Thus, to the Brāhma traditionalists, there was an essential identification between "Hindu" and "Indian".

But the members of the Ādi Brāhma Samāj were also conscious of their Brāhma existence and of their "duty" to guard against Hindu idolatry (pouttalikatā).<sup>116</sup> Raj Narayan Basu, for example, raised

was drowning" and Raj Narayan "rescued it with his lecture". Som Prakāś, as cited in R.N.Basu, op.cit., p.55. Among the prominent Bengalis who criticized the lecture were Keshab Chandra Sen and Shib Nath Shastri, and the Indian Mirror run by the younger Brāhmas carried on a continuous attack on Raj Narayan. R.N.Basu, op.cit., pp. 56-57. In the 1880s, Raj Narayan wrote an English pamphlet entitled The Old Hindu's Hope on the theme of 'mahā Hindu samiti' (great union of Hindus). R.N.Basu, op.cit., pp. 61-62.

<sup>112</sup> Quoted in R.N.Basu, op.cit., pp. 152-153.

<sup>113</sup> R.N.Basu, op.cit., p.54.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.75.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. Raj Narayan's views made him known as the "Hindu-Brāhma" to his contemporaries. R.N.Basu, op.cit., p.56.

<sup>116</sup> R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, p.133; R.N.Basu, Brāhmadīger Ucca Ādarśa o Āmadīger Bartamān Adhyātmiḥ Abasthā /The high ideal of the Brāhmas and our present spiritual deficiency/. Calcutta, 1875.



objections against the intrusion of "nara-pūjā" (worship of human being) into the Brāhma Samāj in the late 1860s, in lectures and pamphlets such as Brāhmic Advice, Caution and Help.<sup>117</sup> He criticized the "Great Man Theory" as propounded by Keshab Chandra Sen and felt that this theory had much to do with the unfortunate rift within the Bhārat Varshīya Brāhma Samāj of India.<sup>118</sup>

By the late 1860s, Keshab's leadership was beginning to be questioned even among his followers. The main objection was directed against the increasing custom of idolizing Keshab by addressing him as the "saviour" (paritrātā) and an "incarnation of God" (Īsvarāvatār), by singing songs in his praise in the streets of the city (nagar-saṅkīrtan) and by similar means.<sup>119</sup> Finally, on 15 May 1878, there was another schism within the Brāhma Samāj which resulted in the establishment of the Sādhāraṇ Brāhma Samāj (General Brāhma Samāj) by Keshab's critics within the Bhārat Varshīya Brāhma Samāj. Although the agitation over the Kuch Bihar marriage episode<sup>120</sup> was perhaps the deciding factor, the secessionists were reported to have been greatly displeased with the "Great Man Theory".<sup>121</sup> Keshab's mistake lay in his abandonment of Western arguments such as rationality and practicality which attracted the urban Bengali youth to him in favour of intuition and mysticism.<sup>122</sup> This schism further weakened

<sup>117</sup> R.N. Basu, op.cit., pp. 85-86.

<sup>118</sup> Letter from Raj Narayan Basu to Elizabeth Sharpe, Calcutta, dated May 1872, quoted in R.N. Basu, op.cit., p.133.

<sup>119</sup> Letter from Bijay Krishna Goswami, Yadu Nath Chakrabarty, Nil Kamal Deb, dated 6 Kārtik 1275 (1868), as quoted in Som Prakās, 18 Kārtik 1275 (1868), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 215-216. Also, letter from Chandra Shekhar Basu, dated Śrāvaṇ 1792 (1870), as quoted in Som Prakās, 4 Āsvin 1277 (1870), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 218-220.

<sup>120</sup> Keshab Sen's daughter was married into the royal family of Kuch Behar at a very young age and according to Hindu rites - two aspects of Hindu marriage which had been previously criticized by Keshab. Tattva Bodhini Patrikā, Pous 1790 (1869); Dhaka Prakās, 7 Śrāvaṇ 1277 (1870); Rahasya Sandarbha, 1280 (1874).

the Brāhma Samāj movement and virtually put an end to Keshab Sen's effectiveness as a social reformer and a leader of the urban Bengali kṛitavidyas.

The effectiveness of the Brāhma Samāj as an agency of social reform and its general success largely depended upon the reaction of the Brāhma converts' families and of the wider Hindu society. In the mid-1860s, vernacular journalists noticed a remarkable change in the general attitude of the society towards conversions to Brāhma Dharma. The Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya remarked:

"In earlier times, many Brāhma families were criticized and abused for merely attending meetings of the Brāhma Samāj. Nowadays, even if the son of a devout Hindu accepts Brāhma Dharma, he does not have to become an abused outcaste."<sup>123</sup>

The changed attitude towards the Brāhma Samāj was obviously a result of the changing situation in the urban areas which tolerated more deviation and allowed more flexibility than before. The increasing number of conversions to the Brāhma Samāj to some extent reduced the feeling of isolation among the converts and also made such conversions appear as more tolerable in the eyes of the contemporaries. The fact that the leadership of the Brāhma Samāj included some of the most influential and respected members of the urban Bengali society - for instance writers like Akshay Kumar Datta, government officials like Braja Sundar Mitra and Gobinda Chandra Basu of Dacca, teachers like Ramtanu Lahiri of Krishnanagar, Raj Narayan Basu of Midnapur,

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<sup>121</sup>R.N.Basu, op.cit., p.133.

<sup>122</sup>Cf. C.H.Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, p.95.

<sup>123</sup>Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 9 August 1865.

Gobinda Chandra Guha and Ishan Chandra Biswas of Mymensingh and Pandit Bisheswar Bhattacharya, and lawyers like Rakhal Chandra Ray of Barisal - improved the general image of the Brāhma Samāj in the eyes of the contemporaries. Some of the leading Brāhmas also belonged to important goṣṭhīs such as the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī and thus came into close contact with non-Brāhma kṛitavidyas of great social prominence such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Dwaraka Nath Vidyabhushan of the Som Prakāś. But the main strength of the Brāhma Samāj lay in its retention of various Sanskritic symbols and rituals and its renewed emphasis upon traditional Indian ideas and values.

Perhaps the one single reason for which the Hindu society most appreciated the Brāhma Samāj was for providing an Indian alternative to Christianity to the urban Bengali youth.<sup>124</sup> The efforts of the Samāj to "attract the attention of the well-educated Bengali youth by means of religious instructions (dharmopades)" were found to be very effective.<sup>125</sup> Many contemporary Hindus seem to have felt that conversion to Brāhma Dharma was preferable to conversion to Christianity, the latter act generally signifying a more drastic and final break with the Hindu society than the former. The contemporary urban Bengali Press also voiced the growing expectations of the urban Bengali kṛitavidyas in connectinn with the Brāhma Samāj and its activities in various spheres such as religious progress,<sup>126</sup> social

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<sup>124</sup> Som Prakāś, 9 May 1864; Sambād Pūrna Chandrodaya, 13 and 16 October, 25 November 1865; 11 April 1866; Sambād Prabhākar, 3 November 1865.

<sup>125</sup> Sambād Pūrna Chandrodaya, 16 October 1865.

<sup>126</sup> Paridarśak, 12 September 1861 (letter from Bijay Krishna Goswami ); Som Prakāś 17 June (letter), 14 July (letter) 1862; 20 April, 28 December 1863; 9 May 1864; Sambād Pūrna Chandrodaya, 13 October 1862; Sambād Prabhākar, 3 November 1865.

work and social reform,<sup>127</sup> and educational improvements, especially in the form of providing an alternative to Christian missionary education.<sup>128</sup> The Som Prakās praised the Samāj for having accepted "the responsibility of performing great tasks... both in the material and spiritual spheres."<sup>129</sup> It was said to have become a major focus of attention in society<sup>130</sup> and even the opponents seemed to be jealous at the sight of its rising fortune.<sup>131</sup>

By the mid-1860s, the question of the relationship between the Hindu society and the converts to Brāhma Dharma had become a very important and controversial issue in urban Bengali society. Prominent vernacular newspapers of Calcutta published many articles on questions such as "Whether the Brāhmas and the Hindus constitute separate communities (svantantra jātis)" and "Whether the Brāhmas should be closely associated with the Hindu society/community (samāj)", and received many letters from contemporary Bengali kṛitavidyas on these topics.<sup>132</sup> The Som Prakās, for instance, felt that the Brāhmas and the Hindus were not separate communities in the sense that the Hindus,

<sup>127</sup> Paridarśak, 20 December 1861; Som Prakās, 17 June (letter), 14 July (letter) 1862; 28 December 1863; Sambād Prabhākar, 8 July (letter), 3 November 1865; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 25 November 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 15 January 1866.

<sup>128</sup> Som Prakās, 20 April 1863; Samāchār Chandrikā, 15 January 1866.

<sup>129</sup> Som Prakās, 20 April 1863.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Som Prakās, 28 July 1862.

<sup>132</sup> Som Prakās, 8, 15 and 22 February (letter) 1864; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 2 November 1865.

Muslims and Christians were different from each other and that the Brāhmas and the Hindus did not have any real differences but belonged to the same religious group.<sup>133</sup> Hence, staying within the Hindu society and the continued use of Sanskritic symbols such as the yajñopabīta (sacrificial thread) were not to be treated as hypocritical acts so long as the ultimate aim of the persons concerned was social reform and progress.<sup>134</sup> The Brāhma converts were urged not to leave the Hindu society if they truly wished to reform it and rid it of superstitions.<sup>135</sup>

The growing faith in Indianization as a process of social progress and change among the members of the urban Bengali elite was often a reaction against the intrusion of Westernization and Christianization into Bengali life and society. The aims and activities of both the Dharma Sabhā and the Tattva Bodhinī Sabhā, for instance, were largely inspired and influenced by Christian missionary activities.<sup>136</sup> In the 1840s, Debendra Nath Thakur, the leader of the Tattva Bodhinigosthī felt "greatly indignant and distressed" when he discovered that Christian missionaries like Alexander Duff were "making Christians even of our Zenana ladies".<sup>137</sup> He induced Akshay Kumar Datta, the editor

<sup>133</sup> Som Prakāś, 8 February 1864.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> See letter from Ramtanu Lahiri to Raj Narayan Basu, dated 24 July 1846, as quoted in R. Lethbridge, Ramtanu Lahiri, pp. 113-114.

<sup>137</sup> D.N. Tagore (Thakur), Autobiography, p.98.

of the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, to write a "spirited article" in his paper emphasizing the Indian roots of the educated Bengalis.<sup>138</sup> With the help of "aristocratic" (sambhrānta) and "respected" (mānya) Bengalis belonging to various usually conflicting goṣṭhīs, for example Radha Kanta Deb, Raja Satya Saran, Asutosh Deb and Bhudeb Mukhopadhyaya of the Dharma Sabhā-goṣṭhī and Tara Chand Chakrabarty of the Derozio-goṣṭhī, Debendra Nath organized a "great meeting" (mahā sabhā).<sup>139</sup> The meeting, which was held on 25 May 1845, was reportedly attended by one thousand people and raised about four thousand rupees to set up an alternative institution of free education for Hindu boys.<sup>140</sup> Finally a free educational institution called the Hindu Hitārthī Vidyālaya (school for the benefit of the Hindus) was established.<sup>141</sup> Debendra Nath claimed that

"since the day of the establishment of the Hindu Hitārthī Vidyālaya, the current of Christianization has slowed down and a great blow was struck against the Christian missionaries."<sup>142</sup>

The Christian missionaries, who were thus facing a strong competition from the Brāhma Samāj in urban Bengal, depended heavily upon the vernacular in their attempts at the Christianization of the Bengali society. European Christian missionaries who were familiar with the Bengali society, for example the Rev. James Long, became aware that

<sup>138</sup> D.N.Thakur, Ātmajībanī, pp. 62-64.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., pp. 64-65.

<sup>141</sup> D.N.Tagore (Thakur), Autobiography, pp. 98-101. Raja Radha Kanta Deb became the Chairman of the school, Debendra Nath Thakur and Hari Mohan Sen were the Secretaries and Bhudeb Mukhopadhyaya was the First Teacher. D.N.Thakur, Ātmajībanī, p.65.

<sup>142</sup> D.N.Thakur, Ātmajībanī, p.65.

"the educated natives are, in numerous cases, awakening to a sense of shame, that their own beautiful language should have been so neglected by them"<sup>143</sup>

and that

"the English schools, however useful to the classes attending them, have had little influence on the masses."<sup>144</sup>

It was feared that "missionaries generally have not a thorough knowledge of the language".<sup>145</sup> The manner in which the Vaishnavas and the Brāhmas used the Bengali language for religious purposes was pointed out.<sup>146</sup> Some of the missionaries attending the Baptist Missionary Conference held in Calcutta felt that "the ability to speak Urdu and Hindi, as well as Bengali, was essential to the complete efficiency of Missionaries and Native preachers employed in Calcutta."<sup>147</sup> Dr. Alexander Duff, the Scottish missionary, also recognized "a ready command, orally and in writing, of both Bengali and English" to be "superior acquirements" of a Christian missionary in Bengal.<sup>148</sup> He urged the European missionaries to devote their time "without distraction, to the study of the vernacular" and thus enable themselves to "do effective work through its medium".<sup>149</sup> According to him, young members "of an earnest missionary spirit, with some aptitude in acquiring a language, and a partiality for

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<sup>143</sup> J. Long, On Vernacular Christian Literature, p.7.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>147</sup> Reports of Baptist Missionary Conferences, p.80. B.M.S.Papers.

<sup>148</sup> Letter from Alexander Duff, dated 3 May 1958. Duff Papers (MSS).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

adult teaching" should be "located for a year or two in a rural district of Bengal" in order to be acquainted with the local language and culture.<sup>150</sup>

The importance attached to "native preachers" and vernacular preaching were signs of the growing belief among the European Christian missionaries in Bengal that the vernacular was the best medium for spreading Christian ideas and values in Bengal.<sup>151</sup> The Church Missionary Society of Calcutta had a church at Mirzapur where services were conducted in Bengali, with an English service on Sunday evenings.<sup>152</sup> The Baptist Missionaries of Bengal gathered at a conference held in Calcutta from 22 August to 12 September 1855 raised the question

"Why are there so few, or rather, why are there no Native Christians sustaining an independent pastoral office among the Churches of Bengal?"<sup>153</sup>

It was thought that "generally it will be the wiser plan that the pastor, as well as the deacon, though he may be thereby a somewhat inferior man, should be chosen out of the people and by the people themselves."<sup>154</sup> The Baptist Missionary Conference held in 1858 suggested that "perhaps some of the better educated and more efficient of the native brethren might, under favourable circumstances, be entrusted with the charge of an independent mission."<sup>155</sup> Between 1846 and 1866, the number of "native clergy" attached to the Church

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Letters of Dr. J. Wenger, dated 22 November 1865, 23 January and 22 June 1866. BMS Papers (MSS); Friend of India, 22 January 1862.

<sup>152</sup> Church Missionary Atlas, p.33.

<sup>153</sup> The Minutes and Reports of a Conference of the Baptist Missionaries of Bengal, 1855, p.40, BMS Papers.

<sup>154</sup> The Minutes and Reports of a Conference of the Baptist Missionaries of Bengal, 1855, p.42, BMS Papers.

<sup>155</sup> Report on Baptist Missionary Conference, 1858, p.83.



Missionary Society rose from one to eight while the number of "native agents" rose from one hundred and twelve to four hundred and eighty five.<sup>156</sup> Dr. Duff of the Free Church of Scotland - which in 1850 had "native preachers" in Calcutta and the Mofussil<sup>157</sup> - felt the need for "one European ordained minister with an ordained native", at each of the branch stations.<sup>158</sup> He appreciated the work of "native preachers" like Lal Bihari De who had "done really good work at Culna [Kalna]"<sup>159</sup> and, according to Duff, could be very effectively used in the Christianization of "the educated natives of Calcutta, who are an increasingly influential class and increasingly difficult to deal with."<sup>160</sup>

The strong belief in the importance of a "Vernacular Christian Literature" was another aspect of the attempt at the Indianization of the Christianization movement. This matter was discussed in detail at the Conference of the Bengal Protestant Missionaries held in 1855:

"The formation of a Christian Vernacular Literature is an object of unspeakably great importance at the present time, when plans are being organised by the Bengal Government for imparting a secular vernacular education to the 35 millions of mental serfs throughout the length and breadth of Bengal who speak the Bengali

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<sup>156</sup> Church Missionary Atlas, p.32.

<sup>157</sup> For example, the Rev. Lal Bihari De in Calcutta, the Rev. J. Bhattacharya in Bansberia and the Rev. P.Chattopadhyaya in Chinsura. M.M.Ali, "Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities 1833-1857", Ph.D.Thesis, 1963, London University, pp. 338, 340.

<sup>158</sup> Letter from Duff, 3 May 1859, Duff Papers (MSS).

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. Also, Letters from Duff, dated 8 January 1863 and 3 May 1869, Duff Papers (MSS).

language and for communicating a higher tone of secular instruction to the 80,000 vernacular schools which already exist and have existed in Bengal and Bihar..."<sup>161</sup>

The growing success of the urban Bengali Press and literature contributed towards the strengthening of this theory.<sup>162</sup> Long's

Catalogue of Bengali Works published in 1855 was expected to act as

"a reply to those who would cast aside all Bengali books with the sobriquet applied of 'filthy trash'."<sup>163</sup> During this period, especially

during the late 1860s and the early 1870s - a time when the Christianization movement among the urban Bengali kṛitavidyas was considerably threatened by the Brāhma Samāj and the Wahhābī movement was gaining

in strength - a large number of books were published in Bengali

164

and Mussulman Bengali on Christian topics. These works, often written

by Christian converts, included selections from the Bible, Church

History and polemics, works on doctrine and homiletic liturgies,

hymn-books and catechisms and miscellaneous tracts and stories.<sup>165</sup>

The translation of the Bible into Bengali and Mussulman Bengali was

considered to be one of the major steps in the Christianization move-

ment by leading Christian missionaries.<sup>166</sup> Dr. J. Wenger of the Baptist

<sup>161</sup>J. Long, On Vernacular Christian Literature, pp. 1-2.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid. Also see Church Missionary Atlas, p. 34.

<sup>163</sup>J. Long op.cit., p. 3.

<sup>164</sup>Friend of India, 31 January 1850; 23 January 1868.

<sup>165</sup>See Appendix III.

<sup>166</sup>Letter from Dr. J. Wenger to A. Powell on Bible translations printed by the Mission Press during 1868, letter from Dr. Wenger to the Rev. W. W. Evans, Secretary, Bible Translation Society, dated 23 March 1868, letters of Dr. J. Wenger dated 22 February 1869. BMS Papers (MSS); Friend of India, 23 January 1868; G. A. Oddie, "The Rev. James Long and Protestant Missionary Policy in Bengal, 1840-1872", Ph.D. Thesis, 1964, University of London, p. 422.

Missionary Society of Calcutta, for instance, regularly reported on the importance of the Bible translation work<sup>167</sup> and on the importance of Christian tracts being available in the Bengali language.<sup>168</sup> His Sanskrit and Bengali Bibles<sup>169</sup> were perhaps his most notable works.

A "Vernacular Christian Press" was also developed, for purposes such as praising the work of the Christian missionaries mainly with reference to conversions,<sup>170</sup> propagating the theory that the "Native Christians" were "more hard-working and loyal to the British rule than either the Hindus or the Muslims",<sup>171</sup> and generally promoting the cause of Christianity in Bengal by publishing various fables, tales and letters supporting conversions to Christianity.<sup>172</sup> The Arupodaya, for instance, urged the formation of a "Christian Army", and praised the "solidarity of the Native Christians" and their various efforts to improve the conditions of their community by establishing societies such as the Banga Khrīṣṭa Dharma Sabhā (the Christian religious society of Bengal) and by publishing journals such as the Sāptāhik Saṅbād Patra [weekly news magazine].<sup>173</sup> Among

<sup>167</sup> Letters of Dr. J. Wenger, dated 7 November 1867, letter from Dr. Wenger to Messrs. Trubner and Company, London, dated 23 December 1868, letter from Dr. Wenger to A. Powell, dated 22 February 1869. BMS Papers (MSS).

<sup>168</sup> Letter from Dr. J. Wenger to unknown correspondent, dated 9 November 1868, letter from Dr. Wenger to the Rev. J. Page, dated 9 November 1868. BMS Papers (MSS).

<sup>169</sup> Letters of Dr. J. Wenger: letter to an unknown correspondent, dated 8 January 1850, letter to the Rev. K.M. Bandyopadhyaya, dated 22 January 1850, two letters between Wenger and R.P. Greaves of Cambridge, 1868-69, letter to the Rev. J. Welland, dated 22 February 1868, letters to E.B. Underhill, dated 22 February and 21 May 1868, letter to W.W. Evans, dated 23 March 1868, letter to the Rev. J.R. Broadbent, Secretary, Calcutta Auxiliary Bible Society, dated 20 April 1868, letters to A. Powell, dated 22 February 1869 and 4 April 1873. BMS Papers (MSS). C.B. Lewis' "Circular Letter", dated 23 March 1869. BMS Papers (MSS).

<sup>170</sup> Arupodaya, 1 May 1858.

<sup>171</sup> Arupodaya, 1 May 1858; Sāptāhik Saṅbād, 1 January 1869.

<sup>172</sup> Arupodaya, 1 April 1859; Sāptāhik Saṅbād, 1 January 1869.

the prominent Christian journals and newspapers published in Bengali at this time were monthlies such as the Kalikātā Christian Observer [the Christian Observer of Calcutta] which served as the mouthpiece of the monthly Christian Conference held in Calcutta, the Khrīṣṭer Rājya-briddhi [expansion of Christ's empire] published from Serampore, the Mangalopākhyān Patra [Journal of good tales]; fortnightly journals such as the Arunodaya [sun-rise] edited by the Rev. Lal Bihari De ; and weeklies such as the Sāptāhik Saṁbād [weekly news] printed in Bhowanipur. Like the Baptist missionaries, many Christian missionaries of Bengal felt the need to maintain their own Press.<sup>174</sup>

The Rev. James Long considered the fact that the Christian missionary schools helped in raising the standard of the vernacular to be a factor acting in favour of the Christianization movement in Bengal.<sup>175</sup> On the whole, the Christian missionaries recognized the significance of vernacular education as a medium of social control. Thus in 1850, the major Christian Missionary Societies in Bengal had more vernacular schools than English schools in Calcutta and its vicinity as well as in other major urban areas in Bengal, such as Serampore, Burdwan, Birbhum, Barisal, Jessore and Chittagong.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>173</sup> Arunodaya, 1 May 1858.

<sup>174</sup> Letters of C.B.Lewis: letters to Dr. E.B.Underhill, dated 7 August 1858, 21 February, 22 April, 3 May, 23 June, 21 and 22 September 1859; 8 May 1863; letters to Trestrail, dated 22 April, 21 and 22 September 1859; letter to Baynes, dated 24 February 1868. BMS Papers (MSS).

<sup>175</sup> J.Long, On Vernacular Christian Literature, p.7. Long also urged the establishment of "Vernacular Libraries". Ibid., p.6.

<sup>176</sup> See M.M.Ali, "Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities, 1833-1857", Ph.D. Thesis,<sup>1983</sup> University of London, pp. 338-341. See Map 2.

The Hindu-controlled section of the Vernacular Press was generally critical of the Christian missionary efforts at Indianization. The Som Prakāś wanted it to be made clear that the Christian missionaries did not establish schools to give education to the local people but simply to "convert them through religious instruction".<sup>177</sup> The Indianization of the Christianization movement by various other means including the introduction of techniques such as kathakatā (religious instruction through story-telling) was also criticized.<sup>178</sup> It was claimed that with the spread of education, the urban Bengali youth had become "farsighted" and as a result felt less attraction for Christianity which had anyway "lost much of its earlier novelty".<sup>179</sup> This was said to be the main reason behind the changing situation in urban Bengal where by the early 1870s it appeared that

"the Bengali youth are not becoming converted to Christianity in large numbers any more."<sup>180</sup>

The prevailing bias towards Indianization within Bengali society compelled leading Bengali social reformers of this time like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar to resort to Sanskritic authorities and arguments for the propagation and justification of their views, even when they were primarily moved by humanitarian considerations. Thus, Ishwar

<sup>177</sup>Som Prakāś, 3 July 1865.

<sup>178</sup>Som Prakāś, 23 Phālgun 1277 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 224-226.

<sup>179</sup>Som Prakāś, 23 Phālgun 1277 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p.225.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid.

Chandra cited ancient scriptures to support the movements for female education<sup>181</sup> and widow marriage.<sup>182</sup> Almost invariably, the vernacular was the medium of expression for the Bengali social reformers.<sup>183</sup>

The widow-remarriage movement was an outstanding example of the effectiveness of the Indianization process in introducing social reform and change. The leading members of the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī, namely, Debendra Nath Thakur, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Akshay Kumar Datta - primarily Ishwar Chandra - were the initiators of this movement. They were supported by various usually conflicting groups and personalities, for example, some of the members of the Derozio-goṣṭhī, the pandits of the Sanskrit College of Calcutta and even by some of the zamindars and other abhijāts of Calcutta. This movement, thus, utilized the tradition of inter-goṣṭhī alliances on important socio-religious and political issues.

Another factor which contributed towards the success of the movement was the extensive use of the increasingly popular Vernacular Press and literature. The movement was strongly supported by some of the leading vernacular journals of Calcutta for instance the Tattva

<sup>181</sup> See above, pp. 279-280.

<sup>182</sup> See below, pp. 321-322.

<sup>183</sup> See Appendix II.

Bodhinī Patrikā and the Sambād Bhāskar. Throughout the 1850s, the concept of the remarriage of Hindu widows, particularly of "child-widows" (bāla-bidhabās), was put forward in numerous long and scholarly articles and editorials published in the vernacular journals,<sup>184</sup> mainly in the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā,<sup>185</sup> and in pamphlets written by Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar.<sup>186</sup> Raj Narayan Basu of the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī considered the publication of Ishwar Chandra's Bidhabā-bibāha Pracalita Haoā Ucitkinā Etad-biṣayak Prastāb [proposals to consider whether widow-marriage should be introduced] in 1856 to be at the root of the widow-remarriage movement. He wrote:

"The Hindu society was like a tranquil lake, but with the publication of this pamphlet it became perturbed like a turbulent ocean and dangerous waves rose in it. Only those who have witnessed the movement (āndolan) can understand its real nature. The movement increased four-fold with the publication of Vidyasagar's second pamphlet on the subject."<sup>187</sup>

Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya of Calcutta, who was associated with the Derozio-goṣṭhī through his connections with the Presidency College and with the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī through his personal friendship with some of its members including Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, denied the theory put forward by some that Vidyasagar was inspired

<sup>184</sup>The Vernacular Press even published the names of widows who were candidates for remarriage. Paridarsak, 27 September 1861; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 25 December 1865.

<sup>185</sup>Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Phālgun (Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's article on widow-marriage), Chaitra (Akshay Kumar Datta's editorial supporting Ishwar Chandra's article) 1776 (1854); Agrahāyaṇ (Ishwar Chandra's second article on widow-marriage) 1777 (1855), Pous 1778 (1857), Agrahāyaṇ 1779 (1857), Śrāvaṇ 1780 (1858), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 162-170, 196-204.

<sup>186</sup>Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bidhabā-bibāha Pracalita Haoā Ucit Kinā Etad-biṣayak Prastāb, January 1855 (first pamphlet), October 1855 (second pamphlet), in D.K.Basu, Vidyāsāgar Rachanāballī, vol. 2, pp. 103-127, 165-304.

<sup>187</sup>R.N.Basu, Ātmacharit, p.64. Contemporary journals and newspapers - even the conservative ones - testified to the enormous popular reaction initiated by these pamphlets. Samāchār Chandrikā, 12 November

by his mother Bhagabati Debi in this movement.<sup>188</sup> Vidyasagar himself had informed Krishna Kamal that it was only when he had made up his mind to initiate the movement, having found widow-remarriage to be "sanctioned by the Scriptures" (Śāstra-sammata), that he asked for and received his mother's permission to make an attempt to legalize it.<sup>189</sup>

The arguments used by Ishwar Chandra were primarily based upon traditional Indian authority, for instance ślokas (poetic stanzas) taken from various Sanskrit sources including the Manu Samhitā, the Parāsar Samhitā, the Brihad Parāsar Samhitā, the Yājñabalka Samhitā, the Brihannārādīya, the Āditya Purāna, the Dharma Samhitā, the Vishnu Purāna, the Ādi Purāna and the epic Mahābhārata.<sup>190</sup> He insisted that "deśācār" (local customs) which was offered as the main argument for prohibiting widow-remarriage was invalidated by the existence of Sanskritic support for the remarriage of widows.<sup>191</sup> Most urban Bengali kṛitavidyas of this time seemed to find Vidyasagar's treatment of the subject to be "highly satisfactory".<sup>192</sup> Even the members of the Western-educated section of the urban Bengali community were impressed

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1855 and Sambād Prabhākar, 25 February 1856, as quoted in B.Ghosh, Vidyāsāgar o Bangālī Samaj, vol. 3, pp. 177-180.

188 Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, pp. 319-320.

189 Ibid.

190 See Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bidhabā-bibāna Pracalita Haoā Ucit Kinā etc., in D.K.Basu, op.cit., vol. 2, pp. 109-110, 112-114, 116-127, 170-187, 189-219, 223-240, 243-301.

191 See Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bidhabā-bibāna Pracalita Haoā Ucit Kinā etc. (2nd pamphlet), in D.K.Basu, op.cit., vol. 2, pp. 297-299. However, Ishwar Chandra realized the strength of deśācār and mainly concentrated on the remarriage of child-widows whose marriages had not been consummated.

192 R.N.Basu, Atmācharit p. 64.



by Ishwar Chandra's clever use of Classical sources, although not necessarily by the sources themselves.<sup>193</sup> Raj Narayan observed:

"All the Ingrāji-wālā /English-educated/ Bengalis were on the side of Vidyasagar."<sup>194</sup>

But the supporters of this movement, including the vernacular writers and journalists who played an important role in this movement, also justified widow-remarriage on grounds of humanitarianism, morality and nationalism and with the help of comparatively modern and Western arguments such as the equality of men and women.<sup>195</sup> Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya discussed the important question of the relative position of Hindu women in society in great detail:

"The present situation perpetuates the oppression of the female race and exposes the great selfishness of the male race. Even an old man of sixty can remarry very easily and without the slightest opposition. But a girl who becomes a widow at twelve or thirteen is destined to suffer the tortures of widowhood which involves eating only one meal a day, giving up all comforts and happiness and becoming a maid-servant/ slave (dāsī) in the house of her brother."<sup>196</sup>

Krishna Kamal, himself a kṛitavidyā, was particularly disgusted to see that

"Even the 'edu-dal' (educated group) of today seem to support this arrangement. Nowadays, the word 'spirituality' (ādhyātmikata) has become very fashionable. According to the 'edu' (educated men, especially Western-educated men), widow-marriage will diminish the 'spirituality' of /Hindu/ women. It is a marvellous arrangement

<sup>193</sup>The Bengal Spectator, the mouthpiece of the Derozio-gosṭhī - perhaps the most Westernized section of Bengali society - published letters and articles supplying Sanskritic arguments in support of widow-marriage, although the ultimate success of the movement, the Bengal Spectator felt, depended upon the spread of female education and the growth of courage among young Bengalis. Bengal Spectator, April, July 1842, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 77-80, 90-92.

<sup>194</sup>R.N. Basu, op.cit., p. 64.

<sup>195</sup>Sarbād Prabhākar, 10 and 17 May (letter) 1855, SBS, vol. 4, pp. 701-704; Paridarsak, August 1861; Som Prakāś, 15 August 1864; 13 November 1865. Also see

U.C. Mitra, Bidhabā-bibāha Nāṭak, especially pp. 5, 9 and 61; Dina Bandhu Mitra, Biye Pāglā Būḍo; Yadu Nath Chattopadhyaya, Bidhabā-bilāś Nāṭak.

<sup>196</sup>Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, p. 74.

indeed! We men will enjoy all the advantages, while the women will carry the difficult burden of 'spirituality'."197

A character in Dina Bandhu Mitra's Biye Pāglā Buḍo, one of the most popular Bengali dramas of this period, said to an old man who wished to remarry:

"You have become insane in your eagerness to remarry, after having lost your wife at the age of sixty. You should then consider whether your widowed daughter, who is only fifteen years old, wants to remarry or not."198

Again, the examples generally cited were those of young girls who had become widows at an early age and seldom of older women who had become widows after having lived with their husbands for some time. In the second case, remarriage seemed to present greater moral and social dangers than in the first case.<sup>199</sup>

The house of Raja Radha Kanta Deb, the leading orthodox abhi-jāt of Calcutta, became the scene of long and exciting debates between Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, representing the progressives, and conservative Sanskrit scholars like Pandit Braja Nath Vidya-ratna of Nabadwip.<sup>200</sup> The Sambād Prabhākar reported that in 1853 the supporters of legislation to introduce widow marriage won the debate held at Radha Kanta's house, taking care to emphasize that the debate concerned only those women who were widowed in their childhood.<sup>201</sup> The debate was also carried on through the medium of

197 Ibid.

198 Dina Bandhu Mitra, Biye Pāglā Buḍo, p.3.

199 G.C.H.Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, p.85.

200 Sambād Prabhākar, 18 Āsvin 1260 (1853), SBS, vol. 1, p.197.

201 Sambād Prabhākar, 18 Āsvin 1260 (1853), SBS, vol. 1, p.197.

musical contests held at the houses of leading Calcutta abhijāts like Madan Mohan Maitra.<sup>202</sup> Songs written on the theme of widow-marriage were also sung in the fashion of kīrtans (religious songs sung in a repetitive fashion).<sup>203</sup>

The main opposition to the movement came from the orthodox Hindus, mostly abhijāts, belonging to the Dharma Sabhā of Calcutta and Hindu Dharma Rakshinī Sabhās of Jessore and Dacca. Apart from Radha Kanta Deb who led this group, some of the other prominent abhijāts who joined the opposition were Abinash Chandra Gangopadhyaya, Raja Kamal Krishna Bahadur and Ram Ratan Ray.<sup>204</sup> Ram Ratan Ray, the zamindar of Faridpur in Eastern Bengal, decided to punish those living within his zamindari (estate) who refused to sign anti-widow-remarriage petitions - a measure which had considerable effect upon the course of the movement in Faridpur.<sup>205</sup>

Generally speaking, the Western-educated urban Bengali kṛita-vidyas supported the re-marriage of widows, although some of the kṛita-vidyas remained apathetic towards this question.<sup>206</sup> Among the supporters of this movement were highly Westernized members of the Derozio-gosṭhī like Rasik Krishna Mallik, Radha Nath Sikdar and Pyari Chand

<sup>202</sup> Saṅbād Bhāskar, 14 February 1856, SBS, vol. 3, p.462.

<sup>203</sup> Education Gazette, 8 July 1859 (letter from Dacca).

<sup>204</sup> Saṅbād Bhāskar, 14 February 1856, SBS, vol. 3, p.462.

<sup>205</sup> Saṅbād Bhāskar, 11 March 1856, SBS, vol. 3, p.469.

<sup>206</sup> Saṅbād Prabhākar, 19 Phālgun 1259 (1853) (letter), SBS, vol. 1, p.191, citing Friend of India and Bengal Hurkaru.

Mitra and progressive Westernized Brāhmas like Keshab Chandra Sen,<sup>207</sup> as well as traditionalists like Raj Narayan Basu, the long-time Secretary of the Tatta Bodhinī Sabhā.<sup>208</sup> Raj Narayan's unequivocal support of this movement was expressed in a letter which he wrote to Vidyasagar after his cousin Durga Narayan and brother Madan Mohan married widows:<sup>209</sup>

"I cannot express to you the satisfaction I am feeling at the consummation of these widow marriages in my family. I now feel that I have at last done something which I may mention with great pleasure at the time of my death... My boyish fancies have been actually realized and not in me but in my brother and cousin. The realization I owe to you. How grateful should I be to you."<sup>210</sup>

Among the leading abhijāts who supported this movement were the Maharaja of Burdwan, Maharaja Satish Chandra of Nadiya and his Dewan Kartikeya Chandra Ray. The Maharaja of Burdwan offered a prize to Satish Chandra who married a widow and scholarships and housing to those who might face various difficulties as a consequence of marrying widows.<sup>211</sup> The Maharaja's support was considered to be very

<sup>207</sup>In 1859, at the age of twenty-one, Keshab Chandra managed, produced and acted in a play entitled Bidhabā-bibāha [widow-marriage] and the presentation was attended by Vidyasagar more than once. B. Ghosh, Vidyāsagar o Bāngālī Samāj, vol. 3, pp. 273-274.

<sup>208</sup>Raj Narayan's commitment to the cause was such that his wife was afraid to let him go to Calcutta because he might marry a widow there. Letter from Raj Narayan to Vidyasagar, in "Some Interesting Letters: Letters to and from Raj Narain Bose", Modern Review, vol. 117, April 1965, p. 256.

<sup>209</sup>These two marriages were the third and fourth marriages under the new Act sanctioning widow-marriage. Letter from Rajnarayan to Vidyasagar, in "Some Interesting Letters: Letters to and from Raj Narain Bose", loc.cit., p. 259.

<sup>210</sup>Ibid.

<sup>211</sup>Sambād Bhāskar, 18 December 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 355-357.

valuable in view of his dominant position within the conservative section of the Hindu community in Bengal.<sup>212</sup> The extensive use of classical sources by the leaders of this movement also drew the support of traditional Sanskrit scholars like Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, Harish Chandra Tarkalankar, and Srish Chandra Vidyaratna. Madan Mohan Tarkalankar wrote several articles supporting the remarriage of widows in his scholarly journal Sarba Śubhakarī Patrikā.<sup>213</sup> These Sanskrit scholars, mainly those who taught at urban educational institutions such as the Sanskrit College of Calcutta, became targets of orthodox criticism and were accused of creating an "unfavourable image of College Professors".<sup>214</sup>

The leading vernacular journalists of Calcutta were divided on this issue. The Samāchār Chandrikā of the orthodox Dharma Sabhā-gosṭhī was naturally against the movement,<sup>215</sup> as was the increasingly conservative Saṃbād Prabhākar of Ishwar Chandra Gupta.<sup>216</sup> Indeed, Ishwar Chandra Gupta was very harsh in his criticism of Vidyasagar's widow-marriage movement, although on at least one occasion he wrote that he would support the remarriage of widows if he was assured that the widows were virgins.<sup>217</sup> Ishwar Chandra considered this movement

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Sarba Śubhakarī Patrikā, Āsvin 1772 (1850), SBS, vol. 3, p.553.

<sup>214</sup> Saṃbād Bhāskar, 27 March 1866.

<sup>215</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 30 November 1865.

<sup>216</sup> Many letters criticizing the movement were published in this paper. See Saṃbād Prabhākar, 10 Chaitra 1258 (1852) (letter), SBS, vol. 1, p.184.

<sup>217</sup> Saṃbād Prabhākar, 1 Māgh 1263 (1857), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 219-220. According to Ishwar Gupta's rival Gouri Shankar Vidyabagish (Bhattacharya) of the Saṃbād Bhāskar, Ishwar Chandra changed sides in the widow-remarriage movement because the movement was opposed by many "prominent" (pradhān) Hindus of Calcutta whose support he sought. Saṃbād Bhāskar, 2 August 1856, SBS, vol. 3, p.314.

to be less important than the spread of female education and felt it to be the source of the growing conflict within Hindu family and society.<sup>218</sup> He said that he could not feel happy about the widow-marriages which had recently taken place because these marriages had failed to receive the "unanimous support of the Bengali society" and criticized the Government for legalizing widow-marriage "in spite of the opposition of lacs of Hindus".<sup>219</sup> Among the leading Bengali journals supporting this movement were the Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā,<sup>220</sup> the mouthpiece of the progressive Tattva Bodhinī-gos̥ṭhī and edited by Akshay Kurar Datta of the Brāhma Samāj, the Sambād Bhāskar<sup>221</sup> edited by Gouri Shankar Bhattacharya - a Sanskrit scholar well-known for his close association with the Derozio-gos̥ṭhī, and the Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya<sup>222</sup> which was generally sympathetic to the Brāhma Samāj movement. In 1865 the Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya praised Durga MohanDas, the government pleader of Barisal who organized a widow-marriage, and wrote:

"We thank Durga Mohan Das a hundred times because he has the courage to do a good deed. If all well-educated men (susikṣītaṣ) had such courage, we would not have to feel sorry for the widows."<sup>223</sup>

<sup>218</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 1 Māgh 1263 (1857), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 216-220.

<sup>219</sup> Ishwar Chandra Gupter Granthābalī [collected works of Ishwar Chandra Gupta], p.135, as quoted in S.K.Gupta, Unaviṃśa Śatābdite Bānglār Nava-jāgaran, p.128.

<sup>220</sup> Tattva Bodhinī Patrikā, Phālgun 1776 (1854), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 141-153.

<sup>221</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 31 January 1857, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 384-375.

<sup>222</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 15 and 31 July 1865.

<sup>223</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 15 July 1865.

The leading nineteenth-century Bengali journals were more-or-less consistent in their attitude towards social problems relating to marriage and the condition of women in society. The Sambād Bhāskar for instance, criticized the custom of burning widows with their dead husbands (saha-marāṇ or satī-dāha) and the practice of polygamy (bahu-bibāha) and desired the introduction of legislation prohibiting such "social evils".<sup>224</sup> The Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya supported the attempt made by a few kṛitavidyas, mostly Brāhmas living in Calcutta and its neighbourhood, to introduce the ancient Indian custom of svayambar (ceremony of the bride choosing her own husband) which would, it was hoped, raise the marriageable age of women, put an end to child-marriage and also lead to the education of women<sup>225</sup> - conditions which would directly affect the position of Hindu widows. The Som Prakāś supported the widow-remarriage movement<sup>226</sup> and generally sympathized with the youth/progressives (navya sampradāya) in their struggle against the old/conservatives (prācīn sampradāya).<sup>227</sup> But at the same time, the Som Prakāś favoured some kind of a compromise between the modernists (navya dal) and the conservative (prācīn dal) on the issue of widow-remarriage:

"Both sides should tone down their views and try to placate each other. The conservatives should relax the bonds of superstitious beliefs (saṃskārs) and

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<sup>224</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 2 February 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 338-339; 26 December 1865.

<sup>225</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 27 July 1865. Also, Samāchār Chandrikā, 24 July 1865 (citing Sambād Prabhākar).

<sup>226</sup> Som Prakāś, 29 August and 5 September 1864; 30 Phālgun 1277 (1871), SBS, vol. 4, p. 227.

<sup>227</sup> Som Prakāś, 23 October 1865.

approve of widow-marriages. The progressives, on the other hand, should give up their present attempts to introduce inter-caste widow-marriages. After all, the restrictions against inter-caste marriage do not cause as much harm as the restrictions against widow-marriages."<sup>228</sup>

The widow-remarriage movement generated a lot of activity among both the conservatives and the progressives. Throughout the course of this movement, numerous petitions were sent to the Government, some opposing the movement for instance the petition of 17 March 1856 signed by Radha Kanta Deb and about thirty-seven thousand signatories from Western Bengal and the petition of the "pandits" of Bengal,<sup>229</sup> and some supporting the movement for instance the petitions from the kritavidyas of Calcutta, Barasat, Krishnanagar, Murshidabad, Bankura, Burdwan and Chittagong.<sup>230</sup> The petitions presented to the Legislative Council on 19 January 1856 on behalf of the movement from Calcutta and its suburbs and from Barasat near Calcutta, according to a contemporary report, contained six hundred and fifty signatures and three hundred signatures respectively.<sup>231</sup> In the same year the members of the prestigious Vidyotsāhinī Sabhā (society for the encouragement of knowledge) of Calcutta led by Kali Prasanna Sinha, the abhijāt Bengali author, petitioned the Government on behalf of the movement.<sup>232</sup> The Sabhā

<sup>228</sup> Som Prakāś, 13 November 1865.

<sup>229</sup> B.Ghosh, Vidyāsāgar o Bāngālī Samāj, vol. 3, pp. 196-199.

<sup>230</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 2 February, 11 March 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 292-293, 468-469.

<sup>231</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 2 February 1856, SBS, vol. 3, p.292.

<sup>232</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, July 1856, as cited in S.K.Gupta, Unaviṃśa Satābdi te Bānglar Nava-jāgaran, p.210.



promised one thousand rupees as prize to those willing to marry widows.<sup>233</sup> Another association which gave valuable support to the movement was the Samājonni Bidhāyini Sabhā (society for the introduction of social improvement) which included among its members some of the leading kritavidyas of Calcutta such as Debendra Nath Thakur, Akshay Kumar Datta, Pyari Chand Mitra, Kishori Chand Mitra, Harish Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, Chandra Shekhar Deb and Rajendra Lal Mitra. In 1866 Vidyasagar and some of the other supporters of this movement formed a Bidhabā-bibāha Pradhāyini Sabhā (society for giving widows in marriage) in Calcutta and in 1872 Vidyasagar and Nabin Chandra Sen established a Hindu Family Annuity Fund to support widows.

The petition sent to the Government of India by Vidyasagar and some other "educated Hindus"<sup>234</sup> emphasized the fact that the "social evil" was "a most injurious grievance, contrary to a true interpretation of Hindu law" and that widow marriages were "neither contrary to nature nor prohibited by law or custom in any other country or by any other people in the world."<sup>235</sup> Vidyasagar and the other supporters of this movement rightly felt that the Government, cautiously avoiding any interference in religious matters, needed this assurance. The draft Bill of 17 November 1855 introduced by J.P. Grant in the Legislative Council which became Act XV of 1856 and

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid. Kali Prasanna Sinha's advertisement on behalf of the Vidyotsāhini Sabhā, as quoted in Sambād Bhāskar, 22 November 1856, SBS, vol. 3, p.292.

<sup>234</sup> Friend of India, 29 November 1855.

<sup>235</sup> Quoted in B.Ghosh, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, p.87.

was described as "an Act to remove all legal obstacles to the marriage of Hindu widows", made use of almost exactly the same words and phrases used by the Bengali petitioners who were in favour of widow-remarriage.<sup>236</sup> The Act arose out of "the Bill to legalize Hindoo widow's marriage" which according to official sources, had "caused considerable agitation among the native community".<sup>237</sup> The Government received a petition presented by "nearly a thousand Hindus, amongst whom were some of the high caste" who stated that "in their opinion and firm belief" the custom of prohibiting the marriage of Hindu widows" is "not in accordance with the Shaisters Sastras or with a true interpretation of Hindoo Law" and they prayed to the Legislative Council "to take into early consideration the propriety of passing a law to remove all legal obstacles to the marriage of Hindoo widows, and to declare the issue of all such marriages to be legitimate."<sup>238</sup> The Government was however aware of the continuing opposition to the Act, primarily from the orthodox section of the Hindu community.<sup>239</sup> In 1856 Kali Prasanna Sinha, a leading kritavidya of Calcutta, wrote in a letter to the Legislative Council on behalf of the Vidyotsāhinī Sabhā of Calcutta:

"We the people of Bengal submit that boundless benefits have been offered to the Bengalis by the enactment of widow-marriage. It is indeed a just act and the highest duty of the rulers to protect peace in the land and destroy evil customs."<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 2 August 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 313-314.

<sup>237</sup> Despatch to India (Judicial Department), 4 November (no. 60) 1857, p. 858.

<sup>238</sup> Despatch to India (Legislative) 6 January (no. 1) 1858, pp. 1185-1187.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., pp. 1187-1191.

<sup>240</sup> Quoted in Sambād Prabhākar, 19 November 1856, SBS, vol. 1, p. 520.

The first widow-marriage under the new Act took place on 7 December 1856 at the house of Raj Krishna Bandyopadhyaya, a friend of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, on Sukea Street in North Calcutta, between Pandit Srish Chandra Vidyaratna, a lecturer at the Sanskrit College who later became a Deputy Magistrate, and Kali Mati Debi, a ten year old child-widow.<sup>241</sup> The marriage ceremony was attended by some of the leading members of the Bengali elite, including abhi\_jāts like Ram Mohan Ray's son Rama Prasad, Derozians like Ram Gopal Ghosh, Digambar Mitra and Pyari Chand Mitra, influential writers and journalists like Kali Prasanna Sinha and Gouri Shankar Bhattacharya of the Sambād Bhāskar, and traditional Sanskrit scholars like Jay Narayan Tarkapanchanan, Bharat Chandra Siromani and Tara Nath Tarkabachaspati. According to a contemporary British journalist, this marriage attracted "the elite of the educated and enlightened portion of the natives of Calcutta."<sup>242</sup> Raj Narayan observed:

"The majority of English-educated kritavidyas of Calcutta including 'Mahātma' (great soul) Ram Gopal Ghosh walked beside the pālki (carriage) of the bridegroom."<sup>243</sup>

The event created great excitement among contemporary Bengalis and there was a large crowd of on-lookers. Raj Narayan, writing on the impact of this movement, remarked:

"On the day of his [Srish Chandra's] marriage, the people of Calcutta were so surprised, that it seemed like an 'epoch-turning' (yug-ultāno) event."<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 9, 16 and 18 December 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 344-346, 352-354, 357-358; Tattva Bodhini Patrikā, Pous 1778 (1856-1857), SBS, vol. 2, pp. 196-198.

<sup>242</sup> Dacca News, 20 December 1856.

<sup>243</sup> R.N. Basu, Ātmacarit, p. 65.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

The second widow-marriage was undertaken by Madhu Sudan Ghosh of Panihati, the third by Raj Narayan's cousin Durga Narayan Basu and the fourth by Raj Narayan's brother Madan Mohan Basu. By 1861 almost thirty to forty widow-marriages were said to have taken place,<sup>245</sup> often in the Mofussil and even in areas of Eastern Bengal such as Dacca, Bakharganj and Faridpur.<sup>246</sup> Most of these areas, especially those in Eastern Bengal, were areas which had been deeply influenced by the Brāhma Samāj movement. These marriages were invariably followed by long debates, primarily in the pages of the influential urban Bengali Press.<sup>247</sup> Most often these marriages took place within caste and among the Brāhmaṇs and the Kāyasthas<sup>248</sup> among whom Kulinism and child-marriages were particularly prevalent. In 1865, however, there was the report of marriage between Gour Mani, a girl of the low nāpit (barber) caste and Gouri Chandra Sen, a Baidya, at the house of Durga Mohan Das, a low caste kritavidya who became a government lawyer in Barisal, the priest being Nil Kamal Chakrabarty, the Brāhmaṇ head clerk of the Chota Adālat or small court who had given up the sacred thread in open defiance of caste.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Paridarsak, 6 November 1861 (letter).

<sup>246</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 3 July 1865. *See Maps*, 2.

<sup>247</sup> Paridarsak, 30 August 1861; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 14 February, 7 June 1865.

<sup>248</sup> For example, marriage between Sarada Debi, nine year old widowed daughter of Srishti Dhar Mukhopadhyaya, a Brāhmaṇ of Hooghly and Nil Madhab, nine year old son of Nabin Chandra Ghosh, a Brāhmaṇ of Twenty Four Parganas; three widow marriages among Kāyasthas in Hooghly. Paridarsak, 30 August 1861; Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodāya, 14 February 1865.

<sup>249</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 15 July 1865.

Some of the other widow-marriages which took place in Bengal in the 1860s were also cases of inter-caste marriage (asavarṇa-bibāha), for instance the marriage between Aghor Nath Gupta, a Baidya, and Kadambini Dasi, a Kāyastha, in 1866.<sup>250</sup>

The widow-remarriage movement again revealed that caste feelings were at the root of most social attitudes and reactions in mid-nineteenth century Bengal. Caste sentiments were generally stronger than feelings for or against the remarriage of widows. Even supporters of the widow-remarriage movement tended to condemn widow-marriage in the Brāhma style which often turned out to be cases of inter-caste marriage. The Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya wrote in support of Vidyasagar's policy of avoiding open clashes with traditional Hindu practices as far as possible :

"In this country, even today, the Hindus continue to enjoy power and the Hindu Dharma continues to exercise influence. Hence, Vidyasagar has organized widow-remarriages according to Hindu Dharma. This is the wisest course of action."<sup>251</sup>

After "considerable research", the Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya found that

"although many Hindus refuse to admit it openly, yet in their minds they cannot fail to accept the justice behind sanctioning widow-marriages."<sup>252</sup>

But, unfortunately, the Brāhmas, meaning the young and progressive Brāhmas led by Keshab Chandra Sen, were "annoying the old/conservatives

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<sup>250</sup> Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 2 January 1866.

<sup>251</sup> Saṅbād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 7 February 1866.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

(prāciṅ sampradāya) by conducting widow-marriages according to Brāhma Dharma."<sup>253</sup> Similarly, the supporters of the movements against child-marriage and polygamy were cautioned not to lose the support of the conservative section completely by breaking traditional practices, mainly those relating to caste.<sup>254</sup>

The opposition to the widow-remarriage movement, which included Hindus as well as a few Brāhmas,<sup>255</sup> was quite strong. Generally speaking, the threat of bahiṣkār (excommunication) - temporary or permanent, fines and other forms of social ostracism continued to be real threats and greatly disadvantageous to the advocates of heterodoxy.<sup>256</sup> The supporters of the widow-remarriage movement, including leading members of the urban Bengali elite like Raj Narayan Basu and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, had to face family trouble and social persecution, even involving physical threat.<sup>257</sup> On the occasion of his son Narayan's marriage to a widow, Ishwar Chandra wrote:

"Narayan, by engaging in this marriage ... has made me proud and has shown himself to be my true son. The introduction of widow-marriage is the greatest achievement of my life. There is very little chance that I shall be able to perform a better deed in the future. I have staked everything that I have got on this venture and, if necessary, I shall offer my life

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Ibid.

254 Som Prakāś, 6 July 1863.

255 Paridarsak, 6 November 1861 (letter).

256 Cf. M.N.Srinivas, Social change in Modern India, pp. 80-81.

257 Saṅbād Bhāskar, 31 January 1857, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 374, 375; R.N. Basu, Atmacarit, p.65; letter from Raj Narayan to Vidyasagar, in "Some Interesting Letters: Letters to and from Raj Narain Bose", Modern Review, vol. 117, April 1865, p.259; Vidyasagar's letter to his brother Sambhu Chandra, dated 27 Śrāvaṅ 1277 (1870) and to Durga Mohan Das, as quoted in S. Banerjee, Patra Sahitya, pp. 42-43 and in B.Ghosh, Vidyāsagar o Bāṅgālī Samāj, vol. 1, pp. 96-97, 99-100.

for it. In comparison, the loss of relatives is a negligible matter."<sup>258</sup>

The Sambād Bhāskar feared that the opposition party was numerically stronger than the supporters of the movement - a factor which explained the widespread social opposition, even ostracism, aimed at the pandits who attended the widow-marriages held in Calcutta, resulting in severe social and economic difficulties for these pandits who were largely dependent upon the patronage of Hindu abhijāts for their livelihood.<sup>259</sup> The fear of social ostracism seems to have been stronger outside Calcutta, especially in the older urban areas such as Dacca. In 1862, a meeting was held in Dacca "for the promotion of social improvement"<sup>260</sup> at which Durga Das Kar, a Sub-Assistant Surgeon in the employment of Government and hence a man of independent means who was in a position to defy his family, declared:

"It is admitted by all present here that the system of widow-marriage should be in force, and we have all along lectured on the subject, but nothing has been done up to this time. I now therefore propose to say that I wish to get my daughter married again, who, unfortunately lost her husband. But I stand in great need of your support and assistance in case I be excommunicated by my orthodox friends and relatives."<sup>261</sup>

Although a few Hindus including the chairman of the meeting left the meeting following this announcement, the remaining members came to a resolution "to carry widow-marriage into effect, notwithstanding the innumerable obstructions that will come in their way."<sup>262</sup> But

<sup>258</sup> Letter from Vidyasagar to his brother, as quoted in S. Banerjee, op.cit., pp. 46-47.

<sup>259</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 31 January 1867, SBS, vol. 3, p. 375.

<sup>260</sup> Hindoo Patriot, 15 December 1862 (letter to editor from "a reader in Dacca", dated 23 November 1862).

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

even after a lot of publicity and in spite of the fact that Durga Das Kar seemed to be "an influential and respectable native gentleman ... who had ... made up his mind", he failed to go through with his promise,<sup>263</sup> presumably because of social and family pressures. The supporters of the movement, however, were generally optimistic about the outcome of the movement in spite of its apparent setbacks.<sup>264</sup> In 1857 the Sambād Bhāskar claimed that the movement had met with considerable success in and outside Calcutta and felt that widow-marriage had become more-or-less accepted among the Hindus in Bengal.<sup>265</sup>

While the initiative for the widow-remarriage movement mainly came from the urban Bengali kṛitavidyas belonging to the Tattva Bodhinī-goṣṭhī, the importance of legislative support was widely recognized. It was generally felt that it was the legal enactment of widow-remarriage which gave Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar the impetus to "really begin his work".<sup>266</sup> Legislation also succeeded in influencing public opinion. The Brāhmas who held a meeting in Dacca in 1857 to readmit the son of a high caste Brāhmaṇ and a widow whom he had married, into caste, remarked:

"Has not the Legislative Council declared the marriage of widows legal; and who are we that we should oppose ourselves to the Legislative Council?"<sup>267</sup>

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> See Sambād Bhāskar, 28 August 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 488-489.

<sup>265</sup> Sambād Bhāskar, 31 January 1857, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 374, 375.

<sup>266</sup> R.N. Basu, Ātmacharit. p. 64.

<sup>267</sup> Dacca News, 17 January 1857.



Throughout this movement, the Government was greatly concerned with the reaction of the urban Bengali elite and eager to point out the respectability of the social reformers. On the occasion when the Government was petitioned to introduce legislation enabling the son of a widow-marriage to inherit his father's property, Sir John Peter Grant said:

"They (the petitioners) are as much Hindus as the other party ... when satī has been abolished it is proper to allow widows to remarry since it is better to die rather than endure the miseries of widowhood for ever."<sup>268</sup>

Generally speaking, the Government was willing to support the social reformers on two conditions, first, that the legislation which they desired was "permissive" as in the case of legislation supporting widow-marriage and not "coercive" as in the case of legislation against polygamy, and second, that the legislation had the support of Sanskritic or traditional Indian sources. The awareness of this distinction between "permissive" and "coercive" legislation might have also influenced the decision of traditional Sanskrit scholars like Tara Nath Tarkabachaspati who supported Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's movement in favour of the remarriage of widows but opposed Vidyasagar's movement against Hindu polygamy.<sup>269</sup>

The widow-remarriage movement raised various other questions connected with Hindu marriage. In 1856, some of the supporters of this movement, mostly members of the progressive Derozio-gos̥thī such as Rasik Krishna Mallik, Radha Nath Sikdar, Pyari Chand Mitra and Kailash

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<sup>268</sup>Quoted in R.N.Basu, op.cit., p.64.

<sup>269</sup>Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, pp. 122, 319.

Chandra Datta,<sup>270</sup> petitioned the Government "for the insertion of a Marriage Registration Clause, under which marriages of widows in whatsoever manner performed, will be held valid provided they are registered by the contracting parties before public officials appointed by the Government for the purpose."<sup>271</sup>

Marriage, which raised various socio-economic as well as religious questions and was closely related with caste and joint family, was generally a controversial issue. In 1851, the Sambād Prabhākar reported that the "respectable men" (mānyas) and "leaders" (pradhāns) of Calcutta were engaged in various conflicts surrounding the question of Hindu marriage.<sup>272</sup> Two aspects of Hindu marriage which created great socio-economic difficulties, particularly for the bride's family, were the dowry system (pan-prathā) by which bride-grooms were offered money as an inducement to marry,<sup>273</sup> and the extravagance which characterized the marriage ceremony. Another prevalent custom which attracted the criticism of the urban Bengali elite was the practice of "selling" daughters in marriage (kanyā-bikray prathā). The urban Bengali Press criticized the custom on humanitarian grounds as well as on the ground that it went against the intentions of the Hindu Śāstras and their interpreters like Manu.<sup>274</sup> This custom of giving a girl in marriage in return for money seemed to have been growing in

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<sup>270</sup> Among the twenty-two petitions mentioned by name, only two were Brāhmins and the rest were non-Brāhmins. Sambād Bhāskar, 9 February 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 461-462.

<sup>271</sup> Quoted in Sambād Bhāskar, 9 February 1856, SBS, vol. 3, pp. 461-462.

<sup>272</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 23 Pous 1257 (1851), SBS, vol. 1, pp. 174-175.

<sup>273</sup>.

Quarrels over the amount and payment of the dowry, among other factors, often led to the torture of brides by their husbands and in-laws - another sad aspect of Hindu marriage. G.P. Bandyopadhyaya, Bou Haoā Bado Day, p.66.

<sup>274</sup> Grāma Bārtā, August 1865.

popularity<sup>in</sup> Bengal, especially among the Kulīns, and further strengthened the customs of child-marriage and polygamy.<sup>275</sup> In May 1871, some of the "Hindoo gentlemen" of Sylhet in Eastern Bengal held a meeting with the object of "abolishing the practice which now prevails in Hindoo society by which girls are practically sold when given in marriage and to reduce the unnecessary and extravagant expenditure with which the religious ceremonies of the Hindoos are solemnized."<sup>276</sup> The meeting was reported to have been "well-attended and successful",<sup>277</sup> which was quite remarkable in view of the remote location of Sylhet and its distance from the relatively progressive metropolitan society. The urban Bengali kritavidyas even raised questions regarding the prevalent method of selecting marriage partners, that is, the "arranged marriage" system. The Paridarsak of Calcutta remarked:

"Marriages should take place at the mutual wish of the two people and with the consent of the parents. This is, of course, only possible with the spread of education."<sup>278</sup>

While these kritavidyas were undoubtedly inspired by Western ideas and examples, they mainly appealed to traditional Indian customs such as the svayambar.

The controversies surrounding the question of marriage naturally led to the question of the position and rights of women. The main arguments used in support of a limited amount of female emancipation

<sup>275</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 19 September 1865. Also see N.C.Pal, Kanyā Bikray

<sup>276</sup> Kāpak, introduction and p.8.  
Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, p.408.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Paridarsak, 24 December 1861. Also, Bāṅga Vidyā, Kārtik 1262 (October-November 1855).

(stri-svādhīnatā) were also primarily based upon the sources of Indian traditions,<sup>279</sup> although Westernized techniques such as meetings<sup>280</sup> and petitions<sup>281</sup> were being used in social reform movements connected with the position of women. The arguments used by the opponents of female emancipation, however, were seldom Sanskritic and mainly practical, for example, "the lack of total success faced by the recent movements in this connection which took place in Calcutta such as widow-marriage and the movement against child-marriage"<sup>282</sup> and "the predominance of sensuality among all men - educated or uneducated - in our country".<sup>283</sup> The supporters of the movement for female emancipation, as in the case of the movements for female education and widow-remarriage, were most assured of popular support and success when they relied on Sanskritic arguments and examples, for instance, the example of famous women of ancient India like Gargi and Maitreyi. The increasingly popular urban Bengali Press and literature were used with great success. In 1865 a prize of two hundred rupees - a considerable sum of money in the context of mid-nineteenth century Bengal - was announced for a drama written on the theme of "Hindu Mahilā-gaṇer Bartamān Abasthā" (the present condition of Hindu women).<sup>284</sup> The essay was to be judged by prominent social reformers like Ishwar

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<sup>279</sup> Som Prakāś, 13 Chaitra 1278 (1871), 22 Śrāvaṇ 1279 (1872), SBS, vol. 4, pp. 254-256, 263-265.

<sup>280</sup> For example, the "meeting of Hindoo gentlemen" held at Sylhet. Bengal Administration Report, 1871-72, p.408.

<sup>281</sup> For example, the petitions of Bengali Hindus including the inhabitants of Krishnanagar in connection with the "Marriage of Hindoo Widows Bill". Proceedings of Legislative Council of India, vol. I, 1854-55, pp. 738, 836.

<sup>282</sup> Samāchār Chandrikā, 30 November 1865.

<sup>283</sup> Sambād Pūrṇa Chandrodaya, 25 April 1865; Samāchār Chandrikā, 30 November 1865.

<sup>284</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 14 August 1865.

Chandra Vidyasagar and Pyari Chand Mitra and presented by the abbi-jāt Jorasanko Nāṭya-śālā (Jorasanko Theatre) in Calcutta.<sup>285</sup>

Even the dowry system (paṅ-prathā) and the restrictions on widow-remarriage were criticized by referring to arguments based upon the Dharma Śāstras (religious scriptures).<sup>286</sup>

Thus, the direction taken by social reform movements during this period was essentially towards the Indianization of society and culture. Social reform was justified on the ground that it would provide the youth (navya sampradāya) with a set of "national customs and modes of behaviour".<sup>287</sup> On the one hand, this new set of rules was expected to be free from the "eternal superstitions" which characterized the existing "upadharmā" (semi-religious rules of conduct) and "deśācār" (customs of the land).<sup>288</sup> Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, for example, derived enough strength from Indian traditions, which he adapted to the modern situation with considerable success, to defy deśācār. He wrote:

"I am not a mere slave (dās) of deśācār. I shall do whatever I think to be necessary or proper for the good of myself or of the society. I shall never be restricted by the fear of either people (lok) or relatives (kutumba)."<sup>289</sup>

On the other hand, the new set of rules of conduct was to provide an alternative to the "undisciplined imitation of the West".<sup>290</sup> In

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Sambād Prabhākar, 17 May 1855, SBS, vol. 4, pp. 761-764; Som Prakāś, 14 Baisakh 1271 (1864), SBS, vol. 4, p.207; U.C.Mitra, Bidhabā-bibāna Nāṭak, p.61; Yadu Nath Chattopadhyaya, Bidhabā-bilās Nāṭak, preface.

<sup>287</sup> Som Prakāś, 28 December 1863.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Letter from Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar to his brother Sambhu Chandra, dated 27 Śrāvaṇ 1277 (1870), as quoted in B.Ghosh, Vidyasagar o Bāngālī Samāj, vol. 2, p.97.

<sup>290</sup> Som Prakāś, 28 December 1863.

his proposal for the Jātiya Gourab Sampādanī Sabhā (society for the promotion of national feeling),<sup>291</sup> Raj Narayan Basu wrote:

"No reform is accepted by nation unless it comes in a national shape. The Nationality Promotion Society will not imitate or take an active part in social reformation - as such reformation is not its principal end or aim - but will aid it by rousing national feelings in its favour. Men naturally look to the past for sanction for their acts and nothing aids reformation as much as a former national precedent."<sup>292</sup>

The Jātiya Gourab Sampādanī Sabhā, therefore, aimed at publishing tracts in Bengali "containing proofs of the existence of liberal and enlightened customs in ancient India, such as female education, personal liberty of females, marriage by election of the bride, marriage at an adult age, widow-marriage, inter-marriage and voyage to distant countries."<sup>293</sup> The Sabhā would not "resist the introduction of good foreign customs into educated society, as that would be a bar to all improvement", but would try to "give if possible to foreign customs already introduced a national shape".<sup>294</sup>

The promoters of Indianization, thus, opposed both the supporters of Westernization and the orthodox section in society. The process of Indianization, which was as much a modernizing process as the process of Westernization but more effective than the latter, added a new dimension to the various conflicts existing within the urban Bengali society as described by contemporary kṛitavidyas:

"The war between conservatives and progressives had begun to rage; not only in the same town, in the

<sup>291</sup>See above, pp. 296-297.

<sup>292</sup>As quoted in Y.C. Bagal, Hindu Melār Itibritta, pp. 97-98.

<sup>293</sup>Ibid.

<sup>294</sup>Ibid.

same village, between the men of the same caste and sect, but in the same family between father and son, brother and brother, an earnest moral struggle has commenced."<sup>295</sup>

"The new group stood up against the old, the old tried to restrict society and literature within narrow boundaries. Society and literature became convulsed as a result of this action and reaction (ghāt-pratighāt)."<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Keshab Chandra Sen, as quoted in Indian Mirror, 15 August, 15 October, 1 November and 15 December 1803.

<sup>296</sup> Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, as quoted in PP, pp. 53-54.

### CONCLUSION

Urbanism emerges as perhaps the most important force of social change in mid-nineteenth century Bengal. The impact of urbanism was visible not only in the physical structure of the urban areas, but also in its social structure, in the pattern of social control, in relationships and attitudes and ideas. The urban milieu provided the leaders of socially with an environment suited to reform and change as well as with the major ideas and techniques which they used in support of the various contemporary movements. Urbanization encouraged some of the most important conditions for social change in nineteenth century Bengal such as the spread of education, particularly modern education, and increased interactions leading to a growth in the areas of conflict between classes, groups and individuals. The urban, particularly the metropolitan, society was the centre of the interplay of the forces of continuity and change.

In spite of the fact that leadership was still largely confined to upper caste Hindus, it was an unmistakable sign of social change that the members of the elite included men from lower castes. The acquisition of modern education and participation in modern occupations as well as in various urban movements were the major factors behind the prominence of the members of the new urban Bengali elite. The traditional institutions wielding social control such as the joint family and caste were considerably undermined by various aspects of urbanization such as Westernization and the economic independence of the younger members of the family, the physical distance between a person and his family and caste elders, and the physical proximity and increased interactions between people belonging to different



castes and religions in the urban areas. These tendencies were particularly strong in Calcutta which, being a relatively new city, was less burdened with the controls and pressures of traditional society than the old cities like Dacca and Murshidabad.

The contacts with the West produced two important results: first, the formation of various alliances between individuals and groups, for example, between the progressive and orthodox elements within the Hindu community against the Christianization movement and against certain aspects of British social policy; second, the increasing belief in the importance of public opinion and in the concept of equality before the law which led to feelings of dissatisfaction with the existing situation, for instance in the sphere of government jobs, among the urban Bengali elite. There was a growing belief among some that the Government neglected Indian opinion and that various aspects of its policy were discriminatory. It was also felt that social and religious reform and change should be initiated by the people themselves and not by the Government.

Indeed, in spite of the fact that traditionalism was still a strong force in the urban areas of Bengal, several important aspects of the traditional social structure including caste, the position of the elders and that of the women within the family structure, the attitude to extravagant rituals and various socio-religious and domestic practices were undergoing changes as a result of factors associated with urbanization and primarily at the initiative of the progressives among the urban Bengalis. The Bengali Muslim community, however, remained strong in its opposition to the forces of change, mainly because modernization was closely associated with Westernization - a situation which was primarily responsible for their socio-economic degeneration.

The Western-educated urban Bengalis, mostly Hindus and Brāhmas, began to make frequent and effective use of the ideas and techniques which they derived from the West in achieving their purposes. They often responded to contemporary issues with Western arguments based upon liberalism and rationality, developed a highly critical attitude towards their own religion and society resulting in various important socio-religious experiments such as the Brāhma Samāj, began to take a distinct interest in political and economic matters, and used methods and techniques borrowed from the West such as meetings, petitions and circulars in their agitations. But while Westernization was an effective method in introducing reforms, the movements and leaders succeeding most in influencing Bengali society were those using basically Indian ideas and techniques. By the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a marked growth in the popularity of the Bengali language and literature as was recognized even by government authorities and by Christian missionaries. The process of assertion of Bengali and traditional Indian elements was also helped by various factors associated with urbanization such as the development of printing presses in the urban areas. Leaders of society such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar made distinct attempts at aiding the spread of traditional knowledge, for instance, by opening institutions of traditional learning such as the Sanskrit College to non-Brāhmins. Vernacular literature and Press became very important media for the formation of public opinion on various matters including social reform. Even in politics, the Vernacular Press acted as a major medium for the growth and spread of national feelings. In religion and society, while the urban Bengalis on the whole disliked governmental interference with their beliefs and practices, legislation was favoured in matters which were

found to have the sanction of the Sanskritic sources, for example, the remarriage of widows.

Thus, the two major influences upon the ethos of the urban community were: first, the impact of the West; and second, the persistence of traditionalism. The responses to these influences took four major forms - by no means mutually exclusive: first, the enthusiastic acceptance of Western values and practices coupled with the rejection of Indian traditions; second, the strong opposition to Western influences together with the revival of orthodoxy; third, experiments in Westernization or the use of Western arguments and techniques in support of various reforms and movements; and, fourth, experiments in Indianization or the modernization of Indian traditionalism. The ultimate strength of the reformers of Bengali society lay in their success in deriving techniques and, more important, ideas and values from their ancient traditions and adapting these to the changing needs and circumstances of nineteenth century Bengali society.

Table 1

Classification of students of the Presidency College according to their geographical and socio-economic background or the position of their parents, 1861-62: percentage of total student population in the College.

where resident	zamindars talukdars and other persons of independent income	merchants, bankers, banians and brokers	professional persons	government servants and pensioners	others
Calcutta	12	8	3	6	13
Mofussil	23	4	10	8	12
Total	35	12	13	14	26

Source: Calculated from Bengal Administration Report, 1861-62, p.xxii, Statement K3.

Table 2

Classification of students in schools according to the socio-economic background of their parents, 1861-62: percentage of total student population in each category.

Type of school	zamindars and other persons of independent income	government servants	others
English schools (government)	18	52	30
English schools (aided)	16	19	65
vernacular schools (government)	8	16	76
vernacular schools (aided)	15	17	68
schools of other classes	13	15	72
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>66</b>

Source: Calculated from Bengal Administration Report, 1861-62, p.xxii, Table K4.

Table 3

The major sources of municipal income in Calcutta:  
percentage of total municipal income

Income from	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872	1873-74
1. Houserate	71	70	73	75	46	31	29	30	21	20
2. Carriage and Horse Licence	8	8	7	7	5	3	3	3	2	2
3. Registration of Carts and Hackeries	3	3	2	3	2	2	1	2	1	1
4. Licences for Trades and Professions, etc.	18	19	18	15	11	8	7	9	5	6
5. Lighting-rate	-	-	-	-	10	6	6	6	4	5
6. Police-rate	-	-	-	-	14	9	8	8	5	5
7. Water-rate	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	19	11	11

Sources: Calculated from Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1867, p.2; Administration Reports of Calcutta Municipality, 1868 to 1872; Bengal Municipalities Report, 1873-74, Statement 2.

Table 4

The major items of municipal expenditure in Calcutta:  
percentage of total municipal expenditure

Expenditure on	1849	1853	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872	1873-74
1. Police	-	-	10	12	9	8	6	7
2. Conservancy and drainage	3	43	11	25	19	15	14	25
3. Roads	36	15	12	15	11	8	6	10
4. Lighting	14	6	13	9	7	7	5	6
5. Water supply (excluding interest on government loan)	-	6	4	5	6	20	8	14

Source: Calculated from Administration Reports of Calcutta Municipality, 1868 to 1872; Bengal Municipalities Report, 1873-74.

Table 5

Receipts and charges: percentage of Police  
Fund in Calcutta in 1872

Specific items of	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872
<b>Receipts:</b>					
1. Police-rate	72	69	61	62	57
2. Contributions from Government	22	24	22	26	27
3. Contributions from Suburbs	1	1	2	1	2
4. Surplus Additional Constables Fund	2	-	9	1	2
5. Surplus Cattle Fund	-	-	-	2	2
6. Escheats from Deposit Account	-	3	2	2	less than 1
7. Judicial Fines	2	2	3	3	6
8. Judicial Fees	less than 1	less than 1	less than 1	less than 1	less than 1
9. Miscellaneous	less than 1	less than 1	less than 1	2	3
<b>Charges:</b>					
1. Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner	5	6	7	7	6
2. Office Establishment	4	4	4	4	5
3. Conservancy and Licence Establishment	-	2	1	1	2
4. Office Contingencies	less than 1	less than 1	less than 1	less than 1	1
5. Cost of collecting police-rate	2	1	2	2	1
6. Executive Police Force establishment and contingencies	80	82	81	81	81
7. Police Hospital establishment and contingencies	4	4	4	4	3
8. Police Hospital repairs	4	-	less than 1	less than 1	less than 1

Source: Calculated from Administration Report of Calcutta Municipality for 1872.



Table 6

The major items of municipal income and expenditure  
in the Suburbs of Calcutta, 1872-73: percentage of  
total municipal income and expenditure

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Income from

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1. Rates on house, building and land	68
2. Tax on carriages and horses	8
3. Registration of hackeries	2
4. Fees and fines	11
5. Pounds and ferries	1
6. Collection for conservancy work	7
7. Miscellaneous	3

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Expenditure on

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1. General charges including collection	15
2. Police	30
3. Conservancy	15
4. Establishment and repair of roads	23
5. Lighting	6
6. Watering	3
7. Hospital and Vaccination	2
8. Fire-brigade	1
9. Miscellaneous	5

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Source : Calculated from Administration Report of the Municipality of  
the Suburbs of Calcutta for 1872-73.

Table 7

The major items of municipal income and expenditure  
in Calcutta, Dacca and Murshidabad in 1873-74:  
percentage of total municipal income and expenditure

	Calcutta	Dacca	Murshidabad
<b>Income from:</b>			
1. Tax on houses, lands and buildings	20	63	69
2. Tax on horses, carriages and carts, including registration fees	2	8	-
3. Fines and fees	2	less than 1	1
4. Pounds, ferries and tolls	-	20	-
5. Rent of houses, gardens and buildings belonging to the municipalities	1	2	-
6. Other sources, including grants from Provincial Funds	74	6	30
<b>Expenditure on:</b>			
1. Establishment	9	16	6
2. Police	7	21	41
3. Conservancy	25	22	32
4. Roads	10	29	17
5. Buildings	5	-	-
6. Works on public utility including lighting	24	9	1
7. Miscellaneous	20	3	3

Source: Calculated from Bengal Municipalities Report, 1873-74

Table 8

The major items of municipal income and expenditure in Bengal in 1873-74: percentage of total municipal income and expenditure

	Towns under Act XXVI of 1850	Chowk- idari under Act XX of 1856	Municipalities under Act III of 1864			Towns under Act VI of 1868	Munici- palities as a whole
			Suburbs of Cal- cutta	Towns in the inter- ior	Total		
<b>Income from:</b>							
1. Rate upon owners according to the annual value of houses and lands owned	-	-	68	56	62	-	41
2. Tax upon occupiers of holdings	93	89	-	-	-	88	29
3. Tax upon carriages, carts, horses and elephants	3	less than 1	5	6	5	-	4
4. Fines and fees	less than 1	less than 1	2	1	2	less than 1	1
5. Pounds, ferries and tolls	1	3	3	18	11	1	8
6. Rent of houses, gardens and markets belonging to municipalities	less than 1	4	less than 1	4	2	1	2
7. Other sources, including Government Grants	2	3	21	15	18	9	15

## Expenditure on:

1. Establishment	7	11	15	11	13	12	12
2. Police	11	46	24	28	26	42	32
3. Conservancy	14	8	21	17	19	9	15
4. Roads	43	29	24	27	26	26	26
5. Buildings	3	less than 1	-	3	1	2	2
6. Works on public utility	16	3	8	8	8	4	7
7. Miscellaneous and contingent charges	6	2	8	6	7	5	6

Source : Calculated from Bengal Municipalities Report, 1873-74, p.9.

Table 9Number of Pupils in Government Colleges, 1861-1872

Government Colleges	1861	1862	fees in 1862	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	fees in 1868	1871 -72
	Rs-as-p			Rs-as-p							
Presidency College	209	227	10-0-0	289	360	323	301	271	292	12-0-0	399
Sanskrit College	-	-	-	16	22 (Rs.2 fees)	26	20	24	27	3-0-0	26
Hooghly College	79	66	4-0-0	65	82	133	141	134	162	5-0-0	138
Dacca College	76	138	3-8-0	128	111	129	110	123	126	5-0-0	103
Krishnagar College	42	38	4-0-0	44	47	61	74	71	83	5-0-0	105
Berhampur College	16	26	3-8-0	32	48 (Rs.4 fees)	77	74	63	71	5-0-0	33

Sources: Bengal Administration Reports, 1860-61 to 1871-72.

Table 10Number of Students in Aided Colleges, 1866-1871-72

Aided Colleges	1866	Fees in 1866	1867	1868	Fees in 1868	1871-72
		Rs-as-p			Rs-as-p	
Doveton College	23	12-0-0	30	25	12-0-0	-
Free Church Institution	126	3-0-0 and 3-8-0	151	97	4-0-0	122
St. Xavier's College	14	8-0-0	20	40	8-0-0	30
General Assembly's College	89	3-0-0	111	102	4-0-0	70
Cathedral Mission College	87	3-0-0	65	128	4-0-0	100
London Mission College	-	-	32	43	4-0-0	40

Sources: Bengal Administration Reports, 1865-66 to 1871-72.

Table 11

Classification of under-graduates in Government Colleges according to the social position of their parents, 1867-68: percentage of total student population in each college

Government Colleges	Zamindars talukdars and other persons of independent income	merchants, bankers, banians, etc.	professional persons	government servants and pensioners	shop-keepers	others
Presidency College	26	17	11	26	1	19
Sanskrit College	26	-	19	22	-	33
Hooghly College	32	5	25	25	6	7
Dacca College	34	4	10	38	-	14
Krishnanagar College	38	6	16	17	1	22
Berhampur College	22	6	17	25	-	30
Calcutta Madrassa	-	-	-	100	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>

Source: Bengal Administration Report, 1867-68, p.102.

Table 12

Classification of under-graduates in Colleges aided by Government according to the social position of their parents, 1867-68: percentage of total student population in each college

Aided Colleges	zamindars talukdars and other persons of independent income	merchants, bankers, banians, etc.	professional persons	government servants and pensioners	shop-keepers	others
Doveton College	16	8	12	28	-	36
St. Xavier's College	13	15	20	37	-	15
Free Church Institution	19	13	12	26	3	27
General Assembly's College	17	19	9	16	2	37
Cathedral Mission College	30	13	6	23	1	27
London Mission College	60	2	16	12	9	-
Total	25	14	11	22	2	26

Source: Bengal Administration Report, 1867-68, p.105.

## APPENDIX I

MUNICIPALITIES, TOWNSHIPS AND CHOWKIDARI UNIONS,  
IN URBAN AREAS WITH MORE THAN 5,000 POPULATION  
IN 1873-74<sup>1</sup>

City or town and population	Location			Type of Government and Act under which formed	Municipal income and expenditure		Membership			
	Region	Division	District		Income and tax per head	Expenditure	Euro-pean	Native	Offi-cial	Non-offi-cial
Agarpara (26,801)	Central	Presi-dency	Twenty-four par-ganas	Township Act VI of 1868	Rs-as- P 11,247 (0- 6-11)	12,777	1	5	1	5
Baghjala (9,718)	Central	Presi-dency	Twenty-four par-ganas	Township Act VI of 1868	3,194 (0- 5- 0)	2,159	1	5	1	5
Baidyabati (13,332)	Western	Burdwan	Hooghly	Township Act VI of 1868	3,160 (0- 3- 9)	3,158	1	7	1	7
Bali (8,529)	Western	Burdwan	Burdwan	Chowkidari Union Act XX of 1856	1,739 (0- 3- 2)	1,792	-	5	-	5
Bankura (16,794)	Western	Burdwan	Bankura	Township Act VI of 1868	7,561 (0- 6- 8)	7,673	3	6	3	6
Bansberia (7,861)	Western	Burdwan	Hooghly	Township Act VI of 1868	2,455 (0- 4-11)	2,231	-	3	1	2
Barasat (11,822)	Central	Presi-dency	Twenty-four par-ganas	Township Act VI of 1868	3,813 (0- 5- 0)	4,638	1	10	2	9
Barisal (8,873)	Eastern	Dacca	Bakharganj	Township Act VI of 1868	11,922 (0- 9- 4)	9,206	5	10	5	10
Barrackpore (9,593)	Central	Presi-dency	Twenty-four par-ganas	Chowkidari Union Act of 1856	2,104 (0- 3- 6)	2,116	2	3	2	3

<sup>1</sup>Source: Bengal Municipalities Report 1873-74.



City or town and population	Location			Type of Government and Act under which formed	Municipal income and expenditure		Membership			
	Region	Division	District		Income and tax per head	Expenditure	Euro-pean	Native	Official	Non-official
Rs-as- P										
Basirhat (12,105)	Central	Presidency	Twenty Four Parganas	Township Act VI of 1868	2,962 (0-3-10)	3,708	-	8	2	6
Berhampur (27,110)	Central	Rajshahi	Murshidabad	Township Act VI of 1868	17,192 (0-6-11)	18,023	7	11	5	13
Bhadreswar (7,417)	Western	Burdwan	Hooghly	Township Act VI of 1868	3,375 (0-7-2)	3,344	1	6	1	6
Bishnupur (18,047)	Western	Burdwan	Bankura	Township Act VI of 1868	2,835 (0-2-5)	2,064	3	6	3	6
Brahmanberia (12,364)	Eastern	Chittagong	Tri-pura	Township Act VI of 1868	3,626 (0-5-0)	4,474	-	13	5	8
Burdwan (31,326)	Western	Burdwan	Burdwan	Municipality Act III of 1864	62,164 (1-5-9)	67,010	7	9	8	8
Calcutta (447,601)	Central	Presidency	Twenty Four Parganas	Municipality Act VI of 1863	45,06,129 (5-0-10)	39,67,556	74	56	24	106
Suburbs of Calcutta or suburban (257,149)	Central	Presidency	Twenty Four Parganas	Municipality Act III of 1864	359,061 (1-0-1)	3,15,061	13	26	12	27
North Suburban Town (27,262)	Central	Presidency	Twenty Four Parganas	Township Act VI of 1868	13,743 (0-6-11)	17,120	3	12	2	13
South Suburban Town (62,632)	Central	Presidency	Twenty Four Parganas	Township Act VI of 1868	20,342 (0-4-11)	24,523	2	14	2	14
Chandrakona (14,576)	Western	Burdwan	Midnapur	Township Act VI of 1868	2,805 (0-3-0)	2,963	-	6	-	6

City or town and population	Location			Type of Government and Act under which formed	Municipal income and expenditure			Membership		
	Region	Division	District		Income and tax per head	Expenditure	Euro-pean	Native	Official	Non-official
Rs-as- P										
Chittagong (20,604)	Eastern	Chittagong	Chittagong	Municipality Act III of 1864	48,259 (over..7)	20,737	9	9	11	7
Dacca (69,212)	Eastern	Dacca	Dacca	Municipality Act III of 1864	61,930 (0-10-1)	68,125	8	15	7	16
Dainhat (7,248)	Western	Burdwan	Burdwan	Township Act VI of 1868	3,346 (0-7-2)	4,448	-	7	1	6
Dinajpur (13,042)	Central	Raj-Shahi	Dinajpur	Township Act VI of 1868	8,880 (0-9-7)	9,767	7	8	6	9
Dum Dum (5,179)	Central	Presidency	Twenty Four parganas	Chowkidari Union Act XX of 1856	948 (0-2-11)	948	1	5	1	5
English Bazar (12,859)	Central	Raj-Shahi	Maldah	Township Act VI of 1868	3,150 (0-3-5)	3,224	1	8	3	6
Faridpur (8,593)	Eastern	Dacca	Faridpur	Township Act VI of 1868	4,503 (0-6-7)	3,728	2	5	5	2
Ghatal (15,492)	Western	Burdwan	Midnapur	Township Act VI of 1868	4,120 (0-4-3)	3,103	-	5	4	1
Gobardanga (6,951)	Central	Presidency	Twenty Four parganas	Township Act VI of 1868	3,347 (0-7-7)	3,290	-	10	2	8
Howrah (97,784)	Western	Burdwan	Hooghly	Municipality Act III of 1864	1,67,456 (1-4-6)	1,51,188	-	-	-	-
Hooghly and Chinsurah (34,761)	Western	Burdwan	Hooghly	Municipality Act III of 1864	30,737 (0-9-1)	31,290	8	13	8	3

City or town and population	Location			Type of Government and Act under which formed	Membership					
	Region	Division	District		Income and tax per head	Expenditure	Euro-pean	Native	Official	Non-official
Jamalpur (14,312)	Eastern	Dacca	Mymensingh	Township Act VI of 1868	3,548 (0-3-10)	3,095	1	7	4	4
Jangipur (11,361)	Central	Rajshahi	Murshidabad	Township Act VI of 1868	4,322 (0-6-0)	3,944	-	7	1	6
Jaynagar (7,772)	Central	Presidency	Twenty Four Parganas	Township Act VI of 1868	2,319 (0-4-8)	4,008	-	11	1	10
Jehana-bad (13,246)	Western	Burdwan	Burdwan	Chowkidari Union Act XX of 1856	2,160 (0-2-6)	5,631	-	5	-	5
Jessore (8,152)	Central	Presidency	Jessore	Municipality Act III of 1864	11,866 (0-14-4)	12,624	3	11	8	6
Kadihati (5,680)	Central	Presidency	Twenty Four Parganas	Township Act VI of 1868	1,563 (0-4-1)	1,393	1	4	1	4
Kalarua (5,937)	Central	Presidency	Twenty Four Parganas	Township Act VI of 1868	1,288 (0-3-4)	759	-	7	1	6
Kalinga (15,687)	Central	Presidency	Twenty Four Parganas	Township Act VI of 1868	3,887 (0-3-11)	3,904	-	12	2	10
Kandi (12,016)	Central	Rajshahi	Murshidabad	Township Act VI of 1868	4,347 (0-5-8)	6,412	-	12	1	11
Katwa (7,959)	Western	Burdwan	Burdwan	Township Act VI of 1868	4,636 (0-9-2)	5,707	-	8	2	6

City or town and population	Location			Type of Government and Act under which formed	Municipal income and expenditure			Membership		
	Region	Division	District		Income and tax per head	Expenditure	Euro-pean	Native	Official	Non-official
					Rs-	as-	P			
Kishor-ganj (13,637)	Eastern	Dacca	Mymen-singh	Township Act VI of 1868	2,498 (0- 2- 11)	2,195	-	11	4	7
Krishna-anagar (26,750)	Central	Presi-dency	Twenty-four par-ganas	Municipality Act III of 1864	20,904 (0- 8- 4)	21,542	7	8	10	5
Kumar-khali (13,637)	Central	Presi-dency	Nadiya	Township Act VI of 1868	2,582 (0- 7- 1)	2,138	1	6	1	6
Kumilla (12,948)	Eastern	Chit-ta-gong	Tripura	Municipality Act III of 1864	10,671 (Over 11)	11,458	7	8	6	9
Kushtia (9,245)	Central	Presi-dency	Nadiya	Township Act VI of 1868	3,007 (0- 4- 3)	2,005	2	5	1	6
Maldah (5,262)	Central	Raj-shahi	Maldah	Township Act VI of 1868	1,762 (0- 5- 0)	1,570	1	9	3	7
Manik-ganj (11,542)	Eastern	Dacca	Dacca	Chowki-dari Union Act XX of 1856	3,555 (0- 5- 0)	4,675	-	10	-	10
Meherpur (5,562)	Central	Presi-dency	Twenty-four par-ganas	Township Act VI of 1868	1,902 (0- 5- 4)	2,005	-	12	5	7
Midna-pur (31,217)	Western	Burd-wan	Midna-pur	Municipality Act III of 1864	15,146 (0- 6- 8)	14,782	6	6	6	6
Murshi-dabad (46,182)	Central	Raj-shahi	Murshi-dabad	Municipality Act VI of 1868	31,321 (0- 7- 5)	26,449	6	9	5	10

City or town and population	Location			Type of Government and Act under which formed	Municipal income and expenditure		Membership			
	Region	Division	District		Income and tax per head	Expenditure	Euro-pean	Native	Offi-cial	Non-offi-cial
					(Rs-as- P)					
Mymen-singh or Nasirabad (8,253)	Eastern	Dacca	Mymen-singh	Township Act VI of 1868	4,361 (0- 7- 9)	3,456	5	9	4	10
Nadiya (8,863)	Central	Presi-dency	Nadiya	Township Act VI of 1868	3,587 (0- 6- 3)	2,964	1	8	1	8
Naihati (23,730)	Central	Presi-dency	Twenty-Four Far-ganas	Township Act VI of 1868	5,973 (0- 3-11)	1,568	1	10	2	9
Narayan-ganj and Madan-ganj (10,911)	Eastern	Dacca	Dacca	Township Act VI of 1868	6,564 (0- 7- 4)	7,975	2	5	-	7
Nator (9,674)	Central	Raj-shahi	Raj-shahi	Township Act VI of 1868	4,864 (0- 8- 0)	4,660	-	12	4	8
Nawab-ganj (16,525)	Central	Presi-dency	Twenty-Four Far-ganas	Township Act VI of 1868	6,386 (0- 5-11)	7,004	1	5	1	5
Pabna (15,730)	Central	Raj-shahi	Pabna	Township Act VI of 1868	5,789 (0- 5- 2)	6,548	3	8	3	8
Rampur Boalia (22,291)	Central	Raj-shahi	Raj-shahi	Township Act VI of 1868	11,104 (0- 6- 5)	14,968	6	12	7	11
Ranaghat (8,871)	Central	Presi-dency	Nadiya	Municipality Act III of 1864	9,368 (0- 9- 3)	7,847	4	10	5	9
Rangpur (14,845)	Western	Raj-shahi	Rangpur	Township Act VI of 1868	7,309 (0- 6- 8)	9,230	5	16	7	14
Raniganj (7,845)	Western	Burdwan	Burdwan	Township Act VI of 1868	4,724 (0- 9- 6)	10,086	7	5	2	10

City or town and population	Location			Type of Government and Act under which formed	Municipal income and expenditure		Membership			
	Region	Division	District		Income and tax per head	Expenditure	Euro-pean	Native	Official	Non-official
Santipur (28,635)	Central	Presidency	Nadiya	Municipality Act III of 1864	14,603 (0-6-4)	13,501	5	15	6	14
Satkira (8,979)	Central	Presidency	Twenty-Four Parganas	Township Act VI of 1868	2,629 (0-4-6)	1,779	-	8	2	6
Serampore (24,440)	Western	Burdwan	Hooghly	Municipality Act III of 1864	25,655 (0-10-7)	24,061	11	14	13	12
Shambazar (14,696)	Western	Burdwan	Burdwan	Chowkidari Union Act XX of 1856	2,622 (0-2-9)	4,502	-	10	-	10
Sherpur (8,015)	Eastern	Dacca	Mymensingh	Township Act VI of 1868	2,991 (0-5-11)	2,311	1	8	3	6
Suri (9,001)	Western	Burdwan	Birbhum	Township Act VI of 1868	4,625 (0-6-3)	6,861	6	9	6	9
Syedpur (6,324)	Eastern	Dacca	Faridpur	Chowkidari Union Act XX of 1856	885 (0-2-1)	809	-	9	-	9
Sylhet (16,846)	Eastern	Dacca	Sylhet	Township Act VI of 1868	7,770 (0-4-6)	6,203	5	11	5	11
Taki (5,261)	Central	Presidency	Twenty-Four Parganas	Township Act VI of 1868	1,826 (0-5-5)	3,064	-	9	2	7
Tamluk (5,849)	Western	Burdwan	Midnapur	Township Act VI of 1868	2,867 (0-7-9)	1,935	1	11	7	5

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Appendix II

SOME NINETEENTH CENTURY BENGALI  
WORKS BASED ON SOCIAL THEMES

Works deploring the miserable condition of Bengali women:

Guru Prasanna Bandyopadhyaya, Bou Haoā Eki Dāy, Gañjanāy Frān Yāy /The life of a young wife is miserable and tormented - a play/. Calcutta, Ben era 1268 (1861-62).

Kailash Basini Debi, Hindu Mahilā-ganer Hīnābasthā /The miserable condition of Hindu women/. Calcutta, 1863.

Dina Bandhu Mitra, Sadhabār Ekādasi /The hardships of a married woman/. Calcutta, 1866.

Keshab Chandra Sen, Etaddesīya Strī-jātir Unnati /proposals regarding the improvement of the women of this country/. Calcutta, 1871.

Works describing the bad effects of Kulinism:

Narayan Chattaraj Gunanidhi, Kali Kutūhala Nāmak Grantha /a book entitled "the Wonders of the Kali Age/. Calcutta, Ben era 1260 (1853-54).

Ram Narayan Tarkaratna, Kulīn Kula-sarbasya /The obsession with lineage among the Kulins/. Calcutta, 1854.

Krishna Kumari Dasi, Citta Bilāsinī /pleasing to the heart - a work on the miseries of Kulīn women/. Calcutta, 1857.

Narayan Chattaraj Gunanidhi, Kali Koutuk Nātak /The fun of the Kali Age - a drama/. Calcutta, Saka era 1780 (1858-59).

Rash Bihari Mukhopadhyaya, Ballālī-Samsodhinī /The reform of the Ballāl system of Kulinism/. Dacca, 1868.

Rash Bihari Mukhopadhyaya, Koulīnya Samsodhinī /The reform of Kulinism/. Dacca, 1871.

Dina Bandhu Mitra, Jānī Bārik: Prabasan /The abode of sons-in-law: a satire/. Calcutta, 1872.

Works on the defects of the Hindu marriage system:

Kashi Nath Dasgupta, Kanyā-pan Bināsikā /How to destroy the dowry system/. Calcutta, 1859.

Shyama Chandra Srimani, Bālyodbāha Nāṭak /a drama on child-marriage/. Calcutta, 1860.

Madhu Sudan Datta, Buḍo Śālikar Ghāḍe Roṅ /plumes on the neck of an old bird/. Calcutta, 1860.

Guru Prasanna Bandyopadhyaya, Punarbibāha Nāṭak /a drama on the custom of second marriages/. Calcutta, Ben era 1269 (1862-63).

Naphar Chandra Pal, Kanyā-bikray Nāṭak /a drama on the practice of selling girls in marriage/. Calcutta, 1864.

Dina Bandhu Mitra, Biye Pāglā Buḍo /an old man madly eager to get married/. Calcutta, 1866.

Ram Narayan Tarkaratna, Nava Nāṭak /The new drama/. Calcutta, 1867.

Anonymous. Asurodbāha Nāṭak /a drama on the "unnatural marriages" among Rāḡhiya Brāhmins/. Calcutta, 1869.

Kali Prasanna Ghosh, Samāj Sōdhiṅī /social reform/. Dacca, 1872.

Works criticizing drunkenness:

Pyari Chand Mitra (Tek Chand Thakur), Mad Khōḍ Bado Dāy, Jāt Thākār ki Upāy? /Drinking is a great burden, how can one retain caste?/. 2nd edition. Calcutta, 1859.

Anonymous. Bujhle Kinē? Ben era 1273 (1866-67).

Pyari Charan Sarkar, Surā-paner Phal /The effects of drinking liquor/. Calcutta, 1868.

Aghor Chandra Das. Ei Ek Majā /This (drinking) is a pleasure/. Calcutta, 1872.



## APPENDIX III

SOME EXAMPLES OF "VERNACULAR CHRISTIAN LITERATURE"

Selections from the Bible and general works on religion:

Rakhal Das Haldar, Yīsu-pranīta Hitopades /advices of Jesus, compiled from Gospels by Raja Ram Mohan Ray/. Calcutta, 1859.

Ram Kanta Das, Kinan Deser Brittānta /account of a land mentioned in the Bible/. Calcutta, 1867.

Ganga Charan Das, Bali-dāner Brittānta /account of sacrifices/. Calcutta, 1867.

Ram Krishna Kabiraj, Dharma Pustak Pāthopakāra /benefit of reading religious books/. Calcutta, 1871.

Church history and polemics:

Mahesh Chandra Mandal, Yihudi-diger Lokder Brittānta /account of Jewish people/. Calcutta, 1867.

Anonymous, Muhammādī Dharmer Bisaye Kathā-bārtā /dialogue on Islam/. Bhowanipur, 1870.

Works on doctrine and homiletic:

The Rev. Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyaya, Upades Kathā /sermons/. Calcutta, 1840.

The Rev. Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyaya, Satyasthāpan o Mithyā-nāsan /the establishment of truth and the display of falsehood/. Calcutta, 1841.

Umesh Chandra Chattopadhyaya, Hriday Darpan /mirror of the heart/. Calcutta, 1864.

The Rev. Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyaya, Saddarsan Saṅbād /true philosophy/. Calcutta, 1867.

Anonymous, Satya Āsray /true refuge/. Midnapur, 1870.

Anonymous, Trānārthīr Ukti /statements of a seeker after truth/. Bhowanipur, 1871.

Ishan Chandra De, Paralok /after-life/. Calcutta, 1871.

Waris Sarkar, Śeytāner Darpa-cūrṇa /downfall of Satan/. Calcutta, 1872 (in verse).

Nil Ratan Haldar, Sarbānoda-Tarāṅginī /discourse on joy/. Calcutta, 1872.

## Liturgies, hymn-books and catechisms:

Gīta Pustak /book of songs/, Calcutta, 1867.

Daiba Bhajaner Anukarma /book of worship/, Calcutta, 1867.

Khristīya Dharma-nidhi /The Christian religion, translations from the Book of Common Prayer/, Calcutta, 1868.

Dibasik Prārthanā /daily prayer/, Dacca, 1868.

Śisūdigar Dharma Gīta /hymns for children/, Calcutta, 1869, 1874.

H.C. Dutt (Datta) (editor), Dharma Sangīta /religious songs/, Calcutta, 1870.

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Yīśur Kāche Kīsa /come to Jesus/, Midnapur, 1867.

H.C. Mullens, Bisva Bijay /faith and victory/, Calcutta, 1867.

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Anonymous, Soudāminī /a dialogue between a mother and her daughter/, Bhowanipur, 1872 (2nd edition).

Anonymous, Basanta (a tale for "Native Christian women"), Calcutta, 1873.

GLOSSARY

<u>abhi-jāt</u>	= aristocrat
<u>ācārya</u>	= priest, preceptor
<u>ādarsa</u>	= ideal, model
<u>a-Hindu</u>	= non-Hindu
<u>adhyapak</u>	= professor
<u>ādhyātmik abhi-jātya</u>	= spiritual aristocracy
<u>ādhyātmikā</u>	= spirituality
<u>ādya-sraddhā</u>	= ceremony performed after death
<u>amān-i-awwal</u>	= the security and religious status which Muslims enjoy under rulers of their own faith
<u>amitrākṣar chanda</u>	= blank verse
<u>āndolan</u>	= movement
<u>antahpur</u>	= inner household
<u>antahpur stri-sikṣā</u>	= home education for women
<u>antahpurikā</u>	= resident of inner quarters of household
<u>antyeṣṭi-kriyā</u>	= funeral ceremony
<u>anuṣṭhān</u>	= ritual
<u>anuṣṭhān-priya</u>	= ritual loving
<u>apāṅkteya</u>	= removed from eating lines outcaste
<u>artha-koulinya</u>	= economic superiority
<u>a-sāstriya</u>	= not approved by the Scriptures
<u>asavarna-bibāna</u>	= inter-caste marriage
<u>babu</u>	= gentleman, fashionable man without any fixed job or purpose

<u>bahiṣkār</u>	= sending out, excommunication
<u>bahu-bibāha</u>	= polygamy
<u>baidha</u>	= legal
<u>bāla-bidhabā</u>	= child-widow
<u>bālya-bibāha</u>	= child-marriage
<u>bāṅ-phōḍā</u>	= piercing with rod, a ritual connected with the Hindu festival of <u>Charak</u>
<u>bara-mānuṣ</u>	= the rich
<u>bāro-yāri</u>	= cooperative
<u>bhadra</u>	= gentle
<u>bhadralok</u>	= gentlemen
<u>bhadra-paribar</u>	= gentle family
<u>bhadra-samāj</u>	= gentle society
<u>bibāha</u>	= marriage
<u>bidesī</u>	= foreign, alien
<u>bidesī prathā</u>	= foreign custom
<u>bidhabā-bibāha</u>	= widow-marriage
<u>bijātiya</u>	= alien
<u>bilāti</u>	= English/Western
<u>Brahma</u>	= God
<u>Brahma-niṣṭha</u>	= devoted to Brahma
<u>Brāhma</u>	= follower of Brahma, member of Brāhma Samāj
<u>Brāhmanattva</u>	= the essence of being a Brāhmaṇ
<u>Brāhmikā</u>	= Brāhma lady
<u>byasthā-patra</u>	= sanctioning document

<u>calit bhāṣa</u>	= spoken language
<u>catuṣpāthī</u>	= Sanskrit school
<u>celā</u>	= fellower
<u>Charak (properly, Caṣṭak)</u>	= Hindu festival
<u>cheledharā</u>	= kidnapper
<u>cheledharā phāṇḍ</u>	= kidnapping trap
<u>choṭalok</u>	= low people
<u>cina-baidhabya</u>	= eternal widowhood
<u>dal</u>	= faction
<u>dalapati</u>	= leader of a faction
<u>dār-al-ḥārb</u>	= land of warfare
<u>dār-al-Islam</u>	= land of Islam
<u>dāsī</u>	= slave, maid-servant
<u>deśācār</u>	= customs of the land
<u>deśīya</u>	= national
<u>dhanādhyā</u>	= rich man
<u>dhanīlok</u>	= rich people
<u>dharma-bhāṣa</u>	= religious language
<u>dharmopadeś</u>	= religious instruction
<u>Durgā Pūjā</u>	= worship of Goddess Durgā, the Mother Goddess
<u>edu-dal</u>	= educated community
<u>ekāṇna-bartitā</u>	= the joint family system
<u>Gangā-yātrā</u>	= the custom of carrying dying Hindus to the banks of the River Ganges
<u>Gayatrī Mantra</u>	= ancient Sanskrit prayer
<u>ghāt</u>	= action, blow
<u>ghāṭ</u>	= embankment
<u>gōḍa</u>	= orthodox

<u>gōḍā-dal</u>	= orthodox community
<u>gorā</u>	= white/British
<u>gop̄hī</u>	= social group
<u>gun</u>	= merit
<u>gun-bhed</u>	= distinctions in merit
<u>Hindu-samāj</u>	= Hindu society/community
<u>Hindu Śāstra-sammata</u>	= approved by the Hindu Scriptures
<u>Hinduani</u>	= Hindu way of behaviour
<u>Hinduttva</u>	= the essence of being a Hindu
<u>homa</u>	= sacrifice
<u>ijtihād</u>	= the tradition
<u>Ingrājī-walā</u>	= English-educated
<u>isat</u>	= slightly
<u>Īsvar</u>	= God
<u>Īsvar-pratyādiṣṭa</u>	= revealed by God
<u>Īsvarāvatār</u>	= incarnation of God
<u>jāta-karma</u>	= ceremonies performed after birth
<u>jāti</u>	= race, caste
<u>jāti-bhay</u>	= caste fear
<u>jāti-bhed</u>	= caste distinctions
<u>jāti-bibhed</u>	= caste distinctions
<u>jāti-chyūta</u>	= outcaste
<u>jātiya</u>	= national
<u>jātiya ātma-nirbharatā</u>	= national self-reliance
<u>jātiya bhāṣā</u>	= national language
<u>jātiya gourab</u>	= national pride
<u>jātiya nirbharatā</u>	= national self-reliance
<u>jātiya sāhas</u>	= national courage
<u>jātyābhinān</u>	= caste pride
<u>kabi-gān</u>	= poetry sessions

<u>kāncā</u>	= mud-built; temporary
<u>kanyā-bikray</u>	= practice of selling daughters
<u>kanyā-dān</u>	= ceremony of giving away the bride
<u>khāl</u>	= canal
<u>khemtā</u>	= song and dance routine
<u>Khrīstīān dal</u>	= Christian group
<u>kīrtan</u>	= religious singing
<u>kritavidya</u>	= educated, cultured man
<u>kṛitya</u>	= ritual
<u>Koulīnya</u>	= Kulinism
<u>Koulīnya-prathā</u>	= the Kulīn system
<u>Kulīn</u>	= upper caste
<u>kutumba</u>	= relative
<u>lok</u>	= people
<u>lok-yukti</u>	= common reasoning
<u>loukikācār</u>	= socio-domestic rituals
<u>madhyabitta</u>	= middle class
<u>madhya mābāsthā</u>	= middle income/position
<u>madhyam śrenī</u>	= middle class
<u>mahā sabhā</u>	= great meeting
<u>mahālā</u>	= locality
<u>mahāsaya</u>	= gentleman
<u>mahātma</u>	= great soul, great man
<u>mandir</u>	= temple
<u>māngalik-chinha</u>	= auspicious sign
<u>mānya</u>	= respectable man
<u>masī-jībikā</u>	= working with pen, white- collared job

<u>mātri-bhāṣā</u>	= mother language
<u>mleccha</u>	= followers of an alien religion
<u>nagar sankīrtan</u>	= singing in praise of God in the streets of the city
<u>nām-keran</u>	= name-giving ceremony
<u>nara-pūjā</u>	= the worship of men
<u>navya</u>	= modern, youth
<u>navya abhijāt</u>	= the new aristocrat
<u>navya dal</u>	= modernists
<u>navya sampradāya</u>	= new/progressive community
<u>navya tantra</u>	= youth/modernists
<u>nīcu-jāt</u>	= low caste
<u>nīl-hāngāmā</u>	= indigo troubles
<u>padri</u>	= Christian missionary
<u>paitā</u>	= sacred thread
<u>pakā</u>	= brick-built, solid
<u>pāl</u>	= gang
<u>pālki</u>	= enclosed carriage
<u>pallī</u>	= locality
<u>pan-prathā</u>	= dowry system
<u>panchāyat</u> (properly, <u>pañcāyat</u> )	= committee of five
<u>pandit</u>	= scholar
<u>para</u>	= locality
<u>param bandhu</u>	= great friend
<u>pardā</u>	= seclusion of women
<u>pardānasīn</u>	= secluded
<u>paritrātā</u>	= saviour
<u>pāthsālā</u>	= primary school
<u>patita</u>	= fallen
<u>peuttalik pūjā</u>	= idol worship



<u>pouttalikatā</u>	= idolatry
<u>prācīn sampradāya</u>	= old/conservative community
<u>prācīnatya</u>	= ancient nature
<u>pradhān</u>	= leader, foremost
<u>pradhān ācārya</u>	= chief preceptor/priest
<u>prajā</u>	= subject
<u>praṇām</u>	= saluting by touching feet or bowing low
<u>pratham śreṇī</u>	= upper class
<u>prāthamik</u>	= early
<u>pratighāt</u>	= reaction
<u>pratijñā-patra</u>	= note of promise
<u>pratyādiṣṭa</u>	= ordered, revealed
<u>prāyascitta</u>	= atonement ceremony
<u>pūjā</u>	= worship, religious festival
<u>pūrṇa-kūmbha</u>	= water-filled pot - an auspicious Hindu sign
<u>Rāj-bidhi</u>	= official legislation
<u>reksansīlatā</u>	= conservatism
<u>ṛṣi</u>	= sage
<u>sabhā</u>	= association
<u>sabhya-samāj</u>	= civilized society
<u>sādhāraṇ</u>	= common, common people
<u>sādhu bhāṣā</u>	= literary language
<u>sagotra</u>	= belonging to the same clan
<u>saha-sarāṇ</u>	= the custom of the widow dying with her husband
<u>śalagrām śilā</u>	= sacred stone symbolizing Vishnu
<u>samāj</u>	= society

<u>samāj-bhay</u>	= social fear
<u>samāj-saṅskār</u>	= social reform
<u>sambhrānta</u>	= aristocratic
<u>saṅskār</u>	= beliefs and traditions
<u>sampradāya</u>	= community, group
<u>Śānti-jal</u>	= sacred water of peace
<u>Saptapadī</u>	= the custom of the couple walking seven steps together in a Hindu marriage
<u>Sarasvatī Pūjā</u>	= worship of Goddess Sarasvatī, the Goddess of learning
<u>śasan</u>	= control
<u>Śāstra</u>	= Hindu Scriptures
<u>Śāstra-sammata</u>	= approved by the Hindu scriptures
<u>Śāstra-siddha</u>	= approved by the Scriptures
<u>satī</u>	= widow who burnt with her husband
<u>satī-dāha</u>	= the custom of burning widows with their husbands
<u>sharafatnamah</u>	= certificate of respectability
<u>shirk</u>	= polytheism
<u>sipāhī</u>	= sepoy
<u>śikṣita</u>	= educated man
<u>śikṣita samāj</u>	= educated community
<u>śloka</u>	= rhythmic couplet in Sanskrit
<u>śrāddha</u>	= ceremony after death
<u>śreṇī</u>	= class
<u>srot</u>	= current
<u>strī-svādhīnatā</u>	= female emancipation
<u>surajani</u>	= good night
<u>susikṣita</u>	= well-educated man

<u>svadesābhimān</u>	= national pride
<u>svadēśi</u>	= national
<u>svatantra jāti</u>	= separate race
<u>svayambar</u>	= ceremony of the bride choosing her own husband
<u>śvet</u>	= white/European
<u>śvetānginī</u>	= white/European woman
<u>tauhid</u>	= unity of God
<u>tritiya-srenī</u>	= third/lower class
<u>tulsi</u>	= a plant sacred to the Vaishnavas
<u>ucca-sikṣā</u>	= higher education
<u>ūcu-jāt</u>	= upper caste
<u>unnata</u>	= advanced, progressive
<u>upabīta</u>	= sacred thread
<u>upadharma</u>	= semi-religious rules of conduct
<u>upāsana-pranālī</u>	= system of worship
<u>upācārya</u>	= assistant priest/preceptor
<u>Vaidik-bākya</u>	= Vedic sayings
<u>vamsabālī</u>	= genealogy
<u>varna</u>	= colour, caste
<u>yajnopabīta</u>	= sacrificial thread
<u>yātrā</u>	= open theatre
<u>yavan</u>	= non-Hindu
<u>yug-ultāno</u>	= epoch-turning, epoch-making
<u>yukti</u>	= reason
<u>zenānā</u>	= woman, inner quarters of the house where women lived in traditional families

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475

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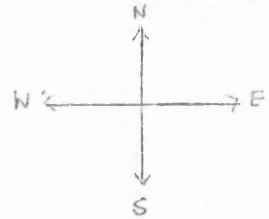
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MAP 1: BENGAL PROPER AT THE TIME OF THE CENSUS OF 1872, SHOWING THE MAJOR CITIES AND TOWNS



SCALE : 64 MILES = 1 INCH

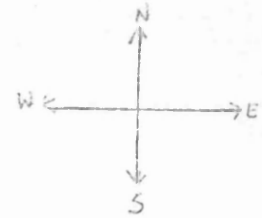


KEY TO THE STATES AND DISTRICTS :

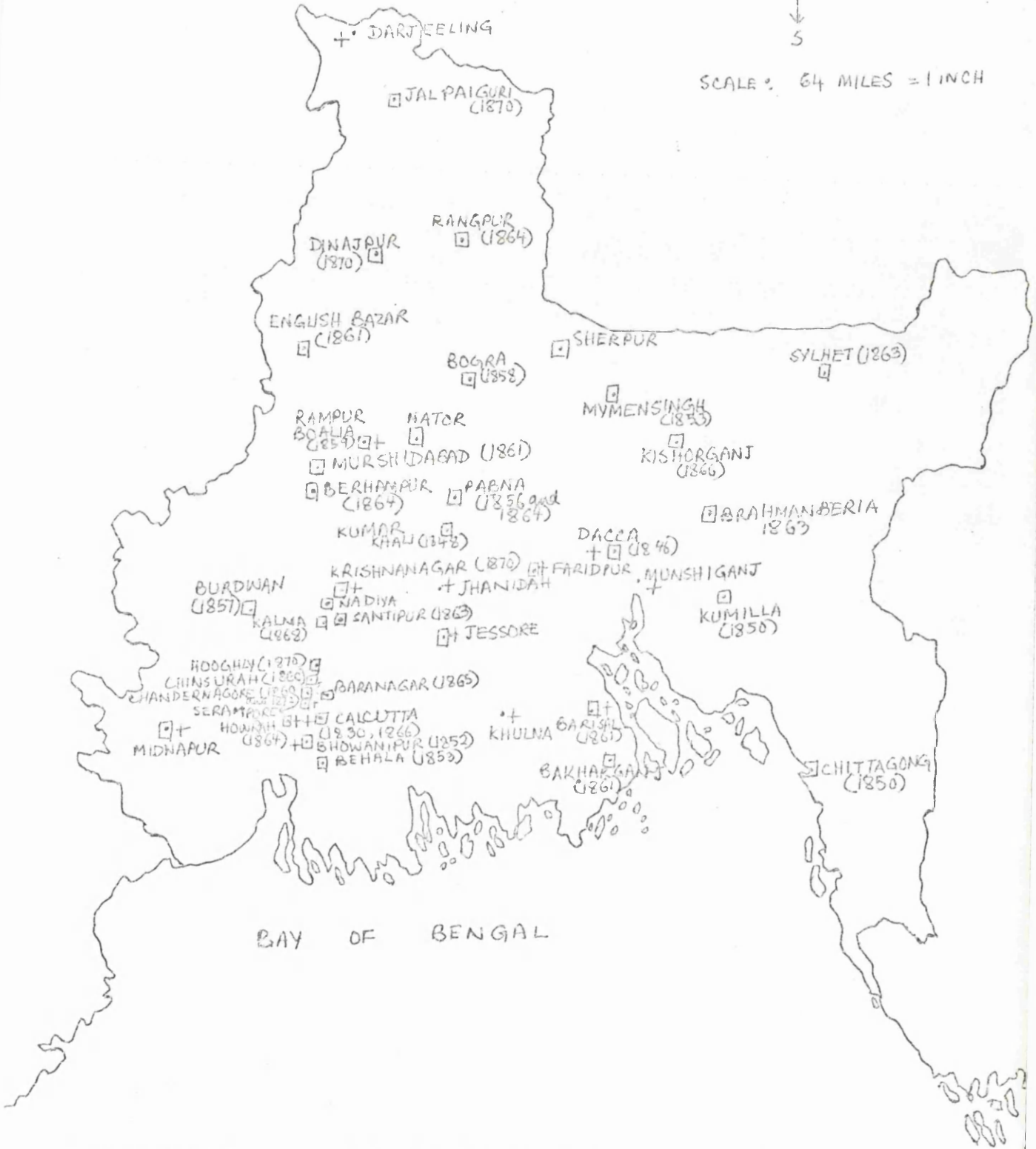
- 1. BURDWAN . 2. BANKURA. 3. BIRBHUM. 4. MIDNAPUR.
- 5. HOOGHLY WITH HOWRAH. 6. TWENTY FOUR PARGANAS.
- 7. NADIYA. 8. JESSORE. 9. MURSHIDABAD. 10. DINAJPUR
- 11. MALDAH. 12. RAJSHAHI. 13. RANGPUR. 14. PABNA.
- 15. BOGIRA. 16. DARJEELING. 17. JALPAIGURI. 18. KUCH BIHAR.
- STATE. 19. DACCA. 20. FARIDPUR. 21. BAKHARGANJ.
- 22. MYMENSINGH. 23. SYLHET. 24. CACHAR. 25. CHITTAGONG.
- 26. NOAKHALI. 27. TRIPURA. 28. CHITTAGONG HILLS. 29. TRIPURA HILLS.



MAJOR CENTRES

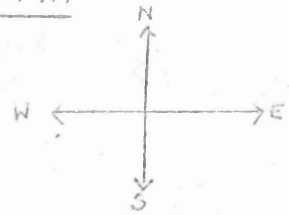


SCALE : 64 MILES = 1 INCH



KEY :   
 □ BRAHMA SAMAJES (SOME WITH DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT)   
 + CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

MAP 3 : THE ENVIRONS OF CALCUTTA



SCALE : 2 miles





ALPHABETICAL LIST OF BUILDINGS IN THE TOWN OF CALCUTTA. Northern Division.

- Free Church Institution.
- Hindoo Female School.
- Christ Church.
- General Assembly's Institution.
- General Female School.
- Lepet Asylum.
- Aims House.
- Police Hospital.
- Church Mission Premises.
- Hindoo College.
- Hindoo College Branch School.
- Calcutta University.
- Mint.
- Armenian Church.
- R. C. Cathedral.
- Greek Church.
- Medical College.
- Bonded Ware House.
- Chinese Church.
- Electric Telegraph.
- Writer's Buildings.
- St. Andrew's Scotch Church.
- Police Office.
- Town Guard.
- Custom House.
- General Post Office.
- Gas Works.

- SOUTHERN DIVISION.**
- Scaldah Small Cause Court.
  - Scaldah Magistrate's Cutcherry.
  - Pauper Hospital.
  - Canning Tank.
  - Nostra Senora Dolores R. C. Chapel.
  - Union Chapel.
  - Reservoir Water Works.
  - Steam Engine House.
  - Chandney Hospital.
  - R. C. Chapel.
  - Military Department.
  - St. Xavier's R. C. Church.
  - Baptist Church.
  - Old Mission Church.
  - Currency Office.
  - St. John's Church.
  - Foreign Department.
  - Metcalfe Hall.
  - Stationery Office.
  - Govt. House Domestic Offices.
  - Government Dispensary.
  - Body Guard Stabling.
  - Petty Court.
  - Legislative Department.
  - Town Hall.
  - Treasury.
  - Bengal Secretariat P. W. Dept.
  - Insolvent Court.
  - Bank of Bengal.
  - New High Court.
  - Reservoir Water Works.
  - Steam Engine House.
  - Government House.
  - Ochterlony Monument.
  - Eden Gardens.
  - Home Department.
  - Bengal Secretariat Office.
  - Imperial Museum.
  - Bengal Secretariat Office.
  - United Service Club.
  - Asiatic Society.
  - Free School.
  - St. Thomas' Church.
  - Free Church of Scotland.
  - Mohamedan College.
  - St. Xavier's Hinduostenee Church.
  - St. James' Church.
  - Baptist Mission Church.
  - Baptist Chapel.
  - Baptist Mission Press.
  - Bengal Club.
  - Doveton College.
  - Surveyor General's Office.
  - St. Xavier's College.
  - St. Thomas' R. C. Church.
  - Revenue Survey Office.
  - Surveyor General's Office Photo. Branch.
  - Do. Do. Litho. Branch.
  - Mathematical Instrument Maker's Department.
  - St. Paul's Cathedral.
  - Bishop's Palace.
  - House of Correction.
  - La Martiniere School.
  - Body Guard Stables.
  - Bhawaneepoor School.
  - General Hospital.
  - Lunatic Asylum.
  - The High Court.
  - Insane Hospital.
  - Cooley Office.
  - Lieutenant Governor's House.
  - Upper Orphan School.
  - Scuderpore Church.
  - Nawab's Palace.
  - New Commissariat Barracks.
  - Timber Shed.
  - Casket Ground.
  - Agricultural Department.

MAP 4: Plan OF CALCUTTA

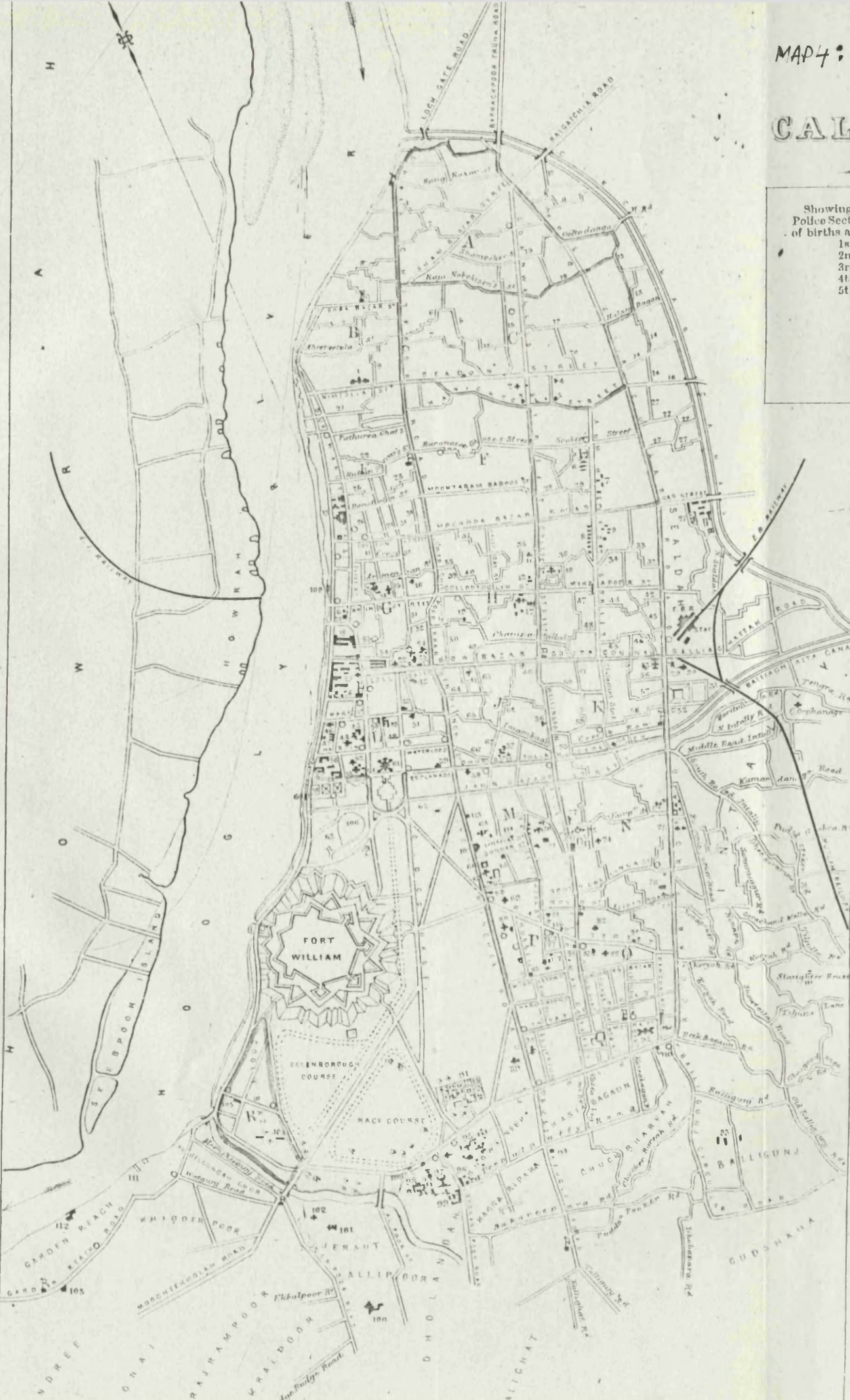
Showing the Conservancy Divisions and Police Sections with reference to the Registers of births and deaths.

1st Division	.....
2nd do.	.....
3rd do.	.....
4th do.	.....
5th do.	.....

**POLICE SECTIONS FROM A TO R.**

Scale, 1/4 inch = 1 mile.

■ Branch Post Offices.  
○ Pillar Post Offices.



- 109 Armenian Ghat Steam
- 110 Swimming Bath
- 111 Govt. Dock Yard
- 112 P. & O. Company's Hou
- 113 Lewis Theatre
- 114 Open House
- 115 Commissariat Office
- 116 Examiner Military Acco
- 117 Exhbr. Madl. & Comt.

NUMERICAL LIST OF R IN THE TOWN OF CALCUTTA Northern Division:

- 1 Ramkath Bose's Street.
  - 2 Rajah Rajbullub's Street.
  - 3 Balaram Ghose's Street.
  - 4 Benatolah Street.
  - 5 Hurreemohun Bose's Lan
  - 6 Taruk Chatterjee's Lane.
  - 7 Doorga Churn Mitter's St
  - 8 Banomalee Sircar's
  - 9 Gour Laha's Street.
  - 10 Ramnarain Bhottacharjea
  - 11 Dhunnoo Bagan Road.
  - 12 Nihareepara Road.
  - 13 Gombaree Road.
  - 14 Baur Mirzapoor Road.
  - 15 Hurree Ghose's Street.
  - 16 Manicktoilah Road.
  - 17 Hoogulkoorya Gullee.
  - 18 Hatee Bagan Street.
  - 19 Shikdar Bagan Street.
  - 20 Goa Bagan Street.
  - 21 Jonabagan Street.
  - 22 Kuburanga Street.
  - 23 Churnuckdanga Street.
  - 24 Burtollah Street.
  - 25 Sobharan Bysack's Street.
  - 26 Dovahatta Street.
  - 27 Baur Simla Road.
  - 28 Faenoo Chatterjee's Street
  - 29 Jhamapokhur Lane.
  - 30 Banstollah Gullee.
  - 31 Burtollah Street.
  - 32 Anthony Bagan Lane.
  - 33 Boothoo Ostagar's Lane.
  - 34 Carey's Church Lane.
  - 35 Rowanee Churn Dutt's L
  - 36 Banatola Lane.
  - 37 Sved Saleh's Do.
  - 38 Tarachand Dutt's Lane.
  - 39 Ram Mohun Bose's Do.
  - 40 Soortee Bagan Lane.
  - 41 Fulya Putee Street.
  - 42 Hyat Khan's Lane.
  - 43 Old Bytakhana Lane.
  - 45 Scott's Lane.
  - 46 William's Lane.
  - 47 Ram Kant Mistree's Lane.
  - 48 Choudhupara Lane.
  - 49 Channa Gullee.
  - 50 Treta Bazar Street.
  - 51 Kara Street.
  - 52 Parsee Church Street.
  - 53 New China Bazar Do.
  - 54 Lyon's Range.
- SOUTHERN DIVISION.**
- 55 Forlyce's Lane.
  - 56 Waterloo Street.
  - 57 Dixon's Lane.
  - 58 Mirzapoor Lane.
  - 59 Bancharata Okoor's Lane.
  - 60 Hidarani Banerjee's Lane
  - 61 Madhu Dutt's Lane.
  - 62 Goremna Lane.
  - 63 Bulseo Bazar Lane.
  - 64 Weston's Lane.
  - 65 Inamdar's Lane.
  - 66 Nuthoo Jamar's Lane
  - 67 Chandee Choke Street.