

Nationalist Identity in Postcolonial Bengali Literature

(1850s – Early 1900s)



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Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Introduction.....	2
Chapter 1	10
Chapter 2	21
Chapter 3.....	46
Chapter 4	65
Conclusion	84

Abstract

Identity is one of the central areas of interest in literature, particularly postcolonial literature. Postcolonial literature and literary theories deal with the issue of identity, the dimensions of identity and identity crisis of the postcolonial nations. As such, nationalist identity also occupies a very substantial part of literary works of postcolonial literature. Postcolonial literature bears witness to how nationalist identity of any particular region underwent changes and metamorphosed within the paradigm of colonialism. Postcolonial literature or literature of the colonial period then is a window into the past. It acts as one of the most significant sources for understanding the history and the present-day of the postcolonial world.

This thesis looks into the emergence and formation of nationalist identity through postcolonial Bengali literature. The literary texts I have used as my primary texts extend over a period of seven decades, that is, 1850s to the early 1900 colonial Bengal. This roughly seven decades in the history of Bengal is of the most critical importance as this is the period in history that truly metamorphosed Bengal and the Bengali people into what it is today. This is the period that oversaw the emergence and formation of the Bengali nationalist identity. In this thesis, through the literary works of Pyarichand Mitra, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore I will be sketching a graph of the emergence, formation and development of nationalist identity in Bengal.

Introduction

Nationalist doctrine decrees that just as nations exist, so nations by definition must have a past. So every nationalism has invented a past for the nation; every nationalism speaks through a discourse, historical in its form but apologetical in its substance, which claims to demonstrate the rise, progress and efflorescence of its own particular genius.

-Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (9)

The term nationalism connotes a specific political doctrine, political struggle, patriotism, a collective sentiment, a common history, a sense of belonging and above all a sense of 'us' within a fixed geographical boundary. But when talking about a nationalist identity, one steps into a problematic area. The issues that inevitably arise are the characteristic features that make a particular group of people belong to a particular nation or a particular national identity. In addition comes forth the nature, character and context of historical, cultural and political links that make up a particular nationalist identity. This is the ground that this thesis concentrates on. The aim of this paper is to investigate into the formation of the Bengali nationalist identity through postcolonial Bengali literature. The term post colonial is not used in the sense of a time frame that is *post-colonial* or after the era of colonization, rather when I use the phrase postcolonial Bengali literature I mean literature that emerged and developed within a historical time frame where the phenomena of colonialism had already affected the socio-cultural dynamics. The period that this thesis will be focusing on extends from 1850s to the early 1900s. This roughly seven decades in the history of colonial Bengal is very significant as it has seen one of the largest literary booms of the Bengali literature. This is also the period that the modern Bengali literature as we know it today came into being through the interaction and assimilation with western literary frameworks and influences. The most important example of this literary

assimilation is the Bengali novel that first came into being in the colonial era. As such the Bengali novel is a perfect synthesis of the interaction between the East and the West. This thesis will be focusing on the Bengali novel alone, a body which is very postcolonial in nature and try to map out the formation of a postcolonial identity or a postcolonial self and see how the conflict, resistance and conformity of this postcolonial self contributed towards the formation of the nationalist identity.

Sumit Sarkar in his book *Writing Social History* writes that –

For the average educated Bengali today, nineteenth century Calcutta lives on mainly as a galaxy of great names. Religious and social reformers, scholars, literary giants, journalist and patriotic orators, maybe a couple of scientists, all merge to form an image of ‘renaissance’ *nabajagaran* (awakening), or *nabajug* (new age), assumed to mark the transition from medieval to modern (160).

The space that this historical, social and cultural transition takes place is the nineteenth century Calcutta. This is the site where the postcolonial self is formed through the conflict, resistance and conformity with the colonial doctrines and hegemony. It is here that West’s or the Occident’s image of the Orient is internalized in the minds and the psyche of the people. This 19th century Calcutta was unlike any other cities that the Indian subcontinent had known through her long history of invasion and migrations. The former foreign rulers of the region were essentially settlers who brought with them elements of their own cultures which were gradually integrated into the Indian culture as a whole. An example of this can be seen in the Indian classical music or the Mughal architecture. However, in 1757 when the East India Company rose to power in the aftermath of the battle of Plassey, the Indian subcontinent for the first time came face to face

with an organized and systematized body of power that aimed at total territorial control. For the first time the country came under what is known as a colonial power structure. Besides economic, political and military control, control over culture was also an integral part of the process. Nugugi WA Thiong'O dealt in length with this aspect of colonialism in his book *Decolonizing the Mind* where he explained that no control or domination can ever be complete without cultural domination as well. The object of colonization is to establish cultural hegemony over the colonies. This is because without cultural dominance economic and political domination is never complete. Once one controls the culture, one controls that race and that population's tools of self definition. Calcutta was the centre of this new British colony of India. The city came into being from a cluster of three adjoining villages called Kolikata, Govindapur and Sutanuti. It is here during the era of the *Nawabi* rule that the English started building a town as a centre for their trade. After Robert Clive defeated Nawab Shiraj Ud Dawla, this trade centre emerged as the capital of the colonial India. It is not possible to draw any comparison between this new city and other former power sectors of the Mughal period like Delhi and Lucknow. Calcutta was a city that was created, a city – the first of its kind – that was forged into existence for the very first time within the frame work of colonial power structure; an alien and foreign body of system virtually unknown to the rest of the region. As mentioned above, this city of Calcutta underwent an immense historical, social and cultural transformation in the early period of colonialism. The city saw a period of great fervour and activity that swept through the newly established capital of the British Raj. This period of transition is said to have initially begun with Ram Mohan Roy and continued till Rabindranath Tagore. In terms of literature the period oversaw the beginning of modern Bengali prose, beginning of the Bengali novel, development of modern poetry, theatre, etc. It was also a period of great social and religious reformations, the

appearance of a large number of newspapers & periodicals, growth of numerous societies and associations, diverse intellectual inquiry and rise of nationalistic ideas. Western science spread in society during this time, gradually marginalizing the Eastern body of scientific knowledge. An example of this can be seen in the ascendance of western medicine and gradual decline of the *Ayurveda*. Historically speaking, it was a period of transition that led Bengal from its former geographical and provincial recluse into the arena of imperial power politics. As more and more territories were being acquired, India was coming under the control of colonial power and Bengal was at the centre of it. The class that emerged as the new native elite in this new colonial city was also a very newly created one. The economic basis of this class was the Permanent Settlement of 1793. The Permanent Settlement was a restructuring and reorganization of the revenue collection system that radically and irrevocably transformed the economic sector, the agricultural sector and dynamics of the rural relationship and agrarian society as whole in Bengal. It gave rise to a group of new land lords based in the metropolis of Calcutta who came to be known as the absentee landlords or the absentee *zamindars*. Stanley Wolpert in *A New History of India* writes that –

The Cornwallis settlement secured a class of loyal Indian supporters for the British Raj, who remained faithful throughout the remaining years of company rule. Many of the old Mughal aristocracy of Bengal were displaced by Hindu families – the Roys, Sens and Tagores – whose scions would, in the next generation or two, become leaders of cultural syncretism and westernization in Calcutta society (197).

History shows that this class, that is the new native elites of colonial Bengal, whose entire economic existence depended upon the permanent settlement, the fundamental basis of

colonialism in India, did in fact remain loyal to the colonial regime to a certain extent. An example of this can be seen in the mass condemnation of the 1857 mutiny by the Calcutta elites. In reality the nationalist stance of this class against imperialism was often ambiguous at the best.

If a hierarchical structure of the native Bengali society is taken into account, the class that comes immediately after the absentee landlords are the professional groups ranging from civil servants and lawyers to average office clerks, all of whom had strong ties to the land under the 1793 Permanent Settlement. These professional groups along with the native landed gentry formed the bulk of what is collectively known as the *bhadralok*. The *bhadralok* class played a very significant role in the colonial history of Bengal. This *bhadralok* class led all the reformist movements, revivalist projects and was pioneers of the modern Bengali prose. However the *bhadralok* class did not automatically come into existence with the beginning of colonialism. The education policy that came to be enforced in the colonial period led to the formation of the distinct character of the *bhadralok* class. The *bhadralok* class of the colonial period basically represented the newly educated westernized faction of the mass. To a very large extent this class owed its existence almost directly to the 1835 'Minutes on the Indian Education' by Thomas Babington Macaulay and the policies imposed as a result of that document. In his minute Macaulay wrote that, "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect (249)." This was the basic principle behind the education system or the education policy that prevailed in the country throughout the colonial period. In the conflict between the Anglicists who campaigned for the promotion of the English language and literature and the Orientalists who advocated for Sanskrit and Arabic, Macaulay sided with the Anglicists. English became the new language of social ascendancy. The

dissemination of this language was achieved via various schools and colleges established in the early 1800s. The Hindu college established in 1817 is the example of such an institution which boasted an alumni which included the likes of Pyarichand Mitra, Kali Prassannya Singha, Madhusudan Dutt, Debendranath Tagore and Kesab Chandra Sen, all of whom were pioneers and legendary figures in modern Bengali literature and their other respective fields. Apart from the institutions like Hindu college, Hare school, Sanskrit college or the Bethune School, the advent of the printing press helped in much wider use of English language in society. Besides the English printing press, Bengali printing press also developed. The rise of an almost equal number of Bengali periodicals, journals, magazines and literature popularized the new modern Bengali prose within the mass. The colonial institutes did not only produce the new Bengali literati, it also created individuals who led various social reformation movements in society.

Amidst such new developments and upheavals in the society, a conflict inevitably was awakened within the identity of the colonized self. This conflict was essentially the result of the clash between the East and the West. In face of such tumultuous transition sweeping through the society, the colonized self was forced to re-examine itself. A need arose to solve the contradictions the colonized self - especially those belonging to the bhadralok class – felt in light of the changing times and society. There emerged a very natural tendency to make sense of ‘us’ in accordance to these changing times. This search for self identity or renegotiation with identity led to the search of a nationalist identity which in turn led to nationalist political aspirations. This gradually led to the formation of a nation state.

This thesis will explore and probe into the identification of a nationalist past and a nationalist identity as it materialized and can be found in the literature of the region. Various paths were taken to satisfy this need for self actualization in terms of a national identity. These

paths in turn lead to distinct streams of nationalism within the overall doctrine of nationalism itself. While one path led to religious revivalism, others lead to armed revolution and yet another lead to secular, humanist universalism. But these phenomena did not happen overnight. Bengal had to go through a long passage of time in its history to arrive at its nationalistic struggle and its unique blend of nationalism.

To look at the creation and development of this nationalist identity, the areas that this thesis will focus on are –

- Emergence of a postcolonial Bengali identity

And

- Mimicry, conformity and resistance of the postcolonial Bengali identity

Through the literature of nineteenth century and early twentieth century colonial Bengal, I will try to sketch a graph of the creation of a new postcolonial Bengali identity. Here I will specifically focus on the new bhadralok class. From looking into the Bengali identity will emerge the graph of the nationalist identity. Exploring the postcolonial phenomena of mimicry, conformity and resistance will further clarify the journey and development of the nationalist identity. The authors whose work I will be referring to for this purpose are –

1. Pyarichand Mitra
2. Madhusudan Dutt
3. Bankim Chattopadhyay

And

4. Rabindranath Tagore

It should be mentioned here that besides the original English writings of some of these authors, all the translations of their works cited in this thesis are mine.

Chapter 1

Bengal has a very rich and old literary history. The earliest known Bengali text is the *Charyapada* that dates back to the 8th century AD. This was a collection of poems composed by Buddhist seer poets and was intended to be sung. Then there were the *Vaishnav* literatures or *Vaishnav Padabalis* from the fourteenth century and the *Mangalkavyas* from the thirteenth century. This is a literary tradition that extends over a period of roughly a thousand years, a literary tradition that consisted solely of verse. From the *Charyapada* of the eighth century to the last *Mangalkavyas* of the eighteenth century, it is approximately a thousand years of literary history in verse. This means that the *Charyapada*, *Viashnav Padabalis*, *Mangalkavayyas* were all written in the structure and format of verse. They were basically collection of poems that were meant to be sung. This also indicates that for almost a thousand years Bengali literature existed in an oral tradition, within the realm of storytelling, music and performance. Bengali literature made its transition from the oral tradition to the reading tradition with the beginning of the colonial period.

In case of literature in Bengal, the advent of prose in literature and the beginning of mass reading tradition or reading culture throughout the society began its journey hand in hand. In contrast to Bengali poetry, the history of Bengali prose is a relatively new one. Bengali prose did not exist before the eighteen hundreds. Use of prose in literature essentially began in Bengal during the colonial period. A significant number of factors that became prevalent in the colonial period contributed to the development of Bengali prose. The journey of the Bengali prose may be said to have begun with the missionaries of Serampore and the Fort William College. The Bengali *pandits* or scholars of the Fort William College were entrusted with the duty of translating and writing texts in Bengali which were to serve the purpose of teaching the British

the native language. William Carey, a missionary first translated the bible into Bengali from Serampore. The advent of Bengali press during this period, that is the early colonial period, also contributed to the structural formation of Bengali prose. This is because the writing in the press, that is, the newspapers, the journals and periodicals were done in prose. It can be said that all these new journals and newspapers prepared the scene for Bengali language's literary endeavour in the novel.

The first literary prose or novel in Bengali is the novel *Alaler Gharer Dulal* written by Pyarichand Mitra under the penname Tekchand Thakur in the year of 1857. It should be mentioned here that *Alaler Gharer Dulal* is not the example of the first Bengali prose. That honour goes to books like *Babu Upakhyan* published in 1821, *Naba Babu Bilash* written by Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay in 1825 , or *Phuloni O Karunar Bibaran*, a Christian missionary novel written by Hannah Catherine Mullens in the year of 1852. But these earlier texts were more like novels in the making. They had structural and often linguistic lacking that did not allow them to fall in the category of modern novels. *Alaler Gharer Dulal*, though it has considerable number of deficiencies and lackings in terms of a novel, it is in fact a full length narrative, a fictional account and as such has been dubbed as the first novel of the Bengali language. It is not the aim of this paper to evaluate or critique *Alaler Gharer Dulal's* literary quality, what this chapter here will focus on is the evidence of the formation of the postcolonial identity or the postcolonial self. Hans Harder in *The Modern Babu and the Metropolis* writes that

–

The literary traditions of pre-modern Bengal – adaptations of the great epics, Vaishnava lyrics, Mangal Kabyas, hagiographic literature (whether Hindu or Muslim), Tantrik literature, etc. – as a rule operated on a highly symbolic frame of reference: a

mythological, superimposed system elevated from the status quo. In these contexts the new narrations mark a drastic change in the communicative directives of Bengali literature. Their subject matter is derived directly from a new sort of awareness in the contemporary society, and they communicate the perceptions of that society back onto it....So, we have for the first time, literary Bengali bhadralok or gentle society speaking about itself – there was no speaking about oneself in pre-modern literature – and that again in oblique mode of satirical dissent (362-363).

The main purpose of this chapter is to find out how the first Bengali novel- a postcolonial phenomena - represents the postcolonial self. In other words, I will try to analyze the postcolonial identity as it can be found in the first Bengali novel, *Alaler Gharer Dulal*.

Alaler Gharer Dulal is the story of a nouveau rich Bengali babu's son whose ruination was brought about by the rampant babu culture of the eighteenth century Bengal. The protagonist Motilal gets derailed very early on in childhood in his native village of Baidyabadi. His depravity, debauchery and degeneration increases when he moves to Calcutta for educational purposes, this ultimately brings about the ruination of himself and his entire family. However later by the end of the novel, Motilal finds salvation through religion and his family and his wealth is restored to him. The novel is a critique of the babu culture and attempts to provoke humour at the decadence of the babu. The term babu is an honorific title that in colonial Bengal indicated towards any Hindu individual who possessed a certain amount of wealth. As such, babus are individuals of the bhadralok class of the colonial Bengal. Later derogatory meanings got attached to this title. The term babu came to connote and represent cowardliness, greed, the effeminate Bengali and general corruption and decadence. The term came to suggest Oriental debauchery and Oriental excesses. The novel *Alaler Gharer Dulal* critiques this figure of the

babu in the midst of all his opulence and luxury. The novel shows the protagonist Motilal and his cronies to be a self-seeking, cowardly, depraved, corrupted and vain men given only to spending their wealth in absolute debauchery. The novel successfully made a perfect lampoon of the figure of the babu. What is interesting here is that it is not a European or the Occident that is drawing this caricature of a Bengali Babu. The author Pyarichand Mitra is a prominent native Bengali who very much belonged to the bhadralok class. As such, it is the Orient himself that is representing such a caricature of himself.

To understand this phenomenon, one needs to look back at Edward W. Said's Occident – Orient binary. Said in *Orientalism* writes that –

The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of complex hegemony. The Orient was Orientalized not because it was discovered to be “Oriental” in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth century European, but also because it could be – that is submitted to being – made Oriental (5-6).

This relationship of domination and hegemony within the Occident – Orient binary led to the creation of the image of the Orient with all its negative connotations, which in turn was internalized by the Orientals themselves. This internalization happens due to the power over representation which in turn leads to hegemonic dominance of the Occident over the Orient or the West over the East or the colonizers over the colonized. It is due to this internalization of colonial hegemony that the protagonist of the first novel of Bengal was portrayed in such a negative light. It should also be kept in mind that this ridicule of the babu was a critique of the babu culture and the existing socio-cultural dynamics. So seen from this light, the novel *Alaler*

Gharer Dulal ultimately emerges as the story of the Orient or the postcolonial self's negotiation with the changing society and times. The postcolonial ego or the postcolonial identity in question had fallen into a crisis, a crisis which was the result of the clash or the conflict between the East and the West. This conflict between the East and the West had been subtly portrayed in the novel. The author wrote that, "The English children according to the advice of their parents spend their time in harmless fun, games and hobbies. Some paint – some take up gardening – some learn music and some hunt or wrestle (34)". He then compared the English children to the Bengali children and stated that the children of this country got spoilt early on by the general decadence prevalent in the society. Here the novel clearly suggests that in the new socio-cultural dynamics of the colonial society, which was marked by the coming together of the East and the West, the native children lacked the proper guidance as that of the English children. In the conflict that arose between the clash of East and the west, it was ultimately the native children that were victimized.

The plot of the novel takes place in three distinct spaces – the village, the city and the space of pilgrimage. Among these the village represents the old ideal space, the space of origin of the postcolonial identity. The city represents the new colonized space and the space of pilgrimage represents the spiritual space. While Matilal's derailment starts early on in his childhood in his native village of Baidyabadi, it is in the colonial city of Calcutta that his depravity escalates. It should be mentioned here that Motilal cannot be regarded as one of the "Macaulay's children" as he is not the anglicized Bengali or the westernized babu whose westernization has been brought about by the colonial education system. He is almost like an ego caught in between the two worlds. He belongs to a society and a culture in transition. It is in this

transitional space that the postcolonial self got derailed and lost. In the novel the author provided a vivid depiction of the early colonial Calcutta –

When the British first came to conduct business in Calcutta, the Seths and Basaks were existing businessmen of the time but no one in Calcutta knew English. The use of sign language was prevalent when communicating with the British regarding business matters...slowly, with the aid of sign language, some English words were learned. Later, because of the establishment of the Supreme Court the necessity to learn English in order to conduct legal matters increased (14).

This excerpt from the novel does not only speak of a city in the making, it also talks of a city and its people in transition. This passage above paints the picture of a Bengal that has left the previous power structure with its inherent socio-economic conditions and was at the threshold of a new one. This is the twilight zone in the history of Bengal and the protagonist Motilal and the likes of him are egos or selves caught in the middle of a transitional phase. To understand this transitional phase one must remember that Calcutta like any other colonial city in Asia was the space where the East and the West came face to face. The city was the meeting place of two opposite and antithetical traditions. One of these came from the culture, civilization, philosophy and religion of the East and the other was a very foreign entity that came from the culture and civilization of the Western colonizers. The conflict between the East and the West in the city of Calcutta was the conflict between the Western conception of modernism and as such, a pre-modern past. It was a conflict between Westernization and the Bengali selfhood that existed in the village. It was the conflict between the city and the village. Seen from this perspective, the identity crisis that resulted in this conflict is tantamount to a loss of self - the Bengali self - in the colonized city. It is in the space of the city that Motilal falls into bad company, gives up

education, takes up tobacco, *charas* (a hashish form of cannabis drug made in the subcontinent) and gambling and is consequently jailed for his misdemeanours.

The Motilal that returns back to his village from the city is a much more depraved being with a distorted identity. He becomes a caricature of the ideal self that resides in the village. On his return to Baidyabadi Motilal attempts to kidnap a girl, chases his mother, brother and sister away following his father's death, gathers sycophants of ill repute and ultimately brings forth total financial ruin. Hence the ultimate result of the identity crisis of the postcolonial self causes the household in the village to breakdown. This household or the home has very special significance in the colonial psyche. Partha Chatterjee in *The Nation And Its Fragments* explains that the home represents the space outside the realm of colonialism while the world outside the home is the colonized space. It is the space where the colonized self has been defeated. The home represents the spiritual supremacy of the East while the world belongs to the material supremacy of the West. The East has always regarded itself to be superior in terms of its philosophy, religion and spirituality. It is the material domain where the East lost out to the West. Chatterjee writes that –

The discourse of nationalism shows that the material/spiritual distinction was condensed into an analogous but ideologically far more powerful dichotomy: that between the outer and the inner. The material domain lies outside us – a mere external that influences, conditions us and forces us to adjust to it. Ultimately it is unimportant. The spiritual which lies within is our true self; it is that which is genuinely essential (120).

Therefore the breakdown of the home in the native village of Baidyabadi does not only speak of the crisis of a single family. It indicates towards the breaking down and the downfall of the 'true self'.

After his financial ruin Motilal travels alone to Varanasi. Here the plot moves into the spiritual space. Varanasi or Kashi is the ancient sacred city of the Hindu religion. It is a space of pilgrimage. It is here in the spiritual space of Varanasi that a reformed Motilal meets his family again. His reformation is brought about by a religious mentor who guides him back to the right path in life. Under the guidance of his teacher, Motilal becomes knowledgeable in the scriptures of Veda. So the colonized self who became conflicted and met his downfall in the space of the city which resulted in his losing his identity in the form of its home in the village, reconciles in the space of spiritualism. Hence the ultimate salvation is achieved through religion. Motilal's family is restored to him and on his return to the village, his home which symbolizes his true self is also restored to him. The three spaces in the novel – the village, the city and the space of pilgrimage – symbolizes the ideal past, the colonial present and the abstract space of spiritualism. The true self or the inner self of the golden past that is lost in the onslaught of the city space recovers and reconciles in this abstract space of spirituality. In other words, the colonized self or the colonized broken identity needed to seek out religion or spiritualism in order to reconcile the past with the present. The past too bears a great significance for the colonial psyche. Ashish Nandi in *The Intimate Enemy* writes that, "The civilized India was in the bygone past; now it was dead and 'museumized'. The present India was only nominally related to its history; it was India only to the extent it was a senile decrepit version of her once youthful, creative self (17)." This quotation by Nandi clearly reveals the need felt by the colonized to reconnect with the idea of a

golden past. In fact a vast proportion of Bengali literature of the colonial period had expended itself with the construction and cultivation of the image of this golden past.

This image of an ideal golden past is further illustrated by a contrast between the character of the protagonist Motilal and his younger brother Ramlal, “The reputation of Ramlal’s honesty and good character gradually spread throughout the village. He never shrank away from his duty to any member of his family (45).” Ramlal was the ideal son, the ideal brother and the ideal man. His good character stems from his association with the learned and virtuous man of the village, Barada babu.

Ramlal became almost like Barada babu in character. He goes out for air early in the morning. He believed that a strong heart and a strong will come from having a strong body and a strong mind. He returns home and engages in meditation. He only reads books that strengthens the moral and enriches the mind. He keeps only good company and reaches out to men of honest and moral constitution (44 - 45).

If Motilal is the babu that has fallen from grace in the colonial society, then Ramlal, the younger brother who has never ventured out to the city is the unsullied Bengali self who has not been contaminated by the onslaught of the colonial society. Here Ramlal comes to represent the ideal Bengali self or ego, an image which can be traced to the idea or conception of the golden past. The ending of the novel further clarifies this distinction. On their way back to their village, Motilal and his family are attacked by bandits but are saved in the end by the courage and valour of Ramlal and Barada babu. Motilal exclaims that –

Ever since my childhood I have only engaged in immoral acts. My babuana has been my destruction. Ramlal spent his time in wrestling and physical training and

I used to taunt him for it. I realize now that courage and valour comes with the practice of masculine sports from early childhood (96).

This masculine Ramlal is the exact opposite of the effeminate Motilal, the Bengali babu. In the colonizer – colonized dichotomy, the colonizer is the man and the colonized is the effeminate male; the colonizer is the masculine and the colonized is the feminine. However this emasculation of the colonized male was achieved in the colonial era. In the golden past the Bengali male was as much masculine and martial as the colonizers or those races of the subcontinent that the British Raj had dubbed as martial races. Somehow through the passage of history the Bengali male had become effeminate. So, cultivation of physical vigour was something that was thought to be desirable during this time. An example of this can be seen in the novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Almost all the male and sometimes female protagonists and characters of Bankim undergo vigorous and often ritualistic physical training.

It is in the journey between these three spaces that the real essence of Motilal's character can be found. In undertaking this journey the first protagonist of the first novel reveals the formation of the postcolonial identity. The postcolonial self is a defeated entity in the colonized space. Any expression of his self results in caricature, he can lay no claim to any creative enterprise. His '*babuyana*' (the luxurious lifestyle of the babus) only destined him for spiralling downwards into a dark abyss, an abyss where the sun has set for the ancient civilization of India. He can only rise up again and become his true self by reconnecting with the golden past, the bridge to which is religion. This is because the golden past for the colonized Bengalis of the bhadralok class resided in the Vedic era. It is within the Vedas that they search for the essence of their true self; a true self that has not been sullied by defeat in the hands of neither the British nor the Turks or the Mughals. The novel *Alaler Gharer Dulal* provides the reader today with the

glimpse of the first literary instance of the construction of the golden past and an aspiration to recover that golden past. This is a very significant element of Bengali literature as a whole as it expresses a desire to break free of the defeatism brought on by colonialism. While the postcolonial self in the novel is not openly expressing dissidence, his journey between the three spaces, the renegotiations within his identity express a longing to reconnect with the true self; to become whole again. Only in reconnecting with the true self that resides in the Vedic past can a postcolonial man reclaim his former superiority. This theme has been taken up and radicalized by later revivalist movements and revivalist religious political thought. This image of the golden past certainly becomes more and more powerful in the novels that succeed *Alaler Gharer Dulal*.

Chapter2

Modern nationalist politics is a species of identity politics. Indeed, the original species.

-Charles Taylor, *Nationalism and Modernity*.

In the previous chapter we have seen the emergence of Bengali novel and the portrayal of the postcolonial identity through the first protagonist of the first Bengali novel. A close reading of *Alaler Gharer Dulal* offers the readers an image of a defeated selfhood whose only emancipation lies within the reconnection with the golden past of Indian Civilization. It is through this reconnection with the golden past that the broken self of the postcolonial identity endeavours to become whole again. The image of the golden past has a great significance in the psyche of the colonized. The golden past is situated in the Vedic era and is deeply rooted in the Vedic scriptures. The image of the golden past is a past in which the Indian civilization was undefeated and was at the zenith of its creativity. It is a past that allowed the colonized self to place itself in the image of the victor and not in the image of the defeated or the fallen self. It was the glorious days of the subcontinent's civilization; it is in the golden past that the civilization of this region began its journey and produced some of the greatest conceptions of spirituality, philosophy, religion and culture of the world. This image which was a historical past for the population of this region was gradually fortified during the thousand years of foreign rule – the Turks, the Afghans, Persians and the Mughals and continued in the British colonial era. No matter how prosperous, tolerant and often peaceful some of these reigns might have been, the image of the golden past of Indian civilization persisted and became more and more powerful. The reason behind this is that the foreign rulers were always considered as the other, the outsider who has dominated the 'us'. This is a phenomenon that goes through a radical change in the colonial period when the 'us' became the 'other' through internalization of colonial hegemony

and the others became 'us'. So, the image of the golden past during the thousand years of foreign domination acted as a space for the cultural self where the 'us' could feel undefeated and superior.

There was a definite symbiosis that existed within the cultural and social life of the period during the thousand years of foreign rule but still, the memory of the golden past existed side by side in the nostalgic memory of religious and cultural identity. This nostalgia was the nostalgia for the undefeated selfhood. Here it should be mentioned that in Bengal, where in the nineteenth century this idea of a golden past slowly metamorphosed into a political tool and acquired the status of political propaganda, power in the sense of the centre of an empire, never truly existed. This is to say that Bengal prior to the colonial era, though had been part of previously existing empires, was never truly the centre of any empire. The only time it emerged as a true centre of power of an empire was with the arrival of colonialism when it became the capital of the colonial India; even then, it was not the whole of the Bengal region that emerged as a power centre. Power was located only in the newly created colonial city of Calcutta. The region of Bengal was and had at times been the periphery or the lucrative and productive region of other centres of power - such as the Mughal Empire - which was located outside Bengal. The free realms in Bengal that rose from time to time never transformed into what can be called an empire. So this general and vague memory of a golden past where the self was undefeated, all powerful and superior to all, was never really Bengal's past. It is debatable if it was anyone's past at all as starting from the Aryan migrations, no race in the Indian subcontinent can be said to have been free of foreign domination. In fact, the golden past which has roots in the Vedic ages and Vedic doctrines can be said to be the saga of the Aryanization of the Indian subcontinent which in turn diverts one's attention to the Pre-Aryan age or the Aryan and Non- Aryan conflict.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to go into Aryan or Pre-Aryan age, nor is this thesis concerned with the source of the golden past of Indian Civilization. The main focus in regard to the golden past is to see how it was being used as a platform of nationalist and political aspiration and how the image of the golden past gradually gathered momentum as a political tool. In Bengal - a region which could not directly lay claim to the golden past - it was harboured and cultivated rather systematically through literature. The individual's reason behind this was coping with the loss of dignity in the colonized space by trying to reconcile with a past image which by nineteenth century has long been an all Indian collective memory. The political agenda was building a platform for nationalist struggle. In the novel *Alaler Gharer Dulal* we see the beginning of this literary endeavour. Later novelists and poets, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in particular took this literary agenda much farther. The aspiration to reconcile with the golden past for them, that is the poets and the novelists, became an expression of resistant thought. However Michael Madhusudan Dutt cannot be regarded as one such poet. He dealt with the issue of nationalist identity from a very different angle. While Dutt does not refute the golden past which was deeply rooted in the colonized self's psyche, his resistance that is reflected in his literary works was very different in nature.

This chapter will focus on the construction of a distinct form of postcolonial identity as it can be seen in Michael Madhusudan Dutt's literary works and see how gradually a nationalist identity emerges. The areas this chapter will be focusing on are –

1. Hybridity and mimicry in Madhusudan Dutt.
2. Construction of a postcolonial identity.
3. Reflection of resistance in Dutt's literary works.
4. Manifestation of nationalist identity in Dutt's literary works.

It should be mentioned that this is the only chapter in the thesis that does not solely focus on the novels. This is because to understand the emergence of a nationalist identity in Michael Madhusudan Dutt, his entire literary work which comprises of prose in form of novel and essays, poetry and plays must be taken into consideration.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt's life has direct correlation with the different stages of his literary work. To understand the changes in different stages of his literary works and vicissitudes of Dutt himself, it is important to look into his own life and his contemporary social dynamics. Michael Madhusudan Dutt was born Madhusudan Dutt, the only son of a wealthy law practitioner in Calcutta. His family belonged to the faction of the native landed gentry and as such, Dutt was a member of the elite *bhadralok* strata of the society. He enrolled in the famous Hindu college in the year of 1843. As mentioned before, the establishment of Hindu College in 1817 had a great significance in Colonial Calcutta. It was in institutions like the Hindu College that Thomas Babington Macaulay's 'Minutes on the Indian Education' materialized in the form of the colonial education policy of the British Raj. Nugugi WA Thiong'O in *Decolonizing the Mind* writes that –

The real aim of colonialism was to control the people's wealth: what they produced, how they produced it, and how it was distributed; colonialism imposed its control of the social production of wealth through military conquest and subsequent political dictatorship. But its most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonized, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a

people's culture is to control their tools of self definition in relationship to others (16).

This control over culture was primarily done through the colonial education system. Though Thiong'O was writing about the colonial experience of Africa, this basic guiding principle of colonialism existed in all colonized countries, regardless of which western nation's colony it was. This basic principle of colonialism was wielded as a political tool and weapon in the Indian subcontinent and hence in Bengal as well. The institutions such as Hindu College through its curriculum which basically consisted of western literature and philosophy aimed at creating a generation who was so thoroughly westernized in thought that they were, according to Macaulay "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste (249)." The hidden agenda of institutions like this was to control the tools of self definition. The medium used by the colonizers through these institutions to succeed in their enterprise was the Western language and particularly in case of Bengal, the English language. Further discussion by Thiong'O sheds light on the process. Thiong'O writes that -

Any achievement in spoken or written English was highly rewarded; prizes, prestige, applause; the ticket to higher realms. English became the measure of intelligence and ability in the arts, the sciences, and all the other branches of learning. English became the main determinant of a child's progress up the ladder of formal education (12).

This supremacy of English and its correlated success up the social ladder explains why the bhadralok class of colonial Bengal rushed to partake in the colonial education. Language is the bearer of culture and it was through the conscious elevation of the English language and covert

repression of the native languages that this westernizing enterprise was carried through. Michael Madhusudan Dutt being a student of the Hindu college was in his early life thoroughly integrated in this westernizing phenomenon. Thiong'O further states that -

English was the official vehicle and the magic formula to colonial elitedom....In primary school I now read simplified Dickens and Stevenson alongside Rider Haggard. Jim Hawkins, Oliver Twist, Tom Brown were now my daily companions in the world of imagination. In secondary school, Scott and G.B. Shaw vied with more Rider Haggard, John Buchan, Alan Paton, Captain W. E. Johns. At Makerere I read English: from Chaucer to T.S. Eliot with a touch of Graham Greene. Thus language and literature were taking us further and further from ourselves to other selves, from our world to other worlds (12).

Cultural westernization of a colony means to gain control over the culture by controlling the people's realm of imagination. This means establishing western hegemony over a culture and internalization of that western hegemony or the Occidental hegemony by the colonized or the Orient. Once that target is achieved, the colonized selves start to view the world and themselves in the light or through the eyes of the Occident. The resultant factor of this internalization of Occidental hegemony, canonization and doctrine is the creation of a postcolonial identity which is very hybrid in nature.

Madhusudan and his contemporary generation studying in institutions like the Hindu college, consuming works of Milton, Byron, Keats, Shelly and Wordsworth, went through this internalization of Western hegemony. It was the students of the Hindu college who started the Young Bengal movement, a movement which was very hybrid in character. The Young Bengals

also known as the Derozians were disciples of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio who was an Anglo-Indian teacher in the Hindu College. Derozio, a radical free thinker himself urged his students to question authority and tradition and be sceptical about norms, customs and religious and societal decrees and imperatives. As such, the Young Bengals emerged as a group who were inspired and excited by the spirit of free thought. They revolted against the existing social and religious structure of the contemporary orthodox Hindu society. The Young Bengals were responsible and were staunch supporters of various reformatory and progressive activities in the society. However, a lot of the activities and behaviour of the Young Bengal, though scandalous at the time, were later regarded as brash and juvenile. For example, the Young Bengals took to eating Beef and consuming alcohol to demonstrate their flamboyant disregard of the society. In retrospect what the Young Bengals of the nineteenth century Bengal represents is a spirit of rebellion; a rebellion against existing social dynamics that arose due to the conflict between the East and the West. It should be mentioned here that the Young Bengals were in no way resisting colonialism. In effect the Young Bengals embodied the creation of the postcolonial hybrid identity, a hybrid identity which was caught between two cultures. Michael Madhusudan Dutt though not directly associated with the Young Bengal was very much a contemporary of the Young Bengal movement. There were three basic streams of social movement existing in the nineteenth century colonial Calcutta. One was then was the reformatory movement associated with Ram Mohan Roy, another was the revivalist movement later associated with Ramkrishna and the other was the radicalized and westernized movement of the Young Bengal. Michael Madhusudan Dutt's personal life and literary works bear this trademark of spirit of rebellion.

Dutt who composed English sonnets dreamt of being a poet like Byron and Milton. He thought his dream could only be realized if he travelled to England, the motherland of his poetic

imagination. He converted to Christianity to avoid an arranged marriage and relocated to Madras. It is speculated that his conversion to Christianity was fuelled by his desire to travel to England. Later on his return to Calcutta he started writing in Bengali, his mother tongue – a language he previously deplored – and became a celebrated poet. His conversion from wanting to be an English poet to becoming a Bengali poet marks the transition in his postcolonial identity which is reflected in the literary works he produced starting from his Hindu college days to the hey days of his creative output as a Bengali poet in Calcutta. According to the postcolonial theories put forth by Homi Bhaba, his literary days in Hindu college and Madras reflected the mimicry stage of postcolonial identity crisis. Bhaba explains that the colonized self mimics the colonizer and attempts to appear in the image of the colonizer. However, this mimicry never produces a completely identical image of the colonizer. In mimicking the colonizer, there is always a slight gap, a certain difference. It is this gap that the colonizers have a fear of; as it is from this gap that resistance emerges. Seen from this light, Dutt on his return to Calcutta as a Bengali poet has left the mimicry stage and made his transition into a much more native postcolonial identity. In assuming an identity which is more pronouncedly Bengali, he had demonstrated his resistance to the mimicry stage of colonialism. It is from this resistance that Dutt's unique blend of postcolonial nationalist identity materializes. The rest of this chapter will look into how Dutt's transition and emergence of nationalist identity is reflected in his literary works.

As stated above, Dutt began writing English sonnets from his Hindu college days. The very act of composing sonnets in English reaffirms Bhaba's theory of the mimicry stage. In trying to emulate the romantic poets, Dutt was essentially trying to cast himself in the mould of the colonizers. His sonnets often expressed his yearning to see himself in the image of the

colonizers. An example of this can be seen in the following verse found in *Madhusudan Rachanabali* –

I sigh for distant Albion's shore,
 Its valleys green, its mountains high;
 Tho' friends, relations, I have none
 In that far clime, yet, oh! I sigh
 To cross the vast Atlantic waves
 For glory or a nameless grave! (ll. 1-6)

This sonnet echoes the postcolonial desire of the colonized to become a part of the colonizers; to escape his position in the subject-object binary, to become 'us' from the 'others'. To escape the Occident-Orient binary, the colonized man feels the need to escape his native land, his language, his roots, shed his Oriental skin and become one with the Occident. This resonates with what Fanon described of the black man's complex, the desire of the black man to become white. This sonnet can also be read as the yearning of a postcolonial self to move from the periphery to the centre. Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* explains that in the Occident-Orient binary, the Occident occupies the centre and the Orient is in the periphery. In yearning to reach out from the periphery to the centre, the postcolonial self exhibits his internalization of the Occident world view. In case of Madhusudan Dutt, this yearning reaches another height. His yearning is that of a poet who thinks his artistic expression will only reach completion by relocating from the periphery to the centre. The periphery in which he is situated, that is his own culture, does not enable him to reach the pinnacles of creativity. So, his yearning for the centre is a yearning for

self actualization, a yearning for the empowerment of his creative self. Dutt situated his creative self away from his own culture to the other culture. He was moving from his own world to another world, from his own self to other selves. The last two lines of this sonnet are even more revealing: “And oh! I sigh for Albion’s stand /As if she were my native land!”(ll. 11-12)

In imagining the distant Albion’s shore to be his native land, Dutt has revealed the image of a postcolonial poet who was in his mind thoroughly alienated from his native land. This alienation of the postcolonial self and his identification with the Occident, reflects the colonized mimicking the colonizer. Even Dutt’s conversion into Christianity was an attempt by him to purge himself of his native identity and to gain accession into the superior society. But it was a futile attempt as according to Thiong’O the individual is only alienated from his own culture but never integrated into the other one. So, this yearning for the centre becomes a futile yearning for the postcolonial self. However, in failing to belong to the centre, the postcolonial self then makes the periphery his centre; this radical shift in his world view embodies the resistance of the postcolonial self to the Occidental domination and hegemony. This is a phenomenon that is later reflected in Madhusudan when he started writing in Bengali.

If the desire for the centre is the colonized self’s desire for power then sonnets like *My Fond Sweet Blue-Eyed Maid* can also be read as a covert desire to ascend to power. An example of this can be seen in lines like –

Yet I shall love, nor love thee less

“My fond sweet blue- eyed maid!” (ll. 39-40).

Or in lines from another sonnet-

I loved a maid, a blue-eyed maid

As fair a maid can ever be. (ll. 1-2)

According to Frantz Fanon, the black man's desire for the white woman is his hidden desire to ascend to power. By gaining control over the white woman the black man wants to gain an equal measure of control over the white woman's world. By having the white woman, the black man wants to belong to the Occidental civilization. This is again the longing of the periphery for the centre. So once again by romanticizing about 'the blue eyed maid' or the 'fair maid', Dutt is in fact expressing his desire to belong to the centre; a positioning in the colonial power dynamics which is much more powerful than the periphery. This desire for the centre or power is a very strong need for the colonized selfhood. Fanon in his book *Black Skin White Mask* provides an explanation of this need. He writes that, "to be the other is to feel that one is always in a shaky position, to be always on guard, ready to be rejected (76)." It is to recover from this sense of insecurity that the colonized desires to shift from the periphery to the centre.

One further example of Dutt's internalization of the Occidental view can be seen in the poem *King Porus*.

Like to a lion chain' That,
 tho' faint-bleeding stands in pride-
 With eyes were unsubdued
 Yet flashed the fire looks that defied
 King Porus boldly went.

Where' midst the gray and glittering crowd,

Sat god-like Alexander. (ll. 87-93)

In this account of Alexander's invasion of India, King Porus is rather heroically depicted. However a deeper look reveals the Occidental hegemony. Though Porus is striding like the bravest of all mortals, he is after all defeated and humbled in front of the divine God like Alexander. Alexander, the Greek, the European, the representative of the West is superior to the defeated, weak and humbled East. An echo of this can be found in Said's *Orientalism* where he explains that, although the Orient is the Occident's cultural contestant, it's 'other', still the Occident is always superior to the Orient. Here Alexander is the eternal God and Porus is the mortal man. The poem farther reads-

'How should I treat thee?' ask'd

The mighty king of Macedon-

'Aye-as a king!'- respons'd

In royal pride Ind's haughty son.

The king was pleased

And him released.

Thus Ind's crown who lost and won. (ll. 99-105)

Here we find the just white man; the virtuous white man who rewards the defeated king for his bravery. This fairness and righteousness of the Occident is again a hegemonic imagery created by the Occident. One other very important element emerges in this poem. The native king Porus does not fit the imagery of the effeminate colonized male. He is strong, brave and masculine in character. In fact he is as much masculine and martial as the great king Alexander himself. However this martial native king is situated in a bygone era. Madhusudan writes –

The crown that once had deck'd thy brow

Is trampled down – and thou sunk law-

Of glistening gold no more is thine!

Alas each conquering tyrant's lust

Hath robbed thee of thy very dust! (ll. 122-126)

This loss of the once great nation and king is situated in some far away time in history. The greatness of the nation has been lost in successive invasions by outsiders or to put it in the poet's words, "tyrant's lust." This echoes of the nostalgia for the golden past. While Dutt never conformed to the notion of the golden past in the sense that the revivalist and even the reformists did, he accepted the view that India's greatness has been lost due to the invasions of the outsiders, long before the British came. The invaders to blame then would be the Muslim rulers. Dutt never took this constructed version of history with the political zeal of the orthodox faction of the society. It was internalized in him as just a traditional view prevalent in society.

Hence in the sonnet phase of Madhusudan Dutt's literary career one can see the existence of a very hybrid postcolonial identity. This is a postcolonial identity which has thoroughly

internalized the Occidental hegemony and dwells in the mimicry stage of colonialism. This is a postcolonial identity whose realm of imagination is completely dominated by the Occidental discourse. Further example of Dutt's internalization can be seen in his English essay 'The Anglo Saxon and the Hindu' which is anthologized in *Madhusudan Rachanabali*. In this essay Dutt explains the West's civilizing mission in India. He describes the Hindu as a fallen race and the Anglo-Saxon or the English as their saviour. While depicting the Hindu Dutt writes that, "The Hindu, as he stands before you, is a fallen being – once – a green, a beautiful, a tall, a majestic, a flowering tree; now – blasted by lightning! Who can recall him to life?" About the Anglo – Saxons Dutt writes, "It is the solemn mission of the Anglo – Saxon to renovate, to regenerate, to civilize – or, in one word, to Christianize the Hindu (607)." It is needless to say that both of the imageries here are projections of the West or the Occident. The Hindu is a fallen entity the responsibility of whose emancipation has fallen on the shoulders of the colonizers. This is a classic example of what has been termed as the white man's burden and this white man's burden is the justification of the colonizers for their colonial enterprise. Acceptance of this view by the colonized is the highest form of internalization possible and this is what one witnesses in this first phase of Dutt's literary career.

If Dutt's first phase in literary career spans from his Hindu college days to his Madras days, his second phase would begin on his return to Calcutta when he started writing in Bengali. Here a significant shift occurs in Dutt's own identity. One might identify Dutt's realization of his futile attempt of establishing himself as an English poet as the factor responsible for this cognitive and psychological shift, a fact which has been acknowledged by Dutt himself. Whatever the inner workings of his transformations might have been, this second phase bears witness to the emergence of a different form of identity. This identity stands in almost an

opposition to the previous westernized one and the literary work where this new form of identity fully reveals itself is the epic poem called *Meghnad Badh Kabya*. *Meghnad Badh Kabya* is based on the epic of Ramayana. It is one of the main religious texts of the Hindu religion and is widely known in the society. In writing *Meghnad Badh Kabya*, Dutt's main aim was writing an epic in the Bengali language. His notion was to create an epic as far away as possible from Valmiki's Ramayana. In doing so he had brought in two traditions of myth and epic together – the East and the West. In a letter to Raj Narain, Dutt wrote that –

It is my ambition to engraft the exquisite graces of the Greek mythology on our own; in the present poem, I mean to give free scope to my inventing powers (such as they are) and borrow as little as I can from Valmiki. I shall not borrow Greek stories, but write, rather try to write as a Greek would have done (529).

The poem is said to be influenced by Milton's *Paradise lost*, however, Dutt has acknowledged his source of inspiration to be both Milton and Homer. He had remarked that both Milton and he himself had drawn inspiration from the original *Iliad*. Besides writing the Bengali epic by drawing from Western mythology, Dutt had demonstrated a certain originality which was previously absent from the scene of Bengali literature. This originality lay in his handling of the literary device of tragedy. Ashish Nandy in *The Intimate Enemy* writes that –

Tragedy in the Puranas did not centre around a grand final defeat or death of the hero, or around the final victory of the ungodly. Tragedy lay in the majestic sweep of time and in the unavoidable decline or decay that informed the mightiest and the humblest, the epochal and the trivial, and the permanent and the transient. Meghnadvadh represented a

different concept of tragedy. Not only were the good and the evil clearly separated in the epic, according to well defined criteria, but evil finally triumphed (21).

This notion of tragedy is a western one. While the tragedies of the Puranas are not individual Oriented, western tragedies are very much so. They are linear, well defined and characterized by the fall of the hero. By incorporating the western mythological notion of tragedy in the rewriting of Ramayana, Dutt has produced a characteristic hybridity in his epic. This hybridity resulted from assimilation of the two traditions of the East and the West. This new kind of literature created appropriated equally from both the East and the West. Michael Madhusudan Dutt himself was no longer in the mimicry stage of colonialism. He no longer composed English sonnets in emulation of Milton or Byron. He had become the Bengali poet who brought together the East and the West and created something very new.

Apart from these characteristic features of the epic, Dutt's most major innovation laid in his interpretation of the Ramayana. In his interpretation, Dutt had deviated from the classic text of Ramayana. His deviation laid in making the villain Ravan and his son Meghnad the heroes of his epic *Meghnad Badh Kabya*. In another letter written to Raj Narain Basu, Dutt stated that, "People here grumble and say that the heart of the poet in Meghnad is with the Rakhasas. And that is the real truth. I despise Ram and his rabble; but the idea of Ravan elevates and kindles my imagination; he was a grand fellow (539)." In *Meghnad Badh Kabya*, Ravan's heroism lay in his patriotism. Dutt had depicted him as a king fighting the invasion of the Ram and his followers. He is a king fighting for the defence of his nation. There is a very strong nationalistic element in this depiction. This patriotism has everything to do with the nation and very little to do with religion or the traditional concept of dharma. This marginal importance of religion and emphasis of patriotism and nation is a very secularist approach. By de-contextualizing Ravan from the

religious myth and placing him in a secular forefront, Dutt had produced a secular interpretation of Valmiki's Ramayana. Thus, Dutt had made it possible for the poet to have secular freedom. This secularism is a very nineteenth century concept and is a concept directly related to the concept of the nation and nationalism. By taking up this secularist approach and deviating from the traditional religious text of Ramayana, Dutt has reflected a spirit of rebellion which was inherent in his character. This spirit of rebellion can be traced back to the Young Bengal. The individual Michael Madhusudan Dutt cannot be called a secular man in the traditional sense of the word. He in his personal life was not very religiously motivated. A fact attested by the predicament surrounding his burial after his death. Several Churches refused to perform his last rites as he has never been an active or functioning member of those Churches. Dutt had discarded Hinduism and although converted to Christianity was in no sense of the word, a devout Christian. The period being the nineteenth century Bengal, religion played a very central role to one's social identity and socio-cultural belonging. In this sense Dutt was an outsider. He was alienated from both the Hindu and the Christian communities. This position of alienation made it possible for him to give such secularist approach to his literary creation.

Dutt demonstrated further innovation in portraying the hero Ravan as he did. The traditional mythical heroes have both masculine and feminine attributes. Machismo was not adhered to as the greatest quality in the literature of the East. Mythical Eastern heroes and villains have both the feminine and the masculine in them. Nandy writes that, "Rama, however Godlike was traditionally not the final repository of all good. Unlike the Semitic Gods, he was more human and more overtly a mixture of the good and the bad, the courageous and the cowardly, the male and the female (19)." This, according to the psychology of the West, is a major defiance and subversion. The West is characterized by the marginalization of the feminine

and emphasizing of the masculine or what Nandy has termed as hyper masculinity. This idea of masculinity is one of the hegemonic impositions of the colonizers and this was internalized by Michael Madhusudan Dutt and others growing up in a colonial socio-cultural dynamics. This colonial hyper masculinity was emphasised by Dutt in the characterization of the hero Ravan. This patriotic Ravan is a very masculine one; he is a far cry from the image of the effeminate Bengali. In portraying a patriotic masculine hero zealously fighting for the defence of his country, Dutt showed a very covert evidence of resistance. The image of this patriotic Ravan then becomes an attempt at recovery of the loss of dignity of the postcolonial self. The postcolonial identity seen through the protagonist here is no longer an effeminate one; it is very masculine in nature. Moreover, this masculine protagonist is a nationalist protagonist.

Another example of Dutt's resistance can be seen in his play *Ekei Ki Bole Shobbhota*. The proscenium theatre's history in Bengal has a very colonial beginning. It started in Calcutta in the last decade of the eighteenth century. At first there were only European theatre meant for the entertainment of the Europeans living in Calcutta but very soon Bengali theatre emerged in the scene. A Russian individual called Gerasim Lebedev is credited as the pioneer of the Bengali theatre who set out at his pioneering work as a purely commercial enterprise. Soon the theatre became the leading form of entertainment for the native population of the city. It should be mentioned here that prior to proscenium theatre the Eastern form of dramatic entertainment was the Jatra, an open air performance of dramatic texts. The performers of the Jatra were a band of travelling troupe who seasonally travelled from village to village setting up temporary stages and staging performances. As such, the Jatra was and still is a mobile unit of entertainment which is a sharp contrast to the proscenium theatre that requires a permanent structure in the form of a playhouse or the theatre. The idea of the proscenium theatre was a very new one and was a

novelty for the Calcutta audience. It perfectly satisfied the requirement of a permanent form of all year round entertainment for the urban population. Theatre as such in Bengal was an urbanized postcolonial phenomenon. Although at the very beginning translation of European plays were performed by the Bengali actors on stage, soon Bengali plays came to occupy the stage. Much later when the nationalist agitation had started in the society, Bengali theatre became a leading voice of dissidence. Partha Chatterjee in *The Black Hole Of Empire* writes that—

The Calcutta theatre is a good example of the strategic politics of the emerging nationalist elite of a colonial city. Denied equal participation in a racially divided civil society, the nationalist elite proceeded to carve out a separate public cultural sphere for itself. But in doing so, it also hoped to reach out to a wider urban public, educate it in its new and sophisticated tastes, and persuade it to listen to the new doctrines of social reform and nationalism. Of all the means employed by the Indian nationalist elite to create a base of mass support in the cities, the theatre was one of the most effective (232).

Theatre in Bengal besides being a popular medium of entertainment was also a medium which created consciousness and popularized the nationalist agenda. This nationalist agenda was creating an image of Bengal and formulating a history which showed the European colonizers to be the villains of the Bengali self and nation; not the invaders of the thousand years of the foreign rule. An example of this can be seen in the play of *Shiraj Ud Dawla* which lamented the fall of Shiraj in the hands of the East India Company and the betrayer collaborator Mir Zafar. The play identified the historical episode of defeat in the battle of Plassey as the loss of independence of the nation. Another remarkable play in this regard was one of the first Bengali

plays of literary quality called the *Nil Darpan* or the *Indigo Planting Mirror* written by Dinbandhu Mitra from 1858 to 1859. This play was based on the indigo revolt in Bengal and achieved the distinction of being the first Bengali play to be banned by the colonial ruling body. So when Madhusudan started writing Bengali plays in 1858, he had stepped into an arena of artistic performance which was already characterized by strong signs of dissidence and resistance. He started writing plays almost on a whim, wanting to improve the literary quality of the Bengali theatre. The result was the play *Sharmistha* performed in the year of 1858 or 1859. *Sharmistha* was written in blank verse and was the first of its kind on Bengali stage. Some of his later plays were *Padmavati*, *Krishna Kumari* and *Maya Kanan*. He wrote the farces *Buro Shaliker Ghare Row* and *Ekei Ki Bole Shobbhota* in the late 1860s. Among these two farces the later one, that is, *Ekei Ki Bole Shobbhota* is a satire of the contemporary society of Calcutta. The act of writing a farce or satire is very subversive in itself. Satire indicates towards the anomalies and oppressions in society, it points out the subjugations and rebels against it through laughter. In theatre satire has long been the language of the oppressed; it has long been used as the language of resistance by the oppressed and the subjugated. The play which does not have much of a plot basically is a depiction of the cultural clashes between the old and the new generation. While the newer generation is the English educated westernized youth, the older generation are their non-westernized parents and family. The play basically describes the lack of morality and the general depravity and decadence of this westernized class. Dutt portrays them as lampoons that are laughable in their attempt to westernize themselves and are in effect, in the name of western liberalization simply pursuing immorality. Much of his criticism in this regard is directed at the westernized babus and their club or association called the 'Gyantarangini Shabha'. The formation of numerous clubs and association was a characteristic feature of the new

urbanized Calcutta society. Historically speaking these associations and clubs were often harbingers of social progress in general but there also existed the other side of the coin. By making a caricature of the ‘Gyantarangini Shabha’, Dutt has suggested that in the absence of true purposeful function and action, a positive entity or a body like an association can become the breeding ground of unproductiveness and immorality. The play also depicts the corruption of the petty European law enforcers in society. Dutt basically portrays the Calcutta society in general characterized by its rampant corruption and decadence. The play ends with the question of whether this should be called a ‘civilization’. By raising this question Dutt is questioning the civilizing mission of the Europeans in the colonies. This attitude is a sharp contrast with his previously written essay, ‘The Anglo Saxon and the Hindu’ where Dutt heralds the civilizing mission of the West as the only means of salvation of the East. By satirizing the Young Bengal and all that they stand for – Dutt indicated towards the behavioural excesses of the Young Bengal – Dutt shows that he had moved away from the mimicry stage of colonialism. He exhibits his resistance which is a resistance against the colonial hegemony. This resistance led to the formation of a postcolonial identity which is much more conscious and assured of its cultural and national identity.

The Bengali poems written by Dutt fully reveal this new postcolonial identity. His transition can be seen in the poems like *Banga Bhasha*, *Bhasha* and *Bangabhumir Proti*. The poem *Banga Bhasha* or *The Bengali Language* begins with the line, “He banga bhandare tobo Bibidho roton (1)” which in translation will be ‘Oh the jewels in the treasury of Bengal’. In the poem Dutt regrets and laments his endeavour of searching for fame in the English language while his own language has such brilliant gems to offer. This poem marks Dutt’s return to his own language, his return to his own culture. In this poem Dutt reverses the previous journey

undertaken by his postcolonial self. He has now returned to his own self from other selves, he has moved away from other worlds to his own world. The last few lines of the poem read –

Ja phiri, ogyan tui, ja re phiri ghore

Palilam agga shukhe, pailam kale (ll. 11-12)

Go return, you ignorant soul, go return to your home

And I obey the command, filled with joy

This poem signals the completion of a kind of a circuit. The journey that began from a young poet's sighs 'For the distant Albion's Shore', ended in his coming back to Bengal and rejoicing in its culture and language. The sharp contrast with 'The distant Albion's Shore' can be seen in the poem, *Bangabhumir Protib*. In this poem Dutt beseeches his native land to remember him after his death.

Rekho go ma dashere mone

E minoti kori pode (ll. 1-2)

Please remember thy servant mother

I beseech at your feet

These lines are a sharp contrast with the lines –

To cross the vast Atlantic waves

For glory or a nameless grave!

Instead of yearning for the Albion's shore 'As if she were my native land,' Dutt now yearns for immortality of his poetic self within the realm of his own language and culture. Dutt's poetic self has reclaimed its identity within his own world and his own nationality. Other poems like *Parichay*, *Kabi Matribhasha* and *Bhasha*, shows the formation of an identity based on the self's own culture. These poems show the newly emerged self's endeavour to reconnect with the cultural past. This reconnection with the cultural past can be farther seen in the poems *Kalidas* and *Jaidev* which are addressed to the ancient Indian poets Kalidas and Jaidev. These poems are almost like the postcolonial poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt having a cultural dialogue with his cultural past. Dutt had also addressed poems to western poets such as Dante. So, the second phase of his literary career does not only root him in the East; it shows him having a bridge with the West as well. However, the bridge to the West now is through the Bengali language. Dutt's only novel in Bengali called the *Hector Badh* is a further example of this bridge between the East and the West. *Hector Badh* written in the year of 1871 is the depiction of the Killing of Hector. This novel has been written in the Bengali language. So it becomes a Bengali author depicting the Greek mythology in the Bengali language. As such, this novel is the first of its kind. The novel is an undertaking in presenting the West to the East. The phenomenon until then has been the other way around. Till then, the West practiced a monopoly of presenting and representing the East in its own language, through its history, philosophy and literature. By presenting the West to the Eastern readers through the medium of Bengali language, Dutt is essentially trying to possess the power over representation. It seems like an attempt to step out of the complex dynamics inherent in the politics of representation. In conclusion, Dutt's Bengali poem heralds the return of the prodigal son. It establishes his nationalist identity, a nationalist identity which is deeply embedded in the cultural identity.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt is often heralded as a poet born before his time. It is said that his thoughts, his views, his philosophy about art and life preceded his contemporary time. In actuality, Dutt is very much a product of his own time and society. It is because he was born at that period that he became the Michael Madhusudan Dutt, one of the pioneers of Bengali literature. His contemporary time, the particular social and cultural dynamics of colonial Bengal made it possible for him to have such a unique blend of western and eastern canonization. It is this unique blend of the West and the East that produced the epic *Meghnad Badh Kabya*, the literary work that has immortalized him in the history of modern Bengali literature. If Dutt was born even two or three decades later, he would not have led the life and become the individual that he did. He would not have to go through the same stages of the identity formation in the same manner as the social and cultural dynamics by then had gone through certain transformations in colonial Bengal. In some ways Dutt contributed in eradicating or resolving the issues that gave rise to the identity crisis suffered by Dutt and his contemporaries. Hence, the contemporary society and time produced the individual Michael Madhusudan Dutt and the individual Michael Madhusudan Dutt and his contemporary time produced his great literary pieces. It was a combination of Dutt and his contemporary society that placed him as an outsider to the mainstream Hindu community and the Christian community. This position of the outsider which was a very unique one gave him the freedom and made it possible for him to commence in his literary path with a secularist approach. By doing so Dutt had opened the arena for secular thought. He had opened the field of secularism which had made it possible for later authors to bring forth secularism as a concept and practice in society. This in turn made it possible for secular consciousness and politics to exist in society. Therefore Dutt had unveiled the vista of

secularism in Bengali literature or in other words secularism in Bengali literature began from Michel Madhusudan Dutt.

The nationalist identity in Dutt did not have much political agenda; his nationalism was not political nationalism. His nationalist identity was almost entirely based on the cultural identity of being a Bengali. It was because Dutt had resolved the identity dilemma and had established the cultural nationalist Bengali identity that the next great poet Rabindranath Tagore did not need to face the same identity dilemma. Tagore inherited the West and the East together; he did not get caught between cultures. Dutt through his literature had firmly established the cultural nationalist identity of the Bengali.

Chapter 3

If Michael Madhusudan Dutt is the first Bengali poet who made secularist approach in the nationalist consciousness possible then the author who based nationalist identity on the premise of religious revivalism is Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. As it has been mentioned in the introductory chapter - various paths were taken to satisfy the need for self actualization in terms of a national identity. These paths in turn led to distinct streams of nationalism within the overall doctrine of nationalism itself. While one path led to religious revivalism, others led to armed revolution and yet another led to secular, humanist universalism. While Dutt is positioned in the secular end of the spectrum, Chattopadhyay is situated in the revivalist end.

Chattopadhyay's novels especially his later novels such as *Anandamath*, *Devi Chowdhurani* and *Sitaram*, which are known as his trilogy has in them embedded a very conscious nationalist project. While Dutt's nationalist identity in literature lacked any specific political agenda, one finds in Chattopadhyay's works the presence of a very well defined and well structured political agenda. In fact, his historical, political novels are the first in Bengali literature that shows evidence of any active form of resistance. However, this resistance was yet to become directly anti-colonial. What one finds in the novels of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay is a postcolonial identity that has become a decidedly nationalist identity. It can be said that his novels demonstrate the emergence of a specific type of nationalism in Bengali literature. This specific type of nationalism is said to be associated with religious revivalism and has later become an integral part of the overall nationalist movement. This chapter will look into the particular kind of nationalist identity found in the works of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.

The aim of this chapter is to look into the construction of a specific nationalist identity and the emergence of a particular kind of nationalism through Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's

novels. This specific nationalist identity and the particular form of nationalism as we will see is a militant nationalist identity and militant nationalism constructed in the dominion of religion. The novels that I will be focusing on for this purpose are –

1. *Anandamath*

And

2. *Sitaram*

As Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's militant nationalism is based on the platform of religious identity, he is often heralded as the father of *Hindutva* or Hindu nationalism in Bengali literature. In fact, the notion of Hindu nationalism as advocated by Chattopadhyay has long been misinterpreted or de-contextualized by orthodox religious factions of the society for furthering their own political agenda. So, this chapter will also focus on clarifying this notion of Hindu nationalism as seen in his literary works. I will attempt to understand Chattopadhyay's need for a religious premise of nationalism and nationalist identity in the context of his socio-cultural and political dynamics. This chapter will also focus on the resistance of this nationalist identity in literature – although in indirect and covert form – which has later influenced and led to the resistance in nationalist politics.

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's trilogy that is, *Anandamath*, *Debi Chowdhurani* and *Sitaram*, all three together clearly define and embody the nationalist project advocated by the author. Among these three novels *Anandamath* was written first. The novel was published in the year of 1882 and has been heralded as the first political novel of Bengali literature. The novel is set against the background of the Great Bengal famine of 1770 or the famine of 1176 according to the Bengali calendar. This period is the transitional period in the history of the colonial rule. It

is interesting to note that in formulating and portraying a nationalist resistance in literature, Chattopadhyay chose to travel back to the period when the East India Company had not yet consolidated its rule. The historical period in question was in fact a period when any real authority and administrative rule had become weak and ambiguous at the best. The underlying reason behind this was the existence of two operative bodies of authority in Bengal at that time. Between the dual authority of the Nawab and the East India Company, any form of significant systematic rule had practically disappeared. What existed was the prevalence of general mayhem, chaos and confusion all over the region. The condition of the region was further aggravated by the famine which was largely caused by the large tributes appropriated by the Company from Bengal's treasury and later by the high rate of taxation imposed on the peasantry. This famine which is estimated to have killed ten million people, created such a condition of suffering and destruction in the region that in certain parts it gave rise to a state of anarchy. In situating the novel against this backdrop Chattopadhyay dealt with the problematic of having to renounce the rule of an established body of authority. The first instance of physical resistance in Bengali literature then is situated in the twilight years of colonial rule when authority is not firmly or completely established and hence renouncement of that authority too is not an outright act of treason. Chattopadhyay gives a very vivid description of this period in the novel –

In 1176 Bengal had not yet come under the rule of the British. The British was then the tax collector of the region. They collected tax but had not yet assumed the responsibility of the protection of the Bengali. The responsibility of collecting tax was that of the British and the responsibility of protecting the life and wealth of the Bengali was that of the sinful betrayer and heinous Mirzafar. Mirzafar was unfit to protect himself, how would he protect Bengal? Mirzafar drugged himself

and dozed. The British extorted the revenue and wrote despatches. The Bengalis merely wept and resigned themselves to their ruin (676).

The novel depicts the story of Mahendra Singh, a prosperous householder who is driven out of his village with his family by the prospect of starvation. While travelling through the devastated, famine stricken land, he gets separated from his wife and child, and encounters a band of rebel *sanyasis* (holy men or sages) who calls themselves Santans - the children of the mother. They organise themselves against the oppressors with the aim of bringing back the lost glory of the motherland.

The novel achieved great importance in the later period of armed resistance. For lot of the revolutionary parties it became a part of the revolutionary literature. Example can be cited of the Anusilon Samity, an organized revolutionary party established in the late nineteenth century. The party members pledged their allegiance in front of the image of the Goddess Kali which for them was the symbolism of *shakti* or strength. This is a practice that has been portrayed in the novel *Anandamath* which preceded the establishment of the Anusilon Samity. In fact, it is said that the party itself was very much influenced by the nationalistic teachings in the literary works of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. The song Bande Mataram which became the hymn of the nationalist movement was incorporated in the novel. It was the hymn of the revolutionary santans. The song Bande Mataram likened the motherland to the image of the Goddess Durga and as such gave rise to a controversy. It was suggested that given the popularity of the song as a bearer of nationalist sentiment it would alienate the large population of Muslims in the country who would not be able to relate to the manifestation of the nation into the image of the Goddess Durga. As a result of this the Indian National Congress later revoked the stanzas that incorporated religious symbolism within the image of the nation. There after the Congress party

only sang those stanzas of Bande Mataram which connoted the nation and not religion. However the RSS or the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh – a very right wing religious political party – still sings the full song in their party assemblies and meetings till date. This controversy surrounding the song Bande Mataram brings to light the divergent streams in the nationalist struggle, a divergence which is still in existence in the subcontinent.

Chattopadhyay himself had disclaimed the novel *Anandamath* as being a historical novel but besides being set in the period of the 1770 famine, the novel has a further historical element in it. This historical factor is the sannayasi rebellion or the monk's rebellion of the late eighteenth century Bengal. The Sannayasi revolt was led by a group of Muslim Fakirs and Hindu Sannyasis in the famine stricken countryside. It is often regarded as the earliest instances of anti-colonial resistance in Bengal. Chattopadhyay took this historical event and fictionalized it, eliminating the participation of the Fakirs, to suit the nationalist agenda constructed in *Anandamath*. This fictionalized account of the sannayasi or the santans in the novel depict a tale of heroic resistance and patriotism. Chattopadhyay's previous historical novels such as, *Raj Singha* situates the narrative of heroism and valour outside Bengal; *Raj Singha* was the heroic depiction of the Rajputana. So, by situating the narration of heroism in Bengal, Chattopadhyay was essentially attempting to create a historiography of martial and militant Bengali past; he was in fact valorising the Bengali past by giving it a martial and warlike historicity. This valorising of the Bengali past is a very key element in understanding the nationalism constructed by Chattopadhyay. According to Chattopadhyay, Bengal and by extension India has been a subject nation ever since the thousand years of foreign rule or to use his own phrase, 'yavana rule' or Muslim rule. In this long period of domination, the Bengalis - whom Chattopadhyay referred to as the 'Hindu' - had become weak and emasculated. The Hindu suffered from cultural fatalism,

he suffered from a lack of history as his history has always been written by others and he suffered from a lack of national solidarity. All these had made the Bengali or the Hindu wanting in a heroic account of their history. To Chattopadhyay formulating a heroic past was a means of achieving national solidarity. It should be mentioned here that Chattopadhyay does not only mean physical strength while speaking of valour and strength. Partha Chatterjee while discussing Chattopadhyay's standpoint on this subject in *Nationalist thought and the Colonial world* writes that –

Yet physical strength is not the same thing as force or power. Power or the lack of it is a social phenomenon; power results from the application on physical strength of four elements: enterprise, solidarity, courage and perseverance. The Bengalis as a people have always lacked these elements, which is why they are a powerless people. But these are cultural attributes: they can be acquired (57).

Chattopadhyay himself wrote extensively on this subject. In his essay 'Bangalir Bahubal' anthologized in *Bankim Rachanavali*, he stated that –

If ever the Bengalis acquire a compelling desire for some national good, if this desire becomes rooted in the hearts of every Bengali, if the Bengalis become prepared to sacrifice their lives for this desire and if this desire becomes permanent, then the Bengalis would certainly become a powerful people (213).

So construction of a militant historiography was a way for Chattopadhyay of empowering the Bengali. It should be mentioned here that this conception of a militant historiography in Chattopadhyay was also a result of internalization of the colonial hegemony. The colonial binary situated the masculine with the colonizers and the effeminate with the colonized. This can be

seen in the colonial depiction of the effeminate Bengali figure. The colonizers always advocated martial valour and masculinity in opposition to femininity and androgyny. So the claim to a martial past on part of the colonized operates on two distinct levels. On one hand it shows the internalization of the colonial hegemony and on the other hand it shows a resistance to the colonial depiction of emasculation. However this resistance only rises after the internalization of the hegemony has been completed. The colonized then seeing themselves through the eyes of the colonizers, sets out to remedy and refute the characteristic traits of the culture which the colonial hegemony has taught them to regard as demeaning and humiliating. Ashish Nandy in *The Intimate Enemy* extensively discussed this aspect of need for masculinity –

They took the position that the Hindus have been great – which meant, in their terms, virile and adult – in ancient times and had fallen on bad days because of their loss of contact with textual Brahminism and true Ksatriyahood. Obviously, if Ksatriyatej or martial valour was the first differentia of a ruler, the ruler who had greater ksatriyatej deserved to rule. This was hardly a compliment to the living Hindus; if anything, it perfectly fitted the dominant structure of colonial thought, as well as the ideology of some Western Orientalists (24).

So by depicting the band of santans as a militant force in the novel, Chattopadhyay was essentially refuting the figure of the effeminate Bengali and striving towards a resistance in accordance to the colonial hegemony.

Once this militant force has been created and firmly established in the historiography, the requirement for its ‘other’ comes forth. This requirement for an ‘other’ in Chattopadhyay’s novel was filled in by the Muslim ruling force. Two basic reasons can be given as to why

Chattopadhyay chose the Muslim ruling force instead of the British ruling force as the other to the nationalist resistance. The first one was that Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay throughout his life had been employed in the civil service. So, a position of outright anti-colonialism was inconceivable to him. In fact, Chattopadhyay made several revisions in the reprinting of the novel *Anandamath* as he feared that the novel might be a source of professional inconvenience for him. He thought that being employed in a government post would expose him to a certain level of censure from which a common civilian was exempted. This fear was not without basis as Chattopadhyay's promotion was cancelled shortly following the publishing of the novel *Anandamath*. Besides this, Chattopadhyay also believed in the progress in the society that was brought on by the arrival of the colonial rule. So, while Chattopadhyay did dream of a militant nationalist aspiration in the Bengali people, his position in regards to the colonial rule was filled with ambiguity. The second reason was the idea of the golden past and the thousand years of foreign rule. In this distant image of a glorified history and the demise of that image in the hands of the foreign rulers, Chattopadhyay found a readymade cultural construct and a convenient cultural and historical 'other'. However, this othering of the Muslim ruling force in part of Chattopadhyay was less a matter of being anti-Muslim and more a matter of cultural regeneration. It should be noted here that this Muslim other for Chattopadhyay was not the Muslim peasantry but only the Muslim ruling faction. Hence, in absence of the British as the other he was looking for an other against whom the militant resistance could take up arms. In establishing the Muslim ruling force as the other, Chattopadhyay also permanently established the presence of the Muslim in the Bengali literature; this was something that was previously absent in the prior literary works. While Madhusudan Dutt's fascination with the Muslim as can be seen in his play *Rizia* stemmed from an urge towards literary creativity – he regarded the

Muslim race to be a better vehicle of tragedy and drama in comparison to the Hindu race – in Chattopadhyay it stemmed from a need for political othering in literature.

The militant band of holy men or the santans who were engaged in armed resistance against this other, the Muslim ruling force, did so by the means of a strict regime of *anusilon* or discipline in the novel. These santans were shown to have a definite goal of freeing the motherland and reviving and reclaiming the lost glory of the golden past. In this lies the nationalist agenda advocated by Chattopadhyay in the novel. This nationalist agenda focused primarily upon the regeneration of the Hindu people. Chattopadhyay does not only mean religion by the term Hindu. The term Hindu he explained connotes the entire culture and the way of life of the people living in the subcontinent. By saying this, Chattopadhyay was moving beyond the geographical confines of Bengal and incorporating the people of the entire subcontinent in his nationalist agenda. So, by regeneration Chattopadhyay did not only mean religious regeneration. What he was aiming for was a total cultural regeneration. This cultural regeneration according to Chattopadhyay was essential for the formation of a common nationalist platform for the entire nation. A strong nationalist character of the Bengali would only emerge after a cultural regeneration of the Bengali people. Hence, Chattopadhyay's nationalist agenda did not only aim towards a cultural regeneration of the people, it also aimed towards giving the people a common nationalist-cultural platform in form of the Hindu religion or what he has called the national religion. Chatterjee in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* writes that –

For the national-cultural project was not only to define a distinct cultural identity for the nation and to assert its claim to modernity, it was also to find a viable cultural basis for the convergence of the national and the popular. In the Indian case, unlike that of many countries in central and southern Europe, neither

language nor racial distinctiveness was a suitable criterion for defining national solidarity. Rather two elements combined to identify Hinduism as a likely candidate which could provide Indian nationalism with a viable cultural foundation of nationhood: first, the possibility of a large popular basis, and second, the very identification by modern Orientalist scholarship of the great spiritual qualities of classical Hinduism (75).

This quotation above clearly shows that for Chattopadhyay seeking out religion as the basis of a nationalist-cultural platform was a strategical tactic. He chose to situate his militant nationalism within the sphere of religion because no other ideological, social or cultural apparatus pertaining to the mass sentiment was available to him.

In the novel *Anandamath*, Chattopadhyay combined patriotism for the nation and religious-cultural identity together. He did this by means of merging the image of the motherland with the image of the Goddess Durga. A vivid description of this is given in the novel when the leader of the santans, Satyananda takes Mahendra through the three chambers to describe to him the ideological basis of their struggle. In the chambers were the idols of the Goddess in her various manifestations. These different manifestations of the Goddess were meant to symbolize the motherland. In the first chamber was the glorious, benevolent and generous image of the Goddess Jagadhatri, the Goddess of agriculture, symbolizing the motherland of the past; in the second chamber was the idol of the Goddess in her manifestation of Kali, the symbol of strength and destruction. In Chattopadhyay's words, "See what mother have become (683)." In the third chamber was the idol of the Goddess Durga, mother as she is destined to be or in other words the future of the nation after the successful completion of the struggle. By likening the glorious and benevolent image of the Goddess Jagadhatri with the country or the motherland of the past

Chattopadhyay was invoking the loss of the golden past. The symbolism of the Goddess Kali implied that the revolutionaries or the santans must become worshippers of strength and take up arms to reclaim that golden past. The final imagery of the Goddess Durga symbolized the future motherland once the golden past has been reclaimed by armed resistance.

The revolutionary santans farther reinforced this image of the motherland. The word santan means child, they were the children of the mother or the motherland. These santans being holy men brought out the religious basis of their patriotism for the mother land. The mother-son dichotomy in terms of the nation then becomes laden with distinct religious overtones. Further example of Chattopadhyay's regeneration campaign which actually implies empowering and strengthening of the Bengali or the Hindu can be seen in the image of the santan. Chattopadhyay writes –

Mahendra: I can't understand this. Why are santans Vaishnavs? Non-violence is the creed of Vaishnavism.

Satayananda: That is Chaityanna Dev's Vaishnavism. That is the result of the influence of atheist Buddhist religion. The indication of actual vaishnavism lies in subjugation of the evil, salvaging of the nation. Because Lord Vishnu is the protector of the world (704).

Here two distinct branches within Hinduism can be seen. One is *Shaktatism* and the other is *Vaishnavism*. While Vaishnavism – devotees of the androgynous Krishna- upholds ahimsa or non-violence and humanism above all, Shaktatism – worshipping the Goddess Kali – upholds reverence to strength. So, by incorporating qualities of Shaktatism in the Vaishnava cult of the santans, Chattopadhyay was in effect reconstructing, reforming and regenerating the notion of

Vaishnavism itself. He was attempting to eliminate any evidence of non-violence and androgyny from the national religion and was militarizing the very notion of the Hindu people. Chattopadhyay further portrayed the santans as total revolutionaries –

The duty of the Children is hard. He alone is worthy of this duty who has renounced everything for the sake of Mother India. The man whose heart is tied with the strings of human attachment is like a kite that is tied to the reel; it cannot fly high or far from the earth below (703).

This makes the santans radical revolutionaries with no family ties, ready to sacrifice all. This conception of absolute radical revolutionaries can be seen reflected later in the secret revolutionary societies of the colonial Bengal.

In the end of the novel the band of rebel santans are shown to emerge victorious against the combined forces of the Muslim and the British. Through this victory in the battle Chattopadhyay showed that the Bengali rebels were capable of winning against anyone they took up arms against, whether the forces of the Muslim Nawab or the East India Company itself. However, the santans only fought the British once they refused to forego of their alliance with the Muslim ruler. Here lies Chattopadhyay's ambiguity in terms of direct anti-colonial resistance. By fighting the British forces and defeating them Chattopadhyay through the image of the santans was refuting the figure of the effeminated colonized body. This colonized body was masculine, martial and victorious. However, this colonized body never directly took up arms against the British themselves. The other for this colonized body was never the British colonizer. The conclusion of the novel elucidates Chattopadhyay's position clearly.

Satyananda: The Muslim kingdom has been destroyed, but the Hindu realm has not been established yet. There are still a lot of British in Kolkata.

He: The Hindu realm will not be established now. Your presence will only increase futile killing. So, let us leave.

Satyananda: Lord! If the Hindu kingdom will not be established then who will be the next king? Will the Muslim come to power again?

He: No, the British will be the king now.

This 'He' in the novel is the voice of wisdom and knowledge that guides the rebel santans in their uprising. This 'He' emerges as the ultimate voice of authority for the rebels in their struggle. It is this 'He' that is telling the leader of the santans Satyananda that it is not time yet for the establishment of the Hindu nation or the Hindu *rashtra*. The age of colonization needs to continue for the time being. The author through the voice of 'He' provided reason for this –

The essence of the Hindu religion resides in knowledge. There are two kinds of knowledge, the knowledge of the inner self or the spiritual knowledge and the knowledge about things external to us. Spiritual knowledge reigns supreme in the ancient Hindu religion. But spiritual knowledge cannot be attained without external knowledge. Knowledge about things external to us no longer exists in this country. So we have to bring in external knowledge from foreign lands. The British has knowledge about things external to the inner self, they are proficient in the external world. We will make the British our king. Bolstering the mass with external knowledge will only exalt the ancient religion. And as long as that does

not happen, as long as the Hindu does not once again regain its revered strength and knowledge, the kingdom of the British will prevail (741).

Here Chattopadhyay accepted the rule of the British as a necessary stage in the nationalist history of the region. However, this stage was a transient one and was essential for the technological and scientific development of the society and the regeneration and awakening of the Hindu people. Once this transitory period was over, The Hindu nation or the free nation could be established. Nowhere in the novel had Chattopadhyay stated the colonial rule to be final or permanent. This obliquely reads that the struggle would continue and freedom or independence would come when the nation was prepared for it.

The reason why Chattopadhyay did not direct the struggle as depicted in the novel against the colonial ruling body was because at the time when the novel was published no real anti-colonial struggle was existent in the society. So, he was constructing a militant revolutionary culture and a militant race in his literature in the absence of any real anti-colonial politics. Hence his resistance also became covert rather than overt. The construction of the militancy was necessary for Chattopadhyay's imagination of a free nation and this aspiration of a free nation metamorphosed into the entity of a Hindu nation because religion was the only ideological apparatus available to him. It should be remembered that the age of secularism or the secularist nationalist doctrine had not emerged in the colonized psyche yet. Seen in this light, the resistance directed against the Muslim ruling power was metaphorical in nature. The actual enemy lay beyond this metaphor against which it was not time to take up arms yet. Hence, the tag of anti-Muslim or communalism that is often held against Chattopadhyay becomes misdirected at the best. The choice of his enmity was strategical, it was never meant for heralding the communal politics of right wing religious political parties like the Hindu Mahashabha or the RSS.

If *Anandamath* is read as an aspiration of a free Hindu *rashtra* or a Hindu nation, then the novel *Sitaram* would be the physical manifestation of that Hindu nation. *Sitaram* was the last novel in Chattopadhyay's trilogy and was published in the year 1887. Like *Anandamath* it too had certain historical factors present in it. The historical factors in the novel *Sitaram* is the historical figure of Raja Sitaram Ray and his conflict with the Mughal rulers. The historical Raja Sitaram Ray was an autonomous king, a vassal to the Mughal Empire, who revolted against the Empire and established a short-lived sovereign Hindu dominion in Bengal. The novel *Sitaram* is a fictionalized account of this conflict.

The novel *Sitaram* depicts the story of the protagonist Sitaram Ray who was forced to leave his own town after attempting to save his brother in law from the unjust and unlawful execution by the Muslim administrator. This brother in law was the brother of Sitaram's first wife Sree, the wife whom Sitaram had previously forsaken. Sitaram escapes his town and sets up a new town and names it Mohammadpur, after the prophet Mohammad. This coincides with the actual history of Raja Sitaram Ray whose town was also called Mohammadpur. Sitaram names his town after the prophet to appease the Mughal court and continues to pay tax to the Mughal treasury. The novel ends in the ruin of the town Mohammadpur. Chattopadhyay described how after years of prosperity the town fell into the hands of Muslim invaders. However, Chattopadhyay identifies the factor responsible for the fall of the Hindu dominion to be the fall of the Hindu King himself.

In the novel *Sitaram* Chattopadhyay revisited certain thematic orientations of the novel *Anandamath*. One of these was the manifestation of the image of the Goddess Durga in the image of the nation. This was portrayed in the scene where Sitaram was trying to save his brother in law from the wrongful execution. In this scene Sree climbs up on a tree to watch the drama of

the rescue operation unfold in front of her. When at a certain point of the event her brother escapes on horseback, a riot ensues between the Muslim army, the Muslim city –dwellers and the Hindu city-dwellers. In a moment of passion Sree calls out to the people to attack –

Then Gangaram saw a goddess-like figure among the green leaves of the huge tree. Her feet resting on two branches, the right hand clutching a tender branch, the left hand swirling her sari, she was calling out: Kill, kill, Kill the enemy" Her long, unbound tresses were dancing in the wind, her proud feet were swinging the branches up and down, up and down, as if Durga herself was dancing on the lion on the battlefield (835).

Here Sree becomes the symbol of the Goddess Durga who entices the general people to attack the enemy. Sree exclaims, “Kill, kill the enemy, they are God’s enemy, people’s enemy, Hindu’s enemy, my enemy (835)!” The antecedent of the establishment of the Hindu dominion was this riot. So, if Mohammadpur is the physical manifestation of the imagined Hindu nation, then one can trace back the beginning of the Hindu nation to this image of Durga enticing people to attack. Hence, once again one can see merging of the nation and religion or religious symbolism. Once again Chattopadhyay reaffirmed the conception of the Hindu nation and militant Hindu nationalism.

Once this Hindu nation in form of the town Mohammadpur was established, it quickly bloomed into a prosperous town bustling with people of all trade. Hoards of people from all over the region wanting to escape the Muslim rule started arriving in Mohammadpur. Muslims settled down in the town as well and Sitaram was equally benevolent to both the Muslims and the Hindus. Here one can get a glimpse of Chattopadhyay’s notion of a Hindu nation where peaceful

co-existence is possible as long as the Hindu is once again reinstated in power. This ascend to power had no egalitarian notion connected to it; what Chattopadhyay meant was the reinstatement of a Hindu ruling class to power. However, this prosperous town soon goes into decline. Chattopadhyay traced the root of this decline to Sitaram and Sree or rather what Sitaram and Sree represented.

Sitaram had forsaken Sree very early into their marriage due to an astrological reading which stated that Sree was *Priyohonta* or that Sree would be the reason for her husband's death. When Sitaram met Sree in Mohammadpur again, Sree had become a sannyasi or monk of the Vaishnav cult. So, if Sree represented Vaishnavism in the novel, then Sitaram who was king of the militant, regenerated Hindu nation represented Shaktivism. Sitaram on seeing Sree again began desiring her; a desire which turned into a fatal obsession. In his adoration for Sree, Sitaram abandoned Mohammadpur and Mohammadpur soon fell upon the attack of the Muslim rulers. This reads as the conflict between two philosophies of Hinduism –Shaktivism and Vaishnavism or the conflict between non-violence and militancy. This thematic orientation in the novel has historical justification as well. The historical Raja Sitaram Ray had converted to Vaishnavism prior to his defeat in the hands of the Mughals. What Chattopadhyay seems to suggest is the danger Hindu Militant nationalism will face in being seduced by the doctrine of non-violence. In the novel the Muslim invaders become just an excuse for the fall of the Hindu nation. The real reason behind the fall of the nation resides in the fall of the King himself; it resides in the Shakta King being seduced by Vaishnavism. The real fault then becomes the conflict in the ego of Sitaram which represents the ego of militant Hinduism. In holding the conflict inherent in the philosophy of Hinduism as the factor responsible of the failure of the imagined nation, Chattopadhyay was himself deconstructing any notion of communalism. The failure of the Hindu

in attaining power resided in the conflict in Hinduism itself; to overcome this, one must march towards regeneration of the Hindu. One must renew, revive and rejuvenate the Hindu culture with militarization and martial qualities.

In Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's novels one finds a postcolonial identity that has become a nationalist identity which is very much conscious of its own nationalist aspirations. One might argue that the postcolonial identity in Chattopadhyay had crossed over the stage of conflict between East and West and sought for itself a niche decidedly Eastern in nature. However this argument has certain fallacies which can be seen in Ashish Nandy's discussion of the novel *Anandamath* in *The Intimate Enemy* –

The order of the sannyasis in the novel was obviously the Hindu counterpart of the priesthood in some versions of Western Christianity. In fact, their Westernness gave them their sense of history, their stress of an organized religion, and above all, their acceptance of the Raj as a transient but historically inevitable and legitimate phenomena in Hindu terms (23).

So in Chattopadhyay one finds the same hybridity – although different in nature – as in Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Chattopadhyay's conception of nationalism and his formulation of a nationalist identity were a response to colonialism itself but a response that grew out of the internalization of colonial hegemony. His answer to the problematics concerning a nationalist basis for Bengal and the entire subcontinent was the idea of militant nationalism which was based on religion and his reason for searching out religion as the basis of a nationalist agenda and nationalist doctrine was the absence of any other ideological apparatus. This militant nationalism itself was a product of internalization of Western hegemony; an internalization

which through his mastery in literature became an amalgamation of the East and the West. This militant nationalism was Chattopadhyay's conception of nationalism which influenced the nationalist struggle of Bengal.

Chapter 4

Benedict Anderson has termed nation as an 'imagined community'. According to Anderson, a nation is a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as a part of that community. He has explained this notion of imagined community in his book *Imagined Communities* which was published in the year 1983. Rabindranath Tagore had revealed somewhat similar notions in the early 1900s when he questioned the basis of the entity of nation in his Bengali essay 'Nation Ki' or 'What is Nation'. There he called nation a psychological entity. In the essay Tagore also discussed the basis of nation formation. Drawing examples of European nations like Prussia, England and Switzerland, he discussed what it is that makes a nation and what the factors are those are responsible for a group of people to identify themselves with a particular nationalist identity. He came to the conclusion that nation is a psychological construct that is forged into existence by the joined will or consent of the people.

Traditionally, the basic criterion of nation formation is said to be a common culture, a common language, race or religion within a specific geographical boundary. In the essay 'What is Nation' Tagore had demonstrated through different examples that this is not always the case. People of a nation do not always belong to a nationalist identity composed solely of a single race, religion or language. This is even truer in the sub continental India with its multitude of languages, religions, cultures, social norms and customs. Hence the question Tagore seemed to imply in the essay is – what is the basis of a nationalist identity? In the context of his own country, what can be the nature of a nationalist identity that can encompass and unify all the different languages, cultures and religions? This is a question that had occupied Tagore for most of his life and starting from his post Swadeshi movement phase, Tagore had tried to find the true nature of a nationalist identity through his literary works.

The aim of this chapter is to explore into the nationalist identity that emerges through Tagore's literary works and to understand the particular kind of nationalism this nationalist identity advocates. The novel I will be looking into for this purpose is *Gora*.

Tagore had been highly criticized as an anti-nationalist on account of his essays and novels on nationalism. None of Tagore's writings on the subject of nationalism – apart from his patriotic songs and poems - provided the nationalist movement with the run of the mill anti-colonial or nationalist sentiments. To the general reader and the mass population, they were pro-colonial, anti-nationalist or conflicting at the best. Tagore himself had been heralded as everything ranging from pro-colonial, elitist to petit bourgeoisie. His conception of nationalism was never fully understood by the mass. As a matter of fact, it is very difficult to deduce Tagore's ideas and conceptions on nationalism. This difficulty partly lay in the fact that Tagore had himself refuted the concept of nationalism. In the essay '*Nationalism in the West*' Tagore wrote –

The Nation, with all its paraphernalia of power and prosperity, its flags and pious hymns, its blasphemous prayers in the churches, and the literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging cannot hide the fact that the Nation is the greatest evil for the Nation, that all its precautions are against it, and any new birth of its fellow in the world is always followed in its mind by the dread of a new peril (172).

This point of view on the subject of nationalism placed Tagore in a position that was misunderstood in the context of the nationalist upheaval and mass agitation in the first decade of the twentieth century Bengal. In fact, Tagore did not only question the ideology of nationalism

but questioned the very basis of nation itself in the context of his own country. He had proclaimed his country as a 'no nation' in the essay 'Nationalism in the West'. He stated –

Take it in whatever spirit you like, here is India, of about fifty centuries at least, who tried to live peacefully and think deeply, the India devoid of all politics, the India of no nations, whose one ambition had been to know this world as of soul, to live here every moment of life in meek adoration, in the glad consciousness of an eternal and personal relationship with it. It was upon this remote portion of humanity, childlike in its manner, with the wisdom of the old that the nation of the West burst in (158).

Tagore had seen the concept of a nation with its mechanization of commercialization as an encroachment on the civilization. He thought of Bengal and as such India more in the terms of a social entity and an entity of an ancient civilization rather than a national entity. The conception of the country as an entity of the nation was according to him an alien, foreign and Western conception that has been imposed upon the people by the historical process of colonialism. Partha Chatterjee explained this manifestation of the Western concept of the nation in the colonized countries in his book *Nationalist Thought and the Colonized World*. He writes that, "Nationalism...is not the authentic product of any non-European civilizations which, in each particular case, it claims as its classical heritage. It is wholly a European export to the rest of the world (7)."

So, if the conception of the nation is a Western concept, the internalization of the nation as the ultimate entity or a state of being bears witness to colonial hegemony. Hence, even the nationalist resistance of colonization and imperialism place the nationalists in a position of the

dominated in the colonizer – colonized binary. Tagore's unique position on the subject of nation then, placed his resistance in a position from which he strove to overcome this colonizer-colonized binary. This is something none of the prior poets and novelists achieved or attempted to achieve. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's very political militant nationalism could not escape the hegemonic domination of the West. The militant aspect of his militant nationalism was very much a product of colonial hegemony. So, even in resistance Chattopadhyay was thoroughly under the cultural control and domination of the colonial power structure. The resistance in Bengali literature had never before been able to escape or attempted to transcend the colonizer-colonized binary which is characterized by control and domination. By refuting the very concept of nation and nationalism Tagore was in effect stepping beyond the binary; he was refuting the binary itself. This is the ultimate form of resistance possible, a resistance which was grossly misunderstood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial Bengal. This unique position of Tagore makes it very difficult in understanding Tagore's concept of nationalism and hence understanding and defining the nationalist identity that emerges in Tagore's works.

As stated above, the aim of this chapter is to explore into the nationalist identity that emerges through Tagore's literary works. In the chapter on Michael Madhusudan Dutt we have seen that the postcolonial identity had found for itself a strong cultural identity deeply embedded in both the East and the West. In the chapter on Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay we have seen the transition of the postcolonial identity from a cultural identity into a nationalist identity. Chattopadhyay's literary works brought forth a postcolonial identity that had become a nationalist identity which was very much conscious of its own nationalist aspirations. This nationalist identity unlike Dutt's nationalist identity was much more directly political in nature.

The nationalist identity in Chattopadhyay's works was a militant nationalist identity within the domain of religion. As stated before, the reason behind the use of religion as an ideological apparatus was mainly for him the absence of any other ideological apparatus. This nationalist identity in Chattopadhyay's works was later misrepresented as political Hindutva. The nationalist identity found in Tagore sharply diverged from Chattopadhyay. Tagore provided the nineteenth century Bengal with an alternative conception of nationalism and nationalist identity that moved away from the revivalist religious movement which at least during the first two decades of twentieth century had significant influence on the overall nationalist movement. This chapter will be focusing on this alternative nationalism and nationalist identity that can be found in Tagore's literature.

The novel *Gora* was written in the year 1910 and was the first of Tagore's novels dealing with nationalism, nationalist identity and nationalist politics. His other two novels dealing with these issues are *Ghare Baire* and *Char Adhay*. *Ghare Baire* was published in the year 1916 and *Char Adhay* in 1934. While *Gora* was an intellectualization of nationalism, *Ghare Baire*, a more directly political novel written in the backdrop of Swadeshi movement was a critique of the nature of nationalism and nationalist practices prevalent in early twentieth century Bengal. In comparison with *Ghare Baire*, the novel *Char Adhay* dealt with a more secularized armed resistance of the secret revolutionary societies. All three novels deal with three different epochs and different dimensions of the nationalist history. However a common factor remains, that is, Tagore's criticism of nationalism and nationalist identity. *Gora* was the second major political novel written in Bengali literature after *Anandamath* which was written in 1882. While *Anandamath* had become the bible for a generation of nationalist revolutionaries, the novel *Gora* had a mixed reception and failed to provoke any upsurge of nationalist sentiment. The novel

Anandamath advocated for a militant Hinduism and *Gora* stood against the ideology of Hinduism as a basis of nationalist identity and patriotism. The novel *Gora* was written almost three decades after *Anandamath*. What interests us is to note what significant changes took place in the society within this span of thirty years for the two novels to arrive at such radically different conclusions in terms of nationalist identity and nationalism.

The first major political change that took place was the establishment of the Indian National Congress or the INC in the year 1885, only three years after the publishing of *Anandamath*. The Congress was established with the aim of giving the educated Indians a more participatory role in the British Raj and as such had very moderate political beginning. It was not until 1930 that the INC had declared Puna Swaraj or complete self-rule. The establishment of the Congress was a very significant phenomenon as it provided the subject nation with a formal platform of political participation and agitation. Soon after, the secret underground revolutionary societies began to make their appearance in the scene. As explained in the previous chapter, these first revolutionary organizations were deeply influenced by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and religious revivalism. The nationalist identity of these first generation revolutionaries were very much connected to their religious identity. The secular basis of the revolutionary organizations came much later with the appearance of Marxist, socialist doctrines in the society. The emergence of Soviet Russia and the formation of Indian Communist Party in 1921 expedited and accelerated the growth of secularist politics in the region. So while *Anandamath* was written in the absence of any real anti-colonial politics, in the decade following the publication of the novel, the ground was laid for political novels to be written in the firmly existing background of political movement. The next major political phenomenon was the partition of Bengal in 1905. The Viceroy of Bengal, Lord Curzon commenced on the partition of

the Bengal province and gave the official announcement in the month of July. The official reason given for the decision of partition was increasing administrative efficiency; however a more ominous political motivation lay behind it. The partition took effect in October 1905 and separated the majority Muslim populated eastern areas from the majority Hindu populated western areas. So, the partition of the province in actuality took place along religious demographic lines. Immediately afterwards Bengal was swept up with mass agitation against the partition. The nationalist movement called the Swadeshi movement began which included the boycott of British commodities. Sumit Sarkar discussed in length about the partition of Bengal and the Swadeshi movement in his book *Modern India*. He explained that –

What the British had clearly underestimated was first of all the sense of unity among the Bengalis – rooted to some extent in a history marked by long periods of regional independence and greatly fostered, at least among the literate, by the cultural developments of the nineteenth century. Calcutta had become a real metropolis for the educated Bengali Bhadrak (108).

Tagore who became deeply involved in the early years of the Swadeshi movement composed the song *Amar Sonar Bangla* in the year 1906 which later became the national anthem of the independent nation of Bangladesh. However, Tagore soon abandoned active politics as the threat of communal violence became obvious to him. There were two distinct reasons behind this threat of communal violence. The first was the religious revivalist leanings of the major stakeholders of the Swadeshi movement and second was the political conspiracy behind the partition of Bengal. Sarkar in *Modern India* further writes that –

But the really important political motive at this time was a division among the predominantly Hindu politicians of West and east Bengal. Home secretary H. H. Risley summed it all up with clarity and frankness when he stated that Bengal united is a power; Bengal divided will pull in several different ways which is the one of the principle merits of the scheme (107).

This was the evidence of the colonial policy of divide and rule in practice. A class of Muslim elites saw the economic and political benefits of the partition as the divided Eastern province of Bengal would be gaining a new capital in Dhaka. To further endorse and sanction the partition of Bengal, the Muslim League was created in 1906 under the initiative of the British raj. The party gradually became the principal voice of Muslim religious politics. The policy of divide and rule in combination with religious revivalist trend of the Swadeshi movement and the establishment of the Muslim league oversaw the beginning of Muslim separatism. This germ of Muslim separatism was sown by both the British Raj and the class of Elitist Muslims who would have benefitted from the 1905 partition. Soon in the year 1907, communal riots broke out in some districts of Eastern Bengal. In face of this newly emergent political reality, Tagore left the Swadeshi movement in the year of 1907. He clearly foresaw the pitfalls and fallacy of the nature of the nationalist movement and the nationalist identity it upheld and commenced on a search for an alternative nationalist expression and nationalist identity. Hence the reason behind the ideological differences between the novels *Anandamath* and *Gora* lied in the very different socio-political dynamics these two novels were written in. In face of the threat of communal violence, Tagore through his literature searched for a nationalist identity which would provide an alternative to the militant Hinduism of *Anandamath*. The novel *Gora* was an attempt towards this alternative nationalist identity and nationalism.

Gora is the story of an Irish foundling - who was named Gora - brought up in an orthodox Hindu household. His true identity was kept a secret from him and he grew up knowing he was a Bengali and a Hindu by religion. Once into adulthood, Gora became an ardent nationalist whose nationalist ideology and nationalist identity was firmly rooted in the doctrines of the *shastras* or the scriptures and Hindutva. However conflict seems to ensue within him when he starts to socialize with a Brahmmo family of Calcutta. The Brahmmo family, especially the adopted daughter Shucharita of that family brings forth in his mind human relations that go beyond religion, caste and community. His travels into the remote villages of Bengal further augmented the conflict in his nationalist ideology. In the villages he found the real country, the mass people with their multitude of religion and customs who cannot be enclosed or contained within the narrow dogmatic confines of Hindutva. The marriage of his childhood friend and compatriot Binoy to another daughter of that Brahmmo family, Lalita, dealt yet another blow to his separatist nationalist ideology. Finally the protagonist Gora is pushed over the edges of the precipice when his true identity is disclosed to him. The novel then becomes a question into the very basis of a nationalist identity. The novel *Gora* has been heralded as an epic in prose and being true to the character of an epic novel it deals with several issues. One can find a multitude of readings in *Gora*. The novel can be approached from an angle of feminism as well as nationalism. In this paper I will be dealing with only the nationalist element of the novel.

The name of the protagonist Gora has different connotations in Bengali language. On one hand it means white, as in the white race and on the other hand it means orthodoxy. The protagonist Gora represented the orthodox political Hinduism in society. His character is the very embodiment of the Hindu nationalism. However before becoming a Hindu nationalist, Gora was attracted by the religious and social reformism of the *Brahmmo Shamaj* (Brahmmo Society). His

transformation from reformism to revivalism is a reflection of the postcolonial Bengali ego or the postcolonial Bengali self. The idea of reform itself, in this case religious reformism, was a response to colonization. Reform movements in nineteenth century Bengal was to a great extent a hybridization of the East and the West. When pushed to the extremities, this reformism often looked for shelter in revivalism. Tagore had dealt with this dimension of the postcolonial ego in his novel *Chaturanga* where the protagonist on the death of his uncle, the father figure, shifted from Western atheism to Eastern mysticism. In this one can see the postcolonial Bengali ego forever trying to seek shelter and security within some kind of an ideological domain or structure. This need for the postcolonial ego to secure itself within some kind of an ideological domain came from the deep rooted insecurity felt by the postcolonial ego. This feeling of insecurity in turn came from the conflict felt by the ego in the colonized society. This conflict within the self of the postcolonial Bengali identity was the conflict between the East and the West. In the novel *Gora*, Tagore showed how a more liberal nationalist identity when pushed to the extreme can become an extremist nationalist identity. This extremism never generates positive and constructive result for the country as is later demonstrated in the novel. Tagore described Gora's transition from reformism to revivalism in the beginning of the novel –

In his debate with the missionary, Gora gradually lost out to his own argument. Gora then said, "We will not let our own country to stand as a prisoner and be tried in accordance to foreign standards and customs. We will neither be mortified nor glorified in being compared by the foreigners. We will not be ashamed and humiliated by the beliefs, customs, scriptures and society of the land in which we were born. We will save ourselves and our land from insults by upholding all that this land has to offer with pride (421).

Tagore further wrote –

Gora awakened a group of people with his preaching. They finally felt free of a conflict and tugging in two opposite directions. They breathed out in relief and said, “We don’t want to justify to anyone whether we are good or bad, civilized or uncivilized – we simply want to feel with all our beings that we are us (421).

This reflects the conflict within the postcolonial ego which pushes it to adhere to extremist or in this case revivalist ideological apparatus. This unified feeling of ‘us’, according to Tagore did not only identify the British as the alien entity but also alienated those factions of the populace of the land belonging to different religion and customs. This shows that Tagore identified this kind of nationalism as non-inclusive and non-pluralist. Tagore had time and time again stated that the basis of the civilization of the country was multi-cultural and pluralist; it is a civilization marked by co-existence, assimilation, adaption and symbiosis of different races, religion and cultures. In ‘Nationalism in the West’ Tagore wrote-

We have to recognize that the history of India does not belong to one particular race but to a process of creation, to which various races of the world contributed – the Dravidians and the Aryans, the Ancient Greeks and the Persians, the Mohammedans of the West and those of central Asia (153).

Hence, in seeking a non-pluralist nationalist identity and historical past as the Hindu nationalism did, was according to Tagore, to refuse the very foundation of history and civilization of the country. Tagore provided a much more elaborate criticism of this kind of nationalist identity in his novel *Ghare Baire* through the character of the nationalist Sandip who is the anti-hero of the novel. In the novel *Ghare Baire*, Sandip – who was the anti thesis of the

protagonist Nikhilesh, Tagore's alter ego – was not blind to the different factions in the society that made the society pluralist in nature. He intentionally turned a blind eye to the pluralist elements of society to attain his short sighted and narrow nationalist goals. The novel shows that Sandip's nationalist endeavours finally resulted in communal violence in a village community which was previously peaceful and tolerant. Hence Tagore was again and again trying to warn about the pitfalls of the nationalist identity based solely on revivalist religious identity.

Furthermore, Tagore also identified the Hindu nationalism advocated by Gora as an urban phenomenon. This fact is illustrated in the novel in great detail through Gora's travels to rural Bengal. Tagore wrote that -

Gora for the first time saw how immense our country really is outside the narrow confines of the Calcutta society. He saw how remote the rural India is; how narrow, how weak and how utterly unaware of its own strength. Its custom and norms change every five or seven miles (487.)

Here one can once again look into the juxtaposition of the city space or the urban space and the village space in the context of colonialism. Within the context of colonialism, the village represents the old ideal space, the space of origin of the postcolonial identity while the city represents the new colonized space. Tagore had echoed these connotations of the village – which he considered to be the real Bengal or India – in many of his essays. It was in the space of the village that Gora's nationalist ideology faced challenge for the first time. In his travel in the village, Gora came across the atrocity and injustice of the British Raj and their Bengali middlemen on the poor peasants. However, all his endeavours to help the villagers were met with defeat. Gora felt that he was an outsider in his own country. He felt that he with his ideology of

nationalism could not connect with the mass of the country residing in the villages; there was a barrier which his ideas of nationalist identity and nationalism could not overcome. His ideas on nation and its people only succeeded in separating him from the people. This was illustrated by the fact that Gora could not really mix with the oppressed – the villagers of different religion and lower caste - for the sake of whom he decided to prolong his stay in the village. His religious practices forced him to take shelter in the abode of the Brahmin middleman, the very class of people he wanted to fight against. It was also in the village that Gora came face to face with the Muslim identity as a part of his imagined nation. In the resistance put forth by the Muslim peasants, something he couldn't help but admire, he saw an identity belonging very much to the country but something he could not place within the narrow non-pluralist confines of his ideology. In the form of the *Napit* or the barber (belonging to lower caste), Gora also saw co-existence between the two communities. The poor barber had given refuge to a Muslim boy whose father has been arrested by the government. On being chastised for this by Gora, the barber replies, "We say Hari and they say Allah, there is no difference (487)." This coexistence and pluralism is central to Tagore's idea of nationalist identity. His was a nationalist identity built on pluralism and co-existence of the age old civilization, not on exclusion and segregation. For Tagore, the concept of nationalism was all inclusive and not restricted and exclusive. The non-multicultural, non-pluralist nationalism for Tagore, ran counter to the very basis of civilization and any idea or ideology that stood against the civilization, was for him, the death knell of that very civilization. It was in the village that Gora for the first time saw the country as a whole and not fragmented to fit within the confines of his nationalism. All these culminated into ensuing conflict within Gora's sense of nationalism and nationalist identity. He sensed that the very ideological basis of his nationalism created more division than unification.

Binoy and Shucharita both represented characters that came under the sway of Gora's nationalist preaching. However, Binoy's marriage to Lalita later in the novel showed the possibility of co-existence and unison of different communities of the society. The function of Binoy and Lalita's marriage in the novel is the possibility of a dream, an imagination of a new entity or a new force in society; this unison stood for the new entity which embodied previously segregated entities. This was the unison where different beings or bodies of the society could co-exist. Shucharita on the other hand represented the source or the medium which contributed in humanizing and freeing the dogmatic nationalist principles embodied by the character of Gora. While Binoy's marriage further increased the conflict already raging within Gora, it was through the character of Shucharita and the affections he felt for her that his inner conflict found a way for salvation.

The disclosing of Gora's true identity was the final blow that shattered his nationalist identity. Towards the end of the novel Gora came to know that he was born of Irish parents who took refuge in his adoptive father Krishnadayal's house during the year of 1857 mutiny. His mother had died after giving birth to him and his father too was killed in the Mutiny. The historical phenomenon of the Mutiny has symbolic significance here. The 1857 Mutiny has long been considered as the first major uprising against colonialism. As such, it was the first conflict between the East and the West. So, from this first conflict was born an entity, a child who embodied both the East and the West. This child was the symbolism of the new entity, the new force that according to Tagore's vision would embody an all encompassing nationalist identity. Tagore wrote in 'Nationalism in the West' –

Then, again, we have to consider that the West is necessary to the East. We are complementary to each other because of our different outlooks upon life which

have given us different aspects of truth. Therefore if it be true that the spirit of the West has come upon our fields in the guise of storm, it is nevertheless scattering seeds that are immortal. And when in India we become able to assimilate in our life what is permanent in western civilization we shall be in the position to bring about a reconciliation of these two worlds (163).

Tagore saw the truth of the formation of a nationalist identity here. He saw and was brave enough to state that a purely Indian nationalist identity was not possible in India. The nationalist identity embodied both the East and the West. This was the historic reality of the country. The postcolonial identity should look for reconciliation of the East and the West for it to culminate into a genuine and complete nationalist identity. Gora found out that he in reality had no claims to the nationalist identity he adhered to. Gora's white, Irish parentage disbarred him from that very nationalist identity which his character represented. Through this Tagore seems to imply that no pure indigenous Indian nationalist identity is possible; nationalist identity is a hybridization of the East and the West. This is because nationalism itself is very much a concept of the West. In the end of the novel Gora speaks about the truth of his identity to Shucharita and her father. He says –

Today I am free Paresh babu. Today I have become that being that I wanted to become all through my life. Today I am an Indian; I belong to the whole of India. There is no conflict of the Hindu, the Muslim or the Christian in me today. Today I belong to all castes, all religion and all races (626).

Gora's state of identity or non-identity breaks the barrier between what is the East or the indigenous or authentic and the alien or the foreign. Gora transcends the national identity

confined within race, religion and culture. He embodies a new nationalist identity which is universal. According to Tagore, this universal nationalist identity was the natural product of the civilization of the country that had long represented pluralism, tolerance and co-existence. By abandoning and rejecting a nationalist identity embedded on religious basis, Gora transcended to a nationalist based on the premise of secularism. Previously he had looked for a political ideology through religion. Later in his hour of conflict when he truly turned to God, he found a God that transcends all religion. He says, "Make me the disciple of that God who belongs to Hindu, Muslim Christian alike; the door of whose temple is never barred to any race, religion or individual – the God who is not only the God of Hindus but the God of India (627)." This concept of God belonging to all religion was a very secularist approach. A further expression of this secularism resides in the eventual union of Gora and Shucharita. This is a union that transcends all modes of social constructs such as caste, religion and community. This union even transcends the barrier of race. This union exist in the realm of what has been called Tagore's utopia of universalism; a universalism that embodies pluralism, tolerance, co-existence, secularism and humanism.

As stated in chapter three of the thesis - Dutt had opened the arena for secular thought. He had opened the field of secularism which had made it possible for later authors to bring forth secularism as a concept and practice in society. This is not to say that any mode of secular thought did not previously exist in the society, just that secularism as a practice did not exist in the national or broader political superstructure of the country. Dutt's pioneering work in Bengali literature made it possible for secular politics or secular consciousness within politics to exist in the society. It was due to Michael Madhusudan Dutt's pioneering work in the field of literature that Tagore could establish a nationalist identity in literature on the foundation of secularism. In

other words, the modern secularism in Bengali literature that began from Michel Madhusudan Dutt, realized its full expression in Tagore's epic novel *Gora*. This secularism in the novel was a response to the emerging and gradually growing threat of communal violence and segregation in nineteenth century Bengal. It was through the novel *Gora* that Tagore first ventured into the pioneering enterprise of eradicating the religious identity from the nationalist identity. In doing so, he placed his notion of nationalism and nationalist identity in the realm of universal humanism. His protagonist Gora then is the universal man who is the very personification of the universal humanist nationalist identity.

Through the novel *Gora* Tagore did not only present an alternative nationalism and nationalist identity to Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's militant Hindu nationalism and nationalist identity; he also - through his literary genius - created a nationalist identity that surpassed and transcended all divisions of caste, community, religion, culture and race. His nationalist identity spoke of universalism and humanism; he sought to create a common ground for nationalist expression based on the creed of secularism. In doing so, he had hoped to create a nationalist identity through his literary works that would not threaten national unification in the name of caste, culture, race or religion. In a letter to Amiyo Chakraborty, Tagore had written that

—

The greatest sin the English has committed in the history of human civilization is to force opium down the throats of China. This act of atrocity committed for the benefit of their own profit is the ultimate example of civilized barbarism. The English had committed a similar crime in creating and enhancing the difference and distance between the Hindu and the Muslim in India. A day will come when a calamity in Europe will force England to loosen its grip on India. But this seed of

poison that has been injected into the veins of the neighbours of a country as immense as India, will we ever be able to eradicate it? The English has darkened the future of an emerging nation. India will eternally have to bear the weight of the cruel conclusion of its relationship with the civilized Europe (372).

The poet and the humanist in Tagore had always feared this encroaching darkness on the horizons of the country; a dark force that was only being strengthened by the divide and rule policy and the divisive nationalist politics of the nation. This danger of communal violence that Tagore foresaw during the era of the partition of Bengal and the Swadeshi movement emerged as a concrete reality in the 1946 riots and the eventual 1947 partition of India. His creed of secular universal humanism was a means for him to rebut that danger. In retrospect, no matter how utopian and non- realistic Tagore's ideas may have seem to his own generation, his conception of a secular universal humanist nationalist identity seems to have been the only solution possible for a nation as complex as India; a nation which according to Tagore was a land of no-nation. Finally, Tagore's own vision of his country can be found in a poem in *Gitanjali* –

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action—

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Conclusion

This thesis – *Nationalist Identity in Bengali Literature* – which looks at the formation and emergence of nationalist identity in Bengal through the literature from 1850s to the early 1900s is being written in the year of 2013. Writing in 2013, one can see that nationalist identity still plays a very important role in world politics and ongoing political crisis, particularly in Asia. In our present time, the contemporary global political scenario is witnessing nationalist agitations by minority nationalist identities. The example of North East India is an excellent case in point. Political agitations, uprisings and rebellions are being waged in the name of nationalist identities which are varying in range and nature. They range from religious identities to linguistic and cultural identities. The issue of identity is very crucial in the Latin American and African context as well. The Latin American literature deals with the issue of identity crisis and the problematics of identity brought into existence by its colonial history. The Caribbean literature and the postcolonial theorists of the region have written extensively on postcolonial identity and identity crisis.

Hence, literature all over the world is reflecting the crisis and problematics embedded in the issue of identity and nationalist identity. An example can be cited of Orhan Pamuk's novel *Snow* published in the year 2004, which deals with the problematics of the identity politics of the Kurdist nationalists. The independence of Bangladesh in 1971 was based on the creed of nationalist identity as well; a nationalist identity which is based on the foundation of secularism and Bengali cultural identity. Hence writing in 2013, when nationalist identity is still a deciding factor in modern politics, it is interesting to look back and investigate into the formation and emergence of the nationalist identity. This thesis was an endeavour to further understand the

cultural and political dynamics and vicissitudes that we have inherited; a cultural and political inheritance that goes back to the colonial period and in many ways is still in continuum.

The thesis explores into the literary works from 1850s to early 1900s. It began with Pyarichand Mitra and ended with Rabindranath Tagore. The reason I chose to end my thesis with Tagore and that too only his works in the first decades of the 1900s is because by the time of Tagore, the Bengali identity and as such the Bengali nationalist identity had completed its transformation and emerged in its present character.

The first chapter of the thesis looked into the first novel of the Bengali literature, *Alaler Gharer Dulal*. Through the protagonist of the novel *Alaler Gharer Dulal* we have seen the first evidence of the portrayal of the postcolonial identity. In this portrayal of the postcolonial identity by the author Pyarichand Mitra we have seen the internalization of colonial hegemony. The chapter explores into how the colonizer's control over the tools of representation, control over self definition of the colonized had led to internalization of colonizer's image of the colonized. The chapter shows how the caricature of the *babu* and the image of the effeminate Bengali man was in fact the postcolonial Bengali identity viewing itself through the eyes of the colonizers. Later, as the novel progresses, one can see the emergence of a subtle and a very indirect form of resistance. This resistance laid in the aspiration of the postcolonial identity to break free of its effeminated image and its desire to be empowered and superior again. However, the fulfilment of this desire as can be seen through a close reading of the novel, was only possible through reconnection with the golden past. Hence, in the very first novel of Bengali literature, the image of the golden past emerges as a very essential factor and a central presence in the postcolonial Bengali identity. As such, the image of the golden past becomes a key element in the formation of the nationalist identity.

The next chapter in the thesis drew a correlation between Michael Madhusudan Dutt's life and his literary works. The reason behind this is that the vicissitudes of the individual Dutt's personal life reflected the vicissitudes of his contemporary society. As discussed in the chapter, Dutt began his life as an aspiring poet of the English language. The substantial body of sonnets he composed in the first phase of his literary career along with his English essays and personal letters – also written in English – reflected what Homi Bhaba had termed as the mimicry stage of colonialism. This stage continued from his Hindu college days to his Madras days and then on his return to Calcutta, Dutt emerged as a Bengali poet and a Bengali playwright. This was the second phase of his literary career. His transition from an aspiring English poet to a Bengali poet draws attention to a number of factors. The most significant among these was the end of conflict between the East and the West which was deeply embedded in Dutt's own life and his contemporary Young Bengal generation. This conflict between the East and the West precipitated into something akin to an identity crisis among the urbanized young Bengal and the new westernized urban generation in general; a phenomenon which was reflected in the first phase of Dutt's literary works. Dutt's transition into a Bengali poet ended this identity crisis and established the Bengali self of the bhadralok class firmly on the fundamental basis of a cultural identity through literature. From internalization of colonial hegemony to Homi Bhaba's mimicry stage to resistance, the completion of the entire circuit can be found in the poet's personal life; and as such it is reflected in his literary works. The resistance one finds in the second phase of Dutt's literary works is the resistance against the internalization of the colonial hegemony. This resistance as seen in his literature was very essential for the development of the Bengali nationalist identity.

The chapter primarily focused on the hybridity of the postcolonial Bengali identity. In Dutt's transition from his English sonnet phase to his emergence as a Bengali poet, the postcolonial identity emerged as a nationalist identity; a nationalist identity deeply embedded in the cultural identity. Through Dutt's literature emerges a nationalist identity which is very secure in its cultural identity. This cultural identity did not stand solely on an Eastern basis; it embodied both the East and the West. Dutt's novel *Hector Badh*, his epic poem *Meghnad Badh Kabya* and his Bengali poems written in blank verse are all examples of the hybridity in the cultural identity reflected in literature. However, the reflection of the nationalist identity one finds in Dutt's literature was still not a very political one. This means that the nationalist identity found in Dutt's works does not have a directly political dimension to it. That political dimension to the nationalist identity came with Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.

Dutt's most significant contribution in the formation of the nationalist identity remains in his opening of the vistas of secular thought in modern Bengali literature. This does not mean that secularist practice and concept of secularism was nonexistent in the Bengali culture before. In fact, the folk tradition of Bengal preaches concepts which can only be translated as secularism. It is just that what we understand as political secularism was absent in colonial Bengal because the political structure and dynamics which embodies these political connotations of secularism was absent before colonialism as well.

The third chapter of the thesis dealt with Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandamath* and *Sitaram*. In this chapter we can see the cultural postcolonial identity becoming a nationalist identity. The political dimension to the nationalist identity and the aspect of political resistance in literature came with Chattopadhyay. Chattopadhyay's nationalist identity can be surmised as militant Hinduism. The reason he sought out religion as a platform for militarizing the Bengali

people was that no other ideological apparatus pertaining to the mass sentiment was available to him. In Chattopadhyay too we see the same evidence of internalization of the colonial hegemony. His desire for a cultural regeneration of the Bengali population and the consequent dream and desire of militarizing of the Bengali people was based on the internalization of the colonial hegemony. It was a reaction and a response to the colonial image of the effeminate Bengali.

Chattopadhyay's militant Hinduism influenced two different factions in later politics. The first one was the early phase of the armed revolutionaries. However later with the arrival of socialist doctrine and Marxist principles much of this faction transformed from a nationalist identity with strong attachment to religious identity to a more secularized nationalist identity. The second faction that Chattopadhyay's militant Hinduism influenced was the religious political parties. Among these the party that later came to forefront was the Hindu Mahasabha founded in 1923. The party was affiliated to INC until 1933 when it left the Congress claiming that Congress was appeasing the Muslims. The RSS which still sings *Bande Mataram* in its meetings was set up in the year of 1925 by the more ideologically radical and militant factions of the Hindu Mahasabha. The formation of Muslim League in 1906 on the other hand saw the emergence of formal Muslim politics in the country. The formation of the Muslim League under the initiative of the British Raj later accelerated the growth of radical political Islam in the region. So while Chattopadhyay's militant nationalism was misinterpreted by these factions, as consequence to it, the events of history later culminated into the development of political ideologies and political movements based on the premise of religion.

Chapter four of the thesis looked into emergence of a different kind of nationalist identity through the literary works of Rabindranath Tagore. The novel I used for this purpose was *Gora*.

As stated in the concluding paragraph of chapter two, Tagore inherited the East and the West together. It was due to the pioneering works of Dutt in literature that Tagore did not have to go through the same form of identity crisis or identity dilemma that Dutt and his generation went through. Dutt had firmly established the Bengali nationalist identity in its cultural identity for the next great poet, that is, Tagore to carry on forward. Tagore also owes a great deal to Dutt for opening up the vistas for secular thought in modern Bengali literature. It was due to Dutt's contribution in literature that Tagore was able to formulate his nationalist identity through literature that was based purely on the premise of secularism.

As stated in the chapter, Tagore was attempting to provide an alternative nationalist identity through his literary works. This alternative identity was a very new creation; it was something that consciously embodied both the East and the West. His search for an alternative nationalist identity stemmed from his premonition and prediction of the communal violence that would eventually erupt in society. The mode of expression of the nationalist movement and the nationalist identity these movements embodied, prevalent in his contemporary society— the focus on religious identity as advocated by Chattopadhyay – according to Tagore only alienated people from the broader society and alienated the self from the essence of the age old civilization of the nation. This form of narrow dogmatic nationalist identity was short sighted at the best and would sooner or later bring about an irreversible split in the country. His fears materialized into concrete reality in the years 1946 and 1947. The poet and the humanist in Tagore dreamt of a nationalism and nationalist identity based on the foundation of humanism. His alternative nationalist identity was one that moved away from the alienating and narrow confines of religious identity to a form of all encompassing, all inclusive, humanist nationalist identity based on the premise of secularism. Tagore was also the first poet and the first novelist that saw India

as a whole. His Bengali nationalist identity was first and foremost all Indian and then universal. In the novel *Gora*, the universal aspect of his nationalist identity manifested in the form of the universal man as represented by the protagonist of the novel. His universal man had no conflict with any race, religion or culture anywhere in the world. It was a new creation that emerged from the coming together of the East and the West. It is through this figure of the universal man that Tagore refuted the colonizer-colonized binary and this refutation of the binary which had imprisoned all novelists and poets before him and even after him, was the ultimate form of resistance possible.

Hence, we see through the literature dating from the 1850s to the early 1800s the formation, emergence, changes and transformations of the Bengali nationalist identity. We see the postcolonial Bengali identity moving from a cultural identity to a militant religious identity to ultimately a secular humanist universal identity. In hind sight, no matter how utopian Tagore's concept of a humanist universal nationalist identity might have seemed to his contemporary times and contemporary politics, in the later political reality that gripped the subcontinent, his secular humanism seems to have been the only solution.

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