Bengal and Britain: Culture Contact and the Reinterpretation of Hinduism in the Nineteenth Century

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I

During the nineteenth century, two cultures, each with a long history and rich traditions, intensely interacted in Bengal. The arena for this interaction was the city of Calcutta. The participants in the interaction were the colonial officers, professionals (educators, scholars, doctors, and lawyers), businessmen, and missionaries from England and the urban, Western-educated, Hindu upper-caste Bengali elite. These Bengalis were not a homogeneous group; rather they may be seen to be divided into two groups based upon their attitudes toward Hinduism and social reform. The orthodox Bengali elite supported Puranic and Tantric Hinduism with its emphasis on Siva and Sakta and opposed British social reforms such as the abolition of sati. The more progressive segment of the Bengali elite felt that Puranic/Tantric Hinduism was one cause of Indian backwardness and that Vedic Hinduism was more compatible with a modern society. They advocated social reform and government intervention in effecting these reforms. Both groups within the Bengali elite were composed of Brahmans, Kayasthas, and Baidyas who had received a Western education and who secured professional, commercial, and government employment in Calcutta. As a result of their interaction with the British, both groups of the Bengali elite, by the end of the nineteenth century, felt they were ready to approach the problems of modernization and eventual independence.

It is possible to classify the interaction between the British and the Bengali elite with other culture-contact situations on three counts: first, as is common to the colonial situation, the representatives of British
society were clearly dominant in the interaction; second, as the subordinate partner in the interaction, the Bengali elite assimilated British ideas and values into their culture; and third, the Bengali elite maintained an identity with and a continuity with their own culture.

These three attributes are commonly used in historical descriptions of nineteenth-century Bengal. Rachel Van M. Baumer, for example, portrays the Bengali elite as a group which "perceived the urgency of accommodation and synthesis in various arenas of life."¹ She suggests that the motivation for the Bengali elite to effect a synthesis of British and Bengali cultures was the practical need of the Bengalis to learn the ways of the British and to develop a modus operandi in their interactions with them.² On the other hand, Baumer indicates that the superior-inferior relationship between the British and the Bengali elite and the Bengali's wide variation in attitudes toward British culture were two of the obstacles that prevented a synthesis of British and Bengali cultures.³ By delving into the motivations for and against a synthesis of British and Bengali culture, Baumer identifies an important area of investigation. These motivational forces, however, have a more complex relation with the synthesis effected by the Bengali elite. If we analyze the motivations, attitudes, and interactions of the Bengali elite as a process that results in a synthesis, then we find that these factors are not simply positive or negative forces. Depending on additional circumstances, namely the British attitude toward Bengalis and the shifting economic and political conditions, the superior-inferior relationship between the British and the Bengali elite may be seen as a deterrent to synthesis at one time and a stimulus to synthesis at another; and practicality as a motivation for adopting British customs and values may vary in its importance in stimulating a synthesis.

David Kopf's analysis of the British Orientalists of the early decades of the nineteenth century pursues similar themes: an encounter with a dominant culture and an identity quest on the part of the Bengalis who had assimilated attitudes and values of the British culture.⁴ His analysis demonstrates the importance of the status differential between the British and the Bengali elite, the British attitude toward the Bengali culture, and the stress felt by the Bengali elite who assimilated British customs and values.⁵

It is the literary creativity of Bengalis in the nineteenth century that is often used to demonstrate the synthesis of British and Bengali cultures. Baumer, Kopf, and other Bengal specialists have explained the synthesis in the following motivational framework: first, the superior-inferior relationship between the British and the Bengali elite; second, the attitudes of the British toward the Bengalis and vice versa; third, the alienation experienced by the Bengalis who imitated the British; fourth, the main-
tenance of a "Bengaliness" even though much British culture was assimilated; fifth, the practicality of adopting aspects of the British lifestyle; and sixth, the economic and political policies of the British colonial administration. An important factor that seems to be missing from these analyses is the Bengali elite's perception of the interaction. Some significant questions arise as a result of considering their perception of the situation. Even though historians claim that the British were clearly dominant in the interaction, how did the Bengali elite view their own status? If they, too, considered themselves in a subordinate position, how did they react to it? How is their perception of subordination related to the synthesis they effected? Similar questions can be asked concerning their perceptions of the British attitude toward Bengali culture and the economic and political conditions during the nineteenth century. Furthermore, we need to delineate the changing relationship between the motivations as their strengths vary and as other social conditions vary during the evolving process of synthesis. We also need to explain the specific relationship between the motivations and the synthesis. For example, why did the superior-inferior relation move the Bengali elite to incorporate British ideas and values into their culture?

It is my aim to answer these questions while expanding previous explanations of nineteenth-century Bengal by employing a combination of two orientations: a consideration of the Bengali elite's perception of their own culture and of British attitudes; and an analysis of the continually evolving synthesis to show the shifting relationships between the significant motivating factors for and against the synthesis. As a chronological framework for the analysis, I divide the nineteenth century into three periods—1800–1830, 1830–1870, 1870–1905—based on the shifting British attitudes toward Bengali culture and the Bengali elite's perception of these shifts and their perceptions of themselves. As the discussion proceeds, the basis for choosing these criteria will become evident.

Before moving into the analysis of the events of nineteenth-century Bengal, I should make some comments about the object of study—the Bengali elite. I have chosen to focus on this group for two reasons. First, historical studies of nineteenth-century Bengal concentrate almost exclusively on the Bengali elite in Calcutta. This emphasis indicates the group's historical importance. Second, it is they who did most of the writing which is the basic source of data for my analysis. To generalize beyond this group of Bengalis, who as a result of the interaction with the British became less and less like other segments of Bengali society, would not be warranted. Yet at various times during the century and for various reasons, the Bengali elite sought to influence these other segments of Bengali society.

Martin Orans has observed a similar synthesizing process among a
variety of groups. After studying the Santal tribe of India, the Jatans of Agra city, the Burakamin of Japan, and the American Negroes, he developed the theory of the rank concession syndrome (RCS) to explain the synthesis effected by these groups. His theory is relevant to the Bengali elite of the nineteenth century because, like the groups he studied, they were in a subordinate position and accommodated ideas and values from the dominant culture.

The RCS theory describes the processes that result when a subordinate society concedes rank to a dominant society. As a result of conceding rank a society will emulate rank attributes of the dominant society in an attempt to raise its status. Associated with rank concession is power concession, which indicates that the subordinate society also concedes that the dominant society is technologically more powerful. A society will borrow technology from the dominant society not because of inferiority feelings but to attain some practical goal (crops, health, victory in war). Although a society concedes power when it concedes rank, power can be conceded independently of rank.

There is a motivation which is in opposition to the motivation to borrow that results from rank and power concessions. This opposing motivation is what Durkheim terms solidarity. Solidarity refers to those shared cultural characteristics that bind a society together. These characteristics also serve as a boundary between two societies and inhibit the mutual assimilation of traits. The binding effect of the shared cultural characteristics is termed internal solidarity; their boundary effect is termed external solidarity. According to Durkheim, individuals of a society want to be like other individuals in that society and will be motivated to preserve the society's solidarity. Thus emulation is in conflict with solidarity, given that a society concedes rank. Orans calls this an emulation-solidarity conflict.

Emulation is not distributed evenly among the individuals within a rank-conceding society. Those with greater economic and political power are more apt to emulate because of their more frequent interactions with members of the dominant society. Such "differential emulation" is destructive of internal solidarity. Nevertheless, an individual cannot be successful in raising his status without economic and political power. Therefore, an emulation-solidarity conflict occurs among those who have the economic and political resources to pursue higher status by borrowing and being accorded higher rank by members of the dominant society.

Hence there is a relation between the strength of the emulation-solidarity conflict and the economic and political conditions under which mobility attempts are made. If individuals pursue an "economic rank path," there is less conflict because the solidarity requirements of this path are less important than in a political rank path. Solidarity is less emphasized
in the economic rank path because, in a market economy, economic success requires individual initiative. Ties with the family or other groups can hamper the economic success of an individual because he may be socially required to distribute his wealth. A political rank path supports the solidarity of a society because, in democratic governments, political success requires the backing of a majority of a society's members. Thus in the political rank path, while emulation and the motivation to borrow remain, solidarity requirements are stronger and this produces a more severe emulation-solidarity conflict than does an economic rank path.

Orans identifies five means of synthesis by which individuals may attempt to resolve their emulation-solidarity conflict:

1. Indigenous claims—through the history-mythology of the culture, individuals demonstrate that what is borrowed is really a forgotten indigenous custom.

2. Syncretism—"naturalizing" borrowed customs by combining them with indigenous customs.

3. Innovative combination—a fusion of indigenous and borrowed customs that results in a change in both.

4. Pattern emulation and trait maintenance—incorporating the deep values of the dominant culture while vigorously emphasizing distinctive indigenous traits.

5. Redefinition of relevant group identification—escaping the conflict by establishing an identity with a group outside the boundaries of the subordinate culture (for example, the proletariat, a different religion).

The most severe emulation-solidarity conflict develops when individuals, after pursuing rank economically, switch to a political rank path. Mobility attempts via the economic rank path emphasize borrowing, and successful individuals will have internalized many of the borrowed customs and values. When they shift to a political rank path, where solidarity is paramount, they find they are alienated from their own society and may have difficulty reacquiring indigenous customs. Under these conditions a "cultural movement" results. Cultural movements are evidenced by a proliferation of literary creativity. The motivation underlying this creativity is the severe emulation-solidarity conflict. The literature produced is directed at resolving the conflict by employing some, if not all, of the techniques noted above.

Of the many anthropological theories of social changes, Orans' RCS theory seems to be the most powerful. By using it we are able to describe the complexity of the varying relations among the motivations for a synthesis and the process whereby the Bengali elite in dealing with these motivations developed a synthesis.
II

The city of Calcutta was founded by Job Charnock in 1690 as a commercial settlement. Thus even in 1800 Calcutta was a relatively new city. It had no traditional inhabitants whose behavior might serve as a standard for the Bengalis migrating to the city for economic reasons. Yet Calcutta was the major arena for interaction between the Bengalis and the British. For both, Calcutta was a new environment in which they could work out their modes of interaction without any of the influences that would have been present had Calcutta been a city with a longer history. Both groups had the opportunity to adapt or ignore their own traditional customs if they proved to be detrimental to their commercial interests. It seems to me that such an environment was conducive to the Bengali elite’s adoption of British customs and values because of the geographical, if not social, distance from the inhibiting influences of traditional customs and attitudes. Thus, at the behavioral level of analysis, I infer an urban/rural dichotomy with reference to Calcutta and the rest of Bengal. Whether or not this dichotomy exists at the level of values and abstract social rules is a question beyond the scope of this essay.¹⁴

1800–1830

After the British established their control over Bengal in 1757, many Hindu upper-caste Bengalis (Brahmans, Kayasthas, and Baidyas) entered into relations with British commercial, financial, and administrative organizations in Calcutta, from which they realized great economic benefits.¹⁵ Thus began a long period of economic interaction between the British and the Bengali elite which continued well into the nineteenth century.¹⁶ It is difficult to sort out from the available data how much the Bengalis borrowed from the British culture and what motivation lay behind such borrowing. We may be able to get some indications of the Bengali elite’s attitude toward British culture and the kind of borrowing that took place during this period by looking at the family backgrounds of several influential personages of the Bengali elite in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The earliest of this group, Devendranath Tagore, who led the most westernized reform group in the 1840s and 1850s, was brought up in a family which had amassed wealth in commercial relations with the British in Calcutta.¹⁷ His father, Dwarkanath, had started an agency house in Calcutta and also managed industrial concerns.¹⁸ Ananda Mohan Bose, a prominent figure in the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, was born to a Kayastha family in 1847. His grandfather had become wealthy through a salt business, and his father had been a government officer. Ananda Mohan
received an English education. The family of Sasipad Benerje, who was born in 1840, was in government service in a suburb of Calcutta. He, too, was given an English education. Bipin Chandra Pal’s father was also in government service. Giving up his government post, his father moved the family to Sylhet, where Bipin Chandra could receive an English education. Sivanath Sastri (born 1840) at the age of nine went to Calcutta to live with his uncle, who edited a Bengali journal. He was educated at Sanskrit College but chose the English medium course. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, whose literature flourished in the late nineteenth century, was born in 1838. His father was in the civil service. Bankim attended an English medium school and Presidency College. Vivekananda was born to a Kayastha family in Calcutta. His great-grandfather had become wealthy as the managing clerk and associate of an English attorney. His descendants retained that wealth and position by going into the professions. In fact, most members of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj (which is considered by many historians to be the most westernized reform group in the latter part of the nineteenth century) came from families associated with the British, either in the professions, commerce, or civil service. Almost all these Brahmos had an English education, many with college degrees.

What I have been trying to demonstrate with this summary is that many fathers and grandfathers of the Bengali elite had successfully interacted with the British during the early decades of the nineteenth century. With respect to the RCS theory, the family histories suggest that these Bengalis borrowed British behavior patterns because successful economic interaction demanded it. Because the British dominated the government, commercial, and professional life of Calcutta, the Bengalis had to conform to the British lifestyle if they wished to establish lucrative relations with them. The least I can say about the motivation of these Bengalis is that they borrowed British customs for their economic interactions because it was beneficial to their success. If this was the case, then we may hypothesize that the members of the Bengali elite who were involved with the British borrowed customs because they had conceded power. Whether or not these same Bengalis had conceded rank is difficult to establish with the data available to me.

We may get further indications of at least power-incorporative borrowing on the part of the Calcutta Bengali elite by looking at the rise of Western education in the early nineteenth century. The reason for the establishment of Hindu College in 1817 exemplifies the attitudes of many of the Bengali elite toward Western education. According to Kopf, “such families as the Mullicks, Debs, Tagores, and Ghoshals owed much of their recently acquired wealth to European relationships. They valued highly
competence in the English language and training in European fields of study." Further, Hindu College was the Calcutta elite's expression "of a practical need to provide the sons of that group with advantageous European education." If Kopf's conclusions are correct, one may infer that the elite, who themselves had been quite successful in their interactions with the British, felt that Western education was an important prerequisite for further successful relations. It is significant that they chose Western education and not the traditional one because this choice indicates a concession that English education would give their sons a practical advantage.

It is also significant, as Kopf points out, that the Bengali elite did not feel their culture threatened by Western education:

It was the Orientalist understanding and respect for Hindu civilization that probably impelled the founders to favor the idea of a Hindu College in the first place. The Orientalist belief that western education should serve not as an end in itself but as the stimulus for changing the indigenous culture from within explains why Bengalis accepted the experiment without a recorded murmur of dissent. It was therefore not really secular knowledge in western dress that was to be imparted at Hindu College, but useful knowledge from the West transmitted without ethnocentric bias.

If Kopf's analysis is valid, then it appears that the elite did not feel Bengali solidarity was being disrupted by the formation of Hindu College. Thus, in terms of the RCS theory, power concession and power-incorporative borrowing are not perceived to conflict with a society's solidarity maintenance. If this is the case, then concession of inferiority, not mere borrowing, is the crucial factor in the process of effecting a synthesis.

Another point should be made concerning the formation of Hindu College: there was some resistance from the orthodox Hindus. David Hare and Rammohun Roy appear to have been the originators of the idea to open a school like Hindu College. After approaching Sir Edward Hyde East, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who agreed with the idea, they received approval from other members of the Bengali elite. However, the orthodox Hindus of Calcutta "refused to have any connection with the school if Rammohun was included in the College Committee." They presumably felt this way because they viewed Rammohun's seemingly westernized theology and his appeals for social reforms (such as the abolition of sati) as a threat to their culture. They did not want their sons to incorporate these ideas while obtaining an education, though it appears that they did want their sons to have a Western education. This episode may indicate the beginnings of a conflict between a desire for Western education and a desire to maintain Hindu solidarity on the part of the orthodox Hindus. However, the motivation behind the elite's sup-
port of Western education is still unclear. With the evidence of the resistance to Rammohun’s involvement with Hindu College we open the possibility of rank concession along with power concession on the part of the orthodox elite in Calcutta. In any event the wide support for Western education instead of traditional education suggests that the elite felt that Western education was superior for at least practical purposes (power concession).

Although there seems to be no concrete evidence for rank concession with respect to the Bengali attitude toward Western education, there are some indications of feelings of inferiority among the progressive Bengali elite, as exemplified by Rammohun Roy. Rammohun’s early education consisted in learning Persian under a Maulavi and Arabic in Patna. His later education included a study of Sanskrit language and literature in Benarases. He acquired knowledge of English and Western culture while working as a civil servant under John Digby. By 1815 Rammohun had been exposed to the culture and religion of India, the Muslims, and the West. His theology was an attempt to synthesize all these traditions into a universal monotheism which closely resembled the Unitarianism of the West.

That Rammohun conceded rank to the West, especially Christianity, is evidenced in a letter he wrote to Digby in 1817: “I have found the doctrine of Christ more conducive to moral principles, and better adapted for the use of rational beings, than any other which [has] come to my knowledge.” Further, Rammohun states: “Genuine Christianity is more conducive to the moral, social and political progress of a people than any other known creed.” In general, Rammohun’s theology and social reforms were a response to the morally degraded condition into which he felt Hinduism had fallen. He believed that women suffered from moral degradation and inhuman social customs and therefore championed the abolition of sati and the general emancipation of women. Realizing the “degraded” state of Hindu society and blaming the Puranas and the later Sastras, Rammohun seems to concede that Christian principles provided a means of morally regenerating Hinduism. Rammohun experienced an emulation-solidarity conflict in that he always considered himself a Hindu and tried to incorporate—by means of indigenous claims, syncretism, and innovative combination—Western social reforms and Christian Unitarian principles into Upanishadic philosophy and theology. The founding of the Brahma Sabha in 1828 can be seen as the expression of the emulation-solidarity conflict felt by Rammohun because he attempted to demonstrate with Brahma religion that Western ideas, values, and behavior patterns were indigenous to Hindu tradition.

Rammohun’s attitude toward Western education was mentioned in
connection with the formation of Hindu College. It appears that Rammohun felt Western education was an important ingredient in India’s progress toward moral regeneration, social reform, and modernization. He opposed the formation of Sanskrit College, an institution proposed by H. H. Wilson which would stress “the traditional Sanskritic studies of rhetoric, sacred literature, law, and grammar” along with Western subjects. In 1823, when the government decided to organize Sanskrit College, Rammohun wrote a letter of protest to Lord Amherst:

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 Schoolmen, which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be 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.

Relying solely on these remarks, we have difficulty deciding whether Rammohun conceded rank and power or just conceded power with regard to Western education. Clearly, he thought that Western education was better suited to India’s progress. But did he also think that Western society in general was better than Hindu society? He probably felt that Western society was better than contemporary Hindu society. Assessing his attitudes toward Christianity and Western education, I feel that he did concede rank to Western culture and that he also experienced an emulation-solidarity conflict, the expression of which was his attempts at synthesizing Western moral principles and social reforms into the Upanishads, the formation of the Brahma Sabha, and the sharp criticisms his view received from the orthodox Hindu community.

According to Kopf, 1800–1830 was the age of the Orientalist. In order to train British civil servants for the posts in India, the British Orientalist scholars had to systematize Indian language and translate Hindu texts into English. As a result of their work, the Orientalists and the Bengali pundits who worked with them found that India had a long history and “discovered” the Indian golden age in Vedic times. The Bengali pundits became conscious of their ancient civilization and developed a pride in it.

The concept of an Indaian golden age of Vedic times subscribed to by the British Orientalist scholars and their pundits suggests that both these groups thought that contemporary Hindu society was in a degraded state. In addition, this same concept indicated to the Orientalists and the Bengali
pundits that India possessed an indigenous model for revitalizing its culture without the wholesale adoption of Western culture. The Orientalists also introduced the idea of renaissance to the Hindus which, combined with the idea of an Indian golden age, could have encouraged the intelligentsia to seek cultural revitalization through the renaissance of their golden age.  

When viewed in terms of the RCS theory, the Orientalists and the Bengali pundits of the College of Fort William present a perplexing picture. There does not seem to be any evidence indicating that the Bengali intelligentsia of the college felt that their culture was inferior, except perhaps for contemporary Hinduism. Equipped with historical consciousness and a pride in their golden age, it appears that these Bengalis felt their culture needed a regeneration from its present state and that their civilization contained the ingredients of the progress they envisioned. Modernization could take place but it could be consistent with Indian tradition. The major legacy of the Orientalists was a sympathetic attitude toward Indian culture and a historical consciousness of a golden age to which Bengalis of the latter nineteenth century turned in their attempts to reduce the emulation-solidarity conflict.

In sum, the 1800–1830 period of Bengali history displayed no clear-cut evidence for rank concession, though I suspect it was present in Rammo-hun Roy’s theology and social reforms. However, I think there is concrete evidence for power concession and borrowing in the elite support of education and the success in their economic interactions with the British, although it is hard to tell whether their power-incorporative borrowing was associated with rank concession and emulation. I suspect that much of the difficulty in distinguishing between “pure” power-incorporative borrowing and rank-concession borrowing with the associated power-incorporative borrowing is due to Orans’ insufficient explication of these concepts. His only statement on this problem is that “emulation and power-incorporative borrowing are often intermingled in particular acts.”

However, I hope to show that these phenomena crystallized during the next period (1830–1870) as a result of the defense of Hinduism against attacks by such Englishmen as Macaulay and Duff.

1830–1870

When Bentinck became governor general in 1828, the growing tide of anti-Hindu criticism that had been expressed by some Englishmen for more than a decade attained the status of official policy. This change in British attitude—from the Orientalists’ respect for Hindu Vedic civilization to the vehement anti-Hinduism of the anglicists and evangelists—produced a defensive response by the Bengali elite which crystallized the
incipient emulation-solidarity conflict of the previous decades. Since the latter years of the eighteenth century, many Englishmen had held a rather low opinion of Indians and their Hinduism and had felt that Christianity and Western education were needed to civilize the subcontinent. However, the Orientalist position was well entrenched in the administrative structure because of the efforts of men like Wellesley, Wilson, Colebrook, and other scholars connected with the College of Fort William. One might assume that the anti-Hindu opinions of the early nineteenth century did not have a great impact on the Calcutta Bengali elite because such opinions were tempered by the Orientalists and because missionary activity was held to minimum until 1813.

Exemplifying this anti-Hindu criticism of the early nineteenth century were the attitudes of Charles Grant. Upon his return from India in 1794, Grant started advocating missionary activity in India “to transform and deliver a whole people from superstition to light through the educational process.”^43 For Grant, “Indian civilization was barbaric because its religion was degrading. It was both dangerous and a violation of the Christian spirit even to tolerate such a culture.”^44 The continuing controversy about allowing missionary activity in India brought to light further indications of anti-Hindu feelings in England. Lord Teignmouth, in supporting the evangelical position in 1813, maintained that “only the strong ethical content of Christianity could eradicate the deeply rooted deceit, obscenity, and tendency toward corruption” that he found so common in Hindus. ^45 Both Grant and Wilberforce in their strong support for missionaries in India “portrayed Hinduism as rotten to the core and incapable of any sort of restoration, reform, or renaissance.”^46 And Wilberforce argued before Parliament that “the Hindu divinities were absolute monsters of lust, injustice, wickedness, and cruelty. In short, their religious system is one grand abomination.”^47 Against this criticism, the Orientalists could not prevent Britain from allowing the establishment of Christian missions in India.

James Mill’s *History of British India* was another source of anti-Hindu criticism. The following passage demonstrates the attitude of at least one British scholar toward India:

Even in manners, and in the leading parts of the moral character, the lines of resemblance [between Indians and Chinese] are strong. Both nations are to nearly an equal degree tainted with the vices of insincerity; dissembling, treacherous, mendacious, to an excess which surpasses even the unusual measure of uncultivated society. Both are disposed to excessive exaggeration with regard to everything related to themselves. Both are cowardly and unfeeling. Both are to the highest degree conceited of themselves, and full of affected contempt for others. Both are in a physical sense disgusting-ly unclean in their persons and houses. ^48
Such opinions of Indians and Hinduism forcefully and officially confronted the Bengali elite in Calcutta under the administration of Bentinck and in the statements and actions of Macaulay, Duff, and the Young Bengal group. Bentinck dismantled the College of Fort William, nearly drove to extinction the Calcutta Madrassa and Sanskrit College, rendered impotent the Calcutta School and School Book Societies, forced the anglicization of the curriculum of Serampore College and strongly supported Western education for Indians.49

The Bengali elite of Calcutta also encountered the derogatory statement of Macaulay and Duff. In the Minute of 1835 Macaulay wrote:

It is I believe no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected to form all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than that what may be found in the most paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or social philosophy, the relative position of the nations is the same.50

Macaulay felt that contemporary English culture and knowledge were the zenith of civilization and that westernization was the only true form of modernization.51 That Macaulay sought modernization through Western secular education is clear when he said, “We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect.”52

Alexander Duff, a Scottish missionary who arrived in India in 1831, was the religious counterpart of Macaulay’s secular westernization. Duff also believed that Western education was an important ingredient of modernization for India, so long as it was “in close and inseparable alliance with the illuminating, quickening, beautifying influence of the Christian Faith.”53 The need for the combination of Western education and Christianity in modernizing India was predicated on Duff’s harsh opinion of Hinduism. In India and Indian Missions, Duff wrote:

Of all the systems of false religion ever fabricated by the perverse ingenuity of fallen man, Hinduism is certainly the most stupendous—whether we consider the boundless extent of its range, or the boundless multiplicity of its component parts. Of all the systems of false religion it is that which seems to embody the largest amount and variety of semblances and counterfeits of divinely revealed facts and doctrines.54

The impact of these British opinions was multiplied when Bengalis themselves leveled similar criticisms at Hinduism. The appointment of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio to the faculty of Hindu College in 1828 signaled the beginning of a wave of loud and vehement Bengali criticism of Hindu religion and civilization. The students of Derozio at Hindu
College, who came to be known as Young Bengal, felt that revitalization of India was not to be found in her past but in opening "Indians' minds to the cultural offerings of the west so that India might once more share the benefits of human progress."\(^55\) That Young Bengal had a low opinion of Hinduism is clear from Madhab Chandra Mallek's statement in the college magazine: "If there is anything that we hate from the bottom of our heart, it is Hinduism."\(^56\) The debates held by the students of Hindu College generally revolved around the so-called vileness, corruptness, and unworthiness of Hindu religion and its unfitness for rational beings.\(^57\)

Along with their denunciation of Hindu religion, Young Bengal advocated westernization as a better way to modernize India. Derozio had instilled in his students a spirit of free thought and revolt against Hindu society and customs. These students were inspired by the writings of Voltaire, Locke, Hume, and Paine and by European history. Krishna Mohan Bannerjee, a Christian convert, in the first address given before the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge echoed the feelings of Young Bengal:

> If the study of history be of such immense consequence to mankind in general, it is by far more so to persons of our present situation. We are by no means satisfied with the state of things around us. We wish we were not surrounded with such wretched and degraded fellow-men. . . . Dissatisfied with our present intellectual and moral condition and desiring to improve ourselves and countrymen, we have come to the determination of organizing this very society. . . . There are nations that at one time groaned under the wretched degradation but who stand conspicuous now for everything that is good and great. . . . Can we observe with attention the rise of European Communities from the lowest depths of barbarism without getting some insight into the secret of human emancipation from corruption and misery?\(^58\)

In 1833 Young Bengal started a journal, *Bijnan Sar Sangraha*, the purpose of which was "to communicate, chiefly among the natives of Bengal, such selections from works of European literature and science as may tend to enlarge the sphere of their moral sentiments and infuse a spirit of activity and enterprise in all those pursuits which conduce to the happiness or glory of man."\(^59\) Young Bengal felt that Hinduism was the cause of the so-called social and moral corruption and backwardness of Hindu society and that by imitating Western culture and with Western science and philosophy India could be a great country.

Young Bengal's imitation of the West went beyond education. Descriptions of their lifestyle provide further evidence of their attitudes toward Hinduism and Western culture. Bose reports that these radical students shouted at orthodox Hindus that they ate beef, and that they
greeted the image of Kali with "Good morning, madam." Benoy Ghosh reports that the main characteristics of members of Young Bengal were "their love of the West and intoxication with the English." Heimsath quotes K. A. N. Sastri's description of these students: they "adopted an aggressive attitude to everything Hindu and openly defied the canons of their inherited religion, while some of them offended public opinion by their youthful exuberance such as drinking to excess, flinging beef bones into houses of the orthodox, and parading the streets shouting 'we have eaten Mussulman bread.' S. Mukerjee states that "there was a rush for everything English, and English ideals dominated our lives and thoughts." In a Calcutta periodical in 1851 the students of Hindu College were described as having a "smattering of English," dressing fashionably, carrying around Shakespeare and Milton, eating beef, and drinking wine.

With reference to the RCS theory, the members of Young Bengal had conceded rank to English culture in the early 1830s. However, as the decade progressed a large portion of the Bengali orthodox community harshly criticized their ideas and behavior. The orthodox elite's attempts to check the westernization of the members of Young Bengal revealed their growing concern with the solidarity of Bengali society. The Dharma Sabha, formed in 1831, protested against the radical trends of Young Bengal. Parents withdrew their sons from Hindu College and forced the firing of Derozio. The Young Bengal members were threatened with excommunication from Hindu society. The orthodox community forced the suspension of the progressive periodical *Parthenon*, published by the students of Derozio, after its first issue in 1830. The attacks by the orthodox elite became more vehement after the Christian conversion of about fifty of the students, among them Mahesh Chandra Ghosh and Krishna Mohan Bannerjee.

Two points must be made about the reaction of the orthodox elite to Young Bengal. First, the feelings of alienation felt by Young Bengal were the result of these attacks. In terms of the RCS theory, the alienation of these students was an important factor in the emulation-solidarity conflict they experienced toward the end of the 1830s. Most members of Young Bengal joined Devendranath Tagore in revitalizing the Brahmo Samaj in 1842. The Brahmo Samaj of 1842 was an extension of the ideas of Rammohun Roy which, as demonstrated above, were attempts to solve the emulation-solidarity conflict. In other words, most members of Young Bengal returned to the position of espousing social reform and modernization while attempting to maintain their Hindu solidarity by using the techniques of synthesis and indigenous claims of Brahmoism. I will have more to say about the Brahma Samaj shortly.

Second, the reaction to Young Bengal of the members of the Dharma
Sabha demonstrated an emulation-solidarity conflict on the part of even the most orthodox Hindus of the Calcutta Bengali elite. According to Kopf, the members of the Dharma Sabha were not against modernization but against the total westernization of India. That the members of the Bengali orthodox community were in favor of Western education eventually is demonstrated in their support of Hindu College. The organization of the Dharma Sabha followed Western lines with a president, board of directors, secretary, and treasurer. They conducted their meetings according to the strict rules of parliamentary procedure. They tended to agree with the British criticism of Hinduism—that the customs and practices of eighteenth-century Hinduism were inferior and that reform was needed. Their ideas for social reform, such as their plan for aiding the rural poor and their proposal for aiding Calcutta’s poor by building a charitable institution and hospital, were derived from their contact with and emulation of Western society. Yet they resented the forceful intrusion of Western culture and the harsh criticisms of the British. As a result, they sought to maintain their solidarity by defending the Hinduism reconstructed by the Orientalists.

The Brahmo Samaj of Devendranath Tagore presents the clearest example of the emulation-solidarity conflict felt by the more progressive Bengali elite between 1830 and 1870. In general, they agreed with the derogatory opinions of Puranic Hinduism held by the British. The members of the Brahmo Samaj believed there was much that was better in Western culture. However, they were also defensive of Hinduism as reinterpreted by Rammohun Roy. Therefore they attempted to maintain their Hindu solidarity through the Brahma religion.

When Devendranath Tagore assumed the leadership of the Brahmo Samaj in 1843, that organization had passed through a period of stagnation since the death of Rammohun in 1833. It is probable that Devendranath had conceded rank to British culture. Because his father, Dwarkanath, had been successful in his business relations with the British in the 1800–1830 period, it is assumed that he internalized many English customs that his family had adopted because of presumed power-incorporative borrowing of his father. Devendranath attended Hindu College in 1831 and continued his studies there for four years. Although I lack evidence, it seems probable that he held attitudes similar to those of the Young Bengal students of the college. We get indirect evidence of his sympathy with the ideas of Young Bengal and his rank concession to Western culture by the fact that he joined the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge in 1838. We also get indirect evidence of his emulation-solidarity conflict, for in that same year he was converted to the Brahmo faith. In his autobiography, Devendranath mentions a spiritual loneliness which was
lessened when, after coming across a part of the Upanishads dealing with monotheism, he took up the Brahmo faith.\textsuperscript{71}

The formation of the Brahmo Sabha by Rammohun Roy in 1828 was an expression of his emulation-solidarity conflict. There seems little reason not to accept that when Devendranath assumed the leadership of the organization in 1843 it was still an expression of the members’ emulation-solidarity conflict. Most members of the Brahmo Samaj were Western-educated Bengali elite who had conceded rank in the sense that they admitted that the Puranic/Tantric Hinduism, which the British criticized, was inferior. But the blind imitation of Western culture by Young Bengal was viewed as a threat to Hindu solidarity.

In an attempt to stem the tide of westernization and to provide a means of identifying with Hindu civilization while incorporating many of the social reforms and institutions of the West, Devendranath formed the Tattvabodhini Sabha in 1839, which became a subsidiary of the Brahmo Samaj when he joined it. The journal of the Brahmo Samaj, \textit{Tattvabodhini Patrika}, emphasized Bengali solidarity symbols by stating the need for developing the Bengali language, studying science and theology, and battling against the superstition and idolatry of medieval Hinduism if moral and material uplift were to be realized.\textsuperscript{72} They confronted the criticism of the missionaries by publishing rejoinders in defense of Vedic Hinduism: “We will not deny that we consider the Vedas and the Vedas alone as the authorized rule of Hindu theology. They are the sole foundation of all our beliefs and the truths of all other Shastras will be judged of according to their agreement with them.”\textsuperscript{73} It seems that the members of the Brahmo Samaj indirectly admitted the inferiority of medieval Hinduism by using Vedic Hinduism as their foundation of Brahmo religion.

Brahmoism provided an alternative to westernization and Christianity. “They offered the Western-educated a reformed Indian religion—Vedantism—which they argued was free of superstition and priestly tyranny. At the same time, Brahmos claimed to offer an ethical system based on Hindu scriptures but reflecting the identical sentiments of the Sermon on the Mount.”\textsuperscript{74} If Kopf is right, the Brahmos were clearly attempting to deal with an emulation-solidarity conflict.

The Brahmoism of Devendranath was not wholly successful in resolving the emulation-solidarity conflict. The Brahmo Samaj did manage to check missionary proselytizing and put an end to the wholesale imitation of the West by providing the Bengali elite of Calcutta with a form of Hinduism that denied the so-called superstition, idolatry, and moral and social corruption of medieval Hinduism.\textsuperscript{75} However, the same religion, Brahmoism, which synthesized the Western-inspired reform of the position of women, education, and sati with the Hinduism of the Vedas and Up-
anishads also alienated the Brahmos from the orthodox Bengali elite. In the 1850s Devendranath stated that “we Brahmos are situated amidst a community which views us with no friendly feelings” because we attack “their Puranic and Tantric systems.” 76 Another factor which added to their alienation from the more orthodox segment of the Bengali elite was their continued sympathy toward American and British Unitarianism. 77 The orthodox Bengali elite probably believed that this sympathy was a further Western influence that would destroy traditional Hindu religion. Raj Narain Bose, in a reaction to this alienation, attempted to demonstrate the superiority of Hinduism over Christianity. The Hinduism he chose to support was that of classical Vedanta while attacking that of the Puranas and Tantras. 78 These efforts failed the convince the orthodox community of the Brahmos’ Hindu identity because the Brahmos attacked the very religion in which they believed. Thus the Brahmos in the 1850s were still experiencing an emulation-solidarity conflict.

When Keshab Chandra Sen joined the Brahmo Samaj in 1858, the organization switched from an emphasis on religious reinterpretation of Hinduism and incorporation of Western ideas to an emphasis on social reform. 79 Keshab quickly became the leader of many younger Brahmos by advocating campaigns against kulin polygamy, child marriage, and caste while promoting widow-remarriage, intercaste marriage, and women’s emancipation through education. 80 These reforms were too radical for Devendranath because he felt they would alienate the Brahmo even further from Hindu society. With more data I might have been able to demonstrate that Devendranath agreed with many of the reforms proposed by Keshab Chandra and that because of the emulation-solidarity conflict he chose to identify more closely with Hinduism than did Keshab Chandra.

In any event, Keshab Chandra’s speech “Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia,” delivered in 1866, was interpreted by Devendranath and his faction as an apologia for Christianity and led to a split in the Brahmo Samaj in that same year. Keshab’s group formed the Brahmo Samaj of India; Devendranath and his followers formed the Adi Brahmo Samaj.

Devendranath attacked the Brahmo Samaj of India and started programs aimed at the modernization of India. At this point the solidarity focus of the emulation-solidarity conflict was extended by the Adi Brahmo Samaj. They realized that their Brahmoism must be spread among a wider segment of Hindu society so that a majority of Bengalis could have pride in their culture. Thus the Hindu Mela was started by Dwijendranath Tagore. The program included a display of Hindu industrial goods, physical training to restore the manliness of Bengali youth, the establishment of a school of Hindu music, the founding of a school of Hindu medicine, and the encouragement of Indian antiquities. These programs were a
response to the "degradation" of Bengali society.\textsuperscript{81} Dwijendra Nath, recognizing the danger of westernization but also recognizing the "inferiority" of Bengali society, attacked the Brahmo Samaj of India in 1869:

With all our present inferiority and infirmities we are little better respected by the world than the Christian negro of North America who speaks English, dresses himself with the jacket and pantaloon, and whose habits of life in fact are mostly borrowed from the European settlers there. And why so? Simply because his civilization is nothing more than an image of European manners and habits, and he is no more like the true European than the monkey in the red-coat riding on the she-goat is like a human being. By means of mere imitation we can be just so much like the Europeans as slaves are like their masters.\textsuperscript{82}

While the Tagores and the Adi Brahmo Samaj were dealing with their emulation-solidarity conflict by creating the Hindu Mela to increase the internal solidarity of Hinduism and uplift the masses and instill pride in Hindu civilization, the Brahmo Samaj of India was becoming more and more westernized and more and more alienated from Hindu society. The Brahmo Samaj of India under Keshab continued to push for social reforms as a response to their agreement with the criticisms of the West. Their alienation attained a de jure status with the Marriage Act of 1872. This act stated that intercaste marriages would be legally recognized if the partners declared that they were neither Hindu, Christian, Muhammadan, Parsi, Buddhist, Sikh, nor Jain.\textsuperscript{83}

Why the Adi Brahmo Samaj experienced a more severe emulation-solidarity conflict and started programs aimed at fostering the internal solidarity of Hindu society and massing support for their program of nationalism and why the Brahmo Samaj of India did not seem to experience the same degree of conflict may be explained by reference to rank path. The Adi Brahmo Samaj chose a political rank path as evidenced by the nationalistic tenor of their programs. According to the RCS theory, the choice of a political rank path results in an increased emulation-solidarity conflict which can be resolved by syncretizing indigenous and emulated customs and by emphasizing the indigenous customs in order to gain the support of the masses. The Hindu Mela was just such a program with the added ingredient of instilling pride in Hindu culture. Because Keshab's program was universalist in tone, he spoke of solidarity with mankind more than solidarity with Hindus. Thus there was not the severe emulation-solidarity conflict and less motivation to emphasize indigenous customs and symbols in their program and philosophy. Keshab's group did experience an emulation-solidarity conflict as evidenced by their derogatory opinion of Hinduism. However, in speaking of a solidarity with all mankind they relieved the self-hatred that accompanies
rank concession without "the exigencies of social unity aimed at improving status." In sum, the difference between the Adi Brahmo Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj of India was the choice of rank path and the focus of solidarity. The former group by choosing the political rank path of nationalism experienced an increase in the emulation-solidarity conflict. Consequently they had to gain mass support through the Hindu Mela. The latter group, though experiencing an emulation-solidarity conflict, did not switch to a political rank path but rather attempted to resolve their conflict by speaking of a solidarity with all mankind. Such rhetoric may decrease overt solidarity attempts, and thus they were free to pursue their Western reforms without the inhibiting influences of a nationalistic solidarity with their own society.

1870–1905

The organizations, theology, and events of the 1830–1870 period were a reaction by the Bengali elite to the change in attitude of the British. Instead of the Orientalist sympathy for Hindu Vedic religion and civilization, the anglicist scorn for all that was Indian prevailed. The British attitude indicated to the Bengalis that the only way India could purge herself of the so-called backwardness, corruption, and idolatry of medieval Hindu civilization was the wholesale adoption of British culture. Although the Bengali elite seemed to agree that Puranic/Tantric Hinduism was inferior, they reacted in defense of Vedic Hinduism through such organizations as the Brahmo Samaj and Dharma Sabha. Brahmoism incorporated Western-inspired social and religious reforms into Vedic and Upanishadic Hinduism as a defense against British criticism of the entire civilization and history. By doing so, the Brahmos indicated that they were experiencing an emulation-solidarity conflict. At the beginning of the 1870–1905 period, there was another shift in British attitude and policy toward Bengalis. According to Kopf, this shift was shown in three ways:

In the first place, there was a sharp rise of the educated unemployed who could not find suitable jobs. Secondly, gifted Bengalis were discriminated against openly by Britishers who resented "niggers" in high positions. Thirdly, the nonofficial British community blocked every effort to give Indian magistrates the power to judge cases involving whites as well as nonwhites.

In other words, now that many Bengalis had emulated and borrowed British customs—a course which had been advocated by the British in the 1830s—the British reversed their position and displayed hostility toward the kind of westernized Bengali they had sought to produce.
The changing economic conditions of the nineteenth century were an important factor in the Bengalis’ view of British attitudes. Between 1800 and 1850 the Bengali upper castes in Calcutta were highly successful in their commercial dealings with the British. Around 1850, Bengalis were withdrawing from commercial affairs because of a series of commercial crises and increased British exclusiveness. At the time the commercial ventures were failing, there were increasing opportunities of white-collar employment for the Bengalis who had an English education. These employment opportunities, together with the opening of government appointments for Bengalis, increased the stimuli for Bengalis to acquire an English education. The members of the Bengali elite were successful in obtaining most of the white-collar positions as well as the government appointments. After 1870, the Bengali elite were almost entirely left out of commercial development. In addition, because of rising population, land fragmentation, and lack of agricultural improvements, their revenue from landholdings was decreasing. This loss of agricultural revenue in the 1870s forced more of the Bengali elite to seek public service and professional employment.

Since English education was necessary for professional and public service employment, there was a sharp increase in school and college enrollment in the 1870s. The increasing numbers of English-educated Bengali elite meant stiffer competition for civil service and government jobs. However, the number of job opportunities did not keep pace with the number of qualified Bengalis. Thus many educated Bengalis found themselves unemployed in the latter part of the nineteenth century and they blamed the British for their situation. In 1876 the British government sought to lower the maximum age limit from twenty-one to nineteen for the open competitive examination for civil service posts. This action was a prime example of what the Bengalis viewed as British attempts to keep Indians out of government service.

Those Bengalis who did secure employment in the professions or in civil service found themselves discriminated against by the British in attaining higher positions. For example, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee “felt that there was little chance of his extra labors receiving recognition since he was not an Englishman.” It appears that Bengalis did not receive the promotions that less-qualified Englishmen received because the British believed that the educated Bengalis were cunning, deceitful, and lacked manly courage. A handbook for British administrators in India stated that: "The physical organization of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy... His mind bears a singular analogy to his body. It is weak even to helplessness for purposes of manly resistance but its suppleness and tact move children of sterner climates to admiration not
unmingle with contempt.” Furthermore, educated Bengalis who did
find employment were subject to demands of servility from their British
superiors. In addition, as John R. McLane points out elsewhere in this
volume, Bengali professionals, particularly lawyers, had a difficult time
“gaining access to the highest position in the bar” because of the poor
training they received and the belief on the part of many Indians that an
Indian lawyer was less likely to be successful in winning court cases.

Another expression of the shift in British attitude was the failure of the
Ilbert Bill to become law. Since the “Black Acts” of 1849, Indians had
been trying to bring “British-born subjects under the jurisdiction of the
local courts, thus abolishing the existing privilege of trial by the Calcutta
supreme court alone.” The Ilbert Bill of 1882 sought to legalize the rare
practice of trying Englishmen by Indian magistrates. But the European
community, organized by Branson, successfully killed the bill by pressur-
ing Lord Ripon.

The unemployment of the educated Bengalis, together with economic
and legal discrimination, clearly displayed the British attitudes toward
Bengalis in the 1870s. The change in attitude forced the Bengalis to re-
consider the rank path they had chosen to raise their status. Until the
1870s, the Bengalis had been pursuing higher status via their economic
interactions with the British and religious reform. As mentioned, the
economic rank path produces a less severe emulation-solidarity conflict
because it is a more individual avenue of mobility. The fact that the
Bengali elite was pursuing an economic rank path may explain the greater
emphasis on emulation of Western culture in previous periods. This is
not to say that the elite was not concerned with solidarity; rather that, in
relation to the period with which we are now dealing, they seemed to be
emphasizing the borrowing of Western customs more than attempting to
affirm their likeness with their own culture. Dwijendranath’s comments
about the Brahma alienation from the rest of Bengali society were a re-
cognition of the fact that both the orthodox community and the Brahmos
were concerned with Bengali solidarity.

The situation we encounter in the 1870s is different from those that
Orans considers. The increased emulation-solidarity conflict for the
Santal, Jatars, Burakamin, and Negroses resulted from the opening of the
political rank path. In the Bengali case of the nineteenth century, we see
the closure of the economic rank path. The result is that the Bengali elite
was forced to pursue a political defense of the position they had gained
through the economic rank path. In other words, the closure of the econo-
ic path, together with British discrimination against the Bengali elite,
forced the Bengalis to attempt to organize politically to maintain, if not
improve, their positions and numbers in the professions and in civil
service jobs. Thus there was a shift from an economic to a political rank path not because of new political opportunities but because of diminishing economic ones.

The switch from the economic to the political rank path brought about more severe emulation-solidarity conflict. In fact, it might be hypothesized that the Bengal elite did not experience a severe emulation-solidarity conflict until the 1870s, when they were forced to pursue rank politically and thus widen their base of support. The Adi Brahmo Samaj was exceptional because it expanded the focus of its solidarity attempts in 1866 as a reaction to the alienation they experienced and the programs advocated by Keshab Chandra. The Hindu Mela was an expression of their expanded focus.

If the Bengali elite did shift from an economic to a political rank path with the resultant increased emulation-solidarity conflict, then we should expect a “cultural movement” in which the elite attempts to increase their solidarity with Hindu civilization in order to gain wider support for their programs of modernization. Further we should expect literary creativity to proliferate, practicing the techniques of syncretism, innovative combination, and indigenous claims in order to naturalize the borrowed ideas and values from the West and to increase Bengali solidarity. The neo-Vaisnava and neo-Vedanta movements of the last quarter of the nineteenth century were stimulated by the increased emulation-solidarity conflict resulting from the shift to the political rank path.

To exemplify the cultural movement of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, I turn now to the literary works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee with respect to the increased emulation-solidarity conflict of this period. Bankim Chandra was born in 1838 of a kulin Brahman family. He probably had close contact with Western culture because his father had been in the civil service and because he had an English education. His upbringing therefore included many English values which became internalized during his youth.

Bankim Chandra experienced an emulation-solidarity conflict. That he felt Bengali society was inferior is evident: “Moreover, the people of our country, particularly the humble people, are exceedingly lazy.”

According to Bankim, Hindu society was backward because of the mastery of the Brahmans and the lack of moral strength to resist on the part of the common people: “At first the mastery of the Brahmans increased through the passiveness of the other castes. Because of the loss of intellectual strength on the part of the other castes, their minds became especially susceptible to superstition. Superstition is produced by fear.” And Bankim showed equal disdain for the westernized Bengali babu:
Whose words are one in his mind, ten in speech, a hundred in writing, and a thousand in a quarrel, he is a babu. Whose strength is one thing in his hand, ten times greater in his mouth, a hundred times greater on the written page, and out of sight at the time for work, he is a babu. Whose intelligence in his childhood is in books, in youth in a bottle, in adulthood in his wife’s auncal, he is a babu. Whose god of good fortune is the British, whose guru is the teacher of the Brahmo religion, whose Veda is the native newspaper, and whose place of pilgrimage is the National Theatre, he is a babu. Who is a Christian to the missionaries, a Brahmo to Kesabcandra, a Hindu to his father, and an atheist to Brahman beggars, he is a babu. Who takes water at home, liquor in his friend’s house, a tongue lashing in the prostitute’s quarters, and a collaring at his Master Sahib’s house, he is a babu. Who despises the use of oil at bath time, his own finger at meal time, and his mother tongue at conversation time, he is a babu. Whose concern is only with clothing, whose diligence is pursuing a good job, whose only respect is for his wife or mistress, and whose anger is only for good books, without doubt, he is a babu.101

Not only did Bankim view Hindus as inferior but he also conceded that the British were superior: “That the English are generally superior to the people of this country, no one will deny except the man blinded by conceit. The English are superior to us in strength, culture, knowledge, and glory.”102 Bankim admired the bravery and dedication to duty of the British; and he felt that Indian backwardness was due to the lack of self-confidence and moral strength of his generation.103

Although Bankim conceded rank to British culture and especially admired the strength and courage of Englishmen, he did not feel that westernization should be the form of modernization for India, as evidenced in his description of the babu. Further, he did not advocate the program of social reform as did the Brahmos; rather he felt that a moral regeneration and a nationalistic spirit were the answer to the problem of Indian backwardness. “He believed that social and political reform would follow naturally upon religious regeneration.”104 His reinterpretation of Vaisnavism was an attempt to naturalize those values of the West which he admired by demonstrating that the values were actually part of Vaisnava tradition. As such, his neo-Vaisnavism, together with Vivekananda’s neo-Vedanta, was part of the “cultural movement” stimulated by the increased emulation-solidarity conflict resulting from the switch to a political rank path.

Because Bankim Chandra regarded religion as the basis of moral regeneration, he viewed it as a system of ethics, not merely a belief in gods:

I am not one of those who think that a belief in God, or in a number of gods, or in a future existence, or anything else which does not admit of proof, constitutes religion. But when such belief, or any belief whatever,
furnishes a basis for conduct of the individual towards himself as well as towards others . . . it is religion. . . . Religion viewed thus is in theory a philosophy of life; in practice it is a rule of life.¹⁰⁵

In order for India to solve the problems of her backwardness, Bankim Chandra advocated a two-pronged program: the creation of a righteous kingdom with moral and ethical regeneration, and the fostering of a national spirit by developing self-confidence and strength. Since religion was the key to both these programs, he reinterpreted Vaisnavism in order to naturalize the ethics and national feeling necessary for creating his righteous kingdom. Bankim Chandra demonstrated that there did exist a righteous kingdom in Hindu tradition. He portrayed the Aryan culture of Vedic times as one of enlightenment and morality. Yet this righteous kingdom had degenerated because the masses of Hindus were too lazy to resist the corruption introduced by the Brahmans through fear and superstition.

The proper ethics of moral regeneration were to be found in the Krisna portrayed in the Mahabharata. Krisna displayed the social and ethical activism, the devotion to humanity, and the moral strength to resist evil. In Krsnacharitra ("Biography of Krisna") Bankim presented the goal of moral regeneration as the kingdom of righteousness and claimed that it would be attained if Hindus upheld their dharma. Dharma, however, was not the multiplicity of particularist ethics of Puranic Hinduism but a universalist ethic of devotion exemplified by Krisna in the Mahabharata. All Hindus should emulate Krisna's code of ethic—karmayoga, the path of works as service to man rather than the performance of rituals.¹⁰⁶ Bankim portrayed Krisna in Krsnacharitra and in Anandamath as the ideal man. Together with his ascetics, Krisna devoted himself to the creation of a nation in which "the truth of the eternal religion will triumph. Bankim Chandra pictured the creation of the Indian nation as a triumph of religious truth."¹⁰⁷ Thus the moral regeneration of Indians would foster a national feeling among Hindus because of their pride in their kingdom of righteousness.

Bankim also portrayed Krisna as powerful warrior, a good tactician and administrator, just, good, forgiving, brave.¹⁰⁸ In order to carry out his dharma of creating a righteous kingdom and working for the good of humanity, Bankim believed that a man should cultivate all his faculties. He was against the ascetics' physical withdrawal from the world and their consequent physical degeneration. Physical and mental strength were necessary for spiritual regeneration.¹⁰⁹ For Bankim a major message of the Mahabharata was that a man should be physically and mentally prepared to resist evil with violence, if necessary, in order to creat the kingdom of righteousness.¹¹⁰ As mentioned, Bankim felt that India had
degenerated because the people were too lazy to resist the corruption of the Brahmans. Thus he advocated physical training along with spiritual uplift as the way to prepare Hindus for their dharma of creating a righteous kingdom.

Another important factor in Bankim Chandra’s reinterpretation of Vaisnavism using Krisna was asceticism. In the novel Anandamath, he portrayed a band of sannyasin who fought “to create a golden age of material and moral progress when the eternal religion would flourish.”\textsuperscript{111} As mentioned above, Bankim was against a sannyasa’s withdrawal from the world. Instead he advocated a this-worldly asceticism by which man would attempt to perfect not only himself but also his society. In KrSna-charitra, “Krisna is ideal because he worked for the good of his people and for the creation of the good society.”\textsuperscript{112} Bankim believed that a sannyasa should sever his family ties so that he could be wholly dedicated to his dharma of working for the good of his motherland. In sum, Bankim advocated a this-worldly asceticism in which man should become a sannyasa by severing his family ties, by developing his physical, mental, and spiritual strength and courage, by devoting himself to work in this world for the good of his fellow man, by spreading the eternal religion, by resisting evil with force if necessary in the pursuit of righteousness, and by building the confidence and national feeling of the people of India. In both KrSna-charitra and Anandamath, Krisna and his sannyasin were portrayed as possessing all these virtues, and they sought the moral regeneration of their people in creating a kingdom of righteousness.

Bankim Chandra did not exclusively use Vaisnava symbolism in his reinterpretation of Hinduism. In fact, the major symbol for his nation when the eternal religion reigned was Sakta. The goddess Kali was used as the symbol of the Hindu nation. Kali represented both the degradation of Hindu society and the source of strength and power to whom sannyasin should dedicate their works.\textsuperscript{113} For Bankim, Kali was the symbol of the nation which would stimulate a national feeling among Hindus. She would stimulate the moral and physical courage to resist evil; she would stimulate an active dedication to the creation of a righteous nation.\textsuperscript{114} The new nation, symbolized by Durga, would be based on the ethic of love of humanity. Bankim believed that the moral regeneration of India depended on love of others. Love of God was the highest stage of human love, but because civilization was imperfect, love for one’s countrymen would suffice until a higher ethical stage was reached by man. The three stages leading to the development of love of God were love of self, love of family, and love of nation.\textsuperscript{115} Bankim translated these stages of love into an ethic of works:
Saving one's own people [family] is a much greater duty than saving oneself, and saving one's own country is much greater than saving one's own people. When bhakti toward God and love for all people are the same thing, it can be said that, apart from bhakti towards God, love of country is the greatest duty of all.¹¹⁶

Thus Bankim Chandra used the symbol of Kali and an ethic of love to stimulate a national feeling among the Hindus.

In his reinterpretation of Vaisnavism and Sakta symbolism, Bankim Chandra naturalized, through indigenous claims, several of the Western values he admired. Two of these values were bravery and dedication to duty, and it is clear that he emphasized these in his interpretation of the dharma of Krishna and the sannyasin. Choudhury's description of the Western ideas which influenced Bankim's reinterpretation of Vaisnavism indicates the extent of his borrowing from the West:

Like the Sadharan Brahmos, Bankim Chandra had also been greatly influenced by his readings in western philosophy. He was a great admirer of Auguste Comte and his concept of a religion of humanity. Bankim's emphasis on humanitarianism and his doctrine of cultivation of all human faculties seem to have reflected the influence of John Stuart Mill. But Bankim Chandra insisted that these basic ideas and ideals existed in Hindu thought in a better form. The Comtean religion of humanity is imperfect because it did not include a belief in God. In the life of Krishna Bankim Chandra found a similar religion of culture which included belief in God and was based on the incarnation of God. He also found in the life of Krishna the principle that the criterion of true religion is what is good for humanity, which he says is similar to the utilitarian philosophy of Bentham and Mill. According to Bankim Chandra the spiritual principles necessary for a moral regeneration can be found in Hinduism and did not need to be imported from outside. The true principles of Hinduism must be rediscovered and reapplied for religious reformation and regeneration. Bankim Chandra stated that religious reform must evolve from within Hindu religious tradition. Western religious and philosophical thought could only act as a stimulus to reexamination of the real meaning of the Hindu tradition.¹¹⁷

A further indication of Bankim's borrowing and incorporation is evident when he said:

Religion in its fullness cannot be found in the qualityless god of the Vedanta, because he who is without qualities cannot be an example to us.... The basis of religion is a god with qualities such as is mentioned in our Puranas and in the Christian Bible, because He and only He can be our model. The worship of an impersonal God is sterile; only the worship of a personal God has meaning to man.¹¹⁸
Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was part of the cultural movement of the last quarter of the nineteenth century—a movement that was stimulated by the increasing emulation-solidarity conflict resulting from the switch from an economic to a political rank path. Through his literary creativity he sought to resolve his own emulation-solidarity conflict by advocating the solidarity of his people. His literary creativity is demonstrative of Orans' RCS theory in that he attempted to naturalize British ideas and values into Hindu tradition, principally through the technique of indigenous claims. Furthermore, he chose the god of the Puranas as the god of his new Hinduism. This is significant in that the Puranas were singled out for criticism by the British missionaries earlier in the century and therefore carried low status value. Emphasizing low status attributes is, according to Orans, ideally suited to stimulating external solidarity because these attributes are the most distinctive.\textsuperscript{119}

Space does not permit a similar analysis of the neo-Vedanta of Vivekananda. But if my understanding of his theology is correct, he too naturalized several ideas and values from the West. The disciples of Bijoy Krisna Goswami, many of whom converted from Brahmoism, also displayed the emulation-solidarity conflict in their attempts at synthesizing Western values and indigenous tradition. The fact that several of his disciples converted from Brahmoism is significant in that, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, the members of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj found themselves more and more alienated from the rest of the Calcutta Bengali elite. Although these Brahmos advocated social reforms similar to those of the neo-Vaisnavas, neo-Vedantists, and the Adi Brahmo Samaj, they did not attempt to naturalize the programs as thoroughly as did the other groups. It appears that the Sadharan Brahmos were not so concerned about solidarity because they felt that their group was the core of Bengalis who would interact with the British for the betterment of Hindu society. I think that they underestimated the solidarity requirements of a political rank path. It was not until the partition of Bengal in 1905 that the Brahmos saw the futility of agitating a small group to gain British concessions in political, economic, and social matters. Their activity failed because they were alienated from the rest of the elite and therefore lacked the wide support necessary in the political rank path. They did not try to counter their alienation by thorough attempts at naturalizing the Western ideals and values they emulated. The post-1905 political activity was based upon the more indigenous reinterpretations of Hinduism of Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda. For it was these philosophies which combined the social activism, universalist ethics, free thinking, and social reform ideas borrowed from the West with the solidarity attributes of Hinduism.
By considering the entire nineteenth century, this analysis of the Bengal elite in Calcutta has been more suggestive than comprehensive. In terms of Orans' RCS theory, the behavior and attitudes of the Calcutta Bengali elite can be seen as a long process of conflicting motivations and ideas culminating in the sweeping reinterpretations of Hinduism which synthesized the cultures of Britain and India in the last quarter of that century. It was these neo-Hindu theologies which were philosophical foundations of the more radical, and sometimes violent, political events of the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The phenomenon of the Bengali elite borrowing ideas, values, and customs from the British while continuing to proclaim themselves Hindus was more than a need for synthesizing two cultural traditions. It was also a result of two conflicting motivations: first, the motivation to imitate the British after having conceded rank to them; and second, the motivation to maintain group solidarity in the face of the increasing alienation, due to borrowing, of the rich and powerful Bengali elite of Calcutta. These motivations and the behavioral consequences were closely related to changing British attitudes and colonial policies in India. Decreasing economic opportunities after 1850 forced the elite to seek political means of maintaining their position in British economic and political institutions and of securing a significant voice in the modernization of their region and country. The switch to a political rank path increased the severity of the emulation-solidarity conflict, motivating a cultural movement in which Bengalis sought to demonstrate that the values they borrowed from the West were actually indigenous to Hindu civilization.

The process of synthesis that evolved in Calcutta during the nineteenth century had a unique character due to the time, place, and participants. On the other hand, this analysis has identified characteristics of the synthesis which enable us to view it in the wider context of culture contact where one society is dominant. In this the history of nineteenth-century Bengal may tell us something about the colonial situation in general, given that the subordinate society concedes rank. Such optimism is enhanced by the similarities of the process of synthesis between nineteenth-century Bengal and the societies studied by Orans.

The case of the Bengali elite of Calcutta in the nineteenth century suggests at least one new aspect of Oran's RCS theory. In the cases that Orans considered, the switch from an economic to a political rank path occurred when political democracy offered a significant alternative for mobility. As we have seen, when the Bengali elite switched to the political
rank path, it was not because political democracy had become a real opportunity but because the economic path was closed off to them. Thus the British compelled the Bengalis to use the political path before it was viable.

To be sure, this analysis has not made nineteenth-century Bengal fully comprehensible. However, by adopting the approach I have taken, scholars may gain significant insights into culture change in general and nineteenth-century Bengal in particular by analyzing the events, organizations, and personages of shorter periods within that century.

NOTES

1. Rachel Van M. Baumer, p. 85 of this volume.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. pp. 85, 86.
5. Kopf uses the "identity quest" theme of analysis in his description of Bengal from 1835 to 1900 in his essay in the present volume.
8. Orans uses the term encysted to denote what I have termed the subordinate society. Though he never explicitly defines encysted, it appears to mean a group that is either a structural segment of the dominant-superior society or is geographically surrounded by the dominant-superior society. Since I feel that it is the subordinate position of the inferior society that is crucial, I will refer to it as such and not use the term encysted. The summary of Orans' RCS theory which follows is taken from his works cited in notes 6 and 7 above.
11. Ibid., p. 4.
12. Ibid., p. 129.
13. Ibid., p. 93.
14. For a more detailed discussion of the question of the rural/urban dichotomy in Bengal, see Ralph W. Nicholas, "Rural and Urban Cultures in Bengal" (unpublished paper presented to a seminar on Bengal, University of Hawaii, 1972).
16. For a more thorough description of the economic relations between the British and the Bengalis during the first half of the nineteenth century, see Blair Kling's essay in this volume.
20. Ibid., p. 130.
21. Ibid., p. 133.
22. Ibid., p. 138.
23. Ibid., p. 246.
24. For lists of the members of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, their backgrounds, and education, see Choudhury, op. cit., pp. 117–211.
27. Ibid., p. 180.
28. Ibid., p. 181.
30. Ibid., p. 61.
31. Ibid., p. 10.
32. Ibid., p. 11.
33. Ibid., p. 12.
34. Cited by Bose, op. cit., p. 16.
35. Cited by Bose, op. cit., p. 25.
36. Ibid., p. 20.
38. Cited by Bose, op. cit., p. 64.
40. Ibid., p. 175.
41. Ibid., p. 39.
46. Ibid., p. 142.
51. Ibid., p. 243.
52. Cited by Bose, op. cit., p. 66.
53. Cited by Bose, op. cit., p. 75.
57. Ibid., p. 40.
60. Bose, op. cit., p. 42.
68. Ibid., p. 271.
69. Ibid., p. 272.
70. Ibid.
71. Bose, op. cit., p. 84.
72. Ibid., p. 86.
74. Kopf, p. 47 in this volume.
75. Bose, op. cit., p. 95.
76. Cited by Kopf on p. 61 of this volume.
77. Ibid., p. 52.
78. Ibid.
79. Bose, op. cit., p. 150.
80. Kopf, p. 53 of this volume.
81. Ibid., p. 57.
82. Cited by Kopf on p. 59 of this volume.
83. Ibid., p. 63.
85. Kopf, p. 64 of this volume.
87. Kling, pp. 37, 38 of this volume.
88. Choudhury, op. cit., p. 28.
89. Ibid., p. 28.
90. Ibid., p. 29.
91. Ibid., p. 41.
92. Ibid., pp. 41-42.
96. John R. McLane, pp. 153, 154 in this volume.
98. Orans, “Caste and Race Conflict.”
104. Ibid., pp. 180–181.
106. Ibid., pp. 188–189.
107. Ibid., p. 195.
108. Ibid., p. 188.
109. Ibid., p. 188.
110. Ibid., p. 191.
111. Ibid., p. 187.
112. Ibid., p. 188.
113. Ibid., p. 193.
114. Ibid., p. 193.
115. Ibid., pp. 197–198.
The recent revolution in Bangladesh must have revealed to nonspecialists what has always been evident to the specialist in Bengal studies: that our knowledge of the twentieth-century political history of this major world region is woefully inadequate. No detailed narrative of the Indian nationalist movement in the old undivided British province is available, and the development of Muslim politics has been even more thoroughly neglected. One turns hopefully from English to Bengali language sources, but there, apart from some interesting memoirs and less reliable biographies, the situation is no better.

It is this state of neglect which has encouraged me to consider the following questions: What political institutions existed in undivided Bengal? How did those institutions change through the forty years up to independence? And what do the changes tell us about the shifting social bases of politics?

One great merit of institutional analysis is that it permits us to say something reasonably exact about the extent of political participation and the nature of leadership. The analysis of membership and executive committee lists, if combined with painstaking biographical compilations, is certainly less slippery ground for generalization than the claims of politicians about their following and influence, all too frequently relied upon by historians. Similarly, an examination of the stated purposes of institutions and their practical achievements is a salutary test of political rhetoric.

**Chronology**

To provide a chronological framework for the discussion, and also to
provoke thought about the major political movements of the half century, I shall first divide Bengali politics into chronological phases. I assume there would be general agreement in reckoning 1971 and 1947 as milestones in the region's history. Most historians would also add 1905 but, as the title of this essay indicates, I reject that date in favor of 1906. Opposition to the partition of Bengal had begun as soon as the proposal was announced in 1903, but the agitation followed the pattern of "polite" protest characteristic of the late nineteenth-century Congress. It was 1906 that brought radical departures: the mobilization of the Congress volunteer brigades; a militant campaign of economic boycott and Swadeshi; and the first spectacular strikes by the terrorist samiti. The year also saw serious communal rioting and the formation of the All-India Muslim League at Dacca. Here were many of the elements that characterize twentieth-century Bengali politics.

I select 1918 as the beginning of the next period, again passing by (this time with less assurance) a commonly accepted milestone—provincial reunification in 1912. The moderates lost control of the Bengal Congress in 1918, and with the rising star, C. R. Das, in the vanguard, the new leadership began the construction of a genuine party machine to give Congress the capability of engaging in mass politics. This strategy involved the extension of recruitment and organization to the district towns, in itself a major reorientation. The revitalized party attracted even the terrorists, and for a time there was a lull in revolutionary violence. Muslim politicians also were rudely confronted with the problems of mass political participation in 1918 when the frustrations of their coreligionists in Calcutta resulted in fierce rioting. This outburst precipitated the formation of new communal organizations, most notably the Khilafat committees, and influenced their organizational efforts among industrial labor.

Eight years later Calcutta suffered even more serious communal rioting, which marked another turning point in the province's political history. Congress had splintered after Das' tragically early death in 1925, and the Hindu-Muslim Pact which he had laboriously negotiated was repudiated by his successors. The slide toward Hindu communalism, accompanied by a reactivation of the terrorist samiti, was matched on the Muslim side with an open advocacy of separatism. A vigorous attempt was made to organize the Muslim voters behind communalist candidates in an effort to gain control of all elective institutions. This effort was sustained into the 1930s, and was largely successful.

The appointment of A. K. Fazlul Huq, Krishak Praja party leader, as chief minister of Bengal in 1937 opened the next phase. Four million additional peasants had been enfranchised in 1935, and many and varied were the politicians who stood forth claiming to speak in the name of the
tenantry. Among them were the new converts to Marxism, recently graduated from British prisons. Huq held the premiership for six years, and his succession of ministries produced an impressive body of rural economic and social reform legislation.

Huq fell in 1943, M. A. Jinnah claiming that his defeat was a triumph for the ideals of the Muslim League, by then committed to the achievement of Pakistan. From 1943 to 1947, the final phase, the league held office in Bengal, and the prospect of the incorporation of all or part of the province within Pakistan was the overriding political issue.

THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY LEGACY

For each of these five periods, let us examine the institutional framework of politics. In doing so we shall be well advised to place the broadest possible construction on the term political institution. Many institutions which are nominally economic, social, or religious are used for political ends, and we shall limit our understanding of the political process if we do not take them into account. Here, however, I exclude the political role of government administrative institutions and, at the opposite pole, the political role of the family. Almost all that lies between may be termed voluntary association.

At the opening of the twentieth century Bengal already had an extensive network of political institutions—to the annoyance of the British imperial administrators who regarded this situation as an unhealthy characteristic of the province. The British themselves had been responsible for introducing some of the institutions, but to their displeasure they had been progressively taken over by Bengalis to serve indigenous purposes. The Bengal Legislative Council, almost forty years old by the turn of the century, remained a small consultative body under tight British control. This was less true of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation and the district and local boards of the other municipalities. Election or appointment to these bodies was prestigious, and they had sufficient local power to make membership attractive to landholders and lawyers, the two occupational groups then most active in Bengali politics.

For this reason, the landholders and bar associations to be found in most district towns and in the capital had a lively political involvement. Coordination of their activities, though only intermittently attempted, was supplied from Calcutta in the former case by the aristocratic and influential British Indian Association and in the latter by the High Court Bar Library Club.

In Calcutta there were also chambers of commerce to represent the interests of bankers and merchants, plantation, colliery, mill, and factory owners. These chambers were organized on communal lines, with separate
British, Marwari, Muslim, and Bengali Hindu organizations. In the mofussil, however, almost all prominent bankers and merchants (Marwari, Muslim, and Bengali Hindu) also held land; so we find the landholders associations representing their interests locally.

Lawyers and landholders were prominent on the executive committees of the district and people’s associations, but here were also to be found college professors, schoolteachers, journalists, and government officials. A few of these organizations were active in the district headquarters towns, but most were based in Calcutta, where the prominent professional and commercial men had gone to further their careers and where the most effective lobbying for district interests could be done. Functioning as their central organization, in a manner parallel to that of the British Indian Association and the Bar Library Club, was the Indian Association of Bow Bazar.

What we do not find at the beginning of this century is a Congress organization. Many members of the associations described called themselves congressmen; most members of the Indian Association were so identified. But the institutional activities of Congress were limited to the annual national convention and the annual provincial conference, organized jointly by the Indian Association executive and the district association of the host district. The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, though in existence on paper, was in effect a subcommittee of the Indian Association.

One of the most prevalent distortions in historical writing on modern India is the equation of nationalism with politics, and it bears repeating that in the early twentieth century there was much politics to which nationalism was irrelevant or only marginally important. One obvious area of this kind in Bengal was educational politics. At every level, from the senate of Calcutta University to the school boards of subdivisional towns, the most prominent local men were engaged in voluntary educational administration, which had assumed extraordinary importance for Bengalis as one of the few avenues of constructive public endeavor open to them in their circumscribed colonial society.

This was one field in which the Muslims were very active. Apart from the affairs of their own madrassah and maktab, they were taking an increasing interest by 1900 in general educational politics, with associations at the provincial and national levels (the Central National Mahommedan Association being the most renowned) lobbying for remedial help for the community on the ground of educational backwardness. The District Islamia Anjumans, parallel bodies to the Hindu-run district and people’s Associations, also gave educational affairs priority.

To complete this picture we should take note of the college students’
associations, themselves arenas for lively political contests and a fertile recruiting ground for nationalists. Less directly involved with politics, but important as centers for educated gathering and discussion, were the private libraries, reading rooms, and cultural societies (Sahitya Parishad, Saraswat Sabha, and Sanskriti Samaj) found in many towns. As one may guess from their Bengali titles, these were primarily Hindu societies, concerned with the Hindu cultural heritage of particular localities. It is indicative of how much less lively was the cultural life of Bengal’s Muslims that they had few such societies outside Calcutta, and many of those were patronized by the Urdu, rather than the Bengali-speaking, community.

At this point a word of caution is necessary: institutional development had not proceeded evenly throughout the province. Calcutta, of course, was in a category by itself, but between the districts there was also a marked variation in the level of institutionalization. In Midnapore and Hooghly, for instance, we find greater activity than in neighboring Bankura, Burdwan, and Birbhum. Dacca and Chittagong had many more political institutions than did the districts which lay between. We can guess at some of the reasons for these disparities, but the very fact that we are still speculating about such fundamental features of Bengal’s political system is a mark of how limited is our knowledge.

**Phase One: 1906–1918**

Lord Curzon’s partition gave an extraordinary boost to politics in Bengal, one indicator being an immediate jump in newspaper circulation. In the latter half of the nineteenth century Calcutta had been justly famous for its lively journalism, but we must be careful in retrospect not to exaggerate the size of the profession or its influence. It was only from 1906 onward that readership expanded sufficiently to support a sizeable number of professional journalists, and the newspaper and periodical offices became the focal points of important political groupings. Dacca, capital of the short-lived Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, was now able to sustain a daily paper; other mofussil towns intermittently produced weeklies. These were most often a sideline of small commercial presses, and their publishers could afford to dabble in nationalist politics only when they had financial backing from local congressmen to compensate for the inevitable loss of their staple government advertising. This was one of the small, but effective, ways in which the British discriminated against the Hindu nationalists. Expressions of support for Muslim political positions did not bring similar punitive action.

The British had good reason to be disturbed by institutional developments in Bengal in 1906 and the years immediately following. Inspired by Garibaldi’s Red Shirts, the younger, militant congressmen organized
volunteer brigades to lead the boycott of stores selling imported cloth and to hawk Swadeshi goods produced by the experimental economic self-help societies founded since the turn of the century. This ideal of economic self-reliance was paralleled by the ideal of national education, which inspired the establishment of schools and colleges independent of the British-dominated Calcutta University and state systems. The curricula of the new institutions combined an emphasis on the glorious cultural heritage of Hindustan with a stress on technical and physical education. As in the establishment of sports clubs and gymnasiums at this time, no great effort was made to conceal the intended connection between physical training and the preparation for a disciplined struggle against the imperialists.

More clandestine were the revolutionary samiti, which attracted recruits from the college generation with a heady doctrine of political self-sacrifice as service to Ma Kali, the avenger. Elaborate rites of initiation bound the members with vows of loyalty, secrecy, and celibacy, and, for the most trusted, there was training with revolvers and bombs in preparation for attacks upon British officials. Calcutta and the peri-urban areas to the north along the Hooghly, Dacca and Barisal, were the initial centers of organization. But as the British reinforced their Committee for Imperial Defence and hit back with arbitrary arrest and deportation, the terrorists were forced to scatter across the province, spreading the legend of revolutionary violence which has become so important a part of Bengal’s political tradition.

Less spectacular but also working to establish the link between religious tradition and nationalism were the jatra (folk theater) and loksangit (folk song) parties, which now went out from the urban centers to spread the message of resistance and national regeneration to a wider audience. Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore supplied songs and dramas for their repertoire.

The period also saw new religious institutions spreading into the mofussil from Calcutta. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, the metropolis, and one or two of the larger towns, had witnessed a lively conflict between reform groups like the Brahmo Samaj and their traditionalist opponents, but in rural Bengal religious organization had retained its traditional familial form. Vivekananda’s Ramakrishna Mission, whose math, ashrams, schools, hostels, libraries, and dispensaries were soon to be found all over Bengal and beyond, supplied a new model—and, incidentally, a new arena for politics.

The social service ideal which inspired the mission’s work also inspired a host of smaller societies, many of them secular. To meet the recurrent disasters of famine, flood, cyclone, and epidemic to which Bengal is tragically prone, these organizations raised funds, assembled relief supplies,
and ministered to the needs of the suffering. Many a political reputation was made through hard work and effective organization during emergency relief operations.

The initiatives in nationalist politics produced a flurry of counteraction among the Bengali Muslims, and this activity was sustained by the succession of crises which beset the community through the subsequent decade. The foundation of the All-India and Bengal Presidency Muslim Leagues following the December 1906 conference in Dacca was an event of major importance, but surprisingly this was the only significant Muslim institutional innovation in this period.

**Phase Two: 1918–1926**

Engaged in the winter of 1917–1918 in a struggle to wrest control of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (BPCC) from the Indian Association, C. R. Das and his fellow extremists organized an All-Bengal Political Conference in Calcutta to which they brought more than a hundred rural delegates. Acting with their approval, they seized control of the BPCC and immediately reconstituted it to provide direct representation for district associations.

This was the beginning of the construction of a Congress machine in Bengal, the organizational effort reaching its high point during the non-cooperation movement in 1921. By that time the BPCC had its own office in Calcutta, from which Das' staff of full-time workers directed the affairs of the four divisions into which the metropolitan area had been divided and kept in regular communication with the Congress committees now active in each district. A Congress News Service dispensed party propaganda and the Congress volunteers, more numerous and more formally organized than in the partition period, were at work throughout the province collecting for the Swaraj Fund, the party purse.

Women made their first appearance in any numbers in political agitation, and the new mahila samiti began educational and social welfare work in the towns. The national schools and colleges, most of which had expired in the years since the partition agitation, were revived to encourage a boycott of government educational institutions, and in some places Congress arbitration boards were offered to mediate disputes withdrawn from the law courts. Although this effort at parallel government could not be sustained for more than a few months, it did set a pattern which was repeated with increasing success in each of the other civil disobedience campaigns up to—and beyond—independence.

To carry Congress' influence outside the towns, the Gandhians built up rural ashrams where the lessons of village reconstruction and cottage industry were patiently taught through the example of personal labor. In
all these activities Muslims as well as Hindus were involved, for this period from 1918 to 1925 was the high point in Muslim involvement in Indian nationalist politics in Bengal.

In addition the Muslim politicians had their Khilafat committees, the product of the discontent—international and local—accompanying the end of World War I. These committees, with a central headquarters in Calcutta and branches in every district town, paralleled the Congress organization, with which they were encouraged (unsuccessfully) to merge. The Khilafatists also showed vigor in taking over the District Islamia Anjumans, and with the support of many mullahs they had a reliable communications network among their coreligionists.

It was they who took the initiative, quickly followed by the Congress, in trade union organization. Agitation among transport workers, miners, mill laborers, and, later, tea garden coolies produced a rash of strikes in the immediate postwar years, but the organization was weak, with scarcely any strike funds available to it, and the workers involved suffered severely. It took another twenty years of organization before the trade union movement in Bengal became a powerful force.

These efforts were obviously directed toward agitational recruitment. There were other organizational initiatives inspired by the enfranchisement in 1921 of almost a million new voters among the urban lower middle class and the prosperous cultivators. We find prominent and aspiring politicians busy with the formation of associations of teachers, mukhtar, nongazetted government officers, and joatdar. The electoral stakes were now worth playing for. The provincial Legislative Council had been given control over some government departments; power in the Calcutta Municipal Corporation was transferred by mid-decade from official nominees to the elected members; and an expanded system of local boards was taking over functions of the district and subdivisional officers. Even at the height of their success in 1921, the noncooperators were uncomfortably aware of the risks involved in leaving these institutions to their opponents, and in 1923 they returned to the hustings.

Another major institutional development of the years between 1915 and 1925 must be noted: the caste associations. Some caste sabha in Bengal dated from much earlier, but it was in this period that many more of the middle and lower castes were organizing. The new associations appear to have had little connection with the traditional caste panchayat, a few of which still survived in Bengal to settle marriage and other intracaste disputes. The normal pattern of the new associations was for a handful of educated and professionally employed members residing in a district town or, more frequently, Calcutta to form a committee. Through printed circulars and at meetings called in the district town most conveniently
located for the majority of the caste members, they explained the objectives of the proposed association.

Typically these aims included the improvement of the caste’s ritual practices to conform with the higher status (Kshatriya, Vaisya, or clean Sudra, whichever it might be) to which the caste was “unquestionably” entitled. Stress was laid upon ensuring that this “correct” status, and a caste name appropriate to it, be recorded at the decennial census. In some cases the abolition of endogamous subgroups within the caste was urged; in others, particularly where there was marked occupational differentiation between the divisions, a complete split was advocated. In view of the new powers vested in local boards and the legislature, attention was drawn to the opportunities open to the caste if its members gave solid support to those of their fellows who were candidates for elective office. Caste members were urged to subscribe to the association to support the educational campaign needed to effect these reforms and to enable the association to aid indigent caste members. When the appeals were successful, the associations usually began the publication of caste journals, but few were sustained for any length of time.

**Phase Three: 1926–1937**

Criticism of the privileges and power of high-caste men in the literature of some of the caste associations was one of a number of disturbing developments which led to the formation of the Bengal Hindu Sabha in 1923. The prime movers were Brahmins, and their stated purpose was to resist the growing disunity among Hindus, which, they asserted, endangered Hindu social order and political power. From 1926 onward the Bengal Hindu Sabha had many battles to fight.

Congress’ repudiation of C. R. Das’ Hindu-Muslim Pact, and the subsequent brutal communal rioting in mid-1926, convinced many Bengali Muslims that they should follow those leaders who were urging an end to all alliances with the Hindu nationalists. With the approval of the provincial government, and with the assistance of British officials in some districts, there was a successful consolidation of the local Muslim associations to ensure more efficient electoral management. This consolidation resulted in the return of many separatist candidates to the Bengal Legislative Council in the December 1926 elections; it also created a large increase in Muslim representation on the local boards when those elections were held in the following year. In the early 1930s more and more seats were captured, and inroads were made on the Hindu-controlled college and school boards.

In rural areas there was now evidence of growing collaboration between the Muslim and low-caste Hindu peasantry, to the detriment of the in-
terests of the higher landed classes. The Krishak Samitis, which had struggled ineffectually to organize the peasantry since their foundation after World War I, now began to attract a much wider following as the world depression throttled Bengal's economy. They were given central leadership and spokesmen in the legislature when Fazlul Huq formed the Krishak Praja party in July 1929. At the same time Depressed Classes (Scheduled Caste, as they later came to be called) Associations were formed to unite low-caste sabha in a lobby against the high-caste Hindus in the constitutional debates which opened with the appointment of the Simon Commission. Pursuing the same objective of political visibility, the tribals—a large but generally disregarded minority in Bengal—were also attempting to build intratribal links between their traditional village councils. They had only limited success, the Santals being perhaps the most enterprising.

These were violent years, with extremist organizations of many kinds active in Bengal. The fascist and communist parties of contemporary Europe provided models for some of the younger Bengali agitators. The home-grown terrorist samiti had extended their networks throughout much of rural as well as urban Bengal, and their coercive tactics were now used against their Muslim and Hindu political opponents as well as against the British. During the civil disobedience campaigns between 1930 and 1934, they gained sufficient strength and weapons to engage the British police and military in guerrilla warfare. In Midnapore district their repeated assassinations of British officials temporarily broke British control, and the Congress was able to run a parallel government for a time.

Aggressive Muslim revivalist groups, like the Ahmadiyyas from north India, did battle (and the word is not used metaphorically) with equally aggressive Hindu organizations like the Arya Samaj, also an import from the Panjab. Societies to oppose cow slaughter and music before mosques fervently sought evidence of offenses by their communal opponents. To complete a dismal picture there were Calcutta's goonda dol, which enterprising politicians of both religions (H. S. Suhrawardy and Sarat Bose among them) found useful as hired auxiliaries in interparty fighting.

The period also gave thousands of Bengali nationalists institutional experience of another kind: incarceration in British jails or detention camps. No humor is intended in describing these as political institutions. By crowding together prisoners of widely differing ages, experience, ideological persuasion, and region of origin, the British inadvertently created an environment in which parties, platforms, manifestos, and conspiracies flourished. The nationalists emerged from these political "staff colleges" with a great deal besides their accolade of Prison Graduate.
PHASES FOUR AND FIVE: 1937–1947

The decade from 1937 to 1947 was so full of political excitement and tragedy for Bengal that although it seems lame to describe its institutional history as simply more of the same, such a characterization is not far wide of the mark. There were some new developments. The cooperative movement, which had limped along since early in the century, was given new vigor in the late 1930s by the zeal of the Krishak Samitis and the commitment of a provincial government armed with an electoral mandate to reduce rural indebtedness and provide new sources of agricultural credit. This was the first administration to take office under the 1935 Government of India Act, which established responsible government in the provinces. Its legislative backing included the Krishak Praja and Scheduled Caste parties, the latter an important new element in Bengali politics.

Radical legislation could also count upon the support of the host of Marxist cells, which had hatched in the peculiarly favorable conditions of the British prison camps. Many of the younger terrorists had been converted to communism during their internment, and their release in the late 1930s added to the complexity of Bengali politics. Muslim politics in Bengal had always been notorious for its factionalism, and after Das’ death the provincial Congress had seemed determined to follow suit. With the expulsion of the dominant Bose group at Gandhi’s instigation in 1939, and with the formation of the Forward Bloc, all chance of a unified nationalist movement in Bengal was destroyed. Throughout the political infrastructure—municipalities, student associations, trade unions, District Congress Committees, Krishak Samitis—rival parties now struggled for control. Adding to the clamor in Calcutta, and reflecting a growing mood of regional exclusivism throughout India, were new representative associations formed by non-Bengalis. These groups had the dual function of providing social welfare for their fellows and lobbying for the protection of their corporate interests, particularly their employment.

In the last phase—the years immediately before independence—we see some strikingly divergent developments. One was the neighborhood puja committees, which progressively were transmuting the great Hindu festivals, most notably Durga and Saraswati Puja, from family to community functions. Given their detailed knowledge of their localities built up through a number of years of fund raising, and the rivalries which were generated with the sponsors of adjacent pandal, these committees became useful adjuncts to the formal political parties.

Many of the Marxists, meanwhile, had set to work among Bengal’s proletariat—the industrial and plantation laborers, and the landless trib-
als—and among the peasantry to foment social revolution, for they saw the opportunities offered by the disruptions which would inevitably accompany the departure of the British. In some places in support of their campaign for agricultural rent and tax resistance, they revived the lok-sangit and jatra techniques employed many years before during the first partition.

At the international level, Subhas Bose’s daring escape and alliance with the Axis powers to form the Indian National Army set the seal on the romance of violence in Bengal. Less romantic and more immediately violent were the vigilante groups and militia, organized by communal extremists of both the major religions. These private armies skirmished throughout the early 1940s and finally closed in pitched battle in 1946. The bloodshed ensured the partition of Bengal.

THE SOCIAL BASES OF POLITICS

If our understanding of the institutional history of twentieth-century Bengal is imperfect, how much worse is the state of our knowledge on the social bases of politics. No more than a beginning has been made with the detailed research necessary to trace the shifting regional, status, class, and age composition of the political leadership or its following.

The institutional changes which have been sketched here provide clues to those shifts, but they are no more than clues. Besides, we must be cautious of reading too much into them. Observing the preeminence of the landholder associations at the beginning of the century, and their precipitate decline in importance from the mid-1920s, we may rightly conclude that the old zamindari class was losing power. We shall be misled, however, if we also conclude from this example that all institutional decline reveals a shift in power to a new social stratum. For instance, after 1918 the Indian Association sank into insignificance, but the leadership of the Bengal Congress, which superseded it, came from the same bhadralok status group that had dominated nationalist politics in Bengal since the late nineteenth century.

Elsewhere I have described the bhadralok: “a socially privileged and consciously superior group, economically dependent upon landed rents and professional and clerical employment; keeping its distance from the masses by its acceptance of high-caste proscriptions and its command of education; sharing a pride in its language, its literate culture, and its history; and maintaining its communal integration through a fairly complex institutional structure that it had proved remarkably ready to adapt and augment to extend its social power and political opportunities.”

It has been a frequent cause for comment that the bhadralok have con-
tinued to dominate political institutions, providing leadership even after independence in West Bengal and even in parties as radical as the Communist Party Marxist and the Naxalites. This appearance of continuity is perhaps illusory. The bhadralok category is probably too inexact for detailed analysis, concealing rather than revealing subtle changes in the social bases of power over the half century.

It is of no help, for instance, in measuring the effects of the generational conflicts which periodically beset Bengali nationalist politics—for example, during the first partition agitation and again in the late 1920s when dissatisfaction with the infighting and ideological bankruptcy of the Congress bosses led the younger intellectuals to form the Socialist party. Similarly, we must not overlook class tensions within bhadrloks society which appear on some crucial occasions, for example during the noncooperation debate of 1920, to have forced major changes in political tactics.

This institutional analysis has revealed a reorientation from 1918 of nationalist organization toward the district towns, and we find a parallel in the late 1920s in Muslim reorganization. What this reflects is the growth of new wealth in the Bengal countryside. To explain this growth we must look at Bengal’s topography, which has always hindered easy communication, and at its shifting river courses, treacherous climate, and debilitating endemic diseases, which together have caused repeated fluctuations in population density and agricultural productivity. These fluctuations meant that even into the early years of the present century there remained underused areas of Bengal and its hinterland—for example, the Sunderbans, the char along the Brahmaputra, the Terrai, and the sal jungles of the Chota Nagpur fringe—which were available for economic enterprise as transportation, agricultural, and health technologies were improved. There has as yet been no study of who profited from the opening of these new lands, nor is there an accurate measure of the capital reinvested in agricultural land from East Bengal’s jute trade, North Bengal’s tea industry, and West Bengal’s mines. We do, however, observe the emergence by 1920 of a parvenu class (Muslim as well as Hindu) residing in the district towns and controlling sections of the surrounding countryside through powerful patronage networks.

It was this class which was best situated to take advantage of the devolution of power to the district and local boards, as also of the enlargement of the provincial legislature and the extension of the franchise. It was they who most frequently gained the organizational backing of the caste associations and the consolidated Islamia Anjumans. They were the moving force in the joatdar associations, and their investments sustained, among other ventures, the district cooperative banks.

The existence and activities of a parvenu class should alert us to the
danger of assuming that once outside the cities and past the rājbāri of the
great zamindars, all that was to be seen in Bengal was an undifferentiated
peasant mass. There were, of course, a number of “fat cats” among the
generally poor rural populace. The thinnest of all—the dispossessed
tribals and other landless laborers—had no institutional representation
before independence. The nonoccupancy raiyat and the poorer share-
croppers appear to have had to wait until the 1940s for the Marxists to
give them a lead with the Tebhaga and similar movements. It was the oc-
cupancy raiyat who were the prime movers in the Krishak Samitis, and the
mainstay along with some of the higher tenure holders (joatdar, talukdar,
and patnidar) of the agricultural cooperatives. Thus what appear at first
sight to be institutions of the rural poor prove on closer inspection to be
new sources of strength for the moderately well-to-do.

The political mobilization of the industrial proletariat in Bengal, as we
might predict from the European experience, preceded that of rural
landless labor by three decades. The years immediately following World
War I were seminal. War demands had artificially stimulated industrial
and mining development in Bengal, but early in 1920 there was a severe
trade recession. To make matters worse a succession of natural disasters in
1918 and 1919, including the great influenza epidemic, had led to a sharp
rise in the price of foodstuffs and cotton goods. Wages did not respond to
the price inflation. The work conditions for industrial labor and the terms
of employment were generally deplorable.

We have already observed that the Khilafatists and congressmen saw
in this situation a fine opportunity for agitational recruitment, and their
initial successes added strength to the noncooperation movement. In the
long run, however, the politicians were faced with a thorny problem: they
were Bengalis while almost all the industrial laborers were from Bihar and
the United Provinces. The sustained disinclination of these men to ac-
cept Bengali leadership, as also their refusal to identify themselves with the
region in which they lived out their working lives, has been the source of
serious instability for twentieth-century Bengal, East and West. The
periodic resort to violence by the “Biharis” should serve as a reminder that
not all politics is institutionalized. Historically the mob has been a potent
political force.

NOTES

1. *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth-Century Bengal* (Berkeley: Uni-

*Note:* Regarding this as an interpretive essay, I have taken the liberty of excluding
references. Should the reader be interested in the research sources on which
I base my assertions, I would refer him to the above book and to my published articles:


“Four Lives: History as Biography,” *South Asia*, vol. 1, no. 1 (June 1971), pp. 74–92
Bengal's Pre-1905 Congress Leadership and Hindu Society

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THE PROBLEM
In its first twenty-five years, the Indian National Congress failed to fulfill two of its primary goals. First, the Congress did not succeed in persuading most nationalists outside the English-speaking professions that it welcomed their participation or represented their vital concerns. Second, it was unable to convince Muslim leaders that it was in their interest to join the Congress. Not only did Muslim leaders generally remain aloof from the Congress prior to founding the All-India Muslim League in 1906 in opposition to the Congress; they also persuaded the small number of Muslims who had attended the Congress sessions to withdraw. Only a handful of Muslims were delegates to the 1907, 1908, and 1909 Congresses. The first elections under the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909 confirmed that the anti-Congress position of the Muslim League was widely supported by Muslim voters. Members of the league won "all the Muslim seats on the provincial Legislative Councils of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Bengal, the United Provinces, Bombay, and Madras." They also gained a number of general seats.\(^2\)

An examination of the organizational and programmatic goals of the Congress does not yield an adequate explanation of the Congress' failure to attract Muslim support. Congress leaders actively sought Muslim participation in the early years. The avoidance of specifically Hindu themes and symbolism and the reliance on the English language in the early Congress meetings were intended to make Muslims feel welcome, although the resulting cultural drabness and neutrality undoubtedly diminished the Congress' appeal for many Hindus. A Muslim (Badruddin
Tyabji) was offered the Congress presidency in 1886, 1887, and 1883, Muslim delegates were given free transportation and lodging at early Congresses, and Muslims were promised that no new resolutions to which Muslim delegates as a body objected would be passed. With the important exceptions of Congress proposals for representative institutions and competitive examinations for the civil services, the core of the Congress program was generally not opposed by educated Muslims. Yet Muslims generally avoided the Congress.

The key to understanding this abstention is to be found in Muslim perceptions of what the Congress movement stood for. A number of recent studies have attempted to define Muslim perceptions. However, insufficient attention has been given to developments within Hindu society which may have affected the ways Muslims viewed the Congress. Nor has there been much study of the religious identity of Congress leaders or of their efforts, or lack of efforts, to reassure Muslims of their security in the new competitive society. It has not been explained, for example, why the secular-minded Hindu Congress leaders relied upon the initiative of their English colleagues in appealing for Muslim support. Why did A. O. Hume in the earliest years of the Congress and William Wedderburn in 1910 assume responsibility for making overtures to Muslim leaders on behalf of the Congress? How can the stated goal of communal cooperation be reconciled with the failure of cosmopolitan Congress leaders to react creatively to incipient Muslim separatism? How does one explain the immobility, helplessness, and resignation of Congress leaders when faced with communalization of politics after the 1905 partition of Bengal?

A partial answer to these questions may be found in a reconstruction of the professional and private lives of leading Congress members. It will be seen that their roles tended to be discrete, unrelated, and perhaps incompatible. As members of a nation-building movement, they were expected to subordinate their individualistic ambitions, pride, and Hinduess to the collective interest of a multicomunal organization. As members of the legal, journalistic, and teaching professions, they were engaged in highly competitive enterprises whose language and milieu were English and whose personnel were rarely Muslim. As members of bhadralok society (if such varied, individualistic, and fractious category of human beings may be called a society), they were subjected to group pressure and sometimes ridicule for their assimilation of English ways. Segments of Hindu bhadralok society were insisting upon conformity to Hindu norms of behavior and were asserting the primacy of Hindu values in Bengali life. These pressures were, in effect, a form of Hindu populism, and they seriously challenged the representativeness of Congress leadership and the right of congressmen to speak for the larger society. When forcibly exerted,
these pressures must not only have undermined the self-confidence of Congress leaders; they must also have reduced their viable options in dealing with Muslims or other Hindus.

This essay examines the professional and private lives of Congress leaders in Bengal with the object of revealing the disintegrative effect of the separate demands imposed upon them by their multiple roles. It attempts to find out why and how they were experiencing and responding to the pressures of their professions, their society, and the needs of the Congress.

It is too easily assumed that the communalization of politics in Bengal stems directly from Hindu-Muslim conflict. Whereas in other north Indian provinces Hindus and Muslims had clashed over language policy, cow slaughter, and communal balance in government services, pre-1905 politics in the Bengali-speaking region was relatively free of these conflicts.

Those Muslims in Bengal who did complain publicly about disparities in the economic and political opportunities available to Hindus and Muslims were frequently non-Bengali Muslims of Calcutta, such as Nawab Abdul Latif and Amir Ali, whose connections with Bengali Muslims outside Calcutta seem to have been slight. Because few Bengali-speaking Muslims raised their voices before 1905, it is difficult to gauge Muslim opinion. For example, it is not certain that the views of Abdul Latif and Amir Ali were more representative of Bengali Muslim concerns before 1905 than were the views of influential Muslim Congress supporters in the Bihari-speaking districts of Bengal. In the prepartition years, two prominent lawyers and civic leaders with distinguished ancestry, Mazhar-ul Haq of Chapra and Bankipur and Sayyid Ali Imam of Patna supported the Congress without ceasing to work for Muslim interests. Mazhar-ul Haq, in fact, worked actively for the Congress and the Muslim League in Bihar after the latter was founded in 1906. That English officials preferred to regard Abdul Latif and Amir Ali as authoritative spokesmen for Muslim opinion is understandable but it is not evidence of their representativeness.

This essay’s point of departure, then, is that politics in Bengal had not polarized along communal lines before 1905 despite the failure of the Congress to attract many Bengali Muslims. The 1905 partition crystallized a Hindu-Muslim division which hitherto had been more potential than articulated and organized. In stating this, there is apparent disagreement with John Broomfield. Broomfield has implied that in pre-1905 Bengal the bhadrakol were worried about their relations with “the mass of the [Bengali] community, Hindu and Muslim.” He goes on to say that:

What we observe here is a point of critical significance: profound bhadrakol uncertainty on the crucial issue of whether their society should be open or
closed. If we look carefully at the subjects of social and political discussion at the turn of the century we find that this was the fundamental issue underlying bhadralok debates. Should Bengali society be dominated by a caste elite, drawing its authority and its strength from the great tradition and organic unity of Hinduism, or should free access to the elite be provided for able individuals of all classes through an expansion of the utilitarian institutions that had been developed in the nineteenth century in contact with Europeans? Broomfield demonstrates convincingly that this became a fundamental issue after the 1905 partition. Perhaps it was inevitable that it should be so. But in suggesting that competition with Muslims and non-bhadralok castes was central to bhadralok concerns before then, it seems that he has telescoped separable developments. Prior to 1905, neither Muslims nor castes such as the Namasudras had mounted a serious challenge to bhadralok dominance in education, the professions, or, in most areas, even in the control of landed resources. Nor had efforts to help low-caste Hindus by Sasipada Banerji, Sivanath Sastri, or the Indian Association been on a scale large enough to arouse significant controversy. Insofar as the openness of society or competition for the material goods of life was central to internal bhadralok politics, resentment was expressed against the wealthy lawyers, zamindars, and Brahmans. Usually this resentment took the form of attacks upon the anglicization of educated Bengalis rather than direct criticism of the acquisition or use of their wealth. Broomfield does discuss the “considerable class feeling within bhadralok society.” This comes much closer to the central issue of pre-1905 bhadralok politics. Hindu populism was in part a leveling protest against the spectacular economic successes of elite members of the English-language professions.

This essay discusses the interaction of congressmen and Bengali society. It is an indirect approach to the question: Why was the Congress goal of building a national movement into which both Muslims and the larger Hindu society would be integrated pursued with so little vigor? The focus is on the Congress leaders in Bengal because, as unrepresentative as they were of many late nineteenth-century trends, they were a prime object of Hindu populist pressures, they did articulate the goal of communal harmony and national integration more clearly than any other group, they were the dominant Indians in the Legislative Council after 1892 and in the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, and they and their supporters did control most major Bengali newspapers. Although nineteen congressmen from Bengal (Bengal proper, Bihar, and Orissa) will be identified for statistical purposes, considerable illustrative information will be drawn from the lives of other congressmen and from the development of the legal profession in other parts of India.
Who Were the Leaders?

Who were the leaders of the Congress movement in Bengal? How does one establish who is and who is not a leader in a movement as loosely organized as the Congress was in its first twenty-five years? The Congress met once a year and did not have full-time workers between sessions. Only a handful of men from each province attended the annual sessions on a regular basis. To obtain a composite profile of the all-Indian Congress leadership, I compiled a list of delegates who between 1885 and 1914 spoke five or more times or who were appointed to three or more special Congress deputations and committees, such as those to visit England, consider the Permanent Settlement, and draft a Congress constitution. The list contains eighty-six names. Because of the autocratic way Congress conducted its affairs, the list represents those individuals whom A. O. Hume, Pherozeshah Mehta, Surendranath Banerjea, and other members of the inner circle approved to speak and selected to perform important Congress tasks. Several key figures were missing from the list, including M. G. Ranade, Aurobindo Ghose, and Bipin Chandra Pal. Despite these omissions, I felt the list was useful for the purpose of drawing a composite portrait of Congress leadership. Inclusion of the names of men whose period of leadership was brief or whose leadership was exercised behind the scenes would not have altered the portrait significantly.

The composite profile contained few surprises. Sixty of the eighty-six were in the legal profession. Not only were the majority in law but a sizeable proportion practiced in the High Courts, where incomes were often substantial and where forensic skills and full familiarity with the English language were needed. High achievement was not limited to the lawyers. The list contained twenty-three journalists, ten businessmen and bankers, and eleven educators, many of whom had attained distinction in one or more professions. The esteem for these men outside the Congress may be gauged by the fact that thirty-five of the eighty-six served in the Legislative Councils, each of which prior to 1909 contained fewer than ten elected members.

The provincial distribution was wide. Madras had twenty delegates, Bengal had nineteen, Bombay had eighteen, and the United Provinces and the Punjab had thirteen and seven, respectively. This distribution fails to reflect the dominance of Bombay leaders (A. O. Hume, M. G. Ranade, Pherozeshah Mehta, William Wedderburn, and Dadabhai Naoroji) in the conduct of Congress affairs in its first twenty years, but it does indicate the inner circle's desire for regional balance.

Brahmans outnumbered non-Brahman Hindus, thirty-eight to nineteen. There were also six Muslims, five Parsees, and five Englishmen.

The figures for Bengal's delegates follow the all-Indian pattern. Thirteen
of Bengal's nineteen delegates were lawyers. Nine were Brahmans, one was Muslim, one was Bihari. The Bengal delegates differed as a group from others in that they owned zamindaris more often than did delegates from other provinces. Eleven of the twenty-one zamindari-owners were from Bengal. However, eight of the eleven were lawyers by profession and none seems to have depended on land as his major source of income. The Bengal list also lacked even a single prominent extremist, assuming that Aswinikumar Dutt should be classified as a moderate. The all-India list, on the other hand, contained B. G. Tilak, G. S. Khaparde, Lajpat Rai, and G. Subramania Iyer. Finally, the Bengali delegates were more likely to have been educated in England (six had been). This pattern was compatible with prior impressions that, as a group, Bengal’s leaders were more anglicized in lifestyle than leaders from other provinces.

Study in England was in fact a key factor in determining leadership within the Congress. The nucleus of Indian leadership was drawn from a group of nine men from Bombay and Calcutta who had formed inter-regional friendships in London. The future Congress leaders who were together in London in the late 1860s were Pherozeshah Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji, W. C. Bonnerjee, and Manomohan Ghose. As those young friends were finishing their studies, a second group who also became Congress leaders began to arrive. W. C. Bonnerjee met Surendranath Banerjea and Romeshchandra Dutt when they landed in 1868 to study for the civil service. Before Banerjea and Dutt returned to Calcutta, they were joined by Lalmohan Ghose and Anandamohan Bose. All these men seemed to have come under the influence of Dadabhai Naoroji and his efforts to start an all-Indian political organization. Naoroji was an older Parsi merchant who lived in London and acted as an informal ambassador for the nationalist cause for half a century.

All these men except Dadabhai returned to successful careers in India. Judging from their incomes, their London training was a major asset. Mehta, Tyabji, Bonnerjee, and the Ghose brothers established exceedingly prosperous law practices, earning as much as leading English barristers and more than almost any other Indian lawyers. Anandamohan Bose also practiced law with profit but gradually turned his attention to education, founding City School (later City College), where Surendranath Banerjea taught. Neither Surendranath nor Romeshchandra Dutt practiced law, although both had received legal training and both had large incomes. Surendranath taught, ran a college, and edited the Bengalee after his expulsion from the Indian Civil Service (ICS). And Romeshchandra remained in the ICS until 1897, when he joined the Congress.

Although most Congress leaders in Bengal were lawyers, their fathers had been in “service” under the British, a zamindar, or a native state more often than in the law. In most cases it seems that the sons earned
incomes which far exceeded those of their fathers. Illustrations of this disparity were found outside Bengal. Ranade’s father earned Rs. 250 per month as private secretary to the Maharaja of Kolhapur while Ranade’s own salary as High Court Justice was in the neighborhood of Rs. 4000 per month.\footnote{Gandhi’s law income of over Rs. 6000 per month in South Africa must have been many times the amount his father earned as a minister in a small princely state.\footnote{Lala Lajpat Rai’s father never earned more than Rs. 35 per month as a Persian teacher in a government school whereas Lajpat averaged more than Rs. 1000 per month as a vakil in Hissar between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-eight, before he joined the Chief Court bar at Lahore.}} Probably all the Congress leaders who had successful professional careers received help from Englishmen at important stages in their academic and occupational training. It is evident from the biographies of Indians born in the 1840s, as many early Congress leaders had been, that the ratio of English teachers to students in the schools was high and that teachers took a personal interest in the development of better students. They awarded these students scholarships, entertained them in their homes, advised them about their careers, and helped them go to England or the local university for further study.

English kindesses did not stop with college, although they seem to have diminished considerably as Indians moved nearer to the point of direct competition with Englishmen. Many nationalists who went to London in the nineteenth century, before the number of Indians in England was large and before English-speaking Indians ceased to be a novelty, boarded with English families, continued to learn the ways of their rulers, and returned with positive feelings about the English as individuals. Romeshchandra Dutt, Surendranath Banerjea, Pherozeshah Mehta, and Gandhi are examples.

THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING PROFESSIONS

Whether they completed their schooling in England or in India, Indians graduating in the 1860s and 1870s were equipping themselves to move into professions still manned by Europeans. And part of their success depended upon having learned how to win the confidence, and how not to antagonize, European teachers, lawyers, and administrators. At least a minority of Englishmen in the legal profession, as in the schools, were willing to assist promising Indians. Possibly that assistance was often contingent on whether English a young man’s bearing and accent were. This may have been a factor in the decision of English lawyers to accept such men as W.C. Bonnerjee,\footnote{Bhupendranath Basu,\footnote{and C. Sankaran Nair\footnote{as apprentices.}} Gaining access to the highest positions in the bar was a lonely and ardu-
ous process for most men who made it, with or without English help. Most Indians did not make it. The majority of those who enrolled in law classes either dropped out or failed the examinations, and many others who passed did not find employment in the major cities and had to look for work in the mofussil (the districts outside the major metropolitan areas). Legal education and apprenticeship suffered from lack of system. Few English professors of law seem to have given the close attention to the education of their students which teachers in the schools had. Law college students found that their courses were only marginally related to their examinations or future work. P. S. Sivaswami Iyer and V. Krishnaswami Iyer, subsequently prominent Congress lawyers, used to sign the register for their law class at Presidency College, Madras, and then spend their class time at the beach. K. N. Katju confirmed that many students did not attend classes or read the assigned texts. He wrote that while preparing to take the High Court Pleader’s Examination in 1906, “everyone used cribs and aids to scramble through no matter how poor his grounding in legal principles or how meagre his reading of those classics.” Law classes were crowded, teachers were poorly paid, sometimes young English lawyers were appointed to teach until they could find a private practice, and some law classes were operated chiefly for profit.

After graduation, the more successful law students usually entered an apprenticeship in the High Court which was likely to be unsupervised and unstructured, regardless of whether they apprenticed with an English or an Indian lawyer. Apprentices attended court and observed the performances of the best known lawyers. Judging by the frequent references in memoirs and biographies, the High Court lawyers had a keen appreciation of the verbal aptitudes of their colleagues. This was reflected in speeches at the annual Congress sessions, for which some men spent weeks preparing, knowing that delegates valued highly an elaborately argued speech. Apart from attending cases in court, apprentices tried to make themselves useful by taking notes and preparing briefs for their lawyers. In general, though, apprentices were ignored and their education was largely a matter of self-help. It may be that the haphazard and unprofessional character of nineteenth-century legal training in India contributed to the early failure of Congress to develop businesslike procedures and a permanent organization.

Indian efforts to break the English monopoly of the highest positions in the bar took three forms. First, Indians qualified themselves as barristers and tried to attract clients who usually took their cases to English barristers. Pherozeshah Mehta made one of the earliest attempts in Bombay. He soon discovered that in spite of his London education he was unable to obtain many briefs:
The entire practice was more or less concentrated in the hands of a few eminent counsel, such as Anstey, Scoble, Green, Latham, White, Mariott and one or two others. It was a very difficult thing either to dislodge them from their position, or even to carry away a few crumbs from their richly-laden table. . . . The litigant public hung upon [those counsel], and took no notice of the knot of hapless juniors hungrily looking for briefs. . . . There were hardly any firms of Indian attorneys to give the young men a lift in the profession. A deal of patronage rested in the hands of managing clerks, whose smile was to be courted.25

Mehta complained publicly in 1873 that Indian barristers were not receiving a fair share of the legal business. The Bar Association of Bombay responded by demanding an explanation from Pherozeshah for this “breach of professional etiquette.” Eventually he gave up hope of finding sufficient work in the High Court and instead concentrated his practice in the mofussil, where he prospered. Badruddin Tyabji, the third Congress president, was more fortunate in finding work in the Bombay High Court after he returned from England, largely because his brother had already staked out a large practice as solicitor. Tyabji’s cases came mostly from Indians. He found that the English lawyers did not like having Indian rivals and that English solicitors gave “all the work of the Government, the Municipality, public works, railways, post offices, telegraphs and the great mercantile firms” to English barristers.26 Even with friendly Indian solicitors and vakils who were willing to send clients to Indian barristers, it took years to overcome a widespread assumption among Indians that even a London-trained Indian was less likely than an Englishmen to win in the High Courts.27 However, by the 1880s Indian barristers were making deep inroads into the practice of Englishmen.

The second direction of Indian efforts was toward alteration of the rules restricting practice before the High Courts. High Court vakils fought for the right to appear without a barrister on the Original Side. (The High Court had an Original side and an Appellate Side. It was the more lucrative practice on the Original Side which English barristers hoped to preserve for themselves.) Victory came first in the 1870s in Madras, where vakils formed their own association to press for changes in the rules. The English barristers fought back and were supported by Judge Bittleson, a former barrister, who said he could not support new regulations which would “take the bread out of the mouth of a Christian and put it in the mouth of a pagan.” Eventually, the Vakils Association, applying pressure with arguments and a vote not to act as junior counsel to any European barrister, persuaded the High Court justices to equalize the vakils’ status.28 The Calcutta High Court vakils, under the leadership of Rash Behari Ghose, soon followed the example of the Madras Vakils Association and won similar changes in the rules of the Calcutta High Court.29
The third issue which concerned Indian lawyers was the appointment of Englishmen to government legal offices. Again, it was the Madras vakils who led the way. They agitated not only to have Indians appointed to government legal offices but also to have vakils considered along with barristers for these offices. They won their campaign when V. Bhashyam Aiyangar became the first vakil in India to be appointed an advocate general.\textsuperscript{30} Up to that time, Europeans in Madras had held the offices of advocate general, government pleader, government solicitor, crown prosecutor, and administrator general.\textsuperscript{31} By 1900, a number of Indians in each of the four High Courts had been appointed to government legal offices and High Court judgships.

Thus by the end of the century Indian lawyers in Bengal and elsewhere had broken European monopolies. Institutional changes in court procedures had been accomplished by acting in concert through Indian bar institutions. Moreover, Indian lawyers had combined informally to re-distribute legal business by channeling clients to fellow Indians. At times this cooperation had been highly effective, as it was in the case of J. A. H. Branson. Branson was the Calcutta barrister who made offensive remarks about Indians during the Ilbert Bill controversy. The subsequent Indian boycott was so effective that Branson was forced to return to England.\textsuperscript{32} On occasion, collective pressure was exerted on Indian lawyers as well. C. Sankaran Nair, a beneficiary of several English friendships, was the only member of the Madras Vakils Association to vote against the resolution calling on Indians not to assist English barristers, and in consequence his practice suffered for a while.\textsuperscript{33}

Yet cooperation in the Indian bar was limited and fitful. In contrast to the common partnerships found between English lawyers, Indian partnerships were said to be infrequent and unstable. The Indian bar did not provide many of the corporate experiences of teamwork and specialization which ordinarily characterize modern professions and which might have been utilized within the nationalist movement. One reason why the legal profession was highly individualistic was the "chronic oversupply" and the consequent competition which limited "solidarity and capacity for corporate action."\textsuperscript{34} The great success of a small number of Indian lawyers is perhaps the result of the individualistic aspect of the profession, and the numbers of people who did not reach the top reveal its hazards. Able men such as Gandhi\textsuperscript{35} and C. R. Das\textsuperscript{36} were total failures in their first years of law practice in the 1890s. Muhammed Ali Jinnah spent three years in Bombay, after his return from England, "without a single brief."\textsuperscript{37} These three men ultimately built up successful practices. But the wealthy Indian lawyers represented only the peak of a broad-based pyramid.

The main concern of this discussion has been the High Court bar, to
which many Congress leaders belonged. However, lawyers who were unable to qualify for or find a practice in the High and Chief Courts in the provincial capitals generally went to the mofussil. P. S. Sivaswami Aiyar estimated that only thirty-two out of the eighty students in his Presidency College class in 1882–1883 passed the law examination; of these thirty-two, only about one-fifth went to the Madras High Court as apprentices. Most of the others turned to mofussil practice. Mofussil practice could be highly profitable for an able individual, such as Pherozeshah Mehta, with the proper qualifications and contacts. The prospects in law were so attractive, and the occupational alternatives so limited, that 2898 or over eleven percent of Indian university students in 1906–1907 were studying law.

Little has been written about the mofussil bar. English officials believed that the success of lawyers in being elected to the Provincial Legislative Council even when most of the voters were landholders was due partly to the network of contacts that lawyers established in the course of their practice, which made canvassing easy. It is likely that the bar association was the most visible and active voluntary association in many mofussil towns and that it was the place where mofussil men were most likely to exchange political ideas. Many mofussil pleaders occasionally attended Congress sessions and, together with schoolteachers, represented the Congress’ chief link to the mofussil.

Social Isolation and a New Status Hierarchy

The struggle to reach the top levels of the raj’s occupational structure in the mofussil and the larger cities had nationalist implications, especially when it brought down racial barriers. But most of all, the new professionals were helping themselves. Few used either their money or their professional expertise in the service of their country before 1905. Once they had reached the top, not surprisingly they made no attempt to dismantle or level the structure. The structure recognized and rewarded ability and diligence, and as the very success of the new professionals demonstrated, it presented no insurmountable barrier to Indian talent. For those men who wanted to join them, the new professionals recommended self-improvement: assiduous study, “never two words when one was enough, clearness of thought and diction,” regular work habits, frequent exercise, and so on. Few of them were levelers. Despite English efforts to portray them as parvenus, most of them came from high-caste families. They had not been trying to bring down or displace other Indian elites so much as to open the modern professions to proven Indian talent. Most of them were adding individual professional achievement and wealth to a previous,ascriptively based, high social status.
These men were part of a new status hierarchy composed for the most part of families with more than one generation in English administrative and professional occupations. The new hierarchy was parallel to the traditional social order, but many members near the top of the new hierarchy occupied an indefinite place in traditional society because of their non-traditional life styles and careers. It may have been the indefiniteness of their position vis-à-vis the old order which helps explain their preoccupation with making money. Perhaps many of them felt they had lost respect in the eyes of traditional Hindus when they abandoned ancestral customs in favor of English education and habits. Perhaps they were trying to compensate for loss of status in the old order by achieving in the new.

In any case, the English-educated elite lived in a society in which some form of social hierarchy was taken for granted. Neither Indian custom nor Anglo-Indian social and official practices provided a serious challenge to assumptions that people were ranked in order of lesser and higher beings. Englishmen treated Indians as inferior and excluded them not only from high office but also from their private clubs, barber shops, city parks, and railroad cars. It was not uncommon for members of Indian elites to treat their inferiors in similar fashion. Henry Nevinson, the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, wrote about the visit he made with Madhu Sudhan Das, the Uriya leader, upon a Bengali deputy magistrate during a famine in Orissa. The Bengali magistrate "had evidently determined not to fall below the standard of European dignity. Consequently he received us with his legs on the long arms of his deck-chair—an attitude which, I suppose, he observed as customary among English officials when they receive ‘natives.’" Madhu Sudhan Das tried in vain to persuade the magistrate to listen to the widows outside the door who said their husbands had starved to death. After failing to arouse a sympathetic response from the magistrate about the villagers’ problems, Madhu Sudhan and Henry Nevinson had no choice but to leave, "waving good-night to his boots" as they went.  

Before 1905, the desire to display status and wealth was part of the effort to become acceptable to English society and even to be superior to most of that society. Renunciation of wealth was not yet a common way of qualifying for political leadership. Vishnu Narayan Mandlik, a leading Bombay lawyer and politician until his death in 1889, once hired a separate train to get to a court case he was working on, and Pherozeshah Mehta "engaged a special saloon for himself" on his way to the Calcutta Congress of 1901. Only a handful of nationalists were wealthy enough to live as lavishly as Mandlik and Mehta, but their lifestyle was shared to some degree by W. C. Bonnerjee, Romeshchandra Dutt, and other Bengali Congress leaders. It was common for Congress leaders to live in palatial
houses, maintain many servants, use first-class travel accommodations, and, in general, live on a scale which set them apart from most other Indians. The luxurious lifestyle and the elitist attitudes it encouraged were visible in the operations of the Congress itself. They inhibited efforts to build a popular base and they became a source of dissatisfaction in and around the Congress.

Younger nationalists were most outspoken about the elitism and anglicization of the Congress leaders. Aurobindo Ghose in 1893 wrote contemptuously of the “Indian Unnational Congress”:

The Anglicized Babu sits in the high place and rules the earth for a season. It is he who perorates on the Congress, who frolics in the abysmal fatuity of interpellation on the Legislative Council, who mismanages civic affairs in the smile of the City Corporation. He is the man of the present, but he is not the man of the future.

The future rested with a new, rising generation who had not committed cultural suicide by entering “the Services and the Law.”43 Gandhi was critical too, although he was much less sweeping. He had recently lived in a “fine bungalow” outside Bombay and had “frequently felt a certain pride in being the only first-class passenger in my compartment” on the train.41 But he reacted to the behavior of Congress leaders at the 1901 Calcutta session. He remarked that J. Ghosal, a Bengali Brahman merchant, zamindar, and member of the leadership’s inner circle, had his bearer button his shirt.45 Gandhi noticed that while some speakers were permitted to exceed their time by half an hour or more, he was cut off by the president’s bell in less than five mintues.46 He also commented on Gokhale’s use of a horse carriage to travel about Calcutta and his frequent trips to the India Club to play billiards.47 This sort of criticism was not limited to men who had lived outside India. The Maharashtrian terrorist Damodar Chapecakar had only scorn for the behavior of another Congress leader, Manomohan Ghose “or some such other name which I do not remember. Though a Hindu by religion he dresses like a European from top to toe and shaves his moustache like a eunuch. . . . He had a European to drive his carriage, and had to pay him a salary of Rs. 500 a month.”48 Congress leaders’ investment of energy and income in attempts to live like sahibs or maharajas diverted their attention from the Congress and led Lala Lajpat Rai to remark that only Naoroji and Gokhale permitted the movement to interfere with their income and way of life.49

Although complaints similar to those of Aurobindo, Lajpat Rai, Gandhi, and Chapecakar increased, especially after the turn of the century, many nationalists did not share these views. To earn as large an income as a burra sahib, to speak English as well as an Englishman, to have as good
taste as the Victorians who shopped on Tottenham Court Road—this was to demonstrate equality with Englishmen. This was important not only to that handful of men who assimilated British values and habits but also to a much larger number who could share these triumphs only vicariously. Until a substantial number of Indians demonstrated to themselves and their admirers individual achievements in law, government, education, and business equal to those of Europeans, personal careers would continue to absorb energies which otherwise might have been channeled into the Congress. Preoccupation with personal achievement may have been a necessary stage of nation-building because it contributed to Indian self-esteem and helped overcome the negative feelings about fellow Indians which English education and political subordination inculcated. Many people took pride in the election of Dadabhai Naoroji and M. M. Bhownaggree to Parliament in 1892 and 1895, respectively, in Ranjit Sinhji’s exploits in English cricket matches, in the promotion of the first Indian, Romeshchandra Dutt, to the position of acting commissioner, and in the elevation of Indian lawyers to the High Courts. Nevertheless, as success in the ICS examinations, industry, and letters became common, a new generation of nationalists began to question the value of individual achievements to the Congress cause. Aurobindo Ghose, Lajpat Rai, and other younger men appealed for sacrifice and a selfless approach to politics. However, these men had little impact on the Congress before 1905. The older generation remained firmly in control of the Congress and continued to enjoy large incomes.

The efforts of Congress leaders to adapt to British Indian professional life did more than absorb their energies. It also led some to identify with the institutions of the raj in a way that isolated them from the bulk of the Indian population. Surendranath Banerjea was probably being sincere when he told a group of English passengers on his ship en route to the 1894 Madras Congress that “we have everything to lose, nothing to gain by the severance of our connection with England. We owe whatever position or prestige we have acquired to our English education and culture. If you were to leave the country, our English education and culture would be at a discount. We are not particularly anxious to commit political suicide.”

Not only would the advantages of English education be lost, but possibly also the physical security to the life and property of the English-educated elite. Anxiety about violence is difficult to document because to have discussed it publicly would have played into British hands. As it was, Englishmen enjoyed reminding Indians of the “anarchy” of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. We may imagine the relish of Lord Welby, chairman of the Royal Commission on Indian Finances, suggesting to Dadabhai Naoroji in London that “the history of India is that the people
have been continually slaughtering each other” and then proceeding to quote Sir Madhaya Rao’s alleged statement to Lord Roberts to the effect that if the British were removed from India, “it would be like loosing the bars of the cages of the Zoological Gardens and letting out the animals, that very soon they would all be dead except the tiger—the tiger was, I believe, the warlike people of Northern India.”51 Few nationalists would have agreed with this observation. However, there is enough evidence about the experiences and attitudes of early Congress leaders to indicate that some distrusted the volatility of the lower classes or at least had so little contact with them that they really did not know what to expect. A fear or apprehension of popular violence seems to have been common among at least a minority of early Congress leaders, just as efforts to use it were common among the extremists of the next generation.

The carnage of the 1857 Mutiny was part of the memory of the first-generation Congress leaders. Pandit Ayodhyanath, Surendranath Banerjee, W. C. Bonnerjee, P. Ananda Charlu, Monomohan Ghose, Pheroze-shah Mehta, and M. G. Ranade were born in the 1840s and were in schools run by Englishmen during or soon after the Mutiny. Whether any of them sympathized with the mutineers is not known. It is likely, though, that they were thoroughly exposed to a British view of the mutineers as cruel and rapacious barbarians. It is interesting how little empathy is revealed in Dinshaw Wacha’s account of the execution of two mutineers in Bombay city. Wacha was a Parsi, a close associate of Pheroze-shah Mehta, and Congress general secretary after Hume’s resignation. He remembered coming out of his school in Bombay with his classmates and finding that the two mutineers had been tied across the mouths of cannon in the usual military fashion:

So far as my recollection goes, the European troops, Infantry and Artillery, took up a position by way of a square. The Indian regiments were located within the squares. There was a thrill of excitement all round and our pulse throbbed faster and faster till at a given word of command the cannons were fired and the pinioned criminals were blown. The burnt flesh sent an unpleasant odour which we all could easily sniff. All was over.52

Similarly, Surendranath Banerjee wrote about “the lower classes of the rural population” of Bengal as if they were not his own countrymen. He described his investigation of the sale of country liquor in Hughli district in 1887. He had heard reports that drunkenness was spreading among the lower classes although he had apparently never before visited the liquor shop “within a stone’s throw of my house.” He goes on to say:

I was not content with these reports. I visited a liquor shop at Haripal, and the sight I witnessed there was one that I shall never forget. I saw half a
dozen men and women lying dead drunk on the floor of the shop. Another band of about a dozen men and women, all belonging to the lower classes, in varying stages of drunkenness, began dancing around me in wild delirious excitement. I apprehended violence and I slowly and cautiously retraced my steps from the shop.

After this experience Surendranath campaigned to reform the drinking habits of poor people. For the first time in twelve years of public life since returning from England, he lectured in Bengali rather than in English. Although his campaign was within his own Hughli district, he described the rural areas as if they were alien. "It was indeed hard, rough work—tramping along trackless areas, living in malarial countries, and eating strange food." It may be that Surendranath's isolation from rural and lower-class life in his own province was different only in degree from a contemporary, wealthy Londoner's separation from the people of English slums and farms. Yet the isolation was genuine and it was recognized as a major hindrance to the making of a nation.

In communal, grain, and plague riots, well-to-do Indians found they were often more vulnerable than Europeans to mass violence. During disturbances, they depended on English officials to restore order with police or sepoys. This was true of the communal riots in Bombay city in 1874 and 1893 and of the attacks on bhadralok by goonda and upcountry men in Calcutta in 1907. It was also true of the Muslim attacks on Hindus in East Bengal in 1907. Even when Europeans were the main targets of rioting, as in the 1897 Muslim riots in Calcutta and in the 1898 Muslim plague riots in Bombay, the effect on Congress leaders must have been to reinforce the impression of lower-class volatility.

The argument here is not that Congress leaders were often themselves the victims of violence. Rather it is that violence occasionally intruded into the normally peaceful cities where Congress leaders lived and worked, and reminded some of them of their common interest with the British in the emerging social and political order and of their separation from sections of Indian society. There was sufficient violence that British and Indian enemies of the Congress were able to play on fears among Western-educated Indians of sectional and lower-class violence. Lord Welby's remark about letting the animals out of the zoo has been mentioned; Sayyid Ahmad Khan taunted the Congress in a similar vein in his speech of December 1887. He suggested that if the demands of Congress were met, Bengalis would rule India:

Over all races, not only over Mahomedans but over Rajas of high position and the brave Rajputs who have not forgotten the swords of their ancestors, would be placed as ruler a Bengali who at sight of a table knife would crawl under a chair. (Uproarious cheers and laughter.) . . . Do
you think that the Rajput and the fiery Pathan, who are not afraid of being hanged or of encountering the swords of the police or the bayonets of the army, could remain in peace under the Bengalis? (Cheers.)

The Pioneer of Allahabad publicized this speech, the Pioneer Press published it in pamphlet form, and Sir John Strachey quoted from it approvingly in 1888, adding that "the most essential of all things to be learnt about India" was that without England to keep the peace between conflicting peoples, "anarchy and bloodshed would spread themselves over the land."  

Sayyid Ahmad referred specifically to Bengalis but the term Bengali, if it had not become a code word, had come to stand for a member of the new professional elite in the eyes of Indians and Englishmen who disliked the competitive society that was emerging. By encouraging talk about communal and interregional violence, the British were making their prophecies more likely to fulfill themselves. They were also contributing to the estrangement felt by some Western-educated Indians from their own society and to the desire of others to revive Hindu martial traditions.

A more significant cause of the Congress leaders' isolation from Indian society was the conflict over social reform within their own families, castes, and ancestral villages. Probably a majority of the nineteen most active Bengali delegates had violated major Hindu dietary, marriage, and travel restrictions. Anandamohan Bose, Aswinikumar Dutt, Nilratan Sarkar, and Guru Prasad Sen were Brahmos, Kalicharan Bannerji was a Christian, and W. C. Bonnerjee, Bhupendranath Basu, Romeshchandra Dutt, Lalmohan Ghose, and others had exhibited disrespect for orthodox values. One component of the reformed attitudes was the hostility of certain Congress leaders toward the religious practices of orthodox Hindus. Something of the reform spirit may be sensed from Romeshchandra Dutt's family's concern with what Bipinchandra called "the bogy of pantheism." As a child, Romeshchandra used to stand in the window with his brothers and sisters on Bijaya day and count the images being carried to the Hugli River for immersion. When the number of images decreased, they rejoiced; when the number rose again, they lamented. Some reformed Hindus feared the social pressures and absorptive powers of Hindu orthodoxy and sought to fortify themselves, mentally and institutionally, against seduction by traditional forms of Hinduism. The Native Marriage Act of 1872 was an example of the effort to build defenses. It was passed in response to a campaign by Keshabchandra Sen to legalize the Brahmo marriage ritual, which expert legal opinion considered to violate Hindu law then in force. The 1872 Marriage Act in effect required Brahmo partners entering marriage under the new law to declare that they were not Hindus. Narendranath Sen's Indian Mirror commented that with the
required disclaimer of being Hindu, "the Brahmo Samaj has thereby been saved, just in time, from falling into that vast and all-absorbing vortex of Hinduism, which by its treacherous tolerance has swallowed up almost all the reform movements in the country. . . . Such absorption is inevitable, unless our people guard their Church carefully against the danger." But such openly hostile acts as declaring oneself a non-Hindu not only increased the distance between Brahmos and the larger society; it also added to the divisions between Brahmos. Many Brahmos wished not to offend the majority community.

The greatest pressures came from outside of the reformed circles. It was these external pressures which strained family unity, diverted leaders' energies and emotions from politics, and conveyed negative messages about the possibility of making common cause with other Hindu elite groups. Bengalis who went to England, in particular, felt orthodox society's strength. They faced possible excommunication or ostracism. Belonging to the Brahmo Samaj or to reformed families provided some insulation from social disapproval. There were also precautions a man might make to relieve his community's apprehensions. Ramaswami Mudaliar, for example, was said to have been received back in Madras and his home town of Salem "without a murmur" after campaigning in the 1885 general elections because he took a servant with him to cook his vegetarian meals. But many men were less fortunate and, if not ostracized, were suspected of having taken forbidden food and of having been corrupted by the fleshpots of Europe. When Surendranath Banerjea, Romeshchandra Dutt, and Behari Lal Gupta prepared to go to England to study for the ICS, they had to keep their plans secret. The latter two sneaked out of their houses at night to avoid being stopped. Enough men returned from England with changed habits or views to give credence to orthodox fears. For example, Motilal Nehru's elder brother, Bansi Lal Kaul, had carefully observed the commensal rituals of Kashmiri Brahmins until he went to London for Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897. But his trip to England "broke the shackles of a lifetime" and he returned with anglicized eating and other habits.

A few men came back thoroughly alienated from Indian society. An extreme case was W. C. Bonnerjee, who wrote home from England in 1865:

I have discarded all ideas of caste, I have come to hate all the demoralizing practices of our countrymen and I write this letter an entirely altered man—altered in appearance, altered in costume, altered in language, altered in habits, altered in ways of thought—in short altered and altered for the better too, in everything, I should say in all things, which have contributed towards making our nation the [most] hateful of all others in the world.
In later years, Bonnerjee and his family spent much of their time in London, where he maintained a house. Three of his children converted to Christianity and some of his children spoke and thought in English rather than Bengali. Bonnerjee was referred to disparagingly as "a Sahib and a Christian" by other Bengalis. His anglicization was exceptional in its completeness. Other leaders remained Indian in many aspects of their lives and were respected for it. Nevertheless, Bonnerjee's membership in the Congress high command was a measure of its character: he was the first man to be elected twice as Congress president in spite of the fact that his behavior closely resembled that of the rulers. His admiration for England and his doubts about Indian culture were shared in varying degrees by other Congress leaders. Surendranath Banerjea, Anandamohan Bose, Romeshchandra Dutt, and many others were also open to charges of "Sahibism."

Society's disapproval of those Indians who had crossed the kali paani, married widows, or otherwise violated Hindu customs was registered in domestic as well as public life. This attitude placed heavy burdens on reformed Hindus because, however anglicized they were, members of the new professional elite continued to value traditions of family loyalty and unity. It is difficult to find examples of parental disapproval or family division which did not cause distress. Sea voyages and new habits interfered with basic filial responsibilities. Performance of the sradh is a case in point. Conceivably the common desire to perform orthodox sradh for their parents was an effort to atone for the grief caused by their challenge to family traditions and to reestablish a measure of harmony with a society they had affronted. In any case, carrying out family rituals was sometimes difficult. Bipinchandra Pal found that when his father died, "as a Brahmo and an outcaste I could not even touch his dead body nor perform the last duties of a Hindu son to his father at the cremation ground. It was my step-mother who had to light his funeral pyre while I had to stand by." Wealthier men than Pal were able to overcome some Brahman objections to participation in the sradh. Bonnerjee, for example, more of an apostate than Pal, spent "thousands of rupees" on his mother's sradh at Benaras. "Brahmans from various provinces were invited to come, and lands were given away to them." However, few men had such means for easing Brahman consciences.

The income and prestige of the new professionals won a certain tolerance from orthodox society for their reformed behavior. Still more freedom was gained when reformers broke away from their family traditions and formed new social groups within which marriages occurred, such as the Brahma, Prathana, and Arya Samajes, or new subcastes such as the Kashmiri Brahman Moti and Bishan Sabhas of Allahabad. These
groups were somewhat self-contained with their own priests and social life. Even Ranade, who did not break with his caste, maintained two Brahman priests in his home to officiate for his acquaintances whose reformed lives had caused them to be boycotted. However, none of these new social cells was able to give full protection from society’s disapproval.

As a Brahmo, Bipinchandra Pal could not find servants to work for him in his father’s village. W. C. Bonnerjee could not live in his family’s ancestral house because he knew that “the servants would refuse to wash any dishes that he used.” Motilal Ghose’s marriage arrangement was endangered by rumors in his village that he and his brothers were meat-eaters. His neighbors assumed this because Motilal was a Brahmo and because witnesses claimed a large bull had entered the Ghose house and had not come out.

Chittaranjan Das’ biographer says that he experienced “social obloquy and opprobrium” and “the indignation of the whole country” because he arranged his widowed stepmother’s remarriage. Das was a Brahmo but he found himself in trouble with the Samaj on account of his “atheistic and bohemian views.” Because of these views, the leading Brahmo ministers refused to officiate at his wedding in 1897. Das was relatively well protected from society’s pressures. The majority of reformed Hindus in the Congress did not have even the limited security of Brahmo Samaj communities.

**INDIVIDUALISM AND Factionalism**

It might be anticipated that the pressures from orthodox society, the common interest in English education, and the special, ambivalent relationship with the English rulers would have strengthened the bonds among at least the reformed members of the educated classes. The political organizations founded in the second half of the nineteenth century, such as the Indian and British Indian Associations of Calcutta and the Congress itself, were products of those bonds. These organizations acted as watchdogs for the economic and political interests of educated zamindars, lawyers, journalists, and teachers in Bengal. But in fact, the first twenty-five years of the Indian National Congress witnessed little lasting cooperation between public leaders. One reason for this situation may have been that orthodox pressure had an unsettling effect upon university graduates, leading some to doubt their own values and in certain cases to withdraw from politics and other activities in which their convictions might be challenged. Others responded sympathetically to the counterpull of traditional allegiances and identities, seeing in them possibilities for a national or at least Hindu unity and revitalization as well as for personal
identity. The late nineteenth century in Bengal seemed to be a time of political uncertainty, disarray, and regrouping.

There was also a factor seemingly independent of orthodox pressure which contributed to the isolation of Bengali congressmen, a factor which had no obvious relation to anglicization or orthodoxy but which made reformed Hindus less able to resist orthodox pressure. This factor was a pervasive factionalism that at times resembled anarchic individualism. It may have been in part a function of the overcrowding and competition within the colleges and professions. And it may have been a result of the novelty of voluntary forms of organization which required subordinating concern for traditional social boundaries and individual status to the interests of a broader social organism. Individualism, and the acquisititioners which often accompanied it, and factionalism bothered many congressmen.

Bipinchandra Pal was an exemplar both of that individualism and of the Hindu revival which sought to control individual behavior, and it is doubtful whether he ever reconciled in either his thinking or his behavior the conflict between individual autonomy and society’s needs. In beginning the second volume of his autobiography, he wrote, perhaps with painful personal experience in mind, that “the individual is not an isolated unit but is part of a whole, composed of many other individuals.” Individualism, he believed, was particularly strong in Bengal. “The key-note of the Bengal school of Hindu law, the Dayabhaga, is individualism, while the key-note of the Mitakshara school, which governs the rest of India, has been what may be called collectivism.” Bipinchandra felt that individualism was Bengal’s “instinct of personal freedom” and the concomitant “social freedom,” a spirit which had been dulled by orthodox Hinduism.71

By temperament and conviction an upholder of freedom, Bipinchandra had difficulty fitting into organizations and accepting the authority of leaders. He moved from one organization to another, battling and then breaking with his superiors in each. For example, in 1890 he was chosen from among 119 applicants for the post of librarian and secretary of the Calcutta Public Library. The library’s hours were 8:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. Pal kept irregular hours, sometimes arriving at 8:00 A.M. and sometimes at noon but apparently working what he considered to be a full day. Some members of the library’s governing council who, according to Bipinchandra, lacked “training in the principles of representative institutions” began to object, and one “wrote caustic remarks” on the attendance register about Bipin’s irregularity. Bipin, however, regarded the library’s president as the only man who might direct him and he let it be known that if the council member continued to make impertinent remarks in the re-
gister, Bipin would "be compelled to turn him out. . . . This attitude of mine inevitably offended some of my masters and I found it necessary to give this post up." He then took a job with the Calcutta Municipal Corporation but soon left this also. He next began working as a lecturer and missionary for the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. He started two journals, Asha and Kaumudi, and used them to criticize the way in which the Brahmo Samaj was conducted. He explained the problems thus: "The Democratic constitution of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj had been threatening to create an official Brahmo bureaucracy which seriously hindered the growth of freedom of thought in the community and real spiritual life in its members." Soon after Bipinchandra had challenged the authorities of the library and the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, he came under the influence of Bijaykrishna Goswami. Whether this discipleship was related to the death of his wife, as he thought, or an urge to bring his independent spirit under control, he continued to chafe under what he regarded as the autocracy of leaders in the associations to which he belonged. He was one of the most outspoken critics of "the despotism" of Pherozeshah Mehta within the Congress, and he joined Tilak, Aurobindo, and Lajpat Rai in their demands that the Congress become democratic in its internal affairs.

No doubt Bipinchandra is an extreme example of that testy independence and restlessness which caused organizations to splinter and partnerships to come apart. But whether one examines politics, journalism, social reform movements, or family life in later nineteenth-century Bengal, there seems to have been a pronounced tendency toward factionalism. Many factions formed without significant disagreements over principles. Other factions, when they argued over principles, seemed actually to be engaged in personal competition motivated by jealousy and concern for individual prestige.

Certain congressmen seemed to relish conflict. Motilal Ghose of the Amrita Bazar Patrika was such a person. His personality was colorful and controversial but he seemed incapable of lasting cooperation with other nationalists. An account of Motilal's effort to be elected to the Calcutta Municipal Corporation in 1892 has been preserved; it suggests the intensity that intragroup rivalry could reach. The group in this case was the Kayasthas of Ward No. 1 in north Calcutta. Eight candidates had started the campaign, but by election day the field had been reduced to three: a wealthy zamindar (Pasupatinath Bose), a young, rising Congress lawyer (Bhupendranath Basu), and a Congress editor (Motilal). The following description of the campaign, written probably by Motilal himself, appeared in the Amrita Bazar Patrika shortly before the election:

The three candidates who have presented themselves this year [from Ward
No. 1] for the honour of a seat on the Municipal Board are all Kayasthas. Now these Kayasthas like others marry and give in marriage and thus form relationships. In Ward No. 1, therefore, the Kayasthas as a rule are related to each other.

When therefore [would-be] Commissioner No. 1 appears in the field his affectionate father-in-law as a matter of fact canvasses for him. The spectacle fires the relations of other candidates with emulation and they thus plunge themselves into the vortex of the whirlpool. The voters and candidates being all Kayasthas are related to each other. The voter who is the uncle-in-law of a candidate is the grand-father of another, and thus the candidates find themselves in the midst of voters, who are generally their relatives.

The usual rule for candidates in all countries is to base their appeals to voters upon their own merits. In Ward No. 1 it is based, with very few honourable exceptions, upon relationship. One candidate pleads to a voter: "Is not my brother your son-in-law?" and thus secures the support of a voter. This voter is immediately after besieged by another candidate, who tries to convince him that the brother of a son-in-law can never have so much claim as the brother of a maternal uncle, which relation he bears to him. When such is the way the votes are canvassed for, it is no wonder that the candidates and voters should all lose their proper senses.

It was very calm in the beginning. At that time the candidates met and shook hands like friends. This was succeeded by squibs, lampoons and satires. And now it is foul abuse—abuse which fouls even the mouth of a fisherwoman.

It was very dull in the very beginning, when the candidates and their friends bowed to each other whenever they met, formally and politely. It was very exciting and exhilarating when lampoons and satires were hurled upon rivals. Now that abuses have been resorted to the matter has become more nauseating than putrid human flesh.73

The campaigning and canvassing became increasingly tense and unfriendly. The day before the election, Pasupatinath Bose had his English lawyer apply for a ruling from the High Court to remove Motilal’s name from the ballot on the grounds that Motilal’s family, but not Motilal himself, was the registered rate-payer. Justice Trevelyan rejected the application. On election day, goonda appeared in order to intimidate voters. "Voters were physically restrained from voting." Mounted police were finally called to restore order.74

Motilal often feuded with Surendranath Banerjea and his supporters (Krishnakumar Mitra and Pandit Kaliprasanna Kavyakisharad). The bad feeling between Motilal and Surendranath was so great in 1896 that some doubted whether the Congress could be held in Calcutta that year.75 In 1898–1899, the rivalry erupted in three defamation suits between Pandit Kaliprasanna and Motilal.76
Surendranath Banerjea was year after year the heart of the Congress movement in Bengal. He had a reputation for flexibility and lack of dogmatism and upon occasion he acted as a conciliator between Congress rivals. His newspaper, the Bengalee, rarely engaged in personal attacks. Yet Surendranath had poor relations with many fellow congressmen besides Motilal Ghose. It was well known that W. C. Bonnerjee’s dislike for Surendranath prevented them from cooperating in the early Congress. Neither Anandamohan Bose nor Lalmohan Ghose gave Surendranath much support in keeping the Congress alive in Bengal. Anandamohan is a special puzzle. Although he had been a close associate of Surendranath in City College and as secretary of the Indian Association, he stayed away from him for nine years after 1887.\textsuperscript{77} After the 1905 partition there were also bad feelings between Aurobindo and Bipinchandra Pal on the one side and Surendranath on the other.

This factionalism needs explanation. Here we can observe simply that there seems to have been frequent fragmentation of organizations and partnerships. It seems likely that many nationalists avoided strong commitment to political organizations because of the divisiveness. Given a choice between abstention and the messiness of factional politics, many men preferred the former. As a result politics was atomized as well as fractious. Congress leaders, unable to work together even within the Congress, were rarely in a position to strike back or give mutual support when attacked by orthodox society.

**Hindu Populism**

Two all-Indian controversies in the early 1890s revealed with striking clarity the strength of orthodox groups when aroused. The first was that over the Age of Consent Bill. In a sense the bill was an extension of the Brahmos’ Native Marriage Act of 1872 because it raised the age limit for the whole of Hindu society whereas the 1872 act applied only to Brahmos. The Age of Consent Bill also received some of its strongest support from Bengali Brahmos. However, the opposition to the bill was probably more determined in Bengal than elsewhere. More marriages stood to be affected in Bengal where, according to the census of 1881, 14 percent of Hindu girls had been married before the age of ten, compared to 10 percent in Bombay and 4.5 percent in Madras.\textsuperscript{78} The militant Hindu newspaper Bangabasi led the attack on the bill, which it said was part of England’s attempt to destroy the Hindu religion. The Bangabasi compared the English to Muslim temple-destroyers such as Aurangzib and Kalapahar, and it regretted that “we are unable to rebel although we are not of those who say it would be improper to do so.” In its attack on the bill and in its subsequent trial for sedition, the Bangabasi was supported by many non-Brahmin congressmen
whom it had recently been denouncing. The Bangabasi had criticized the Congress and its supporters for their exclusiveness, for their ignorance and avoidance of the Bengali language, and for their hypocrisy in preaching nationalism while using English goods and adulterating Hindu culture and morality with foreign borrowings.79 Probably the attacks by the Bangabasi, which had a circulation of twenty to thirty thousand, were a factor in the decision of reformed congressmen such as W. C. Bonnerjee and Motilal Ghose to oppose the bill. In the end, few late-nineteenth-century issues stirred educated Bengali society as deeply as did the Age of Consent Bill. And few emphasized as dramatically the vulnerability of those Bengalis who welcomed government interference in Hindu religious and social practices. One angry youth even tried to shoot Bipinchandra Pal after the latter disrupted a meeting summoned to protest the bill.80 This incident, like the window-breaking and stone-throwing attack on the police following Surendranath Banerjea’s 1883 conviction in the Saligram idol case,81 may have been less a defense of orthodoxy than a nationalist protest against disrespect for and interference with Hindu usages in general. But the anglicized character of the Congress leadership in Bengal made this distinction a fine one at times.

The other sign of a resurgence of Hinduism was the spread of the cow-protection movement in the late 1880s and early 1890s. The movement peaked in 1893 with the outbreak of Hindu-Muslim riots in such widely separated places as Rangoon, the North-West Frontier Province and Oudh, Junagadh, and Bombay city. Most of the riots followed Hindu efforts to rescue cattle intended for sacrifice during Bakr Id. More than one hundred persons died in the riots, and in the district of Azamgarh alone, over eight hundred persons were arrested.

The cow protection movement was weak or nonexistent in most Bengali-speaking districts. Unlike in other provinces, no prominent Bengali Congress leader seems to have been directly connected with the movement. Nevertheless, Raja Sashi Sekharaswar Roy of Tahirpore, Bengal, had embarrassed the leadership in 1887 by trying to move a resolution in the Congress calling for a government ban on cow slaughter.82 This attempt was resisted by men who were intent upon making the Congress attractive to Muslims. Two prominent patrons of the Congress movement in Bengal, the maharajas of Darbhanga and Dumroan, openly supported the cow protection movement.83 And representatives from different parts of India, including Bengal, attended a meeting of the Gauraksha Sabha in the Congress pavilion following the Nagpur Congress session of 1891.84 There is no doubt that the Congress leadership’s failure to dissociate the organization fully from the cow protection movement was a factor in the decline in Muslim participation in the Congress. Whereas Muslims con-
stituted 14.1 percent of Congress delegates (about 112 per year) before the 1893 riots, in the following thirteen years they made up only 7.1 percent (about 58 per year).\textsuperscript{85}

Because the movement had gained little momentum within Bengali-speaking parts of the Bengal province, it was a much less direct indication to Bengali leaders of the latent power of the Hindu reaction than the Age of Consent Bill controversy had been. But no Bengali congressman could have been unaware of the riots and the spread of the cow protection movement, especially in Bihar, the eastern North-West Frontier Province and Oudh, and the Central Provinces, which preceded them. During the decade following the riots, Bengali congressmen did not, it seems, revive their early efforts to attract Muslims to the Congress. It is difficult to ascertain what Bengali leaders thought about the Muslim abstention from the Congress, since the issue was rarely discussed in public; presumably recruitment of Bengali Muslims was regarded as having few prospects for success. The Muslim abstention in turn may have left certain Bengali nationalists feeling freer to Hinduize their politics. However, Hinduization of political rhetoric, symbolism, and organizational forms became widespread among Bengali congressmen only after the partition.

CONCLUSION

This essay began with the observation that few Muslims made more than a casual contribution to nationalist political organizations in Bengali-speaking districts in the late nineteenth century. Although 23.4 million of British India’s 49.5 million Muslims lived in Bengal province, according to the 1891 census, there is little evidence of Muslim participation in provincial conferences, the Indian Association, or the British Indian Association in the 1880s and 1890s. Surendranath Banerjea had persuaded Amir Ali and the Central Mahomedan Association to participate in the National Conference in Calcutta in 1885. But after that, Congress’ emphasis upon representative government and competitive examinations and the lack of concerted Hindu overtures to Muslims deterred most prominent Bengali Muslims from joining. Abul Kasim, the pleader and zamindar from Burdwan, was the only continuously active Bengali Muslim in the Congress prior to 1905.

The absence of Muslims is reflected in the biographies included in \textit{Freedom Movement in Bengal, 1818–1904: Who’s Who}, published by the Government of West Bengal in 1968. Although it was prepared under an advisory committee consisting of N. K. Sinha, S. B. Chaudhuri, P. C. Gupta, and Amales Tripathi, the only Muslim among the 148 individuals is Nawab Abdul Latif.\textsuperscript{86} Matiur Rahman has explained the separation of Muslims from nationalist politics as a consequence of the Hindu character
of such activities as the *Hindoo Patriot*, the Hindu Mela, and the Shivaji festival.\textsuperscript{87} However, he has not produced evidence that those activities were motivated by anti-Muslim bias or, more importantly, that Bengali Muslims perceived those activities as unfriendly or threatening. Perhaps they did. A more pertinent reason for Bengali Muslim abstention from the Congress may be that Congress activities in prepartition Bengal were confined largely to Calcutta, that the most active and influential Muslim civic leaders in Calcutta were non-Bengalis, that few Bengali Muslims in Calcutta belonged to the same educational and economic strata as congressmen, and that the source of separation was therefore as much regional as communal. In any case, Bengali Congress leaders during the 1885–1905 period were, as a group, men who, while having few Bengali Muslim social or professional associates, seemed to be free of communal prejudices and seemed to feel more antipathy toward militant sections of Hindu society than toward Muslims. University-educated Bengali Hindus, in and outside the Congress, were preoccupied with *bhadralok* deficiencies and divisions. Relations with non-*bhadralok* Hindus and Muslims were a matter of secondary concern prior to the partition. It was the Hindu *patua* of Kalighat, for example, who turned out inexpensive drawings which satirized the anglicized babus for the decay of family life, the sexual immorality, the drinking, and the reversal of sex roles that were assumed to have spread with the aping of European behavior.\textsuperscript{88} The main thrust of the social criticism of popular Hindu writers such as Indranath Bandopadhyaya, Rajanikanta Gupta, and Bankimchandra was directed against their own society, rarely against Muslims. The sudden communalization of politics that followed the 1905 partition would have been hard to predict several years earlier. *Bhadralok* society was still sharply divided. While nationalists were searching for means of integrating Hindu society and overcoming perceived social deficiencies, such as elitism, factionalism, and lack of courage, the means chosen were diverse. Which Indian past, which tradition, which hero was appropriate? The answers were many. The neo-Vaishnavism of Ramakrishna, Bijaykrishna Goswami, Aswinikumar Dutt, Motilal Ghose, and Bipinchandra Pal had little in common with the *lathi* play and hero worship of Saraladevi Ghosal’s *biastami* days or the student *samiti* or Surendranath Banerjea’s advocacy of an Akbar festival.

The final point is that many leaders of neo-Hinduism at the turn of the century had been raised in a manner which had isolated them from orthodox society and had made them vulnerable to the scorn and sanctions of traditional Hindus. Therefore, increasingly the reaction against anglicization came from fellow congressmen, ex-Brahmos, and English-returned Bengalis. Bipinchandra Pal, Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Viveka-
nanda, and Brahmabhandhav Upadhyaya had in varying degrees found themselves outside traditions of Hindu bhadralok society. No doubt their return through neo-Hinduism received stimuli from political motives. But for many who made the transition there was a deeper aesthetic and spiritual meaning derived from the basic act of self-discovery and consolidating a fragmented identity. Aurobindo described the release or return he seemed to be seeking from the constraints of his anglicization in the 1890s when he discussed the mid-century Bengali renaissance:

The calm, docile, pious, dutiful Hindu ideal was pushed aside with impatient energy, and the Bengali, released from the iron restraint which had lain like a frost on his warm blood and sensuous feeling, escaped joyously into the open air of an almost Pagan freedom. The ancient Hindu cherished a profound sense of the nothingness and vanity of life; the young Bengali felt vividly its joy, warmth and sensuousness.89

Nationalists’ preoccupation with the integration of high-caste society and the redefinition of Hinduism inhibited the creation of a multicommunity movement. But this preoccupation was overwhelmingly the result of tensions within high-caste circles, and only to a minor degree the result of conflict with Muslims or with nonelite Hindu castes.

NOTES

1. A delegate list for 1907 was not preserved but ten Muslims were listed as delegates in 1908 and five in 1909. Syed Razi Wasti, Lord Minto and the Indian Nationalist Movement, 1905–1910 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), appendix I.
4. Including Seal’s, Wasti’s, and Rahman’s.
5. Rahman, Consultation to Confrontation, p. 208ff.
7. Ibid., p. 32.
8. The list was compiled from the indexes in Annie Besant, How India Wrought for Freedom: The Story of the National Congress Told from Official Records (Madras, 1915). Caste and occupations were derived from the delegate lists in the annual I.N.C. Reports and from Bimanbehari Majumdar and Bhakat Prasad Mazumdar, Congress and Congressmen in the Pre-Gandhian Era, 1885–1917 (Calcutta, 1967), part II.
9. The Bengal delegates were Abdul Kasim, Ambicacharan Mazumdar, Aswinkumar Dutt, Baikunthanath Sen, W. C. Bonnerji, Bhupendranath Basu,
Anandamohan Bose, Asutosh Chaudhuri, Jitendranath Choudhuri, J. Ghosal, 
Guru Prasad Sen, Kalicharan Bannerji, Lalmohan Ghose, Nilratan Sarkar, 
Romeshchandra Dutt, Surendranath Banerjea, Jogeshchandra Chaudhuri, 
Saligram Singh, and Kaliprasanna Kavyabhasharad.

11. Surendranath Banerjea, A Nation in Making: Being the Reminiscences of Fifty 
Years of Public Life (Oxford, 1927), p. 10
12. Ibid., p. 15.
14. Ranade rose to the High Court through government service, not through the legal profession. Ramabai Ranade, Ranade: His Wife’s Reminiscences 
(Delhi, 1963), p. 42.
16. Lajpat Rai, Autobiographical Writings, ed. Vijaya Chandra Joshi (Delhi, 
1965), pp. 15–16, 42.
18. Who’s Who in India (Lucknow, 1911), part VIII, p. 121.
22. Ibid.
24. However, the nineteenth-century Indian bar was not unique in its lack of professionalism. See Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877–1920 
25. H. P. Mody, Sir Pherozeesh Mehta, pp. 27–28, 33, 37. Schmittener identified the three types of Indian efforts to break the English legal monopoly.
29. Sastrı, A Great Liberal, p. 213.
30. Aiyangar, unlike most of the lawyers mentioned in this section, was hostile to the Congress. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Biographical Vistas: Sketches of Some Eminent Indians (Madras, 1966), p. 132.
35. Fischer, Life of Gandhi, p. 46.
40. These are the words used by Dadabhāi Naoroji to describe what he learned from Watts' *Improvement of the Mind* while a student at Elphinstone Institution. R. P. Masani, *Dadabhāi Naoroji* (Delhi, 1960), p. 11. The didactic, self-improving attitude is obvious in Surendranath Banerjea's *A Nation in the Making*.
45. Gandhi’s attitude toward this seems to have been ambiguous, for he saw it as an opportunity to do service. *An Autobiography*, p. 278: “I volunteered to do the bearer’s duty, and I loved to do it, as my regard for elders was always great.”
46. Ibid., p. 281.
47. Ibid., pp. 283, 287.
72. Ibid., p. 128.
74. Ibid., p. 82.
75. Ibid., p. 86.
76. Ibid., p. 115.
77. Majumdar and Mazumdar, *Congress and Congressmen*, p. 103.
82. Ibid., p. 100. The raja was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council in the first elections under the 1892 act.
83. The Maharaj of Darbhanga probably contributed more funds to the pre-1900 Congress than any other individual in India.
85. The Muslim attendance figures are based on appendix I in Wasti, *Lord Minto*, p. 221.
86. These figures do not include the special sections on the heroes of the Santal Rebellion and the Indigo Disturbances. The volume was edited by Nirmal Sinha.