MAN IN INDIA

VOL. 38 { OCT.-DEC. 1958 { NO. 4

MODERN BENGAL

By NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE

(*Received on 28 June 1958*)

Preface

IN November-December 1957, a series of lectures were delivered by the writer before the South Asia Colloquium at the Center for South Asia Studies, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley. The audience consisted primarily of scholars interested in recent economic and political developments in Bengal and India. There was a consequent slant towards furnishing a possible explanation as to why Bengal has developed leftist tendencies in recent times. In spite of this pragmatic limitation, it is hoped that the following summary of the lectures would be able to provide some leads towards more intensive researches in a field which may prove abundantly fertile.

I. BENGAL IN RELATION TO INDIA

Geographical Considerations

Bengal lies at the eastern end of the Gangetic plain in northern India. Geographically, it can be divided into three clearly distinguishable regions. On the north lie the Himalayan

mountains with extensive forests on their flanks. Rainfall is heavy, and the rivers which descend to the southern plains have been known to change their course widely, and thus cause extensive damage to fields and farms in this part of the country. The southwestern portion of the state is geologically a continuation of the eastern highlands of southern Bihar. There are a few isolated gneissose and schistose outcrops lying in the midst of ancient freshwater formations. The latter contain coal, and are often covered on the surface by stretches of gravel or rusty laterite, which makes it comparatively poor soil. The rest of Bengal is formed by recent alluvial deposits ; part of it being intersected by sluggish streams, and part by streams which constantly add more silt and help to raise the level of the land.

Let us now examine Bengal's position in the geography of India. The middle of the Ganges plain, lying in the state of Uttar Pradesh, has been traditionally the home of Brahminical culture. Both Deccan and the southern portion of the Peninsula have nurtured numerous kingdoms in the past, and these two have been roughly separated from the north by the Vindhya Hills and their eastern extensions and by a nearly continuous band of forests which clothe their flanks.

Some of the major routes along which both trade as well as cultural influences flowed from the northern to the southern kingdoms of India were as follows :

(1) From western Uttar Pradesh down the valley of the Chambal, across the plateau of Malwa, either towards the sea at Cambay, Broach or Surat, or down the eastern flank of the Western Ghats, where from early Buddhist times to the 17th century, kingdom after kingdom arose and passed through their chequered career, and often fitful existence.

(2) From eastern Uttar Pradesh, with Allahabad, Mirzapur and Banaras as their focal points, another route ran roughly parallel to the first, more or less in the same northeast-southwest direction, parallel also to the courses of the Ken and Betwa rivers, towards either

Jabalpur and Nagpur, or towards the enclosed Chhattisgarh plain farther east.

(3) There seems to have been in ancient times an extension of the second route from the Chhattisgarh plain down the Mahanadi valley to the delta of the latter, which forms a part of the eastern coastal plain.

(4) The fourth route was through western Bengal down the coastal plain, through Orissa towards the southern kingdoms.

The relief of the Deccan peninsula is such that, except in the case of the Narbada and Tapti, and the short hill streams which rise in the west of the Western Ghats, all rivers eventually find their way to the eastern sea, even when they rise, like the Godavari, Krishna or Tungabhadra almost within sight of the Arabian Sea. It is the silt of these rivers and their tributaries which has accumulated in the form of deltas, or which has been partly spread out by seasonally active coastal currents, that has given rise to a fertile strip of land, the eastern coastal plain from Orissa to Madras, which is occupied by a teeming population of comparable density to that of the Ganges plain in the north.

The fact that the coastal plain has been intersected by numerous broad rivers and their distributaries, has made it possible for numerous kingdoms to arise here, and continue their comparatively isolated existence with some measure of security. A fairly heavy rainfall and the alluvial character of the soil have also made the production of food easy ; and hence led to a kind of economic self-sufficiency.

On account of this character of the eastern coastal plain, the route from north to south which lay through western Bengal did not happen to be one of the major routes from north to south. Bengal, therefore, played a feebler part in the transmission of culture from north to south than the routes referred to under (1) and (2) above.

Some Cultural Affiliations

This does not however mean that cultural influences were completely restricted by the limitations set by geography.

The language of Bengal is related to the languages of northern India (Levi *et al.*, 1929 : xix-32). There are words of non-Aryan origin which have been regarded as remnants of pre-Aryan times ; but, on the whole, the kinship is more with the North than with the South. The Hindus of Bengal are organized under a system of castes, and are subject to a code of laws and rituals which derive clearly from northwestern sources. Its ancient temples were also related to the Rekha Order of the North ; although from the 16th century onwards, it succeeded in developing a new local order of sacred architecture which was markedly different from the earlier one.

But in spite of these evidences of northern affiliation, there are a number of cultural traits, obviously carried over from a more remote past, which point to other directions altogether in the matter of cultural relationship.

Rice forms the staple food of Bengal, and plays a large part in such ritual and magical practices as have been retained by sections of her population. Oil forms an important element of diet, and in this matter Bengal, Assam and Bihar are related closely to one another through the common use of mustard oil. The oil-using zone thins out in the north towards Uttar Pradesh, while it stretches from Bengal all the way down through Orissa, Andhra and Madras ; and then up the western coast through Kerala and Mysore to Maharashtra and Gujarat. In some places, it is mustard, or sesamum or coco-nut ; and one can thus define more or less clearly sub-provinces within this broad, oil-using region on the basis of the oil seed used.

Oil presses, on the whole, are of two kinds in India. One of them has a drain in the bottom, through which the pressed oil is delivered into a vessel ; while, in the other, after oil has been extracted from one charge of seeds, the pestle is taken out and the oil ladled up, and finally the last remnant is soaked in rags from which it is squeezed out.

The Southern oil press without the drain is distributed from Ceylon to the southern portion of Midnapore district in Bengal in the east, and nearly to Gujarat in the west. In the Tamil country, the press may be made of stone instead of wood. Stone is *kal* in Tamil. In Bihar, the oil press is either called

kolhu, and one charge of oil seed is designated by the term *ghani.* In Bengal, the oil-pressing caste is called *Kolu,* while the press itself is *ghani.* (Bose, 1356 B. S. : 54-61)

In any case, oil or rice, both of which are important articles of diet, and which have acquired a distinctive place in ritual and magical practices of the inhabitants of Bengal, indicate a direction of relationship which is different from the one indicated by language and its history. The above evidence can be further fortified by distribution maps of methods of the preparation of rice, the way in which unsewn garments are worn by men and women, the form of sandals and shoes all over India, and so on. But the point need not perhaps be elaborated any further (cf. Bose, 1956).

There is one point however to which attention should be drawn. Rice and oil, like some of the other elements of material culture mentioned above, indicate a cultural affinity of Bengal with the south instead of the north and west of India, but also extend that relationship to other countries in the southeast of Asia. Historians and philologists have, in the past, drawn attention to the use of betel nuts and betel leaf, turmeric, and of the domestication and ceremonial use of the buffalo and fowl as being a common feature between India and the southeast of Asia. These seem to indicate that various elements of material culture, and of ceremonies associated with them, crossed the limitation of geographical boundaries, perhaps over long centuries in the past, and thus made Bengal one of the states like Orissa, where northern, southern and perhaps southeastern Asiatic elements of culture became fused with one another, or remained distinguishable in spite of forming one heterogeneous conglomeration of various cultures.

Brahminical Culture

We have already referred to the fact that in language, as well as in the laws which govern Hindu Bengal, this state has a northern and western orientation.

According to tradition, a king of Bengal named Adisura invited five Brahmins of great learning and high

character to come and settle down in Bengal from Kanauj in Uttar Pradesh. About two or three centuries afterwards, Bengal was under the rule of the Sena dynasty, which originally hailed from the Kannada-speaking region of the south. It is again traditionally held that Vallalasena (1158—1178 A.D.) of this dynasty was responsible for the introduction of Kulinism in this part of the country ; but of this there is no historical confirmation (Majumdar *et al.*, 1957 : 35-38). In terms of Kulinism, Brahmins were elaborately divided into various classes in consonance with their learning and merit ; and it became the custom in later times for families of comparatively lower social status to try and raise themselves by marital alliance with families having a higher position in the Kulin system. This eventually led to hypergamy and a form of polygamy restricted mostly to upper class Brahmin families. Eventually, this stratification of families in accordance with socially desirable characteristics also affected other castes down to 'clean Shudras'. Hindu society in Bengal thus became thoroughly patterned after the Brahminical model.

Among the many pilgrimages belonging to the Sakta sect, which lie scattered from Baluchistan and Kashmir to the extreme south of the Peninsula, and to Bengal and Assam in the east, a fairly large number lie in the last two states, and enjoy an all-India reputation instead of being merely local in importance (Sircar, 1948 : 1-108). When an orthodox Hindu takes his morning ablution in Bengal, he utters a prayer, which freely translated runs as follows: 'Oh thou Rivers Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri, repose in this water.'

The consciousness of unity with the rest of India through Brahminical rituals and tradition, as well as through the concept of property and laws of inheritance, or organization of caste, clearly binds the Hindu inhabitant of Bengal with the rest of India ; and this unity of culture was the result of Brahminical organization as it became effective over centuries across the widespread land (cf. Roy Chaudhuri, 1334 B. S. : 269-285).

Non-conformism

It must however be pointed out that, in spite of various centres of Sanskrit learning in Bengal, as in the colleges of Navadwip, Vikrampur or Sylhet, there was a streak of heterodoxy which has marked the inhabitants of this extreme eastern portion of India ever since Vedic times.

Haraprasad Shastri was firmly of opinion that Bengal had a distinctness which clearly indicated that before its submergence under Brahminical tradition, the East (Bihar, Assam and the delta of the Ganges) was the seat of a civilization different in some significant respects from that of the middle Gangetic valley (Shastri, 1353 B. S. : 7ff.) Buddhism and Jainism had their origin east of the orthodox centre of Brahminical culture, in the middle Gangetic plain, and in both the authority of the Vedas was denied. In these two religious systems, there is not only a critical, moral approach to the problems of life, but both are informed by an insistence upon the primacy of the human spirit, which is perhaps not so patently manifest in Vedic ritualism or theology.

Perhaps elements of this humanistic theology gave rise in later times in Bengal to a number of unorthodox sects, in which the human body itself is treated as the mystic temple of God ; and in which, moreover, as Haraprasad Shastri pointed out, a mortal, religious preceptor was elevated to the rank of divinity (Shastri, 1355 B. S. : 9-13). This apotheosis of a human being may have been an extravagant and misdirected gesture ; but it had its origin in the treatment of humanity as the highest value, in contrast to Vedic ritualdom, in which gods or the 'shining ones' occupied the highest position. Shastri distinguished the two as Gu-bhaju and De-bhaju sects, 'worshippers of the preceptor' and 'worshippers of the Devas' ; and he reported that he had discovered these two terms in use among the people of Nepal where many of the archaic elements of Indian culture have been preserved until recent times (Vasu, 1911 : 24-5).

In any case, it is perhaps well to emphasize this heterodox character of Eastern culture in India, in which the distinctive

element was furnished by an insistence on human values. Sashibhusan Dasgupta of the Calcutta University, has shown how various unorthodox, protestant cults, like Sahaja, Nath, Baul, have formed the basis of Bengal's literature, as well as of her cultural life (Dasgupta, 1946 : 58-69). It was a poet of Bengal named Chandidas, who sang once, 'Listen, Oh my Brother Man ! It is Man (*mānus*) alone who exists above all else as the highest truth. Beyond that is nothing.' Some have claimed that the term *mānus*, as used by Chandidas, did not quite signify what we indicate today by Humanity or Humanism. It had a mystic significance, which equated it with the Soul, and hence with God. Be that as it may, the fact that even the highest was thus cast in a distinctly human mould is itself of some importance, and shows in a way how the culture of the eastern plains was somewhat distinct from that of the rest of northern India.

In later times, this distinctness expressed itself in an interesting way in her literature, as well as in her architecture. The Rekha or Northern Order of temples has a form which is supposed to symbolize the human body, or the mountain abode of the gods. Its various parts are named either after elements of the human body, like the foot, the leg, the trunk, neck, skull, and so forth ; or have names derived from the Himalayan abode of the gods. Gods in northern, western or southern India have a regal stature, while from mediæval times onwards, the saints and poets of Bengal have reduced gods into the stature of human beings.

In the *Annadamangal*, a Bengali poem written by Bharatchandra in 1752 A. D., Siva is described as a human being, and his wife Parvati is even described as a woman given to nagging. Her image is worshipped with great ceremony in the autumnal festival of Bengal. In other parts of India, too, she is worshipped on the same occasion with great pomp. But the particular attitude which is brought to bear upon this worship in Bengal is the treatment of the goddess as a daughter who comes back to her father's home for a while. When the image is cast into water at the end of four days of

worship, all feel as if a dear daughter has departed and left the home without joy.

Temples belonging to the early 16th century onwards in Bengal have been imitations in brick of the thatched cottages in which its rural inhabitants mostly live. They might be decorated with turrets added in the centre or the corners of the roof ; but the temple is, for all that, a home for the gods to live in, not a symbolic representation of the mystic body of man.

This difference in emphasis may not indicate a major difference between Bengal's culture and that of the rest of India, with which it was strong ties of kinship. But it does indicate how that emphasis has led Bengali culture to be somewhat marked off from the rest of Indian culture ; though it has undoubtedly remained a branch of the latter.

The heterodoxy, or a mild degree of non-conformism has, at least, released the intellect and spirit of Bengal free to experiment with new ideas, without a feeling of guilt for not being closely tied to orthodoxy. And that has been one of the features which helped later on to turn this particular corner of India into a melting pot of new ideas and of new institutions. At least, it helped to build up a receptivity in the Bengali mind of what was unorthodox, and what tended to lean towards humanism, whether that was of the mystical or of the more secular, rationalistic variety.

II. MUTUAL AID : ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTERDEPENDENCE IN VILLAGES

Kinds of Villages

On the whole, there are two types of settlements in Bengal, namely, the scattered and the clustered ones.

In the southern districts, particularly where new islands are being slowly thrown up in the mouth of rivers, peasants settle in small bands, build houses in the midst of their fields, and quite often surround the house with a ring of trees of various kinds. This is particularly true of southern 24 Parganas,

Khulna, Backergunj and Noakhali districts in West and East Bengal. The domicile consists of an open courtyard with living rooms, store and kitchen arranged in a square round the yard. A village consists of a variable number of scattered dwellings of the above kind, lying in the midst of extensive cultivated fields. There is hardly a planned street anywhere ; the house being the dominant element in the landscape, along with the fields.

In the mountainous north of Bengal, farmhouses or the dwellings of peasants tend to be similarly scattered in the midst of narrow, step-like fields which are built with infinite labour on the steep slopes. Only, in some areas, where enough flat land is not available, several peasants may build their houses in close proximity to one another. Houses with shops also tend to form a linear cluster by the side of roads, particularly at intersections.

In the West Bengal districts of Midnapore, Birbhum and Burdwan, some houses may be scattered, and built away from their neighbours, but it is more common to find them grouped into small or large clusters. Village streets consequently assume a little more importance than in the region of scattered houses. And these clusters, again, may be inhabited, on the whole, by either the 'upper' or 'lower' castes. The two groups tend to separate from one another in wards of their own.

The majority of villages are inhabited by peasants, but there are others in which the chief occupation is trade or small-scale cottage manufactures. Others may be centres of administration, pilgrimage or learning.

Bahiri, about four miles east of Bolpur-Santiniketan, is a populous village where prosperous landowners live in brick-built houses of their own, while the poorer people live in cottages having mud walls thatched over with straw. Jaynagar-Majilpore in the district of 24 Parganas has its share of peasant population, but there are in addition the mansions of land-owners, with a few temples, also built of brick.

Places like Bolpur or Sainthia in Birbhum also play an important part in the economy of the country as centres of trade. In some of the crowded districts of West Bengal, the

distance between two weekly markets may be as small as three or four miles ; while in comparatively poorer countries, like the south of Puri district in. Orissa, this may be, on an average, seven miles or more.

Weekly or bi-weekly markets may be held in such villages, while there may also be shops which are open every day in the week. The former are called *h ā t*, while the latter are *b ā j ā r* in the Bengali language. On the banks of rivers, or by the side of roads, or near railway stations, there are villages which have become converted into towns, with their complement of shops and godowns, and various buildings of other kinds. It is usual in West Bengal to regard a settlement as a town when the population reaches 5,000, with a density of 1,000 per square mile, and where, at least, three-fourths of the population is engaged in occupations other than farming.

In former times, villages which had become focal points of trade, also attracted various kinds of artisans. There were carpenters or blacksmiths who kept bullock carts or boats in repair, while craftsmen like weavers or brass and bell-metal workers also clustered into the neighbourhood. They found it easy to secure yarn in the bazaars, and also easy to sell the products of the loom to wholesale merchants possessing warehouses in these centres of commerce. Rajbalhat, in the district of Hooghly, has a population of 5,225 persons out of whom 2,120 are engaged in production other than agriculture and 765 in commerce ; it is practically an industrial village where the chief occupation is weaving. Kamarpara in the Burdwan district has a comparable population of the Kamar or blacksmith caste, who have, for the last three generations, taken to the specialized manufacture of gilt brass ornaments. These used to be very popular before the partition of India in the districts of East Bengal, i.e. East Pakistan. Although thus manufactured in villages, the products of either Rajbalhat or of Kamarpara are chiefly sold through traders who live in Calcutta, which is nearly a hundred miles away.

Besides farming, trading and industrial villages of the above kind, and those inhabited by landowners, and thus having an administrative function, there have also been

villages inhabited primarily by Brahmins of learning, where there were Sanskrit colleges of the traditional kind. Several villages in Burdwan, Sylhet and Dacca were of this nature; although their character has changed in recent times. Certain other villages like Tarakeswar in Hooghly or Bakreswar in Birbhum were the seats of temples where pilgrims resorted from all over the country, and in which there used to be the usual complement of Brahmins having a priestly occupation.

Interdependence

No village, except perhaps the very small ones occupied by agricultural and landless labourers, has only one function. Some may have two, and some even more. As stated above, trading villages serve not merely those lying close to it, but also those which may lie at considerable distance. There are weekly markets where cattle are brought for sale; and although they are rather infrequent, yet where one exists, it serves a region which oversteps by far the usual area served by such markets.

Usually, seasonal fairs serve the purpose of supplying goods which farmers have to purchase once in a while. Such fairs may be held on some religious occasion, but they play an important part in the economic life of the villagers; particularly as these fairs are timed shortly after the harvest season. The fair of Kalisunri in Barisal is noted for thousands of boats which are brought in for sale. At Bairagitala in Birbhum, not only do people come for entertainment, but ploughs of good quality and doors or wooden posts and beams for building are also made available in large quantities for those who need them.

A peasant has needs which he satisfies by weekly purchases, while there are others which he can attend to only once in a year or more. And these functionally distinguishable villages and market towns, or places of religious resort, thus serve the inhabitants of rural Bengal through various networks of economic or social relationship. Peasants, traders, artisans, priests and scholars thus become linked, either in a close or remote relationship within a framework of mutual dependences.

Numerous studies of village economy in different parts of India have revealed how the organization of caste plays an important role in the economic life of villages. It was usual to exchange goods and services in a customary manner in former times. Money did not play a major part in these transactions, and the quantity of wealth exchanged was subject to specification by the village or caste as a whole, and not open to speculation under individual caprice.

When population is small, and the inhabitants of villages are not stricken by unemployment, and also remain rooted to the same place, these customary arrangements by which a peasant exchanges his goods for the services of the carpenter, blacksmith, potter, barber, schoolmaster, or astrologer, gives to every member of the village commune a feeling or security extending from generation to generation.

Like these inter-caste dependences, there were also neighbourhood ties of a parallel kind. Among the peasantry of Murshidabad, for instance, there was a custom whereby neighbours came to help a particular farmer when his land or crops needed immediate attention, which he could not secure by means of labour available in his own family. In return, he had of course to render his neighbours similar assistance when they were in need of it. Among the Nulia fishing caste of Puri in Orissa, the entire village is subdivided into a number of wards, the members of which help one another when a ceremony like marriage takes place. Those belonging to one ward help the particular family in the heavy task of cooking all meals necessary for the feast. These neighbourhood ties, besides the neighbourhood-cum-caste interdependences formed at one time the basis of mutual aid in rural India. They maintained the cultural interdependence also alive in the same society.

III. STUDY OF CHANGE

The kind of change to which Bengal has been subjected in course of the last two hundred years can be studied either in

the abstract or in the concrete. There are numerous reports, as well as economic histories written on the basis of official documents, which present a reliable picture of what has happened to Bengal in recent times (Sinha, 1956). There is also another way in which fragments of the same story can be built up through the history of particular families which occupied a key position in a village. In the case of small or unimportant families, no record may perhaps be available; but in the case of richer ones, suitable data can perhaps be obtained from records of land transfer or lawsuits involving partition of property, and so on.

As an example, we shall deal with the case of the Sinha family of Raipur, this being a village lying four miles to the southwest of Bolpur in Birbhum, and situated on the banks of the Ajay River. This river forms the boundary between Burdwan and Birbhum districts, and flows into the Ganges near the town of Katwa. At one time, the river bank was lined by prosperous centres of trade as well as places of pilgrimage marked by well-decorated temples of brick. The poet Jayadeva (12th century) is said to have lived at Kenduli on the Ajay; and every year even now a great religious fair is held in his honour, when wandering mendicants, belonging to the Baul sect, gather under an ancient banyan tree and sing devotional songs. Deuli and Supur are two other villages which have yielded stone sculpture belonging to about the 11th or 12th centuries. The tall brick temple of Ichhai Ghosh was perhaps built later, but was subsequently abandoned, and now lies surrounded by thick jungle. At Supur, there used to be a slightly raised stretch of land called Noon-Danga ('upland of salt'), where probably salt was stored for sale. Ilambazar, a few miles west, was at one time, also an important place of trade and manufacture of indigo and lac toys. The banks of the Ajay have thus been interspersed by places of religious or commercial importance for nearly a thousand years. It was in this area that an agent of the East India Company named John Cheap built a house to the north of a village called Surul.

The Sinhas of Raipur

The Sinhas of Raipur originally came from Chandrakona in the district of Midnapore. They are Kayastha by caste and belong to the Uttara-Rarhiya section. Lalchand Sinha of Chandrakona is said to have settled near the ancient village of Supur on the Ajay River. There is a tradition that, when he came, he was accompanied by a thousand weavers from his native district. Lalchand's son, Shyamkishore, served as an agent of the East India Company and supplied textiles to John Cheap for export to Europe.

Shyamkishore amassed a large fortune in course of time. Birbhum was then ruled by a Muslim family, bearing the title of 'Raja'. The capital was then at Rajnagar near Suri, the present headquarters of the district. The Raja of Birbhum incurred debts from Shyamkishore, and eventually parted with his zemindari from Suri to Raipur in favour of the latter.

Shyamkishore had four sons named Jagamohan, Brajamohan, Bhubanmohan and Manomohan. Of these four sons, the eldest was in charge of landed property, while the third, Bhubanmohan, managed his father's office. The youngest, Manomohan, was fond of music, and spent his time either in literary or musical pursuits. Manomohan had four sons, among whom Sitikantha became the father of Satyendra Prasanna, who was the first Indian Governor of a province under British rule. In his own day, Shyamkishore became reputed as a Persian scholar, while his grandson, Sitikantha, learnt English besides Persian like his grandfather.

The Sinhas thus become zemindars from being merely commercial agents of the East India Company. Labour was cheap in the neighbourhood ; and adventurous Englishmen began to establish factories of indigo and silk in this part of the country. A man named David Erskine built an indigo factory through the help of John Cheap at a place several miles west of Raipur. Cheap died in 1828 and David Erskine in 1837, when the latter's son, Henry Erskine, took up the business of his father. It is said that Sitikantha entered into partnership with Henry Erskine soon afterwards. To have a

powerful local zemindar on his side was no less an advantage for Henry Erskine than it was for Sitikantha to extend his investments from commerce and landownership to manufactures of several kinds.

Through the help of his partner, Sitikantha eventually sent his sons Narendra and Satyendra for education to England. Satyendra became a distinguished lawyer, and was the only Indian to be raised to peerage in England.

The house of the Sinhas of Raipur is still there, but much of it is in ruins. Many of its present members have moved away to Calcutta or other cities, and have taken to professions like law, education, etc. If they had remained confined to their hereditary profession, which is that of writer and accountant under government, the history of the family would have been of one kind. But as it identified its fortunes with the East India Company, and then ventured into landownership and industry, its members drifted along with the current economic and political fortunes occurring in the cities under British rule, and were thus able to raise themselves to a superior position when compared to their less active and mobile neighbours.

Santipur Town

The process described above, which covers roughly four generations or a little over one hundred years, was accompanied by migration of a large part of the family from, firstly, Chandrakona to Raipur, and then from Raipur to Calcutta and other cities or towns. In some of the comparatively older towns of Bengal, in spite of migration, some parts of a family have remained rooted in their ancestral homes; while occupations have changed considerably as a result of economic forces working over the entire province.

Santipur on the Ganges has been a centre of Brahminical learning, as well as a place of trade and pilgrimage for at least five hundred years. During the reign of Mohammedan rulers, two small forts were built on the eastern and western flanks of the town, where Pathan and Rajput soldiers from northern India were originally stationed. These forts have disappeared, but the

completely Bengali-speaking descendants of the latter still retain their homes in the midst of the ruins of former glory. Mosques and ornamented graves lie buried and dilapidated in places overgrown by ancient trees.

During the early part of the 19th century, the East India Company built its commercial establishment in this region. Like Birbhum, indigo and textiles became an important manufacture of Santipur. Trading castes like the Tili, and weavers like the Tanti, gave their names to two quarters of the town, and covered the place where they lived with extensive brick dwellings or lofty temples. Brahmin priests and scholars, as well as bell-metal workers, had quarters of their own ; whence their names also came to be associated with respective wards of the town.

There has been considerable fluctuation in the growth and decay of the town. At one time, it was stricken by malaria, and the population shrank considerably in size. Houses were deserted ; but, on the whole, the fomer caste distribution was maintained intact.

When a map is prepared of the distribution of occupations, and superimposed on a map showing distribution of castes, there are revealed certain very significant discrepancies. In the west of the town, there is a quarter occupied by the Goala caste, or those who keep cattle and trade in dairy produce. They have now taken to weaving. Santipur is famous for its sweetmeats made from milk, and the Goala formerly flourished upon this trade, as did the confectioners or Moira who have shops in the heart of the market place. With the introduction of imported powdered milk, confectioners now find it cheaper to distribute the dry stuff to Goalas who boil it in water and eventually bring it back in the form of cottage cheese. Goalas now earn less through this industry than when they sold milk from their own cattle. Many cattle were sold during the second world war, and the importation of dried milk from outside India has now introduced a new factor which has forced Goala families to adopt trades like weaving in place of their hereditary caste occupation.

Brahmin, Tili, Kayastha and other castes too have changed

profession ; and areas inhabited by these castes coincide on the map with areas where modern professions, like those connected with law, education or trade of various kinds, are now in vogue. The hereditary pattern of occupations connected with caste, which interlocked with one another, has thus undergone profound change even when populations have remained comparatively stationary, as in the town under consideration.

Census Reports

When Bengal is viewed as a whole, and its census reports analysed from 1901 to 1931, that being the only period in which any relationship between caste and occupation can be satisfactorily established, one discovers that the changes illustrated through the history of the Sinhas of Raipur, or of have the town of Santipur, been widespread all over the province. Perhaps what is more important is that different castes have been affected differently in course of time.

The following tables will show clearly how the course of changes in traditional occupation has not only not been unequal, but how a clear distinction can be drawn between castes which have drifted towards urban, and more profitable professions, while others have been reduced through the loss of hereditary arts and crafts, into the rank of either agricultural or industrial proletariate. It would be worthwhile to try and discover by means of detailed study in various parts of the country how this process has developed in the neighbourhood of towns and cities, and in localities where communication and transport are difficult.

In any case, the situation as revealed by the census reports is now quoted below from a previous paper by the writer.

Kumor : Manufacture of Pottery

	1901	1911	1921	1931
Population	195,533	278,206	284,514	289,654
Earning members		92,659	75,326	53,506
Percentage of literates	6·54	8 04	10·18	9·66
Percentage in :				
traditional occupation	75·16	73·80	61·69	58·87
agriculture	16·60	13·40	19·76	19·89
industries		78·14	64·50	65·66
higher professions		0·857	1·288	4·257

Kamar: Blacksmithery

	1901	1911	1921	1931
Population	176,873	238,595	256,853	265,526
Earning members		86,902	89,633	81,710
Percentage of literates	10·34	14·98	17·88	14·91
Percentage in :				
traditional occupation	47·35	57·48	34·11	43·76
agriculture		19·30	26·02	21·81
industries		67·53	52·04	56·11
higher professions		1·745	1·290	5·321

Chamar & Muchi : Leather working

	1901	1911	1221	1931
Population	96,391 (only Chamar)	533,131	564,879	564,682
Earning members		238,058	244,145	217,366
Percentage of literates	3·19	2·97	3·11	4·52
Percentage in :				
traditional occupation	23·26	33·77	23·94	24·59
agriculture	33·47	32·33	28·60	32·88
industries		37·06	42·84	43 93
higher professions		0·254	0·449	1·071

Bagdi or *Byagra Kshatriya* : Agriculture and Fishing

	1901	1911	1921	1931
Population	703,147	847,228	886,821	987,315
Earning members		392,472	371,477	366,455
Percentage of literacy	1·57	1·91	2·13	1·92
Percentage in :				
traditional occupation	70·13	71·28	42·28 (?)	69·79
agriculture		73·41	68·66	81·74
industries		10·05	9·23	5·03
higher professions		0·247	0·355	1·171

Goala : Cow-keeping and Milk Trade

	1901	1911	1921	1931
Population	494,699	588,790	582,597	599,281
Earning members		251,829	239,429	217,438
Percentage of literacy	6·33	7·68	10·57	10·17
Percentage in :				
traditional occupation	41·45	31· 39	21· 30	24. 77
agriculture		41· 00	42· 21	37· 49
industries		6· 47	7· 43	7· 28
higher professions		1·650	1·873	5.421

Vaidya: Medicine

	1901	1911	1921	1931
Population	31,357	88,298	102,870	110,739
Earning members		21,133	24,114	26,292
Percentage of literacy	45·62	53·21	57·52	51·79
Percentage in :				
traditional occupation	36·10	20·11	15·02	18·80
agriculture		7·163	12·418	6·04
industries		2·13	1·22	1·85
higher professions		54·663	46·811	49·40

Brahmin: Priestcraft, Teaching, etc.

	1901	1911	1921	1931
Population	1,019,348	1,191,867	1,341,430	1,456,180
Earning members		400,064	425,173	417,157
Percentage of literacy	35·84	39·85	43·15	37·28
Percentage in :				
traditional occupation	33·54	21·79	14·57	16·57
agriculture		19·388	22·631	15·38
industries		2·92	3·57	4·50
higher professions		43·712	34·96	30·76

'A comparison of the tables will indicate that, on the whole, changes have taken place in two directions among various castes. Artisan castes like Kumor (potter), Kamar (blacksmith), or Chamar-Muchi (tanner and leather worker) have drifted either towards agricultural labour, or skilled labour in industries other than their traditional ones. The percentage of literacy among them has tended to remain low, at a lower level than the average for all castes in Bengal. Castes like the Byagra-Kshatriya (formerly recorded as Bagdi), whose traditional occupation was labour in the fields, have maintained it to an appreciable extent; and their percentage of literacy has also tended to remain at a considerably low level, lower than that of the average for artisan castes, for example. In the case of castes like Brahmin or Vaidya, the departure from traditional occupation has been very high indeed, while there has been a corresponding concentration, not in agriculture or industries, but in 'higher professions', like medicine, law, office work of various kinds, landowning or

land management. Percentages of literacy are naturally higher in comparison with the country's average.

'Furthermore, it is of interest to note that figures for employment in traditional occupations have been steadily reduced in the case of castes referred to in the last portion of the above paragraph. Thus, the decline has been as follows :

Percentage of earning members engaged in traditional occupation :	1901	1911	1921	1931
Brahmin	33·54	21·79	14·57	16·57
Vaidya	36·10	20·11	15·02	18·80

'It is interesting that here too castes have remained endogamous ; in other words, sameness of occupation, whether in the learned professions or agriculture, has not tended in any way to break down the barriers of endogamy' (Bose, 1958 : 84-5).

IV. CHANGE CONSIDERED FURTHER

One of The Mechanisms of Change

Let us now try to illustrate one of the ways in which change has actually taken place in Bengal.

As described already, the river Ajay forming the boundary between Birbhum and Burdwan for some part of its length, was at one time dotted with prosperous trading or manufacturing villages like Supur, Raipur or Ilambazar. Rivers then formed the commercial highway of trade. But after the foundation of the East Indian Railway Company in 1855, a quicker and shorter route of trade was established between Bengal and other provinces in North India. This line ran north and south in Birbhum and intersected rivers like the Ajay, Kopai or Mayurakshi at right angles to their general direction. The Ajay is crossed at a point which lies about three miles west of Raipur, just where the old and now decadent village of Budro is situated. Bolpur is about three miles north of the railway bridge which spans the river.

At one time, it was like one of the many small-sized villages which lie scattered all over the countryside. It gained in importance when a railway station was built here, and traders began to flock into its neighbourhood. Some of the people came from the prosperous riverside villages, which were consequently left in a condition of neglect; while others came from Bihar or from remote provinces like Rajasthan.

During the first world war, the price of rice mounted high, and Bolpur was consequently raised from its position of a small local market to one of countrywide importance. Mills where paddy was hulled were established in rapid succession, paved roads stretched across the country in all directions, the number of bullock carts increased, and Bolpur was eventually converted into one of the most important centres of rice trade in Bengal. By and by, other railway stations like Gushkara, Ahmadpur or Sainthia also gained in importance; but Bolpur has succeeded in remaining at the head of such towns of trade.

It is interesting to follow the history of the town during the last fifty years. Land prices mounted steadily, roads were improved, while godowns and factories, shops and residences slowly spread into neighbouring villages like Bandgora or Trisuliapati, until they became overgrown along the roadside, and eventually fused with one another to form the present municipal town, which is of irregular shape. In every direction, houses have continued to increase along the roadside; a fact which has acquired a new importance since the development of cheap motor transport, which has, on its part, been followed by further improvement in the character of the roads themselves.

Many of the merchants and shopkeepers who originally flocked to Bolpur did not, at first, bring their families from their native villages. But as years passed, and as life in the surrounding villages was left in comparative decay after the principal and more energetic leaders left, the families also abandoned their village homes and crowded into the town where, at least, education and medical aid were more readily available. There was thus a selective migration to the town,

while rural industries languished when the rich left the villages, or because it was no longer possible to cope with the competition of machine-made goods. Artisans consequently migrated in search of employment in the growing towns ; or perhaps, as in the case of many members of the leather-working caste, sank into the rank of landless labourers. The price of farm labour tended to fall ; so much so that, round the year 1930, the share-cropper's proportion of twenty out of every forty bundles of paddy grown, had become reduced to eighteen, while the landowner's had been raised to twenty-two.

The number of small traders who also flocked to the town of Bolpur for a day or two, or of factory-hands who found work in the increasing number of rice mills, coupled with the poverty of the labouring castes, led to a gradual increase in the number of women who lived by the sale of their bodies.

While this was the situation at the bottom of the social scale, higher up, the more prosperous cultivators and traders became permanently interested in the progress of the town ; schools and libraries were opened, medical facilities became more readily available, municipal services were gradually improved, so that altogether the town became bigger and better in many ways. What is however important is that, although poorer castes like the Hadi, Dom or Muchi, or the Santal, gained some of the fruits of urban improvement in an indirect manner, priority always lay with the upper classes, while, on the whole, the former continued to live in their wretched, insanitary condition much as before.

Another point of interest is that the new economic class of factory owners, traders, schoolmasters, medical men and the like drew its recruits, not from all castes indiscriminately, but principally from some of the originally prosperous castes who had taken advantage of education, or had the means of migration when the town stepped up to larger proportions. Moreover, as the pattern of new urban occupations is different from the traditional ones as they existed in villages, and as the hereditary rule was more or less set aside, the economic structure and relationship has tended to be recast into a pattern of

economically differentiated classes, having much less to do with heredity than before. Inequalities of wealth have been shorn of many of the cultural responsibilities assigned to 'higher castes' in the traditional pattern.

Polarization of Interests

As British commercial interests became more firmly established through consolidation of political authority, and the middle class, which was affiliated to the above interests, turned its face to the West, there was a progressive polarization of interests between country and town. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, profits secured through trade and industry did not always return in the shape of capital invested in furthering those interests. A fairly large proportion was spent in the acquisition of zemindari rights ; for, after all, investment in land was deemed safer when political conditions were either insecure or unfavourable to native interests.

When merchants or agents of British commercial houses were thus converted into landlords, it was customary to spend a proportion of their wealth in the improvement of their village homes or in building temples or bathing ghats by the side of rivers, or even in conspicuous expenditure during religious festivals and marriage ceremonies, when their rural neighbours, both rich and poor, found a welcome change from the dull routine of everyday life. But with further urban improvement, as the old generation who still retained a fond memory of childhood days spent in villages, passed away and their place was taken by their descendants who had feebler ties with the ancestral home, the polarization between town and country became more and more sharply defined.

Some Cultural Responses

It is interesting to observe how these changes in the economic orientation of the rising classes thrown up as a result of the progress of British interests, also had their parallel effect upon the cultural interests of the people concerned.

In Santipur, traders belonging to the Tili caste had played an important part in relation to the commercial activities of the early European traders. They and their counterparts of the Subarnabanik, Gandhabanik, Tantubaya, and other castes in the city of Calcutta, therefore built large mansions, the facade or even the plan of which was, more or less, influenced by European models as exemplified by the dwellings of their patrons in the English residential quarters of Calcutta.

The life of men and women in Bengal however continued as before. Women remained secluded under purdah, so that the courtyard within the house, the open verandahs which faced the central courtyard, continued to remain as important a feature of the Bengali house as it was formerly. The terrace was also a place where women retired in the afternoon to have a breath of fresh air or for conversation with neighbours. It was also the place used for entertaining the large number of guests during social ceremonies like marriage, or s'h r a d d h a or funerary observances, which punctuate the life of every prosperous Hindu household. Outside the house, a built-up bench, termed the r a k in Bengali, was important ; and on it, young and old would pass perhaps hours in gossip or in smoking or in playing sedentary games like cards or chess.

These two elements, namely, the inner courtyard and the open verandah, with most of the rooms facing inwards, continued to be a feature of the mansions now built increasingly of brick, as they had, more or less, been features of houses built of earth, bamboo and thatch formerly. The terrace was possible in brick construction, as it was not possible with the earlier materials. But, what is interesting is that ornamental elements of European design were encrusted upon the new buildings even when the form remained more or less undisturbed. Sometimes the ornaments were so important that they also affected form. Yet, on the whole, Western influence in architecture remained more or less at an outer, though not completely superficial level.

Corinthian pillars, often a whole facade in imitation of English architecture, were built ; while windows, venetian

shutters, arches, composite columns borrowed from Gothic churches, were added to verandahs, rooms, or courts of worship called thakur-dalan without intelligent adaptation or adequate artistic sensitivity. The superficial Westernism which thus left its impress upon domestic architecture was more marked in the homes of those whose interests were more closely related to the commercial European houses which they served.

Examples of the above kind are fairly common in the old quarters of Calcutta where the rich formerly had their residence. Thus Chitpore Road, Darmahata, Nimtala, Pathuriaghata, or their neighbourhood, i.e. either the vicinity of the river Hooghly or the area lying immediately east of it, contain numerous examples of this Westernized architectural design. And as this portion of the city has become increasingly congested, as expanding commercial interests have forced the original inhabitants to move away from them, these memorials of a passing phase of imitation of Western architecture now lie surrounded by crowded bazaars, warehouses, or even slums which have become piled on one another in a place where the rich once resided in their newly found urban glory.

V. SOCIAL THOUGHT IN FERMENT

Condition of Hindu Society

As we look back upon Hindu society in Bengal at the end of the 18th century, we are confronted by a rather painful spectacle. Life had become cluttered with social evils of many kinds. Polygamy was in vogue among upper class Brahmins ; ritualism and ostentatious worship had become a substitute for genuine religious endeavour or experience. Women were under subjugation. Widow remarriage was totally forbidden among higher castes ; while, among men, moral lapses were generally overlooked. There was greater interest in maintaining the appearance of purity than in its pursuit as an ideal in life. Suttee as a custom was still in vogue ; and although there might have been an element of coercion, there is no doubt

that numerous examples of immolation were of a voluntary character ; for a great prestige came to be attached to such sacrifices as in the case of the Japanese h a r a - k i r i. It was as if Hindu society tried to hold aloft its banner of purity by relegating that responsibility to the keeping of these noble, but completely misguided, band of heroic women. While the latter burned themselves to death, the rest of society reeked in abuses and degradation which choked the life of the individual from all directions, unless he secured an escape in religious retirement from the burden and temptations of life.

It is curious that the moral poverty and cultural degradation were not adequately felt ; in the sense that, in spite of feeble protests, the reaction seemed, on the whole, to lead to compromise and grudging acceptance, on the one hand, or to cynicism and a sense of frustration on the other, instead of towards a healthy endeavour in the direction of reform. Initiative seems to have been broken in the social and cultural field, as it had undoubtedly been broken in the field of political authority for several centuries past. It required the challenge of Christian missionary activity to rouse Bengal from her slumber ; and this is how it happened.

The Baptist Mission of Serampore was established in 1800 A.D. A weekly newspaper, *Samachar Darpan* (Mirror of News) was started by it in May 1818, and in 1821 there appeared in it a bitter attack against Hindu society and religion. Raja Rammohan Roy sent a suitable reply ; but as it could not be printed, he founded a bilingual magazine of his own entitled *Brahmunical Magazine*. This did not however run beyond three issues.

In the meanwhile, an orthodox Brahmin named Gangakishore Bhattacharyya had already printed a Bengali weekly magazine named *Bangal Gezeti* (? June, 1818). Gangakishore was also responsible for the publication of the first illustrated book in the Bengali language, namely, the devotional poem *Annadamangal* written by Bharatchandra in 1752 A.D. He also published orthodox Hindu religious literature, like *Gangabhaktitarangini* (Eulogy to the sacred

river Ganges) and *Lakshmicharitra* (the Epic of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth).

Some time after, a more powerful leader of Hindu society, named Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay, became associated with a journal entitled *Sambad Kaumudi* (founded in December 1821), and then established a press and paper of his own named *Samachar Chandrika* in March 1822. Bhabanicharan was as much interested in the defence of Hinduism as in the reform of his own society. He was the author of *Naba-babu-bilas* (1823) and two more satires in which social abuses among the newly rich in Calcutta were bitterly ridiculed. Incidentally these books, along with a book of Bengali conversation edited by William Carey of the Serampore Mission, and obviously written by his teacher Mrityunjoy Tarkalankar, were the first books in Bengali prose in which simple or colloquial forms of the language were employed.

Christian Onslaught

As referred to previously, the missionary newspaper now opened an attack upon both orthodox society and religion. Press and platform were both utilized for this purpose. But it is interesting to observe in this connection that Islam or the Muslim population of Bengal were left more or less untouched. Perhaps this was because Christianity had many points in common with Islam. But part of the reticence may also have been due to the fact that the nominal ruling power in India was still Muslim, while some of the Muslim Nawabs of Bengal had shown their strong disapproval of missionary activities by stamping out Portugese power from Bengal, with which such activity had been inextricably connected.

Islam was no less 'heathen' than Hinduism in the eyes of the Baptist missionaries ; yet it was the superstition of the Hindus, their idolatry, caste and other social evils which were subjected to ruthless exposure. And in this age of degradation, it became possible for missionaries to extend a helping hand to the poor or socially suppressed castes, as well as to women who had suffered from the false and formal puritanism of Brahminical society. There was much truth in the criticism of missionaries;

and reformers within Hindu society were roused into a ready recognition of their own degradation, particularly when challenged by those who had come from other lands. It was easier for Christians to be objective about a foreign culture ; for it is always easier to detect someone else's fault rather than one's own.

Let us, however, point out that the missionary view of Hindu society was less objective than it claimed to be. It was strongly coloured by the desise 'to save the soul of the heathen' ; and consequently this led to an underestimation of Hinduism and an idealization of Christianity and European civilization. Even though it thus led missionaries to miss some of the more vital elements of Hindu civilization, it at least helped them to lead a better and more truly Christian life than circumstances at home permitted. For England, at the moment, was passing through its early phase of industrial revolution ; and the cruelty and dirt which had gathered in the lives of people through the sanctification of greed or profit, and the overvaluation of individualism of a kind which attended the rise of industrialism, was no less un-Christian in spirit than the formalism into which Hinduism had taken refuge after political subjugation. The latter was clearly in contrast with the currents of thought which had produced the Upanishads, or the *Artha* and *Kama Shastras*, or even the later reconstructions of faith associated with the names of Sankara and Ramanuja, or Nanak, Chaitanya and Kabir.

On the Defence

In any case, the hostile contact of Christian missionary propaganda led to certain important developments within the boundaries of Hindu civilization itself. The fact that English rule had come to Bengal as an instrument of peace, and Christianity happened to be the faith or profession of the new rulers, and the fact that those on the margin could scramble out of slow economic submergence by alliance with the fate of the ruling class, led to a feeling that Christianity was a vehicle of upliftment, and an adoption of European ways of life was equivalent to identification with progress. The

task of proselytization was however left to missionaries, while the rulers remained more or less aloof or deliberately neutral.

In some significant ways this was in sharp contrast with the attitude evinced by the previous Muslim rulers. Then there were forced conversions, or conversion through secular temptation of various kinds, in which State and missionary became identified with one another.

It should, however, be noted here that conversion to Christianity was, on the whole, confined to the 'suppressed' classes ; while the upper, or more sophisticated ones, remained more or less unaffected by missionary enterprise. Instances like the conversion of Krishna Mohan Banerji (1813-1885) or of Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873) were exceptional ; and their infrequency was an evidence of how little influence Christianity had, as religion, upon the minds of the educated leadership of Bengal.

As ever, the new converts were strong in their denunciation of Hinduism's weaknesses. But there still remained the substantial majority for whom Hinduism was not just one stinking pit of degradation and decay. Bhabanicharan and leaders of his kind tried to recover the lost soul of Hinduism by reviving interest in the best literature of the past while, at the same time, they slashed public opinion by their satires to arouse the public from prevalent inertia. But such endeavours remained at a more or less personal or private level, although this prepared the ground for reform within, and acceptance of several elements of European civilization without.

It is interesting that the first collective move in this direction was headed by a man who had been steeped in the formative period of his life in some of the best that was in Hinduism, as well as in the best that Islam had to offer. Raja Rammmohan Roy (1774-1833) was as great a Sanskrit as an Arabic scholar. In fact, he was described in orthodox Hindu society as a great Maulvi (Pal, 1932 : I, 137). He was also familiar with English literature, and a man whose heart had been deeply inspired by the spirit of liberty associated with the French Revolution. Here was a rare combination, and one who can be looked upon as 'modern' in every respect ;

and soon after Rammohan came to Calcutta in 1815, he took up his pen in a challenge against the writings of Christian missionaries, while he also fought against abuses in his own society even though it led to many bitter personal experiences.

Rammohan, whose intellectual sympathy had been profoundly influenced, as we have indicated, by both Islamic and European thought, now produced a version of Hinduism which was no mean substitute for the faiths against which he proceeded to defend it. Hindus could only be saved through Hinduism, not by its rejection. In this, Rammohan was a person who led from within. But even while he did so, the values which were applied and which guided him in the selection of beliefs marking the new faith, were the uncompromising monotheism of Islam and the proud rationalism of modern Europe.

Although Rammohan thus sowed the seed, and even nurtured the seedling in the form of a small organization, yet the plant did not grow to maturer proportions until his successor, Devendranath Tagore (1818-1905) converted the movement into a nationalistic resurgence of Indian culture. Like Rammohan, Devendranath had also been strongly influenced by Islamic culture (see for instance Tagore, 1909 : 127-146). But unlike the desert breath of monotheism which had come to Rammohan from Arabic sources, Devendranath drew his spiritual inspiration from the mysticism of the Sufi saints and poets. It tinged the austerity of his Upanishadic faith with the romance of love and devotion.

We learn from Devendranath's autobiography how some of the proselytizing adventures of Christian missionaries hurt his pride, and how he sallied forth to organize a protest in which all Hindus could participate (for the incident, see Tagore, 1909 : 38-9). It may be necessary to point out here that some of the leaders of orthodox Hindu society, including Raja Radhakanta Deb and Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay had already formed an association in 1830, named D h a r m a S a b h a, in order to defend Hindu religion and society from alien interference. Devendranath, in the meanwhile, established the T a t t w a b o d h i n i S a b h a, and a journal entitled the

Tattwabodhini Patrika (1839), which became the mouthpiece of progressive opinion. After the incident referred to above, we learn that Devendranath was joined by members of the Dharma Sabha, so that rivalry between the two disappeared (Tagore, 1909 : 39).

The Tattwabodhini Sabha and the *Tattwabodhini Patrika* were destined to play a significant part in the moral and intellectual reconstruction of Bengal. The journal published information on science, history and social affairs ; answered charges levelled by Christian missionaries ; and, although it played a defensive role, it made people feel proud of their civilization, in its reformed version, and rendered satisfied pride the basis of an acceptance of the best which the West had to offer.

Secular Influences

It is interesting that even while the proselytization of Christian missions was being slowed down by the theistic reform of the Brahmo Samaj, there were other movements in the field of education, for instance, which led away in the direction of agnosticism or of atheism ; in short, towards a secularization of reform.

An English watchmaker named David Hare had succeeded in the establishment of the Hindu College in 1817. In this he had secured the help of some of the leaders of Hindu society like Baidyanath Mukhopadhyay. A young teacher attached to this school, named Henry L. V. Derozio (1809-1831) exercised considerable influence upon the youthful Bengali mind for some time. Although Derozio's tenure of office was of short duration, as he was removed from the college on account of his 'atheistic' tendencies, yet he did succeed in setting the mind of Young Bengal aflame with love for the twin gods of Liberty and Rationalism. Indeed, many of the future leaders of Bengal, Peari Chand Mitra (1814-1883), Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873), Reverend Krishnamohan Banerji (1813-1885), drew inspiration from personal contact with Derozio, or from the secular atmosphere which was built up in the neighbourhood of

College Square, which became the home of various educational institutions in the city of Calcutta.

This secularization of freedom which flowed parallel to the theistic reform of the Brahmo Samaj while orthodox Hinduism tried to fortify itself by a restoration of ancient ideals, led to some very interesting results in the life and culture of Bengal. The desire for freedom and the need for some symbol which would satisfy the heart of the revolutionary, became so pressing that recourse was often taken to strange and quixotic means. Thus Sivanath Sastri has recorded how young men formed merry revolutionary companies in order to eat forbidden food and thus throw defiance against Hindu orthodoxy. The food favoured for this purpose was bread or biscuits baked by Muslims (this signified acceptance of 'water' from the hand of Muslims, water having been utilized in the making of bread), or preparations of beef from either Muslim vendors or more costly European hotels (Sastri, 1913 : 86). Rajnarain Basu has also recounted a similar enthusiasm for meat-eating and drinking wine among young men of his time (Basu, 1909 : 40). It is also recorded how, when young Hindus were forced to worship in the family shrine, they refused to utter Vedic prayers, but recited passages from English translations of Homer's *Iliad* (Sastri, 1913 : 82). In a letter dated 14 May 1831, which was published in the *Sambad Prabhakar*, we come across a rare piece of news. A young man who was a student of the Hindu College was once visited by his father who had come from a village. The father stopped in a shop in Kalighat, and after taking a bath in the Ganges, went with his son to the temple of Kali. The boy however refused to salute the image of the goddess, because it was only an idol. Eventually, however, he gave in ; but stood in front of the idol and exclaimed in good English, 'Good morning, Madam !' His revolutionary faith was perhaps thus saved ; but the poor father beat his forehead and lamented at the kind of 'education' that was being given in the Hindu College. (Bandyopadhyay, 1340 B.S. : II, 171).

Thus, the new regard for truth, or the strong faith that Bengali young men often evinced, did not always lead in the

direction of theistic reform. It also led to a negation of existing creeds, to agnosticism and even atheism. A substitution of one idol by another was however taking place. The new substitute was the image of the hammer with which other idols were to be broken ; while the ritual of worship became identical with the act of breaking faiths which held men back to an obedience to the past.

The devotion to the cause of reform or destructive revolution which was thus in evidence, had one element of deep substantiality about it. It was not a product of cynicism, of sourness or frustration, but sprang from the faith that, if bondage to tradition could be broken, this could become the starting point of fresh advance. Cynicism, or a false, formal acceptance of outward values, coupled with a denial of fundamental morals, had been a feature of the last phase of the 18th and early 19th centuries. Brahminical form, devoid of spirit and of the charity or intellectual vigour which marked early Hindu thought, had been allowed to persist, and had engulfed the mind of Bengal in its deathly embrace. So that the iconoclasm of Young Bengal, in so far as it existed side by side with resurgent theism, should be looked upon as something which rescued the youthful mind from hypocrisy, and at least, by its insistence upon honesty of faith, helped in the preparation of the ground for new adventures of the spirit.

VI. INTELLECTUAL INTERESTS

Press and Printing

A fact which is often underestimated, but which, we believe, was of great significance in determining the course of cultural events in Bengal was the manner in which economic or technological changes were taking place, as a result of, or in concordance with, changes in the political fabric of the country. Some interesting evidences of these events have been culled, mainly from the *Samachar Darpan* (founded 1818), and published by Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay in his *Sambad-*

patre Sekaler Katha (The Story of The Past from Newspapers). It is significant that the more progressive forces which happened to dominate the intellectual and social life of Calcutta in the middle of the 19th century were preceded by educational and intellectual endeavours whose role has been unduly underestimated by historians in later times.

If one single technological advance has to be named for its potential significance, the introduction of the printing press in Bengal and the castiug of Bengali types in 1778 by Charles Wilkins and the blacksmith, Panchanan Karmakar, must be counted as one occupying undoubtedly the greatest value (Das, 1353 B. S. : 38).

The first grammar of the Bengali language was published by N. B. Halhed in 1778. Several regulations for the administration of justice and for the guidance of magistrates were printed in Bengali in 1791, 1792 and 1793. Vocabularies were also published in 1793 and 1797. This was the beginning of printing in Bengal as well as of the use of Bengali prose for purposes of communication in place of either Sanskrit or Persian which had so long been in occupation of the field (Das, 1353 B. S. : 22 ff.).

Between 1778 and 1779, an endeavour was made by N. B. Halhed and Henry Pitts Foster for relieving the Bengali language from an accretion of Persian and Arabic words, and replacing them by more elastic words of Sanskrit origin (Das, 1353 B. S. : 27-31).

The first endeavour to translate works in Sanskrit, like the *Mahabharata* or *Sreemad Bhagavat* or *Sakuntala* was also made by Englishmen ; and as a result the doors of a new universe were opened to the people of the world at large. The debt which Bengali prose owes to English writers has been gratefully acknowledged by historians of Bengali literature (Das, 1353 B. S. : 15-31, and particularly 31 ff.).

The literati of Bengal responded to the new opportunity thus thrown open to them, and we find an increasing desire to make adequate use of the printing press and of the newly developed prose for purposes of translation and distribution of

works which had so long been confined to a closed group of Sanskrit scholars.

Popularity of Modern Education

Education was eagerly sought after, and both orthodox as well as progressive groups combined to establish educational institutions after the English model all over the country. In this connection, it is perhaps relevant to quote a letter written in 1823 by Raja Rammohan Roy to the Governor-General, Lord Amherst, on the subject of Sanskrit *versus* English education.

Rammohan Roy wrote :

'. ...The establishment of a new Sanscrit School in Calcutta evinces the laudable desire of Government to improve the natives of India by education,—a blessing for which they must ever be grateful, and every well-wisher of the human race must be desirous that the efforts, made to promote it, should be guided by the most enlightened principles so that the stream of intelligence may flow in the most useful channels.

'When this seminary of learning was proposed, we understood that the Government of England had ordered a considerable sum of money to be annually devoted to the instruction of its Indian subjects. We were filled with sanguine hopes that this sum would be laid out in employing European gentlemen of talents and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, and other useful sciences, which the natives of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world.

* * * *

'We find that the Government are establishing a Sanscrit School under Hindu Pundits to impart such knowledge as is already current in India. This seminary (similar in character to those which existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon) can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or to society. The pupils

will there acquire what was known two thousand years ago with the addition of vain and empty subtleties since then produced by speculative men such as is already commonly taught in all parts of India.

* * * *

'.....as the sum set apart for the instruction of the natives of India was intended by the Government in England for the improvement of its Indian subjects, I beg leave to state, with due deference to Your Lordship's exalted situation that if the plan now adopted be followed, it will completely defeat the object proposed, since no improvement can be expected from inducing young men to consume a dozen of years of the most valuable period of their lives in acquiring the niceties of Baikarana or Sanscrit Grammar. For instance, in learning to discuss such points as the following ; *khada*, signifying to eat, *khadati*, he or she or it eats ; query, whether does *khadati* taken as a whole conveys the meaning he, she or it eats, or are separate parts of its meaning conveyed by distinctions of the word. And if in the English language it were asked how much meaning is there in the *eat* and how much in the *s* ? And is the whole meaning of the word conveyed by these two portions of it distinctly or by them taken jointly ?

'Neither can much improvement arise from such speculations as the following which are the themes suggested by the Vedanta ;—in what manner is the soul absorbed in the Deity ? What relation does it bear to the Divine Essence ? Nor will youths be fitted to be better members of society by the Vedantic doctrines which teach them to believe, that all visible things have no real existence, that as father, brother, etc. have no actual entity they consequently deserve no real affection, and therefore the sooner we escape from them and leave the world the better. Again, no essential benefit can be derived by the student of the *Mimansa* from knowing what it is that makes the killer of a goat sinless by pronouncing certain passages of the Vedanta and what is the real nature and operative influence of passages of the Vedas, etc.

'The student of the *Naya Shastra* cannot be said to have improved his mind after he has learned from it into how many

ideal classes the objects in the universe are divided and what speculative relation, the soul bears to the body, the body to the soul, the eye to the ear, etc.

'In order to enable Your Lordship to appreciate the utility of encouraging such imaginary learning as above characterized, I beg Your Lordship will be pleased to compare the state of science and literature in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon with the progress of knowledge made since he wrote.

'If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanscrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talents and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments, and other apparatus.' (Basu, 1797 Saka : 26-33).

There could hardly be a better statement of the contemporary condition of Sanskrit education, and of the desire among the progressive leaders for all the science and applied knowledge which had made England a powerful modern nation.

It is perhaps in order to refer here to three important facts, namely, that the first Bengali monthly magazine published in April 1818 by the Baptist Mission of Serampore entitled *Digdarshan* used to carry accounts of scientific inventions like the balloon or steamship and so on. The School Book Society also published in February 1822, a monthly magazine named *Paswabali*, which carried each month an illustrated article on one animal or another, such as the lion, bear, elephant, rhinoceros and hippopotamus, etc. The *Vijnansevadhi* (Treasury of Science) was published in 1832. *Vijnan-*

sara Samgraha (Collection of the Cream of Science) in 1833, the *Pakshir Brittanta* (Account of Birds) in 1844. The *Tattwabodhini Patrika* (1843) was under the editorship of Akshaykumar Dutt for twelve years from its inception ; and he was noted for his brilliant essays on popular science which quite often appeared in the columns of this paper. Later on, Rajendralal Mitra's *Vividhartha Sangraha* (1851) was specifically devoted to the popularization of various sciences including archaeology and history.

Bengal thus evinced early a genuine desire for absorbing lessons in modern science, for it was rightly felt that in this lay the source of Europe's greatness. The appeal of Rammohan Roy to the Governor-General can therefore be taken as an intelligent leader's voice uttered on behalf of many of his countrymen who felt likewise.

Besides this, there was another more practical reason for this desire for English education. An item of news published on 26 January 1828, provides interesting observations on the point.

'Formerly Englishmen imagined that Bengalis could learn only enough English to carry on their clerical work ; but now (this comes after a description of an examination, recitation and prize distribution held for students of the Hindu College at the Government House in Calcutta.—N. K. B.) it has been proved that they can master English like their mother tongue. So, what is there to prevent them from conducting cross-examination in court in the English language ? In the courts of Bengal, proceedings are conducted in the Persian language. This is not the language of judges or of pleaders, of plaintiffs or defendants, or of witnesses. In our opinion, if a foreign language has to be employed in court, it is desirable to use English. Formerly, there was difficulty, as Bengalis could not read or write or converse in English. But now this is no longer true ; and we have witnessed how four hundred boys have learnt English in the Hindu College of Calcutta ; and, if other schools are taken into account, their number would be no less than a thousand. And they have learnt it so well that they can conduct cross-examination in that language in court.

If English is adopted in courts, the present system of education will prove very helpful. It is for Bengalis to make this effort. Citizens of Calcutta should petition (the Governor) that Persian should be gradually replaced in courts by English. If this is granted, Bengalis will educate their children in English with enthusiasm, and render education itself profitable' (Bandyopadhyay, 1356 B. S. : I, 33-34).

A report published in the *Banga Doot* of 13 June 1829, also bears quotation in the present context.

'During the last few years, both Calcutta as well as the kingdom of Gaud (i. e. Bengal) have gained in prosperity..... Land which was valued at 15 rupees thirty years ago, now sells for 300 rupees.....Those who had hardly any status in life have now come to occupy a position in the middle classes. The number of poor has been decreasing.

'Before the rise of this middle class, wealth was concentrated in a very small number of hands. The rest of the population lived in physical and mental agony in subservience (to the former). So, it is not so much legal or religious reform which lies at the root of the present moral advancement, but it is the above (economic) fact which lies at the bottom, and will lead to further advance in future. The gains which will accrue through this new class will be great ; and will affect, not only the inhabitants of this kingdom, but also lead to the prosperity and security of English rule. As the middle class becomes well organized, they will become emancipated in the near future' (from their present subservience under the Indian rich ?— N. K. B.) (Bandyopadhyay, 1356 B. S. : I, 398).

Books Published

Banks, insurances and mercantile houses were established in rapid succession in the city of Calcutta ; while this was accompanied by a widespread drive for education, which was, in no way, limited in its leadership to the 'progressive' or 'Westernized' sections of the population. Enthusiasts in favour of education were not only English missionaries or members of the Government or their Westernized allies, but also such conservative leaders as Radhakanta Deb, Bhawanicharan

Bandyopadhyay, Baidyanath Mukhopadhyay, and in later times men like Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Bhudebchandra Mukhopadhyay. What is also significant is that, during the first to third quarters of the 19th century, progress was not merely in the direction of English education, but a new enthusiasm and interest was created in favour of Sanskritic and vernacular traditions as well.

Besides nearly a dozen English newspapers, there was a weekly in the Persian language edited by a Hindu named Harihar Datta. There were also the following newspapers in Bengali, for instance, in the year 1829 : *Sambad Prabhakar*, *Samachar Darpan*, *Banga Doot*, *Samachar Chandrika*, *Sambad Kaumudi*, *Sambad Timiranashak*. The majority of the latter expressed orthodox views, though the influence of the progressive *Samachar Darpan* seems to have been greater. It would be interesting, if possible, to compare over a period of five years, how the total circulation of the 'conservative' and 'progressive' papers actually compared with one another.

Among encyclopaedias and dictionaries, it is interesting to observe how Radhakanta Deb had the Sanskrit encyclopaedia named *Sabdakalpadrumah* prepared between 1822-1852 (Sircar, 1948 : 3) for free circulation among Brahmin pundits. Another named *Pranakrishna Sabdambudhi* was printed in Khardaha near Calcutta. The Sanskrit lexicon, *Vachaspatya Abhidhana* of Taranath Tarkavachaspati (1812-1885) was equal in importance to the Sanskrit encyclopaedia of Radhakanta Deb. It is significant that the *Pranakrishna Sabdambudhi*, like the *Sabdakalpadrumah*, was also meant for free circulation among Brahmin pundits. The Samachar Chandrika Press advertised that it had undertaken printing of the *Sreemad Bhagabat* with the help of *compositors belonging to the Brahmin caste* alone (Bandyopadhyay, 1356 B.S. : I, 88). Krittivasa's *Ramayana*, Kasiramdas's *Mahabharata*, the *Anandalahari*, law books by Manu and Yajnavalkya, numerous commentaries on the Dayabhaga and Mitakshara laws relating to inheritance and succession, were made available in original as well as in vernacular translation by various publishers. Grammars of the

Bengali language, dictionaries and manuals of instruction in the English language seem to have also become equally popular.

Several lists appeared in 1822, 1826, 1830 of books which were currently being printed in presses ; and they present us with a fair sample of the quality of intellectual interest of the average reading public-

Serampore (Missionary) Press, 1822

Sanskrit :

Ramayana with English translation, *Amarakosha* (Sanskrit dictionary) with English translation, *Mugdhabodha Vyakarana* (grammar), *Sankhyasara* (digest of Sankhya philosophy).

Bengali :

Grammar by Carey, Bengali dictionary, English-Bengali colloquies, *Batris Sinhasana* and *Hitopadesha* (stories and fables), *Rajabali* (history), *Digdarshan*, *Goladhyay* (geography), Grammar of Canarese with English, Grammar of Punjabi, Grammar of Telugu, Grammar of Burmese, *Gurudakshina* (book of stories), *Vilwamangal* (Sanskrit with vernacular translation), *Karmalochan* (Sanskrit with vernacular translation).

Timiranashaka Press

Chandi (a poem in the *Markandeya Purana* being the story of the conquest of the demon Mahishasura by the goddess Durga) in Bengali.

Harachandra Ray's Press

Chorpanchasika (a love story in verse), *Hitopadesha* (a book of fables), *Sringaratilaka* (a book on the art of love) in Sanskrit with translation, *Mohamudgara* (Sanskrit religious poem by Sankaracharya) with translation, (the law of) *Dayabhaga* with translation.

Mr. Pear's Press

Law relating to indigo, *Manoranjan Itihas* (history in the Nagari script), *Reader for Schools* by Mr. Adam of Kashi (in Nagari), *Moral Tales* by the same (in Nagari), *Alphabet* by Mr.

Stuart, *Goladhyay* (geography ?) by Tarinicharan Mitra (in Nagari and cursive Kayethi scripts), *Grammar* by Mr. Keat.

Pitambar Sen's Press

Vyavastharnaba (law book), *Nala Damayanti* (romance), *Vidyasundara* (romance), *Annadamangal*, *Chanakya* (moral aphorisms), *Mahimna* (religious hymn), *Karmavipaka* (novel ?), *Nityakarma* (daily rituals of an orthodox Hindu), *Vetal* (stories), *Chandravamsa* (history ?), *Panjika* (almanac).

Baranashi Acharya's Press

Kalir Sahasra Nama (thousand names of Kali, the goddess), *Vishnur Sahasra Nama* (thousand names of Vishnu), *Radhar Sahasra Nama* (thousand names of Radha), *Hanumat-charitra-Kakacharitra-Chakkhuradi Spandaner Phalaphal* (book of omens), a book on astrology, *Bhagabati Gita* (song of the Divine Mother) (Bandyopadhyay, 1356 B.S. : I, 72, 73, 76, 82, 83, 97).

The wide variety of books printed during this period clearly indicates that Bengal was in a state of intellectual ferment during the first three decades of the 19th century ; and much of this was oriented in the direction of ancient traditions or classical literature. As indicated before, the intellectual interest was not wholly, or even in a large measure, necessarily the creation of progressive leadership in Bengal. Peace, after a long period of misrule and insecurity, had opened up new avenues of employment in trade and commerce and in the learned professions. The extension of printing had helped both the progressive as well as orthodox forces to spread their separate viewpoints. And, lastly, the large number of schools for both boys and girls, initiated either by missionary or friendly European effort, and by official or non-official leaders of public opinion, led to a measure of change which was far beyond the degree anticipated by those who had originally aimed at social and religious reform. The field proved abundantly fertile ; but it had beeen prepared by political security and the rise of a middle class which was not necessarily oriented in the direction of the West.

VII. POLITICAL UNREST AND CULTURAL REVOLT

Town and Country

One of the results of change during the 19th century in Bengal indicated in Chapter Four, was the growing cleavage of interests between town and country, and the rapid drainage of leadership from the countryside to the increasing number of urban centres that began to spring up all over the land. There was a migration of capital, and wealth was no longer confined to the landed aristocracy. With settled government, it began to flow in the direction of commerce and trade. A middle class, educated and progressive in outlook, and derived from various castes, was on the rise. Industries were in British hands, or under the shadow of British authority whose primary interest was to find a suitable outlet for British enterprise in India. The middle class, conscious of its importance in society, yet scourged in this manner by the menace of shrinking employment, therefore, became increasingly restless.

A significant fact, which is also generally lost sight of, was at the same time in evidence in various parts of India. From the early years of the 19th century, all through the century in fact, there occurred small, sporadic and local revolts against oppressive economic developments. This was among farmers in the plains, as well as among tribal people in the hills and jungles of the land, among which the earliest seems to have been the Sannyasi rising of 1763-1764, and again in 1776 and 1782. The Chuar rebellion also took place in 1798-1799 (O'Malley, 1925 : 210 and 298).

The Munda tribe of Chotanagpur was ruled in the latter part of the 18th century by a raja named Darpanarain Sahi. He used to pay a revenue of six thousand rupees to the Mughal Emperor of Delhi. But when the East India Company was granted the right of collecting revenue in 1765, Darpanarain's dues were raised to 14,100-5-3 rupees and then to 15,041 rupees. The Raja had to enhance the rates of his subjects, with the result that there was a revolt in 1789. This was suppressed by the troops of the East India Company. But further risings occurred in 1796-1798. Chotanagpur was placed under the

Stamp and Excise Act of 1800. Taxes were further enhanced, and there were further risings in 1812, 1819-1820, 1832, and so on. The last was in 1899-1900 (see Bose, 1356 B.S. : 18ff.).

Similar events took place in Surguja, west of the then province of Bengal ; while within the boundaries of Bengal, indigo disturbances took place round 1800 ; the Santals rose in 1855. Then, in 1857, arose the widespread revolt of the Indian Army, when the aim of the mutineers was to restore the authority of Bahadur Shah, the last Mughal Emperor of Delhi, who had virtually become a puppet in the hands of the East India Company.

It is significant that, while these popular disturbances continued at a halting pace all through the 19th century, the interests of the upper and the new middle class were hardly ever identified with these rebellions. The latter not only kept aloof, but when one reads contemporary newspapers, they seem to have been rather disturbed by these uprisings which interfered with peace and progress as they saw it from their own point of view. These two seemed to be more important than the question as to who controlled the political destiny of the land.

There were some individuals, however, who had a wider vision, or a deeper sympathy, and who took up the cause of the progressively impoverished farmers and labourers, and tried to rouse public opinion in this respect. Naturally, this could only be done at the risk of personal security. Reverend Long was tried and convicted for publishing an English translation of Dinabandhu Mitra's drama about indigo plantation entitled *Niladarpan*.

About 1874, Sashipada Banerjea started a periodical named *Bharat Sramajibee* (Indian Labourer), and he was also responsible for the first organization of labour in India, in which he was helped by Dwarakanath Ganguli, Krishna Kumar Mitra and others. A preacher of the Brahmo Samaj named Ram Kumar Vidyaratna entered the tea plantations of Assam, and after collecting intimate information about indentured labour, returned to publish a book entitled *Slave Trade in Assam*.

If such rare examples are left aside, particularly because they never developed into the stature of public movements, we find that, on the whole, the political interest of educated and urbanized citizens of Bengal lay in the direction of consolidating their own special interests. The India Society was established in 1843, the British Indian Association in 1849. But these more particularly represented the interests of the landed aristocracy, while the Indian Association, in contrast, was founded in 1876 as the organization of the rising middle class (Banerjea, 1925 : 40-41). The Indian National Congress was established in 1885 ; and the aim of these organizations was originally to secure no more than equality of treatment with other British subjects within the empire, along with some form of parliamentary government for India. There were also demands for land reform, popular education, and so forth. But the focal point was the disability which 'educated' people suffered, while the interest of tribal people, of peasants and artisans who constituted more than three-fourths of the population, occupied a comparatively secondary position. Moreover, in the organizations named above, there was scope for educative propaganda, but hardly any prospect of direct political action of one kind or another. (See particularly Banerjea, 1925 : 43).

Thus, with a growing polarization of interests between town and country, with a progressive identification of the middle class with the ruling power of the land, the shapeless revolt of the rural people which occurred from time to time, could never become a serious threat to the security of the new rulers.

The Field of Culture

As we have observed already, in the field of religion, social reform, or of culture in general, there was a clear differentiation of attitudes among the educated classes. For some, Western ways in their complete English form became the favourite, while others pinned their faith with equal vehemence upon a return to the past. It was a question of *either* Westernism *or*, if the term may be used, Indianism. The first attempts which showed a way out of this uncompromising conflict were of an

eclectic character. One point noticeable in such eclectic combinations was the fact that the dominant values to which the combinations were oriented tended to lean towards sources which had impinged upon India in the wake of either Muslim or European conquerors. And in so far as the reorientation of Hinduism was in accordance with such values, it meant half a censure upon prevailing values and forms as they existed under Hindu civilization itself. It is hard for one subject to a defensive attitude to completely free oneself from its influence and rise to a genuinely creative plane. It is only when the mind is released from the cramping sense of inferiority that a really creative phase of culture can once more be established.

Apart from the reformers of the Brahmo Samaj, Hindu society in Bengal also developed its own internal defence mechanism. Leaders of orthodox Hindu society like Bhawanicharan or Radhakanta Deb had tried to render the Samskritic sources of Hindu culture more readily available among the literate classes. A new reaction also came into existence in the late third and fourth quarters of the 19th century against the 'Western' leanings of the Brahmo Samaj. Influential writers like Bhudebchandra Mukhopadhyay, Bankimchandra Chatterji or speakers like Sasadhar Tarkachudamani tried to restore the values of Hinduism on their own account ; while popular dramatists ridiculed the 'excesses' of the Brahmo Samaj, and at the same time sowed the seeds of a more militant form of nationalistic revival.

At about the same time, Surendra Nath Banerjea started on his political travels all over India, and with his fiery eloquence and capability as an organizer, succeeded in giving a new, and completely secular direction to the discontent which had now become widespread among the educated classes of the land. It is interesting that, in this new task, the models of organization which Surendra Nath held up before the youth were derived from Western sources, like the examples of Mazzini and Garibaldi or of the Irish and Russian revolutionaries. (See particularly Pal, 1932 : I, 226-269 and 421-443 ; also Banerjea, 1925 ; 43). Yet, this growth of a political form of nationalism,

by which is meant a primary concern for political action of one kind or another, often went hand in hand with a return to a form of revivalism which led one away from reformism towards the more orthodox forms of Hindu belief.

For instance, when secret societies were first formed for active political action, we read how 'every member of this society had to sign the pledge of membership with his own blood drawn at the point of a sword from his breast' (Pal, 1932 : 248). Bankimchandra had suggested an almost similar organization of revolutionaries dedicated in a religious spirit to the liberation of the motherland ; and it was not a distant cry from this to the terroristic organizations which grew up in the first decade of the 20th century in Bengal, when Durga and Kali became the mother-goddesses of an emancipated India, and the *Bhagabad Gita* became the spiritual support of those who trod the path of political revolution. Before Bankimchandra, Bhudeb had sown the seed of an idea of the same kind through his little-known book, *Puspanjali* (Offering of Flowers).

In course of almost a whole century, the use of the printing press by orthodox leaders as much, or perhaps to a larger extent than by the progressives, seems to have achieved at least one good result. It had made educated Bengalis familiar with the classical traditions of India, as recorded either in Sanskrit or in the vernaculars. This of course cannot be said of the age before printing ; for then, the same traditions and literature were the close preserve of learned Brahmins.

Printing, and a free circulation of both Eastern and Western ideas, now no longer confined to the sacerdotal caste, thus prepared the ground for a new advance. The growth of a spirit of nationalism, more closely oriented towards the glories of Indian civilization than to the eclectic forms of culture combination was now in demand. The latter were no longer congenial to the growing sentiment of nationalism. And it therefore became almost emergent that there should be a restatement of Hinduism which would inwardly not have to bend before either Islamic or Christian or European values.

The fulfilment of this new need was unconsciously rendered possible through the rise of the Ramakrishna movement ; and its counterparts in the last quarter of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth century, including, to some measure, the movement initiated by Mahatma Gandhi.

Ramakrishna

Behind all the changes which had affected Bengal's life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was an undercurrent of religious tradition which had perhaps continued uninterrupted, as a living reality, in the hearts of a succession of poets and saints who belonged exclusively to the simple, and almost unlettered, majority of the rural population. This was true not only of Bengal but of India as a whole, and from one point of view, in this lay the roots of the cultural unity of India. Cults like those of the Bauls and Sahajias did not die ; while through devotional songs, and the open-air theatres called y a t r a, the stream of that religious culture continued in a thin trickle in the countryside ; while the more learned who left their village homes for the prosperity of the cities became more and more involved in the conflicts which arose between the life of the West and of the East in their new surroundings. Economic life, even in the most distant villages, was deeply influenced by English rule and commerce ; but a religious and devotional culture apparently continued to flow unabated in the countryside in spite of increasing poverty.

Ramprasad was a man who belonged to the middle of the eighteenth century. The directness of his religious experience, his vivid personal feeling about God as the Divine Mother, had endeared his songs in the hearts of the common villager (see Nivedita, 1900 : 43-56). The intensity of his experience was enough guarantee of its spiritual authenticity. But, on the whole, these songs found little favour with the educated, reformed sects in the cities ; for they smelled strongly of idolatry, which the reformers wished to leave behind. Educated Bengal tried to satisfy itself with a logical, rational, non-idolatrous and humanistic creed, even though that was devoid of enrichment due to direct religious experience.

The challenge arose when an almost unlettered man from village India, Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1836-1886), began to address educated youth from the city about his intensely real, personal religious realization. Though with hardly any learning gathered from books, Ramakrishna had early come in contact with holy men who passed along a road by the side of his village on their way to pilgrimage in the South, as well as in the temple of Kali in Dakshineswar where he took up residence at the age of sixteen. Country theatres, which had often the sacred tales of Hinduism as their theme, and the songs of Ramprasad or of the Vaishnava saints supplied him with all the best that the age-old civilization of India had yet to offer.

It was through a painful and intensely heroic process of s a d h a n a or spiritual exercise, that Ramakrishna subjected himself to the various disciplines of Hinduism, and eventually succeeded in reaching that intensity of experience which is the goal of mystic practices under the Hindu faith. Ramakrishna travelled along all these pathways as an undaunted pilgrim ; and when he had attained the end, it is strange and significant that he turned towards Islam and Christianity for further discovery. There, too, eventually he succeeded in reaching a goal which was no different from that attained by his former adventures. And then this brave pilgrim came to the realization that all faiths were like rivers which flowed eventually into one common ocean. He declared that there were as many paths to realization as there were 'opinions' or philosophies.

This was a restatement of the ancient truth described in the Hindu scriptures, namely, that there are as many religions as there are men ; for the spiritual needs of no two men can ever be alike. No faith, again, can be better or worse than the other. All that was needed was that men should progress in the faith which sustained them, and never tarry until they had reached a state when there remained no more differences between one creed and another. It was more important to grow from the limitations of one's narrow valley into the vastness of the ocean, than to pretend that one had reached the highest state of realization, and deny the right of other faiths to exist. For this was something which sprang from vanity, which led one to

falsely equate the intellectual recognition of truth with its direct, living realization.

Neo-Hinduism

Here was something in Hinduism which had not to be defended. Here was again a value, unknown, or perhaps dimly realized and acknowledged in the West, which Indians could legitimately welcome, and which might serve as the starting point of a new regeneration.

Quite legitimately the growth of nationalistic sentiment in India found in this resurgence of Hinduism, a new object of which one could be proud. Vivekananda (1863-1902) was the man who organized the Ramakrishna Mission in India and a number of Vedanta Societies in the West. Like a valiant knight, he proclaimed the values of the East as exemplified in the life of his 'Master' before the West ; while without a trace of narrowness, he advised the East to accept from the West all that was worthy in it : its science, its humanism, its emancipation from social bondage, both of womankind and of the common labourer, as well as its gospel of activism. India, in the words of Vivekananda, had become like a decaying, stinking corpse. The past had to be cremated ; for out of the ashes alone could be reborn a new India, heir to an ancient glory which might have significance also for the modern world. From his Master, he had learnt to identify J e e v a with S i v a, the individual with the Universal Soul ; for him God had taken the form of N a r a - N a r a y a n a, the god who resided in the lowly, the down-trodden and the suppressed.

One of the brave soldiers who became associated with Vivekananda was an Irish woman named Margaret Noble who was later christened as Nivedita, 'the dedicated one'. It is not widely known that she became associated with a strange band of youthful Bengalis in many fields, and helped to inspire them abundantly in their own activity. The physicist, Jagadish Chandra Bose, the artist Nandalal Bose, historians of literature like Dinesh Chandra Sen, political leaders like Aurobindo Ghosh and others, all came at one time or another into spiritual association with her, and were deeply influenced thereby.

Nivedita wrote voluminously. She not only edited the speeches of her Master, Swami Vivekananda, but also wrote books on Hindu society and culture, books of travel and on education, started a school for girls in Calcutta, organized municipal services when epidemics raged in the quarter where she lived ; her one purpose being to raise the educated from their slumber and, for herself, to pierce the veil in order to appreciate Hindu civilization as it was, freed from its historical excrescences, and present it as a source of inspiration to the surging, national life of India, as well as to the West, which needed a meditative calmness of realization as a corrective against its excessive dependence upon change and activism alone as almost the supreme values.

Both India and the West had been entrapped by their own special forms of idolatry ; and it was the purpose of Vivekananda and of Nivedita to bring to each the direct realization of spiritual unity, when, freed from fetters which each had forged for itself, they would succeed in complementing one another's efforts so as to be of service to the entire human race.

It would be wrong, however, to look upon this resurgent Hinduism as a logical culmination of the cultural movements of the nineteenth century in Bengal. The fact of the matter is that the Brahmo Samaj still remained an active force ; while within Hindu society itself, reformatory movements had been initiated which had not been affiliated to any distinct religious movement. Reference may be made, for instance, to the efforts of Iswarchandra Vidyasagar who worked for widow remarriage and against Brahmin Kulinism. In the whole of urban society, among educated people residing in small towns as well as in villages, there were organizations of reform in one field after another ; in education, or social uplift, as well as in the field of religious thought.

The whole country was astir ; and although, at one moment of time or another, one or the other of these movements became comparatively popular, they did not in fact stand in mutual competition in any way. Programmes were separate, sometimes parallel. It was only the prevailing mood of the people which

gave one temporarily more importance than another. The mood itself might have been created at moments by some spark of thought set afloat by a powerful speaker, or due to an inner demand of reform from an evil which was generally recognized. But when particular institutions like the Brahmo Samaj or the Ramakrishna Mission, or even the terroristic political organizations were created, they also *depended* for their continuance upon the mood which they had either helped to create or even merely to bring to a focal point and organize.

It is perhaps best to view the numerous religious, social or political movements of the nineteenth century in this particular light. By their multiplication, more and more people became involved in various new ways of living and thinking. All of them separately, as well as by their collective influence, helped to alter the intellectual and moral climate of the people, until the latter became almost ready for nationwide concerted action.

VIII. LATER DEVELOPMENTS

While social and religious reform thus took many and varied forms as the nineteenth century drew to its close, there were rumblings in the political horizon which presaged changes of a more far-reaching character. The British Indian Association, the Indian Association, as well as the Indian National Congress had all been formed ; but their chief object was to secure equality of treatment for Indian subjects, or at best some form of parliamentary government for India. Adequate relief was also demanded on behalf of the impoverished peasantry. But the method of operation consisted of sending deputations to England for pleading the Indian cause, or to educate the public of India into a recognition of their political rights. Even the agitation remained at a, more or less, very moderate level The youth organizations initiated by Surendra Nath Banerjea after the model of Italian or Russian revolutionary parties about 1870 or 1880, did not have any programme of action, although, in the matter of patriotic emotion, they were superior to the political organizations referred to above.

It was in the first decade of the 20th century that new organizations among the youth began to grow up, whose purpose it was to plot and overthrow British rule in India by means of armed insurrection. Among the names associated with the initial organization in Bengal, one could refer to the following : P. Mitra, Jatindranath Banerjea, Aurobindo Ghosh, Barindrakumar Ghosh, and others.

In Maharashtra, developments of the same kind had begun earlier and Bengal's initiation in revolutionary activity was initially connected very closely with the former area (Mukherjee, 1363 B.S. : 21-22) ; and as 'extremists' from both provinces worked their way into the Indian National Congress, they succeeded by combination in overthrowing the control of the 'Moderates' or Liberals within the organization. Bengal had been partitioned into two independent sections ; and this injury to the unity of Bengal became the starting point of the first widespread nationalistic movement in India in 1905-1907. Before that, the numerous shapeless revolts of either the tribal people or peasantry had petered out, because they had never been consolidated, or even oriented, in a manner which might eventually lead to political emancipation. During the Anti-Partition or Swadeshi Movement, Bengal seemed to be fired with a new enthusiasm ; and although the actual political phase was of short duration, it led to cultural developments of a more abiding character.

Language

In the begining of the nineteenth century, the language of books in Bengal was of a character, different from the spoken language, and highly impregnated with Sanskrit idiom. But a simpler language had now and then been experimented with by writers like Pearichand Mitra or Kaliprasanna Sinha and Dinabandhu Mitra when they wrote satires or satirical dramas.

With the growth of nationalism, another interesting development was also initiated in Bengal. Leaders like Rajnarayan Basu (1874), Keshub Chunder Sen (1879) or Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay (1892) had already advocated the widespread use of

Hindi for all-India communication (Das, 1349 B.S. : 5-6). But after the Swadeshi Movement, a more practical attempt was made in this direction. An institution named the Dawn Society, founded by an educationist named Satis Chandra Mukherjee, published in its journal entitled the *Dawn Magazine* articles in Bengali written in the Hindi or Devanagari script. Justice Sarada Charan Mitra founded, at the same time, a society named *Ek-Lipi Vistar Parisad* or 'Society for the Propagation of a Common Script', which ran its own journal entitled *Devanagara* from 1907 A.D. for a few years. Both of these experiments have however been practically forgotten, perhaps because they were born long before their time.

Bengal's interest in literature, as a vehicle of national regeneration, had led to the establishment of the Bangiya Sahitya Parisad or Academy of Bengali Literature in 1894. It soon became the focal point of various lines of activity. Bengali manuscripts were collected, a survey was undertaken of historical places and of local dialects, old texts were edited and published, scientific and technical terms were coined, annual meetings of literary men were organized, much of this being due to the inspiration of the poet, Rabindranath Tagore. So that, on the whole, one notices the birth of a new enthusiasm in culture in the wake of political movements in the country.

Reorientation of Interest

While at the peak of its activity, the Brahmo Samaj had interested itself in the welfare of tribal people in Assam, as well as in the condition of labourers in the tea plantations of the same province. But its major activities had been directed towards the uplift of women, and in the general field of education or social reform. The Ramakrishna organization, too, had an active interest in education and in welfare activities like the organization of relief after flood or famine, medical aid, and so on.

Quite a few of those who joined in revolutionary activities later on, had their initial contact with the growing economic destitution of the country through such voluntary services. It

is true that some of the revolutionary leaders of Swadeshi days realized that the remedy of social wrongs could not be of a superficial nature ; and therefore they went down to the roots of culture, which became indentified in their judgement with a reorientation of one's religious attitude. Aurobindo Ghosh perhaps stands as the supreme example of this line of thinking ; while there were many others who eventually turned to the Ramakrishna or other parallel missions for deeper fulfilment when revolutionary activities ended in failure or frustration, as they often did.

It may be useful to quote here a passage from Shri Aurobindo in order to illustrate how nationalism and Hindu religious traditions were made practically to blend into one another. Aurobindo wrote :

'In a subject nationality, to win liberty for one's country is the first duty of all, by whatever means, at whatever sacrifice ; and this duty must override all other considerations. The work of national emancipation is a great and holy *yajna* of which boycott, Swadeshi, national education and every other activity, great and small, are only major or minor parts. Liberty is the fruit we seek from the sacrifice and the Motherland the goddess to whom we offer it ; into the seven leaping tongues of the fire of the *yajna* we must offer all that we are and all that we have, feeding the fire even with our blood and lives and happiness of our nearest and dearest ; for the Motherland is a goddess who loves not a maimed and imperfect sacrifice, and freedom was never won from the gods by a grudging giver. But every great *yajna* has its Rakshasas who strive to baffle the sacrifice, to bespatter it with their own dirt or by guile or violence put out the flame. Passive resistance is an attempt to meet such disturbers by peaceful and self-contained *Brahmatej* ; but even the greatest Rishis of old could not, when the Rakshasas were fierce and determined, keep up the sacrifice without calling in the bow of the Kshatriya. We should have the bow of the Kshatriya ready for use, though in the background. Politics is especially the business of the Kshatriya, and without Kshatriya strength at its back, all political struggle is unavailing.

'Vedantism accepts no distinction of true or false religions, but considers only what will lead more or less surely, more or less quickly to *moksha*, spiritual emancipation and the realisation of the Divinity within. Our attitude is a political Vedantism' (Aurobindo, 1948 : 77-79).

In any case, whether the attitude was 'religious' or 'secular', there was a steady growth of interest in political action, inspite of temporary set-backs and this eventually led to a diminution of interest in social reform, which had been the outstanding characteristic of Bengal's life in the nineteenth century. Problems which were social were discovered to be at base rooted in political subjection ; and it was argued that unless India attained adequate political power, it would not even be possible to bring about necessary change in the social field. Thus, in course of time, there was a change in the direction of people's interest, while the new spirit of patriotism made it possible for religious emotion to be harnessed in the service of contemporary ends instead of being limited to interests of the hereafter.

Political Developments since 1921

During the early part of the Gandhian movement, there was a spectacular response in the city of Calcutta when a complete boycott was organized on the occasion of the Duke of Connaught's visit to India. But as the Non-co-operation Movement gained force elsewhere, it was not at first greeted with adequate enthusiasm in Bengal. Bengal had already passed through an experience of economic boycott and political organization of both kinds, constitutional and non-constitutional. The Rowlatt Act of the Government of India in 1919 had been specifically aimed against the revolutionary activity of Bengal 'terrrorists'. So that, when Gandhi's programme of non-violent non-co-operation was placed before the country, the response of Bengal was of a lukewarm kind. The programme appeared too negative, or too much charged with moralistic considerations to be popular. To others, it did not appear heroic enough after what the revolutionary parties had tried to achieve in 1915 in the way of armed revolt.

There was another matter also of vital interest in the peculiar circumstances in which Bengal was placed. During the Swadeshi Movement, on the whole, the Muslim community of Bengal had failed to join forces with nationalists. Not only so, the partition of Bengal had been followed by the formation of the Muslim League in 1906 (Prasad, 1946 : 94-113), and then by the introduction of separate communal electorates during the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909. These were specifically aimed at creating a political gulf between the Hindu and Muslim communities for the purpose of weakening the rising forces of nationalism in India.

With the experience of a growth of Pan-Islamic sentiments, political leaders in Bengal like Bipin Chandra Pal, were definitely opposed to the alignment of the Indian National Congress with the Khilafat agitation. According to Pal, the Khilafat agitation was being utilized by some Muslim leaders for promoting the cause of Pan-Islamism, and as such it was bound to be a menace to the growth of Indian nationalism.

In spite of these initial reluctances, Bengal, i.e. its politically oriented middle class, eventually did plunge into the Non-co-operation Movement of 1921. New leaders arose, while some of the revolutionary workers aligned themselves with the Indian National Congress, because they recognized in the Gandhian movement a suitable opportunity for giving form to the discontent of the rural masses. Hitherto their activity had been confined to recruits from the middle class alone.

It was perhaps on account of this hesitant, and also divided, loyalty that the Gandhian movement did not stir up the imagination of Bengal as the Swadeshi of 1905. There was none of that efflorescence in literature or arts as had marked the latter event. There were however some new fields where the Gandhian movement proved very helpful. In 1921, there was a well organized movement in Midnapur District against the Government's proposal to introduce the Union Board system in place of the earlier Chaukidari system. Midnapur objected because the former was no improvement, more costly, and helped moreover to entrench the control of the bureaucracy more firmly on the countryside. This boycott movement ended in

popular victory, and laid the foundation of satyagraha organization in that district in a manner for which it has been famous ever since. There was a second movement in Tarakeswar. This is a pilgrimage in West Bengal, where the temple and its property is under the head of a neighbouring monastery, who had virtually converted everything into private reserve. The movement was designed to bring the religious institution under public control.

In later years, between 1923 and 1929, there were further local satygrahas in places like Brikutsa in Rajsahi District, Bandabila in Jessore, Burdwan in West Bengal, Patuakhali in Barisal, against either the imposition of fresh local cesses, or against the introduction of the Union Board system as in Midnapur, or for the restoration of certain long-established civic rights, which had been recently threatened. So that, one can say, Bengal went through a formative period of drilling and experience in non-violence during these important years. Quite a few of the above movements were due to new workers in the political field ; while some had however attracted workers from revolutionary parties from their narrow field of conspiratorial activity to the larger field of collective action in which the masses had become involved.

Although the old love for revolutionary activity, and the worship of courageous, open warfare still continued, the Gandhian form of struggle became increasingly popular. Yet, even after the majority of Bengal's revolutionaries may be said to have arrived at a compromise with the Congress movement, and even succeeded in securing a majority of seats in the provincial branch of the Indian National Congress, their parties remained intact, and conspiratorial activity continued to flourish outside the regular scheme of action under the Provincial Congress Committee.

A new band of non-violent political workers had, in the meanwhile, buried themselves in distant villages in Hooghly, Burdwan, Rajsahi, Dacca, and elsewhere, and continued to work the constructive programme suggested by Gandhi, while, by and large, the organization of the Congress committees was often left to other hands.

The purpose of a detailed description of these various tendencies in the political field is to prepare the background of happenings in later days. Here we can discern the forces which have been, on the whole, responsible for the growth of more frankly leftist, or often merely anti-Congress, tendencies in the state of West Bengal, as the latter emerged in later times.

In any case, when Gandhi initiated his Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930, there was, during the first few weeks of April, a lack of adequate response from official Congress headquarters in Bengal. There was however an enthusiastic response from the districts of Midnapur, Hooghly and Burdwan which had become already seats of Gandhian constructive organization during the last decade. The Provincial Congress soon followed suit and plunged into parallel activity in the District of 24 Parganas and some parts of Midnapur. A cleavage of techniques and procedure in civil disobedience between the two classes of workers was however easily discernible, and clearly recognized by the workers themselves.

Soon after government repression began in earnest, and widespread collective punishment meted out indiscriminately, the revolutionary party stepped into a determined phase of violent activity. In Chittagong, the Government's armoury was raided in 1930, and the town and its immediate neighbourhood remained, for a week or more, completely under their control. The Government retaliated with violence ; but the heroism of the raiders succeeded in evoking a sympathetic response from all over Bengal, the like of which had only been witnessed in earlier Swadeshi days.

Literature and Art

If we step out of the field of political activity, we notice a parallel development in the world of art and literature too. In the Swadeshi days, the new school of Bengali art, under Abanindranath Tagore's leadership, had derived some amount of technical inspiration from the arts of Japan and China. But now, a new interest was noticeable in regard to the arts prevalent among the hitherto forgotten rural inhabitants of India.

Even in Swadeshi days, there was a thin stream of interest in folk literature and folk music. The rural dialects of Rangpur, Rajsahi, Birbhum, Malda and other districts of Bengal had been studied by scholars, the results of which were published in the journal of the Bangiya Sahitya Parisad or of its Rangpur branch. There was evidently a growing interest in people, in how they talked, how they lived, and how they worshipped their gods and goddesses. But this had been limited to a small band of sensitive scholars, artists or historians. After the political movement of 1921, in which the people in general became first involved, this number increased, while there was also a new orientation of interest.

In the second and third decades of the twentieth century, Bengali literature had been shocked by the introduction of characters which had never been considered respectable enough for entry into works of art. Saratchandra Chatterji had portrayed the lives of so-called fallen women, and even made a heroine out of them in one of his controversial novels at the time. His main characters were drawn however from the lower middle class Brahmin society of West Bengal ; and what he succeeded in depicting in a touching manner was, how by its hypocrisy and lip-service to formal morality, i.e. the conventions of society, it had ruined the lives of those who had dared to love and live.

After the active political participation of Bengal in the twenties, new developments in the same direction became particularly pronounced. In the Swadeshi days, or following shortly after that, a parallel change had taken place in the language used for literary expression. This had so long been sharply marked off from the spoken language. The spoken language, or a simplification of the written in the direction of the spoken, had been a feature of satires or dramas written as far back as the first, second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. After Swadeshi, there were fresh experimenttation in a wider field by Pramathanath Chaudhuri. But, on the whole, the literary language yet continued to hold its own. Following the popular political movement of 1921 and 1930, an intensified

use of the spoken language became a marked feature of Bengali literature.

New themes were also derived from the life of dwellers in the coal mines, who had recently been torn from their rural homes and cast into slums where their lives became an unbroken round of suffering and tragedy. The story of boatmen, of men and women belonging to religious sects of an unorthodox kind were all explored (cf. Bose, 1948). And the average Bengali reader thus became familiar with the lives of those who had been subjected to a tragic strain by the demands of a cruel economic and social system. It was almost like the story of their own lives ; and therefore succeeded in evoking a sympathetic response in their own breasts.

The whole point is that both language and literature were, in this manner, brought into closer relationship with the demands of life than they had been formerly. A long way back, we see literature as a preserve of the few. There was culture ; but the medium of that culture was often the oral tradition as handed down from generation to generation by professional bards, story-tellers and actors. But now, after printing had made communication easier, the former cleavage between literary men and the life of the common people also began to break down. Literature was not merely to guide life along a moral plane, but it became a portrayal of life, as reflected in the mind of sensitive artists. Of course, that picture too was illuminated by the sympathies or ideals to which the artist himself subscribed. But, now, there were so many competing systems that, on the whole, literature reflected almost the same variety as one was likely to experience in the larger field of life.

In both literature and other forms of art, a rebellious, destructive tendency was also noticeable at the same time. Neat, well-finished arrangements of line or masses or of colours now gave place to vague, undefined and even conflicting arrangements of various kinds. And this is true as much of the present as of the previous two decades in Bengal. T. S. Eliot, or more recently, Auden, Spender and Joyce have had their admirers in Bengal ; while, in the previous period, Tolstoy,

Dostoievsky, Ibsen, Maupassant and Knut Hamsun were the common favourites. This signified a protest against the carry-over of traditions from the past, as well as an energetic apotheosis of the common man, and of his instinctual impulses.

The desire to break away from the past has been stronger than the urgency to build up something more satisfactory in its place ; and this has resulted in a movement in literature which corresponds to the feeling of those who try to sweep the floor of social life clean from the debris of the past, but discover that the volume of it is often so great as to reduce them into a state of frustration or impotent rebellion.

Perhaps, it is not surprising that, along with the above mood, we observe in Bengal as well as in other states of India, a contrary movement towards classicism in the arts, evident not so much in literature as in other forms of art. A new interest seems to have grown in classical forms of dancing like Bharata Natyam or Kathakali, as well as in popular forms like Kajari or Manipuri Ras. Artists like Jamini Roy or Nandalal Bose have restored the two-dimensional pat style of painting to a new dignity. Classical music, like Dhrupad or Kheyal, have drawn more votaries than ever before in the past. Perhaps printing, and in the latter case, the use of the radio and amplifiers, have made participation by larger audiences possible. But the fact that classical forms have gained in popularity even while popular forms have been raised to respectability is not explicable in terms of mechanical multiplication alone.

There was a phase in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century when, in order to recover oneself from the attack of those who delighted in painting Indian civilization in dark colours, people defended themselves by conjuring up a romantic picture of the past. Then, a return to the past was no more than a means of self-defence. And even that defence was in terms of the values which the West flaunted before India. So that, in the field of values, the defenders of Indian civilization inwardly surrendered to the values of the politically and economically more successful group.

But the contemporary revival of classicism or interest in folk culture is marked by a genuine interest in the inherent merit of these as forms of art. The simple human joys and sorrows, the loves and fears of men, are watched as they are presented through classical techniques or by means of more unsophisticated forms of expression in dance, drama or painting. So that, altogether, both the orders of art, classical and plain, have taken their due place as media of the expression of life's emotions, which is just as it ought to be.

General Observations

Beneath all these conflicting, and sometimes parallel developments in literature and art and of social or political life, we observe one thing, namely, that human life has gained a new recognition of dignity that was very nearly denied to it, either under the formal ritualism of the past or the cramping pressure of an exploitative political system in more recent years. There has been a considerable secularization of interest ; and religious festivals, which were once informed by a promise of mystic experience, have now become the vehicles of popular organization, of entertainment thrown open to the multitude, to whom it was often denied. And motives of art have taken the place where religious mysticism formerly reigned supreme. This is particularly true of the shape into which communal, religious festivities, called S a r b a j a n i n P u j a, are being recast in recent times.

There is a markedly healthy release of life from the many bondages by which it had been chained. The freedom has however not permeated to every one. It has been particularly tardy in the field of woman's life when compared to man. And as the bondages of the past still continue to cramp part of Bengal's life, there are naturally tendencies in politics, social thought or art in which the theme is dominantly one of revolt rather than of new construction. Yet, the other tendencies are also there, where life itself has been restored to its dignity and struggles for a new expression, whether by means of forms derived from the past, or by means of new creations, which have begun to blossom forth under India's new-found freedom.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aurobindo, Sri

1948 *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta.

Bagchi, Kanangopal

1944 *The Ganges Delta*, University of Calcutta, Calcutta.

Bandopadhyay, Brajendranath

1339 B. S., 1340 B. S. *Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha* (Story of The Past Through Newspapers in Bengali), I and II. Bangiya Sahitya Parisad, Calcutta.

1354 B. S. *Bangla Samayik Patra* (Bengali Periodicals), 1818 to 1868 A. D. Bangiya Sahitya Parisad, Calcutta.

Banerjea, Surendra Nath

1925 *A Nation in Making*. Oxford University Press, Calcutta.

Basu, Rajnarayan

1797 Saka. *Hindu Athaba Presidensi Kalejer Itihas* (History of The Hindu or Presidency College), Calcutta.

1315 B. S. *Rajnarayan Basur Atmacharit* (Autobiography of Rajnarayan Basu). Kuntaline Press, Calcutta.

Bentley, C. A.

1925 *Malaria and Agriculture in Bengal*, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta.

Bose, Buddhadeva

1948 *An Acre of Green Grass*.

Bose, Nirmal Kumar

1356 B. S. *Hindu Samajer Garan* (Structure of Hindu Society, in Bengali). Viswabharati, Calcutta.

1956 'Culture Zones of India', *Geographical Review of India*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, pp. 1-12.

1958 'Some Aspects of Caste in Bengal', *Man in India*, Vol. 38, No. 2.

Das, Sajani Kanta

1353 B. S. *Bangla Sahityer Itihas : Gadyer Pratham Jug* (History of Bengali Literature : The First Period of Bengali Prose). Mitralaya, Calcutta.

1361 B. S. *Atmasmriti* (Reminescence), Vol. I. D. M. Library, Calcutta

No date *Swadhin Bharater Rastrabhasha* (The State Language of Independent India). Saniranjan Press, Calcutta.

Chaudhuri, Sashi Bhusan

1955 *Ethnic Settlements in Ancient India, Part I. Northern India*, General Printers and Publishers Ltd., Calcutta.

Dasgupta, Sashibhusan

1946 *Obscure Religious Cults as Backgrounds of Bengali Literature*. University of Calcutta, Calcutta.

Gupta, B. S.
1958 'Pioneers of Labour Movement in Bengal', *Vigil*, March 29, 1958. Pp. 141-144.

Lévi, Sylvain, Jean Przyluski, Jules Bloch
1929 *Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian in India.* Trs. by Prabodh Chandra Bagchi. University of Calcutta, Calcutta.

Majumdar, R. C., A. D. Pusalkar
1957 *The History and Culture of The Indian People : The Struggle for Empire*, Vol. V.

Mukerjee, Radhakamal
1938 *The Changing Face of Bengal* (A Study of Riverine Economy). University of Calcutta, Calcutta.

Mukherjee, Jadugopal
1363 B. S. *Biplabi Jivaner Smriti* (Reminescence of a Revolutionist's Life). Indian Associated Publishing Co., Calcutta.

Nivedita, Sister
1900 *Kali the Mother.*

O'Malley, L. S. S.
1925 *History of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa Under British Rule.* Government of Bengal, Calcutta.

Pal, Bipin Chandra
1932 *Memories of My Life and Times*, Vol. I.
1951 *Memories of My Life and Times*, Vol. II. Yugayatri Prakashak Limited, Calcutta.

Prasad, Rajendra
1946 *India Divided.* Hind Kitabs, Bombay.

Ray, Annadasankar, Lila Ray
1942 *Bengali Literature.* P. E. N., India.

Raychaudhuri, Girijashankar
1334 B. S. *Swami Vivekananda O Banglaye Unabingsha Shatabdi* (Swami Vivekananda and Bengal in The Nineteenth Century). Udbodhan Karyalaya, Calcutta.

Sarkar, Indira
1949 *Social Thought in Bengal, 1757-1947.*

Sastri, Haraprasad
1353 B. S. *Pracheen Banglar Gourab* (Glories of Ancient Bengal). Viswabharati, Calcutta.
1355 B. S. *Bauddha Dharma* (Buddhist Religion). Purbasha Ltd. Calcutta. (Originally published in *Narayana*, 1321 B. S. onwards).

Sastri, Sivanath, Sir Roper Lethbridge
1918 *Ramtanu Lahiri—Brahman and Reformer : A History of the Renaissance in Bengal,* George Allen & Company Ltd., London.

Sen, Priyaranjan

1932 *Western Influence in Bengali Literature.* University of Calcutta, Calcutta.

Sinha, Narendra K.

1956 *The Economic History of Bengal from Plassey to The Permanent Settlement.* Vol. I. Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta.

Sircar, Dinesh Chandra

1948 'The Sakta Pithas', *J. A. S. B. Letters*, Vol. XIV, No. I.

Tagore, Devendranath

1909 *The Auto-biography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore.* Translated from the Original Bengali by Satyendranath Tagore and Indira Devi, S. K. Lahiri & Co., Calcutta.

Tripathi, Amales

1956 *Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency 1793-1833.*

Vasu, Nagendra Nath

1911 *The Modern Buddhism and its Followers in Orissa.*

Wilcocks, William

1930 *Lectures on the Ancient System of Irrigation in Bengal.* University of Calcutta. Calcutta.

SOME CULTURAL PARALLELS AMONG AUSTRALOIDS

by S. S. SARKAR

Calcutta University

(*Received on 31 October 1958*)

ALTHOUGH physical affinities between the Veddid tribes of India and the Australian aborigines have been the subject of a few studies (Howells, 1939 ; Sarkar, 1954) few cultural parallels have been studied between the two who are now so widely separated from one another. The separation in fact is not as wide as it appears to be ; a diffuse Australoid physical strain is evident in the insular regions linking Australia and India.

An artefact of material culture, the throwing stick or the boomerang, which as Davidson (1935, 1936) rightly calls 'a special form of throwing stick' has already been much discussed. In a critical study of the boomerang, Davidson (1935) has pointed out the confusion created by the application of the typical Australian word 'boomerang' to all artefacts which nearly approach a curved stick. According to Davidson the throwing stick of Australia is non-Australian in origin. Hornell (1924) also pointed out some historical connection between the Egyptian throwing sticks discovered from the tomb of Tutankhamen and the Indian specimens described by him. Bertram Thomas (1925) describes a throwing stick used by the Veddids (Coon, 1943) of the Qara mountains in southern Arabia as 'a heavy straight stick of *mitain* wood pointed at both ends and thrown with great skill'. A wooden throwing stick has also been discovered by Brunton from neolithic excavations at Badari[1], Egypt (Childe, 1954). It appears to vary from the typical boomerang and should be described as a throwing stick rather than a boomerang.

[1] Badari may be dated as being nearly contemporaneous with Fayum neolithic which is 4150 ± 500 B. C. according to radio-carbon dating.

Besides this element of material culture which has been chosen because of its archaeological significance we find another parallelism in cultural behaviour, namely circumcision.

Both Bertram Thomas and Coon have described the circumcision practices of the Veddids of the Qara Mountains, which remind one of those of the Australian aborigines. Among the Veddids of the former region not only are boys circumcised in groups but girls have also to undergo clitoridectomy, a practice not known among Muslims. The following references to circumcision in non-Muslim India are worthwhile comparing in this connectinn.

The earliest reference to circumcision is found inr Vatsayana's *Kamasutra* (Chakladar, 1929). Vatsayana howeve does not go into the details of the practice, but only mentions the prevalence of this practice among children in South India. He also mentions that the circumcised boy should remain in water as long as he bleeds and also prescribes certain remedies for healing the wound. Rivers (1926) has divided genital mutilations into : (1) circumcision, (2) incision and (3) subincision. For lack of details, it is difficult to understand which kind of practice has actually been referred to by Vatsayana. Vatsayana's reference to South India is however corroborated by present day usages, also only known in this part of the country.

The *Census of India, 1891, Mysore* (Narasimmiyengar, 1893) describes the circumcision practices among the Myasa Bedars of Mysore. The Myasa Bedars are hunters, and older references mention them as Veddars, while the same people have been named as Chunchus in the above census report. The above names probably link up the above people with the Veddas of Ceylon and the Chenchus of the Nallamalai Hills. Their nomadic nature also possibly indicates their Veddid affinity. It may however be pointed out that names are often given to tribes by local peoples, and a vast field of research is open here. The sooner we are able to equate the tribal names accurately, the better for Indian anthropology. An example of it may be

given in the confusion of the alleged Mrus of West Bengal (Sarkar and Bhattacharjee, 1957). In India most of the tribal names mean 'man', whereas the names given to tribes by their neighbours often refer to occupation or habitat. Thus among the Australian aborigines *Urliara* means 'a fully developed man' (Ashley Montagu, 1937), which is almost the meaning denoted by the term *Urali*, a tribe dwelling in the forests of Periyar in Kerala. Are the above two terms genetically related ?

The Tamil Kallans (Kallar of Hutton, 1933) of Madura (Francis, 1902) are another group of people in South India who practise circumcision. Muslim influence has been suggested to be at the base of the practice, though Thurston (1906, 1909) long ago questioned its validity. The curious association of Brahmanical rites goes against this suggestion. Unfortunately, the actual ceremonies of none of the above two tribes are known to the present writer. But the early references to circumcision in Vatsayana evidently rule out Muslim influence altogether. Among Muslims, circumcision is an entirely individual affair ; whereas among the Veddids, as among the Australian aborigines, it appears to be a community practice. A detailed study is however necessary for a correct appraisal.

It will not be out of place in this connection to add another item from Vatsayana with reference to certain abnormal practices, which may render sexual intercourse more enjoyable. This practice involves extra attachments (A p a d r a b y a) on the male organ, but it is not clear from Vatsayana whether they were meant for the circumcised or for normals. It is however probable that such practices were in vogue in India during Vatsayana's time[2]. Ploss and Bartels (1935) have also described such practices from various parts of the world. The sub-incision rites of the Australian aborigines have been studied in great detail by eminent anthropologists (Ashley Montagu, 1937, has ably summarised them), but so far no satisfactory explanation has been offered.

[2] Vatsayana has been dated variously from 150 B. C. to 400 A. D.

The present writer is not competent to offer any explanation but is tempted to draw a parallel on the basis of Vatsayana. It appears that the whole problem can be very much simplified if we take into account the functional value of such practices. It is extremely hard to believe that a young man in his adolescent period and then again during the period of his wedded life will undergo some serious mutilation of an organ intended for the highest pleasure, without any resultant benefit to the same. Why should a grown-up man, already father of a few children, go in for extending the length of his penile subincision long after he is formally subincised ?

Subincision flattens the penis during coitus while circumcision, either by fire or by any other medium, causes a ring or lump of raised flesh at the base of the glans. They thus functionally behave in the same manner as the A p a d r a v y a of Vatsayana.

While writing about the boomerang, Pitt-Rivers (1883) drew attention to Professor Huxley's opinion about racial connection between the Egyptians and the Australians. Hornell has also expressed the same opinion regarding the Dravidians and the Egyptians. This opinion has now obtained confirmation from the studies of Badarian crania (Stoessiger, 1927, 1st series ; Morant, 1935, 2nd series) which appear to be similar to those of the Indian aborigines, who correspondingly appear to be similar to the Australoids.

Is it possible that the throwing stick of Badari and the trombush of Abyssinia diffused from India along with the same race ? The intermediate links of the Australoids or the Veddids are now known from the Sayyad, the hunters of the swamps of Helmand river (Coon, 1952) and those of southern Arabia already referred to. The plausible route of migration from India may be through Afghanistan, southern Arabia, Abyssinia and finally to Egypt. The similarity of circumcision practices also points in the same direction.

We need however more data for a clearer picture and a correct appraisal.

REFERENCES

Ashley Montagu, M. F. 1937. *Coming into Being among the Australian Aborigines*, London.

Basedow, H. 1927. Subincision and kindred rites of the Australian aboriginal, *J. Roy. Anth. Inst.* 57, 123-156.

Chakladar, H. C. 1929. *Social Life in Ancient India* : Studies in Vatsayana's Kamasutra. Calcutta.

Coon, C. S. 1943. Southern Arabia, a problem for the future, in Studies in Anthropology of Oceania and Asia. *Pap. Peabody Mus. Am. Arch. Ethn. Harv. Univ*, XX. 187-220.

——————— 1952. *Caravan*, London.

Childe, V. Gordon, 1954. *New Light on the Most Ancient East*, London.

Davidson, D. S. 1936. Australian throwing sticks, throwing clubs and boomerangs. *Am. Anth.* N. S. 38, 76.

——————— 1935. Is the boomerang Oriental ? *J. Am. Orient. Soc.* 55.

Francis, W. 1902. *Census of India, 1901*, Madras, Vol. XV. Report, Pt. I, p. 158.

Hornell, J. 1924. South Indian blow-guns, boomerangs and crossbows *J. Roy. Anth. Inst.*, 54, 336.

Hutton, J. H. 1933. *Census of India, 1931*, Vol. I. Pt. I, p. 456.

Morant, G. M. 1935. A study of Predynastic Egyptian skulls from Badari based on measurements taken by Miss B. N. Stoessiger and Professor D. E. Derry. *Biometrika*, XXVII, 293-309.

Narasimmiyengar, V. N. 1893. *Census of India, 1891, Mysore*, Vol. XXV, Report, Pt. I, p. 257.

Pitt-Rivers, L. 1883. Egyptian boomerang and its affinities. *J. Anth. Inst.*, XII, 454.

Ploss, H. H. and Bartels, P. & M. 1935. *Woman*. Ed. E. J. Dingwall Vol. II, pp. 49-54. London.

Rivers, W. H. R. 1926. *Psychology and Ethnology*, London.

Sarkar, S. S. and Bhattacharjee, Papia, 1958. The Tribal Population in West Bengal, *Man in India*, 38, 60.

Stoessiger, B. N. 1927. A study of the Badarian crania recently excavated by the British School of Archæology in Egypt, *Biometrika*, XIX.

Thomas, Bertram, 1932. *Arabia Felix*, London.

Thurston, Edgar, 1906. *Ethnographic Notes on Southern India*, Madras.

——————— 1909. *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. I, p. 186, Vol. III, p. 74, Madras.

India's Changing Villages: Human Factors in Community Development. *By S. C. Dube. Routledge and Kegan Paul. London. 1958. 25 shillings.*

This timely and refreshing study from the pen of one of India's leading anthropologists is indicative of the keen and critical interest which our social scientists are taking in the great social transformation taking place in our country. With the launching of the Community Development Programme in 1952, the Government of India began a great and gigantic task of raising the standard of living of the rural masses by an all-out attack on social and economic evils. The destination of the programme is 'man' and it is but natural that students of the 'Science of Man' should stimulate its growth by proper evaluation and constructive criticism. In the programme itself a large amount of attention has been given to economic improvements and technological advance, but the spirit that moves the common man in the villages has not been worked upon with the attention it deserves. People do not live and move in a void, their attitudes, preferences, prejudices and responses to external innovations are culturally patterened. Hence the human factors in Community Development assume tremendous importance. In fact, without a correct understanding and handling of these cultural factors, success in this direction will not be as quick as desired.

This work is the product of group research sponsored by the Cornell-India Programme under the direction of Professor Morris Opler. A number of research associates worked with Professor Dube in a Western U.P. Community Development Project. Latest methods of field work, elaborate questionnaires and schedules, interviews and statistical data have gone into the making of this book and hence the results achieved and the observations made are not just impressions but based on well-founded fact.

Community Development Programme may be viewed essentially as an attempt at State-sponsored culture change. Professor Dube in high-lighting this aspect has touched upon an important problem of Government. The State at the present time is no longer a mere police State but its ever-expanding functions have made it a welfare State. In a short time no aspect of our life or behaviour will be left without State direction. In this change, the role of Government servants has to undergo a complete metamorphosis. It is here that

the rub comes in. The boss-subordinate relationship between high officials and low and the overall relationship between bureaucracy and the masses has come in for a good deal of comment by the author. Efforts are being made in this direction and the faster the change-over from bureaucratic to 'social-service-role', the greater will be the success of our national endeavour.

In this educational experiment how an idea or an innovation is communicated to people and by whom, is as important as the idea or the innovation itself. After analysing the various channels of communication such as slogans, pictures and posters and audio-visual aids, publications, tournaments, exhibitions, meetings, fraternization, visits by important dignitaries, social education classes and community centres, individual contacts and sight-seeing tours, Professor Dube rightly concludes that 'Its success was most pronounced where it used the idiom, symbols and language of the people'. We have to adapt the agents of change and the media of communication to the value system, attitude and world-view of the community. Existing channels of communication have to be discovered and the responses of the people have to be anticipated before we can think of success in that field.

Extension workers in under-developed areas are showing growing awareness of the cultural factors in directed change sponsored by external agencies. Almost at every step the worker has to contend against habits and taste, social practices and tradition. The greatest difficulty arises when an innovation impinges on an area of belief. Many of the responses are determined by social structure, attitudes and values. People may be convinced about the advantages of an improved variety of wheat or about the advantages of having compost pits outside the village, but somehow they are half-hearted in the execution of these programmes. The secret of this and several other 'imponderables' in the field lies in the wide ramifications of these cultural factors. Professor Dube has sounded a note of warning in this regard by focussing attention on the fact that if changes have to last people must own them whole-heartedly. Over-emphasis on quick achievement of targets may undermine the foundation of solid gain.

Towards the end of the book the author has aired his views on the role of social scientists in Community Development.

According to him the 'role of social scientist must essentially be viewed as that of an analyst and not that of a therapist.' He looks askance over the claim of the anthropologist as a social doctor or social engineer. The social scientist can undertake research on specific problems facing the administrator. He can make empirical case studies of specific projects and field situations. He can fruitfully participate in training programmes for development workers. In the 'pilot projects' social scientists can help planners in their planning, analysis and evaluation. He can study the response of people through different stages of the implementation of the project.

By critical appraisal of development work in one Block through this microscopic study, Professor Dube has given a lead to social scientists as well as administrators and planners of the Community Development Programmes.

Sachchidananda

Customs and Cultures : *By Eugene A. Nida. Harper and Brothers, New York. 4 dollars.*

The sub-title of this book is 'Anthropology for Christian Missions'. The need for the knowledge of anthropology for missionaries who go into the backward areas of the world cannot be over-emphasized.

The author has drawn his examples from people dispersed over fifty countries. In a small canvas he has covered all important aspects of the study of man. While dealing with the question of Christian missions and non-Christian beliefs, the author has rightly pointed out many pitfalls in the work of missionaries. He advises missionaries not to under-rate the importance of socially conditioned decisions or to fail to appreciate the individual's part in it. Mass movements should not be judged in terms of our own responses but on the basis of the culture involved. Total repudiation of any and all pagan practices is also a dangerous course. It may lead to a strong reaction which may express itself in large defections from the Church. He rightly concludes that 'the real solutions of religious problems result from presenting the truth within an understandable framework of the other man's experience.'

The author also advises missionaries to be neutral about some of the customs of the natives which they may disapprove. He agrees with Kroeber's view that it is through educational institutions that the missionary can be most influential and can have

lasting converts. Rather than oppose harmless customs, missionaries would do well to wait and work with cultural development.

The Chinese of Sarawak : *Juk'ang T'ien. Monographs on Social Anthropology. No. 12, Department of Anthropology. Pp. 88. The London School of Economics and Political Science, London. 1956 (2nd Impression).*

The book under review is a report on the social structure of the Chinese living overseas in Sarawak, and has been published on behalf of the Colonial Social Science Research Council.

The immigrant Chinese in South-East Asia are faced with geographical, economic and social challenges which are essentially different from those of China. Throughout the book the author has tried to examine the responses of the Chinese to the changed conditions in Sarawak.

The Chinese of Sarawak number about a hundred and fifty thousand, much less than those at Singapore and Malaya. They also form an economically backward community in contrast to the Chinese elsewhere. Linguistically they belong to ten different dialects each having its own association and specialized occupation. Clan and language go together. The rural economy of the Chinese in Sarawak thus hinges upon the framework of clanship. In rural Sarawak they live in comparative isolation. In these circumstances kinship bonds appear to be the most convenient framework of social relationship, and almost all families are linked together in a web of clanship. On the other hand, in urban centres inter-family contacts among the Chinese are frequent. While the nature of urban economy forces contacts with others, the Chinese extend their social relationship with outside centres.

In spite of the long association of about 1,500 years of the Chinese with Sarawak, the 'Chinese remain Chinese—there is nothing mysterious about it'—that is how the author feels. Economic, emotional, social and religious affinities keep alive their allegiance to China.

The book seems to have a limited scope. It does not seem clear if the Chinese in Sarawak could be considered as a closed group having no extension outside their own community. It would have been useful if that question had also been dealt with.

D. P. Sinha

The Psychology of Adjustment : *By L. F. Shaffer and E. J. Shoben. Pp. 672. Second edition, 1956. Houghton Mifflin Company. Boston.*

The book was first published about twenty years ago and since then it has been reckoned as exemplifying a dynamic and experimental approach to the study of personality and mental hygiene. In this edition, several modifications have been brought about in the light of recent experiments and advances in the science of psychology, specially those dealing with the psychology of human adjustment, motivation-patterns, the relationship between frustration and conflict and the different projective techniques and other methods of measurement of personality types. An appraisal of the various approaches to the study of mental hygiene has also been made and the authors have discussed in detail the social problems involved in psychological adjustments, and also the adjustments of husband and wife and parents and children. E. J. Shoben has added two new chapters on learning and personality and on psychotherapy. In the chapter on 'Learning and Personality', Shoben has tried to evaluate the relation between culture and personality in the light of the work of anthropologists like Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead and Ralph Linton.

A. B. Saran

Social Origins : *By Stephen Fuchs. Pp. 147. Gyanayatan Publications. Bombay. 1957. Rs. 3.50.*

In the present volume the author tries to explain how the primary and secondary forms of social institutions and variety of social organizations came into being and how they functioned during the early period of human history. He comes to the conclusion that the 'present day social institutions and moral standards are basically the same as those that prevailed when mankind was young.'

The author then discusses some aspects of physical, social, cultural and economic anthroplogy, primitive technology and religion and also applied anthropology. He has also given several suggestions for anthropological research in different parts of India.

A. B. Saran

Notes on Prehistoric and Early Iron in the Old World : *By H. H. Coghlan. Pp. 220. Oxford University Press. 1956. 25 shillings.*

The book has been divided into ten chapters, the first seven written by Coghlan and the last three by I. M. Allen. Coghlan examines various iron ores, those that are suitable or unsuitable for primitive methods of smelting. He then discusses the smelting process and the mechanical properties of iron, the earliest smelted iron and cast iron in antiquity, furnaces and fuels, the tools of the ironsmith and the technical art of the smith to about 1000 A.D.

In the concluding chapters, I. M. Allen explains some of the terms used in describing the metallurgy and metallography of ancient iron. He also describes, with the help of good illustrations, the Eskimo knives.

A. B. Saran

The Development of Hindu Iconography : *By Jitendra Nath Banerjea. Second edition. Pp. xxxvii + 655 + Plates I – XLVII. University of Calcutta. Calcutta, 1956. Rs. 30 ; 42 s. ; 7.50 dollars.*

In the present enlarged edition of his well-known work, Professor Banerjea has described in comparatively greater detail the development of Hindu iconography. He has tried to trace the origins of image worship through ancient coins and seals and literary references in the shape of books and inscriptions. In order to help students, chapters have been added to explain technical Sanskrit terms, as well as measures and proportions in use among sculptors. This is followed by a detailed description of numerous cult icons worshipped in India. Images of Vishnu, Surya, Siva and Sakti, along with numerous minor divinites, have then been treated historically, and finally an interesting section has been added on syncretistic icons. There are valuable appendices in which texts have been translated ; while results have been presented of Dr. Banerjea's endeavour to find out how far proportions recommended in the texts were actually followed in practice.

What impresses one most throughout the text is the care which the author has taken to trace the various possible sources which led to the observed development of icons. Changes in the character of the latter, or their proliferation, have been explained in terms of contact between peoples professing different cultures in India. Changes also took place internally within Brahminical civilization, which occasionally led to sectarian conflicts, but more often to sectarian compromises. Differing moods of groups of people to one another were thus reflected, in one way or another, in India's iconographic record.

This is indeed a very valuable contribution to the study of tendencies observed by other scholars in the fields of philosophic thought or even of social organization. As such, Dr. Banerjea's study of Indian iconography forms a chapter in the story of the general development of Indian civilization ; the advantage in his case being that the data used here are more concrete and tangible and cover all parts of India over a wide stretch of time from Harappa to the late mediaeval age.

The treatment of the subject has been critical, precise and comprehensive. In several significant instances, Dr. Banerjea has differed from previous scholars, as in the case of the so-called Trimurti of Elephanta ; and he has been able to give good reasons for his independent views. One would certainly not call his treatment of the subject 'popular', for the book is indeed meant for the scholar instead of the uninitiated reader. But it never loses its character of lucidity on that account.

N. K. Bose