Ānandamaṭh, or *The Sacred Brotherhood*

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or
The Sacred Brotherhood

BANKIMCANDRA CHATTERJI

Translated with an Introduction

and Critical Apparatus by

Julius J. Lipner

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For Anindita: *sahadharmiṇī*

❁ Preface and Acknowledgements ❁

I have been undertaking research on nineteenth-century Bengal for many years. During the course of my research, I had often encountered references to Bankimcandra Chatterji's novel *Ānandamaṭh*. These references invariably mentioned how influential this text became in various ways as the nineteenth century entered its last two decades, and, particularly from a political point of view, how important a role it continued to play throughout the twentieth century in India. So I thought I had better read it, before I recommended it to my students. It came as something of a surprise to discover that this important novel was not readily available in English translation, and that when one or another of the English translations available was run to ground, how much a new translation seemed to be desirable. Further, when I realised that the novel itself had evolved and that it was playing a part in keeping a number of controversies alive in India today, it seemed clear that making an English translation would not be enough. It would be necessary also to provide an extended introduction, contextualising the novel as well as its historical role. I must admit I did not anticipate writing such a hefty introduction. But what's done is done, and I leave the fruit of my labour with the reader. As I argue in my introduction, for a literary text there is no such thing as a definitive translation. Every good or adequate translation of such a text calls for a reprise, so that the target text can continue to live on in fresh embodiments. If this work stimulates such a response, it will have been worthwhile.

This work is the result of several years of research, and I am grateful to many people for making it possible. I cannot name them all, but let me begin by thanking the following for their help: France Bhattacharya, John Brockington, Warren Brown, Dilip Chakrabarti, Kunal Chakrabarti, Ratan Chanda, Abhaya Dasgupta, Peter Heehs, Sebastian Kim, Rachel McDermott, Sheila Mitra, Manoj Pant, and Tapan Raychaudhuri.

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This book is dedicated, with immense gratitude and appreciation, to my wife, Anindita.

Julius J Lipner
Cambridge, 2005

❁ Procedural Note ❁

This work is in three parts. The first part consists of the introduction, which is divided into five sections of unequal length. The discussions under the five headings are not meant to be exhaustive, but are intended to offer pointers for a fairly rounded understanding of the main issues dealt with under each heading, and include a brief justification for the act of translation itself in the last section, which I considered important. The five headings are as follows:

1. The Making of the Times
2. The Making of an Author
3. The Making of a Text
4. The Future in the Past: History in the Making
5. The Making of a Translation

This introduction is not intended to be primarily a literary analysis of the novel, though it contains many literary observations.

The second part of the book consists of the English translation of the fifth edition (that was published in book form) of Bankimcandra Chatterji's Bengali novel, *Ānandamaṭh.* Since it is this edition of the novel that is usually published for general consumption, we may call it the "standard edition".

The third part consists of the critical apparatus. This is at the end of the translation, and is divided by chapter, within each chapter there are two sections, "variants" and "notes". The variants record (most of) the textual variants for each chapter of the preceding editions of the novel; what I have adjudged to be insignificant variants are not given. As an aid to the reader, every time a variant reading occurs in the text, it is signalled by an asterisk (*) at the relevant place in the translation. If the reader is so inclined, she or he can then turn to the relevant part of the critical apparatus to see what earlier editions of the text had said at this point.

The notes give the original Bengali or Sanskrit terms or phrases of some of my translations—those which I have considered to be of interest to the scholarly reader (inevitably an arbitrary exercise)—as well as justifications of my translation and explanations of features of the novel. There are also footnotes within the translation itself. These are meant to clear up cultural and other obscurities as the reader goes along; they have been kept to a minimum, both as to length and number.

Since there is no international convention for transliterating Bengali, I have adopted a "phonetic" approach. Knowers of Bengali will not find it difficult to understand the transliteration. In the translation I have used no diacritical marks whatever. In the introduction, unless I am translating from the

Bengali or quoting, I have not used diacritical marks for personal or place names, or for the names of deities. I find this usage somewhat pretentious and offputting to the reader. I have used diacriticals for all other Bengali and Sanskrit terms and in the critical apparatus.

Since the introduction is very long—virtually a book in its own right—some readers may be tempted to read only the translation of the novel, or the translation first, in a bid to get directly to the core of the book. Of course, I would consider this a false economy; in some matters, one should hasten slowly but surely. Or to put it somewhat differently: in some cases it is advisable, as the King said gravely to the White Rabbit, to "begin at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end: then stop".

❁ Contents ❁

❁ Appendices ❁

❁ Abbreviations ❁

See the Select Bibliography for further details.

A(BSP): *Ānandamaṭh, Baṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat* edition.

AMcb: Reprint, with notes and appendices, of the first book edition of *Ānandamaṭh*, by Cittarañjan Bandyopādhyāy (1993 ed.)

AMsv: *Ānandamaṭh, Baṅgadarśan* serial version.

BcJ: Amitrasūdan Bhattācārja's *Baṅkimcandrajībanī.*

BM: Lise McKean's "Bhārat Mātā: Mother India and Her Militant Matriots".

BMIN: Haridas and Uma Mukherjee's *"Bande Mataram" and Indian Nationalism (1906–1908).*

CW: *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.*

DE: Lise McKean's *Divine Enterprise.*

DM: Thomas B Coburn's *Devī Māhātmya.*

FHVH: Indira Chowdhury's *The Frail Hero and Virile History.*

Gg: Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda.*

HBIP: Salim Ali and S Dillon Ripley's *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan.*

HE: C K Chapple and M E Tucker (eds.), *Hinduism and Ecology.*

MF: France Bhattacharya's *Le Monastère de la Félicité* (second edition).

SANT: Haridas and Uma Mukherjee's *Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics.*

TT: Julius J Lipner's "The Truth(s) of Translation".

UC: Sudipta Kaviraj's *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India.*

VMBS: Sabyasachi Bhattacharya's *Vande Mataram: The Biography of a Song.*

Introduction

Vande Mātaram! "I revere the Mother!"—or *Bande Mātaram* in its Bengali form—has been characterised variously as one of the most inspiring, threatening, or challenging utterances in the history of India's birth as a nation. Emerging in the public sphere through Bankimcandra Chatterji's novel *Ānandamaṭh* (published in the early 1880s), it became a potent slogan in Bengal's burgeoning nationalist movement of the early twentieth century.[1] Since then it has grown from strength to strength as a symbol of dedication to a free India, and of a vision for a nation. Fraught with history, it continues, as we shall see, to invoke the Mother over a range of important issues on India's national stage. But who is this somewhat mysterious Mother? And who are her children? What is their relationship to each other and to her? Is this an inclusive or an exclusive relationship, one of growth and change, or must it remain fixed in several respects? What is its history, the better to ponder its potential for the future?

These are not simple questions. The developing science and art of hermeneutics intimates ever more clearly how consequential the transformative role of the imagination, both individual and collective, is in the shaping of our worlds. The Mother can have many faces, many moods, speak in many ways in our imaginings and their translation into action. Many Mothers or one? These are the issues that will be addressed in this book.

The novel *Ānandamaṭh,* the crucible from which the flame of *Vande Mātaram* arose, emerged in a Bengal alive to the prospects of nationalism. This process with its many strands—economic, social, literary, religious, political—had begun several decades before the novel was written. It was in the main an "elite" process, the preserve in Bengal of the male, middle-class English-educated intelligentsia, but it was gathering momentum nonetheless. This is not the place to chart this development; we can but point to some of its salient features.[2]

British rule, under the aegis of the East India Company, had become ascendant over most of the subcontinent by the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Concomitant with this tightening administrative grip from Calcutta (now Kolkata), the capital of British India at the time, was the growth of English education among a rising Bengali middle class, which is sometimes

[1] In his *Vande Mataram: The Biography of a Song* (abbr. *VMBS*), Sabyasachi Bhattacharya goes so far as to say that "in a variety of media, visual and verbal, [the slogan] was foregrounded as the core idea inspiring the nationalist struggle from 1905 onwards" (2003, 64). This is a small but useful volume.

[2] For more detailed accounts of stages of this development from different points of view, see, for example, R C Majumdar, 1965; Sarkar, 1997, esp. Part 2; Metcalf, 1994; P Chatterjee, 1995; Lipner, 1999, ch. 1.

referred to as the *bhadralok* or cultured menfolk.[3] The *bhadralok* consisted mainly of Hindus drawn from the three birth-groups or "castes" (*jātis*) of Kayasthas, Baidyas, and Brahmins; among them, because of a growing porosity of caste barriers, there was increasing social interaction. There was Muslim representation among this elite, to be sure, but in time Muslims in general were to draw away from the coalescing Hindu movement towards modernisation and politicisation in Bengal, the vanguard of nationalism in India.

Well before the British had imposed English as the lingua franca for administrative purposes and career prospects for Indians from the late 1830s, at the expense mainly of Persian (which for about two and a half centuries had been the chief administrative language of the now largely defunct Muslim rule in Bengal), the Hindu *bhadralok* had clamoured for English-teaching schools. For it was under British patronage that they perceived their future would lie.[4] Further, by the middle of the century, the *bhadralok* were being squeezed out of any role of economic ascendancy in the region.[5] The East India Company was still a trading company with its own economic interests at heart and the power to enforce them. In the aftermath of the Permanent Settlement of Lord Cornwallis of 1793, the great *jamidāris* or landholdings of Bengal had to a significant extent been broken up and parcelled out, and the strength of the landholders (*jamidārs*) politically undermined. Urban migrations, especially to Calcutta, of non-Bengalis were seriously challenging commercial enterprise in Bengali hands, if not wresting it from them. The middle-class Bengali male—women's emancipation as we understand it today was hardly a gleam in anyone's eye—had little option but to seek advancement in the British orbit in clerical and other jobs in the civil service (though rarely in the higher echelons), and in education, journalism, publishing, translating, and the legal and medical professions, among other careers. In the process he was "Westernised": not only did he learn English more or less well, he also learned the language of committee-speak and how to function bureaucratically, and to assimilate in one way or another such emblematic conceptions as "liberty", "nation", "patriotism", "science" and "progress". In this sense, the *bhadralok* were agents of collaboration with British rule, but with a difference. For while they were constrained, on the one hand, to implement the guiding principles of such rule, they also learned, on the other, to bend them to their advantage so that in time they were able, in a triumph of eclectic assimilation, to take over from their colonial masters.[6] But midway into the nineteenth century, this endgame lay in the distant future.

Displaced by the ousting of Persian and Arabic and the somewhat effete regime with which these languages were associated, and psychologically outgunned by their Hindu countrymen, the Muslim leadership felt unable to compete, and so were gradually alienated with the passage of time.[7] They were kept progressively at arm's length, mostly by default, in what turned out to be essentially a Hindu nationalist movement for an independent India, so that the partition of 1947 came to seem almost inevitable. We shall see how *Ānandamaṭh* and its totemic slogan *Vande Mātaram* lay in the shaping stages of this fateful conclusion.

Ānandamaṭh was first published serially in *Baṅgadarśan*, the journal started by its author, Bankimcandra Chatterji.[8] The first instalment appeared in the twelfth issue of the journal in its seventh year of publication, in the year of the Bengali San era 1287, in the month of Caitra (ca. mid-March to mid-April 1881). The last instalment appeared in the Jyaiṣṭha issue of 1289 (May–June 1882).[9] *Baṅgadarśan*, which was a monthly, had established itself by then as one of the leading journals if not the premier publication for literary discussion and information in Bengali, and Bankim, for his part, had established himself

[3]This was not a political category. Leonard A. Gordon's criticism that "it has seemed to me better not to use this concept in describing and analyzing Bengali politics. . . . A major difficulty . . . is that because this one tool . . . is used to explain so much, in the end it explains little" seems to be based on this (erroneous) assumption. And, of course, it is one sociological tool among many. See Gordon, 1974, 7.

[4]The Scottish educationist and missionary Alexander Duff gives a flavour of this demand when he reports that the "excitement [for English education] continued unabated. They pursued us along the streets. They threw open the very doors of our palankeen; and poured in their supplications with a pitiful earnestness of countenance that might have softened a heart of stone" (1839, 526–27). The surge towards English education had begun by the end of the eighteenth century. In *Bengal: The British Bridgehead*, P J Marshall (1987, 174) quotes a source to the effect that more than "three thousand native youths" were reported to be learning English in Calcutta by 1833—an impressive number in what was still a small city by today's standards.

[5]See Kling, 1975.

[6]For an analysis of "eclectic" in this context, see Hatcher, 1999.

[7]The process of inevitable decline of Muslim power in the presidency had begun from the time the British effectively took control in 1765.

[8]Chatterji is an anglicised form of Bankim's Bengali surname, Caṭṭopādhyāy. Since the raison d'être of this book is an English translation of his novel, in accordance with common practice for such Bengali names even today, I shall use the anglicised form to refer to him. During his lifetime, Bankim was often referred to by anglicised versions of his name. I have come across Chatarji, Bankim was often referred to by anglicised versions of his name. I have come across Chatarji, Chatterjea, Chatterji, and Chatterjee. When signing his name in English, he himself used an anglicised form. This was generally Chatterji, though on occasion he used Chatterjee, and he even wrote to his brother Sanjibcandra, addressing him with the surname Chatterjee! The Bengal Library Catalogue of Books records him as Chatterji: see C Bandyopadhyay's reissue of the first book edition of *Ānandamaṭh*, with its valuable notes and appendices (1993, abbr. *AMcb*), 94–96.

[9]When *Ānandamaṭh* began, Bankim had ceased to be editor of the journal; it was under the editorship of his older brother Sanjibcandra, though Bankim retained a controlling editorial influence. The journal had also ceased publication for the duration of the Bengali year 1285 (1879–1880). After it restarted publication, it was not long before the journal began to run several months late (indeed, on one occasion, there was a gap of seven months between instalments of *Ānandamaṭh*). In the course of time it ran into editorial difficulties and was finally discontinued, at Bankim's insistence it seems, after the Māgh issue of 1290 (January–February 1884). *Baṅgadarśan* was resurrected again for some years under the editorship of Rabindranath Tagore in Jyaiṣṭha 1308 (May–June 1901).

as the doyen of novelists in the vernacular. The eagerness with which each issue of the journal and the instalments of Bankim's novels were awaited by their readership is intimated in the following passage taken from an account of his childhood by Rabindranath Tagore: "At the time, *Baṅgadarśan* made a tremendous impact. . . . All that everyone in the land could think of was 'What's happened now?' and, 'What's going to happen next time?' [in the story]. As soon as *Baṅgadarśan* arrived, the afternoon siesta would be out of the question for everyone in the neighbourhood".[10]

Thus, by the early 1880s, when *Ānandamaṭh* appeared, several factors were in place to swell the rising tide of nationalism. The so-called Indian Mutiny—hardly cohesive enough to be called the First War of Independence, as some would prefer—had erupted in 1857. Soon after it was quelled, the East India Company yielded to the Crown, and the British Empire was formally installed. Though "hardly a dog [may have] barked" in urbanised Bengal during the uprising, as one commentator put it, this was in fact the lull before the gathering storm in the Presidency. The 1857–1858 *intifada* exacerbated a growing racial tension between the British and their Hindu and Muslim subjects and, like all *intifada*s, forced a retrenchment on both sides of the divide, so that the "racial" element that characterised their differences became increasingly "racist". The groundwork for this had been laid by the assertion of British domination in various forms.

From the early decades of the nineteenth century, in fact, a growing hauteur could be detected on the part of the British (in their press, and in their social and administrative dealings) with regard to Indians. There is evidence to suggest that this was a reflection of changing social attitudes in England. But it was the so-called Black Acts of 1849 which indicated to what a pass things had come. In that year four bills were drafted, one of whose principal aims was to place Britons under the jurisdiction of Indian judges sitting in the East India Company's criminal courts (hitherto Britons had been answerable only to the Supreme Court in Calcutta, which had British judges). This raised such a storm of protest from the British that the government was forced to withdraw these "black" bills. English-educated Indians were appalled by this show of racial aversion. They increasingly felt the need to form associations in the face of British rule to express solidarity in the cause of what can only be described as a broadly political agenda. A notable example was the British Indian Association (with not a single British member!) set up in Calcutta in 1851. "It was hardly representative of either Indian or even Bengali public opinion. . . . [Yet] it represented a serious and concerted attempt on the part of upper-class Bengalis, mainly bhadralok, to put aside caste and other differences and to agitate for short-term political changes in the context of a larger

[10]*Chelebelā*, 1946, 52. Rabindranath was referring in particular to instalments of the novel *Biṣabṛkṣa* (Poison Tree).

political vision" (Lipner 1999, 26–27). This vision included political reform (such as the separation of political and legislative functions in governing bodies) and Indian representation in government. What we may call a protonationalist consciousness among influential circles of the Bengali middle class was developing.[11] The uprising heightened this consciousness.

So did the role of the press and the steady development of the Bengali language (on the latter, see the next section).

> There were (in 1876) about sixty-two [Indian-owned] papers in the Bombay Presidency—Marathi, Gujerati, Hindustani and Persian; about sixty in the North-West provinces, Oudh and the Central Provinces; some twenty-eight in Bengal; about nineteen in Madras. . . . Their circulations were, of a necessity, restricted but they were nevertheless expanding. It was computed about this time that there were probably 100,000 readers of such papers and that the highest circulation of any one paper was in the neighbourhood of 3,000.[12]

This was almost certainly a general underestimate of the numbers involved, which were in any case to grow rapidly as the century progressed.[13] But even in the two decades or so after the uprising, the cumulative effect of the Indian-owned press was to put the British on the defensive by a mounting pressure of probing questions concerning their administrative practices and relations with Indians. These questions included demands for a justification of various aspects of public expenditure, as well as of industrial and commercial policy; charges questioning the workings of British justice; and complaints about perceived under-representation of Indians in government. This pressure was particularly acute in Bengal. It gave rise in 1878 to the passing of the Vernacular Press Act which, by strict government scrutiny of the "native" press, sought to rein in "feelings of disaffection against the Government" and amongst the Crown's subjects in India (cf. R C Majumdar, 1965, 247). It was really a measure by the government to scotch the beginnings of supposed seditious activity (and was repealed in 1882 as counterproductive). The point is that the existence of the act indicated the fact that by the time *Ānandamaṭh* appeared there was a growing racial, cultural and political alienation between educated Indians and the British, particularly in urbanised Bengal.

This does not mean that British rule was perceived by the Indians to be bad per se. Indeed, the nationalist leadership at the time, under Surendranath Banerjea, believed in the efficacy of constitutional agitation and reform, that

[11]Not without all-India significance; in 1852 similar societies were formed in Bombay and Madras, and were in close touch with the Calcutta association.

[12]Quoted in R C Majumdar, 1965, 246.

[13]To cite a telling example, "the strongly orthodox Bengali weekly *Bangabasi* . . . within ten years of its existence [it was started in 1881], had reached a record circulation of 20,000 a week", being read widely in rural districts as well as in urban areas. See A P Sen, 1993, 5.

is, they believed that Indian representation in government would be fostered by the British themselves, and that, in fact, British rule was a necessary evil in India until such time as the Indians were ready to take charge of their own affairs ("Providential" was the euphemism they tended to use to legitimate the colonial regime). Their agitations were aimed, in the first instance, at bringing the British to a sense of their responsibilities as caretaker rulers or at least as rulers in partnership under the aegis of such British iconic principles as freedom and fair play. It was only later, towards the turn of the century, when this approach seemed to fail, that a faction would form who wanted to eject the British by force, in light of the conviction that British rule had outstayed its usefulness. This led to factionalism in the nationalist movement in Bengal and elsewhere, between various stripes of "moderateness" and "extremism". Here too, in the development of this ideological split, *Ānandamaṭh* was in one way or another a significant factor. But this is to anticipate.

Baṅgadarśan, from its inception under Bankim's editorship in 1872 (on Bengali new year's day, first Baiśākh 1279, that is, Friday, April 12), played an important role in forming and consolidating educated Bengali opinion. The objectives stated in the first editorial can be summed up in what follows: "We shall endeavour to make this journal suitable for perusal by educated (*suśikṣita*) Bengalis. . . . May it make known in Bengali society their learning, imaginings, literary skill and heart's desires. . . . This journal has not been produced either to support any particular faction (*pakṣa*) or to benefit any particular group. . . . We shall approve any measure by which the new community (*nabya sampradāy*) [of educated Bengalis] may become more sympathetic to even the very lowest (*āpāmar*) [of society]".

In his early and even middle years, Bankim had a strong social conscience; the later Bankim allowed his egalitarian sympathies to be if not quite swamped, then displaced, by more pressing concerns. Nor do the objectives express an explicitly political agenda. They were implicitly political in the sense that it was Bankim's aim to instil among his readership a new morale, a new sense of purpose, a new sense of historical destiny vis-à-vis the encounter of Bengal (especially Hindu Bengal) with British rule in particular, and with Western sociopolitical ideas and science in general. Largely through his writings in *Baṅgadarśan*, Bankim contributed importantly to a growing belief among the Bengali intelligentsia that "India still awaited an intellectual and cultural self-generation which was the patriot's first task. This regenerative movement could only be indirectly political for a people had to rediscover and restate their glorious cultural identity before they could reasonably claim the right of political self-expression" (A Sen, 1993, 120).[14]

[14]It is in this sense that we can speak of a neo-Hindu, neo-Vedantic, and so on, movement of the time. This was new in the sense of a reinvention or regeneration of commitment to whatever

Thus the image of a golden age of "Aryan" or "noble" Indians of the Vedic past established in the first half of the nineteenth century by the early Orientalists of the West, and appropriated by the *bhadralok* as a prop for a new sense of self-belief under the humiliating circumstances of colonial rule, reinvented itself, so to speak, from about the late 1860s on. If the earlier conceptualisation stressed early Vedic greatness for the Aryan (in the period 1500 BCE to about 600 CE, depending on context), the later saw greatness in late-medieval "Hindu" contestation of the Muslim yoke.[15] If the first was used, by such reforming bodies as the Brahmo Samaj, to evoke a sense of Hindu *dharma* or right living as a universal, moralistic code, the second, by the 1870s, marked a retreat among a growing number towards an affirmation of *dharma* as a way of life whose foundational principles of caste, family life and religion should be respected. No doubt different commentators selected different aspects of this *dharma* for emphasis and revival, and no doubt there was scope for reform as circumstances dictated. But the argument was an essentialist one. The dharmic core was eternal and unchanging (*sanātana dharma*); it manifested variously at different times. The aim was to reform the inevitable distortions accruing with the passage of time without damaging the substance. Progress and modernisation in terms of scientific discoveries and foreign political and social ideas were to be engaged with in this way, and should not be allowed to imperil this basic distinction. In short, Hindus were affirming a distinct yet somewhat insular sense of identity.

By the time *Ānandamaṭh* appeared, Bankim had converted himself into one of these trendsetters, and this had not only social but also broad political implications.[16] We shall look more closely at Bankim in this regard in due course. But we must not discount a political agenda for Bankim, though it was not overt. It was not far below the surface in a number of his novels published in *Baṅgadarśan*. *Ānandamaṭh* was perhaps the most outstanding of these.

was deemed to be the principles of "Hinduism" or aspects thereof, irrespective of whether we could call those involved revivalist, reformist and so on. I believe this understanding of *neo* undercuts Bimal Matilal's critique of the application of *neo* to such changes. See "Bankimchandra, Hinduism and Nationalism" (ch. 29) in Matilal 2002.

[15]With special reference to the activities of the (Hindu) Maratha chieftain Shivaji in the western Deccan in the middle decades of the seventeenth century.

[16]There is an argument as to whether this conversion was sudden or gradual. This need not concern us here, but I hope this introduction will show that there were significant indices in Bankim's earlier years of his later turn to conservative principles. Further, this trend towards conservative Hinduism at the time was not confined to Bengal's urbanised centres. C Bayly describes in some detail the various kinds of revivalist ferment that appeared among the educated classes—backed as they were by mercantile patrons—in the Allahabad area in the period 1880–1894. This seemed to be the dominant religiopolitical tendency of the area, and was often sustained by Bengalis who were living locally. See Bayly, 1975, esp. ch. iv.

❁ *The Making of an Author* ❁

Bankim was born on 13 Āṣāṛ 1245 Bengali San era (June 26, 1838) in a respected Brahmin family which had been living for several generations in the village of Katalpara (*Kāṭālpāḍā*), some twenty-five miles north of present-day Kolkata. Bankim was the fourth of five children, who included two elder brothers and a sister, and a younger brother.[17] The Cattopadhyay family had been exposed to significant westernising influences. In January 1838, the year in which Bankim was born, his father, Jadabcandra, had been appointed deputy collector in the Bengal Civil Service (a division of the Indian Civil Service), to the district of Medinipur (Midnapur) in southern Bengal proper.[18] Thus, in several respects he had been westernised, through a knowledge of English and conformity to British ways. Bankim was to display and increase this influence by attending English-teaching schools. But he also had ready access, which he nurtured, to the roots of his ancestral Hindu religion. The religious influences of his upbringing seem to have been quite eclectic. Prominent among these were Śākta, that is, Goddess-orientated, and Vaiṣṇava (in particular Krishna-orientated) influences. His great-great-great paternal grandfather, Gangananda Cattopadhyay, ran a *ṭol*, a traditional-style school for boys that inculcated Sanskrit-based learning. His father had married Durgasundari-debi, the daughter of a well-known pundit or expert in traditional Sanskrit scholarship, Bhabanicaran Bidyabhūsan, who collected and passed on to Bankim a library of Sanskrit works. Bankim was to read avidly from this library. Since there was no opportunity in the English-style schools Bankim attended for Sanskritic learning, it was not long before he took the initiative to remain in scholastic contact with the famous Bhatpara pundits in their centre on the east bank of the Hugli River, across the river from Candannagar, north of Calcutta. So not

[17]The fact that one of Bankim's male ancestors had not married according to the strictest requirements of ritual status would not have affected the family's generally respected social status. The punishment for such an infringement was not outcasting, and by the late 1830s, under British rule, other factors were beginning to influence social standing. The order of birth among Bankim and his siblings was as follows: Syamacaran (male), Nandarani (female), Sanjibcandra (male), Bankimcandra, Purnacandra (male). I have been greatly assisted in this work by Amitrasudan Bhattacarja's monumental *Baṅkimcandrajībanī*, 1991 (abbr. *BcJ*). For a list of sources on Bankim and his work, mainly from a religious point of view, with a brief comment on content, see Harder, 2001, 162–68. The cutoff year for this list is 1997.

[18]"The Bengal Presidency in the early nineteenth century covered vast territories beyond the Bengali-speaking region, and was gradually delimited. In 1836 Agra was separated from the Bengal Presidency, and Assam was detached from Bengal in 1874 and given its own chief commissioner. From 1833 to 1854, Bengal had a deputy governor and its own small secretariat, but practically no political authority that was separate from the government of India. This ad hoc arrangement was changed in 1854, when Bengal was officially put under a lieutenant-governor, and this last arrangement was retained until the [first and temporary] partition of Bengal in 1905" (Gordon, 1974, 4–5).

only was there appreciation of traditional learning in the family which was passed down but Bankim also imbibed and developed it in his own life.

There are two conclusions we can draw from this. First, Bankim had a robust knowledge of Sanskritic learning, notwithstanding his modest disclaimer in later years that he was "an indifferent Sanskrit scholar".[19] He regularly reviewed Sanskritic publications in *Baṅgadarśan,* and referred to Sanskrit texts, expressions and passages in his writings (including *Ānandamaṭh*), showing a wide knowledge of the tradition. Indeed, the slogan *Vande Mātaram* is a Sanskrit expression, and the song from which it derives has strong Sanskrit content, as we shall see. This was no accident. We shall return to the role he accords Sanskritic style and content in Bengali literary writing. Second, it was his long-standing respect for the Sanskrit tradition, which he took the trouble to cultivate, that enabled him fairly late in life to move towards a strong affirmation of traditional mores and values, as intimated earlier in this introduction, even to the extent of starting a detailed commentary on the famous Sanskrit religious text, the *Bhagavad Gītā.* The roots of this turn lie here, in his deeply-felt grounding in the Sanskrit tradition. It did not come out of the blue.[20]

In this connection we note that there are some charming references to the *ṭol* in *Ānandamaṭh,* which are meant not only to entertain but also to show the importance of two things in Bankim's developing philosophy of life: first, the conviction that it was not possible to come to terms with Western progress and conceptions of culture and polity, that is, to develop an appropriate Indian identity in the context of an emerging nation-state, without being rooted in

[19]Mentioned in a letter in English to Shambhucandra Mookerjee (1839–1894), the editor of the well-known English-language *Mookerjee's Magazine* (see *BcJ*: 259, which points out that this letter may have been written sometime late in 1873). Indeed, Bankim was taken to task for Sanskritic lapses by reviewers of his works. *BcJ* records an instance in which the learned reviewer of the first issue of *Baṅgadarśan,* writing for the Bengali weekly, the *Somprakāś,* makes the following observations: "The language in *Baṅgadarśan* is generally not at all bad (*anutkṛṣṭa nāi*). Still one encounters many heart-rending (*hṛdaybhedī*) mistakes in it. . . . The writer of the story [*Biṣabṛkṣa* (Poison Tree), that is, Bankim] has in many places kicked grammar and language in the head, and then with eyes closed has written whatever's come to mind. . . . [The reviewer proceeds to note certain grammatical irregularities. For example:] The term *śyāmāṅginī* is also mistaken. . . . In place of *śyāmāṅginī* it would have been appropriate to write *śyāmāṅgī*", and so on (see *BcJ*: 130–34). One gets the impression that the reviewer was being unduly pedantic, and somewhat blind to the fact that a new literary style in Bengali was emerging. Some of the "mistakes" he notes are not mistakes in Bengali today. Nevertheless, Bankim took the review to heart, and subsequently adopted some (but not all) of the suggested changes. We may conclude that Bankim may not have acquired the pedantic expertise of a pundit, but that is not the same thing as saying that his knowledge of Sanskrit was incompetent.

[20]Why did Bankim's grandfather choose him, rather than his siblings, to gift his library to? We are told by his younger brother Purnacandra that it was because his grandfather noticed a keen interest in Bankim for Sanskritic learning. Bankim would have been in his mid-twenties. It was a relatively small but wide-ranging library, and Bankim treasured and used it (see *BcJ*: 75).

ancestral, hegemonic values—the Sanskritic tradition. What this made of the position of those who did not have the opportunity, as did the male elite, to draw directly from this tradition in selective and authoritative or authoritarian ways (in other words, most of the Hindu population, including women, as well as Muslims, Christians and so on) is a crucial question, of course. Second, and somewhat paradoxically, in his philosophy, it was the function of suitably instructed women to preserve and appropriately transmit this heritage. We shall return to this point presently.

From an early age, in what was not an unhappy childhood, Bankim went to English-teaching schools. This began at the age of six, in the school at Medinipur, and continued through several changes of school and college till the completion of his undergraduate studies at the newly-established University of Calcutta in 1858. The records show that he was consistently a good student, regularly being awarded double-promotions and scholarships, and that he was in the good books of teachers and principals.[21]

His literary career started in the school section of Hooghly College when he was still in his early teens. His first publication was a poem in Bengali which was published in 1852, when he was not yet fourteen. Henceforth he was to publish Bengali poems and articles regularly, to the appreciation of senior literary figures. Yet, commenting on the style of his early poems, the well-known impresario of Bengali journalism, Isvarcandra Gupta (1812–1859), made suggestions for improvement as follows: he needed first, to write in a more elegant manner (using *lalita bhāṣā*); second, to abandon the outdated terminology of the older poets; and third, not to focus so much on love (*ādiras*) in the content of his work (*BcJ*: 45).

BcJ goes on to note that in his early poetry Bankim displays a predilection for the detailed description of womanly physical beauty aided by extensive use of analogy, and that this was continued into the first phase of his novel writing. In fact, this tendency is displayed throughout his career as a writer of novels. The reader will see evidence of this in several places in *Ānandamaṭh* (which is one of his last cluster of novels). Dwelling on various features of feminine beauty is a trait of classical Sanskrit literature. It is done, more or less wittingly, in such a way as to stereotype the sexual differences and gender roles of women and men, to show generally the subordinate social position of women with regard to men, and to closely identify women with various features of the natural world. This traditional gender contrast was reinforced in the minds of nineteenth-century Bengali literati by its Victorian parallels.

On the one hand, Bankim accepted the terms of this enhanced contrast—after all, he was a child of his times. It became a crucial feature of his later

[21]In Indian schools (the custom endures to the present day), the student had to pass end-of-year exams to be promoted to the next grade. A uniformly excellent student could be "double-promoted", that is, promoted to a higher class, by skipping an intervening one.

conservative ideology. It was women who, by their traditional domestic role, were best suited to safeguard what was important for sustaining Bengali and Indian identity in terms of ancestral values. But on the other hand, he manipulated this gender contrast in his novels to powerful reformative effect. Not only were women to preserve they were also to transmit, and to do this it was necessary to adapt to changing circumstances—so long as the essence of the eternal *dharma* was respected. In *Ānandamaṭh* this can be seen particularly in the roles Shanti and Kalyani play. Let us consider this matter briefly.

Shanti is the wife of Jibananda, one of the *santāns* (pronounced "shon-tahn") or Children of the Mother in the novel.[22] Exactly who the Mother is will become clearer as the story, and one hopes, this introduction, unfolds. How Shanti enters the male circle of full-fledged *santāns* need not concern us here; what is of interest is the way she is prepared for this by the author of *Ānandamaṭh*. Like all of Bankim's young female principals, she is a beautiful woman: "She had a fresh youthfulness, and the beauty of her youth was like a lotus in bloom . . . her body had an exquisite charm . . . nothing could stand in the way of her loveliness" (I, ch. 15). She was every bit a woman. But in the story she has a mission: she must help her husband accomplish his *dharma* by becoming a *santān* herself. So, in the last edition of the novel, Bankim adds a chapter in which he prepares her for this task. First Shanti is instructed in the Sanskritic tradition in the *ṭol* run by her father. She had lost her mother when she was still a baby, and as there was no one else to look after her, she would stay with her father while he taught at the *ṭol*. The students, who were all boys, accepted her, and she studied along with them. Thus, she has an educational base in Sanskritic values.

Next, extenuating circumstances prompt Shanti to run away from home while she is still a young girl. She joins a band of wandering mendicants, and learns in their company to strengthen her body and mind through expertise in physical exercise and martial arts. This she accomplishes to great effect. As time passes, without losing her underlying beauty and determinate woman's nature (*svabhāva*), she takes on the guise of a youth. Thus Shanti occupies an ambivalent status, not indeed of being half-woman and half-man (*ardhanārīśvara*), but of being, in a sense, fully woman-and-man. She switches from one state to the other—male *santān* in appearance, coquettish itinerant singer of religious songs (Vaiṣṇavī) in disguise—as the occasion demands. This liminal existence symbolises her transformation, at the end of the action, into one kind of new woman Bankim envisaged for Mother-India-as-she-would-be. She preserves the essence of her glorious womanhood; but she does so by rein-

[22]Jibananda and Shanti are Brahmins. In fact, the chief protagonists of the novel are all upper-class/caste Hindus. There is no place for Muslims among the band of Children of the Mother. The place of Muslims in *Ānandamaṭh* and in Bankim's ideology generally will be discussed in the penultimate section of this introduction.

venting both her husband and herself according to one enduring ideal of traditional Hinduism—that of ascetic renunciation. In Bankim's novel, this is done in the service of the Mother. It is for the reader to discover how this is accomplished by perusing the narrative.

Kalyani, another female heroine, acts as Shanti's foil. She too is young and beautiful, and the wife of a man who, later in the story, becomes a *santān*. But unlike Shanti she remains unambiguously a "womanly wife" throughout the novel. However, Kalyani too undergoes a transformation through a liminal state. By force of strange circumstances, she exists for some time in the limbo of what we may call suspended functionality, until, tempered by a process of suffering, she is enabled to function in a domestic role once more. Not every woman can be as proactive as Shanti, but even they serve who bide their time, provided that they are ready, like Kalyani, to sacrifice everything in the cause of the motherland. In both cases the essence of *dharma*, and of womanhood for that matter, is safeguarded, but their embodiment is purified so as to be ready to manifest in a new order.[23] Bankim's so-called later conservative ideology masked an internal seething dialectic between tradition and change. He may have been a child of his times, but the child was also a father of the new India coming into being. As for *Ānandamaṭh*, though it may have the status of a novel, it functions also as a catechism for a reforming faith—a literary combination not always pulled off with unalloyed success.

Bankim was certainly no misogynist. We have seen that he was an admirer of female beauty and that he accorded an important role to (the right kind of) woman in the new India he envisaged. He was married twice, the first time to Mohini-debi, the daughter of a Nabakumar Chakrabarti. She was five and he was nearly eleven. It was the practice at the time to marry child-brides, though the girl would not be expected to fulfill her domestic and sexual responsibilites, or even live in her husband's house, until after puberty. Mohini-debi died of a fever when she was sixteen. Bankim was then prevailed upon to marry again about eight months later. This time he married Rajlakshmi-debi, the twelve-year-old daughter of a well-known family by the name of Chaudhuri. This was a proper marriage, and in time Bankim and his wife developed a close relationship. These were customary arranged marriages, of

[23]Again in *Debī Chaudhurāṇī*, for example, Bankim's penultimate novel (begun serially in *Baṅgadarśan* in the December issue of 1882), the eponymous heroine also exists in a liminal state, masked by various changes of identity as the novel progresses. In preparation for her role as dacoit queen, Bankim has her undergo a regimen parallel to Shanti's (see I, ch. 15), but in a variation of the theme of the birthing of the new woman, she combines the roles of Shanti and Kalyani, achieving a final domesticity after she has passed through the discipline of service to the needy, somewhat in the manner of a latter-day Robin Hood. Debi's tortuous transgressions of ancestral woman's *dharma* and her final reversion to a traditional domestic role are symbolic not only of the preservation of *dharma* but also of its adaptation to a changing, modern world. On traditional *dharma* for women, see Julia Leslie's *The Perfect Wife*, 1989.

course, and Bankim's experience of the one that endured in his life was positive. In an essay entitled *Uttar Carit*, he wrote of the (ideal) wife in the context of a traditional marriage as follows:[24]

> He who forsakes (*bisarjjan kare*) his own wife (*strī*) reveals what lies in his own heart. She who is one's playmate in childhood, the first teacher of the joy of life in early adolescence, the very image (*pratimā*) of the beauty of family life (*samsār*) in youth, and life's support in old age—whether one loved her or not (*bhāla bāsuk bā nā bāsuk*), who could abandon such a wife? She who serves (*dāsī*) in the home, becomes a nymph (*apsarā*) in bed, is a friend in danger, a healer in sickness, an adviser in one's work, a companion in leisure, a disciple in knowledge, and a mentor (*guru*) in virtue (*dharma*)—whether one loved her or not, who could easily forsake such a wife? She who brings comfort at home and for whom one pines when one is away, who is one's happiness in health and one's remedy in illness, who is the presiding goddess of what one earns (*arjjane je lakshmī*) and the credit of what one spends, who is prudence (*buddhi*) in adversity and one's glory in prosperity—whether one loved her or not, who could easily forsake such a wife? And if one loved her? What a terrible calamity for him who forsakes such a wife!

The ideal of the traditional marriage was a wonderful thing, and we can perhaps catch a glimpse here of Bankim's own marital situation. We see here depicted the ideal helpmeet in virtue (*sahadharmiṇī*) from Bankim's point of view. It was in contrast to this marital ideal that he explored in his novels, often in transgressive contexts, various kinds of relationships between men and women, and the instructive ways in which these relationships might develop, not least in the context of a nation in the making. In the later novels particularly, of which *Ānandamaṭh* was one, there was in this respect a strong didactic undertone to Bankim's writing.

This is not to say that there was a dearth of latent eroticism in Bankim's narratives. Bankim lived at a time when a vulgar eroticism was widespread in the effusions of popular culture (in plays, skits, narratives, songs and so on), and a coded eroticism marked the religious songs and practices of the so-called *bāuls* or *barttamān panthīs* who ranged the Bengal countryside.[25] English-educated Bengalis were perfectly familiar with both types of eroticism. Many a time in *Baṅgadarśan* Bankim was to inveigh against the indecency of at least the former type. Through *Baṅgadarśan* he wished not only to educate public

[24]Published early during his editorship of *Baṅgadarśan*, in Jyaiṣṭha 1279 (May 1872). The context is Rama's unparalleled love for Sita (and his feeling of the necessity to forsake her).

[25]See Openshaw, 2002 for an analysis of *bāul* language and culture.

opinion but also to elevate its moral tone. But this does not mean that there was no place for eroticism in his own works.

Eroticism in the popular (Hindu) Bengali imagination has a distinct function. It is not meant only to titillate—it can do this, of course—but it is also a telling symbol of potentially socially transgressive relationships that instruct, caution and, on occasion, effectively transform. This function finds its roots in the long-standing tradition of Tantra, which characterises so much of Bengali culture.[26] The characteristics of Tantra on a popular level are devotion to the Goddess, specifically in terms of her power or shakti (*śakti*) discernible, not least sexually, in women, and a discipline (*sādhanā*) to express this devotion by seeking to identify with the Goddess and express her shakti in some way in one's life. Any cognizant visitor to Bengal even today will see ample evidence of the erotic underlay of Tantra in the portrayal of the Goddess in one form or other: the naked, attractive figure of a youthful Kali, for instance, or the beaming voluptuousness of a gracious Durga, or the shapely depiction of some other goddess.[27] In certain forms of Tantra, no doubt frowned upon by the general populace, identification with the Goddess is sought in socially transgressive ways, including ritual sexual intercourse with a fertile woman who is not one's wife. The controlling agents of Tantra are men, and the nubile beauty of Bankim's leading young women may well be a reflection of the Tantric eroticism underlying Bengali culture. In this context, it provides ready-made access to the cautionary and transformative lessons of his narrative attempts to explore the social relationships between the sexes in Bengali society.

As we shall see, the Goddess makes a lasting impression in *Ānandamaṭh*, which is not without its Tantric undertones, and her shakti is manifest in the relationships of the novel's leading female characters. Let us consider but two instances. We have already encountered the *santān* Jibananda and his feisty wife Shanti, as well as another female principal, Kalyani. It is time now to introduce another prominent *santān*, the commanding figure of Bhabananda. Bhabananda is a somewhat tragic figure, and his sombre fate unfolds as the novel develops. He is not Kalyani's husband, but he becomes infatuated with her and is ready to abandon his *santān* code of practice to which he is committed, if she will requite his love. For his part, Jibananda, as a *santān*, is also committed to a celibate way of life, but he too is prepared to abandon this undertaking if Shanti agrees to be reunited with him as his wife. Both men are prepared to enter into forbidden relationships, Bhabananda on two counts: in violation of socioreligious norms (lusting after another man's wife), and of his *santān* code; and Jibananda on one count, in violation of his vow of celibacy as a *santān*, though this is a grave enough violation, for its penalty is death.

[26]For an account of Tantra's ancient pedigree in Bengal and its adjacent regions, see K Chakrabarti, 2001.

[27]The sexuality of the Goddess can manifest in more strident or less anthropomorphic forms. For a treatment of Shakti and Tantric influences on Bengali society in the context of an influential eighteenth-century Bengali saint, see McLean, 1998.

Both women, however, stand firm, each in the circumstances of her situation. "Shame!" says Shanti to her husband, when he proposes that they should live again as husband and wife, "You are a hero! The great joy of my world is that I'm a hero's wife. . . . Do not love me. I don't want that happiness. But never abandon your duty as a hero" (I, ch. 16). Kalyani too resists Bhabananda's importunities. "I will not do what you want", she says to him with a finality that is irrevocable (III, ch. 4). Both women display the shakti that, in the Tantric way of thinking, lies preordained in their *svabhāva* or basic nature as women. Though the sexual attractiveness of both women has been the occasion for transgressive acts on the part of their admirers, they are proof against their advances, and enable Bankim to accomplish his didactic purposes in the unravelling of these acts' consequences.[28]

Bankim's developing English education also opened up for him the world of English literature and Western thought. He read fairly widely in both fields; he was especially enamoured of Shakespeare and in time of Walter Scott, and he was influenced by utilitarianism and positivism, and what we may call humanist or nondoctrinal approaches to various subjects (such as those of J R Seeley and J E Renan in the interpretation of scripture). We shall have occasion to note some of these influences in due course.[29]

In other words, Bankim's formal training represented a blend of traditional Indian and Western sources. Some have maintained that it was on the basis of a Western formation that he developed his indigenous literary expertise. The leading savant of Bengali literature in the first half of the twentieth century,

[28]As the second half of the nineteenth century developed, *bhadralok* perceptions of urbanised middle-class women underwent a paradoxical transformation: on the one hand, such women were the site of a patronising discourse to emancipate them, on the other, they were depicted as a financial burden, constantly making consumerist demands on their husbands. They were both weak and strong, from a male point of view, and Bankim could draw on both strands of this image. See A Sen, 2001, 72–74; and S Sarkar, 1997, 307–8.

[29]As an indication of the high esteem in which Bankim held Shakespeare, and of what he thought of Shakespeare's fate in a Western literary context, we quote the following extract from his *Baṅgadarśan* essay, *Uttar Carit* (mentioned earlier): "Even though Shakespeare is a literary figure (*kabi*) second to none in the world, the reputation (*marjādā*) he deserves has been current for only a short time in Europe. For two hundred years after his death, no one was able to grasp the true import (*marma*) of his marvellous plays. Not one among Dryden, Pope, Johnson and others, who were themselves literary figures, and who carefully analysed Shakespeare's work, praising it to the best of their ability, was able to grasp its true import. Even Voltaire, himself an extremely important literary figure, and an intellect the likes of which have rarely been born into this world, was unable to appreciate Shakespeare's true significance (*marma*) in the least. . . . The true worth of this English poet was not first recognised in England; it was Schlegel and other Germans who created the modern reverence for Shakespeare" (Jyaiṣṭha 1279 [May 1872]); the Schlegel mentioned would be August Wilhelm von Schlegel, 1767–1845, who translated seventeen of Shakespeare's plays). It would be an interesting exercise to attempt to trace Shakespeare's influence in Bankim's work.

Rabindranath Tagore, appears to support this view in the convoluted passage translated below:

> Even though those deemed learned in our country during the first era of English education (*iṅgreji śikṣā*) were completely at home in the use of English in their studies, correspondence, and conversation, and even though in the English-educated mind of the time the power (*aiśvarja*) of its thought and the shaping of its sentiments (*bhābraser āyojan*) arose primarily through the inspiration (*preraṇā*) of English, nevertheless the Bengali authors of the day never ceased to believe that the most they could do through an alien tongue was to gather rays of light, whereas the dawning light (*prabhāt ālo*) of self-expression could be spread only by one's own language. . . . We see two shining examples . . . of this simple fact during the early creation of our new literature. . . . As does Madhusudan [Datta] where poetry is concerned, so Bankimcandra lies at the inception of the opening up of a path for modern Bengali prose literature. . . . Needless to say, his mind was inspired (*anuprāṇita*) primarily by English education. The stimulus (*prarocanā*) he derived from English literary prose he sought first to shape in terms of the English tongue. But it didn't take him long to realise the futility of this attempt. Nevertheless, in so far as he derived real cultural value from foreign education, it was able to draw him, in his search for his own fulfillment, towards his native tongue. Just as the cascading stream of a distant mountaintop, when it leaves its stony bosom and flows through inhabited places makes the fields surrounding its banks fruitful with crops and fruits derived from their own soil, so Bankimcandra made the new teaching fruitful by the gift he bestowed through the nature of his own language. (*BcJ*: 71)

But where Bankim is concerned, the judgement that lies embedded here, that his Bengali literary prowess arose out of an English education, is highly questionable. We have seen that his earliest literary efforts of note, begun in early adolescence and fairly substantial in output, were in Bengali. It was not long before he nurtured his indigenous literary roots by scholastic contact with the Bhatpara pundits and careful study of the Sanskrit works in the library gifted to him. Surely there was a strong indigenous base here for his later literary development in Bengali.

It is true that his first attempt at novel writing was in English, the ill-fated *Rajmohan's Wife,* written in 1864 and published serially in the English weekly *Indian Field.* "Ill-fated" because it sank without trace, and was consigned by its own author to literary oblivion. It seems that Tagore was right when he observed that "it didn't take [Bankim] long to realise the futility of such an attempt"—to write in what was not his mother tongue. Indeed, this

tends to confirm the view that Bankim's main literary base was not his English education. Bankim had the sense to realise that this experiment was a non-starter, and he never made such an attempt again.

There could be no doubt, of course, that Bankim was fluent in English. He could not be adjudged successful in his job in the civil service by his political masters, which he was, unless this were so. He received several indications of functional approval in this regard. Further, his polemical English style was perfectly adequate for his purposes. He could turn a phrase, or deliver a barb of scathing criticism, to very good effect. But writing a novel is a very different thing. As Tagore intimates, it is a form of self-expression, of baring one's soul. And the English were not Bankim's soul mates. Behind the writing of novels, Bankim had a vision in mind. This vision was inchoate at first, and took shape in time. But in retrospect it could be described as messianic: helping lead his people into a new era of speech and polity. By definition this project could be attempted only in the mother tongue. What Bankim sensed was the right approach in the first instance, with success gradually formed into a conviction. This is why Bankim turned out to be his own most ruthless critic when it came to writing a novel in English.

To be precise, *Rajmohan's Wife* is more a novelette than a novel, written when Bankim was about twenty-six.[30] The story is set in the rural Bengal of the time and is a melodramatic account of romance and skulduggery in the households of an extended *jamidāri* family. Many of the traits of Bankim's later (Bengali) novels are present: beautiful women, forbidden passion, family treachery, self-sacrificing love, dastardly dacoits (bandits), the loving attention to descriptive detail of nature and human emotions, the flashes of caustic wit and penetrative humour with regard to Bengali family life. Though the plot sustains interest by its twists and turns, not much attention is paid to the development of character. It reads somewhat like a *Boys' Own* adventure story.

[30] "Novelette" in both senses of the term, that is, it is only about eighty-seven pages long and has twenty-one short chapters with a conclusion, and it is in the style of a light romance. It was first reprinted in the centenary edition of Bankim's works, edited by Brajendra Nath Banerji and Sajani Kanta Das. In their preface, the editors point out that the novel was at first believed to have been lost, when by pure chance all but the first three chapters were discovered in the bindings of another publication. The first three chapters were added in a circuitous way. "At a later period of his life Bankim himself had begun to prepare a Bengali version of his first novel. But he did not proceed further than the first seven chapters of the English original". This incomplete work was then carried to completion by Bankim's nephew, Sachish Chandra Chatterjee, writing in his own style. "It is by means of Mr Brajendra Nath Banerji's English version of the first three chapters of [Sachish Chandra Chatterjee's] Bengali book that the missing beginning of Bankim's English novel has been supplied". So *Rajmohan's Wife* as published in the centenary edition "thus comprises Bankim's own original English from Chapter IV to the 'Conclusion', and an English rendering of Bankim's Bengali version from Chapter I to III". The whole has more recently been reprinted in *Bankim Racanavali (vol. III)*, edited by J C Bagal, 1969.

Throughout one gets the impression that the author is trying a little too hard to show his proficiency in English (so that the result is a forced mastery *over,* instead of a mastery *of,* the language).

Here is an extract from *Rajmohan's Wife* (quoted from *BcJ*: 70–71):

> The recent shower had lent to the morning a delightful and invigorating freshness. Leaving the mass of floating clouds behind, the sun advanced and careered on the vast blue plain that shone above; and every house-top and every tree-top, the cocoa-palm and the date-palm, the mango and the acacia received the flood of splendid light and rejoiced. The still-lingering water-drops on the leaves of trees and creepers glittered and shone like a thousand radiant gems as they received the slanting rays of the luminary. Through the openings in the thick-knit boughs of the groves glanced the mild ray on the moistened grass beneath. The newly awakened and joyous birds raised their thousand dissonant voices, while at intervals the *papia* sent forth its rich thrilling notes into the trembling air . . .

and so on. This is turgid stuff, even by the standards of early Victorian writing, and is typical of the novel as a whole.[31] It was to Bankim's credit that he realised, after the sustained attempt of writing this novel, that for the deep reasons of self-expression intimated above, it would not do. So he took recourse to the medium that became his element—Bengali. I do not think that he started his novel-writing career in English because he found it a comfortable starting point. Rather, and this may not have been clear to him at the time, he made the attempt in order to quash an insidious doubt, the more firmly to embark on what progressively proved to be a sustainable course of literary action. His English novel was thus a more or less deliberate exercise in futility. On the matter of his literary resources, then, we can conclude by saying that Bankim's base was an indigenous one, complemented by the training and knowledge he derived from his English education, or perhaps that this base was formed by an integral combination of indigenous and Western elements. But I do not think that we can give priority here to his English education.

In fact he was a pioneer, the doyen in the making, of what proved to be

[31]Or consider the following passage, taken from chapter 10. The brutal Rajmohan is speaking to his wife, the heroine of the story: " 'Woman', he said fiercely, 'deceive me not. Canst thou? Thou little knowest how I have watched thee; how from the earliest day that thy beauty became thy curse, I have followed every footstep of thine—caught every look that shot from thine eyes . . . ' " and so on. The reader is a little taken aback here by the sudden turn to the archaic form of "you". In fact, it seems that Bankim failed because he tried too hard to conform to a perceived Victorian style, rather than allowing his attempt to write creatively in English to be a *liberative* experience by adapting his English to the genius of Bengali language and context. Perhaps this loss of nerve was conditioned to some extent by his relative youthfulness and inexperience. For an analysis of the theme of Indians writing novels in English, see Prasad, 1999.

the invention of a new Bengali literary style. He was caught up in the excitement of the times, and would not abandon this role lightly. His junior contemporary, Rameshcandra Datta (1848–1909), who became a well-known historian and novelist in his own right, recounts an incident in which he once met up with Bankim in the first half of 1872:

> At the time Baṅkim-bābu was about to bring out *Baṅgadarśan.*[32] The paper first came out from a printing press in Bhabānīpur, and Baṅkim-bābu was always about the place. My home was near the press, and, needless to say, when Baṅkim-bābu arrived I would go to meet him. One day we were talking about Bengali literature, and of course I praised his novels. Baṅkim-bābu asked me, "Since you have such a devotion and love for Bengali books, why don't you write in Bengali yourself?" I was nonplussed. I said, "Well, because I know nothing about writing in Bengali. In my English College it was the custom to bluff our Bengali teacher, so I didn't learn Bengali well. I never learned how to compose in Bengali (*bāṅgālā racanāpaddhati*)". Baṅkim-bābu replied in a solemn voice, "Well, what is composing [in Bengali]? You are educated young men (*tomrā śikṣita jubak*). Whatever you write will become the way to compose. It is all of you who will shape the language". These momentous words always remained alive in my mind, and three years later I published [the novel] *Baṅgabijetā,* my first endeavour in the Bengali language. (*BcJ*: 167–68)

Bankim makes a significant remark in the passage above: "You are educated young men". English education certainly had its uses: It could give content and form to one's indigenous base. It could help one come to terms with the ruffling winds of modernity. Bankim himself had been deeply influenced by these forces. It was his susceptibility to the principles of utilitarianism and positivism in particular which paradoxically helped him formulate a revisionary ideology in due course. By the time he was having his conversation with Ramesh Datta, his perception of British rule was becoming increasingly critical. He was about thirty-four years old, and had been working for the British in the Bengal Civil Service for about fourteen years, having been moved some eight times by then from place to place in the line of duty. He had had ample opportunity to observe British practices from close quarters in the context of the new thought flowing in from the West.

In the *Baṅgadarśan* of December 1872 (Pauṣ 1279), in an article entitled *Baṅgadeśer Kṛṣak* (The Cultivators of Bengal), he takes the British to task for the ineptitude of their justice where the poor peasant is concerned. "British officials have not deliberately inflicted harm on their subjects. . . . Unfortunately, they are foreigners, and because they are not specifically aware of the

[32]"Bābu" is a a respectful way of referring to a Bengali gentleman.

circumstances of this land, they have fallen into error at every step. Because they have fallen into error, they have promulgated all these harmful laws. . . . There are laws, but why isn't the offending landlord punished by the law? There are courts, but why is the guilty landlord always victorious in these courts? . . . What kind of law is it that punishes only the weak and is ineffective when it comes to the powerful?"

There is no doubt that Bankim was deeply influenced by the egalitarianism underlying the principles of utilitarian philosophy (this he derived from reading Bentham as well as James and John Stuart Mill). This sense of egalitarianism helped him to disassociate himself from the inhumane excesses of the traditional caste system, leaving him free to formulate a new ideology of caste whereby traditional divisions could be transcended for a collective cause. In this sense he deconstructed, that is, deabsolutised caste to some extent, giving it a utilitarian basis, though the counterbalance here was a tendency to regard the Brahmin as the "natural leader" of the regenerative movement (a Comtean idea). We shall see this ideology at work to some extent in *Anandamath.* Though a belief in a common humanity for all was to remain with him till the end of his life, it was progressively diluted by his growing adherence to a somewhat exclusivist sense of Hindu cultural and religious identity. Like others of the Bengali intelligentsia of the time, he was prepared to express this adherence in generic terms. In the course of his review (*Bangadarśan,* March 1873/Caitra 1279) of Rajnarain Basu's well-known disquisition *Hindudharmer Śreṣṭhatā* (The Superiority of the Hindu Religion), he observes: "We are Hindus; we are not members of a particular sect (*kona sampradāybhukta nahi*). I did not say this in support of a particular sect, I said this in support of the Hindu race (*hindu jāti*)".[33] We shall see presently how this procrustean sense of identity was exacerbated overtly by confrontation with British insensitivity, and residually by a felt long-standing alienation from representatives of Islam. Once again, *Anandamath* gives disturbing evidence of these ethnocultural oppositions.

But the reconstructed *dharma* or religious way of life Bankim was formulating for the "Hindu race" was not a religion of words only; more important, it was a religion of works. This is where two sources in particular were of presiding importance. One source was of fairly recent Western provenance: the positivism of Auguste Comte (1798–1857), augmented by utilitarian insights.[34] The other source had flashed intermittently as a guiding star in the Hindu Sanskritic firmament for about two thousand years: the *Bhagavad Gītā.*

[33]In the reviewer's opinion Basu's work was not a defence of traditional Hindu religiosity, but an attempt to Hinduise the image of Brahmoism, or to put it differently, to see Brahmo ideas as the quintessence of Hinduism.

[34]"John Stuart Mill's two critical essays on Positivism, appearing first in the *Westminster Review* in 1865 and then as a book, can probably claim the greatest responsibility for establishing Comte's ideas in England and in India"; Forbes, 1975, 17. For an analysis which sees positivist influence as pervasive in Bankim's thought, see Jasodhara Bagchi's article, "Positivism and Nationalism," 1985.

"Comte", as Amales Tripathi observes, "was no mere 'explainer' of phenomena . . . but 'a reformer of thought for the sake of action' ".[35] Bankim was won over by, among other things, the empiricist temper of much of Comte's thought, by his stress on human well-being as the focus of religious reform (which should take place without violent social upheaval, by allowing the husk of outmoded cultural practices to fall away), and by the call to action of his religion of humanity. Bankim had come under a guarded influence of positivism while still an undergraduate at Presidency College in Calcutta.[36] In positivism he saw an endorsement for a morality of detachment in the world for the benefit of humanity. But, mutatis mutandis, this is precisely what he interpreted one of the main teachings of his other presiding source, the *Bhagavad Gītā,* to be. There was thus a powerful convergence of views for a certain way of living in the world—selfless action for the sake of human welfare—from both his guiding sources. This was perhaps the cornerstone of the revisionary ideology he was constructing.[37]

But the *Gītā* had one advantage for Bankim over his Western sources. It inculcated belief in and devotion to a real God—positivism and utilitarianism seemed at best agnostic in this respect—who had made an exemplary descent (*avatāra*) into the world in the person of Krishna Vasudeva in order to embody his teaching of selfless action for the welfare not only of humanity but also of all living beings (see the concept of *lokasaṃgraha* in *Gītā* 3.25). The *Gītā* was more universal in its salvific scope than Western philosophical thought or religion. Further, its teaching was expressed in language and imagery with which Hindus could feel at home. It could be interpreted to endorse a spiritual discipline of an integral yoga of knowledge, action and love whereby "human happiness lay in the fullest possible development of human faculties, which, when directed to God, involved sublimation of egoism" (Tripathi, 1965, 171). Bankim went on to argue that this development led one to see God as indwelling the world, so that the love of God in its proper sense implied unselfish

[35]"Bankim Chandra and Extremist Thought" (Part 1), in *Bengal Past and Present,* July–December 1965, 176.

[36]"At Presidency, Bankim became friendly with three men who later exhibited a deep interest in Positivism—Jogendro Chandra Ghosh, Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, and Hem Chandra Banerjee. These four, sometimes with others, frequently met in Jogendro's home to discuss Positivism and other intellectual topics"; Forbes, 1975, 129. Still, it is doubtful whether Bankim directly read widely from Comte's own works.

[37]Thus we can see why John Seeley's popular book on Christ, *Ecce Homo* (1865), attracted him: "In this survey of Christ's life and mission, [Seeley] sought to reconcile the Positivist faith in science and the conception of a Church of Humanity with Christianity seen as an international ethical society. . . . Seeley saw the welfare and progress of mankind as the whole point of Christianity"; Wormell, 1980, 22, 24.

love of self, the other, community, society, country, and the whole world, in an ascending order of integrated service. One can see here the scope for selfless political action in the service of one's country.[38]

These ideas were already beginning to take shape in *Ānandamaṭh*. This is why Bankim included from the very first edition of the novel, as an epigraph to the text, the following extract from *Bhagavad Gītā*, chapter 12 (the embodiment of the Godhead, Krishna, is speaking):

> Those who are devoted to Me, who have offered up all their works to Me,
> Who worship Me with minds fixed, seeking no other way,
> I soon become their Deliverer, Partha—those whose minds abide in Me—
> From the ocean of repeated death.
> Fix your senses only on Me, set your mind on Me,
> Then most surely you will abide in Me.
> But if you are unable to meditate steadily on Me,
> Then seek to attain Me by disciplined practice. (vv. 6–9)

We see here inculcated the path and the goal of the selfless *bhakti* or dedicated service to God, which in Bankim's interpretation must infuse every human endeavour in the new order. Within the decade Bankim would bring these ideas to a form of maturity in his two Bengali treatises, *Kṛṣṇacaritra* (Part 1 published as a book in 1886, and the complete work in 1892) and *Dharmatattva* (1888), and in his unfinished Bengali commentary on the *Gītā*.[39] *Kṛṣṇacaritra*, "The Life of Krishna", is a protracted attempt to educe a historical Krishna from the welter of mythological material accumulating around the figure of Krishna Vasudeva from the time of the Vedas (ca. 1200 BCE).[40] Bankim professed firm belief in the divinity of Krishna, or rather in Krishna as the chief human manifestation of the transcendent Godhead, but the aim of this treatise

[38]In the next generation of Hindu reformers, these ideas: selfless service in the cause of human material and spiritual progress, with special reference to the "motherland", and Krishna, the human embodiment of the divine, as a moral exemplar—based on an interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gītā* in the light of positivist and utilitarian insights—were to coalesce in the concept of the *karmayogin*, the ideal human moral agent for the regeneration of India. As it developed, there were at least three aspects to this concept: first, the *karmayogin* is an activist, who acts selflessly (that is, out of *niṣkāma karma*); second, the *karmayogin* acts according to *svadharma*, that is, his sense of duty (whatever this might be interpreted to mean); and third, the *karmayogin* acts effectively, that is, on the basis of discerning what has to be done, and then doing it. This was a concept in a "Hindu" mould, and Bankim played a part, in his discursive and narrative writings, in formulating a basis for it. There is a discussion on the *karmayogin* theme in King, 1980, and in Raychaudhuri, unpublished paper. Bankim himself does not articulate a concept of the *karmayogin*.

[39]Part of this commentary was published in the journal *Pracār* from 1886 to 1888, though the whole of the (incomplete) text was published in 1902. See Harder, 2001.

[40]There is an English translation of this text by P Bhattacharya, 1991.

is to discern a historical Krishna, shorn of supernatural and carnivalesque attributes and fit to be the ethical and heroic ideal of the diverse Hindu India he envisaged.

Ashis Nandy summarises this project as follows:

> What Madhusudan sought to do in the context of the Rāmāyaṇa, Bankimchandra sought to do in the context of the Mahābhārata and the five Purāṇas dealing with Kṛṣṇa. He tried to build a historical and a historically conscious Kṛṣṇa . . . not only to locate Kṛṣṇa in history, but to argue away all references to Kṛṣṇa's character traits unacceptable to the new norms relating to sexuality, politics and social relationships. . . . Bankimchandra did not adore Kṛṣṇa as a child-god or as a playful—sometimes sexually playful—adolescent who was simultaneously an androgynous, philosophically sensitive, practical idealist. His Kṛṣṇa was a respectable, righteous, didactic, "hard" god, protecting the glories of Hinduism as a proper religion and preserving it as an internally consistent moral and cultural system.[41]

For Bankim, then, Krishna was not just a religio-moral exemplar, a superior rival to his counterparts in Islam and Christianity. Rather, he invested Krishna's life with the attributes of a master narrative in the sense that it "reveals and exemplifies the central organizing principles of a culture. . . . For what is being judged [by it] is not a poet, not a sect, not a religion, but the self-presentation of Hindu civilization, what Hinduism has thought of itself".[42] Nevertheless, the ecumenical fallout of this competitive Hindu ideal in a nascent nation-state—a challenge to Islamic and Christian exemplars—invites scrutiny, not least in a sociopolitical context.

The objective of *Dharmatattva* (The Essence of Dharma), on the other hand, is to analyse in a predominantly Hindu context what makes for rounded, personal development (*anuśilan*) and how to express this with integrity in the modern world. In simplified terms, the themes of *Dharmatattva* and *Kṛṣṇacaritra* in Bankim's thought are complementary, the one arguing for the making of a perfect moral individual, the other showing how this was embodied in the ideal exemplar, itself embedded in the tradition of a people (but, in actual fact, in that of only a majority of the nation in the making). But it is not our purpose to enter more fully into this discussion—just to say that Bankim was completing a process of thought through these texts, cardinal aspects of which were being shaped and illustrated through the narrative form of *Ānandamaṭh*. We have already considered some of these, such as the role of women, selfless service to one's country as a crucial phase of a wider devotion to an all-pervasive divine being, a formulation of *sanātana dharma* or the eternal Hindu religious

[41]*The Intimate Enemy*, 1983: 23–24.

[42]Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness* (abbr. UC), 1995, 79–80.

code, and a coalescing Hindu identity in contradistinction to foreign intrusiveness—all in the context of an emergent nation. We shall have more to say on this objective later.

On December 15, 1873, when Bankim was stationed as deputy magistrate at Baharampur in Murshidabad District (mid-Bengal), he encountered an expression of British hauteur whose consequences provide a good illustration of Bankim's mettle and the effect British rule must have had on him personally.[43] No doubt this personal alienation played its part in Bankim's attitude towards the British in the pages of *Ānandamaṭh*. Bankim, as was his custom, was returning home from work in a palanquin. His path would lead him along a field on which, on the day in question, a game of cricket was being played. One of the players, a Lt. Col. Duffin, approached Bankim, and unaware of who he was, insisted that he take another route. Bankim declined, whereupon in the presence of British and Indian witnesses the lieutenant colonel assaulted him. Outraged, Bankim took Duffin to court. The case created a sensation in the region and was even reported in the Calcutta press. Bankim demanded an unequivocal apology and, as the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta (January 15, 1874) reported, "The apology was made in due form in open Court where about a thousand spectators, native and European, were assembled". The noble sport of cricket, like the politics of the Raj, was supposed to be a benign expression of fair play, yet the history of both games in the subcontinent has proved to be a wonderful source of controversy for their inventors.

Thus by the time Bankim was ready to write *Ānandamaṭh*, his life's trajectory was already determined in a Bengal whose nationalist aspirations had been primed to receive the novel in ways that would change the course of Indian history. The prospect of a new dawn for an Indian nation with representative control of its own political affairs had already been mooted. In this context, Bankim was a leading thinker amongst an increasingly influential set who saw the need to develop a consolidated, somewhat standoffish sense of Hindu identity. He had become one of Bengal's most prominent celebrities, and the readers of his novels and satires, in particular, waited upon his every word.[44] He had founded one of the premier literary journals in Bengal, to which he and other intellectuals contributed a ceaseless flow of ideas, predominantly with a Hindu bias, it is true, for the development of a more mature

[43]This was perhaps the most dramatic of a number of such incidents.

[44]Towards the end of 1874, subscription to *Baṅgadarśan* seems to have peaked at 2,000, a large number for such a journal at the time. Several of his novels had been enacted on the public stage, and had seen a number of printings and editions. As a satirist he was perhaps best known for the work *Kamalākānter Daptar* (Kamalkanta's Notebook), which he published in instalments (to which others occasionally contributed) in *Baṅgadarśan* from August 1873. *Kamalākānter Daptar* was Bankim's laboratory of thought, the arena to explore an alter ego, unspoken fantasies, hidden aspirations, suppressed anxieties; it is also a wonderful site for humour, satire and parody. One of these experiments was of major consequence for *Ānandamaṭh*, as we shall see.

Indian polity. He had established himself as a *deśpremik*, a patriot who would challenge the foreigner.[45] Distinguished by reputation and distinguished in appearance—grey-haired, with high forehead and piercing eyes, a finely etched nose, a firm mouth with slim lips, and a somewhat dimpled chin—he was pioneering a new literary yet populist Bengali writing style with unprecedented success. Bankim poured these energies into the writing of *Ānandamaṭh*.

❁ *The Making of a Text* ❁

Sir William Wilson Hunter, in his celebrated *Annals of Rural Bengal* (first published in 1860), writes as follows:

> Tigers and wild elephants were not the most cruel enemies of the peasant. The English found Bengal in the hands of banditti, and the names of successful leaders of the last century, such as Strong-fisted Khan [note: Zabbar-dast Khan], to be found in every native history, tell a story of rapine and oppression not difficult to read. . . . Bands of cashiered soldiers, the dregs of the Mussulman armies, roamed about, plundering as they went. . . . Lawlessness breeds lawlessness, and the miserable peasantry, stripped of their hoard for the winter, were forced to become plunderers in turn. Early in 1771 . . . [t]hey formed themselves into bands of so-called houseless devotees [note: Sanyassis], and roved about the country in armies fifty thousand strong. "A set of lawless banditti," wrote the Council in 1773, "known under the name of Sanyasis or Faquirs, have long infested these countries; and, under pretence of religious pilgrimage, have been accustomed to traverse the chief part of Bengal, begging, stealing, and plundering. . . .". In the years subsequent to the famine, their ranks were swollen by a crowd of starving peasants . . . and the cold weather of 1772 brought them down upon the harvest fields of Lower Bengal, burning, plundering, ravaging. . . . The collectors called out the military; but after a temporary success our Sepoys "were at length totally defeated, and Captain Thomas (their leader), with almost the whole party, cut off". . . . On 31st March 1773, Warren Hastings plainly acknowledges that the commander who had succeeded Captain Thomas "unhappily underwent the same fate".[46]

We have quoted from Hunter, rather than from a number of more recent studies of these events, because it was largely on Hunter's account, coupled

[45]This had emerged with greatest impact to this point in his third Bengali novel *Mṛṇālinī*, published in 1869, where he decries the Muslim invasion of Bengal. We shall return to this concern in due course.

[46]1897, seventh edition, 69–71.

with G R Gleig's *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Hon. Warren Hastings* (the governor-general appointed to oversee the East India Company's affairs at the time), that Bankim relied for the historical outlines of his story.[47]

This is an important extract, first, because it contains some of the raw data Bankim used, but also because like all histories it gives a particular slant to the role played by some of the chief participants involved: the British, the Muslims, and not least, the peasants and the so-called *sannyāsīs* or renouncers. Hunter's account was constructed from a particular point of view, with a particular project in mind. In due course we shall comment on the constructions Bankim made, but in important respects he took a different tack from Hunter's. Each was in the business of making his own tryst with history.

So far as it is possible to discern, an "objective" account of actual events is not crucial for our purposes. Bankim was not attempting a conventional history. I doubt too if we could call *Ānandamaṭh* a "historical novel"; he never accepted such terms. But it is useful to note the following data: the novel is set in Bengal about a hundred years before it was written, at the time of the famine of 1770 and its aftermath. This catastrophe was well known to succeeding generations of Bengalis as the great famine of '76, that is, 1176 of the Bengali era (*chiyāttarer manvantar*), the date corresponding to a specific period in 1770 in the Western calendar. Bankim's younger brother, Purnacandra, tells how a great-uncle used to recount the awful events.[48] But associated with this famine were the activities of bands of itinerant renouncers, *sannyāsīs* and *fakirs*, who on occasion were reputed to number up to as many as fifty thousand men. They could be troublesome to various authorities in the region: the big *jamidārs* or landholders who were deputed to collect revenue, and the two groups to whom they answered, the now largely titular local Muslim rulers and the British of the East India Company, between whom the apportioning of this revenue was a major bone of contention. The East India Company had been awarded the *dewanee* or rights to trade and collect revenue on behalf of the now titular Mughal emperor (*Bādśāh*) in Delhi through the agency of the local Muslim rulers. An agreed sum of this revenue went to the nominal rulers

[47]So much so that Bankim added two appendices to the third edition of *Ānandamaṭh*, quoting from each source.

[48]"Several of us boys from the family first heard of the famine of '76 from our aged paternal great-uncle (*khullapitāmaha*). He had a special aptitude for narrating stories. He described to us how from small beginnings the famine assumed a terrible form and devastated Bengal. Various kinds of affliction appeared when Bengal was in this state till finally robbery and dacoity began. I had forgotten this account, but not so my older brother (*agraja*) [Bankim], because I heard the story again from his lips during the Orissa famine of 1866. I believe he had wanted to write a novel based on the famine of '76 for a long time, but he didn't do this when he was young, somewhat late in life he wrote *Ānandamaṭh*" (quoted on p. 4 of the editorial preface to the Baṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat edition [abbr. *A(BSP)*] of the novel).

(and *jamidārs*), and the British kept the major portion as compensation for their pains.[49]

The renouncer bands who traversed the countryside journeyed through much of the Bengal of the time. This included the regions of Birbhum and Barendrabhumi, areas in mid and northeastern greater Bengal, where the novel is set. More about the locations presently. The venerable monk who is leader of the rebellion against the Muslims and British in the novel, Satyananda, distinguishes between two kinds of rebel or *santān*: "There are two kinds of *santān*—those who have been initiated and those who have not. The latter are either householders or beggars. They appear when it's time to do battle, and after they've received their share of the loot or some other reward, they go away. But those who are initiates have renounced everything. They are the leaders of our Order" (Part II, ch. 4). Only the second kind of *santān*, the noninitiates, resemble the historical itinerants mentioned above. They are not the heroes of the story. The heroes are the first kind of *santān*, the initiates, all upper-class Hindus, relatively few in number, literate, disciplined, and imbued with a specific patriotic purpose. They had taken a solemn vow to give up family life until their objective had been accomplished. The penalty for transgressing that vow was death. They could with justification be called *sannyāsīs* or renouncers.

The itinerants, on the other hand, who included Muslims (*fakirs*) who usually but not always moved about in separate bands, made regular journeys through the eastern Indian countryside, ostensibly on pilgrimage to various sites, exacting sustenance and tolls from the villages they encountered.[50] They were far more disparate in composition than the initiated *santāns* of our story. As Hunter's description correctly states, they included disbanded or cashiered soldiers, and various kinds of opportunistic hangers-on. Some of them hired themselves out as temporary mercenaries to various local feuding groups. On occasion they plundered the revenue collected at one stage or another of the revenue chain. Even many of the regular holy men were not above indulging in some of the pleasures of this world, such as the smoking of *ganja* and entering into marital or extramarital unions.[51] As can be imagined, these assertive bands did not commend themselves to the three sets of authority mentioned earlier. They were viewed as disruptive of settled village life and hence

[49]"[B]y 1765 an independent government of Bengal had virtually no existence. The Nawabs and their ministers were appointed by the Company. The Company had disbanded much of the Nawab's army, while accepting for itself exclusive responsibility for the defence of the provinces and exercising the right to appropriate the lion's share of the resources of Bengal for its own use" (Marshall, 1987, 89).

[50]These *fakirs* belonged, at least nominally, to various Sufi orders.

[51]The *sannyāsīs* tended to follow Śaivite or Tantric teachings, whereas the initiated *santāns* belonged to a kind of Vaiṣṇava order (see Part II, ch. 4, and further in this introduction).

of the revenue-collecting process, and were branded, in short, as marauders, banditti, and plunderers. The British in particular, who stood to lose most by their often predatory activities, made a sustained attempt to disband them, usually by force of arms.[52]

But under normal conditions at least, that is, before famine set in, the *sannyāsī* and *fakir* bands could not simply be dismissed as marauders unpopular with the local villagers. The picture was more subtle than that. Since the authorities were at loggerheads amongst themselves, those lower down the hierarchy, anxious to obfuscate their attempts to collect the revenue so as to retain more of it for themselves, regularly misreported and exaggerated the depredations of the itinerant bands. The villagers, for their part, not infrequently gave tacit if not active support to the itinerants, out of respect for the latter's profession and resentment towards their own tax collectors. But during times of hardship, such as that of the famine, the picture became even more complicated. The ranks of the itinerants were swelled by starving and desperate villagers ready to aid the former so as to resist the attempts of the British to disband them, since there was some hope for survival through the force of numbers. Thus during the famine, the *sannyāsīs* of the Sannyasi Rebellion or Insurrection were a far cry from the heroic band of initiates of Bankim's novel. They provided the background for a certain movement of resistance against Muslim and British authority, but could hardly act as an inspiration for the disciplined code of practice or patriotic motivation of the *santāns* of the Mother/motherland.[53]

However, there may well have been another source of inspiration for Bankim in depicting the *santāns*, one closer to the ideals he had in mind. This was the activity in the final period of his life of a Marathi revolutionary named Vasudeo Balvant Phadke (1845–1883).[54] The paternal grandfather of Phadke, a Citpāvan Brahmin, had sought unsuccessfully to resist the British, who forced him to vacate his stronghold in the district of which he was the ruling figure. This set the scene for Phadke's increasing antagonism towards the British. After he finished school, a series of uninspiring office jobs prompted Phadke to turn

[52]Just as this phenomenon of groups of assertive religious itinerants regularly traversing the Bengal countryside eventually came to an end (by the close of the eighteenth century, largely as a result of British countermeasures), so it had had a beginning. This was well before the time of British ascendancy in the region. In fact, militant asceticism in the subcontinent in the form of warrior-monks has a centuries-long history. See Pinch, 1996. In his reference to *Ānandamaṭh*, however, Pinch confuses the issue by not distinguishing between the initiated and uninitiated *santāns* of the story (145–46).

[53]For more detailed information on the itinerants, see J M Ghosh, 1930, and Chandra, 1977. Since the former relies principally on data provided by British sources of the time, it presents a British point of view, whereas the latter has an ideological axe to grind in the opposite direction, and is ridden with typographical mistakes. Nevertheless, using both accounts in conjunction with one another can give an informative picture of what happened.

[54]For information on Phadke, see Singh, 2000, and *AMcb*: esp. 9–30.

to religion. While he was still a relatively young man working in Poona (now Pune), he was refused permission by his British employer to visit his dying mother. Though Phadke went anyway, he arrived late; his mother had already died. Phadke's sense of grievance against the British increased, and this was exacerbated by wider issues, such as the condition of the poor peasants in the Deccan and the dire straits to which many were reduced in the regional famine of 1876–1877. He held the British authorities accountable for these conditions, and before long began to speak out publicly against British rule. He argued that unless the British were expelled, by force if necessary, his compatriots would be unable to develop in the freedom to which they were entitled.

Phadke now separated from his wife, so as to pursue his revolutionary goal more singlemindedly. He became the leader of a somewhat undisciplined group of followers drawn from a variety of uneducated and poor backgrounds. Their aim was to collect money—by looting from the wealthy, if necessary—raise an army, spread panic among the British, isolate various parts of the country by disrupting railway and telegraph lines, and break open the jails in order to increase their numbers.

Phadke's first dacoity (or act of banditry) was perpetrated in February 1879. Evading capture in the jungles, he became more and more of a desperado, and when the British authorities learned that he intended to loot the regional treasury they began to take serious notice. This was heightened by a proclamation he issued in the city of Poona that made a number of demands of the British government, including jobs for unemployed peasants and the reduction of taxes as well as the salaries of senior British government officers. If these demands were not met, the proclamation warned, the revolutionaries would begin to plunder "European" establishments, raise a powerful force and attack and kill "Europeans", not excepting the governor himself. During these activities Phadke presented a striking picture. Resolving to sacrifice everything, even his life, for his country, he became known generally as a militant *sannyāsī*, though he was called Maharaj by his followers: "[T]here was a rosary of wooden beads (*rudrākṣer mālā*) around his neck, he wore earrings, his long black hair was bound in a turban (*pheṭā*), and his long beard fell upon his chest. He was five foot ten inches in height. A sword hung continually from his waist" (*AMcb*: 10).

Phadke was eventually captured in late July 1879, and was tried for dacoity and seditious agitation. He was found guilty and was sentenced to transportation for life. The most damning pieces of evidence against him were a diary and short autobiography he had written. He died in prison in Aden, suffering from tuberculosis, on February 17, 1883. These are the bare bones of a life that began in obscurity but whose last year in India, at least, was full of incident and publicity.

Though there is no direct evidence that Bankim was cognizant of Phadke, it is hardly conceivable that a politically aware individual such as Bankim was oblivious of the events of the latter's turbulent life. For much of the latter half

of 1879, Phadke's activities received wide publicity. In fact, they had been discussed in both Houses of Parliament in Britain towards the end of May, not to mention *The Times* of London and other British newspapers.[55] The Indian newspapers, both vernacular and English, in Bengal and elsewhere, carried accounts of his doings, arrest and sentencing. Both his diary and autobiography had been published and extensively quoted before the year was out. Of special importance was a long, generally sympathetic, editorial on Phadke in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta, of November 13, 1879.[56] This quoted extracts from his autobiography and depicted him as a misguided yet genuine patriot; this was the same newspaper that had reported with such relish on Bankim's successful extraction in court of a full apology from Duffin for assault on the cricket ground, over five years previously. That Bankim, deputy magistrate and political watcher, had not followed the whole of Phadke's case carefully is hard to believe.

But did Phadke and his activities influence the writing of *Ānandamaṭh*? Let us first look at the dates. The publicity of Phadke's story in India had reached a climax by late 1879. On July 15, 1880, Bankim wrote a letter in English to Nabincandra Sen (Keshabcandra Sen's older brother), thanking the latter for dedicating a poem to him. In the letter he adds: "I have, however, got through . . . a novel—so to call it—but I have not the slightest idea when the latter will be ready for publication" (*BcJ*: 533). This novel was *Ānandamaṭh*. From his observation it is clear that the novel was still in draft form. Somewhat later—perhaps six months or so—when Aksaycandra Sarkar paid a visit to Bankim's house, Bankim invited him to read an episode from the novel from a notebook.[57] This implies that the novel was still subject to editorial attention on Bankim's part. We shall return to Aksaycandra's testimony in another context. The point here is that there seems to be little doubt that *Ānandamaṭh* had not reached anything like completion before the climactic events of Phadke's life in 1879. So, in view of the timing, the revolutionary could well have been an influence on the writing of *Ānandamaṭh*. The question that remains is, was he?

The author of *AMcb* has mounted a detailed argument to show that various features of the novel were influenced by the life of Phadke (21–30). These include a similarity between (1) the personalities and patriotic goals of Phadke and Satyananda (the leader of the *santāns*), (2) the backgrounds of the two times (famine, peasant distress and revolt), (3) the levelling of caste differences in both contexts, (4) the somewhat unruly behaviour of Phadke's followers and of the uninitiated *santāns* (in marked contrast to the self-

[55]On the subject of publicity, see *AMcb*: 15–19.

[56]It is quoted in full under Appendix 2 in *AMcb*: 60–63.

[57]This happened when Bankim was still deputy magistrate at Hugli and had not yet been transferred to Howrah, which took place on February 14, 1881.

sacrificing principles of the chief protagonists of both stories) and other specific matters.[58]

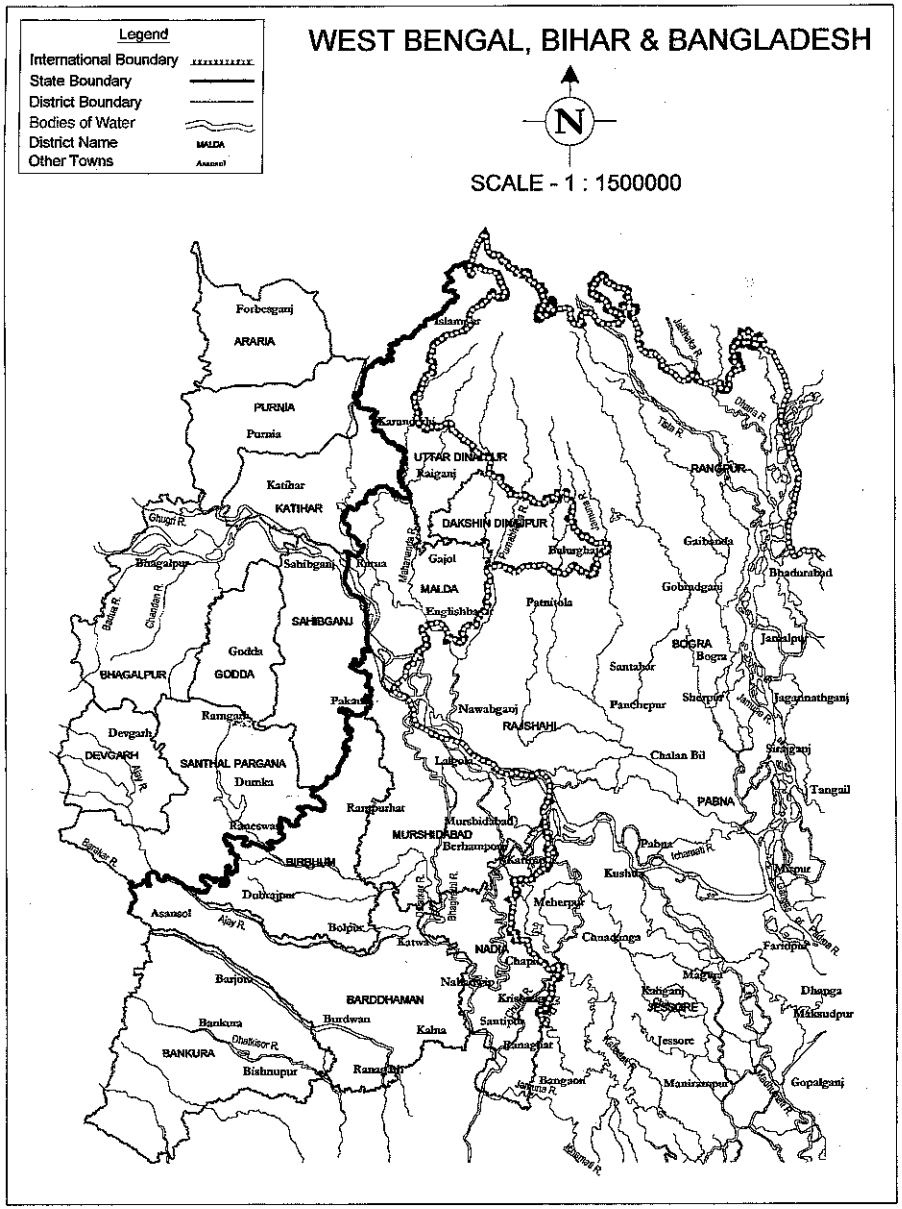
On the whole, *AMcb* makes an interesting case, more plausible in some respects than in others. It is not our purpose to review the matter in detail. Bankim may well have been influenced, indeed inspired, by several features of Phadke's life. But such things are not surprising in the writing of a novel where history has an elusive role to play—both the history of the past and a reinvented history for the future. Many disparate factors can play a part in the construction of such a novel. In other words, Bankim remained free to fashion his imagined world on the basis of circumstantial clues. We shall begin to clarify what we mean by our consideration of the next point.

This is a subject that has given rise, perhaps surprisingly, to a fair amount of speculation: the location of the novel (see maps 1 and 2, pp. 34 and 35). That the novel is set in the region of the mid and northeastern Bengal of the time, that is, in the adjoining areas of Birbhum and Barendrabhumi, is not a bone of contention. The question that has caused some discussion is: Did Bankim have a specific location in mind?

Bankim himself is unclear on the matter. Before we consider what Bankim has said (and not said) on this subject, it will be helpful to review the publishing history of *Ānandamaṭh*.[59] As we have noted earlier, the novel first appeared, serially, in the journal *Baṅgadarśan* from the issue of the month Caitra, Bengali San era 1287 (March–April 1881) to that of Jyaiṣṭha BE 1289 (May–June 1882). We shall call this the serial version and abbreviate it as *AMsv* (Ānandamaṭh, serial version). The novel was first published in book form, with some significant changes, on December 15, 1882. Let us call this the first edition. The second edition, with further changes, came out on July 20, 1883. The third edition, virtually a replica of the second edition so far as the text of the novel is concerned, was published on April 15, 1886. Both the second

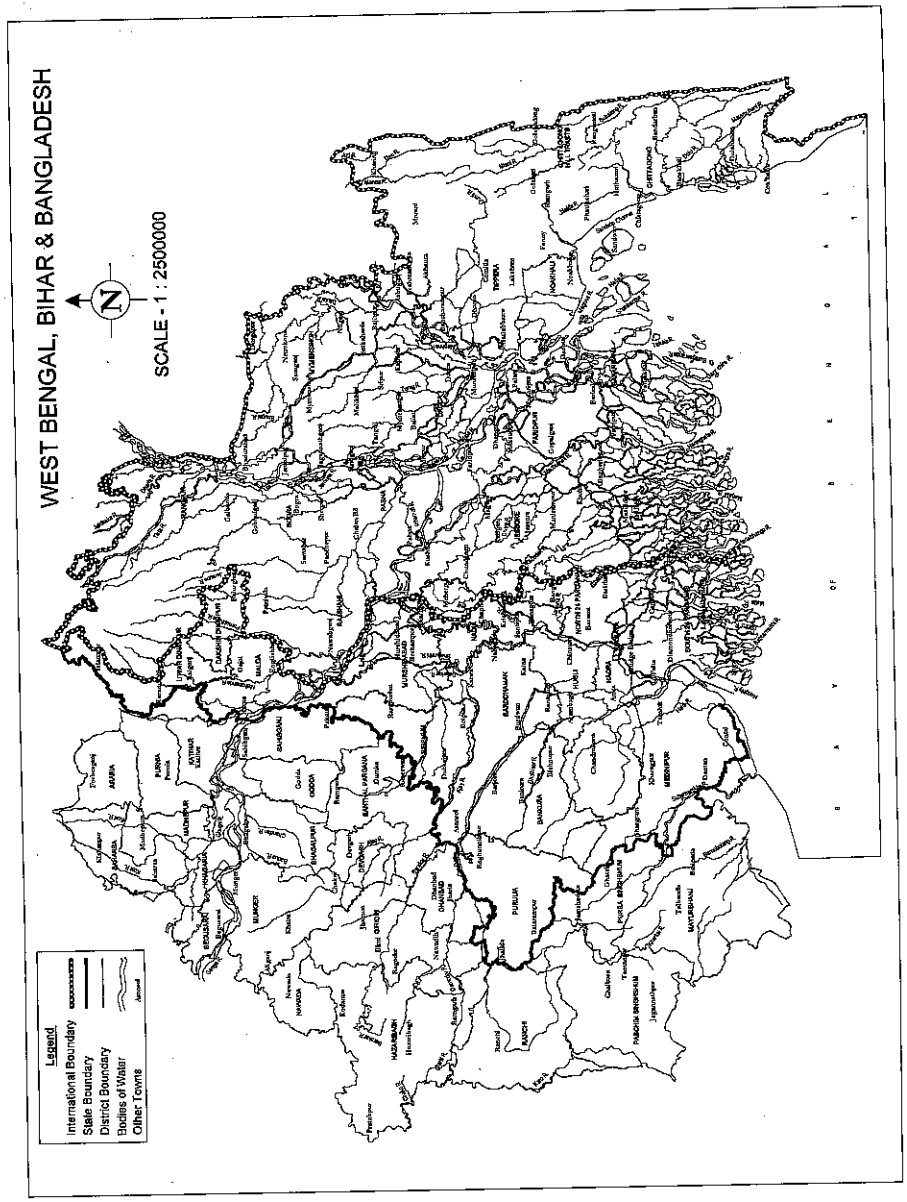
[58]*AMcb* argues that the appellation *santān* in the novel was derived from the use of the term in the translation into Bengali of the original Marathi accounts written by Phadke (28). Another possible source for the use of this important term in the novel presents itself, however. This was Satyendranath Tagore's national-minded song, *Mile sab bhārat santān* (With all India's children united . . .), composed in 1867. It was appended in full to the end of Rajnarain Basu's well-known work, *Hindudharmer śreṣṭhatā* (The Superiority of the Hindu Religion), adverted to earlier in this introduction. Bankim reviewed Rajnarain's work in the March 1873 issue (Caitra 1279) of *Baṅgadarśan*, and quoted the whole song at the end, concluding with a eulogy of the hymn: "May this Great Song be sung everywhere in India! May it echo from the Himalayas to the valleys", and so on. The arm of speculation is long. In fact, several sources may have combined, of course, to influence Bankim in the writing of his novel. Arguing for a link between Phadke and *Ānandamaṭh* is not a new exercise. Bimanbehari Majumdar had attempted this earlier (1966). *AMcb*'s analysis, however, which does not take note of Majumdar's article, is more detailed and comprehensive, and includes Majumdar's arguments.

[59]For this and other matters, I have found Cittaranjan Bandyopadhyay's work, *AMcb*, a valuable source of information.



MAP 1.
West Bengal, Bihar, and Bangladesh.
Courtesy of Riddhi Management Services, Kolkata.

MAP 2. *(facing page)*
Overview of West Bengal, Bihar, and Bangladesh.
Courtesy of Riddhi Management Services, Kolkata.



and the third editions had a print run of 1,000 copies. The fourth edition appeared in the same year, December 20, 1886. There is some doubt as to whether any changes at all were made in this edition. It had a print run of 2,000 copies. The fifth and last edition had important changes. On November 21, 1892, 1,000 copies were printed. The present translation is from the text of this fifth edition (which I have called the standard edition). I have recorded what I have adjudged to be the noteworthy changes that the text has undergone from the serial version to the last edition in the critical apparatus after the translation, under the heading Variants. The reader can thus follow the quantitatively relatively small but qualitatively quite significant transformations of this multilayered work.[60]

In the serial version and the first four editions, the novel specifically locates itself for the most part in the old kingdom of Birbhum, with its capital at Nagar or Rajnagar (one must recall that the story is set in the early 1770s). In the fifth edition, the particular references to Birbhum are mostly omitted.[61] In all versions of the novel, the names given to various sites, such as Padacinha (the village from which one of the leading *santāns* comes) and Talpahar (a landmark), are fictional; there is no obvious historical link. Further, there are references in the novel to forests, copses, shrines, rivers, hillocks and other features of the landscape which are not explicitly tied down topographically. This does not make the task of locating the novel and identifying sites any easier. Add to this the consideration, if one is to be realistic about things, that in the hundred years between the time in which the events of the novel occur and the time of its writing, numerous changes to the whole topography of the area could have taken place.

In the notice to the third edition, Bankim says: "The battles described in the novel did not take place in the Birbhum region; they took place in northern Bengal. . . . I do not consider this to be a fatal discrepancy, for a novel is a novel, and not history". So Bankim is perfectly aware, of course, that the locus of a novel permits imaginative licence. Additional testimony of this fact is

[60]As a working text for the Bengali, I have used the centenary edition of the fifth edition prepared by Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajanikanta Das, and first published by the Baṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat in BE. 1345 (1938). This text usefully gives textual variants of earlier editions at the back, but it is not without its problems. There are some omissions both in the main body of the text and in the variants, which I have noted. Further, it inexplicably omits completely the variant readings from the serial version of the novel. I have added these, some of which are quite noteworthy.

[61]In this edition, however, in Part III, chapter 12, there is a confusing reference to Barendrabhumi. An important battle against the British has been won, and the victorious *santān* commanders, with their leader Satyananda, are discussing what to do next. Satyananda says: "At any rate we are now in command of this whole region. No one is left to oppose us. So proclaim *santān* rule in Barendrabhumi". But the earlier editions had instead, "At any rate, we are now in command of all Birbhum except Nagar. . . . So proclaim *santān* rule in Birbhum". This only adds to the confusion. Perhaps it was an editorial oversight.

taken from an account in Bengali by Aksaycandra Sarkar, who was visiting Bankim while the novel was still in draft form:

> One day . . . Bankim-bābu gave me to read, in his handwriting in a notebook, the part about the battle at the end of *Ānandamaṭh*. I saw a reference to a location on both banks of the Ajay River, and not discerning the word *santān*, kept reading *Santāl* in my mind.[62] After a while I asked, "So now we have reference to a Santal Insurrection theme, is it?" "No", he replied, "Sanyasi Insurrection". I said, "Well, you've written about the banks of the Ajay, and keep saying *Santāl*, the *Santāls*". Then he burst out laughing and said, "First, there's your unintentional mistake—not *Santāl* but *santān*, and then there's my own intentional one—the Ajay River and Birbhum". Then we both laughed out aloud".[63]

Bankim may have originally wished to set the bulk of the novel in the Birbhum area, even though he believed that at least some of the historical events behind it took place elsewhere, but this still does not mean that all or even part of the novel's landscape accurately depicts that of the Birbhum region, or that features of the topography in the novel were not brought in from outside Birbhum (hence Bankim's "intentional" mistake). It is this question that has given rise to some controversy.

In an article entitled "*Ānandamaṭh*—Sthān Kāl Pātra" (*Ānandamaṭh*—Places, Times, Characters),[64] Kishanchand Bhakat has argued in some detail that Bankim drew inspiration for the chief features of virtually the whole novel—its locales, most of its leading characters and so on—from places and individuals of his time and an earlier period, in and around the town of Lalgola, situated in a northern part of Murshidabad district in present-day West Bengal, on the west bank of the Padma River, which divides India from Bangladesh in that region. This was not in the Birbhum area, but in a western extremity of Barendrabhumi. Let us look briefly at Bhakat's thesis.

Bhakat makes ten points that can be summarised as follows: that, contrary to the view of some of Bankim's commentators that the characters and landmarks of the novel are wholly fictional, in fact, first, some of the forest scenes were based on Bankim's experience of the forests in the Lalgola area. Bankim spent several months as a guest of the leading Hindu family (*rājbāḍi*) of the place in 1873–1874, before he wrote *Ānandamaṭh*. He had plenty of opportunity to explore and to soak in the atmosphere. Second, the complex of temples and

[62]The *Santāls* are an aboriginal people of the area. The Ajay River lies on the boundary of present-day Birbhum and Burdwan districts.

[63]Quoted in *Bcf*: 533–34. The English expressions "Santal Insurrection theme" and "Sanyasi Insurrection" appear in the original.

[64]Published in *Udbodhan*, Āśvin 1405 (1998).

shrines in the region and the tunnels linking some of these sacred sites acted as the model for the main temples and shrines in the story. "Bankimcandra was amazed to see the temples to Jagaddhātrī, Mahākālī and Durgā in this dense forest (602). . . . There's nothing imaginary or fictive about the comparison he made between the past, present and future forms of [the Goddess] as mother of Bengal [in *Ānandamaṭh*] and the three images of the Goddess [he saw]. He saw these three temples with his own eyes . . . in the forest of Lālgolā. These three temples exist there even today (604)." Third, the image of the Goddess Kali in the novel was drawn from the figure of Mahakali in the Lalgola temple dedicated to her. Further, Bankim directly derived inspiration for the song *Vande Mātaram* from rituals in this temple, which may well have included a chant he duplicated in the first portion of his own hymn in *Ānandamaṭh*. Fourth, the Vishnu image and temple described in the novel were quite possibly drawn from counterparts found in Lalgola. The family deity (*kuldebatā*) of the ruling house in Lalgola was Vishnu in the form described in the Vishnu-temple in the novel. Fifth, the *maṭh* or monastery of *Ānandamaṭh* was based on an ancient Buddhist cloister (*bauddhabihār*) situated in woodland in the vicinity of the *rājbāḍi*. The novel explicitly states that the monastery in which the leading *santāns* lived in the forest was once a Buddhist cloister (see Part I, ch. 5).

Bhakat continues that, sixth, "Bankim derived the two backcloths (*paṭbhūmi*) of the famine of '76 [1770 CE] and the *sannyāsī* rebellion from the history of the Raghunāth temple situated on the bank of the Kalkali River" in the area. "Against the background of the famine of '76, there was a clear connection between the history of this temple's construction and the *sannyāsī* rebellion that took place" (606). During the famine of 1770, the controlling *jamidāri* of the region had seen to the needs of thousands of "tantrics and *sannyāsīs*" and others who had sought its help. When Governor-General Warren Hastings broke up this *jamidāri* on the pretext of its failure to pay the full revenue, the beneficiaries, including tantrics and renouncers, of the *jamidāri*'s aid in the past attacked the British encamped nearby. "Thus began history's famous *sannyāsī* rebellion"—at least in the area. The religious practitioners of a monastery not far away joined the rebellion, first placing the relics and images of their monastery in the safekeeping of the patrons of the Raghunāth temple. So Bhakat claims that Bankim's conception of the *sannyāsī* rebellion was coloured by this local manifestation of it.[65] Seventh, Bhakat identifies the village

[65]J M Ghosh, 1930, 19–20, makes a pertinent comment in this regard: "It is necessary to distinguish the nomadic [*sannyāsī*] orders from others who may be called the Resident Sannyasis living in Maths or monasteries under the Mohants [leaders]. The principal monastery of the Giri sect was the Joshi Math in the Himalayas, and subordinate monasteries were scattered throughout Bengal. In these Maths, temples were erected and deities installed, principally the God Siva as most of the devotees were 'Saivas' or worshippers of Siva. They were endowed with landed properties of varying extent, and were resorts of the Wandering Sannyasis in their annual travels to their various

of Padacinha in the novel with the thriving historical village of Dewansarai in the region. He also contends, eighth, that the emphasis given to the full-moon day of the month Māgh (mid-January to mid-February) in the novel can be associated with certain events in the lives of leading individuals of the Lalgola *rājbāḍi*, and ninth, identifies other landmarks of the story (the village of Bhairabipur, and a bridge that figured in one of the battles) with sites in the region. Finally, he argues that a number of the principal male characters of the novel were drawn from real-life individuals connected with the Lalgola ruling house (indeed, in one instance, from Bankim himself). What are we to make of all this?

Some of the evidence is impressive—for instance, that of physical structures such as part of the temple complex and some of its images (aided by a photograph or two), which Bankim no doubt had the opportunity to investigate. These may well have fired his imagination.[66] But the argument on the whole is still largely circumstantial, with little or no scholarly backup. Where the characterisation is concerned, Bhakat's thesis seems overly speculative, and one gets the impression that he writes with more than half an ear cocked in the direction of local folklore. Much of the case requires proper scholarly documentation.

There also appears to be strong counterevidence in some respects. Sureshcandra Maitra, in his *Ānandamaṭh: Itihāse o sāhitye* (*Ānandamaṭh in History and Literary Works*, (1988), has argued plausibly for the view that the geographical and demographic landscape of the novel fits neatly with that of Birbhum District (see the opening sections of the first chapter of his work). "From the natural point of view, the presence of Birbhum is strong in the novel, *Ānandamaṭh*. Birbhum's plains, forests, small hills or hillocks, its various rivers and the towns situated on their banks or in its plains are the stage for the novel's male and female characters. The birds, animals and reptiles of the region's forests are present in the novel" (3). He then goes on to adduce a plausible array of documentation in support of this thesis.

The distinguished Cambridge archaeologist Dr Dilip Chakrabarti, who has done substantial fieldwork in the area of mid-Bengal, and who has evinced an interest in these matters, has written:

places of pilgrimage. . . . Some Resident Sannyasis not only furnished shelter to the nomadic orders, but actively participated with them in their raids when opportunity occurred". Hence it is not far-fetched to base a novel on the idea of a *sannyāsī* monastery hidden in a forest of the region.

[66]On Friday, March 21, 2003, I had the opportunity to spend several hours visiting most of these sites in Lalgola. Mr Bhakat himself was kind enough to take me around. Except for the Kali temple and one or two other locations, the relevant sites are now in a completely ruinous condition, bereft of their images and so on, and a couple of the temples supposedly figuring in the novel seem impossible to identify. Thus the assertion that the three temples which are supposed to have modelled the three shrines of the goddess in the novel "exist there even today" is somewhat disingenuous. However, there remains what appears to be clear evidence of what were once sunken passages or tunnels, with their roof arches still visible, connecting various parts of the complex; these are now filled up or have been restructured for drainage, and seem unusable as tunnels for human passage.

> [The extension of the Chhotanagpur plateau] in the Bengal districts of Birbhum and Burdwan formed the basic geographical background of . . . *Anandamath.* The impenetrable forest described in this novel set in the context of the *Sannyasi* rebellion in the early stage of British rule in Bengal may safely be located anywhere in the western section of Birbhum and Burdwan, and the description of the village Bhaira[b]ipur or Bharuipur which was situated in a forest clearing and more or less self-contained (primarily because of the plant food resources available in the forests) may easily apply to the protohistoric villages identified in this region long after Bankim's day.[67]

In a private communication to me (February 2003), he adds:

> In chapter 12 [Part III], the victorious *santan* army milled around Satyananda and celebrated its victory on the bank of the *Ajay.* The *Ajay* separates Birbhum from Burdwan [District] and cannot thus indicate Barendrabhumi. And yet, soon afterwards, Satyananda asks Jibananda, Dhirananda and others to establish *santan-rajya* [*santan* rule] in Barendrabhumi.[68] . . . . Whatever the reason, Bankim's geographical sense got muddled in *Anandamath.* . . . There can, however, be no doubt that the geographical background of *Anandamath* is the western section of Birbhum and Burdwan. The forest described in *Anandamath* is not of the type that one finds [further] north [in] Bengal, i.e., the one with dense undergrowth. . . . I believe that Padacinha was located in Birbhum. . . . I imagine that it was somewhere in the Ilambazar-Suri belt which still has some large villages with a few *attalikas* [brick mansions]. Padacinha was apparently on the bank of a river because [the monk Satyananda] advised Mahendra to fortify that place and put cannons on a *bandh.* This Bengali word means various things but in this context it can only mean an embankment—a river embankment, as the monk was also thinking of protecting Padacinha by a ditch. Which river could it be? I can think only of the *Ajay* and the *Mayurakshi.* I have seen embankments on the banks of both. The monk also asks Mahendra to build a house made wholly of iron in Padacinha. The *Mayurakshi* belt in Birbhum was once famous for its iron industry. So, if you prefer, Padacinha was located on the bank of the *Mayurakshi* somewhere in Birbhum.
>
> Another small point leans strongly in favour of the belt which we have envisaged for *Anandamath.* References to *resamer kuthis* [silk factories] owned by the British have some geographical meaning if it

[67] *Archaeology of Eastern India* 1993, 18.

[68] See note 61 above.

> is remembered that such *kuthis* were more common in Birbhum than elsewhere.
>
> The idea that the forests near Lalgola played a role in conceptualising the forests of *Anandamath* simply cannot be the case. First, that area never had a forest worth writing about, and second, Murshidabad does not have a single hill.[69]

We have already mentioned that by the time Bankim was writing *Ānandamaṭh,* he had been posted as an officer in the civil service to some nine or ten different areas around the Bengal country districts of the time, including Birbhum and northern Murshidabad (an extremity of Barendrabhumi). He had ample opportunity to experience different forms of Bengal landscape and Bengali rural life (not to mention urban life, including that of Calcutta, with which he was familiar by way of stays of varying duration). No doubt grounding the events of a story or novel in real locales gives immense pleasure to many, as a way of embodying what might otherwise remain an ephemeral experience, and of insinuating oneself into the imagined world one has encountered. It is a participatory exercise, a form of shared coordinates of experience. So people visit The Old Rectory in the village of Croft on Tees near Darlington in northern England, the home for many years of Charles L Dodgson, who wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* under his pseudonym of Lewis Carroll, or follow a Sherlock Holmes trail around sites in London made familiar in stories about the celebrated detective. But in many cases there is a limit to the correspondences discernible between imagined and real reference points where literary works such as novels are concerned. The role of the imagination in a novel has its own freighted agenda. This is an important point.

Consider, for example, the forests of *Ānandamaṭh,* to which we have just referred. As we shall see presently, they are not simply reflections of what Bankim observed; they are instruments of perceptions whose rationale invites decipherment in terms of the imaginative depths of the story and authorial context. As Simon Schama has pointed out in his *Landscape and Memory,* "At the very least, it seems right to acknowledge that it is our shaping perception that makes the difference between raw matter and landscape".[70]

Here is one literary example of the way a forest in *Ānandamaṭh* becomes susceptible to changes of mood and meaning. It is useful for its heuristic

[69] It may also be of interest to note that in his argument linking *Ānandamaṭh* and Phadke, the author of *AMcb* avers: "Locating the story in Birbhum has made it possible to show the similarity between the two environments [of the novel and of Phadke's activities]. At the time there were many areas in Birbhum strewn with dense forest and jungle, and a number of forts and large mansions lay hidden in those jungles". He goes on to note that some commentators see grounds for identifying the fort of the legendary chieftain Ichai Ghosh, situated on the banks of the Ajay, with the monastery of *Ānandamaṭh* (*AMcb*: 27).

[70] 1995, 10.

content. The example centres around an episode in the story in which one of the heroines, Kalyani, a young mother with her infant child, has been seized by starving bandits, rendered desperate by the famine of 1770. Night is about to fall.

In Part I, chapter 2, Bankim writes: "Then the black, gaunt men seized and lifted Kalyani and the girl, carried them out of the building, and crossing a field entered a jungle beyond". In Hindu tradition, the word "jungle" (*jaṅgal*) connotes disorder, fear, insecurity. The assemblage of trees and so on that constitutes a jungle is threatening, the abode of untamed forces. Only wild beasts are at home in the jungle.[71]

Yet within a few lines, in chapter 3, Bankim continues: "The forest in which the bandits put Kalyani down was very beautiful. There was no light, no eye to behold the charm—the beauty of that forest remained hidden like the beauty within a poor man's heart. Food might be scarce in the region, but there were flowers in that forest, and the flowers had a fragrance that seemed to make even that darkness glow".[72] Like a new movement in a sonata, the mood has changed. The word used for "forest" throughout this passage is *vana* (*ban* in its Bengali form), a place that is less threatening than a jungle. It is as if Bankim is offering a respite to the terrified, vulnerable captive and her infant daughter. And indeed, for a brief while at least, while the bandits are otherwise occupied, Kalyani is able to rest and take stock of her situation. But before the bandits can carry out a hastily devised plan to eat the child in their desperate craving for food, unbeknownst to them Kalyani has escaped with her daughter. Again the mood changes. The chapter ends with the words: "Taking the child in her arms, she had given her her breast and fled into the forest. Seeing that their prey had escaped, the ghoulish band ran in every

[71]This is the latter-day connotation of *jaṅgal*. "The ancient *jāṅgala* was not the 'dense' and relatively 'distant' forest to which exiles and ascetics repaired, but rather was the preferred, encompassing ecosystem of early Indo-Aryan culture—a tree-studded, grass-covered savanna that was considered ideally suited to pastoralism, small settlements, occasional hunting, and limited cultivation". See Lutgendorf, *Hinduism and Ecology* (abbv: *HE*), 2000, 273. This was not the "jungle" of popular imagination to which Bankim and we refer.

[72]In his article, Bhakat argues that it was the woodland around Lalgola which inspired Bankim to write this passage. In support he quotes from a poem describing the beauty of this area composed by the enthusiastic Bishop Heber (Anglican bishop of Calcutta), at the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, during a boat journey he was making upstream past the area. This is one of the few examples of supporting documenation given by Bhakat. Heber was enthralled by the novelty of it all, it is true, but still he could write in his travelogue for August 2, 1824 (he was addressing his wife who had returned to England): "Our course continues nearly west, though a little inclining to the south. . . . We arrived at Bogwangola [i.e., Bhagabangola, a little southeast of Lalgola] between four and five, and stopped there for the night. . . . I found the place very interesting and even beautiful. . . . After leaving the shore, I followed a very pretty glade, through what was almost a jungle, or rather a woody pasture. . . . The whole walk was extremely beautiful . . . [he then breaks into poetry, the first verse of which is:] 'If thou wert by my side, my love! How fast would evening fail In green Bengala's palmy grove, Listening the nightingale! ' " See Heber, 1828 1: 237–42.

direction crying, 'Kill! Kill!' In certain circumstances, human beings become nothing but ravening beasts".

Chapter 4 begins as follows: "The forest was pitch dark and Kalyani was at a loss to find a way. Not only was there no path among the dense thickets of trees, creepers and thorns, but it was also intensely dark. Kalyani began to force her way through the forest. . . . The higher the moon rose and the brighter it became, the more the darkness began to hide, and the more Kalyani and her child sought cover in turn. The baying robbers began to close in as the terrified child cried all the louder". The forest has changed form again, once more becoming an abode of beasts, including the human variety, and once again placing Kalyani in peril. From a place that provides respite, fragrant with flowers, it is transmuted into a hostile, obstructive environment to the fugitives. It is like a living thing, with different moods and faces, now protective, now threatening. There is more than a streak of what we might call Romantic tendencies in Bankim. In his writings, nature is often personified, sometimes in "her" own right, sometimes as a foil of human agency, especially women. There is a fair amount of this in *Ānandamaṭh*.

Just as the forest is able to change form itself, so it is the locus of changing identities in others. Desperate men become ravening beasts; a tender child becomes their prey. Before long, we shall enter yet deeper into the morphic symbolism of the forest in *Ānandamaṭh*; the point here is that the novel's landscape must not be invested with a historicity that it cannot bear. As Bankim pointed out in his notice to the third edition: "a novel is a novel, and not history". This is why, when introducing the topic of locating the text, I said that it had given rise to a fair amount of speculation, "perhaps surprisingly".

Indeed, in larger context, *Ānandamaṭh* was not intended to be a historical novel, whatever the degree of historicity we may wish to ascribe to the adjective. Responding to speculation on this subject, in a notice preceding the text of his next novel, *Debī Chaudhurāṇī*, in 1884, Bankim made the following declaration:

> After *Ānandamaṭh* was published many expressed a wish to know whether there was any historical basis to this work or not. The *sannyāsī* rebellion was historical no doubt, but there was no particular need to inform the reader about this. . . . It was not my intention to write a historical novel (*aitihāsik upanyās*), consequently I made no pretence of historicity. Now, after all that I've seen and heard about the matter, I would like to provide some historical information about the *sannyāsī* rebellion in the next edition of *Ānandamaṭh*. . . . If the reader would be so kind as not to consider *Ānandamaṭh* a 'historical novel', I would be most obliged".[73]

[73]Quoted in *A(BSP)*, p. 1 of the editorial preface. Hence the extracts from Hunter and Gleig in the third edition of *Ānandamaṭh*.

So we have a salient clue as to how to read *Ānandamaṭh*. It is not a historical novel in the sense that it was meant to be historically precise, whether this has to do with events, characters or topography. But I shall argue in the next section that it is historical in another sense: in the legitimate sense of recommending a new programme of collective history in the Indian context.

It is time now to consider the title of the novel: *Ānandamaṭh*. How best to translate this expression? In English the novel is usually referred to as *The Abbey of Bliss*. The earliest translation into English of the novel, to my knowledge, was by Nares Chandra Sen-Gupta; the fifth edition of this translation was published in 1906, and bears this title: *The Abbey of Bliss: A Translation of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Anandamath*. So far as I know, three translations into English have been published to date: Sen-Gupta's, another started in 1909 by the well-known nationalist-turned-philosopher Sri Aurobindo (Ghose) and completed by his brother Barindrakumar Ghose (published in the 1940s), and a third by Basanta Koomar Roy. The Ghose translation did not offer an English equivalent of the title.[74] The first edition of the Roy translation was published as *Dawn over India* in 1941, whereas the second edition was published in 1992 (without change to the text but with a new preface), this time with the original Bengali title. Thus, so far as I know, a new translation into English of *Ānandamaṭh* has not been published since the Second World War.[75] In the final section of this introduction and in the critical apparatus, I shall make further reference to these translations. But it is the title of the first translation, by Sen-Gupta—*The Abbey of Bliss*—which seems to have stuck when the novel is referred to by an English name.[76]

It could be argued that this translation is correct. *Ānandamaṭh* is a compound, derived from the Sanskrit, which consists of two members: *ānanda*, which can mean "bliss" or "happiness", and *maṭh* (Sanskrit: *maṭha*), meaning "monastery", "abbey", "cloister". Hence, "Abbey of Bliss". But I contend that this is an inappropriate translation of the Bengali title. No doubt the story is largely about the activities of a group of monks who live in a monastery in the forest, and no doubt they live in amity, but their base can hardly be

[74]Chapters 1–13 and the prologue of this translation were published in the Calcutta weekly *Karmayogin*, edited by Aurobindo between August 1909 and February 1910. They were published subsequently in the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library in 1972, and again in the Complete Works of Aurobindo in 1999. The latter edition also includes a translation of the first two numbered chapters of the standard edition of the novel (excluding the prologue), which were found among Aurobindo's papers; apparently he intended to revise his translation, begun after leaving Calcutta for Pondicherry in 1910, but did not finish. I am grateful to Peter Heehs for this information.

[75]I understand that another translation into English by Professor Jiban Bannerjee of Santiniketan, West Bengal, is now completed and awaits publication, though I have not had the chance to consult this.

[76]In 1985, France Bhattacharya produced a French translation with the title, *Le monastère de la félicité*, which was republished in 2003 in a revised form (abbr. *MF*). We shall refer to this second edition when the occasion arises.

described as an abbey of "bliss". The novel does not concern itself with an active prayer life of this community of monks, and when the author on occasion describes the meditations of some of the leading protagonists, these hardly evince a life of quiet mysticism or blissfulness. On the contrary. These monks are activists, temporary crusaders in a patriotic cause. They sally forth to fight, kill, loot (not to mention other things, noted earlier) and then return to their abbey. They do not reside in an abbey of bliss.

However, it is significant that the religious name each assumes when fully initiated into the *santān* Order invariably ends with -ananda (for example, Jibananda, Bhabananda, Dhirananda).[77] Taking a new name when one joins a religious society has been common practice not only among Hindus traditionally, but also among adherents of other faiths. The full-fledged *santāns* of *Ānandamath*, however, assumed the suffix ānanda in their religious name. They were thus, from the point of view of nomenclature, an elite of Ānandas who, by definition, lived in "a monastery of Ānandas". Hence "*Ānandamaṭh*." The title then refers directly to the monastery or abbey as qualified by the presence of these Ānandas; in other words, literally it describes the abbey as dwelt in by the Ānandas.

There are a couple of references in the novel that indicate authorial intention in this regard. In the serial version and the first four editions there is a passage, omitted from the fifth edition, in which the monk Satyananda, leader of the *santāns*, says to Shanti, wife of the *santān* commander Jibananda: "The Children are my only happiness (*ānanda*). That's why all of them have *ānanda* in their name and this place is called 'the monastery of the *Ānandas* (*e ānandamaṭh*)".[78] It seems then that the title *Ānandamaṭh* was intended to mean "The Monastery of the *Ānandas*" rather than "The Abbey of Bliss".[79]

There is another conversation (in Part II, ch. 8 of the fifth edition) where this meaning again asserts itself. Gobardhan, a servant who works in the monastery, is speaking once more to Shanti. Shanti has been inquiring as to who the occupiers of certain rooms in the monastery are. Gobardhan answers that they are top commanders of the Order. "Who are these top commanders?" demands Shanti. Gobardhan replies, "Bhabananda, Jibananda, Dhirananda, Jnanananda. *Ānandamaṭh* is full of *Ānandas* (*ānandamaṭh ānandamay*)". Once again, it seems that *Ānandamaṭh* refers to the presence of the *santān* initiates

[77]There seems to be one, perhaps inadvertent, exception. Mahendra, who is initiated as a full-fledged *santān*, is not given such a title. However, see the final point under Variants to Part III, ch. 7.

[78]The whole passage is translated under Variants to Part II, ch. 7.

[79]On the basis of our analysis, we can say technically that the Sanskritic compound *ānandamaṭh* is a *ṣaṭhī tatpuruṣa*, where the member *ānanda* does not mean "bliss" (as Sen-Gupta understands it) but refers to the inhabitants of the monastery, *maṭha*, who have the suffix *ānanda* in their monastic names. In this sense, the compound *ānandamaṭh* would resolve as follows: *ānandānāṃ maṭhaḥ*, "The Monastery/Abbey of the Ānandas".

in the monastery, the Ānandas. This is why the title of this translation is *The Sacred Brotherhood.*[80] Finally, I find no counterevidence to our view in the story nor anything to directly support the title of Sen-Gupta's translation.

Let us inquire now into the changes the novel underwent through its various editions (including the serial version). It will not be necessary to consider every amendment, of course; a number concern style rather than content, others have to do with second thoughts on instances of perhaps dubious entertainment value and matters of propriety rather than with substance, such as the material in appendix A, which was omitted from the fifth edition. Some changes occur in the interests of clarity and completeness, such as the addition of chapter 1 of Part II in the final edition. In the notice to this edition, Bankim himself gives this as the reason for the addition of this chapter.

As the publishing history of *Ānandamaṭh* indicates, the novel soon became very popular; thus, two editions were published, as the result of popular demand, in the same year. By the time *Ānandamaṭh* first appeared, Bankim had been established as the premier novelist of Bengal, and the time was ripe for a narrative of its covert political genre. I believe that references to a particular geographical region, that is, Birbhum, were excised in the final edition precisely because Bankim had made it clear by then that the novel was not intended to be historical in a literal sense. In the earlier editions, reference to Birbhum was more or less a fictional convenience (though this does not mean that certain topographical data were not drawn from Bankim's personal knowledge of Birbhum, as discussed earlier).[81] Bankim did not wish to fuel irrelevant speculation; he was more concerned to focus attention on the subliminal sociopolitical message of the story (which we shall consider in the next section).

Some changes in the novel seem to have been made as a result of prudential caution on Bankim's part with respect to his British employers, or in response to explicit or implicit official censure arising from these same em-

[80]One notes with interest that in the review of *Ānandamaṭh* published in *The Liberal* of April, 8, 1883 (an extract of which appeared under the notice to the second edition of the novel), the following passage occurs: "the plot, the organization of the *sacred Brotherhood* of children, the watchword, the unity and discipline are the author's own" (emphasis added; this sentence does not occur in the extract quoted in the notice to the novel).

[81]Bimanbehari Majumdar provides a reason as to why Birbhum was made the original location of the novel: "Originally Bankim Chandra selected Birbhum as the centre of the events described in the *Ananda Math* because of some peculiarity in the status of that region. He himself explained in the seventh chapter of the book as published in the *Bangadarsana* that while the rest of Bengal was nominally under Mirjafar, Birbhum was under the administration of the Muslim Raja of that place, though its revenue was sent to the English. The East India Company had appointed their officers at other places for supervising the collection of revenue but none was appointed in Birbhum. This is why Bankim Chandra considered it safe to make Birbhum the place of occurrence of the main events of the *Ananda Math*. He could say, he thought, that the Santānas were fighting against the Moslem [*sic*] power and not the English. But while bringing out the third edition he considered this sort of veil almost transparent and frankly admitted that the fights took place in North Bengal and not in Birbhum" (1966, 106–7).

ployers. These would include references in earlier editions to instances of British defeat in battle at the hands of *santāns*, and the lechery of British officers in the story towards Indian women. In the fifth edition, a number of references to British troops defeated in battle are omitted, or rather, absorbed in reverses retained or introduced as involving Muslims. Similarly, some, but not all, of the descriptions of lasciviousness on the part of the British are removed from the fifth edition. The reader will be able to note these during perusal of the novel and its variants.

One seemingly relevant event in Bankim's life, however, does stand out. In September 1881 Bankim was posted to Calcutta as temporary assistant secretary to the Government of Bengal in the Finance Department at the Writers' Building. This was the first time such a post was occupied by an Indian. However, towards the end of January in the following year, Bankim was relieved of this post, the post itself was abolished, and instead, a new office of undersecretary was created for British incumbents alone. No satisfactory reason was given for Bankim's removal (he reverted to the post of deputy magistrate and deputy collector in Alipur in 24 Parganas District). His change of job became a matter for speculation in the press and elsewhere. A rumour circulated that official secrets had been leaked during Bankim's occupation of the post. But there was no government confirmation that this was the case. Officially, and in the public mind, Bankim's reputation remained intact. In fact, it was generally surmised that he had been removed because of the antipathy towards the British that was being shown in the pages of *Ānandamaṭh*. By the time Bankim had come to Calcutta in September 1881 to take up his new post, *Ānandamaṭh* in its serial form in *Baṅgadarśan* was well under way, though the journal was running late, as noted earlier: for example, the Āśvin issue of BE 1288 (mid-September to mid-October 1881) was published in Caitra BE 1288 (March–April 1882). Subsequently, concern for his career prospects may well have prompted Bankim to tone down some of his references to the British in the story.[82]

There was a sequel to this episode in Bankim's life. He is reported to have said when speaking about his narrative characterisation of Indian women: "Say what you wish about any of the great-minded (*manasvinī*) women of Europe, none is superior to the queen of Jhansi.[83] When the English general saw the

[82]Here is an example of a comment published in the novel's serial form and first edition (Part II, ch. 2 of these versions) that was subsequently amended. A certain Captain Thomas had been sent to quell the *santāns* after they had begun to dominate the countryside. He was living temporarily with the English manager of a silk factory. Thinking that he had worsted the *santāns* in battle, Captain Thomas "applied himself to savouring the talents of the Santal girls, for the English in India at that time were not as virtuous as the English of today". In subsequent editions, this was amended to "savouring the talents of [his host's] cook".

[83]The famous Rani of Jhansi. During the uprising of 1857–1858, she met the British troops in battle, and was killed fighting courageously in command of her forces in June 1858.

queen on the battlefield, he said, 'This woman is the only man amongst these orientals (*prācyadiger madhye*).' I would wish once to portray this character, but since our bosses (*saheberā*) were offended by *Ānandamaṭh*, that would be the end for me".[84]

Though the text was amended as described above through its various editions, Bankim did not make drastic changes of style. The idea was not to rewrite the novel as a literary exercise. Thus the novel retains its somewhat hurried compositional form. For all its occasional passages of ornate (sometimes elegant) prose, its racy episodes and stylistically innovative dialogue, its stirring theme, and the great song *Vande Mātaram* (or *Bande Mātaram* in its Bengali form), as a *literary* achievement *Ānandamaṭh* is not outstanding.[85] It gives evidence of its serialised genesis: there are lapses of coherence and other solecisms. I have noted some of the more salient in the notes of the critical apparatus. Nevertheless, as a narrative text with didactic concerns, *Ānandamaṭh* is multistranded and many-layered, with interpretative depths that excite the imagination. This introduction is not intended to provide a literary analysis of *Ānandamaṭh*. Its aim is more modest: to put the novel in context, and to suggest trains of thought that might open up the text to a deeper understanding. It is with this end in view that I should now like to inquire into some of the features of the narrative's underlying symbolism.

Consider the following passage:

> A vast forest. Most of the trees in it are *sal*,[86] but there are also many other kinds of tree. The trees, with foliage intertwined, stretch out in endless ranks. Without break or gaps, without even openings for light to penetrate, a boundless ocean of leaves, wave upon wave ruffled by the wind, rolls on for mile after mile.
>
> Below, profound darkness prevails. Even at high noon the light is dim, dreadful! Humans never venture into that forest, and except for the ceaseless murmur of the leaves and the cries of its wild beasts and birds, no other sound is heard in it.

Now compare this to the extract given below:

> Towards the west . . . the eye ranged over an ocean of leaves, glorious and rich in the varied but lively verdure of a generous vegetation, and shaded by the luxurious tints that belong to the forty second degree

[84]Quoted in *BcJ*: 619, from Sriscandra Majumdar's reminiscences of Bankim.

[85]Bengali has no "v" or "w" sound. The equivalent Sanskrit labial is pronounced as "b". As to the novel's style, readers must remember that by the time Bankim was writing *Ānandamaṭh*, he had eschewed his earlier somewhat ornate narrative style and had adopted a more direct, idiomatic form of prose. As a narrative form, this was quite innovative, and I have sought to reflect his penchant for short, racy sentences in my translation.

[86]The *Shorea robusta*; a widespread, gregarious tree with broad, ovate leaves, the *śāl* aids the image of a dense forest.

> of latitude. The elm . . . the maple . . . the noble oaks . . . the broad leafed linden . . . mingled their uppermost branches, forming one broad and seemingly interminable carpet of foliage, that stretched away towards the setting sun, until it bounded the horizon, by blending with the clouds, as the waves and sky meet at the base of the vault of Heaven.

The first is taken from my translation of the prologue to *Ānandamaṭh*, the second from James Fenimore Cooper's novel, *The Pathfinder*, first published in 1840.[87] "The Leatherstocking Tales", as they were called, were a collection of five novels with the same frontiersman character (Leatherstocking) as hero, who rejoiced in the name of Natty (Nathaniel) Bumppo. *The Pathfinder* was the penultimate novel of the series, perhaps the best known of which is the second, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). The last novel of the series, *The Deerslayer*, was published in 1841. The novels are set in various parts of frontier territory of the North American continent in the mid-eighteenth century or so; the conflict between the French, British and North American Indians of the time, not only over territory but also over different ways of life, figures largely in the action. In his way, Bumppo is a trailblazer—hence "pathfinder"—helping Providence clear "the way for *the advancement of civilization* across the whole American continent" (emphasis added), in the words of the 1839 and 1851 prefaces to the novel.[88] Though this is not a simple tale of good versus bad, nevertheless the old order of the noble savage at its best must give way to the new, if somewhat intrusive, civilization of the West.

Natty Bumppo is a transitional figure, simple, brave, and honest, and knowledgeable in the forest lore of the American Indians, with some of whom he makes lasting friendships. But he is also obsessed with racial purity, patrolling the boundaries between white skin and red, and ever ready to signal the differences of race and culture that he perceives "nature" to have ordained in these matters. Though he is prepared to resort to violence, and then without the slightest compunction, he does so not out of greed or the lust for power (Western civilization at its worst) or because of cruelty or ruthlessness (the way of some of the native Indian tribes), but only when he deems it necessary. He loves nature, as symbolised by the forest, and respects its ways, but with his trusty "rifle", the technological tool of the new order, is able to keep its perils at bay.[89] Thus, though in one sense Bumppo is in between the two domains, he is also a pathfinder from the indigenous to the new. In fact, it is types with

[87]1989, 8–9.

[88]See the introduction of the Penguin edition (1989) by Kay Seymour House.

[89]"Rifle" is possibly an anachronism for the times in which the majority of the novels are set; they came into more general use fairly late in the eighteenth century (a period relevant for only two of the novels). But "rifle" is an apt symbol for the new technological lifestyle that the West is bringing in.

his qualities who, like a midwife, are best suited to bring the new order to birth. For all his frontiersman spirit, his uncompromising racial and social conservatism makes him a shallow and unappealing character. Perhaps Bankim, if he was familiar with (one or another of) the Leatherstocking Tales, was attracted to Cooper's uncompromising pro-Americanism in defiance of the conventional literary tilt of the time towards British cultural models, and to the fact that the tales explore in their Romantic fashion the dawning of a new national order amid the conflicts of the old.

The prime locus of these conflicting orders, and of the transition to the new, is the ample forests of the mid-northeastern stretches of the North American continent ("the forty second degree of latitude"). The forest reflects the human contests that are transpiring. It can be savage, in tooth and claw, mysterious and resistant to change, but also beautiful and seductive, and when wooed in the right manner, is ready to yield its secrets and be mastered. It is a primordial wilderness, a virginal womb, which when appropriately impregnated by its new masters gives birth to a desirable new form of life. To turn the metaphor somewhat, the forest, for the Romantic essentialising mind of a Cooper (in the ascendant at the time), is a sacred site, a virginal bride, whose marriage to the likes of the Pathfinder, and subsequent birthing of the new order are blessed by Providence. Or if you will, the forest is a living temple of God. Thus in *The Pathfinder,* when referring to the forest, Cooper speaks of "the sublimity connected with vastness" (7), and has the Pathfinder say, "I have endivoured [*sic*] to worship garrison-fashion but never could raise within me, the solemn feelings and true affection, that I feel when alone with God, in the forest. There I seem to stand face to face, with my master; all around me is fresh and beautiful, as it came from his hand, and there is no nicety or doctrine, to chill the feelin's. No—no—the woods are the true temple a'ter all" (92). And again, when speaking to a friend in the forest: "Look about you, and judge for yourself. I'm in church now; I eat in church, drink in church, sleep in church. The 'arth is the temple of the Lord, and I wait on him hourly, daily, without ceasing, I humbly hope" (433–34).

Is it an accident then, or a mere flight of the imagination, that Bankim, like Cooper, writing more than a continent away, likens the huge forest that introduces *Ānandamaṭh* to a boundless "ocean" of leaves (*pallaber ananta samudra*—the very same image!), the classic symbol of a fertile womb?[90] Or that

[90]I have come across no direct evidence to indicate that Bankim was familiar with *The Pathfinder* or indeed any of the Leatherstocking Tales (though the similarity of this image and other themes as indicated above is suggestive). By the time Bankim wrote his first novel, *Rajmohan's Wife,* in 1864, the Leatherstocking Tales were well known. It is perhaps significant that *The Pathfinder* was first published from England in February 1840, where Bankim would naturally look first for acquaintance with literature written in English. After all, like some of Bankim's own works, the Leatherstocking Tales fall into the genre of historical romances. Is the shift, then, to the antique

he locates his monastery, the abbey of the *Ānanda*s, in the midst of a virginal, impenetrable forest? But, as the reader will see, only the *santān*s can master this fearful forest, make it a secure refuge not only for their survival but also for the partial fruition of their cause. It is from their abbey in the womb of the forest that the vision of the new India is born. It is this sylvan monastery that symbolises the forest as holy ground, sacralising the new order that is presaged, as well as the struggle of the *santān*s, an order of celibate renouncers wedded to their forest temple, who drench the seeds of this transformative vision with their blood.

To be sure, for all the archetypal similarities that seem to pertain, there are noteworthy cultural specificities with regard to this symbolism. Without seeking to make a comparative study, let us look briefly at the Indian background in general, and Bankim's figurations in particular. There are recurrent images in traditional Hindu thought of the ocean as the womb of being. One of the best known is that of the primeval waters being churned by the gods (*deva*s) and their long-standing rivals, the titans (*asura*s), to extract the elixir of immortality—a "seed of life"—which both groups desire. In the process, they generate, together with the ambrosia, a whole array of entities which can both benefit and harm the world. In other words, primordial rivalries collapse in the mythic work of creation to produce the stage on which these very rivalries and their subsets can unfold.[91] The forest, then, as an "ocean of leaves" is being depicted as the locus for an impetus towards change.[92] Or, to penetrate the imagery still further, it is depicted as a sacred womb, which when fertilised by the indwelling of its masters (the *santān*s), produces the elixir of a new nation, a fresh embodiment of the Eternal Code (*sanātana dharma*) of the Hindus.

In the prologue to the novel, which introduces the forest, the following sentences occur: "Not only is this a vast, profoundly dark forest, but it is also late at night. . . . And the mass of gloom within is like the darkness in the very bowels of the earth". The Bengali expression used for "bowels of the earth" is *bhūgarbha,* and although the translation I have given is an idiomatic rendering of the Bengali, the term *garbha* also means "womb". Thus the semantic association of the forest with a womb is very clear. We can give another relevant example of the symbolic connections noted above. In Part I, chapter 11, Mahendra is being shown around the monastery's temple complex in which the

vocative, "thou" referred to in note 31 above an instance of mimicry on Bankim's part? Cooper uses it often.

[91]A paradigmatic description of the myth occurs in the *Mahābhārata,* 1.15–17 (critical edition), but there are many other versions in Hindu folklore.

[92]France Bhattacharya writes: "In the opening page [of *Ānandamaṭh*] . . . the forest described is not located in any particular place: it is a metaphor for the primeval ocean at the beginning of a new evolutionary cycle" (1998, 28).

santāns live in the depths of the forest. He is taken by the monk Satyananda to an underground shrine in which the image of the Goddess Kali resides. "The monk pointed to a dark tunnel and said, 'Follow me.' He went on ahead, Mahendra following apprehensively close behind. They reached a dark chamber, in the depths of the earth, lit somehow by a faint light. There in the dim light he could see an image of Kali". Again, in context, "depths of the earth" is an appropriate translation of *bhūgarbha,* the same Bengali expression encountered earlier. It is in this underground hollow that the Mother of the *santāns* and of the nation-in-the-making is enshrined in one of her forms. The concentric symbolism of enfoldment here is telling: the massive forest circumscribing the monastery within its depths, which in turn ensconces the Mother shrine at its core. It is like some powerful explosive device being compressed and primed. When released by the right concatenation of forces it bursts with explosive force, spreading the seeds of a new and transforming message. As in some surreal drama, the *santāns* are the catalytic agents of this diffusion, both in the novel and beyond, for *Ānandamaṭh*'s publication was directly instrumental for shaping Hindu political sentiment in the strategies for nationalist awakening that were developing at the time.

The reader will not have failed to notice that concomitant with the imagery of the impregnated womb in Bankim's descriptions is the image of darkness and of its counterpart, light. The interplay between darkness and light in the novel is instructive. There are different kinds of darkness, no doubt. There is the darkness of obfuscation and doubt, of ignorance, and the darkness that breeds fear. But there is also that luminous darkness that presages a fresh dawn: a fertile darkness that is the condition for the light that will radiate a new meaning to our world. Classical Hindu tradition, about which Bankim was so knowledgeable, is replete with references to both these negative and positive forms of darkness, though here often the one impinges on the other.

There is a famous Upanishadic prayer (famous from fairly modern times, that is)[93] that can be translated, "From the unreal lead me to the real, from darkness (*tamasaḥ*) lead me to the light, from death lead me to immortality" (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* 1.3.28, ca. tenth to eighth centuries BCE).[94] This is, in fact, a prayer of ascent from the human condition of ignorance and death towards knowledge, spiritual sovereignty and deathlessness. *Tamas,* the term for "darkness" in the invocation, is a constraining force, resisting physical and spiritual growth. Bankim refers to it on occasion as an obfuscating power; it has its transitional if limited uses, but eventually it must be transcended (for example, Part II, ch. 4). It is that darkness of the forest which generates insecurity and fear (for example, prologue and Part III, ch. 6). There is a strong

[93]As G Gispert-Sauch, S.J., has pointed out in his fine scholarly analysis (1988).

[94]This is Gispert-Sauch's suggested date for the origin of the prayer, which he thinks was inserted later into the Upanishad.

element of unpredictability about this darkness, a darkness in which fateful decisions for good or ill, both individual and collective, may be made.

In the context of *Ānandamaṭh,* it becomes necessary to invoke this darkness as a horizon of contingency. The mark of history in modernity's analysis of both the past and a projected future is precisely this element of indetermination. Yet it is out of the darkness of the forest—the pregnant gloom of the womb-house of the monastery—that the light of a new era must dawn. The specificity of such a fertile gloaming is well attested to in Hindu tradition. Characteristically, not only the enlivening, luminous self (*ātman*) but also the deity as resplendent inner controller (*antaryāmin*) of the soul are enshrined in "the cave of the heart". It is from this recess that the saving light of transforming knowledge bursts forth. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* so central to modern Krishna devotion and familiar terrain to Bankim, describes the occasion of the birth of Krishna thus: "When Krishna was being born in the growing darkness (*tamas*) of the night, it was Vishnu, reposing in the depths of all, who appeared in the godly Devaki, like the full moon in the eastern sky".[95] Vishnu, who dwells in the depths (or "secret place": *guha*) of all, manifests as Krishna in the latter's mother Devaki, overcoming the growing darkness of the world as the rays of the full moon pierce the night. But light rises from the east; similarly Krishna heralds the coming of a new regime. The night here, overcome by *tamas,* is mastered. *Tamas* in this passage simultaneously intimates both forms of darkness mentioned earlier, the negative, obstructive kind, as well as its positive, enabling counterpart. The semantic interplay of this single, pregnant verse is redolent with significance.

Bankim too deploys the polysemic imagery of light and darkness to telling effect on occasion. A notable example is his introduction to the reader of the various shrines of the monastery through the eyes of Mahendra, who is being shown around by the *santān* leader, the monk Satyananda. The ambulation from shrine to shrine is on the whole plunged in gloom, interspersed with rays or flashes of light. This too is an ambivalent journey, giving as context demands the impression on the one hand of the nurturing darkness of the womb (in which paradoxically the Mother Goddess, who both symbolises and births the nation in her various forms, resides) and on the other, the resistant darkness of oppression and ignorance relieved by the rays of a new hope for the future.

> The monk led Mahendra into the temple and Mahendra saw that they had entered a hall of vast proportions. Even then, in the crimson flush of a new dawn, when the nearby forest glittered like diamonds in the sunlight, that huge hall was almost dark. . . . As he peered more and more closely, Mahendra could gradually make out a massive four-armed statue . . . on its lap sat an enchanting image. . . .

[95]*Niśīthe tamoudbhūte jāyamāne janārdane, devakyāṃ devarūpiṇyāṃ viṣṇuḥ sarvaguhāśayaḥ; āvir āsīd yathā prācyāṃ diśīndur iva puṣkalaḥ;* 10.3.8.

In a voice most solemn and filled with awe, the monk asked Mahendra, "Can you see everything?"

"Yes", said Mahendra.

"Have you seen the figure in Vishnu's lap?"

"Yes. Who is she?"

"The Mother. . . . She whose Children we are" . . . Then the monk took Mahendra into another chamber. There he saw a beautiful image of the Goddess as Bearer of the earth. . . .

"Who is she?" asked Mahendra.

"The Mother-as-she-was", replied the monk . . . After Mahendra had devoutly prostrated himself before the motherland in the form of the nurturing Goddess, the monk pointed to a dark tunnel and said, "Follow me". . . . They reached a dark chamber, in the depths of the earth, lit somehow by a faint light. There in the dim light he could see an image of Kali.

The monk said, "Look, this is the Mother-as-she-is. . . . Blackened and shrouded in darkness. She has been robbed of everything; that is why she is naked". . . .

Then saying, "Come this way", the monk began to ascend a second tunnel. Suddenly the rays of the morning sun dazzled their eyes and they heard the soft bird-song all around them. Mahendra saw a golden ten-armed image of the Goddess in a large marble shrine glistening and smiling in the early morning rays. Prostrating himself, the monk said, "And this is the Mother-as-she-will-be". (Part I, ch. 11)

The interplay of the two forms of darkness is apparent, illumined by reference to the rays of the early morning sun heralding a new day. We must not forget that Bankim gives a special if somewhat obscure role to the full-moon day (*pūrṇimā*) of the month of Māgh (January–February). It is on this day that the final battle will be fought and won, and that the mysterious superman, the Healer, will come for Satyananda, to remove him from the worldly spoils of victory and instruct him in the true meaning of his life's achievement—that is, not a temporary victory over the British in some transient battle but rather the enduring conquest of one way of life over another that is yet to come. Bhakat avers that this reference to the Māgh Pūrṇimā was derived from a factual circumstance of Bankim's experience: this was the day, Bankim was told while staying at Lalgola, on which a prominent member of the locality's *rājbāḍi* chose to pass over to the next world. But the question must be asked as to why it was at this sacred moment (*tithi*) and no other that the passage was effected in the first place, and why indeed it was that Bankim endorsed the moment by giving it prominence in his novel. And the answer must be that the full-moon day in Hindu tradition is the auspicious time when a transition is made from a lesser state to an improved one (it is often the time in popular Hindu custom when a number of festivals are cel-

ebrated and *vratas* or vows are given effect). The implication is that it is on the full-moon day that the vision of the new national order is both glimpsed and initiated: the old regime is passing away (symbolised by the victory in battle), and the new is coming into effect.

The general contrast of this more telling form of imagery with the almost uniformly negative darkness of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is striking. The chiaroscuro of light and shade in Conrad's story serves to highlight the irredeemable gloom of it all: "I looked around, and I don't know why, but I assure you that never, never before, did this land, this river, this jungle, the very arch of this blazing sky, appear to me so hopeless and so dark, so impenetrable to human thought, so pitiless to human weakness" (1997, 130). As critics have noted, in Conrad the darkness into which the reader journeys is overwhelming, indicating the moral blackness of colonial greed and exploitation, and of the ignorance and superstition of the savage tribes of the interior; the psychological gloom of misunderstanding and apathy; and the hopelessness of cultures striving at cross purposes. In the end, the crushing weight of this stygian darkness precludes any quest for a guiding light. But in *Ānandamaṭh*, the darkness of which Bankim speaks cannot master the dawning of a new era. In the final analysis, Bankim's is a narrative of hope; Conrad's is a tale of despair: "[Kurtz] cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision. . . . 'The horror! The horror' ". There are depths in the novel's symbolism, contextualised as it is in Hindu tradition, that repay further inquiry and illuminate the narrative exercise.

We must now consider a final, connected point relevant to the understanding of Bankim's project. The forest is not only a uterine symbol of a new national life, of that pregnant darkness which heralds the dawn of a fresh embodiment of the Eternal Order (*sanātana dharma*), it is also the locus of passage from an old, worn-out state to the threshold of a new. In Hindu tradition (as also in other cultures), the forest is a classic arena of liminality and transition. This is an ancient idea, embedded culturally, if one may speak so generally, in both popular and elite strata of the Hindu psyche. A normative textual locus for this paradigm is the great epics of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the stories of two separate groups of heroes, the five Pandava brothers accompanied by their joint wife Draupadi, and the king Rama and his associates, respectively, who proceed to the forest in exile so as to emerge ready to take on fresh responsibilities—the governance of their kingdoms. Though the Sanskrit versions of these epics that have come down to us, which are still popular among Hindus, were finally redacted in their present form about two thousand years ago, they have generated, with the passage of time, an array of regional versions in the vernacular that have preserved the central characters and story line.[96] Thus the great epics, in their different versions, retain a heg-

[96]For comprehensive scholarship on the Sanskrit epics, see Brockington, 1998; see also Richman, 1991.

emonic hold in the symbolism of the forest in Hindu culture as a whole. "It is clear enough that Indian epic heroes, destined for the eventual rule of city-states, only grow to their full stature through a period of exile and wandering in a 'wild' landscape that is filled both with dangers and with magical and spiritual forces—an archetypal narrative pattern" (Lutgendorf, 2000, 269).

This wild landscape is par excellence the forest, and in *Ānandamaṭh* Bankim follows this pattern. The forest in the novel is the locus not only of specific transitions with regard to its principal actors but also of a collective act of passage, that is, the movement from individual, differentiated subjecthood to an egalitarian brotherhood (ably aided and abetted by female participation) on the threshold of a new awareness of their transformed state. Indeed, the particular transitions are indices of the collective transformation that is envisaged.

The (initiated) *santāns* enter the forest as individual householders or men of the world, exercising their individuality in terms of their particular dharmic occupations and caste responsibilities. There they are transmuted into a united order of celibates who have agreed to renounce specificities of caste and status for the sake of a common, dharmic, higher objective (see, for example, Part II, chs. 4–5). "Celibacy reinforces the neither-here-nor-there, betwixt and between quality of the liminal *persona* or thresholder. Because the thresholder abstains from sexual activity he or she loses a primary expression of his or her sexual identity. . . . Celibacy, then, is a classic liminal quality which simultaneously negates forms from the world recently left, and allows the possibility of new forms unknown to that structured world".[97] The amorphous setting of the forest enables this restructuring exercise to take place. Hence all the individual changes and crossovers the particular characters undergo for specific goals—Bhabananda disguising himself as a Muslim young man in order to enter the city and find out what has happened to Satyananda, Shanti cross-dressing as a male ascetic for one purpose and disguising herself as an itinerant religious singer for another, Dhirananda dressing as a Muslim guard so as to rescue Satyananda from jail—find their fulfillment in the one, overarching goal to which they all point: the transition of all Indians to a regenerated national collective.

Note the priority given to celibacy and the renunciation of personal objectives, primarily as a male ideal, in the novel. This is Bankim being unable to shake off his newly entrenched gender and caste proclivities so as to endorse the Brahmin—celibate renunciation was par excellence a Brahmin, male prerogative—as the "natural leader" of the new movement. There may be a reinforcing Comtean influence here. But it was a long-standing Sanskritic theme to harp on celibacy as an invariable condition for the accumulation of *tapas* or spiritual power, which could then be directed for the effecting of various ends. Traditionally, this power was usually acquired by celibate ascetics who

[97]Parkhill, 1995, 82–83. Parkhill acknowledges Victor Turner's influence in his analysis.

could then use it to change the course of individual lives and kingdoms by issuing blessings and curses which acted as a conductor for the transforming energy of *tapas*.[98] But in the context of the nationalist (and protonationalist) agitation in nineteenth-century Bengal, this theme of the transformative use of *tapas* acquired by a celibate lifestyle was adapted to bringing about nationalist/patriotic goals. As I have noted elsewhere, "By affirming his masculinity physically [that is, by discharging semen as a married man], the householder so to speak lost his masculinity spiritually, with its potentially transforming powers. The celibate, by foregoing the exercise of his masculinity physically had the capacity to assert it spiritually, in more far-reaching ways. . . . Celibacy, therefore, was a crucial factor in the 'masculine' psychology of a Hindu youth in tune with the traditional spirituality of his faith and pursuing a visionary goal in life" (Lipner, 1999, 53–54).

Finally, celibacy, as a mental and physical discipline, purified and concentrated the mind. It was this that stored up *tapas* as a lever of power. This is why, in a conversation explaining the *santān* way of life to Mahendra, the would-be initiate, Satyananda, the *santān* leader, could say, "No one who takes this vow can stay in touch with his wife, son, daughter, or relatives". When Mahendra asked why this was so, the old monk replied, "If your mind remains tied by the rope of worldly concerns, then like the kite bound by its string, you will never be able to soar into the heavens. . . . It is the rule of the Children's code to give up one's life when the need arises. . . . If you cannot forget, do not take this vow" (II, ch. 4). The requirement for celibacy in the story, then, is, as we have intimated above, the later, more culturally conservative Bankim, speaking in accordance with this ideal. In any case, the valorising of this and other Sanskritic Brahmin ideals sits uncomfortably with the egalitarian thrust of eschewing caste distinctions adopted by the *santān* initiates.

The broad strategy for attaining the new order is given in the very last chapter of the novel. It is given in the form of an Instruction by the magical Healer to the *santān* leader, Satyananda. The Healer teaches Satyananda how the new embodiment of the *sanātana dharma* or Eternal Code will come about. It is British rule and English education, he declares, that will be instrumental in achieving this goal. Hindus have lost the key to implementing the inward knowledge that establishes the *dharma* that shapes their identity and polity. They will be able to find this key, or rather their true selves, once they come to terms with the world in which they now find themselves.[99] This is a world of sense experience regulated par excellence by the likes of the British. So let the British, concludes the Healer, teach the Hindus how to master the external

[98]"The classic symbol of the loss of *tapas* is the discharge of semen. The [Hindu] tradition abounds in stories of awesome ascetics being seduced by nubile maidens with a resulting loss of their power to influence events by issuing imprecations or blessings" (Lipner, 1994, 260).

[99]This is not a postmodern Instruction!

world. This will enable the inward world of true self-knowledge and the eternal righteous order (*dharma*) on which it is established, to be unlocked. The Hindus will then come into their own.

Several critics have argued that this Instruction was a sop to appease the British authorities of the time, and that it is an adventitious graft on to the body of the narrative.[100] I do not agree with this criticism. On the contrary. Though certain changes were made in later editions of the final chapter, the substance of the Instruction remained intact from the first, serial version of the novel. In fact, in my view the Instruction is an integral part of the whole, the culmination of the narratival dynamic. It dominates a chapter of final reconciliation: reconciling the fraught divides between the old and new lifestyles of the *santāns*, and the cultural and racial antagonisms of the native peoples of India and their foreign British overlords who were there to stay. The final chapter is a chapter that urges the Indians (as led by the Hindus) to bide their time, encouraging and advising them as to how the final victory from subalternity to sovereignty could be achieved. It is a chapter that rehabilitates the ignominious past and the almost despairing present into a promise of hope for the future. It reveals the ground plan for which the *santāns* sacrifice everything, for which they enter the threshold of the forest, ready to die to their old ways for a new modus vivendi, and to restructure their everyday, individual goals in order to serve a greater collective ideal: "The forest is always a temporary way station on a larger journey" (Parkhill, 1995, 65).

This theme of death and spiritual rebirth in and about the forest setting is enacted repeatedly in *Ānandamaṭh*. Kalyani "dies" in the woodland and is reborn as the steadfast, chaste wife of an absent *santān* husband—she is ready to give up an outworn domestic state for partnership with her husband in a reconstituted order; Jibananda "dies" on the forest battlefield and is raised to a new life that does not reprise the old; Shanti relinquishes her sexuality as a wife in her guise as a male *santān* (hence dying to her former self), and reappears finally on the battlefield as Jibananda's female yet celibate collaborator, wedded to the ideal of heralding a liberated motherland.

The past must be revisioned, sublated into a blueprint for a future of

[100]For example, Tapan Raychaudhuri: "The advent of the British [in the novels *Ānandamaṭh* and *Debī Chaudhurāṇī*] is described as ordained by God for India's regeneration. Such sentiments are nowhere echoed in the serious essays and one wonders if these are to be taken at their face value or as devices to counterbalance the seditious undertone of the novels in question" (1988, 183). Although Bankim may not have insisted that the advent of the British was providential, his rationalisation of British rule as enabling a new phase of Indian development is a separate issue. It is this rationalisation that is the gist of the final Instruction in *Ānandamaṭh*. It could be argued that Bankim endorsed this from his early mature writings, for example, in his serious essays in *Baṅgadarśan*, when he explains and defends, for instance, scientific data and the scientific method, modern (Western) ideas such as elective representation, and judicial and other reform (of which he was a conscientious administrator as a deputy district magistrate), and indeed English education itself—all products of British rule.

promise: this is what the symbolism of the forest in its narrative context, as discussed above, indicates. But how this is to be achieved through the contingencies of history, how the hard realities of the present can be transmuted, in Bankim's view, into a realisable vision of national sovereignty and freedom from foreign rule, calls for further discussion. It is to this that we now turn.

❁ *The Future in the Past: History in the Making* ❁

In his fine discussion of Bankim's thought, Sudipta Kaviraj writes:

> The Europeans' history of India arranged the events and trajectories in universal history in such a way that Indian subjection to Europe-Britain appeared as a necessity of the historical world. Historical novels and historical treatises by Indian intellectuals sought ways of saying that this was false, by showing the constructedness of this narration, denying its positivist semblance of objectivity, and asserting the contingency at the heart of the historical process. Whether a battle took place on a particular day was a matter of empirical evidence, but whether this showed European superiority was a matter of construction and narrativization. (*UC*: 111–12)

This goes to the heart of Bankim's rationale for writing *Ānandamaṭh*. We have seen that Bankim was at pains to dismiss any claim to historicity of the narrative. It was not meant to be docufiction, a factual account dressed up in the garb of a novel. By dispensing with historicity, Bankim created space for historicality—the scope to hypothesize a historical trajectory out of actual events of the past. The Sannyasi Rebellion thus became a nebulous backdrop for the reconstruction of a recommended future. The useful beauty of modernity's stress on the contingency of history, as Kaviraj notes, is that it shows to the discerning eye not only how the world came to be what it is but perhaps more important, how close at times it came to being something else, how "it was possible to change the past in the future, simply by making it the past of a different present" (*UC*: 109). This is what happens in *Ānandamaṭh*.

But before we examine Bankim's recreation of the past in the novel, we need to examine the ingredients that were at his disposal. It is no accident that the novel is set in the 1770s. Consider the period's disposition of space and time. The Bengal of that time presented itself as contested ground. Who was in charge of this space, authorised to rule? The British had been granted the *dewanee*, that is, the rights to collect revenue. But as Bankim makes a point of saying in the novel, "In 1770 Bengal had not yet fallen under British sway. The British at the time were Bengal's tax-collectors. All they did was collect the revenue; they took no responsibility for overseeing the lives and property

of Bengalis" (I, ch. 7). No matter that from 1765, in fact, the East India Company was effectively in control of Bengal, being the power that appointed the nawab and his ministers, a fact that Bankim with his strong historical sense must have known. But this is not the point. The point is the kind of Bengal Bankim is depicting in the novel.

Perhaps the Muslims were in charge then? Bankim in his narratival role continues: "The responsibility for life and property belonged to the evil Mir Jafar. . . . He was unable to look after himself, so how could he look after Bengal? Mir Jafar took opium and slept, the British took in the money and issued receipts, and the Bengali wept and went to ruin" (I, ch. 7). This was supposedly in 1770. No matter that Mir Jafar had died in 1765! Bankim could hardly have been ignorant of that. Alive or dead, Mir Jafar and his colleagues were not in effective control of the region, at least from the point of view of the narrative. And as for the *santāns* of Bankim's *sannyāsī* rebellion, they had only just embarked on their campaign to oust their enemies; they were not the ruling power in the land. So the Bengal of the novel is contested ground, a land bereft by default of proper authority, and in search of a legitimate ruler. This picture of political anomie is compounded by the devastation and chaos of the famine. We are faced with the depiction of a ravaged, rudderless Bengal which from the viewpoint of a purposeful history is virtually a blank canvas, and as such a fitting template for the ideological construction that Bankim will attempt. Perhaps this is why Bankim originally located the novel in Birbhum. As he himself declares (as narrator, in the early editions of the novel after the last statement quoted above): "In regions such as Birbhum the arrangement was slightly different. . . . Birbhum was under the rule of its kings". So there was a semblance of independence in Birbhum.[101] Bankim continues: "The independent kings of the past were Hindus, though the current royal line was Muslim. The king just before the time of which I write, Alinaki Khan Bahadur, got a bit above himself and with the help of Siraj-ud-daula attacked and looted Kolkata. Then, fulfilling his birth as a Muslim by grovelling at Clive's feet, he made ready to enter heaven". This passage was excised from the fifth edition.

The reader will not have failed to notice the bitterness of these words. True, Birbhum had a semblance of independence under Muslim rule, but instead of fulfilling their gubernatorial duties of protecting the lives, property and way of life of their subjects (Hindu and Muslim) and enabling them to flourish, these rulers had betrayed their trust. They had capitulated slavishly

[101] As Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal* (1897), which strongly influenced Bankim, states, it was only from 1786 to 1787 that "English supervision, more or less direct, dates in Beerbhoom" (68, which has 1786, but see 13–14, which give 1787; either way in the early 1770s, Birbhum was semi-independent).

to the British and left Bengal at the mercy of predators. It is only when one keeps this original context of the novel's location in mind that the full import of a diatribe against Muslim rule by a leading character in the novel, justifying the bellicose activities of his fellow *santāns*, can be appreciated: "Bhabananda answered: 'Where else is in such a mess? Where else do people have to eat grass for lack of food? Or thorns, or anthills, or creepers from the forest? . . . Everywhere else there's a pact with the king for protection, but does our Muslim king protect us? We've lost our religious way of life, our caste status, our self-respect, our family connections—and now we're about to lose our lives! If we don't get rid of these bearded degenerates will anything be left of our Hindu identity?' " (I, ch. 10).

With special reference to *Ānandamath*, we must now inquire into a matter of central importance for our appreciation of Bankim's ideological project: the status of the Muslim in his re-visioning of history. For obvious reasons, this is a subject of considerable sensitivity. It is one about which some modern commentators (T Raychaudhuri, S Kaviraj) seem strangely reticent, yet no assessment of the novel, and indeed of Bankim's thought, can be complete without its due consideration. Further, as we shall see, with reference to the slogan *Vande Mātaram* and the song from which it emerges—officially dubbed the national song of independent India—the role of the Muslim in *Ānandamath* as well as Muslim perception of the novel are of crucial import for ongoing relations, troubled as they are, between Hindus and Muslims in the India of today. Nothing can be gained by sweeping the matter under the rug, and allowing innuendo, ignorance, misrepresentation and recrimination to hold sway. If we are to go forward in honest dialogue, the whole subject must be broached openly and in the totality of its context. This is one of the reasons for the writing of this book.

It was a characteristic of British theorists and administrators writing about India in the first half of the nineteenth century to essentialise the Muslim and to stereotype his role in the history of the subcontinent. This was done in a racial context, against the prospect of emergent British rule. The first step of the argument was to distinguish between "Aryan" and "non-Aryan" peoples in racial, linguistic and cultural terms. According to this phase of the argument, the Aryans were lighter-skinned, spoke an "Indo-European" language (Vedic Sanskrit) after their arrival in the subcontinent (the term "Indo-European" was coined in the first quarter of the nineteenth century), and were a "master" race. The Indo-European branch, who asserted their presence in northwestern India from about the end of the second millennium BCE (ca. 1200) were supposedly the forbears of the Hindu upper castes. Sir William Jones (1746–1794), an early and influential orientalist, pronounced on their ancient achievements thus: "Nor can we reasonably doubt, how degenerate and abased so ever the Hindus may now appear, that in some early age they were splendid in arts and arms, happy in government, wise in legislation, and eminent in various knowl-

edge".[102] The Hindu elite, who now smarted under the ignominy of British rule, were glad thus to pride themselves on their racial and cultural descent from Aryan ancestors and to ally themselves with their current Aryan conquerors, howsoever "degenerate" they were constrained to admit they had now become. And it was their task to "aryanise", that is, upgrade the lifestyles, of their less fortunate, lower-caste compatriots, taking the assistance of their British rulers and English education as best they could. Thus ran the first step of the argument.

The second step sought to separate off indigenous, that is, Hindu, Aryan culture and descent by invoking a contrast between established Hindu and usurping Muslim presence in the subcontinent. In this opposition, the Muslims were depicted as oppressive invaders who, in contrast to the enlightenment brought in by the British, had contributed little if anything to enriching the lives of their subjects.

> [An] emerging pattern of the [first half of the nineteenth century] was a categorical emphasis on the contrast between the Hindu and the Mohammedan (*sic*) periods in the history of the subcontinent. . . . [T]he Muslim rule in India was put forward as a period of darkness against which the British rule could shine like the mid-day sun. . . . In 1853 John William Kaye was no less contemptuous of the Muslim rule in his *The Administration of the East India Company, a History of Indian Progress*. . . . [here Kaye is quoted]: "the rulers whom we supplanted were, like ourselves, aliens and usurpers. We found the Hindoos a conquered people, and, little by little, we substituted one yoke for another".[103]

This view had become fixed by the middle of the nineteenth century in the minds of many of the Bengali intelligentsia.[104] One of Bankim's chief sourcebooks for the writing of *Anandamath*, Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*, endorses both steps of the argument as a matter of course. With regard to the first step, he writes: "It is chiefly to the presence of a heterogeneous population of mixed descent [that is, between Aryans and 'aborigines'], the Bengalis owe it that they have never been a nation; for two races, the one consisting of masters, the other of slaves, are not easily welded into a single nationality" (1897, 136; this chapter of the book presents a classic expression of these stereotypes). And with respect to the second step, which refers to Muslim presence in India, he declares: "[T]he Aryan population of India have been subdued by successive waves of conquerors, inferior to them in their boasted intellect, but

[102]See his lecture, "On the Hindus", first delivered in 1786, and republished in Marshall, 1970, 251.

[103]D K Chakrabarti, 1997, 101–2.

[104]See further, P Chatterjee, 1995, 118–22.

able to wield the sword with a more powerful right hand than is given to a people who shift the labour of life on to servile shoulders. Afghan, Tartar, and the Mogul, found the Indo-Aryans effeminated by long sloth, divided amongst themselves, and devoid of any spirit of nationality. Thus for seven centuries has Providence humbled the disdainful spirit of Hinduism beneath the heel of barbarian invaders" (139).

These ideas were hammered into, and generally accepted by, Bengali intellectuals: their "Aryan" heritage, their debased lack of nationalist grounding, and alien but usurping Muslim presence. Bankim too adopted this picture and sought to react in terms of it. Nevertheless, his perception of the Muslims was more nuanced than we might expect. That he regarded the Muslim-as-ruler as generally an unsympathetic invader is hard to gainsay. Nowhere is this stance made more clear than in his preoccupation with the way the Muslims were supposed to have gained possession of the Bengal kingdom of Gaud under the leadership of the Turkish Muslim general Bakhtiyar Khiliji in 1199. Khiliji is supposed to have engineered the capture of the capital city of Nabadvip with the help of seventeen of his mounted warriors (some reports say eighteen or nineteen). On more than one occasion, Bankim adverts to this event with chagrin. He was so incensed by the way this apparently outrageous feat seemed to be accepted as historical fact (to the detriment of the military prowess of his Bengali countrymen) that, it could be argued, he devoted the plot of a whole novel, *Mṛṇālinī*, to showing fictively how it could have taken place.[105] In the novel, published in 1869, Khiliji succeeds because of the abject weakness, on the one hand, and misplaced trust, on the other, of the king of Gaud and his chief adviser, respectively. Thus the whole matter could be accomplished without a fight.

But what is revealing is the way Bankim describes the entry of Khiliji's emissaries into the capital city.

> Early in the morning, the inhabitants of the city were surprised to see seventeen strange (*aparicitajātīya*) horsemen riding down the main street in the direction of the palace. The citizens of Nabadvip were impressed by the way they looked and acted. They were large-bodied, tall yet sturdy, with complexions like molten gold. Their faces were broad, adorned with flowing, jet black beards and large blazing eyes. Their clothing lacked any unnecessary gloss. They were dressed as warriors, their whole bodies bristling with weapons, a look of firm resolve in their eyes. And how captivating those horses from across the Indus on which they rode—with massive frames like blocks of mountain rock, bodies burnished, with arched necks, champing at the bit, and prancing spiritedly! And their riders, what skill they dis-

[105]But he refers to this incident dismissively in other contexts, too.

played—effortlessly controlling their fiery mounts, reined in like the wind! When they saw this the inhabitants of Gaud were filled with admiration. (IV, ch. 4)

This picture is infused with a sense of admiration, fascination, fear, *otherness,* down to the build and complexion of the horsemen and the wonderful horses they ride. These were the representatives, in Bankim's imagination, of the Muslims as invaders, the foreigners or *jabans* (Sanskrit: *yavanas*), who had come to rule India: men of another mien and faith, ruthless, bellicose, relentless. In the story they proceed, unchecked, to kill the guards and capture the palace, while the weak and aged king and his family flee by boat from a back door.

Though the seventeen horsemen of Gaud's apocalypse were no doubt depicted as larger than life, for Bankim they encapsulate something of the average *jaban* who had helped to enforce Muslim rule in the subcontinent. One can see how this picture accords with the British description of the Muslim as foreign invader.[106]

Some have contended that the term *jaban,* which Bankim used often in his writings when describing the Muslim, is offensive. But this is not necessarily so. Dermot Killingley has written that although "*mleccha* is a generic term for all outsiders, or all who do not have a particular claim to respect, *yavana* is used as a specific term for specific peoples, though not always for the same people. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it referred most often to the Muslims, who had replaced the Greeks as invaders from the West who brought with them a wide range of practical skills as well as a literary and scientific culture".[107] Killingley goes on to quote from Rammohun Roy (1774?–1833?), the first influential Bengali moderniser among the Bengali elite of Calcutta, who seemingly uses *yavana* (that is, the Bengali *jaban*) to refer to both the Europeans and the Muslims. However, as Killingley points out, at the time *jaban* referred generally to the Muslim as an alien presence.[108] This usage continues in Bengali literary writings of the period without any necessary connotation of offence. In the novel *Mṛṇālinī* itself, Bankim often puts *jaban* in the mouths of Muslim interlocutors as a self-description. When the seventeen horsemen ride up to the palace gate and are challenged by a doorkeeper, they reply: "We are emissaries of the *Jaban* King's representative". Thus for Bankim, *jaban* generally means the Muslim qua foreigner. He does not dwell on the

[106]"A Muslim Pathan [we may substitute 'Turk' or 'Persian'] was quite as foreign to a Bengali, though more familiar perhaps, than an Englishman or a Scotsman" (Spear, 1973, 100).

[107]1997, 127.

[108]This trend was confined not only to Bengal. Maratha historians writing from the third quarter of the eighteenth century, who sought to rationalise former Muslim rule in large parts of western India after Maratha hegemony had reasserted itself in these regions, generally referred to the Muslims as *yavanas*. See Wagle, 1991, 51–66.

question as to whether these Muslim *jabans* were ever of the same stock as the ancient Aryans, converted to a different faith and culture with the passage of time and through the convolutions of history (after all, the traditional theory of Aryan migration into India that he accepted had these migrants pass through what is now Iran and adjoining countries). Nor was there a developed concept, at the time, of a secular nation-state in the Indian context, which envisioned a racially, religiously and culturally plural society that accorded no constitutional privilege to any citizen or community on the basis of numbers, race, creed or gender. For Bankim, Muslim-as-*jaban* has the somewhat simplistic connotation of an alien presence as a ruling elite that neither belongs nor seeks to belong—of "the intrusive other".

But he also views the Indian Muslim and Islam in other, more conciliatory ways. One context in which the Muslim is more or less accepted as a son (or daughter) of the soil is that of the Muslim *ryot* or peasant of greater Bengal (many of whom would today live in Bangladesh). For Bankim these Muslims were generally not outsiders by origin but rather native inhabitants who had changed their faith and, consequently, a number of cultural practices. This view emerges clearly in an important article written in six instalments by Bankim late in the life of *Baṅgadarśan,* entitled "Bāṅgālir Utpatti" (The Origin of the Bengali), published in the Pauṣ, Māgh, Phālgun, and Caitra issues of BE 1287 (December 1880, and January, February and March 1881, respectively), and in the Baiśākh and Jyaiṣṭha issues of BE 1288 (April and May 1881, respectively). The trajectory of the article had been set at the end of an essay by Bankim entitled "Bāṅgālā Itihās Sambandhe Kayekṭi Kathā" (Some Observations about the History of Bengal), published in the Agrahāyaṇ issue, BE 1287 (November 1880), of *Baṅgadarśan.* There the following questions are raised: "When did half the population of Bengal become Muslims? Why did they give up their own faith (*svadharma*)? Why did they become Muslims? From which birth-groups (*jātīyerā*) did they become Muslims? There is no more important reality than this in the history of Bengal. If readers wish, I shall say more about this subject". "Bāṅgālir Utpatti" begins in the next issue.

In the last instalment of "Bāṅgālir Utpatti," the whole argument is summed up in a short final section. It is worth noting that in outline this argument closely follows the conclusions of Western researches concerning the racial composition of Bengal, that is, the "Aryan"–"non-Aryan" divide and the combination of both poles to produce mixed populations of various kinds. Bankim concludes:

> But the Bengali is not an unmixed or pure Aryan. There can be no doubt that the Brahmin is an unmixed and pure Aryan, because . . . if there is [caste] miscegenation (*saṃkaratva*) Brahminhood lapses. . . . [Further] it is more or less the case that there are no Kshatriyas and Vaisyas in Bengal. If one excludes a tiny number of Vaisyas, it can be seen that the Bengali is divided into only two groups, Brahmin

> and Sudra. The Brahmin is a pure Aryan, but whether we should consider the Sudras pure Aryans or pure non-Aryans or a mixture of the two is what we have been deliberating for so long! This is because most of the Bengali people (*jāti*) are Sudras.

At this point there is an important footnote: "It was determined in the census of '71 [1871] that 30,600,000 people live in that part of Bengal where Bengali is spoken. Of these only eleven lakhs [1,100,000] are Brahmins". This footnote is important because in the song *Vande Mātaram* there is a reference to the round figure of seventy million voices raised on behalf of the Mother. However one computes these figures, there can be no doubt from the song that as the region of Bengal symbolises the Mother, Bankim included the Bengali Muslims among her children.[109]

Bankim concludes the article thus:

> In truth, there are four kinds of Bengali among those we call Bengalis today. One is Aryan, a second is non-Aryan Hindu, a third is Aryan-non-Aryan Hindu, and beyond these three there is a fourth birth-group (*jāti*), the Bengali Muslim. These four divisions live separately from each other. In the lower strata of Bengali society you get the Bengali non-Aryan or mixed Aryan and the Bengali Muslim; in the higher strata you get mostly only the Aryan. So viewing the Bengali race (*bāṅgālijāti*) from afar it seems a mixed, Aryan race, and the history of Bengal is written as the history of a people of Aryan ancestry (*āryabaṅśīya*).

Considerations about the accuracy of this analysis apart, we encounter here a starkly assimilative logic in favour of a minority perceived as racially and culturally elite, but it gives the rationale for Bankim's conception of Indian history as a history best led by and understood in terms of (Aryan) Brahmins and the Hindu upper castes. The Muslims who were to be reckoned as genuine children of the land (as opposed to their "foreign" coreligionists) were to be assimilated, politically and historically, as were other non-Muslim Indians (including, presumably, most of the native Christians and those we would call *dalit*s today), into the "Aryan" agenda of the higher Hindu castes. In short, the hegemony belongs to the Aryan Hindu. This was the mind-set of Bankim the Brahmin, notwithstanding the goodwill he may have had towards those who were neither "Aryan" nor Brahmin. Bankim was writing at a time, not least in a context of colonial rule, when the cultural and racial hegemony of elites was the order of the day. It is not without significance that the writing

[109]Das, 1984, 224, makes a pertinent observation: "[T]he population of the Bengal Presidency which included Bihar, Orissa, Assam and Chota Nagpur, was roughly sixty-five millions at the time of the composition of *Ananda Math*".

of *Ānandamaṭh* had begun serially in the issue in which the fourth instalment of this article was published. And we can see why it was the initiated *santān*s who represented those who would create a new history for the land in the novel, and why these *santān*s were generally from the Hindu upper castes. We can also see why the Muslim as native Indian or *deśī* was assimilated into this project, and why the Muslim as *jaban* was not considered an integral part of it.

Where Islam as a religious faith was concerned, Bankim wrote on more than one occasion of it with respect; he tended to give it a homogenised quality, and admired its egalitarian spirit and religiously uncompromising nature. In this, somewhat paradoxically, he wanted the Hindu elite to emulate Muslims, giving the lead to their coreligionists to sink their divisive differences, at least in the cause of forging a nationalist spirit.[110]

In the light of our discussion so far, we must now look more closely into the role of the Muslim in *Ānandamaṭh*. Some of our opening quotations in this section may have given the impression that Bankim's main political target in the novel was former Muslim rule in Bengal. In her book, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation*, Tanika Sarkar gives important attention to Bankim's treatment of the Muslim, with special reference to *Ānandamaṭh*. To some extent she appears to endorse the impression mentioned above, both focusing on the novel and extending its scope to the writings of the last phase of Bankim's life (in which the writing of *Ānandamaṭh* falls). She also draws some consequential conclusions from this concern.

> Bankim was the first Hindu nationalist to create a powerful image of an apocalyptic war against Muslims and project it as a redemptive mission, an achievement intended to endow the Hindu with political energies that he had, all along, enviously associated with Islam. . . . My focus will be on his last five years, when he composed three historical novels on Hindu-Muslim antagonism—*Anandamath* (first published in 1882) . . . *Debi Chaudhurani* (1884), and *Sitaram* (1887). . . . As class, caste, and gender issues abruptly disappear from [Bankim's later] work, their relative absence is filled up in the eighties by a new and coherent problematic: What constitutes authentic Hinduism? What possibilities exist within the Hinduism of the past, and in the reauthenticated Hinduism of the future, for nation building? What precisely is the culpability of the Muslim in Indian history, and how and why had Hindu power capitulated to it? . . . Since the British have something to impart to the Hindu, Hindu empowerment, it seems, must unfold within an overarching colonial framework. It

[110]Bankim is not concerned to differentiate between Muslims denominationally; he differentiates racially and culturally, as between the Muslim as *jaban* ("outsider") and the Muslim as *deśī* (indigenised), but denominational differences were hardly to his purpose.

> is the Muslim, the vanquisher of generations of past Hindus, who will be the great adversary of the new Hindu. This is the concluding note and message of *Anandamath*. (2001, 141, 165, 172, 181–82)

A close consideration of *Ānandamaṭh,* in light of our discussions so far, will show how important it is to give nuance to our assessment of Bankim's treatment of Islam and Muslims. I observed earlier, after quoting from Bhabananada's indictment of Muslim rule of what in the earlier editions of the novel had been the kingdom of Birbhum, that the passage was characterised by a bitterness on the part of the speaker. The Muslims had let the inhabitants of Birbhum down by self-indulgence and neglect. It was an accepted criterion of proper kingly sway in Hindu tradition that the ruler was obliged to establish such order in his territory as allowed all his subjects to flourish according to their established ways of life so long as the stability of the kingdom was not imperilled. This the Muslim ruler(s) of Birbhum did not do. " 'A king who doesn't look after (*pālan karā*) his kingdom is no king', said Bhabananda" (I, ch. 10). Earlier in the passage quoted above, Bhabananda had said: "Look at all the other places—Magadha, Mithila, Kashi, Kanci, Delhi, Kashmir—where else is in such a mess?" But some of these places, which are favoured by the comparison, were under Muslim rule.

Fairly early on in *Baṅgadarśan,* Bankim wrote an article, *Prācīn o Ādhunik Bhāratbarṣa* (Ancient and Contemporary India; Bhādra 1280, August 1873), in which he distinguished between the freedom (*svādhīnatā*) and independence (*svatantratā*)—and their opposites—of kingdoms. According to his analysis: "Sometimes one can call a dependent kingdom free, as was Hanover and Kabul at the time of George I and the Moghuls, respectively. Conversely, sometimes an independent kingdom can be called unfree, as in the case of England and India at the time of the Normans and Aurangzeb, respectively. We say that northern India under Kutubuddin was dependent and unfree, while India ruled by Akbar was both independent and free".

Finally, here is another quotation taken from *Rājsiṃha,* the novel Bankim wrote just before *Ānandamaṭh.* It was published in book form in 1882. We quote from the concluding chapter, in which Bankim makes an interesting "submission" (*granthakārer nibedan*):

> The author humbly submits that no reader should think that this book aims to point to disparity (*tāratamya*) between Hindus and Muslims. One is not good just because one is a Hindu or bad just because one is a Muslim, and vice versa. There's good and bad among both equally. In fact, one must admit that when Muslims ruled India for so many centuries they were certainly better than contemporary Hindus where kingly qualities (*rājakīya guṇ*) were concerned. But it is also not true that every Muslim king was better than every Hindu one. In many cases, Muslims were better than Hindus in respect of kingly qualities, and in many cases Hindu kings were better than

> Muslims in the same respect. He who has virtue (*dharma*) together with other qualities—whether he be Hindu or Muslim—is superior. And he who does not have virtue, other qualities notwithstanding—whether he be Hindu or Muslim—is inferior. Because Aurangzeb lacked virtue, Mughal rule began to decline from his time. Rajsimha was virtuous (*dhārmik*), so even though he was the ruler of a small kingdom, he was able to disregard and vanquish the Moghul emperor. This is what the book sets out to establish.

Thus the matter is subtle, and Muslim rule in India is not always to be castigated or even condemned. We are told what it is that lets the people down—dereliction of kingly duty—and latter-day Muslim rule in Bengal has betrayed the people. It is significant that Bankim uses the expression "traitor" (*biśvāshantā*) of Mir Jafar: he was "a vile, treacherous blot on the human race" (I, ch. 7).

Thus far, in our effort to present a nuanced account of Bankim's estimation of Muslims both as *jabans* and as *deśīs* or belongers in India, we seem to have encountered insufficient grounds to describe him as the creator of "a powerful image of an apocalyptic war against Muslims and to project it as a redemptive mission", or indeed to characterise *Ānandamaṭh* as a novel of "Hindu-Muslim antagonism" tout court (not to mention *Debī Chaudhurāṇī,* which has very little to do with Muslims in the first place); and as for Bankim's assessment of "Muslim culpability" in Indian history, I hope I have done enough to show that he endeavoured to be seen to be even-handed in his judgements.

But this is the point: Bankim needs to strive in the matter, to make a display of his efforts, precisely because he seems to have realised, however inchoately, that his estimation of the Muslim, if I can speak in general terms, was a powerful problematic both in his own perception and in that of his works. Again and again have critics alluded to the "recurrent theme of conflict" in Bankim's writings (Raychaudhuri, 1988, 111); his treatment of the Hindu-Muslim question represents one of the prime sites of this agonistic state. And even-handedness on Bankim's part does not always appear to be the victor. More about this later.

This, I assume, is also partly what Professor Sarkar wishes to convey: the perception of Bankim as the creator of a Hindu-Muslim antagonism—with fateful consequences. It is to this consideration that we now turn.

In his book, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity* (1997), Akbar Ahmed has referred to the significance of *Ānandamaṭh*—as have many other Muslim commentators—in the context of Indian independence. He writes:

> *Anandamath* had a major impact on the minds of young Bengali Hindus and set a trend in Bengali literature. The plot revolves round the revolt of the sannyasis (Hindu ascetics) in the 1760s and 1770s, which is depicted as a national rising. The sannyasis, worshippers of the Hindu goddess Kali, who symbolizes Mother India, have one aim:

the destruction of every trace of Muslim rule. They attack Muslim rulers and go about massacring Muslim communities, plundering and burning Muslim villages. The story ends with a supernatural figure telling the sannyasi leader that he has already completed his task by defeating the Muslims.

The song "Vande Mataram" ("Hail to thee, Mother") was taken from *Anandamath.* It is an intensely passionate devotional hymn to the mother figure of India and to goddesses like Durga and Lakshmi. The association of the mother with India and in turn with Hinduism fired a passionate sense of Hindu nationalism. . . .

Understandably Jinnah and the Muslims complained when in 1937 "Vande Mataram" was declared a national anthem to be sung by all schoolchildren in every school. Today Muslims at schools in India have to sing it. (66) . . .

There is a direct causal relationship between *Anandamath,* written in 1882, and the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya in 1992. (220)

This is a fairly typical response by even a well-meaning Muslim—which from personal experience I know Professor Ahmed to be—to *Ānandamaṭh* and its contents. We note several points; first, the universalising of the influence of the novel's impact in the direction of an exclusivist Hindu nationalism, second, its long-lasting effect in this regard (both points endorsed by Professor Sarkar), third, the reduction of the novel's aim to the extirpation of Muslims and Muslim influence in India, and fourth, the veiled association of the song *Vande Mātaram* with idolatrous sentiments together with a sense of grievance about its imposition on Indian Muslims. This is a fairly comprehensive and accurate summary of Muslim objections in general to *Ānandamaṭh.* We must now inquire into them.

As to the third point, the novel's narrative intention, we have already indicated that we find this to be a complex issue. We will have more to say on this matter in due course. Whether one could say that the rather reductive interpretation offered above can be sustained, either internally, that is, in the context of the story's plot, or externally, that is, within the wider implications of the logic of the narrativisation, will depend in the first instance on a careful reading of the novel in terms of its multilayered publishing history. It is to make this observation that I advert to the third point, the narrative intention, first; further, clarifying this intention is also one of the major reasons for the writing of this book.

But let us return to the first point, the universalising of the novel's impact. This can be subdistinguished further, as follows: into questions concerning the association of the novel's scope either exclusively with Bengali patriotism, or (more inclusively) with a wider Indian nationalism; and in the latter case, into further questions concerning the nature of this nationalist sentiment—is it "Hindu" or nonpartisan, and if Hindu, is it moderate or extreme?

There can be no doubt that *Ānandamaṭh* has been received in the context of a wider nationalism, in which both the slogan *Vande Mātaram* and the hymn from which it is drawn have played an important part. I myself was educated in India (mostly in Bengal), beginning, not long after Independence, from the primary classes and ending with study for a postgraduate degree. Although we never had to sing all or part of the song *Vande Mātaram* in the schools I attended (nor was this a custom in other schools with whose practices I was familiar, whether inside or outside Bengal), it was common practice for years for many schoolchildren in Bengal to march in procession during the annual celebration of India's Independence Day on August 15, chanting *Bande Mātaram.* But in recent times this practice has been discontinued to a significant extent. Incidentally, the song *Vande Mātaram* is officially not India's national anthem but India's "national song". It is not clear what this signifies. A verse or two is regularly sung or played at local or national occasions, especially those of an official nature.[111] On August 14, 1947, at the fifth session of the Constituent Assembly of India, with the president of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad, in the chair, the first verse of *Vande Mātaram* was sung as the first item on the agenda. Again, on May 30, 1996, when the Rajya Sabha or Upper House convened at Parliament House in the morning, the "National Song (Vande Mataram) was played" as the second and final item of a short agenda. Or to take another example, the function to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Republic of India held on January 27, 2000, in the Central Hall of Parliament House, commenced with the singing of the national anthem. After various items were released to mark the occasion, "the National Song *Vande Mataram* was sung by two eminent vocalists". These are only some of the circumstances in which *Vande Mātaram* as the national song plays an official role.[112]

[111]In this introduction I have not sought to distinguish between "song", "hymn" and "anthem" in Western musicological terms when referring to the song *Vande Mātaram.* In such terms, a hymn would tend to have a cyclic or repetitive structure, so that one or more stanzas could be sung without violating its musical form; an anthem, on the other hand, has a linear quality, which requires that it be sung or played in its entirety. Further, "hymn" is most at home in a sacred context, whereas "song" and "anthem" need not be. I am grateful to Guy and Julia Welbon for providing this information, in consultation with the distinguished composer, Lindsay Lafford.

[112]Information taken from the Web site http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/jpi/MARCH2000. *VMBS* throws some light on the genesis of determining the "national song" of India vis-à-vis its "national anthem": "On 24th January 1950, the last day of the last session of the Constituent Assembly, the president of the Assembly, Dr Rajendra Prasad, gave a decision from the chair. Rabindranath Tagore's *Jana gana mana* would be the national anthem and 'the song "Vande-mataram" which has played a historic part in the struggle for Indian freedom, shall be honoured equally with "Jana-gana-mana" and shall have equal status with it' " (43–44). He is quoting from *Constituent Assembly Debates,* Report vol. 12, January, 24 1950, 7. *VMBS* continues: "This was a motion from the Chair and thus not debated upon or put to vote, unlike the numerous resolutions debated and voted upon in the process of making the Constitution of the Republic". For an elaboration see note 128.

The history of the slogan *Vande Mātaram*, and the song from which it is derived, in achieving national and nationalist prominence is intriguing. It seems clear that the original context, the novel *Ānandamaṭh*, was intended to use the Bengal of the time as a symbol of a wider India (Bhāratbarṣa) as the motherland for patriots. As we shall see, the hymn is immersed in Bengali and Hindu symbolism. Yet the scope of the *santāns*' martial achievement in the novel is extended, during the final Instruction imparted in the story, to the whole of India. In this Instruction, the mysterious healer teaches Satyananda, the *santān* leader, about the relationship between the inward knowledge (*antarbiṣayak jñān*), the chief part of the Hindu's eternal code (*sanātana dharma*) on which the Hindu way of life and its identity are properly established, and the outward knowledge (*bahirbiṣayak jñān*), which enables one to cope effectively with the empirical realities of this world and is a means for arriving at the inward knowledge.

> Unless the outward knowledge arises first, the inward cannot arise. Unless one knows the gross, one cannot know the subtle. For a long time now the outward knowledge has been lost in this land, and so the true Eternal Code has been lost too. . . . The English are very knowledgeable in the outward knowledge, and they're very good at instructing people. Therefore, we'll make them king. And when by this teaching our people are well instructed about external things, they'll be ready to understand the inner. Then no longer will there be any obstacles to spreading the Eternal Code, and the true Code will shine forth by itself again. . . . At present the English are traders. They're intent on amassing wealth, and do not wish to take on the burden of ruling a kingdom. But because of the Children's rebellion, they'll be forced to take on the burden of ruling, for without this they cannot collect wealth. The rebellion came about to usher in English rule.

It is clear from this that the scope of the novel is not confined to Bengal; it takes in the whole of the political entity that is British India. One must remember that the novel is being written with hindsight in the early 1880s. It is also important to note, with respect to the third item in our list above, that the intent of the novel includes a stance on British political presence in India. This is why the British figure prominently in the narrative. It is forces under their command who are major opponents of the *santāns*, and it is a British-led expedition that is defeated in the last, great battle of the story. Thus the novel must be read with the political roles of the Muslims and the British in a contested land as juxtaposed: the verdict of history past must be that the Muslims have finally let their Indian subjects down; they have failed in their kingly duty (as symbolised by Muslim rule in Bengal). But the trajectory of

history in the making must be the instrumentalisation of British rule. British rule is acceptable only on the basis of an ulterior, Indian, objective.[113]

On this, note the tenor of some of the Healer's statements: "Therefore, we'll make the English king (*sutarāṃ iṅgrejke rājā kariba*). . . . The rebellion came about to usher in English rule"—as if it is in the power of the Indians to be kingmakers, and confer a temporary dominion upon the British to enable an Indian national objective to triumph. Bankim's historical trajectory here defies the standard interpretation of the times, that is, of the period in which the novel was written, that India's subjection to Europe-Britain was an ineluctable consequence of universal historical analysis (see the quotation from Kaviraj opening this section).

But for Bankim this ulterior Indian objective was, as we have seen, the incarnation of the Hindu Eternal Code in the emergent nation-state. This is why the *santāns*, though they are identified as Vaiṣṇavas, transcend the confines of conventional Vaiṣṇava sectarianism. They are not Vaiṣṇava in any narrow sense. They worship Vishnu but also a Śākta Goddess and her manifestations (in which Shiva figures as a consort) which are themselves not narrowly sectarian. Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Śākta features combine to constitute their identity; they stand for all Hindus rather than for any particular group of Hindus, and in this universal role they are ready to embrace all non-Hindus who are prepared to accept their vision for the future—but on their terms. As such, they are really devotees of the Eternal Code.[114]

The Hinduism that would characterise this Code was a product of Bankim's own invention, the neo-Hinduism that was being forged with the help of Comtean and utilitarian ideas, glimpsed in the unfolding of *Ānandamaṭh*, and brought to a degree of maturation in a cluster of Bankim's final discursive writings, notably *Kṛṣṇacaritra*, *Dharmatattva*, and his unfinished commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā*.[115] We have given the gist of Bankim's neo-Hindu

[113]Thus the aim of the novel cannot be reduced to "the destruction of every trace of Muslim rule", nor can one say tout court that "the story ends with a supernatural figure telling the sannyasi leader that he has already completed his task by defeating the Muslims" (Ahmed, 1997), or indeed that "it is the Muslim, the vanquisher of generations of past Hindus, who will be the great adversary of the new Hindu" (T Sarkar, 2001).

[114]But different in significant respects from the more traditionalist types of devotees of this code—the Sanatanis—identified by Lutgendorf, 1991, 363–64. Bankim's Sanatanis were the creation of a mind more ready to hold an overt dialogue with westernising influences.

[115]We may include among these writings Bankim's *Letters on Hinduism*, a set of six fairly short essays that Bankim did not complete but apparently intended to publish in due course. According to Ursula King, "one can infer from internal evidence that they must have been written in 1882 or shortly afterwards", though she does not elaborate (1977, 129). However, in only the second letter there is a footnote by the author referring to a source dated December 1882, so it is doubtful if the bulk of the work was written in 1882. "The manuscript came into the possession of Kumar Bimal Chandra Singh of Paikpara, and he first published it about three years ago on the centenary of

outlook in an earlier context; it is beyond the scope of this book to go into further detail. But, as noted earlier, the bold face of this ground plan for a regenerated India bore unmistakably Hindu "Aryan" features, and as the song *Vande Mātaram* and the novel from which it derived were clearly located in this context, it may be no wonder that in the run up to Independence in the 1930s, when *Vande Mātaram* was recognised as a salient marker of *Hindu* nationalism, "Jinnah and the Muslims complained" (Ahmed, 1997).

We still need to inquire more closely, however, into the early history of the rise to prominence of *Vande Mātaram* as a national symbol, and its subsequent impact. There is no doubt that the novel itself was popular among the middle classes of Bengal; by 1892 it had undergone five editions in book form. Although it is clear that a history of the translation of the novel into other Indian languages is a desideratum,[116] it is also clear that it was not long before the hymn *Vande Mātaram* was detached from its narrative base—which is not the same thing as saying that it could be entirely dislodged from its narrative context—and given a life of its own. Concomitant with this process was the rise of the expression *Vande Mātaram* as a patriotic slogan in its own right. This need not be particularly surprising, for, as the reader will see on perusing the novel, *Vande Mātaram* is used often in the story as a watchword per se.

It is interesting to note that this process of highlighting the song appears to have started even before the completion of the serial version of the novel. The final instalment of the story appeared in the *Bañgadarśan* of Jyaiṣṭha BE 1289 (May–June 1882). Yet, as *BcJ* points out (568), Sriscandra Majumdar records that at a meeting of a literary society in the month of Caitra 1288 (March–April 1882), at which Bankim himself was present, the song *Vande Mātaram* was sung before the speaker began to deliver his piece.[117] If this is an accurate record of dates and events, then this is a remarkable fact. For it means that both the song and the expression *Vande Mātaram* were assuming a public—though not necessarily a political—profile even as the novel was being completed serially, notwithstanding the fact that the journal was running late (the song itself appears fairly early in the story, and the expression *Vande Mātaram* occurs several times as a watchword well before the conclusion of the narrative).

Bankim's birth [1938]", from the editors' preface to the section entitled "Letters on Hinduism" in the centenary edition of Bankim's works, edited by B N Banerji and S K Das. These letters have been reprinted in Bagal, 1969.

[116] *VMBS*, 54, gives an incomplete list.

[117] *VMBS*: 20 cites references to the effect that "a friend of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee writes in his memoirs that while Bankim was writing the novel *Anandamath*, an enthusiastic friend of his, another Bengali deputy magistrate, set Vande Mataram to tune in raga *Malhar*; the song was occasionally rendered by him in Bankim's drawing room in 1880" (see also note 5, p. 106). *Malhar* (or *mallār*, etc.) and other Indian musicological modes to which the song was set will be discussed below.

We can assume that this public singing of *Vande Mātaram*, albeit on a local occasion, was not an isolated event: "Soon after the publication of the song it attracted the notice of several writers and critics. It inspired a picture of Mother India by Harishchandra Haldar which was printed in 1885 in a journal called *Balak*. In 1886 Hemchandra Banerji wrote a poem, 'Rakhi Bandhan', wherein he included the first two stanzas of Vandemataram. . . . The first enthusiastic plea for the extensive use of the slogan Vandemataram was made by Yogendranath Vidyabhushan in his biography of Garibaldi published in 1890".[118]

These examples are not meant to be exhaustive, but they do indicate that *Vande Mātaram* soon began acquiring a political profile, at least among the Bengali middle classes. This image was reinforced on the national stage at the convention of the twelfth session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta in 1896, with Rahimutullah Sayani, a Muslim, as president. It was Rabindranath Tagore, a rising star at the time, who sang the hymn on that occasion.[119] There would have been a number of other Muslims present among the participants, and the proceedings were widely reported in the newspapers.

Thus far neither song nor watchword seems to have excited non-Hindu (that is, Muslim, Christian or other) antipathy, at least in a concerted, public manner. A change of status in two ways—with respect to the heightening of *Vande Mātaram*'s national image as also its appropriation as a specifically Hindu symbol—seems to have occurred in connection with the agitation in Bengal against the first partition of Bengal under British rule in 1905. It is generally agreed that this was an ill-conceived act by the authorities, intended to divide Hindu and Muslim Bengalis and to weaken in particular rising Bengali opposition to British rule (it was reversed a few years later).

The Partition came into effect in October 1905. On August 7 of that year, thousands of students and others marched in procession towards the Calcutta Town Hall protesting against the Government's intention, and chanting *Bande Mātaram*. There seems to be a consensus that this was probably the first major occasion on which the expression was used in public as a political slogan. The chanting was not confined to Hindus; people of all communities were reported to have been involved.[120] In October 1905, a society called the Bande Mataram

[118] Das, 1984, 215.

[119] There is some debate as to whether Tagore sang the song on this occasion or at the Congress session in Calcutta six years earlier. See A Chakrabarti, 1996, 29, where he opts for the latter alternative; *VMBS*, on the other hand, avers that "Tagore set to music the first two stanzas of Vande Mataram and sang it in the Congress session in Calcutta in 1896" (see p. 106, note 1).

[120] See Das, 1984, 215–16, and Mukherjee and Mukherjee, 1957, 14 (abbr: *BMIN*). In his article under "Chatterji, Bankim Chandra", in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (vol. 6, 1910, pp. 9–10), Rameshcandra Datta notes, "During Bankim Chandra Chatterji's lifetime the *Bande Mataram*, though its dangerous tendency was recognized, was not used as a party war-cry; it was not raised, for instance, during the Ilbert Bill agitation, nor by the students who flocked round the court during the trial of Surendra Nath Banerji in 1883. It has, however, obtained an evil notoriety in the agitations that followed the [1905] partition of Bengal". *VMBS* points out that it

Bhikshu Sampraday was formed in Calcutta to popularise the expression as a political slogan. "On every Sunday, the members of the society moved about in procession in the streets, singing *Bande Mataram*".[121] Meanwhile, both the song and the expression *Vande Mātāram* were becoming known in wider context. A collection of patriotic songs entitled *Vandemataram,* edited by Yogindranath Sarkar, appeared in September 1905; it ran to five editions within a year. The song was translated into Tamil in November 1905 in a monthly magazine; it subsequently became very popular in the Madras Presidency.[122]

The British authorities reacted strongly to the growing popularity of the slogan. "On 8 November 1905 P. C. Lyon, the chief secretary of the new government of East Bengal, sent a circular to the commissioner banning the song and the shouting of Vandemataram in public places" (Das, 1984, 216). Of course, this produced the opposite effect to that intended, and there were many instances of spirited defiance of the ban.

In 1906, two events in particular occurred that enhanced the political importance of the slogan, especially among Bengalis, then in the vanguard of mounting opposition to British rule. The first was a violent police assault on delegates who had gathered in Barisal (a coastal town in the newly partitioned eastern portion of Bengal) on April 14 for the meeting of the Provincial Conference of the Indian National Congress. In defiance of the banning order, the delegates, who included Hindus and Muslims, were marching towards the Congress venue chanting *Bande Mātaram,* and wearing *Bande Mātaram* badges and waving *Bande Mātaram* flags. They were set upon by the police with *lāṭhi*s (thick staves about five to six feet in length), and the procession ended in disarray. There was widespread outrage among Indians not only in Bengal but also in other parts of the country.

Second, on August 6 that year, the first issue of the revolutionary paper *Bande Mataram,* published in English, appeared in Calcutta under Bengali

was not only the middle classes who used the slogan subsequently. "While it may be true that in the majority of instances the slogan was raised by students and middle-class youth, we also have police reports of its use by the working classes. An early example was the strike by millworkers in the British-owned Fort Gloster Mill near Calcutta in October 1905. The superintendent of police reports that millworkers were given to shouting Vande Mataram at the European assistants". When the management attempted to stop this, the 9,000 workforce, "nearly all local Bengalis", shouted the slogan at an agreed time in defiance. Some violence followed, the police were eventually called and arrests were made. "This led to a total strike in defence of those arrested". *VMBS* also observes that the chief secretary of the newly-created province of East Bengal wrote to the viceroy in September 1906 that "the police report that the cry of Vande Mataram was raised on two occasions by bands of men looting grain boats . . . as a sort of rallying cry". Other similar reports of looting using the slogan were also made at the time (*VMBS*: 60–61).

[121]Mukherjee and Mukherjee, 1997, xxvi (abbr: *SANT*).

[122]See Das, 1984, 218. *VMBS* notes (19) that translations into Marathi and Kannada were available from 1897; later translations are also mentioned. The reader will recall that the fifth edition of Nares Chandra Sen-Gupta's English translation of the novel was published in 1906; see also back pages of *AMcb* (no page numbers) for samples of early translations of *Vande Mātaram* into English.

editorship (it had daily and weekly editions and was to last until October 1908). This paper kept up a relentless attack against British colonial presence in the land. The attack was conducted not only on political but also on cultural grounds. The paper was charged with sedition in 1907, and one of its reputed editors at the time (since it was the current strategy of the paper to withold publicly the name of its editors), Aurobindo Ghose, who was in his revolutionary phase, was arrested but eventually acquitted. But it is the nature of the cultural, rather than the political, onslaught of this "extremist" publication that is significant for our purposes. Though the editorials discussed a wide range of current issues (see *BMIN* and *SANT*), a reading of even a sample of those which raised religious and cultural concerns will show how overwhelmingly "Hindu", with special reference to Vedantic ideas, their ideological rhetoric was. This tendency is summed up in the following extract, taken from an article entitled "The Bed-Rock of Indian Nationalism—II", from the *Bande Mataram* weekly of June 14, 1908:

> The different world religions representing different world cultures that have already found a habitation in India will remain here always, form elements of the common national life, and contribute to the evolution of the composite culture of modern India [the religions of Christianity and Islam were mentioned earlier]. The Hindu culture, however, on account of its age and its superior numerical strength, will always form the ground work of this composite Indian culture and civilisation. The dominant note of Hindu culture, its sense of the spiritual and universal, will, therefore, be the peculiar feature of this composite, Indian nationality.
>
> The new movement which seeks to embody the ideals and aspirations of this nationality, is, therefore, an essentially spiritual movement. And the type of spirituality that it seeks to develop, is essentially Hindu. Its key-note is the essential unity of God and man. . . . [T]aken by himself, man is a toy of time, a play-thing in the hands of death; but when viewed in relation to God, he is a spirit, a soul, an *atma,* eternally pure, free, and self-realised, as the Supreme Spirit, the Over-Soul, the *Paramatman* himself. (*BMIN*: 94–95)

Aurobindo was under arrest on a different political charge at the time this editorial appeared, but it seems to give a preview of the kind of Vedantic philosophy he was to develop later in life.[123] But the significant point is that

[123]The early Aurobindo was much taken by Bankim. Upon his return from England as a young man, he wrote seven eulogistic articles in English on Bankim (discussing his life, times and career) for the *Indu Prakash* (July–August, 1894). In 1905, Aurobindo wrote a patriotic pamphlet (published anonymously in Baroda, in western India), entitled *Bhawani Mandir* (The Temple of [the Goddess] Bhawani) which came to the attention of the district magistrate of Broach. *Bhawani Mandir* was clearly influenced by themes from *Ānandamaṭh,* especially the idea that India's strength

such writing is in keeping with the dominant ideology of the paper, an ideology that is assertively and assimilatively Hindu, not the "Hindu" of popular practice, of course, but the "neo-Hindu" of the reformers. This stance not infrequently described itself as Hindu, and, more important, was generally perceived as such. It shows clearly that distinctive characteristic of the nationalism that was to develop on the whole under the leadership of Hindus in India (or persons reckoned among the Hindu camp): the fusing of the political and the religious in terms of predominantly "Hindu" ideation and symbolism. This is, in fact, a feature of the novel *Ānandamaṭh* itself. There is no place here for Muslim or other voices to have an equal role in the shaping of the new nationalism. I believe that this paper, during its brief yet meteoric career under the banner of the title *Bande Mataram,* played a significant part in the early stages of a growing perception of *Vande Mātaram* as a marker for specifically Hindu objectives.[124]

Antipathy between Hindus and Muslims in partitioned Bengal began to increase in the aftermath of the Partition. The Muslims were soon led to believe that they would not be disadvantaged by the Partition; on the contrary, it would consolidate their identity and future prospects, since they were in the majority in the eastern province. In 1907 there were several serious riots between Hindus and Muslims in eastern Bengal.

> In April "serious disturbances erupted in Jamalpur. Here Muslim rowdies attacked Hindu volunteers who were destroying foreign-made goods at a fair. . . . Mobs attacked landlords' houses, destroyed debt bonds, and smashed an image of Durga. This act of desecration outraged Hindus in every part of the country. *Bande Mataram* fanned the flames. . . . *Bande Mataram*'s sub-editor Hemendra Prasad Ghose spoke for hundreds when he wrote: 'It makes one's blood boil to think of it. . . . Revenge is the word that escapes one's lips' ".[125]

In fact, a controversial Muslim pamphlet published at the time, *Lal Istahar* (The Red Pamphlet) urged Muslims not to use the watchword *Vande Mātaram.* Riots between the two communities in greater Bengal were to become a depressingly recurrent phenomenon in the years that followed. Perhaps it was only a matter of time before *Vande Mātaram* became a divisive slogan between Hindus and Muslims. S K Das avers that in the Calcutta riots of 1921, *Vandē Mātaram* was used as a slogan by Hindu rioters against Muslims for the first time, "and from this time onwards Vandemataram began to be used as the war-cry of the Hindu fanatics" (1984, 220). For their part, Muslims began to express their opposition to *Vande Mātaram* as a slogan from the latter half of the first decade of the 1900s, but not as part of a political campaign. Indeed, in some cases Muslims seem to have cooperated with Hindus who were agitating against the British by chanting the slogan and singing the song of the same name. Thus, "The *Hindu* reported in February 1907 that a Bala Bharati Samiti was organized and in Rajahmundry [a town in what was then known as Madras Presidency], 'students, all wearing Vande Mataram badges, and carrying aloft beautiful banners glittering with bold letters of Vande Mataram and *Allah-o-Akbar*' [emphasis added], marched around the town and 'here and there the procession halted to sing the immortal song of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee' " (*VMBS*: 55, quoting the *Hindu* of February 14, 1907). It was in the 1920s, however, that Muslims framed an ideological critique of the slogan and the novel, no doubt as a response to concerted Hindu provocation (*VMBS*: 26). From this time on, political opposition between Hindus and Muslims in terms of *Vande Mātaram* hardened.

A resolution of the twenty-fifth annual session of the All India Muslim League, the party headed by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan, in October 1937 condemned "the attitude of the [Indian National] Congress in foisting *Bande Mataram* as the national anthem upon the country as callous, positively anti-Islamic, idolatrous in its inspiration and ideas, and definitely subversive of the growth of genuine nationalism in India. This meeting further calls upon Muslim members of various legislatures and public bodies in the country not to associate themselves in any manner with this highly objectionable song".[126]

At the end of October 1937 a small subcommittee of the Congress, which included a distinguished Muslim, and which had met to consider the status of *Vande Mātaram* as a potential national anthem in competition with other patriotic songs, submitted a resolution which stated:

for regeneration as a nation was to derive from a transcendent source conceived of as infinite power or *shakti,* described as the Mother (symbolised by the temple to *Bhawani*) and identified also with the land of India. It was not long after that Aurobindo began his English translation of *Ānandamaṭh.*

[124]Enactments of *Ānandamaṭh* in a religiopolitical context reinforced the currency of "Vande Mātaram" as a Hindu political slogan. Referring to an initiative by Sarala Devi, a niece of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, Lise McKean notes: "Sarala Devi organized a group of young Bengali men who pledged to her in front of a map of India that they would sacrifice their lives fighting for independence from British rule. In 1903 Sarala Devi's group instituted an annual festival of heroes, held on the second day of Durgā Pūjā, the great festival in honor of the warrior-goddess Durgā. Included in the third of these celebrations was a dramatic performance of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's anti-British novel *Ānandamaṭh,* 'Monastery of Bliss.' When the performance ended, the crowd began to chant the song 'Bande Mātaram': its lyrics and imagery, which praise the goddess Bhārat Mātā [Mother India], recur throughout *Ānandamaṭh.* 'Bande Mātaram' subsequently became the nationalists' rallying cry" (1996, 252–3). McKean gives no source, but this performance would have occurred in 1906 (that is, in "the third of these celebrations", after the initial one of 1903). But by then, as we have seen, the public launch of "Vande Mātaram" as a political slogan had already occurred; no doubt this is why "the crowd began to chant the song 'Bande Mātaram' ".

[125]Heehs, 1993, 106.

[126]From Gopal, 1959, 256–57. See also, for example, Qureshi, 1965, 105, 126, 128; and ch. 1 of *VMBS.*

> During the past thirty years, innumerable instances of sacrifice and suffering all over the country have been associated with "Bande Mataram". . . . The song and the words thus became symbolic of national resistance to British imperialism in Bengal especially, and generally in other parts of India. . . . Gradually the use of the first two stanzas of the song spread to other provinces and a certain national significance began to attach to them. The rest of the song was very seldom used. . . . These two stanzas described in tender language the beauty of the motherland and the abundance of her gifts. There was nothing absolutely in them to which objection could be taken from the religious or any other point of view.

This was partly drafted by Nehru the secular humanist, and endorsed by Rabindranath Tagore the great national poet, feted by the world for his love of humanity and breadth of vision. "The working party accepted the poet's suggestion and recommended that the first two stanzas of the song be accepted as the national anthem" (Das, 1984, 222). However, in an article on the *Bhārat Mātā* theme in modern India, Geeti Sen states: "In 1937 Nehru wrote to Subhas Chandra Bose, 'Certainly as suggested by you I shall discuss the *Bande Mataram* song with Dr Tagore'. The poet laureate confirmed that the second stanza describing the goddess enshrined in temples was inimical to Islamic tenets against the worship of icons. And after considerable debate, in the wisdom of things as they had changed, *Bande Mataram* was not chosen as the national anthem".[127] The apparent contradiction here in the poet's recommendations ("that the first two stanzas of the song be accepted" in Das's reference, and the observation "that the second stanza . . . was inimical to Islamic tenets" in Sen's quotation) can be understood by pointing to ambiguity in the meaning of the expression "second stanza" in the two extracts. Reference to the "Goddess enshrined in temples" in the hymn occurs in the second half of the hymn (which is generally not sung on official occasions), though it is not entirely clear how the political adoption of the song shifted from potential national anthem to national song.[128]

[127]Winter 2002–Spring 2003, 160.

[128]Two matters are worthy of note here: first, the ambiguity of dividing the song into "stanzas". There is confusion in the literature on this point, and it is not always clear where one "stanza" is supposed to end and another begin. *VMBS* avers that the first two stanzas comprise the first twelve lines of the song as originally published in the serial version of the novel, that is, up to the line *ripudalabāriṇīṃ mātaram* (The Mother who drives away the hostile hordes; see my translation later in this introduction). No mention of "the goddess enshrined in temples" here. Thus, after due consideration, I have given my own division into verses, which I believe conforms to the structure and sense of the song; and second, the retention of the concepts of "national anthem" and "national song", though confusing, seems to be a concession to conciliation, on the one hand, and history, on the other, from the viewpoint of the nationalist Hindu leadership—conciliation to Muslim

But Muslim opposition, as we have indicated, has been implacable. It is one of those phenomena of human psychology that Hindus on the one hand, even moderate individuals, by all accounts, and Muslims on the other, by and large remain at cross purposes on this matter.[129] Very many Hindus tend to

sentiments (hence adoption of Tagore's inoffensive *Jana Gana Mana* as the national anthem) and retention of Bankim's *Vande Mātaram,* steeped as it was in Hindu nationalist history. In an article posted on the Internet, "How Secular Is Vande Mataram?" A G Noorani writes: "[The Government of India's] stand was defined in a statement by Prime Minister Nehru to the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) on August 25, 1948. Nehru said: 'The question of having a national anthem tune, to be played by orchestras and bands, became an urgent one for us immediately after 15th August 1947. It was as important as that of having a national flag. The "Jana Gana Mana" tune, slightly varied, had been adopted as a national anthem by the Indian National Army in South-East Asia, and had subsequently attained a degree of popularity in India also. . . . I wrote to all the provincial Governors and asked their views about our adopting "Jana Gana Mana" or any other song as the national anthem. . . . Every one of these Governors, except one (the Governor of the Central Provinces), signified their approval of "Jana Gana Mana". Thereupon the Cabinet considered the matter and came to the decision that provisionally "Jana Gana Mana" should be used as the tune for the national anthem, till such time as the Constituent Assembly came to a final decision. . . . It is unfortunate that some kind of argument has arisen as between "Vande Mataram" and "Jana Gana Mana". "Vande Mataram" is *obviously and indisputably* [emphasis added] the premier national song of India, with a great historical tradition, and intimately connected with our struggle for freedom. . . . no other song can displace it. . . . In regard to the national anthem tune, it was felt that the tune was more important than the words. . . . It seemed, therefore, that while "Vande Mataram" should continue to be the national song *par excellence* in India, the national anthem tune should be that of "Jana Gana Mana", the wording of "Jana Gana Mana" to be suitably altered to fit in with the existing circumstances' ". Noorani continues: "A more definitive statement was made by the President of the Constituent Assembly, Rajendra Prasad [the first president of India], on January 24, 1950. He said: 'There is one matter which has been pending for discussion, namely the question of the national anthem. . . . [I]t has been felt that, instead of taking a formal decision by means of a resolution [by the House], it is better if I make a statement with regard to the national anthem. Accordingly, I make this statement. . . . The composition consisting of the words and music known as "Jana Gana Mana" is the national anthem of India, subject to such alterations in the words as the Government may authorise as occasion arises, and the song "Vande Mataram", which has played a historic part in the struggle for Indian freedom, shall be honoured equally with "Jana Gana Mana" and shall have equal status with it. (Applause). I hope that will satisfy the Members' ". Note that the implication here is that the words of *Jana Gana Mana,* the national anthem, are subject to (authorised) change, whereas the words of the national song *Vande Mātaram* are not. Further, in retaining the concepts of having national anthem and national song as being of equal official status against the historical background we have described—an occurrence seemingly unique in the establishment of a nation-state—the government of India may be considered to have laid itself open to the charge of creating confusion in the minds of its citizens, as well as scope for ongoing communal disaffection. See also note 112 above.

[129]In his weekly, *The Harijan* (July 1, 1939), no less a figure than Mahatma Gandhi wrote somewhat disingenuously: "As a lad when I knew nothing of *Ananda Math* or even Bankim, *Vande Mataram* gripped me. I associated the purest national spirit with it. It never occurred to me it was a Hindu song or meant only for Hindus. Unfortunately, now we have fallen on evil days. All that was pure gold before has become base metal today" (see *India Today* [International], September 1, 1997, 55). Professor Anthony Parel, who has worked extensively on Gandhi, adds: "Gandhi had a

find it uncontroversial to detach the watchword and/or the first section of the song from the context of the novel as a whole, whereas Muslims espouse the opposite tendency, convinced that the song symbolises sentiments that are "positively anti-Islamic" and "idolatrous". No doubt partisan histories that stretch back into the recesses of the past lie embedded in the psyches of both sides, and it has become very hard for individuals of each party to subject these histories to dispassionate scrutiny. However, if the wasteful energies of divisiveness are to be channelled into a dialogue that engenders the hope of reconciliation, then, in the first instance, such scrutiny is necessary.

Matters have not been helped in recent times by the rise of a Hindu right that seeks to appropriate both slogan and song for its political agenda.[130] Let us consider this development briefly. Before the elections of 2004, the government of India was a coalition led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is generally characterised as a party with Hindu sympathies situated on the political right. It is also a matter of common consent that associated more or less closely with individuals and parties of the BJP is the 'Sangh Parivar', a "family nexus" or combine of religiocultural bodies whose political ideologies are usually characterised as extreme right (and members of which are often confusingly described as Hindu fundamentalists). The RSS—Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh—is an influential and fairly widespread militant Hindu organisation that is a member of the Sangh Parivar, and so is the VHP (the Vishwa Hindu Parishad). Tanika Sarkar makes the following observation:

profound and life-long esteem for *Vande Mataram*. He came to know of it early in his life, 'as a lad', as he put it (*CW* 69: 380), much before he had ever heard of either Bankim or *Anandamath*, which he read only in 1937 (*CW* 66: 155). He was 'gripped' and 'enthralled' by it, so much so that up to 1920, he used to close many of his private letters to friends with 'vande mataram from Mohandas' . . . (e.g., *CW* 17: 439). However, he attached no religious significance to it (*CW* 68: 309) and refused to see it as a Hindu song, meant only for Hindus. Rather it was for him an 'anti-imperialist cry', a symbol of Indian nationalism, expressing 'the purest national spirit' (*CW* 69: 380–81). As it became a controversial song, he 'would not risk a single quarrel' over its singing at mixed gatherings (*CW* 69: 381), and, in the 'Constructive Programme', he advised the Congress Party against 'imposing' it on the unwilling (*CW* 75: 164). In the mid-1940s, he opposed the move to replace it with *Jai Hind*, arguing that it should have precedence over the new slogan (*CW* 82: 391, 415). Finally, he left it to the new government to decide 'whether we can sing *Vande Mataram* or *Jai Hind* or the Tricolour Song', at public functions (*CW* 94: 325)" (personal communication of June 15, 2003). Hindu authors repeatedly stress, to the present day, how the song or the slogan has played a key role in symbolising the sacrifices, to the point of death, that Hindus have made for the success of the nationalist movement.

[130]Here is a recent example. In the context of the 2004 national elections in India, the *Times of India* (Kolkata edition) of April 10 reported as follows: "Describing Congress as a 'burden' on the nation, Gujarat CM [Chief Minister] Narendra Modi continued his attack on its president Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin. Addressing an election rally . . . Modi said, 'I have challenged her to sing *Vande Mataram* without looking at the text. . . . Can there be a Prime Minister who cannot even sing *Vande Mataram*?"

> Bankimchandra, and especially his patriotic novel *Anandamath,* have been very significant resources for the Sangh combine. In the Sangh complex at Jhandewalan in Delhi, the VHP leader-cum-erstwhile BJP MP, B L Sharma "Prem", talked about Bankim's inspirational writings. So did Asha Sharma, leader of the combine's women's front, the Rashtrasevika Samiti. . . . The song [*Vande Mātaram*] is chanted in full, at prescribed times, at all daily *shakhas* or training sessions of the RSS. To the combine, this remains the real national anthem. Rabindranath's song, *Jana Gana Mana*—the official anthem of the Indian state—is widely condemned [by the Parivar] as a paltry substitute. . . . As soon as the BJP government came to power in Delhi [in 1993], it made *Vande Mataram* the compulsory anthem in all government-run schools. . . . The RSS thus restores the song to its old status as a sacred chant, not a word of which can be altered. Neither the Bengali nor the Sanskrit passages may be translated, since the original words are supposed to contain sacred energy. When I asked why the song is never abbreviated, members of the organization told me that it is symbolic of the integrity of the Motherland. It is always displayed against a map of undivided India, expressing the organization's refusal to accept the partition [into India and Pakistan] of the subcontinent. (2001, 273, 274, 277–78)

It is a problematic fact that certain iconic texts which have played a crucial role in determining religious or political or cultural identity can also lend themselves to exclusivist interpretations, based on an appropriation of that very identity. Thus the New Testament has been used since early times by Christians for anti-Semitic propaganda, the Koran has been interpreted to mean that Christians and Jews have distorted the prophetic utterances of the founders of their faiths, the *Bhagavad Gītā* has given rise to hostile polemic both within and beyond the boundaries of Hinduism, and even William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* has been resorted to as a source text of anti-Jewish prejudice. It is equally a fact that such texts, in the hands of constructive interpreters, have been used as repositories of insights into human nature, and as instruments of reconciliation across religious and other barriers on the basis of a reconstituted sense of identity. The passage of time and fresh perspectives on the need for joint action to bridge long-standing rivalries have demanded increasingly sophisticated techniques for understanding the formation and reading of controversial texts. According to these techniques, texts need not be swallowed whole; like the feeding swan which is supposed to be able to separate the substance of milk from that of water when the two are mixed, a hermeneutic of discernment can be applied to the reading of iconic polemical sources. It remains to be seen whether this can be accomplished with respect to *Ānandamaṭh* and/or *Vande Mātaram.*

Just as it has been used for ideologically exclusivist purposes, the modern reception of *Vande Mātaram* has found wider, nationalist applications, as we have seen. A spate of patriotic cassette tapes and CDs in recent times, intended for general release and produced by national and international companies on a commercial, nonsectarian basis, has often included a rendering of *Vande Mātaram* as one item, sung by respectable artists not associated with an ideological position. [131] One is especially reminded of the well-known CD *Vande Mataram* released by Sony Music Entertainment (India) on August 12, 1997, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence. The CD includes a rendition of *Vande Mātaram,* with its lyrics attributed to "Bankim Chandra Chatterjee", and the arrangement and vocals to the famous Muslim musical personality, A R Rahman, who declares towards the end of the inlay pamphlet, "All perfect praises belong to the Almighty alone. I dedicate this album to the future generations of India. I wish that this album inspires them to grow up with the wealth of human values and ethics that this country is made of". Clearly this album is not intended to encourage religious or political sectarianism.[132]

But our inquiry is not ended. We have given consideration to the first three points in the extract quoted from Akbar Ahmed's book, let us now consider his last point: the putative idolatrous nature of the song, or, to put it somewhat less theologically, the content of the hymn as (allegedly) exclusively and exclusivistically Hindu.

In the critical apparatus at the end of this book, I have made some comments on structure, terminology, and other aspects of the hymn (including a justification of aspects of my translation). Further, the whole song appears, of course, in its appropriate place in the English translation of the novel. I shall try to duplicate material as little as possible, but for purposes of our discussion here it will be necessary to repeat my translation of the song. The fullest account of the song then, must collate our observations from all three parts of this book. I have translated the song as follows:

1. I revere the Mother! The Mother
   Rich in waters, rich in fruit,
   Cooled by the southern airs,
   Verdant with the harvest fair.

[131]For example, the cassette tapes *Mere Wattan Ke Logo,* sung by Lata Mangeshkar and released by HMV, on the occasion of fifty years of India's independence; *Bañga Āmār Jananī Āmār,* released by Prime Music Pvt. Ltd. (Kolkata); *Aye Wattan Tere Liye,* released by HMV; and so on. Each of these tapes has *Vande Mātaram* as one item.

[132]Only the first two verses of the original song as we have enumerated them are sung in this version. See also the articles on the production and release of this album in *India Today* (International), September 1, 1997.

2. The Mother—with nights that thrill
   in the light of the moon,
   Radiant with foliage and flowers in bloom,
   Smiling sweetly, speaking gently,
   Giving joy and gifts in plenty.

3. Powerless? How so, Mother,
   With the strength of voices fell,
   Seventy millions in their swell!
   And with sharpened swords
   By twice as many hands upheld!

4. To the Mother I bow low,
   To her who wields so great a force,
   To her who saves,
   And drives away the hostile hordes!

5. You our wisdom, you our law,
   You our heart, you our core,
   In our bodies the living force is thine!

6. Mother, you're our strength of arm,
   And in our hearts the loving balm,
   Yours the form we shape in every shrine!

7. For you are Durga, bearer of the tenfold power,
   And wealth's Goddess, dallying on the lotus flower,
   You are Speech, to you I bow,
   To us wisdom you endow.

8. I bow to the Goddess Fair,
   Rich in waters, rich in fruit,
   To the Mother,
   Spotless—and beyond compare!

9. I revere the Mother! the Mother
   Darkly green and also true,
   Richly dressed, of joyous face,
   This ever-plenteous land of grace.

According to the way the text is divided in the fifth edition, the song appears in chapter 10 of Part I. In my enumeration, the verses 1, 2, 4, 7, 8 and 9 are in Sanskrit. Verses 3 and 5 are partly in Sanskrit and partly in Bengali, while verse 6 is wholly in Bengali. Many have adverted to this curious mixture of Sanskrit and Bengali. Before we inquire into this peculiarity, it will be important to consider the compositional history of the song. It seems clear that an earlier version (or versions) of the hymn was composed before the

novel was begun. The hymn, more or less ready-made, was then integrated into the novel. Thus, in simplified terms, it appears that the narrative was composed to accommodate the hymn, rather than that the hymn was a product of its narrative context. In other words, there could be literary justification for detaching the hymn from its narrative base, which, as we have seen, is what has happened to such striking effect.

The genesis of the hymn is unclear; however, Bankim's younger brother, Purnacandra, recounts that on occasion when an assistant, Pandit Ramcandra Bandyopadhyay (who would help in the copyediting and so on of *Baṅgadarśan*), required additional material to make up the full complement of pages of the journal prior to publication, he would approach Bankim for a "page-filler" or two. On one such occasion he needed to fill a single page, and noticing a sheet of material lying on Bankim's desk, read it and asked if it could be included in the journal. It was the poem *Vande Mātaram*. He is supposed to have said that it wasn't bad, and its publication would save delay in seeing the journal to press. This faint praise seems to have irked Bankim. He thrust the page into a drawer. "Bad or no, you won't understand now", he is reported to have replied. "You'll understand later. I may not be alive then, but you might be". There are different versions of this story (*BcJ:* 331–32), and the exact date is not known, but all agree that the incident occurred several years before the writing of *Ānandamaṭh*. If this is true, then an important seed of the story lies here.[133]

But can we arrive at some indication of when the poem/song was originally composed? We turn first to a serial that began in *Baṅgadarśan* in Bhādra 1280 (August 1873), adverted to earlier: the satirical essays, *Kamalākānter Daptar*. The eleventh instalment of this serial, published in the *Baṅgadarśan* of 1281 Kārttik (October 1874), is entitled "Āmār Durgotsab" (My Celebration of Durga's Festival). Kamalakanta is pondering the fact that on the seventh day

[133]This incident, as described by Purnacandra, also indicates that each line of Bankim's composition as it appeared in print later was written on successive lines of the page Ramcandra saw on Bankim's desk, so that it took up more or less the whole page—that, in other words, the original composition was more or less of the same length as the printed version, twenty-eight lines (though this does not preclude some revision of the song in its final form). When eventually printed in *Baṅgadarśan*, the song took up a little less than half a page because its twenty-eight lines were placed in two parallel columns of fourteen lines each. Of course, if it had appeared as the page-filler originally sought by Ramcandra, it would have been suitably printed in twenty-eight consecutive lines (with title and explanatory comment?) so as to occupy most of a page. This is an important deduction. For it means that the original composition did not consist of only the first twelve lines of the printed version when Ramcandra espied it on Bankim's desk and that it was then subsequently more than doubled during the writing of the novel itself, as *VMBS*: 70 claims. (*VMBS* makes this claim to discount the "latter part" of the song "which contained those explicitly Hindu and idolatrous imageries which were objected to by many outside the Hindu community" [ibid.], and which is not sung on an official basis. In fact, it seems that the original composition was as long as the printed version and probably quite similar, if not identical, in content. Also see note 136 below).

of the great autumnal festival of Bengal, the Durgā Pūjā, when thousands of images of the Goddess Durga are worshipped throughout the length and breadth of the region, he has overindulged in opium. As a result he had a vision:

> I saw: suddenly the stream of time surging towards and pervading the horizon—and I was floating on a raft in the same direction. I saw that stream, in the endless, boundless darkness, wave-tossed and tempestuous. From time to time, bright stars would rise and then be extinguished, would rise again, lighting up the horizon, and be extinguished once more. I was utterly alone, and being alone began to feel afraid—so alone, without a mother. "Mother (*mā*)! Mother!" I kept calling out. I had come in search of a mother in this ocean of time. Where, oh where, could my mother be? Where was the land of Bengal (*baṅgabhūmi*) that had given birth to Kamalakanta! Mother, where were you in this fearful ocean of time?
>
> Suddenly, heavenly music filled my ears—there, in the horizon, like the rising of the morning sun, was the radiance of a crimson glow. I felt a calming, gentle breeze, and saw in the distance on that mass of heaving water, clad in gold, this seventh-day's image of Durga. She was floating on the water, smiling and radiating light. Was this my Mother? Yes, it was she! I knew her for my mother, the land of my birth (*janmabhūmi*), made of earth, in the form of clay, adorned with endless gems, now hidden in the womb of time. Her ten bejewelled arms—the ten points of the compass—stretched in these directions. They were adorned with various powers in the form of different weapons, the enemy crushed at her feet, the most valiant of lions taking refuge there, destroying the foe! I shan't behold this form now—not today, nor tomorrow. Unless I cross the stream of time, I will not see it. But one day I shall—her arms the directions, wielding her various weapons, subduing the enemy, and roaming on a lordly lion's back (*birendraprṣṭhabihāriṇī*)—on her right Lakshmi, fortune personified, on her left the Goddess of Speech (*bāṇī*), wisdom (*bidyā*) and learning (*bijñān*) incarnate, with Karttikeya personifying strength and Ganesh good success, by her side. I saw in the midst of that stream of time this golden image of Bengal! . . .
>
> I cried out . . . "Protectress of your family of countless children (*santān*)! Bestower of virtue (*dharma*), wealth, happiness, sorrow! Accept my offering of flowers. . . . Leave your boundless realm of water and show the world this all-bewitching form. Come, Mother, suffused with new love, bearer of new strength (*nababaladhāriṇī*), bold with new pride, beholding new dreams. Come, Mother, enter our homes—then united and together, we sixty million children, with twice sixty million hands folded, will worship at your lotus feet . . . and cry out

. . . Slayer of the enemy! Ten-armed One! Bearer of the tenfold power (*daśapraharaṇadhāriṇi*)! . . . Give your children power (*śakti*), giver of boundless power (*anantaśaktipradāyini*)! . . . We sixty million heads will throw ourselves at your feet. . . . We sixty million bodies will die for you. And if we cannot, then twice sixty million eyes will weep for you. Come, Mother, enter our homes. For she who has sixty million children need not fear".

But as I watched, I saw her no more—for that image sank in that boundless ocean of time! . . . Then with folded hands and tearful eyes I cried out, "Rise again, Mother, golden land of Bengal! Mother, rise again. We'll be good children now, and tread the right path. We'll protect your honour. . . . We'll forget ourselves and love one another". . . . But mother did not rise again. O, will she ever? Come brothers, let's plunge into this dark stream of time and raise that image with a hundred and twenty million hands; let's bear it on sixty million heads and bring it home. . . . Is life worthwhile without a mother?. . . . Conquer, conquer, conquer, O Giver of victory and defeat (*jayājayadātri*).[134] . . . Conquer, conquer, conquer, O bestower of boons and refuge. . . . Conquer, conquer, O Durga, destroyer of hardship . . . Conquer, Mother Kali (*jaya mā kālī*). . . . Salutations to you, Ruler of the world (*namas tu te jagannāthe*) . . . I bow down before the Goddess (*namāmi śirasā devīṃ*).

This is a translation of a large portion of the article, and it is significant for the parallels it contains not only with features of the *Vande Mātaram* hymn, but with descriptions of the Goddess later in the novel. Note the identification of the Goddess (who herself has several forms: Durga, Kali, and others not quoted) as represented by her glorious image made of earth or clay, with the Mother of Kamalakanta and, indeed, of all the other inhabitants of greater Bengal (presumably including Muslims and other non-Hindus: hence the number, sixty million) and with the land of Bengal itself. The point of fusion is the clay of the image and the clay of the motherland; this is effected in terms of a well-known, traditional context: the identification of the Goddess as supreme spiritual reality with the "stuff", called *prakṛti,* out of which determinate psychical and physical phenomena are produced, including the land in which one lives. We shall return to this idea. Further, the Goddess as spiritual reality is one, notwithstanding her various names and forms, and this Goddess as Mother and the motherland are one. Thus the motherland has been divinised, and there is an interactive symbolisation between divine Mother and motherland. We see also that the beauty of the image reflects the beauty of the motherland. The Mother is golden; she is bedecked with jewels

[134]Or possibly, "Victory, victory, victory, O Giver of victory and defeat" (and similarly subsequently), since this is a hymn in which Bengali is admixed with Sanskrit.

and has millions of "children" (*santāns*, the same term used in the novel), who are exhorted to show their love for her and do her will.[135] Similarly, the land of Bengal, the motherland, is protective and fertile. Both ideas and language here find clear parallels in the *Vande Mātaram* hymn of the novel.[136]

In the novel (I, ch. 11), after Bhabananda has sung the hymn and escorted Mahendra to his leader, Satyananda, the latter takes Mahendra on a tour of the temple complex, showing him various images of the Goddess. The last image is of the Mother-as-she-will-be. Like the icon in Kamalakanta's vision, she too is golden and has ten hands, encompassing the directions—thus indicating that she embraces and symbolises the whole of India; she too is smiling and radiant like the new dawn, and is "adorned with various powers in the form of the different weapons she holds, the enemy crushed at her feet, while the mighty lion who has taken refuge there is engaged in destroying the foe". Lakshmi, personifying good fortune, stands on her right, "the Goddess of speech who bestows wisdom and learning" is on her left, "with Karttikeya signifying strength and Ganesh good success, in attendance". The terminology is virtually the same.

There is some difference, however, with regard to the clarity of the chronology of the Goddess's appearance in the novel. There the Mother's appearance is clearly divided into three phases: as-she-was, as-she-is, and as-she-will-be. The Goddess as described in Kamalakanta's vision seems to correspond, as we have seen, to the Mother-as-she-will-be in the novel. Yet, even in Kamalakanta's vision, one can distinguish three phases of the Goddess's presence: her initial, glorious appearance; her "disappearance", as she sinks into the ocean of time; and her hoped-for reappearance, after her devoted children plunge into the waters and retrieve her. There is a "history" here of a glorious past, a decline of fortunes, and a resurgence in the future, the last enabled by the concerted action of the Mother's children. This tripartite division is mentioned with greater clarity in the novel.

Tanika Sarkar, in her analysis of the hymn, discerns a similar tripartite

[135]During and after the 1905 agitation over the partition of Bengal, the concept of *sonār bāṅglā*—"Golden Bengal"—as a patriotic symbol, became very popular among the Bengali middle classes.

[136]For example, the fusion of Goddess image and land as "Mother" who is bountiful and protective, who is known by various names (such as Durga, Speech, and Lakshmi), who bears the tenfold power, wards off enemies, bestows refuge, and is worthy of worship by all of Bengal. Note the remarkable similarity of style and language in both compositions, such as the use of *mā, -bihāriṇi/ī* (depending on whether the case is vocative or nominative), *daśapraharaṇadhāriṇi/ī, dāyini/ī, bāṇī, durgā, namāmi,* and not least the mixing of Bengali and Sanskrit in the course of the eulogy. Surely this clinches the argument, begun in note 133, that the *Vande Mātaram* poem Ramcandra saw on Bankim's desk was in its entirety a close forerunner of, if not virtually the same as, the *Vande Mātaram* hymn of the novel, for if Bankim could write thus for the *Āmār Durgotsab* article of 1874, he could write in the same vein for the original *Vande Mātaram* song composed at about the same time.

demarcation. "In an unbroken musical flow, the song encapsulates three distinct images of the nurturing mother: the mother of the past, the dispossessed mother of the present, and the triumphant mother of the future" (2001, 177). She does not elaborate further, but one would presume that the first phase would correspond to verses 1 and 2, the second to verse 3, and the third to verse 4, and possibly 5 and 6. But the rest? Nor is it clear that verses 1 and 2 refer to "the mother of the past"; they appear to describe the motherland as she or it is, or rather an ideal Mother, an icon of the imagination. Nevertheless, Professor Sarkar's comments do point to a tendency on Bankim's part to endorse a trajectory of idealised history that is demarcated into three parts.[137]

There is a further point with regard to the composition of the hymn. It has been noted by Bhakat and others that in the serial version of the hymn, the first section, that is, the portion corresponding to verses 1–4, occurred within quotation marks.[138] This was repeated when the novel was published as a book (though the fifth or standard edition no longer contains the quotation marks). Bhakat avers:

> On the evening of *Maghi Purnima* in the Bengali year 1280 [1873 CE], Bankim joined an assembly of sannyasis at the Mahakali temple [at Lalgola]. The image of the goddess intrigued him, for she has only two hands free, with nothing in them; the other two are chained. Next to her stand Lakshmi and Ganesh on the right, and Saraswati and Kartiek on the left. Bankim heard a centenarian tantrik chant *Jai Ma Danuja Dalani* and *Bande Bandini Matarang*. Pandit Kali Brohmo Bhattacharya, the guru of Raja Jogindra Narayan Roy [of Lalgola], recited to him some slokas [verses] which constituted the motto of the sannyasis. . . . By deleting "bandini" from the second chant, Bankim coined the immortal *Bande Mataram*. . . . I have collected seven slokas from a book in the possession of Pandit Kali Brohmo's family. They have a remarkable similarity to Bankim's song, especially to the stanza [that is, section] within quotation marks. Can it be that Bankim is not the original author of *Bande Mataram*?

[137]In *FHVH*, Indira Chowdhury comments with reference to the Goddess in *Ānandamaṭh*: "Bankim's reading of the tantric theory of the evolution of the goddess was deeply entrenched in western notions of evolution and progress" (98). The term "evolution" can mean something like "development" or "unfolding". But it is hard to see how Bankim's conception of idealised history in association with the Goddess here accords with a more strict understanding of Western notions of evolution, at least in a Darwinian context. The later Darwinian conception (and more popular versions) had to do with progressive development from a more undifferentiated state to a less undifferentiated one (which does not easily match Bankim's tripartite division) and adaptation for survival (which can be seen to have interesting affinities with Bankim's conception of the appearance of the Goddess; but we cannot develop this idea here). On Western notions of evolution with special reference to Vivekananda, see Killingley, 1990.

[138]This is also the case in the first book edition. See Bhakat's English article, "The Making of Anandamath", 1994. See also *VMBS*: 70.

Or, we may add, at least of features of its terminology?

But the matter is not straightforward. I have come across little or no corroborating evidence for much of what Bhakat says in this statement, that is, that Bankim was present on *Māghī Pūrṇimā* in BE 1280 with the *sannyāsīs* in the Mahakali temple, the chant of the "centenarian tantrik" and its content, and so on. Nor have I seen evidence of Bhakat's source for the seven slokas bearing a "remarkable similarity" to Bankim's song. Further, when I visited the Mahakali temple at Lalgola, I saw not two but three minor images on each side of the central figure of the Goddess; they were not easy to identify (especially Ganesh, the elephant-headed deity). Again, the two lower hands of the Kali image seem to be not "chained" but clasped, though it is hard to tell (see Figures 1–4). No doubt Bankim was in the area at the time, and some of Bhakat's testimony is at least plausible. But most of his claims require corroboration. Nevertheless, the fact that the early editions of the novel did have quotation marks demarcating a portion of the hymn is suggestive. If Bankim did derive some terminology of the song from elsewhere, it makes the whole question of dating, composition, and, indeed, of the ultimate provenance of features of the song and perhaps of the great watchword even more problematic.[139]

As a literary product, the composition of a Sanskrit hymn to the Goddess has ancient pedigree in Hinduism. There are hymns to goddesses in the Veda (ca. 1200 BCE; see, for example, Ṛg Veda 1.92, 3.61, 7.77 [to Dawn]; 10.127 [to Night], and so on); later, from about the sixth century CE, a new kind of hymn, closer to the style of the *Vande Mātaram* song, with refrains and pulsating rhythms, began to dominate Goddess worship, theologically and ritualistically.[140] We shall come to this in due course. The point here is that from a literary point of view, Bankim was not creating something particularly new though, as we shall see, with regard to semantic content and perhaps theological input he may well have been innovative.

With these considerations in mind, we can now return to the question of the hymn's mixed composition in Sanskrit and Bengali. Let us remember that if, as Bhakat suggests, Bankim largely borrowed the first section of the hymn from a liturgical context, then he had a ready-made Sanskritic template on which to elaborate. In any case, it has been the regular practice for hymns of

[139]The reader will recall that we have repudiated *VMBS*'s explanation for the early quotation marks of the hymn (see notes 133 and 136). It is also worth noting that the number of "children" mentioned in the *Āmār Durgotsab* article is sixty million; this has increased to seventy million in the *Vande Mātaram* hymn, perhaps indicating that the hymn was finalised later. In his article referred to earlier, A Chakrabarti mentions one or two other views about the dating of the hymn, especially that of Jagadish Bhattacharja, who in his work on the hymn favours a date of 1875 or a little earlier (1996, 26). From the evidence I have considered, I think we can say that the song was first composed in 1874–1875.

[140]It has been argued that the locus classicus for this new type of hymn is the *Devī Māhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa;* see Coburn, 1984. The *Devī Māhātmya* has remained a central influence for Goddess worship in the Śākta tradition in Bengal: see McLean, 1998, 58.

FIGURE 1.
Upper half of Lalgola Kali, without decoration or attire.
Photo: Courtesy Pradip Bhattacharya.

FIGURE 2.
Lalgola Kali image, fully attired, with attendant figures. Photo: J. Lipner.

FIGURE 3.
Attendant figures of Lalgola Kali (viewed from right). Photo: J. Lipner.

FIGURE 4.
Attendant figures of Lalgola Kali (viewed from left). Photo: J. Lipner.

praise (*stotras*) to an object of reverence in Brahminic Hinduism, including those used liturgically, to be in Sanskrit. Sanskrit was traditionally the language not only of high culture but also of religious efficacy. When legitimated by the authority of received tradition, and applied in the appropriate manner, Sanskrit utterances worked: they tended to bring about the desired effect. Hence it would have been important for Bankim, who was sensitive to traditionalist emphases, to use Sanskrit for so central a feature of the novel.

But there was another, equally important reason, which we have already hinted at. Sanskrit was the language, in Bankim's cultural milieu, which gave ballast to an idea, an air of authority; it was the language of classical ideals, of gravitas. For this reason, it became the language most associated by the Bengali Hindu intelligentsia, from early in the nineteenth century, with the historical depth needed to construct a (Hindu) national identity, for it symbolised continuity with the past, especially the classical, pre-Muslim past.[141] Once again, however, in the context of determining national identity, this becomes an exclusivist emphasis.

In Jyaiṣṭha 1285 BE (May 1878), Bankim published an article in *Baṅga-*

[141]See "Sanskrit and Hindu National Identity in Nineteenth Century Bengal", by van Bijlert, 1996.

darśan entitled "Bāṅgālā Bhāṣa" (Bengali Language), in which we are given important clues for his appreciation of the significance of Sanskrit for the task of the writer. Bankim is discussing the relative merits of various literary models for modern Bengali writing. "There's no gainsaying the fact", he says, "that the language of writing and that of speech will always remain separate from one another. This is because the object of each is different. The object of speech is to make known only workaday matters, whereas that of writing is to impart instruction (*śikṣādān*), to stimulate the mind (*cittāsañcālan*). This great objective can never be accomplished in [the popular, vulgar style of] Hutomi language [that is, the language in which Kaliprasanna Simha wrote his well-known tale, *Hutom Pyācār Nakśā,* published in 1861]. Hutomi language is impoverished, it doesn't have that [requisite] wealth of words. Hutomi language is enfeebled (*nistej*), it lacks proper structure. Hutomi language is inelegant, and when it's not salacious, it is not chaste either. One ought never to write a book in Hutomi language." He goes on to say, "The Scottish poet Burns used Scots in poetry expressing sentiments of humour and human warmth, but when it came to serious and elevated subjects, he used English."

There is an analogy here with Sanskritic models for writing in Bengali. Not that these models are always appropriate. Bankim grants that when Bengali is enslaved to these models, it can become insipid and sterile. Nevertheless, a successful writer must always be sensitive to Bengali's Sanskritic literary heritage. The richness of Sanskrit, with regard to vocabulary and literary conventions, is unparalleled for the Bengali, notwithstanding the proficiency he may have in English, for "the bones, marrow, blood and flesh of Bengali have been constituted in Sanskrit (*saṅgskṛtei gaṭhita*)". Thus, when one is sensitive to its Sanskritic literary heritage, Bengali is best able to convey authority, gravitas, power and continuity with the past. It was to Bankim's purpose then to borrow or use a Sanskritic base for a central linguistic and symbolic feature of his novel. But, we may ask, is this not also covertly to seek to affirm the "Aryanness" of Bengali, its Hindu pedigree?

This may well explain Bankim's deference to the use of Sanskrit in the structure of the hymn—but why the admixture of Bengali? As an innovator in the use of contemporary Bengali—the stylistic cynosure of all eyes among the literati and middle-class Bengalis—Bankim realised how important it was to establish a direct emotional relationship with the reader. This could be accomplished only with the appropriate use of Bengali. The Bengalified sections—which indeed are not divested of Sanskritic content (*abalā, bidyā, dharma, hṛdi, marma, śakti, bhakti*)—tend to strike a short, sharp, yet stirring rhythm, pulsating with emotional impact that turns on two words used as familiar forms of address for "you" and "mother", *tumi* and *mā,* respectively. This combination of Sanskrit and Bengali—the one referring to the Mother's ancient ancestry (*Durgā, Bāṇī, Kamalā*), to her beauty, graciousness and protective nature, and hence calling for respect; the other evocative of immediate, concerted action on her behalf and under her patronage—creates a powerful

instrument that is able to grip the whole persona of the responsive individual.[142]

But, of course, not everyone can be characterised as responsive in this way. We are now ready to inquire into the religious content of the hymn. In late 1882, Bankim was engaged in a bitter controversy in the pages of the English Calcutta daily, *The Statesman,* with a Rev. W Hastie. Hastie, then forty, was principal of the General Assembly's Institution in Calcutta. The occasion of the controversy was Hastie's tirade against the apparently acquiescing attendance of a long list of distinguished English-educated Bengalis at the "idolatrous" ceremonies, as he saw it, of a lavish funerary rite (*śrāddh*) on September 17 to mark the death of the grandmother of a Calcutta grandee, Maharaja Harendra Krishna Deb of Sovabazar. These English-educated Bengalis ought to have known better, Hastie declared. They couldn't be believers in the idolatrous rites, and therefore, they shouldn't have been there; if they were not being hypocritical, they were certainly giving the wrong example. Hastie wrote with insufferable smugness and arrogance, describing both popular and intellectual Hinduism and their followers in the most derogatory terms. Bankim, who had not been present at the *śrāddh,* was stung into a response, writing under the pseudonym of Ram Chandra (till his final letter, published on November 22, when he reverted to his own name). The cut and thrust of the debate need not concern us here, for when it began *Ānandamaṭh* had already been completed in its serial form. Thus the fire in Bankim's belly generated by Hastie's remarks could hardly have inflamed relevant passages of the novel as a consequence.[143] Nevertheless, the debate with Hastie is of interest because it gives an indication of Bankim's views on image worship at the time.

In his long letter, published on October 28, Bankim writes:

> Modern science has shown that the Hindus always knew that the phenomena of nature are simply the manifestations of *force.* They worship, therefore, Nature as *force. Sakti,* literally and ordinarily means force or energy. As destructive energy, force is *Kali,* hideous and terrible, because destruction is hideous and terrible. As constructive energy, force is the bright and resplendent Durga. The universal

[142]This is to pull in a different direction from that given in *VMBS*: 74, where, with reference to the work of Sukhamoy Mukherjee, *VMBS* says, "the lapse into Bengali is a kind of soliloquy, the poet talking to himself . . . 'conveying profound inward pain . . . Nothing but words in his mother tongue could possibly express the excited, numb reverie'. . . . The poem reverts occasionally from formal Sanskrit *vandana* [praise style] to some words from the heart in the poet's mother tongue, and hence 'the interweaving of two allied languages' ".

[143]Nor could, as is sometimes maintained, the agitation following the proposal of the Ilbert Bill in the early 1880s. The bill sought to give Indians acting as magistrates in the rural districts the right to try white British subjects (see Metcalf, 1994, 203–4). It was vigorously and successfully contested by a faction of these Britons. *Ānandamaṭh,* with any controversial racial or political passages, had already been published.

soul is also worshipped, but in three distinct aspects. . . . I translate them as love, power, and justice. Love creates, power preserves, justice dooms. This is the Hindu (idea) of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. . . .

I now pass on to the worship. Much of the Hindu ritual is mere mummery. . . . Idol worship is permitted, is even belauded in the Hindu scriptures, but it is not enjoined as *compulsory*. . . . The orthodox Brahmin is bound to worship Vishnu and Siva every day, but he is not bound to worship their images. He may worship their images if he chooses, but if he does not so choose, the worship of the Invisible is accepted as sufficient. . . .

And I must ask the student of Hinduism when he comes to study Hindu Idolatry, to forget the nonsense about dolls given to children. . . . The true explanation consists in the ever true relations of the subjective Ideal to its objective Reality. . . . The passionate yearnings of the heart for the Ideal in beauty, in power, and in purity, must find an expression in the world of the Real. Hence proceed all poetry and all art. Exactly in the same way the ideal of the Divine in man receives a form from him, and the form an image. The existence of Idols is as justifiable as that of the tragedy of Hamlet or of that of Prometheus. The *religious* worship of idols is as justifiable as the *intellectual* worship of Hamlet or Prometheus. . . .

Nor must the student fall into the error of thinking that the image is ever taken to be the God. The God is always believed, by every worshipper, to exist apart from the image. The image is simply the visible and accessible medium through which I choose to send my homage to the throne of the Invisible and the Inaccessible. . . . The image is holy, not because the worshipper believes it to be his god—he believes in no such thing—but because he has made a contract with his own heart *for the sake of culture and discipline* to treat it as God's image. (see Bagal, 1969, 214–16)

There are a number of items in this extract that are of interest, but I will select three for our purposes: first, the Goddess Durga represents "constructive energy" or force (*śakti*), and conversely Kali stands for "destructive energy". Both are aspects, together, no doubt, with other female deities, of one and the same underlying power. That this power, according to traditional belief (which Bankim does not deny), is a spiritual reality, in some way identified with nature (*prakṛti*), is also not in doubt. This idea reflects the prominence of Tantra and the Goddess in Bengali culture, but it could be extended, taking due account of context, to the rest of the subcontinent. By implication, invoking the Goddess in the *Vande Mātaram* song is an appeal to the source of power accessible to the invoker, in the context of Bankim's comments above, that is not polytheistic in the usual senses of the term: there is but one source that "pluralizes"

variously.[144] We made reference earlier to Coburn's work on the *Devī Māhātmya*. The point of his study is to show that by the sixth century CE or so, a new theology of Goddess worship was beginning to replace the old Vedic conception of the goddess. This theology was being articulated in hymns and myths, the earliest mature context of which is the *Devī Māhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. Here the Goddess is seemingly not one deity among many but rather the supreme spiritual power (*śakti*), both underlying and identical with the basic substance of the world. This does not mean that there are no theological links between the old conception and the new (in Part III of his work, Coburn intimates that there are), but in the new theology, the Goddess is the One yet she is also many, able to project particular manifestations of her power in the guise of various "Goddesses".[145]

We cannot divorce this conception from our understanding of Bankim's song. The terminology of the hymn indicates that it is the context against which the hymn must be read. Thus the fusion of the Mother as the land of Bengal, and by implication, the whole of India, and the Goddess as protective, spiritually real power—for example, "The Mother rich in waters, rich in fruit (v. 1) . . . who saves and drives away the hostile hordes (v. 4)"—is unmistakable. Although the song is not polytheistic in the usual sense, it is clear that it does not depict the Mother/motherland in purely symbolic terms. The underlying rationale has a religiously theistic component. Further, the imagery used in articulating the symbolism and theology of the hymn is unabashedly Hindu.[146] Thus it would be disingenuous, to say the least, to claim that there could be nothing in the hymn as a whole to give rise to theological or cultural concerns on the part of non-Hindus.

Second, looking at the extract quoted, religious images—whether idols of earth or other material or idols of the imagination—are embodiments of ideals, of beauty, power, and so on, rooted in the Divine. They are an eminently human way of bringing these ideals down to earth, and as such are an effective preparation for a course of action. What is innovative, when we consider the application of this idea to the hymn, is the creation of a sustained religious image of the ideal of the motherland. This image, which is not depicted in

[144]Hence in the *Vande Mātaram* hymn, Durga as presiding Goddess is also identified with the goddesses of speech (*bāṇī*), wealth (*kamalā*), and so on.

[145]Kunal Chakrabarti's book, 2001, shows how this thinking developed in the eastern region of the subcontinent, including Bengal.

[146]Note the convergence of this conception with that of Kamalkanta's vision described earlier. In this book I have not attempted systematically to show semantic links between Bankim's use of descriptive terms and names for the Goddess in the hymn and their occurrence in preceding tradition. That is a separate task, but that this is a tradition that stretches unbroken in fundamental respects and diversifies, from about the sixth century through medieval (see, for example, Brown, 1974) to contemporary times, is undeniable. The literature is growing rapidly.

the ancient hymns, is invested, as we have noted, with Hindu symbolism and is focused on the land of Bengal (it is difficult to see how the more arid parts of the subcontinent can be included in the first instance). Nevertheless, the seventy millions of greater Bengal include the Muslims, Christians and others, and Bengal becomes the lens through which the whole land of India is brought into view, as intimated by the ten-handed Durga whose arms stretch in all directions. As the hymn progresses, we observe the fusion between the image of the motherland and the traditional religious imagery associated with the goddess Durga and her forms. Thus, the motherland becomes sacred, an icon who must be served by practical action.[147] The idea of service to the motherland is clear, not only from the content of the hymn and its narrative context but also from other sources of Bankim's thinking at the time (see earlier portions of this introduction).

Finally, the image is holy not for intrinsic reasons but because it is the result of a contract with the divine being for *the sake of culture and discipline* in the worshipper (italics in the original). The Comtean provenance of this idea is obvious; it is the worshipper who can annul this contract. In other words, worship of the images entails a course of practice, a framework for living, in which the whole individual is freely involved over time. It does not endorse unstructured temporary outbursts of devotion that do not integrally affect one's way of life. When applied to the hymn, this means that devotion to the icon of India as Mother does not entail primarily or even necessarily the image-worship of the temple, but rather a disciplined path of action, the cultivation of a certain lifestyle that focuses on service to the motherland. Any graphic representation of the motherland with or without some cultic association memorialises this primary objective.

Clearly, the conception of the hymn—its imagery and symbolism in terms of the Goddess, her forms and her history—is overwhelmingly Hindu, but its underlying rationale of image worship, as analysed here, is not a traditionalist one, and whether it can properly be described as (directly or intentionally) anti-Islamic and idolatrous, or indeed, as anti- any other faith or tradition, is a matter for further debate, in which theological considerations must play a part. But entering this debate is not an aim of this essay.[148]

[147]Bankim sought to encapsulate this idea in the form of the *Vande Mātaram* hymn or *stotra*. "To be a stotra, however, a composition must conform to some purely formal properties of style. Incomparability of the deity to whom the stotra is offered is conveyed by the mannerisms of descriptive excess. Stotras also exhibit a usually circular, repetitive movement, coming back, after each cycle of excessive praise, to the signature phrase describing the essential attributes of the object of worship" (Kaviraj, 2000, 389). In the hymn we are considering, this attribute is contained in the refrain *vande mātaram*, the land as divinised Mother.

[148]Sustained research is required to trace Christian responses to *Vande Mātaram*, both as song and slogan, in the Indian context.

That the themes discussed above with reference to the hymn and novel have been used for exclusivist purposes by sections of Hindus is, however, undeniable. We have already seen how the RSS make use of the hymn with religiopolitical ends in view. There is another significant manifestation of Hindu assertiveness that has been derived largely from these sources in modern times. This is one version of the ideal of Bhārat Mātā (Mother India) as enshrined in image and temple. In her book, *Banaras: City of Light* (1983), Diana Eck has drawn attention to "a modern temple called Bhārat Mātā, 'Mother India' " in the city. This contains "no ordinary image in its sanctum, but rather a large relief map of India, with its mountains, rivers, and sacred *tīrthas* [fords] carefully marked. It is a popular temple with today's pilgrims, who circumambulate the whole map and then climb to the second-floor balcony for the *darshana* [religious viewing] of the whole" (38–39). The temple was opened by M K Gandhi in 1936, though Eck does not elaborate on the inspiration for this temple or its further significance. However, there has been a study of a modern application of the Bhārat Mātā ideal in recent times more directly germane to our subject.

Before we consider this, let us note by way of preliminary remark that the personification of the land in Hindu tradition has generally been in terms of female imagery from ancient times. We have already noted how the Goddess as supreme spiritual power (*śakti*) has been traditionally identified with *prakṛti*, the material cause or basic stuff out of which psychical and physical reality, including the land, is produced. More specifically, the textual, if not the ritual, origins of Sita, the iconic wife of the God-king Rama in a central strand of Hindu mythic narrative, are derived from reference to the ploughed furrow. In *Ṛg Veda* 4.57.6–7, Sita the Furrow is invoked as the giver of blessings, rich harvests and a regular supply of milk.[149] In her form as consort of Rama, she has not lost this connection with the land: "She can be seen to display the qualities of a goddess in two different modes: as mistress of the plants and animals she is intimately related to the fertility of the earth, and as *śakti*, the energy that inspires the hero Rāma to action, she is the source of his power as king".[150] This idea of the land (*bhūmi*) as partner of the king in enabling him to carry out his kingly duties is also typical. The land is the king's consort, and if she is protected in accordance with *dharma*, then, by implication, together with her husband the king she is a protective and bountiful mother to their *prajās* or subjects.[151] This, in conjunction with the idea that the Goddess is also the ultimate "material" out of which the world is formed, that is, *prakṛti*, is probably the chief provenance for the "personal" theology of regarding her

[149]See further, Kinsley, 1987, ch. 5.

[150]Dimmitt, 1986, 210–11.

[151]See Hara, 1973.

as Mother (*mātā*), subsequently developed in modern times so strikingly for Bengalis in the discourse of Ramprasad, and later, of Ramakrishna.[152] Thus Bankim was not being innovative either in feminising the land or in ascribing to the Goddess a maternal role, or indeed in fusing these two ideas into that of a sacralised motherland in a Hindu context. His originality lay in singling out this concept and developing it, not least from the viewpoint of the children (*santāns*), in a religiopatriotic context, that is, in a "neo-Hindu" political framework. Not only does the holy terrain or *bhūmi* of yesteryear become the *desh* or sacred motherland of the present, but, in the distinctive garb of *Ānandamaṭh* which seeks to blend old and new, this is an iconised Mother India awaiting emancipation and glorification in a political context.[153]

This idea of Bhārat Mātā (Mother India) has been heavily politicised towards the right in the final decades of the twentieth century, and has been the object of particular study by Lise McKean.[154] McKean suggests that:

> The narrative of militant "matriotism" might be read as an oedipal drama of the patriarchal nation-state. The nation is figured as a loving Mother surrounded by her devoted children; the secular state and Muslims (as heirs of Muslim invaders) figure as the tyrannical Father. Whether celibate or supported by their devoted wives, Bhārat Mātā's sons are valiant protagonists whose struggle is a righteous patricide, a conquest that simultaneously liberates the nation—the Mother and her children—and enables her sons to enjoy the power and riches they have successfully wrested from the malevolent Father. (*BM*: 252)

If this construal is legitimate, then the Bhārat Mātā ideal in this politicised form inverts the traditional imagery of the land as dutiful partner to her husband the king, as energiser of her consort, and coestablisher of *dharma* for all. The Mother, through the agency of her "matriotic" children, now takes on a divisive, violent and exclusivist function. This is a consequential twist, and it is significant that McKean and, in a different way, some of the figures she studies, link this strident ideal of Bhārat Mātā to Bankim and *Ānandamaṭh*.

To the best of my knowledge Bankim does not use the expression "Bhārat Mātā", though McKean seems to imply that he does. Nevertheless, it is possible that the oedipal construal can be applied to his novel in some sense (though,

[152]For this concept in the *Devī Māhātmya* see Coburn, 1984, esp. 98, 199 and following pages.

[153]*VMBS* points out, after giving some examples, that in the period leading up to Bankim's novel, "the personification of the country as the mother was not uncommon in the 1860s and 1870s" (77–78). For more detail on this personification as Mother India, see *FHVH*: ch. 4.

[154]In *DE* and *BM*. On the conception and representation of *Bhārāt Mātā* as a modern theme, also see G Sen, winter 2002–spring 2003, and chapter 1 of her book, *Feminine Fables*, 2002, and Ramaswamy, 2003.

and this would certainly cloud the issue, the British would have to be included in the idea of the hostile Father). McKean goes on usefully to describe in detail and analyse the contents of the Bhārat Mātā temple constructed in the sacred sub-Himalayan city of Hardwar, and inaugurated in 1983. She includes a description of the Bhārat Mātā statue installed on the temple's ground floor:

> The inspiration for the Bhārat Mātā statue is attributed to Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's poem "Bande Mātaram". The guidebook links Bhārat Mātā to the freedom struggle by explaining that Bankim visualized her during the movement for independence from British rule. Although the statue could not include all the nuances and details expressed in "Bande Mātaram", it manifests them in an abbreviated form. Bhārat Mātā holds a milk urn in one hand and sheaves of grain in her other hand and is accordingly described as "signifying the white and green revolution that India needs for progress and prosperity". But the milk urn suggests other chains of significations that the text does not discuss—cows, the cow protection movement, gifts to Brahmins—as well as recalling ritual vessels like the ones filled with Ganga water that were worshiped and sold during the VHP's Sacrifice for Unity. A sign in Hindi and English identifies the statue as Bhārat Mātā. Below that is another sign evocative of the Indian flag: black letters on a white background, with a green and orange border. The Hindi script reads "Vande Bhārat Mātaram" ("Praise to Mother India"). . . . [A] large map of India is mounted on a raised platform located in the center of this ground-floor shrine. On it are marked mountains and rivers, major centers of Hindu pilgrimage, and "all important centres of culture". The map thus represents the political boundaries of the Indian state while inscribing its topographic features in terms of Hindu cosmography. (*BM*: 269)

Clearly, from the point of view of symbols, ideas and their political history, we have come a long way here from Bankim's original conceptualisation, and though Bankim cannot be charged with the uses, political or otherwise, to which his ideas have been put in recent times, it would be an interesting exercise to attempt to analyse how closely these extrapolations can be traced to his work.[155] Certainly Bankim said nothing about a "map of India" in the

[155]But that this would be an exercise in the history of religious ideology, whatever else it might be, cannot be denied. Religion and politics have long been intertwined in India, not least in the rhetoric of modern right-wing political factions. We have seen how some proponents of Bhārat Mātā and RSS ideologies have appropriated some of the religious imagery involved. That on occasion this may be a cynical exploitation of such imagery is beside the point; it is its popular appeal that must be reckoned with. Thus I cannot agree with Partha Chatterjee when he declares that the appeal of this ideology "is not religious but political. In this sense, the framework of its reasoning is entirely secular" (1995, 126). To dichotomise religion and politics in this way in the context of modern

novel (more about this in the next section). But his comprehensive number of seventy millions of the Mother's children notwithstanding, he developed a highly assimilative—if not exclusivist—icon of the motherland in terms of graphic Hindu imagery and objectives.

The preceding discussion sharpens a question with which this introduction began: one Mother or many? Theologically for Bankim there is but One, though she has many historical forms. She is the personification of power or *śakti* in its various manifestations, and is both constitutive of (as *prakṛti*) and protective of the earth. Here Bankim makes use of traditional Hindu teaching, imagery and liturgy. This results in the sacralisation of the land, especially in the first instance of Bengal, and then by extension, of the somewhat vague geographical entity called India (*bhārat*)—for it is in this context that the recognition and role of the Mother Goddess have crystallised. It also results in the need for her chosen progeny, the children of India, to act as her protective, and on occasion, avenging arm(s) with respect to the motherland. For her part, as fusion of both (mother)land and its nurturing (and avenging) power, the Mother may or may not be the focus of religious devotion (Bankim is not too exercised by this issue), but she must certainly be the object of patriotic fervour, uniting a religiously, linguistically and culturally diverse people to further the cause of prosperity and recognition.[156] Nevertheless, it is hard to gainsay the fact that in Bankim's portrayal, she remains unambiguously a Hindu mother, and however encompassing she may be towards all her children, her embrace is effected on what may be described as Hindu terms.

In modern times, Bankim's Mother/motherland has been to some extent dichotomised. On the one hand, on a constitutional basis (through the singing of the "national song", the official, public utterance of the slogan *Vande Mātaram* and so on) she continues to welcome all her children, but with a recognisably Hindu voice. On the other, as appropriated by the militant right, she takes on an exclusivist visage, differentiating between first-class and second-class children, and indeed prepared to exclude those who are unwilling to conform to the vociferous demands of her favoured offspring.

So, let us now ask, was Bankim anti-Muslim? Was Shakespeare anti-

Indian politics is misleading. It may well be that the religiousness of this ideology transcends certain traditional sectarian boundaries (as Chatterjee notes), but these would be boundaries within a broadly "Hindu" framework. Modern standardized identities in India as between Hindu, Muslim, Christian etc. would continue to hold in general terms—and this is the point.

[156]There are remarkable similarities (and differences) between this conception of the Motherland and its chief uniting symbol and that of Mexico in respect of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Mexican Virgin is also intended to be a unitive icon—historically, socially and politically—welding together peoples of different ethnicity, religion and culture, though where this leaves non-Catholics and immigrants from disparate cultures is open to question. There are also fascinating analogies of theology and the election of a people. On the Mexican Virgin, see Brading, 2001.

Jewish? Both are rightly regarded as geniuses of their literary traditions, and notwithstanding the transcendent qualities of their genius, both were to some extent heirs to the ideological constructs of their times. In Bankim's case these included, as we have seen, a bias against the Muslim as invader, and (in many cases) against the track record of the Muslim as ruler. This is an important aspect of the totality of context in which the novel was composed. We have sought to nuance Bankim's view of Muslims in terms, inter alia, of the *jabandeśī* distinction. This distinction, however, finds only a faint echo in the novel; as the reader will see, there is a stronger countervailing tendency to homogenise both Hindus and Muslims into opposing camps. As an instance of this tendency we note that Bankim is one of the first to use the term *hindutva* in this context. In Part III, chapter 1, Bankim as narrator says: "In particular, everyone was angry with the Muslims for the anarchy and lawlessness of their reign. Because the Hindu rule of life had disappeared, many Hindus became keen to establish a sense of Hindu identity (*hindutva*)". Further, there are a number of passages in the novel that may be construed as offensive to Muslims. Let us consider one or two of these.

In Part I, chapter 18, one of the *santān* commanders exhorts the Children to attack the city in which their leader has been imprisoned and rescue him. As part of an impassioned speech, this is what he says: "For a long time we've been wanting to smash the nest of these weaver-birds, to raze the city of these Muslim foreigners (*jaban*), and throw it into the river—to burn the enclosure of these swine and purify mother earth again! . . . Come let's raze that city of the foreigners to the dust! Let's purify that pigsty by fire and throw it into the river! Let's smash that nest of tailor birds to bits and fling it to the winds!" After they rescue their leader, the text continues: "[O]nce Satyananda and Mahendra had been freed, the *santans* set fire to as many Muslim homes as they could find". Again, in explaining to Mahendra why he should consider being initiated as a *santān*, Satyananda concludes by saying, "We don't aspire to temporal power. All we wish to do is uproot the Muslims completely because they are enemies of our Lord" (Part II, ch. 5). Other passages may be adduced, but perhaps these suffice.

Whether such passages can be explained away in terms of narrative license is a moot point. After all, the *santāns* are supposed to be speaking about a regime they consider corrupt, and after the first passage cited above, when he discovers what the *santāns* have done, Satyananda remonstrates by saying, "Go back! There's no need for such a pointless and evil course of action!" Pillage and destruction are often perpetrated by a rabble army (and the rescue of Satyananda was effected not only by the fully initiated Children but also by part-time *santāns*). Further, there are passages in which the part-timers indiscriminately attack Hindus, as well. All this notwithstanding, there does seem to be a hint of irresponsible suggestion on the author's part that Muslims are fair game, or that they are irremediably the traditional enemies of the Hindus.

And the reference to Muslims as "swine" and to "pigsty" does seem unduly provocative in the context of a rousing speech to action by one of the *santān* heroes.

In general terms, several commentators have remarked on what they consider to be the gratuituousness of some of Bankim's anti-Muslim (and indeed, anti-British) comments (e.g., Raychaudhuri, 1988, 136).[157] Others have sought to make an apologetic defense (Das, 1984, 230–39; *BcJ:* 597–600). We have pointed out earlier that Bankim's estimation of the Muslim was the site of an agonistic problematic in his work in which evenhandedness does not always seem to emerge the victor. As suggested above, the reader will have occasion to note this in Bankim's novel(s).

We are approaching the end of this section. There are two matters I still wish to consider. The first concerns the musical mode (*rāga*) of the *Vande Mātaram* song, that is, the musical parameters suitable for its rendering. When the song first appeared in *Baṅgadarśan,* there was a footnote indicating that its mode was *mallār.* This footnote remained intact in the fifth edition.[158] In the critical apparatus, I have given a fairly detailed note about the features of the *mallār* mode. There I have pointed out that, probably in the tradition which influenced Bankim's composition of the song, "*mallār* was eventually classified as the first *rāgiṇī* or lighter form of its lead-mode, *megh-rāg*". In Indian musicology, *rāg*s and *rāgiṇī*s have been visualised anthropomorphically; *megh-rāg* has been described in the tradition as an embodiment of unfulfilled love, awaiting fulfillment just as a flock of swallows "with thirsty eyes" seeks water from the arrival of dark monsoon clouds. Hence, this is not necessarily a lover's mode. Further, neither *megh-rāg* nor its lighter form, *mallār,* is properly a martial or militant mode. They embody plaintive, expectant love; the mood allows for this to be expressed with heroic, lofty sentiments. In the Jyaiṣṭha issue, BE 1292 (May 1885) of the journal *Bālak,* produced by the Tagore household for children, there is a full-page drawing purporting to represent the song's sentiments (*bhāb*) (see Figure 5). This contains a sketch of a tree with numerous tendril-like branches that fill the page. This tree has fruits and flowers of different kinds, and playing or resting among the curves of the branches are about twenty smiling, sexless toddlers, presumably the "children" of the Mother(-land). The "Mother" clearly is represented by a young, smiling woman in a sari seated on the upper curve of a large, tendril-like root at the base of the tree. She has a child nestling in her lap, and her two hands (in one of which there seems to be a fruit) are stretched downwards. This is a rather cute, idyllic picture of a bountiful and fertile mother and her offspring. There

[157]Or S Sarkar, 1997, 16: The "collective [national] self . . . was for Bankim almost invariably Hindu, and pitted usually against Muslims, in language that sometimes turns downright abusive".

[158]We have already adverted to the claim that while Bankim was still writing the novel, the song was set to *mallār* mode and sung in Bankim's drawing room (see note 117).

FIGURE 5.
Drawing depicting the song *Vande Mātaram* in the journal *Bālak,* 1885. Courtesy Pradip Bhattacharya.

is nothing fearsome or particularly heroic about it. Thus to play or sing *Vande Mātaram* in a martial mode seems to deviate from the authorial conception of the song.[159]

Further, the musical metre (*tāl*) announced in the original footnote of the novel, and retained in subsequent editions, is that of *qawalli,* which is appropriate, in classical terms, for light to semilight music. Thus it seems misleading to say, as Tanika Sarkar does in her book, that "the mantra [that is, the hymn] is first heard in the aftermath of a battle between British-led troops of the nawab and the santans, who lead a mob of villagers" (2001, 178)—as if an instigation to violence was the song's original rationale. We have already noted that there were early interpretations of the hymn that seem to have nothing

[159]This does not mean that subsequently the words of the song could not be put to different tunes or musical modes and beats. As A Chakrabarti points out (1996, 28), it is precisely because Bankim himself did not put the song to music that a gap was created between words and melody, enabling others to provide tunes and rhythms as they saw fit (and admittedly on occasion to go beyond the mode [*rāgiṇī*] and beat that Bankim himself specified). Chakrabarti gives a list of early phonograph and gramophone recordings of the song (31 and following pages). For more detailed lists, up to modern times, see Chandvankar's Internet article, "Vande Mataram", 2003. Chandvankar, who writes as honorary secretary of the Society of Indian Record Collectors, intimates that it was the Bengali revolutionary Subhas Chandra Bose who, before India achieved independence, was instrumental in *Vande Mātaram* first being set to "Raga Durga in the style of a marching song". This article also gives a brief account of the song's appearances in various Indian feature films, beginning with *Amar Asha* in 1947, and points out that as a result of the BBC's online survey of the world's "top ten" songs conducted towards the end of 2002, to which millions of Internet users from 155 countries responded, *Vande Mātaram* (in A R Rahman's version) emerged in second place (behind the Irish national anthem).

to do with violence. There *is* a battle (in Part I, ch. 8) before the occurrence of the hymn, as Sarkar notes, but it is mainly a looting expedition. In chapter 9 of Part I the *santān* leader, Bhabananda, confronts a would-be comrade, Mahendra, and offers to take him to his now-rescued wife and child. The hymn makes its appearance in the tenth chapter of Part I, but this is how it is introduced:

> The two walked silently across the plain in that moonlit night. Mahendra was silent, anguished, unbending, somewhat intrigued. Suddenly Bhabananda seemed to become a different person. No longer was he the grave, calm renouncer, the skilled, valiant figure of the battlefield, the man who had cut off the head of a commanding officer! No longer the man who had just rebuked Mahendra so haughtily. It was as if seeing the radiance of plain and forest, mountain and river of a peaceful, moonlit world had invigorated his mind in a special way, like the ocean gladdened by the rising moon. He was now light-hearted, talkative, friendly, keen to make a conversation. He tried often to get Mahendra to talk, but Mahendra remained silent. Then, with no other recourse, Bhabananda began to sing softly to himself.

This is precisely the point. Bhabananda was no longer in martial mode. The peaceful splendour of the moonlit countryside had induced the plaintive sentiments that could be evoked in the singing of the hymn. The use of the hymn and that of "*Vande Mātaram*" as a slogan in the novel have subtly yet importantly different functions; the latter appears to be much more flexible in its various applications, depending on context: password, battlecry, victory shout, clarion call and so on.

Finally, we must note the dramatic quality of the narrative, verging on the theatrical at times, in the historical context we are discussing in this section. One gets the impression from time to time, when reading the novel, that Bankim envisaged the action on a stage, suffusing it with larger-than-life sentiments that heighten its emotional charge. The repetitive use towards the end of the twelfth chapter of Part I of the Sanskrit invocation echoed by different human and nonhuman features of the death scene as Kalyani grows progressively weaker, is a classic example.

But this dramatic quality also serves to increase the didactic impact of the novel. Not only the sentiments but also the characters seem larger than life, somehow representative of different facets of the message that Bankim seeks to convey. With one or two exceptions (such as, possibly, Bhabananda), these characters are not closely observed instances of (aspects of) human living, but enablers of the action, mouthpieces for the instruction underlying the narrative. They fulfil roles, rather than blood-and-guts instances of human nature. So S Maitra (1988) can say:

> "Anandamath" is not a novel. "Anandamath" is a nineteenth-century parable of indigenousness (*svadeśīyatā*). Thus there are many actors (*kuśīlab*) in this novel, but not a single portrayal (*caritra*). There are no portrayals in a parable, there are only some types (*rūpak*) or shadowy figures. Satyananda, Jibananda, Bhabananda, Dhirananda, Shanti —all are types. Only Bhabananda has sought to break through this chain of types. Satyananda, Jibananda, Dhirananda—none of these lived their own lives, they lived composite lives (and the life of their land). That is why none of them engage in conversation, they only give lectures, much like a priest in a pulpit. They have mouths only, the rest of their bodies say nothing, or do not exist. (1988, 34, 39)

But this typology had an underlying purpose to which a number of commentators have referred in various ways: to be actors in a drama that allows for the possibility of revisiting history. If the characters had been portrayed too realistically as individuals they could not do this. Attention would focus on who they were, not on who they might be. But their representational nature allows us to look beyond them to a possible future in which others can continue or complete their work. Thus there could be many Jibanandas or Bhabanandas who are prepared to sacrifice their lives for their *desh* or country, many Kalyanis or Shantis who serve the cause by standing by their man, each in her own way, many Satyanandas or lifelong renouncers who dedicate their lives in leadership to the ideal. Sudipta Kaviraj is hinting at this when he says,

> invented history is a way of mythicizing the collective self, extending it in all kinds of rationally impermissible ways, giving the present a worthier past than it has actually had. Dramatization and mythicization are constant parts of men's lives; they are falsehoods by means of which people often try to cope with the overwhelming nature of reality. Thus Bankim's *santans* . . . turn themselves into myth in two ways. In the thick of battle . . . they see not only their fellow soldiers of the day. . . . Stretching behind them into an infinite series in the endless expanse of time they must "see" the ranks of all similar soldiers of history. . . . Even if the soldiers fail, they are already enacting the paradigm of martyrdom. . . . so that even their failure is a success of a kind. . . . This is rendered possible by a second element of myth: they look upon the present battle as an incident in a long and essentially unfinished process in which today's fighters may well lose, but someone else some day must win the war for them. (1995, 104–5)

This perception of the historically open nature of the novel is not only a modern insight. It was the subject of a telling exchange of letters between Rabindranath Tagore and a friend, Candranath Basu, as early as in 1884. Tagore

lamented the fact that in the novel *Ānandamaṭh,* "all the 'Ānandas' seemed the same". It was as if each character had submerged his or her nature in a great idea at the service of a revolution. They said and did the same kinds of things. Thus in the novel, we get nothing but "the picture of a revolt completely cut off from everyday life". But this was a perceptive observation based on a misunderstanding of Bankim's purpose. His interlocutor, however, was more in tune with what Bankim had in mind. The objective of the *santāns* was not everyday morality (*saṃsārdharma*), he replied. Fired by devotion to their land (*svadeśānurāg*), their task was to liberate it. It was this sole objective that united and characterised them. This is why they appear to act as a single individual. Thus, Tagore's perception that nothing but "name and number" distinguished one *santān* from another was a sure sign that Bankim's purpose in writing the novel had met with success. There was a further point: no doubt there appeared to be something remote in the action of the narrative, as if it were cut off from everyday concerns. But this remoteness lay only on the surface. As soon as the reader empathised with the author's profound devotion for his country, as expressed through the novel, he (or she) too would be touched by it and the novel's action would cease to be either remote or devoid of human interest (see *BcJ,* 670–71).

We are ready now to move on to the final section of this introduction: a discussion of some of the principal issues involved in the translation of *Ānandamaṭh.*

❁ *The Making of a Translation* ❁

We can begin by asking: should this novel be translated? This question resolves into two sub-questions: one general, the other more specific. In general terms, we may pose a philosophical doubt. Is linguistic translation, with special reference to translation from one tongue to another (for translations can be attempted within the confines of a particular language, of course, as when we try to unravel jargon into everyday speech), a legitimate process? Can meaning be "carried across" (from the Latin verb *transferre,* and its noun *translatio*) language divides intact? Are not languages so culture-specific as not to make the attempt worth our while? Are not the much-vaunted loss of meaning or inherent biases of the translator that underlie the process of translation from one tongue to another legitimately prohibitive obstacles? If this is an insuperable objection, then *Ānandamaṭh* should not be translated because the philosophy of translation fatally undermines the attempt. (The unsuccessful translation in this respect is the fault not of the translator but of the act itself.)

But there is a more specific objection: should *Ānandamaṭh* be translated because it is *Ānandamaṭh?* As we have shown, it is a controversial novel with a controversial history whose repercussions, socially and politically, are being felt to the present day. To seek to translate it, especially into so global a

language as English, would be to stoke the controversy. Let sleeping dogs lie, and leave well—or at least strained familiarity—alone. Unlike the first objection, this is a contingent one: contingent because it centres on the kind of novel *Ānandamaṭh* is, rather than on the novel as a speech-act per se or as a product of language. We shall consider each objection in turn.

Let us begin by making the first objection, the philosophical one, more acute, by referring to what many would see as the inevitability of translation in modern times. We do not need to be reminded that we live in a communicationally interactive world. This interactiveness seems to be not only desirable but also necessary. Our growing global economic, social and political transactions require the exchange of information and ideas across linguistic and cultural divides, and this necessitates a continual process of language translation, from the mundane (such as the standard list of "directions for use" rendered into various languages for the global use of innumerable appliances) to the more sublime (such as the work of translators in political and other negotiations).

There is a story that when the Irish immaterialist philosopher George Berkeley (1685–1753) proposed his famous theory that objects of perception, which he called "sensible things" or "ideas", cannot exist except in so far as they are perceived (*Esse est percipi*), which was taken by some to mean that material things are really ideas in disguise, his critic Samuel Johnson kicked a stone and said, "Thus do I refute him". Similarly, to those who contend that translation is not viable because of such inherent pitfalls as loss of meaning, distortion of the original, and subvertive biases on the part not only of the translator but also of the context of translation, one could simply point to the fact that existence in our world today depends in all sorts of ways on the feasibility of translation. Economic, social, political and other transactions between peoples and cultures continue, more or less successfully it is true, on the basis of translation across linguistic divides. Of course, the quality of success of this translation varies, as is the case analogously in all human activity, but the undeniable fact of acknowledged success—otherwise we could not function as we do in the world today—indicates that translation works. If it works, then Johnson-like, we have refuted the sceptics.

Very well, the objector may reply, but such translation works on the level of mere functionality. It is acknowledged that we can transfer meaning across linguistic boundaries, but this meaning is functional meaning, minimally contoured and hardly expressive of the character of a language. This is not the issue at stake. The issue is the viability of literary translation, the translation of the nuances of a tongue that combine to express its soul. The cost of translation here is too high, and the original of *Ānandamaṭh,* a literary work, would be forced to pay the price. We should not attempt the transaction.

But this is to acknowledge the thrust of the objection too readily. No doubt there are different levels of translation, and functional translation may be an uncontroversial example of a translation that works. But we need not

stop there. The viability of our world depends no less on the success of translation that impinges on the literary kind, That is, that involved in the subtle negotiations of the world of realpolitik, high finance and global trade. These are ongoing operations that work, and translation across (sometimes extreme) cultural-linguistic barriers is an integral feature of their success. (I do not comment here on their success in moral terms; I am drawing attention to their acknowledged operational viability.) And we know that they work because on the criterion of bilinguality or multilinguality—another attested fact of human experience—there is confirmation that they have been more or less successful. People are enabled to move on towards achieving their agreed upon goals. We cannot draw arbitrary lines in the sand and declare that translation works across cultural and linguistic barriers in the world of realpolitik, say, but not in the world of literature. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and though it may be the case that my own efforts in this book lack the requisite culinary skill, this does not mean that others must necessarily share the same fate. Yet it is true: the translator stands vulnerable and exposed. Translation is a thankless task.

At this point it will repay us to look more deeply into the nature of translation. I have written on this elsewhere;[160] here let me advert much more briefly to some relevant conclusions.

I have argued that translation exists at three levels. At the most foundational, translation occurs when data from outside our individual subjectivities—all the sensory and other input that we receive—are processed into the "banks" of our cognitive-experiential faculty. We "translate" external data—auditory, visual and other input—into internal data in a host of ways: as ideas, images, impressions, dispositions and so on. This material, integrated into our subjectivity, must then be retranslated into appropriate word and gesture as we seek to relate, both personally and otherwise, with our environment. Ontically, this is the most grounded level of translation.

But our subjectivities are not just the constructs of imminent data transactions. They are also the products of culturally bounded traditions of thought and emotion—shaped perspectives on the world—that have been transmitted from ancient times. We experience the other, the world and ourselves, in and through the flux of culturally permeable sets of specific cognitive patterns. Speaking deliberately loosely in terms of "Western culture", George Steiner, in his work, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation,* describes the boundedness of this horizon as follows:

> We are so much the product of set feeling-patterns, Western culture has so thoroughly stylized our perceptions, that we experience our "traditionality" as natural. . . . The themes of which so much of our philosophy, art, literature are a sequence of variations, the gestures through which we articulate fundamental meanings and values are, if we consider them closely, quite restricted. . . . The initial "set" has generated an incommensurable series of local variants and figures (our "topologies"), but in itself it seems to have contained only a limited number of units. . . . Our Western feeling-patterns, as they have come down to us through thematic development, are "ours", taking this possessive to delimit the Greco-Latin and Hebraic circumference. (1975, 462)

[160]See *TT.*

But this is some circumference, delimited though "Western culture" may be! It contains within its boundaries a huge range of fundamental texts—Greek, Latin, Hebrew and other—which together have shaped the "initial set" of Western cognitive patterns, and which have then been transmitted in time through a process of continuous translation, both linearly and radially, across a vast range of linguistic and subcultural divides that have come to make up the *complexus* of Western culture today.

In the essay mentioned above, taking my cue from Steiner, I advert to:

> how *Weltanschauungen,* philosophical preoccupations [in the "West"] down the ages, the very "shape" of cultural assumptions, notwithstanding their thematic and other variations amid a diversity of linguistic and ethnic identities, derive from the translation, the "carrying over", of the formulated experience of Ur-texts [such as the Bible, the works of Plato, Aristotle and so on] across external and internal linguistic boundaries, across, that is, the sometimes not inconsiderable changes over time of word and meaning within a particular tongue, as well as the divisions that characterise historically closely related languages.

This is translation at the second level, attested to by the reciprocal porosity of human subjectivity across linguistic boundaries. Such porosity is not confined to a particular ethnic group. We have indicated with reference to such criteria as multilinguality and post factum confirmations of authentic translation (sometimes across sharp linguistic divides) that it is embedded in the human psyche, that it is a mark of what makes us human. If it did not exist we could not speak, experience and interact in terms of specific cultural sets—Western or Indian or African in general terms, and English or German, Bengali or Tamil, Tutsi or Shona, and so on, in more particular contexts. In other words, the cultural shaping of our subjectivities across the centuries attests to the viability of the more or less intact linguistic transfer of meaning from one tongue to another, that is, to the recovery and reformulation of meaning over linguistic divides of time and space.

Thus translating a particular literary work from one tongue to another, however far apart etymologically these may be, represents but the surface level

of human translation. As an epistemic act, it is legitimated by its two predecessors. It is possible because the other two are possible; not only this: it is the end-product, the expression of a profound human urge, rooted in the two other forms of translation, to interact and communicate. All three modes of translation are hierarchically interrelated, part of the same systemic structure. You cannot have one without the others.

It follows that translation as such has three innate characteristics: first, it is inherently possible, because human communication is inherently possible; second, it carries the mark of incommensurability—in so far as it must bridge personal, linguistic and cultural divides; and third, it is inherently creative, that is, the attempted reconciliation of the first two characteristics under optimal conditions produces a reflected other, a new authentic form of the original generated through the process of linguistic transaction. A brief consideration of each point with the translation of *Ānandamaṭh* in mind will help us understand the trials, pitfalls and possible successes of translation as an act per se (and of the translation of *Ānandamaṭh* in particular).

In my essay (*TT*), I refer to Jacques Derrida, who observes that "if discourse and philosophical communication (that is, language itself) are to have an intelligible meaning, that is to say, if they are to conform to their essence and vocation as discourse, they must simultaneously in fact and in principle escape madness. They must carry normality within themselves . . . for [this] belongs to the meaning of meaning. . . . By its essence the sentence is normal. It carries normality within it, that is, *sense,* in every sense of the word".[161] The point is that the communication of ideas through a language that formulates the various solidarities of a viable human community, that is, a rational language, is normal. Since translation in all three senses is an integral part, at least potentially, of this project of communication, it too is normal. This is another way of saying that it is inherently possible, since the normality of which we speak refers to the norm of the transfer of meaning across boundaries, which enables human development to take place. (This is why a society that allows itself to be dominated by an "irrational" idea—an idea that is at odds with the processes of the development of a universal human solidarity [which itself rests on a regular and enriching exchange of semantic content]—runs the risk of being sucked into madness, which is a form of isolation, and so of destroying itself.)

But the articulation of self to own-self and to self-as-other, both collectively and individually, over time—which is what translation in all its three modes implies—necessitates the following:

> the deployment of a hermeneutic of meaning. The life-growth of the individual as self-aware, the development of the collective (whether this be the nation or some smaller group) . . . cannot be achieved without a complex dialectic of interpretation which becomes possible only through a corresponding development of complexity in the formation and use of language. The very multi-layeredness of language (here I include gestures and wordless signs) gives ample scope to the ambiguities of intentionality. . . . But to speak of the inevitability of interpretation in the transmission of meaning, of the inherent multi-layeredness and intentional ambiguity of language, is to speak of translation as an exercise in incommensurability. (*TT*)

[161]From "Cogito and the History of Madness" in *Writing and Difference*, 1978, 53–54.

In other words, though translation may be inherently possible, its dependence on the personal appropriation and formulation of meaning makes the transfer of semantic content, not least across cultural divides, innately problematic. This leads us to the second point.

There is an ineradicable element of incommensurability in translation. Translation is semantically hiatal in nature. This is not difficult to appreciate. Each of its strata requires the personal, and therefore, to some extent, unique appropriation of semantic content. At the first level, the assimilation and integration of external data devolves upon the individual construct that each subjectivity has become through the particular life experiences of that subjectivity; personal communication is likewise to some extent an expression of unique individuality. We must not lose sight here, as modern research has informed us, of the fact that the mind too is cognitively stratified and that, consequently, there are hidden depths to human intentionality. (It is this that often gives rise to the ambiguity of authorial intention.) Thus, even in the articulation of meaning to own-self there is loss of semantic content. Frequently, this structural inarticulacy rises to the surface of our awareness. How often do we experience ourselves "at a loss for words", not because there is nothing to say but because we feel that we do not have the means, either verbally or in other ways, to say it. However, this is not the final word in the matter. We do manage to communicate, this semantic inarticulacy notwithstanding, with varying degrees of success, using the common currency of what we may call the cognitive universals embedded in the linguistic resources at our disposal. We all have access, more or less expertly, to the shared thematic content of our cultural sets, which we then invest, each of us in the act of communication, with our own unique semantic "spin". For greater efficiency at communication, it remains our continual task to extend the range of these epistemic templates.

At the second level, that of the transmission of the cognitive content of foundational text, semantic loss occurs too when this formulated material is passed on from one generation to the next. The Plato or Kālidāsa we read today, whether in the original Greek or Sanskrit, or indeed in some carefully prepared translation, is, to put it provocatively, both the same and yet different, not only from what each of us might have read when these texts were produced

but also from the readings we make as we pass from translation to translation. The inalienable uniqueness of individual perspective, the subtle but inevitable transmutations of the meanings of words that occur with the passage of time, the continually changing environments of our mind-sets, and the evolving interpretation and reinterpretation of the depths of authorial intention and its context, all combine to render the ideal of some "virginal reading" of text an elusive and ill-conceived goal (but tell this to the fundamentalists!). Still, notwithstanding all these conditions of change, salient semantic continuities of text can be preserved from generation to generation, else we would be unable to build at all, over a range of disciplines, scientific endeavour included, on the achievements of the past. After all, is this not what that slippery term "progress" seeks to convey? But for this preservation to occur, we must strive continually to establish the optimal conditions: stretches of a stable social order, a tradition of careful scholarship, a developing and vibrant literary heritage, and so on (this is why a society cannot survive without its literary types and savants).

Thus, when we arrive at the third level, that of the imminent translation of a particular literary text, the semantic incommensurability of which we speak is but a continuation of this structural dialectic. "Dialectic", because it is not necessarily the case that the "gaps" of incommensurability, of the loss of meaning, must inevitably grow wider with the passage of time. So long as there is a continual rerooting in the literary culture of the past, a careful exploration of the way literary history speaks to the present, the reformulation of traditional "units" of thematic content (Steiner) is possible. No doubt this reformulation can produce no more than authentic resonances of, lines of continuity with, the original. In Hindu culture this has traditionally been attempted by a chain of ongoing commentary on foundational texts. The Ur-text is continually revisited, inserted into the present, by commentarial retranslation, often on the basis of a gloss, word by word. This retranslation takes place within the framework of a *sampradāya* or teaching tradition, so that recognisable boundaries for the recovery of meaning are established. When it is adjudged that semantic content has been overattenuated with the passage of time, the original is retranslated so that "pristine" if not virginal meaning may be recovered (though often enough this distinction is either conflated or overlooked).[162] One way or the other, in the process of translation of semantic content across temporal (and linguistic) boundaries, it is necessary to construct a viable bridge between the literary heritage of the past and the formulations of the present. In the Bengal of the second half of the nineteenth century, in the high culture of Hindu tradition, Bankim played a crucial role in constructing such a bridge

[162]"Virginal meaning" is meaning that has been dehistoricised, viewed as a predetermined given transcending context; it cannot be "objective" in any acceptable sense of this term. "Pristine meaning" is meaning that is sought to be recovered in terms sensitive to original context.

between the Sanskritic conventions passed down and the Bengali language of his day. The result was an important contribution to the formation of a new Bengali idiom, and *Ānandamaṭh* is a prime example of this innovation. This leads us to the third characteristic of translation as an epistemic act: its tendency to produce a linguistic alter ego, a reflected self in the lineaments of the host language.

As noted earlier, this is achieved by the attempted reconciliation of the human urge to communicate, which necessitates translation, and translation's innate tendency to remain open-ended, to resist semantic closure (its feature of incommensurability). It is here that the creative dimension of translation comes to the fore and enables the good translator to enrich human speech and experience. "A good translation", says Ronald Knox, "should have the freshness of an original product".[163] If the translation does not strive for accuracy, if it plays fast and loose with the given terminology of the source text, it becomes openly distortive, an adaptation at best (like B K Roy's translation of *Ānandamaṭh*). At the very least, it cannot be called a faithful translation, and fidelity is a requisite of good translation. But fidelity is not enough. A crib is faithful, but cribs do not make for good translations. Their literality may be useful for various purposes, such as grammatical analysis, but they succeed also in dismembering text. They are works in progress towards good translation. Their deadpan, convoluted nature does a disservice to the original, which itself is rendered lifeless by implication.

Thus the second requisite of a good translation is the implementation of what we may call *methodological respect*, that is, attentiveness to the resonances and nuances of text. The good translator is a good listener, sensitive to the hidden depths of context, attuned to the cadences of the languages in which she or he works. For this to happen certain conditions must be in place: sufficient expertise in both the source and target languages, careful research into authorial context, awareness of the linguistic and social environment into which the translation is being made. The translational act is not just a transfer of meaning across words; it is also a transfer of meaning across worlds, and unless the requisite respect is shown to the relevant cultural paradigms on both sides of these divides, a successful semantic transaction cannot be effected.

So it is that when fidelity and respect are appropriately combined, the third and crowning trait of good translation arises: integrity between original and product. It is this "wholeness", this wholesomeness, that makes for good translation, giving it "the freshness of an original product". In literary translation, the models of "copyist" and "perfect servant" for the translator, either singly or in combination, are inappropriate. The copyist seeks to duplicate the original, to imitate to the point of slavishness. The more successful he becomes, the more we see, paradoxically, only a glaring approximation between original

[163]In chapter 3, "On English Translation", in his *Literary Distractions*, 1958, 50.

and product, as in the case of "the reproductions of paintings and artifacts that you can buy in museum shops".[164] The vitality, the raison d'être of the original, must necessarily be lost. (Is it not the case that the most successful forgers in art manage to infuse some life into their creations?)

But it is also inadvisable for the literary translator to strive to be like the perfect servant, completely unnoticed in the work achieved. The trouble with this approach, says de Lange, is that "the successful translator is the one who has eradicated from his text every arresting feature, every sign of originality. . . . Do we want Dante or Kafka to read like the latest pulp novel?" It is not that the translator, in violation of the aims of these models, can afford to be either deviant or intrusive in the work that he or she sets out to accomplish. We have pointed out that fidelity and respect are requisite characteristics of a good translation. It is rather that neither model per se allows for that engagement of the translator's subjectivity that good literary translation demands. The translator as copyist and/or the perfect servant has surrendered his or her subjectivity to the mastery of the original. In consequence, the translation lacks a voice of its own and is rendered dull and lifeless (it has become a "stuffed-owl" rendering, to use Knox's expression). "The translator must do his best by using the speech that comes natural to him. . . . His style must be his own, his rhetoric and his emphasis must be that of his original. And, always, at the back of his mind, he must imagine that he is the original" (Knox, 1958, 57). Good translation calls for an ongoing conversation between author, translator and reader/hearer. It is this that makes of the translational product a reflected self of the original.

This is why I have called good (literary) translation *suhridic* translation (from the Sanskrit term *suhṛd* meaning friend, confidante, helper). The good translation enables the text to speak for itself in the here and now. It is a timely restatement of the original in a new tongue. This has two related consequences: it displays the inevitable *contingency* that characterises (all, including) literary translation; and it allows for the hidden potential of a text to find expression. We need to explain both these points with special reference to *Ānandamaṭh*.

Because in translation the source text is embodied anew, so to speak, like all embodied selves it is enmeshed in historical contingency. Translation is a salient marker of historical transience, for every translation, by virtue of its occurrence as *this* translation, *this* concatenation of words, demonstrates its contingency. As a particular historical event then, a translation displays (to extend an idea of Sudipta Kaviraj) not only the particular identity it has acquired but also the fact that it could have been other, since every text is capable of an unspecified number of (good) renditions, each nuanced differently from the others. Translations, however good they might be, cannot mark time; they are harbingers of change, of a potentially continuous process of

[164]On these models, see de Lange, 1993.

retranslation, of the rebirth of texts and ideas. Here is an example of what I mean.

In Part II, chapter 4 of the novel, the monk Satyananda is instructing Mahendra, who is about to be initiated as a *santān*, about the religious objectives of his followers. After the instruction, Mahendra professes to understand, saying, "So the Children are simply an Order of religious devotees". "Exactly", replies Satyananda. "We don't aspire to temporal power. All we wish to do is uproot the Muslims completely because they are enemies of our Lord". The expression in the original which I have translated as "uproot completely" is *sabańśe nipāt (karā). Sabańśe* is a term that refers to one's descendants, lineage, family; *nipāt karā* means "to destroy, kill", but also "to overthrow". Now we may ask, what exactly did Satyananda (and possibly Bankim) mean by these expressions? To "(physically) destroy", that is, to kill, the Muslims, root and branch (*sabańśe*)? To render them incapable (not necessarily by physical destruction) of assuming a spiritually debilitating temporal rule over Hindus? After due consideration of authorial and narrative context, I have used "uproot completely" in my translation (where "root" evokes the sense of *bańśa*), since this seems to reflect the perhaps unwitting ambiguities of the original without transgressing its semantic content. There may well be alternative translations, of course, that preserve the niceties distinguished.[165]

But this example has led us to the second point: the capacity of translation to uncover, even nurture, the hidden or germinal potential of a text. Translation can function as a midwife, enabling new possibilities to come to light, perhaps bringing one possibility to birth over another. This can arise from particular syntactic and structural demands that the source and host languages may have. In our case, we are translating from the nineteenth-century Bengali of educated speakers into a form of modern, standard English.[166] This is not the place to launch into an analysis of the syntactic and other differences involved; suffice it to say that there are salient cultural and linguistic boundaries across which we must translate—with respect, for example, to word play, distinctive metaphors and social practices, and allusive meanings (not to mention vagaries of grammatical construction, and the idiosyncracies of Bankim's style).[167] This is why there are footnotes and endnotes, though most of the burden of translation has been confined—as indeed it must—to the main text.

[165]*MF* has, "Nous voulons exterminer les musulmans jusque dans leur descendance", while the Ghose and Sen-Gupta translations have: "we want to destroy [the Mussalmans] totally", and "we only want to kill these Mussulmans, root and branch", respectively.

[166]But not too modern; we cannot resort to modern slang. We must try to reflect not only linguistic nuances of the original Bengali but also a somewhat theatrical and transitional literary style from Sanskritic conventions to a more modern idiom in a text produced in the 1880s but whose action is set in the 1770s—all this in a form of English comfortable for reader and translator.

[167]Although the story is set in the late eighteenth century, Bankim was not trying to mimic the language of the time.

Here is a knotty example of how translation can influence hidden or potential meaning. The word *dharma* is used often in the story. This is a notoriously complex term to translate. It may even be argued that this term has been adopted into modern English (it occurs, unitalicised, in the current *Concise Oxford Dictionary*), so a case could be made for saying that it can remain untranslated. But this would not clarify what the term might mean in a particular passage (in fact, its English meaning may be obscure, anachronistic, or mistaken in most minds), so I have decided to translate it. Since *dharma* could have a number of meanings both in the context of the narrative and in Bankim's time (such as "code of practice", "virtue", "rule of life", even "religion"; Bankim was not too particular about historical exactitude, as we have seen), and in fact seems to have been used by Bankim in more than one sense in the story, it will not do to give it the same translation wherever it occurs.[168] Thus I have had to decide how to translate it for each occurrence (in each case, in the endnotes, I have recorded the use of the term against my translation). The point is that in some cases, at least, I may have either narrowed or broadened the meaning intended in my rendering. Indeed, in some cases there is no way of knowing which alternative I have taken, since the original itself may be indeterminately polysemic. I can only hope that from each recorded use of the term, the reader will be able to sense, from a careful perusal of the context, what (fuller?) nuances the term could have in the original.[169]

But there is another way in which translation can bear on the potential of a text. Sukanta Chaudhuri, in his *Translation and Understanding*, puts it thus:

> Translation can release an alternative, subversive potential of the text, turn it inside-out to bring its deconstructive factor to the fore. The new language draws out possibilities beyond the original writer's intention or awareness, possibilities he might have consciously rejected. Going beyond authorial intention, they might be possibilities that his own language would not admit but that are instilled in the new text by the structures of the target (or, as I would prefer to call it, "host") language. . . . [Further] each translation from a marginal or subaltern language into a dominant one can counter the imbalance [between the two]—often subtly, sometimes dramatically. It validates the subaltern culture quite literally in terms of the dominant one; but thereby

[168]A strategy used incongruously by J A B van Buitenen when he invariably renders *dharma* by Law in his translation of the Poona-constituted text of the *Mahābhārata*.

[169]No doubt, as Harder notes, "By Bańkim's time the use of *dharma* as an equivalent of 'religion' was firmly established" (2001, 182), yet I have been reluctant to use this word in my translation. Though Bankim was aware of the semantic complexity of the term *dharma* (see Harder's discussion, 182–95), one must not forget that the novel is set in the 1770s. It is not clear how historically sensitive Bankim intended his use of *dharma* to be.

> draws out the dominant language beyond its entrenched confines. (1999, 2, 16)

This brings us to the second, more specific, objection raised against the translation of *Ānandamaṭh*, that is, the objection that centres on its contingent features, on the kind of novel that *Ānandamaṭh* is. One way in which translation can release the potential of a text, subversively or otherwise, is by taking place amid controversies in which the target language can have an important part to play. For obvious historical reasons, this is the case with English in the politically charged atmosphere, particularly of Hindu-Muslim relations, in India today. I have already indicated how fraught both the slogan and the hymn *Vande Mātaram* have become in this atmosphere, and how the need to have a proper understanding of their narrative context seems to have receded from the limelight. It is hoped that a new, critically-weighted translation of the novel, such as this purposes to be, might go some way towards answering this pressing need. It has the potential to open up the text anew, to recontextualise its contents, and to encourage the possibility of a new dialogue between interested parties of goodwill. Surely this is a better option than allowing *Ānandamaṭh* to remain a closed book to virtually everyone concerned—because of the linguistic specificities of the original text—so that hardened prejudices of the past may prevail. This takes us to the next question.

Is Bengali a "subaltern" language? And does translation from Bengali into a world language like English, which dominates the global landscape today, serve only to endorse Bengali's subject status, indeed to undermine its linguistic identity? One might begin a response by saying that it is hardly possible to turn the clock back. The global status of English seems here to stay, and it is unhelpful to refuse to acknowledge this fact.[170] The task is to seek to ensure that the hegemony of English remains primarily instrumental rather than culturally undermining, that is, a hegemony that enables rather than disables cultural specificity. One way of achieving this is through good literary translation.

I cannot pronounce if Bengali may rightly be described as a "subaltern" language. "Subaltern" has become an evocative term and calls for considerable contextual analysis. Bengali is spoken by many millions of people today in various forms, not only in homeland locations but also in the diaspora. The fact that it has a colonial history, or more properly, colonial histories (but so has English, in the context of former colonies) need not make it subaltern today. These are large questions which I cannot enter into here. But I have written as follows:

> Translations, good translations, of literary works from Bengali into English . . . will perform a dual function: on the one hand, they will

[170]See Crystal, 1997.

valorise Bengali language and culture as the vehicle of a refined humanity which has many fresh things to say about the enrichment of human relationships, about how to assume fruitful new perspectives on the world. They also help us reveal those cultural differences that define and at the same time celebrate the particularities of certain kinds of identity. All this will encourage some to learn Bengali (not least in the Universities) with serious intent, and many to hold on to their linguistic heritage in the face of an omnivorous challenge from English. But, on the other hand, these translations will also bring about a change for the good in English. They will insinuate new thought and life into English-based perceptions, new loan-words, new cultural idioms. Through this exchange, in time English will be changed forever as part of the broadening global interactions between peoples. One must not underestimate the constructive value of good translation. (*TT*)

It remains for us to give a cautionary example or two, with respect to *Ānandamaṭh,* demonstrating the need for adequate translation. I have already referred to the version of *Ānandamaṭh* by Basanta Koomar Roy, and to that by the Ghose brothers. Both purport to be renditions of the standard edition of the novel. In what follows, I am not trying to score points. I acknowledge with gratitude the help I have received in consulting the English translations that have come my way (as well as translations in other languages). However, once embarked upon, literary translation must be pursued as a serious exercise—a lot may depend on it.

Here is a passage from Part I, chapter 10, translated by Aurobindo Ghose. The *Vande Mātaram* song has just been sung, and Bhabananda and Mahendra are conversing about the possibility of liberating their birthland from the oppressor.

[Mahendra asked:] "Can Englishmen and Bengalees be compared?"

[Bhabananda replied:] "Why not? What does physical strength matter? Greater physical strength will not make the bullet fly farther".

"Then," asked Mohendra, "why is there such a difference between an Englishman and a Mussulman [that is, Muslim]?"

"Take this first", said Bhavananda. "An Englishman will not run away even from the certainty of death. A Mussulman, as soon as he perspires, he roams in search of a glass of *sherbet.* Next take this, that the Englishman has tenacity: if he takes up a thing, he carries it through. 'Don't care' is a Mussulman's motto. He is giving his life for a hire, and yet the soldiers don't get their pay. Then the last thing is courage. A cannon ball can fall only in one place, not in ten, so there is no necessity for two hundred men to run from one cannon ball. But one cannon ball will send a Mussulman with his whole clan

running, while a whole clan of cannon balls will not put even a solitary Englishman to flight."

My own translation of this passage is as follows:

[Mahendra asked:] "You're comparing the Bengalis to the English!"

"Why not?" answered Bhabananda. "There's a limit to physical strength. Do you think a stronger person can make a bullet fly farther?"

"Then why is there such a difference between the English and the Muslims?" asked Mahendra.

"Listen", said Bhabananda, "an Englishman won't flee even to save his life, whereas the Muslim will run off when he begins to sweat; he'll slope off in search of a cool drink! Again, the English hang on, they'll finish what they've begun. But the Muslim plays fast and loose. The sepoys risk their lives for money, even then they don't get paid. And finally, it's a question of courage. The cannonball can fall only in one place not in ten, so there's no need for two hundred to run when they see a single cannonball. Yet when they see a single cannonball a whole tribe of Muslims will flee, whereas a tribe of cannonballs can't make a single Englishman run!"

Now here is Basanta Koomar Roy's version:

[Mahendra said:] "When it comes to warfare, there is a world of difference between the British and the people of India."

[Bhabananda replied:] "You do not fight these days with mere physical strength. The bullet does not travel faster nor further because a stronger man fires a rifle."

"Then what makes this difference between the British and the Indian soldier?"

"Because the British soldier would never run away even to save his life. The Indian soldier runs away when he begins to perspire; he seeks cold drinks. The Englishman surpasses the Indian in tenacity. He never abandons his duty before he finishes it. Then consider the question of courage: A cannon ball falls only on one spot. But a whole company of Indian soldiers would run away if one single cannon ball fell among them. On the other hand, British soldiers would not run away even if dozens of cannon balls should fall in their midst."

Compare the three, the point being: Where have all the Muslims gone in Roy's translation? In fact, he has translated them out of the novel entirely! There is no trace of them in his rendition. He has the grace to say on the cover page: "Translated and Adapted from Original Bengali". But this is some adaptation! Roy's version, which first appeared in the context of India's inde-

pendence movement, clearly had a political agenda to serve. But his adaptation is like adapting Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* to get rid of Shylock. As we have seen, the Muslims play a key role in *Ānandamaṭh* for a variety of political and narratival reasons, including the "political rage" Bankim felt at Muslim self-indulgence in ruling their Indian territories (it is this that lies behind the unfavourable comparison described in the passage above). To banish all trace of Muslims in one's translation is not to solve a problem but to defer it, if not to exacerbate it.

However, Roy's "translation" has more to answer for. It appears to have misled a number of scholars in other ways. In her *Divine Enterprise*, Lise McKean relies importantly on Roy's rendition when discussing the subject of Bhārat Mātā, or Mother India, and the way this idea has been enshrined in the form of both temple and sacred map of India.[171] She writes,

> To understand what it meant to build a huge temple to Bharat Mata in the early 1980s requires backtracking to Bengal in 1882, and to the publication of a novel. Bankim Chandra Chatterji's novel, *Anandamath* (Monastery of Bliss), marks the invention of the tradition of Bharat Mata. . . . Bankim Chandra's expressive powers reach their greatest intensity in his elaboration of the religious devotion of Bharat Mata's children. . . .
>
> Under the leadership of the ascetic Mahatma Satya, the Order of the Children protects the good and punishes the wicked British and their collaborators. The audience visualizes Bharata Mata when the Mahatma leads Mahendra, a potential disciple, to three rooms, each containing a different form of Bharat Mata. In the first room is Bharata Mata before British conquest: "a gigantic, imposing, resplendent, yes, almost a living map of India". In the second room, a tearful Bharat Mata wears rags and a sword hangs over her head. . . . In the third room a heavenly light radiates from "the map of a golden India—bright, beautiful, full of glory and dignity!" (*DE*: 144–45)

Notice that there is no mention of Muslims in the account above; the British are the sole opponents of the Children. Notice too, the regular occurrence of "Bharat Mata" to describe the Goddess, and more than one reference to a "map of India" as representing the Goddess. The quotations in the extract above are taken from Roy's version of the novel. I give below Sen-Gupta's translation, and my own, of the relevant passages for comparison (taken from Part I, chapter 11).

Here is Sen-Gupta's rendering:

> [T]he monk led the way and Mahendra followed him into the temple. On entering it he found it to be a very high and spacious chamber. . . . Mahendra could not at first see what there was in the room, but gazing and gazing on, he presently found a huge four-handed image . . . On the lap of Vishnu sat a charming figure, fairer far than Lakshmi or Saraswati and richer far than both . . . Then the ascetic led Mahendra to another chamber where he found a complete image of Jagaddhatri, perfect and luxuriously decorated. . . . [T]he anchorite showed him a narrow tunnel and bade him come by it. . . . [They reached] a dark underground chamber. . . . In that dim light [Mahendra] saw the figure of Kali. . . . Mahendra cried with horror, "Oh, Kali!"
>
> "Yes, Kali, covered with the blackest gloom, despoiled of all wealth, and without a cloth to wear. The whole of the country is a land of death and so the Mother has no better ornament than a garland of skulls". . . . Then the monk showed him the way through another tunnel, bid Mahendra follow him, and himself began to climb up. . . . Mahendra saw a golden image of the ten-handed goddess smiling brightly in the morning sun.[172]

And here is my version:

> The monk led Mahendra into the temple and Mahendra saw that they had entered a hall of vast proportions. . . . At first Mahendra was unable to see what was inside, but as he peered more and more closely, he could gradually make out a massive four-armed statue. . . . On Vishnu's lap sat an enchanting image, more beautiful and glorious than Lakshmi and Sarasvati. . . . Then the monk took Mahendra into another chamber. There he saw a beautiful image of the Goddess as Bearer of the earth, perfectly formed and decorated with every ornament. . . . The monk pointed to a dark tunnel and said, "Follow me". . . . They reached a dark chamber, in the depths of the earth. . . . There in the dim light [Mahendra] could see an image of Kali. . . . "Kali!" said Mahendra fearfully. "Yes, Kali", said the monk. "Blackened and shrouded in darkness. She has been robbed of everything; that is why she is naked. And because the whole land is a burning-ground, she is garlanded with skulls". . . . Then saying, "Come this way", the monk began to ascend a second tunnel. . . . Mahendra saw a golden ten-armed image of the Goddess in a large marble shrine glistening and smiling in the early morning rays.

Neither translation mentions Mother India or Bharat Mata, neither refers to a map of India. The original has no such expressions either here or

[171]And she relies on Roy again in her article, "Bhārat Mātā" (*BM*).

[172]English idiom apart—and this is an important consideration—Sen-Gupta's translation is on the whole a faithful one, though his project was different from ours. For more detail on the differences between the two, see the critical apparatus.

elsewhere; they are a fabrication by Roy. To crown it all, Roy leaves out the entire last chapter of the novel, which gives the Instruction by the Healer justifying British rule. He ends his rendition with Jibananda and Shanti walking off together to build "a little cottage on the Himalayas" and spend the rest of their days in prayer for Mother India and Mother Earth and all their children. This does make a travesty of the novel and some of its main objectives. The moral is that a sound translation cannot properly be substituted by an "adaptation", and it alone provides a sound basis for a historical study (and careful extrapolation) of the original.

This introduction is almost done. As I grew up in Bengal in the aftermath of Independence, in a nation that was beholden to Bankim Chatterji in important respects, I had no idea that sometime in the future I would produce a study on what has turned out to be an oracular contribution to nation building. This contribution is not without ambiguities and ambivalences as we have seen, but it is of seminal import. It is my hope that this study may play a part in providing a basis for genuine dialogue, and that it may act as a tribute to the multicultural Bengal and India that I love. But let us delay no longer: the novel awaits, so read on.

Ānandamaṭh, or *The Sacred Brotherhood*

❁ *Dedication* ❁

"Oh, where are you—our love lost in a moment—
Who's abandoned me even as I lived for you?
You've left me like a torrent of water
Rushing through a broken dam leaves
A cluster of lotuses".

There's a bond between heaven and earth, and it's to keep this bond that this book has such a Dedication.

"Those who are devoted to Me, who have offered up all their works to Me,
Who worship Me with minds fixed, seeking no other way,
I soon become their Deliverer, Partha—those whose minds abide in Me—
From the ocean of repeated death.
Fix your senses only on Me, set your mind on Me,
Then most surely you will abide in Me.
But if you are unable to meditate steadily on Me,
Then seek to attain Me by disciplined practice".
—*Srimadbhagavadgita* 12

❁ *Notice to the First Edition* ❁

The wife of the Bengali is in many situations his main support; often she is not. And often enough social rebellion is no more than self-torment. The rebels destroy themselves. The English have freed Bengal from misrule. These matters are explained in this work.

❁ *Notice to the Second Edition* ❁

I have quoted below the words of a knowledgeable critic, by way of commentary on what I wrote in the Notice to the first edition.§

> The leading idea of the plot is this—should the national mind feel justified in harbouring violent thoughts against the British Government? Or to present the question in another form, is the establishment of English supremacy providential in any sense? Or to put it in a still more final and conclusive form, with what purpose and with what immediate end in view did Providence send the British to this country? The immediate object is thus briefly described in the pref-

§The following extract is given in English.

ace—To put an end to Moslem tyranny and anarchy in Bengal, and the mission is thus strikingly pictured in the last chapter: "The Physician said, 'Satyanand, be not crest-fallen. Whatever is, is for the best. It is so written that the English should first rule over the country before there could be a revival of the Aryan faith. Harken unto the counsels of providence. The faith of the Aryans consisteth not in the worship of three hundred and thirty millions of gods and goddesses; as a matter of fact that is a popular degradation of religion—that which has brought about the death of the true Arya faith, the so-called Hinduism of the Mlechhas. True Hinduism is grounded in knowledge, and not in works. Knowledge is of two kinds—external and internal. The internal knowledge constitutes the chief part of Hinduism. But internal knowledge cannot grow unless there is a development of the external knowledge. The spiritual cannot be known unless you know the material. External knowledge has for a long time disappeared from the country, and with it has vanished the Arya faith. To bring about a revival we should first of all disseminate physical or external knowledge. Now there is none to teach that; we ourselves cannot teach it. We must needs get it from other countries. The English are profound masters of physical knowledge, and they are apt teachers too. Let us then make them kings. English education will give our men a knowledge of physical science, and this will enable them to grapple with the problems of their inner nature. Thus the chief obstacles to the dissemination of the Arya faith will be removed, and true religion will sparkle into life spontaneously and of its own accord. The British Government shall remain indestructible so long as the Hindus do not once more become great in knowledge, virtue and power. Hence, O Wise man, refrain from fighting and follow me.' " This passage embodies the most recent and the most enlightened views of the educated Hindus, and happening as it does in a novel powerfully conceived and wisely executed, it will influence the whole race for good. The author's dictum we heartily accept as it is one which already forms the creed of English education. We may state it in this form: India is bound to accept the scientific method of the west and apply it to the elucidation of all truth. This idea beautifully expressed, forms a silver thread, as it were, and runs through the tissue of the whole work. (*The Liberal,* April 8, 1883)

❁ *Notice to the Third Edition* ❁

This time in an Appendix there is an excerpt from an English book on the true history of the *sannyasi* rebellion of Bengal. The reader will see that it was a very serious business. The reader will also see that on two matters there is a

marked discrepancy between the novel and history. The battles described in the novel did not take place in the Birbhum region; they took place in northern Bengal. And in place of "Captain Edwards", "Major Woods" was the name substituted in the novel. I do not consider these to be fatal discrepancies, for a novel is a novel, and not history.

❁ *Notice to the Fifth Edition* ❁

Since it has been decided that there is no need to retain the discrepancies mentioned in the Notice to the third edition, the necessary changes have been made in this edition. In other matters too, some changes have been made. Shanti has been made comparatively more restrained, and certain things concerning her that were left to the reader's imagination have been explicitly described in a new chapter. Also, the printing of the text has been improved.

❁ *Prologue* ❁

A vast forest. Most of the trees in it are *sal,*[1] but there are also many other kinds of tree. The trees, with foliage intertwined, stretch out in endless ranks. Without break or gaps, without even openings for light to penetrate, a boundless ocean of leaves, wave upon wave ruffled by the wind, rolls on for mile after mile.

Below, profound darkness prevails. Even at high noon the light is dim, dreadful! Humans never venture into that forest, and except for the ceaseless murmur of the leaves and the cries of its wild beasts and birds, no other sound is heard in it.

Not only is this a vast, profoundly dark forest, but it is also late at night. And it is an extremely dark night, dark even outside the forest. Nothing is visible. And the mass of gloom within is like the darkness in the very bowels of the earth.

The birds and animals are completely silent. How many countless millions of animals, birds, worms and insects live in that forest, yet not one makes the slightest sound. Indeed, the darkness of which we speak could be imagined, but that brooding silence of an otherwise clamorous world is beyond conceiving.

In that boundless forest then, in that impenetrably dark night, in the inconceivable silence, a voice was heard: "Will my heart's desire never be fulfilled?"

And the voice heard, once more that mighty forest was plunged in silence.

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[1]See introduction, note 86.

Who could say then that a human voice had been heard there? Then again a sound, again the voice rang out breaking the silence: "Will my heart's desire never be fulfilled?" Thrice thus was that sea of darkness convulsed.

Then an answer came: "What will you pledge in return?"

"The pledge is my life, my all", was the reply.

"Life is trifling; anyone can give up their life".*

"What else is there? What else can I offer?"

And the answer came: "Dedication".*

PART I

❁ *Chapter 1* ❁

It is summer one day in 1770 in the village of Padacinha, and the sun beats down fiercely. The village is full of homes, but there is no one about. There are rows of shops in the bazaar and lines of makeshift stalls in the marketplace, there are hundreds of mud houses in every quarter, with brick buildings of varying sizes in between, yet today everything is silent. The shops are closed, and no one knows where the shopkeepers have fled. It's the day for the local market, but the place is empty. The beggars are supposed to come out today, but none are about.

The weaver has shut his loom and lies weeping in a corner, the trader has forgotten his trading and sobs with infant in his lap, the givers have stopped their giving, the teachers have closed their *tols*,[2] and even babies, it seems, lack the will to cry. No folk on the main roads, no bathers in the large ponds, no people at their doors, no birds in the trees, no cattle in the pastures—only jackals and dogs in the cremation ground.

A huge building—its large fluted columns can be seen from afar—stands out like a hilltop amid that forest of dwellings. Yet no splendour there; its doors are closed, the house is devoid of human throng, and it stands silent, resistant even to entry by the wind. Even at noon its inner apartments are dark, and in the gloom within a husband and wife, like a pair of blooms in the night, sit brooding, massive famine staring them in the face.

Because there was a poor harvest in 1768, rice in 1769 was a little more expensive. The people suffered, but the king exacted taxes to the full. And because they had to pay their taxes in full, the poor ate but once a day. During the rainy season in 1769, it rained heavily. People thought that the gods were being merciful. Once again the cowherd sang happily in the fields, and once more the tiller's wife began pestering her husband for a silver bracelet. Suddenly, in Asvin the gods became unfavourable.[3] In Asvin and Karttik not a drop of rain fell. The paddy withered in the fields and became like straw;[4] as for those who had a meagre crop, the king's officers bought it up for their sepoys. Once again people went hungry. First, they skipped a meal, then even the one meal they had was reduced by half, and finally they fasted throughout

[2] *Tol*: a traditional school for boys. More information about its activities is given in Part II, ch. 1.

[3] Asvin: mid-September to mid-October: the sixth month of the Bengali calendar. Late monsoon rain can be expected in the latter half of September.

[4] Paddy: the rice plant in its early stages, when it needs to stand in several inches of water.

the day. The harvest in Caitra simply wasn't enough.[5] Then Muhammad Reza Khan, the king's revenue officer,* thinking to show how important he was, at once increased taxes by 10 percent, and great was the lament in Bengal!

First, people started to beg. Soon there was no one to give alms, so they started to go hungry. Then they began to succumb to disease. Then they sold their cattle, their ploughs and cattle yokes, finished off their seed-paddy, and sold all their possessions. Then they sold their land. After this, they started selling their girl children, then the boys, and then their wives. Finally, who was there to buy the children and the wives? There were no buyers, since everyone wanted to sell. For lack of food, they began to eat the leaves of trees, and grass, and weeds. The low-caste and those who lived in the forests started to eat dogs, mice and cats. Many fled—and those who fled went to strange parts and died there of starvation, while those who remained died of disease, either because they ate the uneatable, or for want of eating at all.

Then disease had its day: fever, cholera, tuberculosis, smallpox. Smallpox was especially rampant. They started dying of smallpox in every house. No one dared to give water to any person or to touch anyone. No one was willing to treat or attend to anyone or to dispose of the dead. The most beautiful bodies were left to rot by themselves in mansions. As soon as smallpox entered a house, the inhabitants abandoned the sick and ran away in fear.

Mahendra Simha was one of Padacinha's wealthy men, though today rich and poor shared the same plight. In these grievous times, all his relatives and servants had gone, ridden with disease. Some had perished and some had fled. Now only he, his wife and a baby daughter remained in that once populous household. It was of them that I spoke earlier.

His wife Kalyani stopped brooding and went to the cowshed where she milked the cow herself. Then after heating the milk and feeding it to the child, she went to give the cow some grass and water. When she returned, Mahendra said, "How long can we go on like this?"

Kalyani replied, "Not much longer. Let's see. I'll try to manage for as long as I can. After that, take the girl and go to the town".*

Mahendra said, "If we must go to the town, why give you all this trouble now? Let's go right away". They debated this for a long time.

Then Kalyani said, "Will it be worth our while going to the town?"

"Perhaps it's deserted there as well", replied Mahendra, "with as little chance of staying alive".

"We could survive if we went to Murshidabad, Kashimbajar or Kolkata. Whatever we do, we must leave this place".

Mahendra said, "This house is filled with the wealth of many generations, it will all be looted if we leave".

[5]Caitra: the last month of the Bengali year (mid-March to mid-April), the season of the second, smaller harvest.

"Can the two of us keep looters at bay? And if we don't survive who will enjoy the wealth? Come on, let's lock up and go right away. If we survive, we can return and make the most of things".

Mahendra asked, "Will you be able to do the journey on foot? All the porters are dead,[6] and where there are oxen their waggoners are dead and vice versa".

"Don't worry, I'll manage", said Kalyani. If I can't, she thought, I'll die on the way, and at least these two will survive.

Next day at dawn, they took some money, locked up the house, released the cattle, and taking their daughter in their arms, started their journey towards the capital. As they were setting off, Mahendra said, "The road is very dangerous. There'll be bandits and looters every step of the way, we can't travel empty-handed". He went back to the house and emerged with musket, powder and shot.

When she saw this, Kalyani said, "Now that you've thought of weapons, take Sukumari for a while, I'll bring a weapon too". She placed the little girl in Mahendra's arms. "What kind of weapon are *you* going to take?" asked Mahendra as she entered the house.* Kalyani returned, hiding a tiny box of poison about her clothing. She had stored up the poison against the uncertainty of the times.

It was the month of Jyaistha and fiercely hot.[7] A scorching wind blew across the fiery earth. The sky was like a canopy of molten copper and the dust on the road seemed like sparks of fire. Kalyani began to sweat, struggling along the road, resting now and then in the shade of a babul tree or date palm and drinking the muddy dregs of dried-up ponds. Mahendra carried the girl, fanning her from time to time. Once, as they rested in the deep shade of a dark-leafed tree with fragrant blossoms and encircling creepers, Mahendra marvelled at the way his wife was bearing up under the strain. He soaked a piece of clothing in an adjacent pool and sprinkled Kalyani's and his own face, hands, feet and forehead with water.

This refreshed Kalyani somewhat, but both keenly felt the pangs of hunger. Even this was bearable, but not the hunger and thirst of the child. So they set off on their journey again. As if swimming through the scorching waves,[8] they arrived before evening at an inn. Mahendra had high hopes of being able to give his wife and daughter cool water and life-sustaining food. But alas, the place was deserted! The large rooms lay empty, everyone had run away. After examining the place carefully, Mahendra deposited his wife and daughter in a room and went outside. He called out in a loud voice but there was no answer.

[6]It was the custom for women of social standing to travel by palanquin.

[7]Jyaistha: mid-May to mid-June, the height of summer.

[8]That is, the heat-shimmers that often appear in such conditions.

Mahendra said to Kalyani, "Be brave and stay here on your own for a while. If there's a cow in the place, by God's grace I'll bring back some milk". There were many earthen pitchers lying about. He picked one up and went out.

❁ *Chapter 2* ❁

Mahendra had gone. Kalyani, alone with the child, peered about fearfully in the deserted, nearly-dark inn. There was no one about; no human sound could be heard, only the howling of jackals and dogs.

Why did I let him go, she thought, we could have held on a little longer without food and drink. She decided to lock all the doors, but every doorway missed either panels or a locking-bar.[9] As she cast anxious glances from side to side she saw what looked like a shadowy human form in the doorway facing her. Yet was it human? Utterly withered, gaunt, of the darkest hue, naked, something misshapenly human-like stood in the doorway. After a while the shadow seemed to lift a hand which was skin and bone, and with a long, shrivelled finger of that long, shrivelled hand made as if to summon someone. Kalyani was petrified. Then another shadow like the first—withered, black, tall, naked—came and stood by the latter's side. Then another, and another. Gradually the number grew, and they began to advance slowly and silently into the room. The darkened room became as dreadful as a cremation ground at night. As the ghostly forms surrounded Kalyani and her child, Kalyani nearly fainted.* Then the black, gaunt men seized and lifted Kalyani and the girl, carried them out of the building, and crossing a field entered a jungle beyond.

A little later Mahendra arrived carrying some milk in the pitcher, and saw that the place was empty. He searched everywhere, calling first his daughter's and finally his wife's name many times.[10] But no answer came, and there was no trace of anyone.

❁ *Chapter 3* ❁

The forest in which the bandits put Kalyani down was very beautiful. There was no light, no eye to behold the charm—the beauty of that forest remained hidden like the beauty within a poor man's heart. Food might be scarce in the region, but there were flowers in that forest, and the flowers had

[9]Doors were often sealed by means of a horizontal bar across the middle.

[10]Traditional conventions of reserve between husband and wife made Mahendra reluctant to mention his wife's name in the first instance.

a fragrance that seemed to make even that darkness glow. The bandits had put Kalyani and the child down on a patch of clear, soft grass, and were sitting around them. They were debating what to do with them, for Kalyani's ornaments were already in their possession: a group was busily dividing them out.

When this was done, one of the bandits said, "What will we do with silver and gold? I'd rather someone gave me a fistful of rice for a piece of jewellery! I'm dying of hunger. All I've lived on today are the leaves of trees!" No sooner had one spoken thus than the rest followed suit. There was an uproar. "Rice, give us rice!" they cried. "We're dying of hunger, we don't want silver and gold!"

The gang leader tried to restrain them, but to no avail; gradually voices rose higher and higher, they began to abuse one another, and were on the point of fighting. Every one who had received a share of the ornaments flung the jewellery at his leader in rage. The latter struck one or two about him, then all of them attacked him with blows. For lack of food, the leader had become thin and weak; a few blows were enough to knock him down and kill him. Then from among that starving, enraged, excited and senseless band of robbers, one cried, "We've eaten the meat of jackals and dogs, and we're dying of hunger. Come on, today let's eat this fellow here". Then everyone shouted, "Victory to Kali! Power to Kali! Today we'll eat human flesh!"

Then those gaunt, black demonic forms roared with laughter in the darkness and clapping their hands began to dance. One of them set about lighting a fire to cook their leader's body. Gathering some dry creepers, wood and grass, he started a fire with some pith and flint. As the fire slowly took hold, the dark foliage of the trees nearby—the mango, citron, jackfruit, palmyra, tamarind, and date palm—gradually began to light up. Here the leaves glowed in the light, there the grass began to gleam, while in other places the darkness became even more intense.

When the fire was ready, one of them grabbed the legs of the corpse and dragged it to throw it into the flames. Then another cried, "Wait! Stop! If we are to live by eating the grandest of meats today, then why eat this old man's dried-up flesh? Let's eat what we've captured and brought here today! Come on, we'll roast the flesh of this tender child!" Another cried, "Cook one or the other, I don't care, but I can bear this hunger no longer!"

Then, slavering, they looked to where they had left Kalyani with the child, but the place was empty! Neither mother nor daughter was there. Kalyani had seen her chance while the bandits were arguing. Taking the child in her arms, she had given her her breast and fled into the forest. Seeing that their prey had escaped, the ghoulish band ran in every direction crying "Kill! Kill!"

In certain circumstances, human beings become nothing but ravening beasts.

❁ Chapter 4 ❁

The forest was pitch dark and Kalyani was at a loss to find a way. Not only was there no path among the dense thickets of trees, creepers and thorns, but it was also intensely dark. Kalyani began to force her way through the forest. But each time the thorns pierced the child and she began to cry, the bandits cried out more loudly in pursuit. In this way, bloodstained, Kalyani pushed deep into the forest. In a little while the moon rose. Thus far Kalyani had had the slight hope that the bandits would be unable to see her in the gloom and that after some effort they would give up the chase. But with the rising of the moon that hope was dashed.

The risen moon poured out its brightness on the forest-top and drenched the darkness within with its light. The darkness brightened, and here and there prying shafts of light pierced through the gaps of the forest. The higher the moon rose and the brighter it became, the more the darkness began to hide, and the more Kalyani and her child sought cover in turn. The baying robbers began to close in as the terrified child cried all the louder. Finally, Kalyani could flee no more and gave up the struggle. She sank down on a clear patch of grass under a huge tree and taking the child in her arms could only cry out again and again, "Where are You, whom I worship and revere daily, and with whose help I've been able to enter even a forest like this! Where are You, Lord, Madhu's slayer?"

Then gradually losing track of the outside world through fear, the excess of devotion and the exhaustion of hunger and thirst, Kalyani was suffused with an inner awareness, and she heard ring out above her in heavenly tones:

O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!
O Gopal, Govinda, Mukunda, Krishna!
O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha![11]

From childhood Kalyani had heard from the Puranas how the divine sage Narada would roam the skyways of the world with the *vina,*[12] chanting the name of Lord Hari; she began to think of this now. With her mind's eye she could see the mighty form of a great sage, body, hair, beard and robes shining white, *vina* in hand, chanting along the bright moonlit pathway of the deep blue sky: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha".

Slowly the voice came nearer and she began to hear more clearly than before: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!" and then nearer and even more clearly, "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!"

[11]A Sanskrit invocation to Vishnu and/or Krishna, that is, Hari, mentioning some of the demons he slew.

[12]"A four-stringed musical instrument with a fretted finger-board and a gourd at each end" (as defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary).

And then, echoing through the forest, the voice sounded right above Kalyani's head: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!"

Kalyani opened her eyes: there in the dim moonlight of the forest gloom she saw directly before her that very form of the sage—body, hair, beard and clothes shining bright! Dazed as she was Kalyani thought to pay him reverence, but she could not, for as she tried to bow her head she fell unconscious to the ground.

❁ Chapter 5 ❁

There was a large monastery in that forest, spread out over a vast area and encircled by a great deal of broken stone. On seeing it archaeologists could tell that what had once been a Buddhist abbey had now become a Hindu monastery. There were two-storeyed rows of buildings with many kinds of shrines in between and a meeting-hall in front. Nearly the whole area was enclosed by a wall and covered in such a way by the thickets of trees outside that no one could tell even during the day and from a short distance that there were buildings here. The buildings had crumbled in many places, though by daylight one could tell that the whole place had recently been repaired. It was clear that even in this deep, impenetrable forest human beings now lived here.

It was in a room in this monastery where a huge log was burning that Kalyani first regained consciousness and saw before her that same great person with shining form and robes. Once again Kalyani looked wonderingly at the figure—for memory had not yet returned—when it said, "My child, you are on holy ground, do not be afraid. I have some milk; drink it, and then we will talk".

At first Kalyani was at a loss to understand, but as she gradually became more composed she drew the border of her garment about her neck[13] and touched the great one's feet. He blessed her graciously in return and from an inner room brought out a fragrant clay vessel in which he heated some milk on the blazing fire. Then he gave the milk to Kalyani and said, "My child, give a little to your daughter and drink some yourself. After that I wish to speak with you".

Kalyani joyfully began to feed the child some milk. "I will return, do not be anxious", said the man and left the shrine. When he returned after a short time he saw that Kalyani had fed the child some milk, but that she herself had not had any, for only a very little of the milk had been used. He said, "My child, you have not drunk any milk. I will go out again and not return until you have drunk some".[14]

[13]A sign of modesty.

[14]Traditionally, respectable women did not eat or drink before strange men.

As he was about to depart, Kalyani bowed to him again and with folded hands made as if to speak.

"What is it?" asked the hermit.

Kalyani said, "I cannot drink the milk for a reason. Please do not insist".

The hermit said to her gently, "Tell me why not. I live as a monk in this forest, and you are like a daughter to me; you can speak freely. When I carried you here unconscious from the forest you seemed completely exhausted from hunger and thirst. How will you survive without nourishment?"

"Since you are a divine being, I can tell you", said Kalyani tearfully. "My husband has not eaten yet. Unless I see him or hear that he has eaten, how can I eat myself?"[15]

The monk asked, "Where is your husband?"

Kalyani said, "I do not know. Soon after he left to look for some milk, the robbers came and took me away". Then, by a series of questions, the monk learned the full facts about Kalyani and her husband. Kalyani did not—could not—mention her husband's name, but after further questioning the monk realised what it was.[16]

"So *you* are Mahendra's wife?" he asked.

Kalyani remained silent and without looking up put some wood in the fire that had warmed the milk.

Then the monk said, "Listen to me. Drink the milk, I'll bring news of your husband. But unless you drink I shan't go".

Kalyani said, "Do you have a little water, please?" The monk pointed to a jug of water. Kalyani cupped her hands and the monk filled them with water. Then Kalyani stooped at the monk's feet and said, "Please put the dust of your feet here". After the monk had touched the water in Kalyani's cupped hands with his toe, Kalyani drank the water and said, "I have drunk nectar. Please don't ask me to take anything else. I can have nothing unless I get news of my husband".[17]

"Then remain in this shrine without fear", said the monk, "I am going to look for your husband".

❁ *Chapter 6* ❁

It was late into the night. The moon was directly overhead. It wasn't a full moon—the light wasn't that sharp. The night's dim, shadowy light was scattered over a vast plain whose edges the light could not penetrate. It was

[15]It was the custom of a good wife not to eat before her husband had done so.

[16]The respectful wife did not utter her husband's name.

[17]The ritual of drinking water that has touched or washed the dust of someone's feet is a mark of profound respect. Kalyani does not wish to offend the anchorite, but she will not break the custom of fasting until her husband has eaten.

impossible to make out what or who was on that plain: it seemed endless, deserted, a dwelling place for fear.

The road to Murshidabad and Kolkata lay along that plain. By the side of the road was a small hill on which many mango and other trees grew. The rustling treetops shimmered in the moonlight and cast black, trembling shadows on the dark rocks below. The monk climbed to the top of the hill and stood there motionless, listening—listening for what, I cannot say, for except for the rustling of the trees nothing else could be heard on that apparently endless plain. In one place at the foot of the hill was a dense jungle, between the hill and the main road. The monk set off in that direction as if he had heard something there. Going deep into the jungle he saw men sitting in the forest gloom beneath rows of trees. They were tall, dark and armed, and their polished weapons gleamed in the dappled moonlight. They sat thus in utter silence, about two hundred of them.

The monk passed slowly between them and made a sign so that not a single one rose up, or spoke or made a sound. As he walked past, peering at each face in the gloom, he seemed to be looking for someone he could not find. Finally, he recognised the person he was looking for, and touching him on the body, motioned him to follow. The other rose at once and the monk led him some distance apart from the rest. The monk's companion was a fine figure of a man, young and muscular, his handsome face covered by a jet-black beard and moustache. He was wearing saffron robes, his body luminous with sandalpaste.

The monk said to him, "Bhabananda, any news of Mahendra Simha?"

Bhabananda replied, "Early today Mahendra Simha took his wife and daughter and left his house.* At the inn . . .".

"I know what happened at the inn", the monk interrupted.* "Who was responsible?"

Bhabananda said, "Probably some of the village folk. Hunger has driven all of them from the villages around to become bandits. Who isn't a bandit nowadays? We too fed on looted spoils today. Two maunds of the *kotwal's* rice were in transit,[18] and we captured them and consecrated them to our Vaishnava bellies!"

The monk laughed and said, "I've rescued Mahendra's wife and daughter from the robbers. They're safe at the monastery now. Your task now is to find Mahendra and restore his wife and daughter to his care. Jibananda can see to what's required here".

Bhabananda acquiesced, and the monk left him.

[18]A *maṇ* or maund weighs about eighty-two pounds; a *kotwal* is a police chief.

❁ *Chapter 7* ❁

Deciding that there was no point in sitting and brooding at the inn, Mahendra got up and went towards the town* thinking to search for his wife and daughter with the help of the king's officials. Some distance along the road he saw a number of bullock carts flanked by many sepoys on the march.

In 1770 Bengal had not yet fallen under British sway. The British at the time were Bengal's tax collectors. All they did was collect the revenue; they took no responsibility for overseeing the lives and property of Bengalis. Their task was to collect the money, while the responsibility for life and property belonged to the evil Mir Jafar, a vile, treacherous blot on the human race. He was unable to look after himself, so how could he look after Bengal? Mir Jafar took opium and slept, the British took in the money and issued receipts, and the Bengali wept and went to ruin.* So while Bengal's revenue belonged to the British, the burden of government fell on the nawab.

Wherever the British collected their own dues, they would appoint a collector. When the revenue was collected, it went straight off to Kolkata. People could die of starvation, but the collection of revenue didn't stop. Yet there wasn't that much revenue to collect—you can't come up with wealth that mother earth hasn't produced! Be that as it may, whatever did come in was loaded onto carts and went off under armed guard to the Company's[19] treasury in Kolkata.

Since the fear of bandits was so great at present, fifty armed sepoys with fixed bayonets marched in ranks before and behind the carts. The commanding officer was a white man* who rode on horseback at the rear. Because of the heat, the company travelled not during the day but at night.

As they went along, the revenue carts and their armed escort blocked Mahendra's path. Seeing this, Mahendra stood to one side, but when he realised that the sepoys would still collide with him—and thinking that this was no time for an argument—he went and stood by the edge of the jungle adjoining the road.

At this one of the sepoys said in broken Bengali, "Look, there's a bandit running off!" When he saw the gun in Mahendra's hand he was the more convinced of this. He ran up to Mahendra, grabbed him by the neck, and crying, "Scoundrel, thief!" suddenly gave him a blow and snatched the gun away. Mahendra, now empty-handed, could only return the blow. Needless to say, he was furious. When struck, our worthy sepoy spun round and fell senseless on the road. Then three or four sepoys caught hold of Mahendra and dragged him before the English officer in charge, saying that he had killed one of their number.

[19]The East India Company, which had been granted trading and revenue rights.

The officer, who was smoking a pipe, and somewhat the worse for drink, said in Hindusthani, "Take the scoundrel and marry him".[20]

The sepoys were at a loss to understand how they were to marry a gun-toting bandit. But thinking that their master would regain his wits when he sobered up, and that they would not have to enter into matrimony then, three or four bound Mahendra's hands and feet with the rope used for the bullocks and lifted him onto a cart. Mahendra realised that it would be futile to struggle against so many; besides, even if he freed himself by force, what was the point of it? He was stricken with grief for his wife and daughter and had no desire to live. The sepoys tied Mahendra firmly by the wheel of the cart. Then, carrying the revenue with them, they continued with measured tread as before.

❁ *Chapter 8* ❁

After receiving his instructions from the monk, Bhabananda headed for the inn where Mahendra had been, softly chanting Hari's name as he went along.[21] That would be where he could pick up the trail, he thought. The present roads made by the English didn't exist at the time.* If one wished to go from the towns to Kolkata one had to travel by the marvellous roads constructed by the Muslim emperors! On his way to the town from Padacinha, Mahendra had travelled northwards from the south, so that he met up with the sepoys on the way. Likewise, in heading for the inn from Talpahar, Bhabananda had to make his way from the south towards the north. So in a very short time he came upon the sepoys escorting the money. Like Mahendra, he too stepped to one side.

Not only were the sepoys expecting bandits to try and capture the money, but had they not caught one of them on the way? So when they saw Bhabananda by the roadside at nightfall they at once assumed that he was a bandit, and caught hold of him too there and then.

Bhabananda laughed softly and said, "What's this, friend?"

A sepoy answered, "You scoundrel, you're a bandit!"

"But can't you see that I'm a monk in my yellow robes? Do bandits dress like this?"

The sepoy said, "Many of you ascetic scoundrels have become bandits", and he grabbed Bhabananda by the neck and dragged him along. Bhabananda's eyes flashed in the dark but he did not protest. Instead, he said very meekly, "Very well, Master, just tell me what to do".

[20]A pun on *sadi* (marry: uttered by the officer) and *sida* (straighten [out]). Instead of saying, *Sida karo* (Straighten him out!), the tipsy officer says *Sadi karo* (Marry him!). Bankim frequently pokes fun at the inability or disinclination of the British to speak the local language.

[21]Hari, another name for Krishna. These monks are a kind of Vaishnava.

Pleased, the sepoy said, "Here you are, then, you rogue, you can carry this on your head", and he thrust a bundle onto Bhabananda's head.

Then another sepoy said, "Don't do that, he'll run off. Tie him up with the other scoundrel on the cart". Curious to see who had been tied up, Bhabananda threw the load off his head and struck the sepoy who had put it there on the cheek. The upshot was that the sepoys trussed Bhabananda up too and threw him into the cart next to Mahendra. Then Bhabananda knew that this was Mahendra Simha!

As the cart creaked along again and the sepoys lost interest and began to argue amongst themselves, Bhabananda said softly so that only Mahendra could hear, "Mahendra Simha, I know who you are. I'm here to help you. Right now, you don't need to know who I am. Do exactly as I say, but take care. Put the rope tying your hands on the wheel of the cart".

Mahendra was astonished, but without wasting words he did as Bhabananda said. Moving a little closer to the wheel in the dark, he placed the rope that bound his hands against it. Slowly the friction cut the rope; then Mahendra did the same with the rope tying his feet. Now freed, he followed Bhabananda's advice and lay without moving upon the cart. The monk cut his own ropes in the same way. Both remained motionless.

The company were to travel along the same high road near the jungle where the monk had stood looking about him. As they reached the hill the sepoys saw a man standing on a small mound below the hill. Seeing his dark form etched against the deep blue of the moonlit sky, the *havildar*[22] said, "There's another of those scoundrels! Catch him and bring him here! He's going to carry something too!" Even though a sepoy came up to seize him, the man just stood there—he made no effort to move! Nor did he protest when the sepoy caught hold of him and brought him before the *havildar*.

"Give him something to carry", ordered the *havildar*. When a sepoy placed a load on his head, the other accepted it, and the *havildar* went back to accompany the cart.

Suddenly the report of a pistol rang out, and the *havildar* fell dead to the ground, shot in the head.

Shouting, "This scoundrel's shot the *havildar*", a sepoy grabbed the carrier by the hand. Still holding the pistol, the other threw off his load, reversed the pistol in his hand and struck the sepoy on the head.[23] The latter collapsed with a broken head. Just then two hundred armed men emerged shouting the name of Hari, and surrounded the sepoys. As the sepoys waited for their commanding officer to come up, the latter thinking that bandits were upon them, rushed up to the carts and gave the order to form a square, for in times of danger the English overcome their addictions.*

[22]A *havildar* was a noncommissioned Indian officer of the rank of sargeant.

[23]Pistols of the time had large, heavy gourdlike handles.

The sepoys at once made a square facing outwards, and at their leader's next command raised their muskets. Just then, someone suddenly snatched the officer's sword from his side and with a single blow cut off his head. Decapitated, the latter fell off his horse, no longer able to give the command to fire! All could see a figure standing on a cart, sword in hand, shouting Hari's name and crying out to kill the sepoys. It was Bhabananda!

Suddenly seeing that their commander was headless and that there was no one to give orders to protect them, the frightened sepoys were briefly at a loss to know what to do. Taking advantage of this, the daring bandits killed and wounded many of them, and reaching the carts captured the money chests. At this, the defeated sepoys lost heart and fled.

Then he who had stood upon the mound and later taken command during the battle came up to Bhabananda. After the two had embraced, Bhabananda said, "Brother Jibananda, your vow was taken to good effect!"

Jibananda replied, "And may your fame spread, Bhabananda!" Asked to arrange for the captured money to be taken to a suitable place, Jibananda quickly departed with the men—and Bhabananda was left standing there alone.

❁ *Chapter 9* ❁

Mahendra had climbed down from the cart and snatched a weapon from a sepoy, ready to take part in the fray. Then it became clear to him that these were bandits who had attacked the sepoys to capture the money. Realising that if he helped the robbers he would be party to their misdeeds, he moved away from the arena of battle. He threw his sword away and slowly began to retreat when Bhabananda came up to him.

Mahendra asked, "Who are you, sir?"

"Why do you need to know?" replied Bhabananda.

"Well, there is some need since I'm specially in your debt today".

"I didn't think that had occurred to you", said Bhabananda. "There you were, weapon in hand, yet standing apart! Just like a landowner's son—ready to indulge in wasteful rituals, but as work-shy as Hanuman[24] when there's a job to be done!"*

Hardly had Bhabananda finished when Mahendra said scornfully, "But a bad job! Banditry no less!"

"Perhaps it was", returned Bhabananda, "but we did you some little service, and we're prepared to do you some more".

"No doubt you've done me a good turn", said Mahendra, "but what more

[24]Hanuman: the monkey-devotee of the God Rama and something of a figure of fun in traditional Bengali folklore.

could you do? And rather than be obliged to a bandit, I think it's best if I remain unobliged!"

"It's up to you whether you want our help or not", said Bhabananda. "But if you do, then follow me. I'll take you to your wife and child".

Mahendra turned and stopped short. "What's that?" he cried.

Without replying Bhabananda walked away. Mahendra had no choice but to follow. What kinds of bandits are these?* he wondered.

❁ *Chapter 10* ❁

The two walked silently across the plain in that moonlit night. Mahendra was silent, anguished, unbending, somewhat intrigued. Suddenly Bhabananda seemed to become a different person. No longer was he the grave, calm renouncer, the skilled, valiant figure of the battlefield, the man who had cut off the head of a commanding officer! No longer the man who had just rebuked Mahendra so haughtily. It was as if seeing the radiance of plain and forest, mountain and river of a peaceful, moonlit world had invigorated his mind in a special way, like the ocean gladdened by the rising moon. He was now light-hearted, talkative, friendly, keen to make a conversation. He tried often to get Mahendra to talk, but Mahendra remained silent. Then, with no other recourse, Bhabananda began to sing softly to himself:

I revere the Mother![25] The Mother
Rich in waters, rich in fruit,
Cooled by the southern airs,
Verdant with the harvest fair.

Mahendra was a little astonished when he heard this song, and was at a loss to understand. Who was this mother "rich in waters, rich in fruit, cooled by the southern airs, verdant with the harvest fair"?

"Who is this mother?" he asked Bhabananda.

Without answering Bhabananda began to sing:

The Mother—with nights that thrill
in the light of the moon,
Radiant with foliage and flowers in bloom,
Smiling sweetly, speaking gently,
Giving joy and gifts in plenty.

[25]The first occurrence of many in the novel of the famous Sanskrit slogan *Vande Mataram* (*Bande Mataram* in its Bengali form). See the introduction and the critical apparatus for a fuller discussion.

Mahendra cried, "But that's our land, not a mother!"[26]

Bhabananda replied, "We recognise no other mother. 'One's mother and birthland are greater than heaven itself.' But we say that our birthland is our mother. We've no mothers, fathers, brothers, friends, no wives, children, houses or homes. All we have is she who is rich in waters, rich in fruit, cooled by the southern airs, verdant with the harvest fair".

"Then sing on", said Mahendra, understanding at last.

And Bhabananda sang once more:

I revere the Mother! The Mother
Rich in waters, rich in fruit,
Cooled by the southern airs,
Verdant with the harvest fair.

The Mother—with nights that thrill
in the light of the moon,
Radiant with foliage and flowers in bloom,
Smiling sweetly, speaking gently,
Giving joy and gifts in plenty.

Powerless? How so, Mother,*
With the strength of voices fell,
Seventy millions in their swell!
And with sharpened swords
By twice as many hands upheld!

To the Mother I bow low,
To her who wields so great a force,
To her who saves,
And drives away the hostile hordes!

You our wisdom, you our law,
You our heart, you our core,
In our bodies the living force is thine!

Mother, you're our strength of arm,
And in our hearts the loving balm,
Yours the form we shape in every shrine!

For you are Durga, bearer of the tenfold power,
And wealth's Goddess, dallying on the lotusflower,
You are Speech, to you I bow,
To us wisdom you endow.

[26]A cue-text for what eventually became the image of "the motherland", and then "Mother India", in the developing nationalist movement.

I bow to the Goddess Fair,
Rich in waters, rich in fruit,
To the Mother,
Spotless—and beyond compare!

I revere the Mother! the Mother
Darkly green and also true,
Richly dressed, of joyous face,
This ever-plenteous land of grace.

Mahendra saw that the bandit wept as he sang. "Who *are* you people?" he asked bewildered.

Bhabananda replied, "We are the Children".

"What does that mean? Whose children?" asked Mahendra.

"The Mother's Children".

Mahendra said, "Fine, do children honour their mother by robbing and plundering? What kind of mother-love is this?"

Bhabananda replied, "We don't rob and plunder".

"But you've just plundered those carts!"

"Was that robbery and plunder? Whose money did we plunder?"

"The king's, of course!"

"The king's!" said Bhabananda. "Does he have a right to the money he takes?"

"It's the king's share".

"A king who doesn't look after his kingdom is no king", said Bhabananda.*

"I can see sepoys blowing you all to bits some day at the cannon's mouth!"[27]

"Don't worry, I've seen plenty of those scoundrels about, I saw some today too!"

"You didn't see well enough. One day you'll really see", said Mahendra.

"Perhaps", said Bhabananda. "You can only die once".

"Yes, but why court death?"

Bhabananda answered, "Mahendra Simha, I thought you might be a real man, but I see now that you're like the rest of them—a devourer only of fine things! Look, the snake crawls about flat on the ground, the lowliest creature around, but step on it and even the snake rears its hood! Aren't you even a little fed up with the way things are? Look at all the other places—Magadha, Mithila, Kashi, Kanci, Delhi, Kashmir—where else is in such a mess? Where else do people have to eat grass for lack of food? Or thorns, or anthills, or

[27]A form of punishment for treason or serious dereliction of duty. The transgressor was tied to the mouth of a cannon, which was then fired.

creepers from the forest? Where else do they eat dogs and jackals and dead bodies? Where else can't folk have peace of mind even when they've locked away their money, or installed the *shalogram*[28] at home, or kept their wife and daughter indoors, or when their womenfolk are expecting? Here they cut open the womb and tear out the child! Everywhere else there's a pact with the king for protection, but does our Muslim king protect us?* We've lost our religious way of life, our caste status, our self-respect, our family connections—and now we're about to lose our lives! If we don't get rid of these bearded degenerates* will anything be left of our Hindu identity?"

Mahendra said, "How will you get rid of them?"

"By destroying them", Bhabananda replied.

"On your own? Just with a slap?"

The bandit sang:

Powerless? How so, Mother,
With the strength of voices fell,
Seventy millions in their swell!
And with sharpened swords
By twice as many hands upheld!

Mahendra said, "But I see that you're alone!"

"How can you say that? You've just seen two hundred men!"

"Are they all Children too?"

"Every one of them".

"How many more are there?"

"Thousands right now, and in time there'll be more".

Mahendra said, "Let's say there'll be ten to twenty thousand of you. Will you be able to end Muslim rule with that?"

"How many men did the English have at Plassey?" rejoined Bhabananda.

"You're comparing the Bengalis to the English!"

"Why not?" answered Bhabananda. "There's a limit to physical strength. Do you think a stronger person can make a bullet fly farther?"

"Then why is there such a difference between the English and the Muslims?" asked Mahendra.

"Listen" said Bhabananda, "an Englishman won't flee even to save his life, whereas the Muslim will run off when he begins to sweat; he'll slope off in search of a cool drink! Again, the English hang on, they'll finish what they've begun. But the Muslim plays fast and loose. The sepoys risk their lives for money, even then they don't get paid. And finally, it's a question of courage. The cannonball can fall only in one place not in ten, so there's no need for

[28]An ovoid stone containing fossil ammonite worshipped as harbouring the presence of the God Vishnu.

two hundred to run when they see a single cannonball. Yet when they see a single cannonball a whole tribe of Muslims will flee, whereas a tribe of cannonballs can't make a single Englishman run!"

"Do your people have all these fine qualities?" asked Mahendra.

"No," said Bhabananda. "But qualities don't fall off trees; you've got to practise them".

"And are you doing that?"

"Can't you see we're renouncers?" said Bhabananda. "We've renounced in order to practise. When the job's done, when our practice is completed, we'll go back to running households. We too have wives and daughters".

Mahendra said, "Have you been able to give all that up? To cut off worldly concerns?"

Bhabananda answered, "No *santan* should lie, so I won't make empty boasts. Who can cut off worldly concerns? Those who say they've done so either have never had such concerns or are making an empty boast. We don't cut off worldly concerns, we keep a vow. Will you be a *santan*?"

Mahendra replied, "Unless I hear about my wife and child, I can't answer that".

"Very well, then come and meet your wife and daughter".

They continued on their way, and Bhabananda began to sing *Bande Mataram* again. Mahendra, who had a good voice and some knowledge and love of music, sang with him. As he sang, he noticed that tears came to his eyes.

Mahendra said, "So long as I don't have to leave my wife and child, you can initiate me into this vow".

Bhabananada said, "Whoever takes this vow must abandon wife and child. If you take the vow you can't see your wife and daughter. They'll be looked after properly, but you're forbidden to see them till your vow is fulfilled".

"Then I won't take the vow", said Mahendra.

❁ *Chapter II* ❁

Night had turned to dawn, and that deserted forest, dark and silent for so long, was now flooded with light and rejoiced in the sound of bird-song. And in that joyful dawn, in that joyous forest, in the monastery of the sacred brotherhood,* Satyananda Thakur[29] sat on a deer-skin performing his early morning worship with Jibananda at his side. Just then Bhabananda arrived with Mahendra. The monk continued his rituals without a word, and no one dared to speak. When the worship was done, both Bhabananda and Jibananda made their obeisance, and taking the dust from his feet sat down respectfully in his presence.

[29]Thakur: a term of respect, analogous to "Reverend" in the case of Christian clergy.

Satyananda made a sign to Bhabananda and took him outside. We do not know what they said, but after a while both reentered the shrine, and with a kindly smile the monk said to Mahendra, "My son, I've been greatly distressed by your sorrow. It was only by the mercy of the Friend of the needy[30] that I was able to save your wife and daughter last night". He explained how he had been able to rescue Kalyani. Then he said, "Come, let me take you to them".

The monk led Mahendra into the temple and Mahendra saw that they had entered a hall of vast proportions. Even then, in the crimson flush of a new dawn, when the nearby forest glittered like diamonds in the sunlight, that huge hall was almost dark. At first Mahendra was unable to see what was inside, but as he peered more and more closely, he could gradually make out a massive four-armed statue bearing a conch shell, discus, mace and lotus, respectively, in each hand, with the Kaustubha gem adorning its breast, and the discus Sudarshan seeming to whirl around in front.[31] Two great, headless forms, painted as if bathed in blood, representing the demons Madhu and Kaitabha, stood in front of the image. On its left stood a terrified-looking Lakshmi, flowing hair dishevelled, and adorned with a garland of lotuses. On the right stood Sarasvati,[32] surrounded by books, musical instruments, the various musical modes personified, and other objects. On Vishnu's lap* sat an enchanting image, more beautiful and glorious than Lakshmi and Sarasvati. Gandharvas, kinnaras, gods, yakshas and sprites paid her homage.[33]

In a voice most solemn and filled with awe, the monk asked Mahendra, "Can you see everything?"

"Yes", said Mahendra.

"Have you seen the figure in Vishnu's lap?"

"Yes. Who is she?"

"The Mother".

"Who is this Mother?" asked Mahendra.

The monk answered, "She whose Children we are".

"Who is she?"

"You will know her in time", was the answer. "Now say *Bande Mataram,* and follow me. There's more to see".

Then the monk took Mahendra into another chamber. There he saw a beautiful image of the Goddess as Bearer of the earth, perfectly formed and decorated with every ornament.

"Who is she?" asked Mahendra.

"The Mother-as-she-was", replied the monk.

"Who is that?" said Mahendra.

[30]A designation for God.

[31]Iconographic features of the god Vishnu.

[32]The goddess of learning.

[33]Various nonhuman beings: *gandharvas* or celestial creatures of various accomplishments; *kiṃnara,* a mythical composite of man and horses, *yakṣa,* a kind of semidivine attendant.

"She who subdued the wild beasts such as the elephant and lion underfoot and set up her lotus throne in their dwelling place. She was happy and beautiful, adorned with every ornament, radiant as the risen sun and full of majesty. Prostrate yourself before her".

After Mahendra had devoutly prostrated himself before the motherland in the form of the nurturing Goddess, the monk pointed to a dark tunnel and said, "Follow me". He went on ahead, Mahendra following apprehensively close behind. They reached a dark chamber, in the depths of the earth, lit somehow by a faint light. There in the dim light he could see an image of Kali.

The monk said, "Look, this is the Mother-as-she-is".

"Kali!" said Mahendra fearfully.

"Yes, Kali", said the monk. "Blackened and shrouded in darkness. She has been robbed of everything; that is why she is naked. And because the whole land is a burning-ground, she is garlanded with skulls. And she's crushing her own gracious Lord[34] underfoot. Alas, dear Mother!"

The tears streamed down the monk's face. Mahendra asked, "Why has she a club and begging-bowl[35] in her hands?"

"We're her Children, and that's all we could put in her hands as weapons", said the monk. "Now say, *Bande Mataram*".

"*Bande Mataram*", said Mahendra and prostrated himself before Kali.

Then saying, "Come this way", the monk began to ascend a second tunnel. Suddenly the rays of the morning sun dazzled their eyes and they heard the soft bird-song all around them. Mahendra saw a golden ten-armed image of the Goddess in a large marble shrine glistening and smiling in the early morning rays.

Prostrating himself, the monk said, "And this is the Mother-as-she-will-be. Her ten arms reach out in ten directions, adorned with various powers in the form of the different weapons she holds, the enemy crushed at her feet, while the mighty lion who has taken refuge there is engaged in destroying the foe. Behold her whose arms are the directions"—here Satyananda's voice broke down and he began to weep—"whose arms are the directions, who holds various weapons and crushes the enemy and roams on the lordly lion's back, who has Lakshmi personifying good fortune on her right, and the goddess of speech who bestows wisdom and learning on her left, with Kartikeya signifying strength and Ganesh good success, in attendance! Come, let us prostrate ourselves before the Mother".

Then with folded hands and upturned faces both cried out in unison: "You who are blessed above all good things, the gracious one, who bring all

[34]The god Shiva, in familiar iconic form. But this can also be translated, "well-being".

[35]Probably in the shape of a skull. See notes in the critical apparatus.

things to fruition, our refuge—Tryambaka, Gauri, Narayani—salutations to you."[36]

After they had devoutly prostrated themselves they rose up and Mahendra asked in a choked voice, "When will we be able to see the Mother in this form?"

The monk replied, "When all Mother's children recognise her as the Mother, she will be gracious to us".

Mahendra asked abruptly, "Where are my wife and daughter?"

"Come, it's time to see them", answered the monk.

"I'll see them just once and then send them away".

"Why will you send them away?"

"Because I want to accept the *Maha Mantra*".[37]

"Where will you send them?"

Mahendra thought for a while before replying, "There's no one at home, and I have nowhere else to go. Where can I find a place in such disease-ridden times?"

The monk said, "Go out of the temple by the way you came. You will see your wife and daughter when you reach the temple door. Kalyani has still not eaten. There's provisions for food where they're sitting. See that she eats and then do whatever you please. You will have no further contact with any of us. If your mind is still made up, I will make myself known to you when the time is right". Then, without warning, the monk took some path and was lost to view, and Mahendra, returning by the way indicated, saw Kalyani sitting with the child at the temple's meeting hall.

Meanwhile, Satyananda had descended through another tunnel deep into a secret chamber. Jibananda and Bhabananda were sitting there counting out money and arranging it in piles. Gold, silver, copper, diamonds, coral and pearls were stacked in the room in heaps. The pair were sorting out the money captured on the previous night.

Satyananda entered the room and said, "Jibananda, I think Mahendra will join us. If he does it will be greatly to our advantage because all his wealth collected over generations will be put to the Mother's service. But unless he becomes a wholehearted devotee of the Mother, do not accept him. When both of you have finished what you're doing follow him about at different times, and when you see that the time's right bring him to Sri Vishnu's shrine. And protect them continually, for it is the code of the Children not only to chastise the wicked but also to protect the good".

[36]The Goddess, as *shakti* or inherent power of the Godhead; here she transcends sectarian divisions. See notes in the critical apparatus for further information.

[37]*Maha Mantra* or "Great Watchword", *Bande Mataram*, the sign of membership of the sacred brotherhood of Children.

❁ Chapter 12 ❁

It was after much travail, then, that Mahendra and Kalyani met again. Kalyani flung herself down and sobbed, while Mahendra couldn't stop crying. After a bout of tears, there was much wiping of eyes, but no sooner was this done than they would burst out crying again! It was to stop her tears that Kalyani raised the subject of food and told Mahendra to eat what the monk's followers had brought. In times of scarcity it was not possible to get the usual things, but whatever was available in the region was within easy reach of the *santans*. The forest was inaccessible to ordinary folk. Those who starved could pick the fruit of every available tree, but only the Children could reach the fruit of this impassable forest. So it was that the monk's followers were able to bring lots of wild fruits and a little milk (for the renouncer-monks had a few cows in their possession).*

At Kalyani's request, Mahendra ate a little first, and then, sitting to one side, Kalyani ate from what was left.[38] She fed her daughter a little milk, and kept some to feed her again later. Then, overcome by sleep, both rested from their labours. When they awoke, they began to discuss where they should go.

"We left the house because we thought it would be too dangerous there", said Kalyani, "but it seems more dangerous to be away. Why don't we return home?"

This is what Mahendra had intended. He wanted to instal Kalyani at home and find someone to look after her, and then return to take up that most beautiful, heavenly, sacred vow to serve the Mother! So he readily agreed. Refreshed, the two took the child and started their journey towards Padacinha.

But they had no idea how to find a way out to Padacinha in that vast impenetrable forest! They thought that once they had left the forest they would find the road, but how to get out of the forest! For a long time they kept wandering about in circles and returning to the monastery, unable to find a way out. At last, in front of them stood an unknown monk dressed as a Vaishnava; he was laughing.

"Why are you laughing, Gosai?"[39] asked Mahendra, annoyed.

The monk said, "How did you two manage to enter the forest in the first place?"

"However we managed it, we got in", said Mahendra.

"Well then, why can't you find a way out?" said the Vaishnava, and he started laughing again.

"You think it's funny", said Mahendra angrily. "Can *you* get out?"

"Come with me," said the Vaishnava. "I'll show you the way. You must have come in with one of the renouncer-monks. No one else knows the way to and from the monastery".

[38]As was the custom.

[39]Gosai: a form of address to a Vaishnava monk or holy man.

When he heard this, Mahendra asked more respectfully, "Are you one of the Children?"

"I am" said the Vaishnava. "Come along. I've been waiting here to show you the way".

Mahendra asked, "What is your name?"

"My name is Dhirananda Goswami".

He went on ahead and Mahendra and Kalyani followed. Dhirananda led them out by a very difficult route and then reentered the forest alone.

A short distance after they had emerged from the Forest of the Monks, they came upon a plain with some trees. The main road ran along one edge of the plain, skirting the forest. In one place a small river gurgled through the forest, its limpid water dark as a dense cloud. Dark, glossy trees of various kinds cast their shade on the river from both sides, and in their branches a variety of birds made a medley of sounds, and just as the sweet bird-song mingled with the river's gentle murmur, so the shade of the trees merged with the colour of the water. Her thoughts seeming to blend with the shadows, Kalyani sat under a tree at the river's edge and asked her husband to sit by her. Mahendra did so and Kalyani took the child from his arms into her lap. She took her husband's hand in hers and sat silently for some time. Then she said, "You seem very sad today. We were rescued from the dangers that faced us, so why are you so sad?"

Mahendra sighed deeply and said, "I'm no longer my own master, and I don't know what to do".

"What do you mean?" asked Kalyani.

Mahendra answered, "Listen and I'll tell you what happened after I lost you at the inn". He recounted what happened in detail.

Kalyani said, "I too have suffered much and faced many dangers. But what good will it do to tell you? And how I've managed to sleep after so many dangers is beyond me! Last night it was only in the early hours that I got to sleep. And as I slept I had a dream. I dreamt—through what past merit I cannot tell—that I had gone to a most wonderful place! There was no earth there, only light—such a soft light, like a cool haze filtered through clouds. There were no people there, only shining forms, and no sound except for what seemed to be the sweet strains of distant music. It was as if hundreds of thousands of jasmines of various kinds and gardenias had just blossomed and filled the whole place with their fragrance.

"Someone appeared to be sitting high up in the sight of all, as if a blue glowing mountain was burning gently from within. A great fiery crown was on his head and he seemed to have four arms. On each side—I couldn't quite make them out—there seemed to be a female form, but so beautiful and resplendent and fragrant that I could hardly bear to look at them! I was unable to look up and see who they were.

"Another female form appeared to be standing in front of the four-armed One. She too was resplendent, but she was surrounded by a cloud and the

light came through only faintly. I got the impression that this female form, very thin but beautiful, was weeping in anguish. A gentle, fragrant breeze seemed to waft me into the presence of the throne on which the four-armed One sat, and then the cloud-wrapped thin lady introduced me, saying, 'This is she—it is for her sake that Mahendra doesn't come to me.'

"Then I heard the clearest, sweetest music of what sounded like a flute, and the four-armed One seemed to say to me, 'Leave your husband now and come to Me. This is your Mother; your husband must serve her. If you remain with your husband, he will not be able to serve her. Come to Me.' I seemed to weep and say, 'How can I leave my husband and come to You?' And then again, through the sound of the flute, I heard, 'I am husband, mother, father, son, daughter—Come to Me.' I do not know what I said in reply. It was then that I woke up". Kalyani remained silent.

Amazed, shocked, cowed, Mahendra too was silent. A *doel* began to call overhead. The sound of a *papiya* flooded the sky, and the cry of the *kokil* echoed to the horizon. The forest vibrated to the sweet calls of the *bhringaraj*, while at their feet the stream gurgled softly. A breeze carried the soft scents of the wild flowers. Here and there the river water shimmered in the sunlight and palm leaves murmured in a gentle wind. A range of blue hills could be seen in the distance. The two sat rapt and silent for a long time. At last Kalyani asked Mahendra, "What are you thinking?"

Mahendra replied, "I'm thinking what I should do. As for dreams, they only frighten us. They arise in the mind and then vanish in it—life's water-bubbles. Come on, let's head for home".

Kalyani said, "You should go where God wants you to go". She gave the girl to him.

Mahendra took the child in his arms and asked, "What about you? Where will you go?"

Kalyani covered her eyes tightly with her hands and said, "I too will go where God has told me to go".

"Where's that?" said Mahendra, startled. "How will you get there?"

Kalyani showed him the poison box. Astonished, Mahendra asked, "What! You'll take poison?"

"I'd decided to do it, but. . . . " She remained silent, thinking. Mahendra stared at her. Every moment seemed like a year. When he saw that Kalyani didn't finish her sentence, he asked, "But what? What were you going to say?"

Kalyani said, "I'd decided to do it, but I don't want to go even to heaven without you and Sukumari! Don't worry, I'm not going to die".

She placed the poison box on the ground. Then the two began to talk about what had happened and the future. As they became engrossed in conversation, neither saw the child, who was playing about, pick up the poison box. The box seemed a fine plaything; Sukumari held it in her left hand and slapped it vigorously with the right; then she held it in her right hand and

thumped it with her left. Then she pulled at it with both hands. The box opened and the poison pill fell out.

The little pill fell on her father's clothing. Seeing it, Sukumari thought that that too was a toy, and throwing the box away, snatched up the pill. Why Sukumari hadn't put the box in her mouth I couldn't say, but there was no delay with the pill. As the saying goes: "Enjoy it the moment you get it!" Sukumari crammed the pill into her mouth. Just then her mother noticed her.

"Oh God, what's she eaten!" cried Kalyani and thrust her finger into the child's mouth. Both Kalyani and Mahendra saw the poison box lying there empty. Thinking that this was another game, Sukumari grinned at her mother, clamping down with the few teeth that had just sprung up. Then, perhaps finding that the poison pill tasted unpleasant, she unclamped her teeth and Kalyani was able to extract the pill and throw it away. The child began to cry, and the pill lay on the ground.

Kalyani wet the edge of her sari with water from the river and squeezed some into the girl's mouth. "Do you think she's swallowed some of it?" she asked Mahendra piteously.

Parents always fear the worst, and the greater their love the greater the fear. Mahendra had no idea how large the pill had been. He took the pill in his hand and after examining it carefully for a long time said, "She's probably eaten quite a lot of it". As a result, Kalyani believed this too. She also took the pill in her hand and examined it for a long time. Meanwhile, the child, who had swallowed some of the poison, began to act a little strangely. She started to become restless, and cried, and then became listless.

"Do you see that?" cried Kalyani to her husband, "She's going by the very path God has called me. I too must follow". She thrust the poison pill into her mouth and in a moment had swallowed it.

"Kalyani, what have you done?" cried Mahendra, "What have you done?"

Without answering, Kalyani put the dust from her husband's feet on her head; then she said, "My lord, words will only result in more words. I take my leave".

"Kalyani, what have you done?" cried Mahendra, sobbing loudly.

Very gently, Kalyani replied, "I've done the right thing, so that you don't neglect God's work for the sake of a useless woman. Look, it was because I disobeyed the divine call that my daughter's gone. And if I had continued in this way, I may have lost you too".

Mahendra wept and said, "I would have left you somewhere to be cared for, and when my work was done I would have returned, and we could have been happy together! Kalyani, my all, why have you done this? Oh, you've cut off the very hand by whose strength I could hold my sword! I am nothing without you!"

Kalyani said, "Where could you have taken me? There's no place to go.

My parents and all our friends have died in these awful times. Into whose house would you take me? There's nowhere to go! I've become a weight around your neck. I've done well to take my life. Bless me, so that I can return to that . . . to that world of light and meet you there again". Once more Kalyani took the dust from her husband's feet and put it on her head. Unable to reply, Mahendra started to sob again.

Kalyani spoke once more in a voice that was very soft and gentle and loving, "See, who can go against God's wishes?" she said. "He's commanded me to come. Could I have stayed even if I wanted to? If I hadn't died of my own accord, somebody else would certainly have killed me. I've done well to take my life. Fulfill the vow you've taken with all your mind and heart. You'll be blessed, and it'll take me to heaven, and we'll be happy together in heaven forever".

In the meantime, the child threw up the milk she had drunk and recovered, for the little poison she had taken was not a fatal dose. But Mahendra hadn't been paying attention. He placed the girl in Kalyani's arms and held both tightly, weeping uncontrollably.

Then, as if from the midst of the forest, a soft but deeply resonant sound was heard:

"O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha! O Gopal, Govinda, Mukunda, Krishna!"

The poison was beginning to take effect, and Kalyani started to lose consciousness. Then as her mind wandered, Kalyani seemed to hear in the wonderful strains of that heavenly flute she had heard before: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha! O Gopal, Govinda, Mukunda, Krishna!"

Then, her mind fading, Kalyani began to call out in the sweetest of voices: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!"

She said to Mahendra, "Say it*: 'O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!' "

Bewildered by the sweet sound issuing from the forest and Kalyani's gentle voice, and thinking in his distress that only the deity could help, Mahendra too called out: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!"

Then from all sides was heard: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!"

Then the birds in the trees too seemed to sing out: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!"

And the river seemed to say as it rippled by: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!"

Then, in a frenzy and forgetting his grief, Mahendra cried out with Kalyani: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!"

And from the forest too, as if ringing out in unison, came the call: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!"

Kalyani's voice gradually grew faint, yet still she called out: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!"

Then slowly her voice faded and she was silent, and her eyes closed and her limbs became cold, and Mahendra understood that she had passed on to her heavenly abode even as she called upon the name of her Lord.

Then shaking the forest and startling its birds and beasts Mahendra kept shouting out like a madman: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!"

And someone came up to him and held him tight and cried out along with him: "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!"

Then in the majesty of the infinite being, in the midst of that boundless forest, in the presence of her who was journeying towards the eternal, together they proclaimed the name of the Infinite One. Bird and beast were silent, and the world, taking on an unearthly glow, became a fitting temple for this eternal refrain.

Satyananda sat there with Mahendra in his arms.

❁ *Chapter 13* ❁

Meanwhile, there was consternation in the main streets of the capital city. It was rumoured that the consignment of revenue on its way from the royal court to Kolkata had been looted by ascetics. On the orders of the king armed sepoys were speedily despatched to apprehend the *sannyasi*s. At the time there were not many genuine ascetics in that famine-stricken region, for such people live on alms, and when the populace cannot feed itself, who will give alms to ascetics? So, in order to survive, all the genuine ascetics had fled to such areas as Kashi and Prayag.[40] Only the Children assumed the guise of ascetics at will, which they abandoned when the need arose, as many did now when they saw the commotion. So it was that the eager retinue of the king, unable to find ascetics anywhere, smashed the pots and pitchers of the ordinary folk and went back only partially satisfied. It was only Satyananda who never put off his saffron robes.

So, when the *jamadar*[41] Nazir-uddin and his sepoys arrived at the bank of that little river with its dark, rippling waters and saw Kalyani lying there by the path under a tree, with Mahendra and Satyananda holding on to each other and calling tearfully to the Almighty, he instantly went up to Satyananda and seized him by the throat, saying, "This scoundrel's an ascetic!" Another grabbed hold of Mahendra in the same way, thinking that he too must be an ascetic—for was he not in the company of one?—while yet a third went to seize Kalyani's dead body where it lay on the soft grass! But seeing that it was the body of a woman, he realised that it might not be an ascetic after all and

[40]Modern Benares and Allahabad, respectively, sacred pilgrimage centres for Hindus.
[41]An Indian officer holding the lowest commissioned rank.

left her alone. And he came to the same conclusion with regard to the little girl. Then, without speaking to one another, they bound the two men and took them away. Kalyani's body and the baby girl remained there under the tree without anyone to guard them.

At first, overwhelmed by grief and crazed by his devotion to God, Mahendra was almost senseless. Unable to take in the situation, he made no objection to being tied up. But after a few steps he realised that they were being trussed and taken away! Kalyani's body was lying there bereft of the proper rites, and the little girl abandoned there too—at any moment some fierce beast might devour them! As soon as he realised this, Mahendra forced his hands apart and with a single wrench broke his bonds. He flattened the *jamadar* with a kick, and then attacked one of the sepoys. The other three closed in on him and once more overpowered and subdued him.

"With a little help from you I could have finished off these five ruffians", he said to Satyananda in distress.

Satyananda replied, "I have no strength in this old body of mine. My strength lies only in the One to whom I called out. Do not resist what must happen. We cannot get the better of these five. Come, let's see where they take us, and remember, God will take care of everything".

Then without any further attempt to escape, Mahendra and Satyananda followed behind the sepoys.

After some distance, Satyananda asked the sepoys, "Friends, it's my custom to recite Hari's name. Is there any objection to my doing so?"

Thinking that Satyananda was no troublemaker, the *jamadar* said, "You can recite Hari's name, we won't stop you. Since you're an old monk, there'll probably be an order for your release. But this rascal will be hanged".

Then, in a soft voice, the monk began to sing:

On a wooded river-bank amid soft breezes lives a woman fair,*
Do not tarry, archer, for the young maid is so fearful there . . .

When they reached the city they were taken before the *kotwal*.[42] The *kotwal* sent news of the monk and Mahendra to the royal court and then confined them in a prison that was truly dreadful, for those who went in rarely came out, as there was no one to judge their case. It wasn't an English jail; English law didn't exist at the time. Today we live in a time of order; at that time there was no order. Compare the times of order and disorder.

[42]A chief of police.

❁ *Chapter 14* ❁

Night had fallen. Confined in the prison, Satyananda said to Mahendra, "Today is a day of great joy for we have been put in jail. Say, *Hare murare!*"[43] Mahendra said sadly, "*Hare murare!*"

Satyananda said, "My son, why are you sad? If you had taken this great vow you would certainly have had to renounce your wife and daughter. You'd have no contact with them".

"Giving them up is one thing", said Mahendra. "Death's decree is another. The strength with which I would have embraced the vow has gone with my wife and daughter".

Satyananda said, "You will get strength. I will give it to you. Let me initiate you into the *Maha Mantra*. Take the great vow".

Mahendra said angrily, "Dogs and jackals are feeding on my wife and daughter at this very moment. Don't speak to me of vows!"

Saytananda replied, "There's no need to worry about that. The *santans* have seen to the rites for your wife, and they've taken the child to a safe place".

Mahendra was surprised to hear this. "How do you know?" he asked doubtfully. "You were with me all the time?"

Satyananda said, "We've taken the great vow and God* is merciful to us. This very night you will hear that what I say is true and you will be freed from prison".

Mahendra made no reply, and Satyananda realised that Mahendra didn't believe him. He said, "You don't believe me. Well, see for yourself". Satyananda went up to the door of the jail. It was dark and Mahendra couldn't see what he did, but he knew that he had spoken to someone. When he returned Mahendra asked him, "What do you mean, 'See for yourself'?"

Satyananda said, "You will be freed this very minute".

No sooner had he said this than the door of the prison was unlocked. Someone came in and said, "Who is Mahendra Simha?"

"I am", said Mahendra.

The stranger said, "An order has come for your release. You can go".

Mahendra was dazed at first, then he thought that it couldn't be true. So, to test it, he stepped out. No one stood in his way, and he walked out as far as the main road.

Meanwhile, the stranger said to Satyananda, "Maharaj,[44] Why don't you go out too? It was for you that I came!"

Satyananda said, "Who are you? Dhirananda Gosai?"

"Yes," said the other respectfully.

[43]The first part of the invocation repeated at the end of chapter 12: "O Hari, enemy of Mura!"

[44]Maharaj: lit. "Great King/Ruler"; also, a form of address to monks, especially to those in authority.

"How did you become a guard?"

"Bhabananda sent me. When I arrived in the city and discovered that you were in this prison, I came here with some bhang mixed with datura. The Khan who was guarding the jail made the most of it and now lies sleeping on the ground! This outfit with the turban and lance belongs to him".

Satyananda said, "Well then, go out of the city dressed like that, but I shan't leave this way".

"But why not?"

"The *santans* must face a test today."

Mahendra returned. Satyananda asked him, "Why have you returned?"

Mahendra replied, "Truly you're a holy man with special powers. Still, I think I'll stay with you".

"Then stay. Tonight both of us will be set free in another way".

Dhirananda left the place, and Satyananda and Mahendra remained in jail.

❁ *Chapter 15* ❁

Many had heard the monk's song in the forest, and Jibananda was one of them. The reader may recall that he had been instructed to follow Mahendra. On the way he came upon a woman who hadn't eaten for seven days lying by the roadside, so he stopped a while in an effort to save her life. He saved the wretch and continued on his way, abusing her vilely all the while for the crime of delaying him!

He saw that his leader had been seized by Muslims and was being taken away, singing as he went along. Jibananda had a way of knowing what his Master, Satyananda, had in mind:* "On a wooded riverbank amid soft breezes lives a woman fair . . .".* Probably some other starving wretch lying* on the riverbank. He walked thoughtfully along the bank. Jibananda had seen that the monk was following the Muslims of his own accord. Normally his first task would be to rescue the monk. But he realised that this was not what Satyananda had in mind. The first thing he had learnt from him was to follow instructions; this was even more important than saving his life. Therefore I'll follow instructions, he thought.

So Jibananda walked along the riverbank. After a while he saw at the foot of the tree the dead body of a woman and an infant girl who was alive. The reader may remember that Jibananda had never seen Mahendra's wife and daughter. But it occurred to him that these might be they, for had he not spotted Mahendra with his leader? In any case, the mother was dead, but her daughter was alive. It was his task to protect the child lest some wild beast devour her. Bhabananda Thakur was nearby; he would see to the woman's last rites. With this in mind, Jibananda took the girl in his arms and went off.

Jibananda Gosai went deep into the dense jungle, passed through it and

entered a small village. The name of the village was Bhairabipur, but people called it Bharuipur. Bharuipur had the dwellings of a few ordinary folk, with no large village nearby. Once you passed through Bharuipur you entered the jungle again. In fact, the whole area was jungle, with a little village in its midst, but it was a very beautiful village. It had grazing ground for cows covered with tender grass, with soft, dark leafy groves in which mango, jackfruit, rose-apple and palmyra trees grew. In the middle was a lake filled with clear dark water with herons, wild geese and moorhen. On the banks of the lake the *koel* and the curlew could be heard, while a little distance away the peacock gave its loud call.

The houses had cattle in the courtyards and bins for storing unthreshed rice inside. But in today's scarce times the bins were empty. Some folk had a cage for mynah birds hanging from the thatched ceiling of their huts, others had patterns of rice-paint on the walls, while yet others had vegetable plots in their courtyards. Everyone was ravaged by the lack of food—enfeebled, lean, worn down. Still, the people of this village had some respite: the jungle produces many kinds of food for humans, so that by collecting these the villagers were able to safeguard their lives and health.

In the midst of a large mango grove was a small house. It was divided into four rooms and was surrounded by a mud wall. Its owner had a cow, a goat, a peacock, a mynah bird and a parrot. There used to be a monkey too, but because they could no longer feed it they let it go. There was also a device for husking rice, a threshing floor outside, and a lime tree in the courtyard as well as two kinds of jasmine tree (though there were no flowers at present). Each room had a verandah with a spinning wheel, though not many people lived in the house.

Jibananda entered this house with the child in his arms. He stepped up onto the verandah of one of the rooms and started the rumble of the spinning wheel. The little girl had never heard the sound of a spinning wheel before. In fact, she had been crying from the time she had left her mother. When she heard the wheel she screamed even more shrilly with fear. A girl of seventeen or eighteen came out of the room, clapped her right hand to her right cheek and hunching her shoulders, cried out:

"What's this? Dada,[45] why are you spinning that wheel? And where did you get the child? Is she your daughter? Did you marry again?"

Jibananda put the child in the girl's arms, and made as if to smack his sister. "Monkey!" he said, "So I have a daughter now? I haven't been up to much—is that it? Is there any milk in the house?"

"Of course", said the girl. "Do you want some?"

"Yes", said Jibananda.

While the girl busied herself boiling some milk, Jibananda kept turning

[45]Dādā: the respectful but familiar way in which an elder brother is addressed.

the spinning wheel. Now that she was in the lap of the girl, the child didn't cry any more. I have no idea what the child was thinking; perhaps when she saw the full-bloomed beauty of the girl she thought she was her mother. A spark from the oven may have struck the child. Anyway, she gave a wail. As soon as he heard it, Jibananda said, "Nimi, you wretch! Monkey-face![46] Haven't you heated the milk yet?"

"Finished", called out Nimi.[47] She poured some milk into a stone bowl and brought it to Jibananda.

Jibananda pretended to be angry and said, "I feel like pouring this hot bowl of milk over you! Did you think it was for me?"

"For whom, then?" asked Nimi.

"Can't you see it's for the child? Feed it to her".

Nimi sat down cross-legged, laid the child in her lap and taking a deep, beaked spoon began to feed her the milk. Suddenly, she shed a few tears, for the spoon belonged to an infant son who had died. Nimi immediately wiped the tears with her hand and then asked Jibananda smiling, "Dada, whose child is this?"

"What's it to you, horror-face!"

"Will you give her to me?"

"What do you want her for?"

"I'll feed her, look after her and bring her up". Again tears welled up in those afflicted eyes,[48] and again she wiped them with her hand and laughed.

Jibananda said, "What'll you do with her? You'll have plenty of children of your own".

"Perhaps", said Nimi, "but give her to me now. Afterwards, if you want you can take her away".

"Take her then and go to hell", said Jibananda. "I'll come back now and then to see how you're getting on. The child's Kayastha.[49] Right, I'm off".

"But aren't you going to eat something before you go?" exclaimed Nimi. "It's quite late. Have something and go, or eat my head!"[50]

"What! Eat your head and something else besides?" said Jibananda. "I wouldn't be able to get up, I'd have eaten so much! Go on then, save your head and give me some rice instead!"

[46]The relationship displays the affectionate banter of an older brother towards his sister in a rural context.

[47]Nimi is Jibananda's sister Nimai's nickname.

[48]Nimi has been cursed with the misfortune of having lost her (male) firstborn. A son was especially valued in traditional Hindu society.

[49]The "caste" or birth-group of the child. Together with Brahmins and Vaidyas, the Kayasthas belonged to the upper classes in Bengal. For rites of passage and so on, it was important to know the child's birth-group.

[50]"Or eat my head!": a mild imprecation meaning "You'll eat my head if you do/don't follow a certain course of action".

Nimi took the child in her arms and hurried about getting the rice ready to serve. She put out the seat for Jibananda to sit cross-legged on, sprinkled some water and cleaned the eating place, and served out some clean rice as white and fragrant as the *mallika* flower,[51] a dish made from green pulses, another made from wild figs, and a third prepared from *rui* fish from the lake, and some milk. When he sat down to eat Jibananda said solemnly, "Nimai my girl, who'd say there was a big famine on? Hasn't it affected your village?"

"Of course it has", said Nimi, "and a big famine too! But there's only the two of us. We give what we can to others and eat the rest. But the village has had rain too. Remember how you said it rains in the forest? So we were able to grow some rice in the village. Everybody else went off and sold theirs in the city. We didn't".

Jibananda said, "Where's your husband?"

Nimi bent down and whispered, "He's taken two or three *seers*[52] of rice and gone off somewhere. Someone wanted some rice".

Jibananda hadn't been lucky enough to have such fare for a long while. So without wasting more words, he gulped and slurped his way through the food in no time. Now the young lady had cooked only for her husband and herself, and she had given her share of the food to her brother. Taken aback when she saw his empty plate, she brought her husband's share and ladled it out. Without raising an eyebrow, Jibananda despatched the lot to that cavern he called a stomach.

Nimai said, "Dada, do you want some more?"

"What do you have?" asked Jibananda.

"There's a ripe jackfruit."

Nimai brought the jackfruit, and without much ado Jibananda Goswami despatched that too to the same all-consuming destination.

Nimai laughed and said, "There's nothing left".

"All right then", said Jibananda. "We'll leave it at that. I'll come back and do it again some day".

All that remained was for Nimai to pour out some water for Jibananda to rinse his mouth. As she did so she said, "Dada, will you do something for me?"

"What?"

"You'll eat my head if you don't!"

"What is it, horror-face?"

"Will you do it?"

"Tell me first".

"I beg you—otherwise you'll eat my head!"

[51]A species of jasmine.

[52]A *seer* is a weight of about two pounds.

"All right, so you beg me, and I may have to eat your head. Now what is it?"

Nimai wrung her hands, bent her head, inspected her fingers, kept glancing at Jibananda and then at the ground, and finally blurted out, "Shall I call your wife?"

Jibananda took the water jug and made as if to hit Nimi on the head with it. "Give the girl back to me", he said. "And one day I'll give you back your food. Monkey-face! Wretch! You're not supposed to say such things!"

"Maybe", said Nimai. "And I'm a monkey-face and a wretch. Now shall I call your wife?"

"I'm off", said Jibananda, and he walked quickly towards the door. But Nimai got there first, slammed the door shut, and standing with her back to it said, "Kill me first, and then go. Unless you see your wife, you can't leave".

Jibananda said, "Do you know how many people I've killed?"

Nimi was angry now. "You're a real hero", she said. "I'm supposed to be afraid of you because you've left your wife and kill people! Don't forget, we come from the same stock. If killing people is something to brag about, then kill me and brag about it!"

Jibananda laughed. "All right", he said. "Call her then. Go and call that sinner if you want. And listen, speak like that again and without more ado I'll shave your scoundrel of a husband's head, douse it with whey and run him off the land facing the wrong way round on a donkey!"

"I'd be let off then", said Nimi to herself, and laughing she went out of the house and entered a thatched hut nearby. A woman sat inside working a spinning wheel; her clothes were patched in a hundred places and her hair was unkempt. "Bou,[53] come quickly", said Nimai.

"What's the hurry?" said the woman. "Been thrashed by your husband and want me to rub oil in the wounds?"

"Something like that", said Nimi. "Do you have any oil?"

The woman brought out a pot of oil. Nimai quickly smeared some oil on her palms and rubbed the woman's head with it,[54] and then tied a quick knot at the back. Then she thumped her affectionately and said, "Where's that Dhaka sari of yours?"[55]

"Why, have you gone mad?" asked the other wonderingly.*

Nimai thumped her on the back and said, "Where's that sari?"*

The woman played along and took out the sari, for in spite of her sad circumstances she still had the heart to have some fun. She had a fresh youthfulness, and the beauty of her youth was like a lotus in bloom. Oil, food and clothing may have been in short supply, but her glowing, incomparable beauty

[53]Literally, "(Brother's) Wife".

[54]To smooth the hair and make it look glossy and presentable.

[55]A specially beautiful kind of sari, for which Dhaka (now in Bangladesh) was famous.

shone even through those patched-up clothes. She had a shimmering quality to her skin, darting glances in her eyes, laughter on her lips, but a steadiness of purpose in her heart. Food may have been scarce, yet her body had an exquisite charm, and though she lacked for clothes and ornaments, nothing could stand in the way of her loveliness. Like lightning among the clouds, like the spark of intelligence within the senses, like music behind the world's sounds, and like joy in the midst of mortality, something ineffable hovered in her beauty—an ineffable sweetness and nobility, warmth of heart and devotion.

Laughing within herself—no one saw her mirth—she took out the Dhaka sari.

"Well, Nimi, now what?" she asked.

"You're going to wear it".

"Whatever for?"

Then putting her own graceful arm round the other's lovely neck, Nimai said, "Dada's here. He wants to see you".

"He wants to see me!" the woman replied. "Then why the Dhaka sari? Come along, I'll go as I am".

Nimai smacked her affectionately on the cheek again. The other put her arm on Nimai's shoulder and led her out of the hut. She said, "Come on, I'll see him with these rags on". Since she refused to change her clothes, Nimai had no option but to agree. Nimai walked with her to the door of the house, pushed her in, and then shutting the door remained standing there on her own.

❁ *Chapter 16* ❁

Though the woman was about twenty-five years old, she didn't look older than Nimai. The house seemed to brighten up when she entered in her shabby, patched clothes. It was as if the flower buds hidden behind the leaves of some tree had suddenly burst into bloom, as if someone had broken a sealed phial of rose water and released its scent, or as if someone had thrown some fragrant incense onto a smouldering fire.*

This lovely woman entered the house and looked about hesitantly for her husband, unable to find him at first. Then she saw him—he was standing with his head against the trunk of a small mango tree in the courtyard, weeping. She went up to him and gently took his hand. I do not say that tears did not come to her eyes. God knows that if she had allowed the tears to fall the stream would have borne Jibananda away! Yet checking her tears and taking Jibananda's hand in hers, she said, "Shame on you, don't cry. I know you're crying because of me, but you musn't. I'm quite happy with the arrangements you've made".

Raising his head and wiping away the tears, Jibananda said to his wife,

"Shanti, why are you wearing such shoddy, torn clothes! You've enough for food and clothing".*

Shanti said, "I've no idea what to do with the money you left—your wealth's for you to use. When you come back for me again . . .".

"When I come back for you!" cried Jibananda. "Shanti, do you think I've abandoned you?"

"Not abandoned", said Shanti, "But when you've fulfilled your vow and start loving me again . . .".

Before she had finished speaking, Jibananda held her tightly in his arms, and burying his face in her shoulder remained silent for a long while. Finally he heaved a deep sigh and said, "Why did I agree to see you again?"

Shanti said, "Why did you? Haven't you broken your vow?"

"That may be", said Jibananda, "but there's a penance for that. I'm not worried about it. But now that I've seen you, I can't tear myself away. That's why I told Nimai it would do no good to see you again. Now that I've seen you, I just can't go back. On the one side there's duty, wealth, pleasure, salvation, the concerns of this world, my vow and its religious rites. All this on one side—and on the other, there's you—you alone! And I can never work out which is the weightier! Shanti, you are my country. What use is it to me without you? Give me a small piece of this land, and with you I could turn it into heaven. What would I do with it otherwise? The sorrows of our people? Is there anyone sorrier in the land than he who's had you for a wife and then left you? And who's more needy in the land than he who's seen you in these tattered clothes? You're the prop of everything that I can call duty. Of what use is the Eternal Code to him who's abandoned that prop?[56] What kind of duty is it that takes me, musket on my shoulder, from place to place, from forest to forest, destroying life and gathering this burden of sin? I do not know if the *santans* will ever possess the earth. But I possess you, Shanti. You mean more than the earth to me—you are my heaven. Come, let's go home. I'll not go back".

For some time Shanti was unable to speak. Then she said, "Shame! You are a hero! The great joy of my world is that I'm a hero's wife! How can you abandon a hero's duty for the sake of a lowly woman? Do not love me. I don't want that happiness. But never abandon your duty as a hero. Tell me something before you leave. What is the penance for breaking this vow?"

Jibananda said, "The penance? Oh, giving alms, fasting, paying some trifling sum of money . . .".

Shanti gave a little laugh. "I know what the penance is", she said.[57] "Is

[56]"The Eternal Code"; the eternal code of right and wrong, the foundation of right living as affirmed by Brahminic Hinduism.

[57]Shanti knew that the penance was forfeiting one's life. See Part II.

the penance for one transgression the same as that for transgressing a hundred times?"

"Why are you asking these things?" said Jibananda, surprised and upset.

"I have a request", replied Shanti. "Don't do your penance till we meet again."

Jibananda laughed and said, "Don't worry about that. I shan't die before I see you again. I'm in no hurry to die. I must leave now, but I've not had my fill of you. One day I promise I shall. Our heart's desire will come true one day for sure. I'm going, but promise me you'll get rid of these clothes. Also, go and live in my ancestral home".

"Where are you going now?" asked Shanti.

"I'm going to the monastery in search of Satyananda", said Jibananda. "I was a little worried at the way he went to the city. If there's no trace of him at the temple, I'll head for the city".

❁ *Chapter 17* ❁

Bhabananda was sitting in the monastery singing Hari's praises when an extremely spirited *santan* called Jnanananda* came up to him, looking crestfallen.

"Why so serious, Gosai?" asked Bhabananda.

"There seems to be a problem", said Jnanananda. "Because of yesterday's fuss, the baldies only have to see someone in saffron to seize him![58] All the *santans* have stopped wearing saffron robes, with the exception of our leader Satyananda, who set off alone towards the city. What will happen if he's captured by the Muslims?"

"There isn't a Muslim in Bengal* who can hold him against his will", replied Bhabananda. "I know Dhirananda's gone after him.* Still, I'll go to the city myself and see what's happening. You guard the monastery".

Bhabananda then went into a private room and removed some clothes from a large chest. Suddenly his appearance changed: instead of the saffron robes he was now decked out in pleated trousers and a long, loose shirt, with a waistcoat and turbanlike headdress, and pointed shoes. The trident shape and other marks of sandalpaste from his face had gone, and his handsome features with their jet-black beard and moustache assumed a wonderful glow. Anyone seeing him now would take him for a young man of Moghul descent. Thus attired but armed, Bhabananda left the monastery.

About two miles away stood a couple of small hillocks covered in jungle.

[58]"Baldies": an uncomplimentary reference to Muslim men as "shaven" or "lopped". See under Variants for chapter 10 in the critical apparatus.

Between the hillocks lay a secret place in which a large number of horses were kept. This was the stable of the monastery's inhabitants. Bhabananda untethered one of the horses, mounted it and galloped towards the city.

As he sped on he was suddenly brought to a halt, for there on the side of the road by the gurgling stream's bank—like a star fallen from heaven or a dart of lightning that had dropped from the clouds—lay the radiant form of a woman. Bhabananda saw no signs of life; an empty poison box lay by her side. Bhabananda was shocked, upset, afraid. Like Jibananda, he had never seen Mahendra's wife and child before, but whereas Jibananda had had the means to guess at their identity, Bhabananda had none. He had not seen the monk and Mahendra being led away as captives—nor was the child still there. From the empty box he could see that some woman had taken poison and died.

Bhabananda sat by the body and spent a long time in thought with his cheek resting in his hand. He touched the woman's head, armpits, hands and feet, and examined her in a number of mysterious ways. At last he concluded that there was still time, but even if he saved her, what then? This thought preoccupied him for a long while. Finally, he went into the forest and returned with the leaves of a certain tree. Crushing the leaves in his hands, he squeezed out some juice, and parting the woman's lips and teeth allowed the juice to trickle down his fingers into her mouth. Then he put a few drops in her nostrils* and began to rub her body with the liquid. He repeated the process a number of times, now and then placing his hand near her nose to see if she breathed.

At first it seemed as if his efforts were in vain. But after persevering thus for a long time, Bhabananda's face brightened—he felt a faint breath of air on his fingers! He squeezed out some more of the juice, and gradually the woman's breath grew stronger. Feeling an artery, he saw that her pulse was beating. Finally, little by little, like the first flush of dawn from the east, like the first opening of the morning lotus, or like love's first awakening, Kalyani began to open her eyes. When he saw this, Bhabananda lifted her still half-recovered body onto his horse, and galloped into the city.

❁ *Chapter 18* ❁

Before evening had fallen, the whole Order of Children had been informed that the monk Satyananda and Mahendra had been confined as prisoners in the city jail. Then, arriving in ones and twos, and in their tens and hundreds, the Order of *santans* began to surge into the forest that surrounded the temple. Everyone was armed, with the fire of anger in their eyes, pride in their faces, and a pledge on their lips. First a hundred came, then a thousand, then two thousand—thus did the number of men begin to grow.

Then, standing at the entrance of the monastery with sword in hand,

Jnanananda* cried out in a loud voice, "For a long time we've been wanting to smash the nest of these weaver-birds, to raze the city of these Muslim foreigners,[59] and throw it into the river*—to burn the enclosure of these swine and purify Mother Earth again! Brothers, that day has come! The teacher of our teachers, our supreme preceptor—who's full of boundless wisdom, whose ways are always pure, the well-wisher of all, the benefactor of our land, who has pledged to give his life to proclaim the Eternal Code anew, whom we regard as the very essence of Vishnu's earthly form, who is our way to salvation—today lies captive in a Muslim jail! Is there no edge to our swords?" He thrust out his hand and cried, "Is there no strength in this arm?" Striking his chest he roared, "Is there no courage in this heart? Brothers, cry out 'O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!' We worship Vishnu—who destroyed Madhu and Kaitabha, who wreaked the downfall of such powerful demons as Hiranyakashipu, Kamsa, Dantavakra, and Shishupala, by the loud whirling of whose discus even the immortal Shambhu became afraid, who's invincible, the giver of victory in battle. It is by his power that we have infinite might of arm! He is all-powerful. Let him but wish it and we will conquer in battle. Come, let's raze that city of the foreigners to the dust! Let's purify that pigsty by fire and throw it into the river! Let's smash that nest of tailor-birds to bits and fling it to the winds! Cry 'O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!' "

Then from thousands of throats in that forest all at once rose a most fearful cry, "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!" Thousands of swords clashed as one, thousands of spears and shields were raised aloft, the slapping of thousands of arms began to sound like thunder, and thousands of bucklers began to grate on the rough backs of the massed warriors! Terrified by that great din the animals fled from the forest. Screeching with fear, the birds rose into the sky and covered it. Just then hundreds of wardrums resounded all at once!

Crying "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!" the massed ranks of *santans* began to emerge from the forest. In the dark of the night, with firm and steady tread and calling loudly on Hari, they headed in the direction of the city, their armour rustling, their weapons clattering, with a clamour from their voices, and occasional shouts to Hari in the din! Steadily, solemnly, wrathfully, mightily, that *santan* army reached the city and threw it into terror. Suddenly seeing this thunderbolt, the inhabitants fled in all directions, and the sentinels of the city became confused and unable to act.

The Children went straight to the royal jail, smashed it open and slew all the guards. Then they freed Satyananda and Mahendra, and lifting them above

[59] "Weaver-birds": the *babui* (for an explanation of this metaphor, see notes in critical apparatus); "foreigners": *jaban,* an uncompromising way of referring to the Muslim as an outsider. See the introduction, section on "The Future in the Past".

their heads, began to dance in triumph. There was a great hubbub of chanting to Hari, and once Satyananda and Mahendra had been freed, the *santans* set fire to as many Muslim homes as they could find.

"Go back!" cried Satyananda,* when he saw this. "There's no need for such a pointless and evil course of action!"

When they heard about these depredations of the Children, the region's authorities despatched a group of the district's sepoys to quell them. Not only were these armed with guns, but they also brought a cannon with them. When the Children heard that they had arrived, they came out of the Forest of the Monks to join battle. But what chance do staves and spears and a few guns have against a cannon? The Children were defeated, and they began to run away.

❁ END OF PART I ❁

PART II

❁ *Chapter 1* ❁

Shanti was very little, still a baby, when she lost her mother, and this played a major part among the forces that shaped her character.* Her father was a Brahmin who ran a traditional school or *tol*.[1] Since there were no other womenfolk in the house, Shanti would accompany him to the *tol* and sit there as he taught the boys. Some of the students lived in the *tol*. At times Shanti would play with them; she would climb onto their laps and backs, and they in turn enjoyed her company.

The first fruit of thus being continually in male company during her childhood was that Shanti didn't learn to dress like a girl, or rather, though she may have learned how to do so, it was something she soon rejected. She began to dress like a boy, by tucking in her lower garment. If anyone dressed her like a girl, she would undo the garment and tuck it in like a boy's. The boys in a *tol* do not wear a bun, so Shanti never wore one. (In any case, who was there to tie it for her?) Instead, the boys would comb her hair with a wooden comb, turning it into ringlets which would swing about her back, shoulders, arms and cheeks.

The boys would put a small sectarian mark on their forehead and smear themselves with sandalpaste, so Shanti also put a similar mark on her forehead and smeared herself with sandalpaste. She cried bitterly when she wasn't allowed to wear the sacred thread across her neck,[2] though she insisted on sitting down with the other pupils during the rituals at the junctures of the day and copying what they did. When the teacher was not around and the boys would talk about sex with the aid of a few risqué Sanskrit expressions, Shanti, parrot-like, learnt what they said, but just like a parrot she hadn't the least idea what they meant.

The second fruit of associating with the boys was that as she grew older Shanti kept pace with their studies. Of grammar she knew not a syllable, but like the other pupils she began to learn by heart the great Sanskrit poetical works and their glosses. When he saw this, Shanti's father said, "What will be, will be", and began to teach her the *Mugdhabodha*.[3] Shanti learned quickly to the astonishment of her teacher. So, together with grammar, he taught her some literary works as well.

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[1] *Tols* had only male pupils (starting from early boyhood), observed caste ritual in a more or less relaxed way, and stressed Sanskritic learning.

[2] A practice reserved for upper-caste males.

[3] A work on grammar attributed to the thirteenth-century savant Vopadeva.

Then everything went awry, for Shanti's father died, and she became homeless. The *tol* was discontinued and the students went away. But they were very fond of Shanti and couldn't just abandon her. Out of pity, one of them took Shanti into his own home. Later, he entered the *santan* Order and took the name Jibananda, so we shall call him by that name.

At the time, Jibananda's parents were still alive. When he informed them about Shanti, they asked, "But who will take the responsibility for someone else's daughter?"[4] "I will", replied Jibananda. "Since I'm the one who's brought her here". "Very well", said the parents. So, since Jibananda was unmarried and Shanti had reached marriageable age, he married her.

But after the marriage, everyone began to regret what had happened. They all thought that a mistake had been made, for Shanti would never dress like a girl, or tie up her hair. She wouldn't stay indoors; instead she'd join the local boys at play. There was a jungle near Jibananda's house. Shanti would go into it alone and explore where the deer and the peacock lived, and where rare fruits and flowers could be found.

Her father-in-law and mother-in-law forbade her at first to behave in this way, then they rebuked her, then they beat her, and finally they kept her a prisoner in the house by chaining the door. Shanti felt greatly tormented by such cruel treatment. One day, finding the door open, she ran away from home without telling anyone.

She dyed her clothes by selecting certain flowers from the jungle and took on the guise of a child-ascetic. At the time ascetics roamed about in bands throughout Bengal. Shanti begged her way to the road leading to the holy site of Jagannath,[5] and before long met a group of ascetics which she joined.

The ascetics of those days were not like the ascetics of today. They stayed in groups, and were well educated, powerful, skilled in combat, and proficient in various other qualities. They were generally hostile to the king in one respect—they lived by looting his revenues. Any sturdy lad that fell into their hands they would abduct, educate, and initiate as a member of their own order. This is why they were known as kidnappers of boys.

Shanti joined one of these orders in the guise of a boy-ascetic. At first, when they saw how soft her body was, they were reluctant to accept her, but when they noticed her keenness of mind, her cleverness and general adroitness, they welcomed her amongst them. In their company, Shanti learned various forms of physical exercise, the use of different kinds of weapons, and how to bear up under strain. She travelled to many parts of the country with them, witnessed many battles, and learned to do many things.

Gradually the signs of her budding youth began to appear. Many of the

[4]That is, not only to care for, but also to marry off appropriately.

[5]A famous Vaishnava temple in Puri, on the coast of the modern state of Orissa, south of Bengal.

ascetics realised that she was a woman in disguise, but as ascetics are generally in control of their senses, no one said anything.

There were many learned men among the ascetics. When one of them noticed that Shanti had acquired some proficiency in Sanskrit, he began to give her lessons. I've said that ascetics are generally in control of their senses, but not all of them. This scholar was one of the latter; or rather, enthralled by the fresh beauty of Shanti's burgeoning youth, his senses began to assail him once more. He began to teach his pupil various erotic poems, and to make her listen to salacious glosses of them. But rather than being harmed by this, Shanti in fact derived benefit from it. Shanti had not had the chance to learn the meaning of modesty, yet now the modesty that comes naturally to a woman appeared of its own accord. The wonderful radiance of chaste womanly conduct superimposed itself on her masculine ways and enhanced her other qualities. Shanti gave up her studies.

As the hunter pursues the doe, so Shanti's teacher began to pursue her every time he set eyes on her. But by her physical exercises and other activities Shanti had acquired strength difficult even for a man to attain, so that as soon as her teacher came close Shanti would greet him with buffets and blows—and fairly hearty ones at that! One day when our esteemed ascetic found Shanti alone and grabbed her tightly by the hand, Shanti was unable to get away. Unfortunately for the ascetic, he had seized Shanti's left hand; she dealt him such a forceful blow on the forehead with the right that he fell unconscious to the ground. Shanti left the order of ascetics and ran away.

Shanti was quite fearless. She set off alone in search of her own land, and by means of her courage and prowess made unimpeded progress. Assuaging her hunger by begging or with wild fruits, and victorious in many scrapes, she finally reached her matrimonial home. She discovered that her father-in-law had passed away; her mother-in-law, however, refused to allow her to stay, for if she did so, the family would lose caste. So Shanti went away.

But Jibananda was at home. He went after Shanti, and catching up with her asked why she had left home, and where she had been all this time. Shanti told him the whole truth, and Jibananda, who could tell the difference between truth and falsehood, believed her.

Now Eros doesn't waste the passionate shafts he has so carefully fashioned from the sparkle of nymphs' coquettish glances on a couple who are already married. The English will light their gas lamps on the high street even on the night of the full moon, while the Bengali will pour oil on an already sleek head. Human behaviour apart, sometimes the moon god remains on high even after the sun-lord has risen, while Indra, god of storms, pours forth his rain even upon the ocean! Kubera, the god of wealth, will bring riches to a chest already overflowing with money, while Yama, death's lord, will snatch away the remainder from among those he has nearly killed off already. Only the lord of love does not indulge in such pointless behaviour! Once the marriage-knot's been tied, he ceases to exert himself. Leaving the Creator wholly in

charge of the situation, he goes off in search of someone whose heart's blood he can still quaff.

But perhaps today love's archer had nothing else to do. He suddenly let fly two flowery shafts. One struck Jibananda's heart and cleft it in two. The other lodged in Shanti's breast, revealing to her for the first time that it was the breast of a woman—and a very tender thing indeed! Like a flower bud drenched with the first drops from a new rain cloud, Shanti blossomed without more ado, and gazed with radiant eyes upon Jibananda's face.

Jibananda said, "I shan't desert you. Wait here till I return".

"You will return, won't you?" asked Shanti.

Jibananda made no reply. Without so much as looking about him, he kissed Shanti on the lips right there in the shade of the coconut grove by the road, and thinking that he'd drunk nectar, left the place.

He went home and explained the situation to his mother, and then taking her leave, returned to Shanti. His sister Nimai had just married in Bhairabipur. Since he was on good terms with his brother-in-law, he took Shanti there. His brother-in-law gave them a little land on which Jibananda built a hut, and he and Shanti began to live there happily. Living with her husband, Shanti's masculine ways gradually disappeared or were suppressed, and the delightful characteristics of a woman began daily to appear. Their days would have passed like a happy dream, but suddenly that dream was broken. Jibananda fell under the influence of the monk Satyananda, and on embracing the code of the *santans*, he left Shanti. Their first meeting after he left her took place through Nimai's artifices, as I have described in a previous chapter.

❁ *Chapter 2* ❁

After Jibananda had gone, Shanti sat down on Nimai's verandah. Nimai took the child in her lap and sat down beside her. There were no longer any tears in Shanti's eyes. She had dried her tears and brightened up her face, and was smiling slightly. Yet she looked a little solemn, thoughtful, preoccupied. Nimai understood and said, "So the two of you met".

Shanti made no reply; she sat there silently. Nimai realised that Shanti wouldn't confide in her. She knew this wasn't Shanti's way. So making an effort to start a new topic of conversation, Nimai showed her the child and said, "Look, Bou, isn't she lovely?"

"Where did you get her?" asked Shanti. "And since when have you had a baby!"

"Got it in for me?" said Nimai. "Go to hell! This is Dada's child".

Nimai was not trying to provoke Shanti. She simply meant that she had got the child from her brother. But Shanti didn't see it that way. She thought that Nimai was trying to annoy her, so she said, "I wasn't interested in the girl's father, I asked about her mother".

Suitably chastened, Nimai answered embarrassedly, "How would I know whose child she is! Dada got her from somewhere and brought her here, and I didn't get a chance to ask questions. There's a big famine on. So many people are abandoning their children by the wayside. We've had so many offers from people wanting to sell their children, but who'll take someone else's child?" (Again the tears welled up in her eyes. Nimi wiped them away and continued speaking.) "But this one's so beautiful. When I saw how lovely and plump she was I begged Dada for her, and he gave her to me".

They chatted for a long while after that, but when Shanti saw Nimai's husband returning home she went back to her own hut.

She shut the door, removed some ash from the oven and kept it aside. Then she threw away the rice that she had cooked for herself on the remaining embers. Standing motionless and thoughtful for a long time, she finally said to herself, "Today I'll do what I've been meaning to do for such a long time. The hope that held me back me for so long has now been fulfilled! Or has it been futile? Futile, I think! Life itself is futile! I'll do what I've planned to do. After all, the penance for one offence is the same as that for a hundred!"

It was with this in mind that Shanti threw the rice into the fire. She fetched some fruits from the forest, and ate these instead. Then she took out the Dhaka sari in which Nimai had shown such interest, ripped off its border, and thoroughly dyed what remained of the cloth in red ochre. It took her till evening to dye and dry it. And that evening, after shutting the door, Shanti was occupied in the most amazing task. First she cut off some of her unkempt ankle-length hair with scissors and put this aside. Then she braided what was left and piled it high on her head. Her unkempt tresses were now transformed into the amazing matted locks of an ascetic! Then tearing the dyed cloth in half, Shanti wrapped it round the lower part of her shapely body, and with the other half she covered her bosom.* There was a small mirror in the house which Shanti hadn't used for a long time. She took it out and inspected herself. "Oh dear", she said. "Now what should I do?"

Getting rid of the mirror, she fashioned a beard and moustache from the hair she had kept aside. But she just couldn't put them on! "For shame!" she said to herself, "This will never do! Those days are gone! Still, I'll hang on to these to teach the old fellow a lesson". Shanti tucked the strands of hair into her clothes.* Then she took out a large deerskin from the room, and tying it around her throat, covered her body from neck to knee.* Thus clad, our new-found ascetic looked carefully around the house.* Then late into the night, and still dressed as an ascetic, Shanti unlocked the door of the hut and in the darkness entered the dense forest alone.

And in the dark of the night, there in the forest, the goddesses of the wood* heard a most unusual song:

"Clip-clop on your horse—tell me where you're going, hey!"
"I'm off to battle, don't you see—don't try and hold me back, hey!

Hari, Hari, Hari, Hari—eager for the fight I say,
O my love, don't you see, I'll rush into the fray today,
Now apart we must be—stay away, O stay away!
I cannot yearn for you, fair one, sing victory in the battle, hey!"

"My beloved, I beg of you, do not leave and go away!"
"But can't you hear that victory calls—that it summons me today?
Can't you see my noble steed, prancing keenly to the fray?
Can't you see my heart's away—that I can no longer stay?
I cannot yearn for you, fair one, sing victory in the battle, hey!"

❁ *Chapter 3* ❁

Next day, three dejected leaders of the *santan*s sat talking in a secluded room in their monastery.

Jibananda asked Satyananda, "Maharaj, why has God been so unfavourable to us? For what fault were we defeated by the Muslims?"

"God is not unfavourable", replied Satyananda. "There's both victory and defeat in battle. Earlier we were victorious, this time we've been defeated. The final victory is what counts. I am certain that He who has shown mercy to us for so long, our Lord who bears the conch, the discus, the lotus and the mace, will again be merciful to us. But we must certainly perform the great vow to which we've been consecrated at His feet. If we turn away we shall go to hell forever. I have no doubt about our future success. But just as no task can be accomplished without divine grace, so too human effort is necessary. We were defeated because we lacked proper weapons. What can staves, cudgels and spears do against guns, shot and cannon? Because our efforts were inadequate, we were overcome. Our next task is to ensure that we are not short of such weapons in the future".

Jibananda said, "But that's a very difficult task".

"Difficult task, Jibananda!" exclaimed Satyananda. "How can a *santan* say such things! Is there anything difficult for a *santan*?"

"Then command how we're to collect such weapons!"

"Tonight I am going on a pilgrimage for that very reason. None of you should undertake any major task till I return. But keep the Children united. See that they have sufficient provisions and that the treasury is full in preparation for Mother's victory in battle. I leave this task to the two of you".

Bhabananda said, "But how will you collect what we need by going on a pilgrimage? It won't be at all easy to buy guns, ammunition and cannons and then send them on to us. And where will you get all this? Who will sell it to you, or bring it here?"

"Even if we collect the weapons, we won't be able to finish the job",

replied Satyananda. "I'll send the craftsmen, and the weapons will have to be made here".

"What!" said Jibananda. "In our monastery?"

"No, of course not", replied Satyananda. "I've been wondering how to solve this for a long time. And God has now given us the chance. You said that the Lord is against us, but I see that he's on our side".

Bhabananda said, "So where will this factory be?"

"In Padacinha", said Satyananda.

"In Padacinha!" cried Jibananda. "How can that be?"

Satyananda replied, "Why else have I taken so much trouble to initiate Mahendra Simha into our great vow?"

"Has Mahendra taken the vow?" asked Bhabananda.

"Not yet, but he will", said Satyananda. "I shall initiate him tonight".

Jibananda said, "But we know nothing of the efforts made to induce Mahendra Simha to take the vow! We don't know what's happened to his wife and daughter, or where he's left them. I found a little girl today at the riverbank and left her with my sister. A beautiful woman lay dead near the child. Weren't they Mahendra's wife and daughter? I thought that they were".

"Yes, they were Mahendra's wife and daughter", answered Satyananda.

Bhabananda realised with a start that the woman he had revived with the medicine was Mahendra's wife, Kalyani. But he didn't think it necessary to say anything at the time.

"How did Mahendra's wife die?" asked Jibananda.

"She took poison", replied Satyananda.

"Why?"

"The Lord commanded her in a dream to give up her life".

"Was that to accomplish the work of the Children?" asked Bhabananda.

"That's what Mahendra told me", replied Satyananda. "It is now evening and I must attend to my evening prayer. When that's over, I'll initiate the new Children".

"Children?" said Bhabananda. "Is there someone other than Mahendra bold enough to want to be your disciple?"

"Yes, there is another person", said Satyananda. "I've never seen him before. He approached me for the first time today—a very young man, but I was very pleased with the way he spoke and behaved. He seemed the genuine article to me. Jibananda has the job of teaching him what the Children must do, since Jibananda's so good at winning people over! Before I go, I have one last piece of advice. Listen to it very carefully".

Both pressed the palms of their hands together and said respectfully, "Command us what to do".

Satyananda said, "If either of you has committed an offence, or does so before I return, make no penance till I get back. When I return I'll make sure you do your penance". Satyananda left for his own place, leaving Bhabananda and Jibananda looking curiously at each other.

"Was that meant for you?" asked Bhabananda.

"Perhaps", said Jibananda. "After all, I went and left the child at my sister's house".

"There's nothing wrong with that", said Bhabananda. "That's not forbidden. Did you meet your wife?"

"Perhaps that's what our Teacher thinks", answered Jibananda.

❁ *Chapter 4* ❁

When he had finished his evening prayer, Satyananda called Mahendra and said, "Your daughter is alive".

"Where, Maharaj?" exclaimed Mahendra.

"Why do you call me Maharaj?" asked Satyananda.

"Because everyone does so", returned Mahendra. "One must call those in charge of monasteries Raja. Where is my daughter, Maharaj?"

Satyananda said, "Before I tell you, answer this truly: do you wish to accept the code of the *santans*?"

"I have resolved to do so", replied Mahendra.

"Then do not ask where your daughter is".

"Why, Maharaj?"

"Because no one who takes this vow can stay in touch with his wife, son, daughter, or relatives. There's a penance even for seeing one's wife or child. You will not be allowed to see your daughter until our aim is achieved. Why then, if you are determined to follow our code, do you wish to know where your daughter is? You shan't be able even to see her".

Mahendra said, "Why is there such a hard rule, Master?"

"Because the task of the Children is a very hard one", said Satyananda. "Only he who has given up everything is fit for this task. If your mind remains tied by the rope of worldly concerns, then like the kite bound by its string, you will never be able to soar into the heavens".

Mahendra said, "Maharaj, I don't really understand. Why should someone who only sees his wife and child be unfit to carry out a responsible task?"

"Because we forget God's work when we do so. It is the rule of the Children's code to give up one's life when the need arises. Will you be able to lay down your life if you keep thinking of your daughter?"

Mahendra replied, "But could I ever forget her even if I do not see her?"

"If you cannot forget, do not take this vow".

"Do you mean to say that every *santan* has forgotten his wife and child and taken the vow! In that case, there must be very few about!"

"There are two kinds of *santan*", answered Satyananda. "Those who have been initiated and those who have not. The latter are either householders or beggars. They appear when it's time to do battle, and after they've received their share of the loot or some other reward, they go away. But those who are

initiates have renounced everything. They are the leaders of our Order. I am not asking you to become one of the uninitiated. We have enough fighters to wield staves or spears. But if you are not initiated you will not be fit to undertake any responsible task for our Order".

"What do you mean by initiation? And why should I be initiated?" asked Mahendra. "In any case, I have already been initiated with a mantra".[6]

"You will have to renounce that and take another from me".

"How can I renounce a mantra?"

"I'll show you how", said Satyananda.

"But why should I do so?"

"Because the Children are Vaishnavas".

"I don't understand", Mahendra replied. "How can the Children be Vaishnavas? For Vaishnavas nonviolence is the highest code of practice".

Satyananda said, "Yes, for the Vaishnavas who follow Lord Caitanya. Nonviolence is the mark of the false Vaishnavism that arose in imitation of the atheist Buddhist code of practice. The mark of authentic Vaishnava practice is subduing the evildoer and rescuing the world. For is not Vishnu himself the protector of our world! On no fewer than ten occasions did He take on a body to rescue the earth! It was He who destroyed the demons Keshi, Hiranyakashipu, Madhu, Kaitabha, Mura, Naraka and others in battle, as well as the ogres Ravana and so on, and the kings Kamsa, Shishupala and the rest. That Vishnu wins the victory, and bestows it. It is He who rescues the world and is the Children's chosen deity! Lord Caitanya's Vaishnava code is not the true Vaishnava code; it's just the half of it. Lord Caitanya's Vishnu consists only of love. But the Lord is not only love, he is also infinitely powerful. Lord Caitanya's Vishnu consists only of love, while the Children's Vishnu consists of power alone. Both of us are Vaishnava, yet each is only half a Vaishnava. Do you understand?"

"No", said Mahendra. "This is a newfangled teaching to me. I met a Christian priest once at Kashimbajar who spoke just like you. God is love, he said. You must love Jesus. The sort of thing you're saying".

"I'm saying exactly the sort of thing our ancestors have believed for generations", said Satyananda. "You've heard that God consists of three attributes?"

"Yes. The three attributes are goodness, energy and quiescence".

"Good. Each attribute has its own corresponding spiritual practice. God's mercy and benevolence arise from his attribute of goodness, and that is appropriately worshipped by loving devotion. This is what Caitanya's followers do. God's power, however, arises from his attribute of energy, and that must be worshipped by warfare, by the destruction of those who hate God. This is what we do.* Finally, God uses his attribute of quiescence to become embodied, so that in accordance with his wishes he has assumed his four-armed form

[6]Probably at the hands of another guru before these events took place.

and so on. This attribute must be worshipped with ritual offerings of flowers, sandalpaste, and so on. This is what ordinary folk do. Now have you understood?"

"Yes, I understand. So the Children are simply an order of religious devotees?"

"Exactly", said Saytananda. "We don't aspire to temporal power. All we wish to do is uproot the Muslims completely because they are enemies of our Lord".

❁ *Chapter 5* ❁

When he had finished speaking, Saytananda took Mahendra into the monastery's inner shrine in the presence of that wonderful, massive four-armed image of the deity. The shrine had an unearthly beauty and was lit by various lamps wrought in silver, gold and jewels. Masses of flowers arranged in heaps perfumed and brightened the temple. One other person was already seated there, softly chanting the refrain *Hare Murare*. As soon as Satyananda entered he rose and prostrated himself.

The monk said, "Do you wish to be initiated?"

He replied, "By your grace, I do".

Then addressing him and Mahendra, Satyananda asked, "Have you both duly bathed, fasted and disciplined yourselves?"[7]

"Yes", they answered.

"I ask you to declare solemnly in the sight of God: Will you obey all the rules of the Children's code?"

"We will".

"So long as the Mother is not free, will you renounce the householder's life?"

"We will".

"Will you renounce mother and father?"

"We will".

"And brother and sister?"

"We renounce them".

"Wife and children?"

"We renounce them".

"Friends, relatives and servants?"

"We renounce them all".

"Wealth, property, pleasures?"

"We've renounced them all".

"Will you restrain your senses? Do you agree never to sit next to a woman?"

[7]"Disciplined": especially by keeping oneself mentally and physically pure.

"We agree. We will restrain our senses".

"Solemnly declare in the sight of God that you will never seek wealth for yourselves or for your families. Do you agree to give all that you acquire to the treasury of the Vaishnavas?"

"We agree".

"Are you ready to take up arms yourselves and fight for the Eternal Code?"

"We are".

"Will you never flee in battle?"

"Never".

"And if you break this promise?"

"Then we will forfeit our life by entering a blazing pyre or drinking poison".

"One other thing", said Satyananda. "Caste. What is your caste? I know Mahendra is a Kayastha, but I do not know the caste of the other".

"I am a Brahmin. I'm not married", was the answer.

"Very good. Will both of you be able to renounce caste? All the Children are of equal standing. Under the terms of this great vow there is no difference between a Brahmin and a Shudra.[8] What is your reply?"

"We will not make such distinctions. We are all the Children of the same Mother".

"Then I will initiate you", said Satyananda. "Do not break any of the promises you have just made. Vishnu himself is witness to this. He who brought about the destruction of Ravana, Kamsa, Hiranyakashipu, Jarasandha, Shishupala and others, who is the inner controller of everything, who is all-conquering and all-powerful, the ruler of all, who resides equally in Indra's thunderbolt and the claws of the cat,[9] will destroy the breaker of these promises and cast him into hell eternal".

"So be it", they replied.

"Now sing *Bande Mataram*".

Both sang the hymn to the Mother there in that secret temple. Then the monk initiated them in the prescribed fashion.

❁ *Chapter 6* ❁

After he had initiated them, Satyananda took Mahendra to a very secluded place. When they had both sat down, Satyananda said, "My son, listen to me. I regard the fact that you have taken our great vow a sign of the Lord's favour. Through you a great work for the Mother can now properly begin, so listen to my instructions carefully. I'm not asking you to roam the forests with

[8]The highest and the lowest of the traditional caste-orders respectively from the point of view of ritual purity.

[9]Possibly also a reference to Nara-Simha, the man-lion avatar of Vishnu, who destroyed the demon Hiranyakashipu by ripping him open with his claws.

Jibananda and Bhabananda as comrades-in-arms. No, return to Padacinha, and follow the renouncer's code in your own home".

When he heard this, Mahendra was both surprised and disappointed, but he said nothing.

Satyananda continued, "At present, we've no refuge, no place where we can stock up on food, close the doors and remain unscathed for some time when a powerful army blockades us. In short, we've no stronghold. But you have a large residence and the run of your village. My wish is to build a stronghold there, in your village. We can construct an excellent stronghold if we surround Padacinha with a ditch and a wall, and build watch posts at regular intervals with cannons mounted on an embankment. Go back to your house and live there. Gradually two thousand *santans* will join you, and with their help you can build the fort, the embankment for the watch posts and so on. Also, build a first-class strongroom made of iron there. We'll use that as the *santans*' treasury. I'll send you, one by one, chests full of gold which you can use to finish the task. And from various places I'll despatch experienced craftsmen to do the work. When they arrive build a factory in Padacinha. There you can make the cannons, cannonballs, gunpowder and guns we need. This is why I'm sending you home".

Mahendra agreed.

❁ *Chapter 7* ❁

After Mahendra had respectfully touched Satyananda's feet and left, the second disciple who had been initiated with him that day came and paid obeisance to Satyananda. Satyananda blessed him and graciously gave him leave to sit on a black deerskin.[10] After some pleasant conversation, Satyananda said, "Now tell me, are you truly devoted to Krishna or not?"

"How can I say?", the other replied. "What I regard as devotion may actually be hypocrisy or self-deception".

"Well said", said Satyananda approvingly. "Then practise that which will deepen your devotion each day. I give you my blessing so that your efforts may bear fruit, for you are still very young. My son, I still haven't asked by what name I should call you".

The new *santan* replied, "Call me whatever you please. I am the humblest of the Vaishnavas' servants".

"Seeing how young you are", said Satyananda, "I wish to call you Nabinananda.[11] So why don't you take that name. But tell me, what was your

[10]The skin of the black antelope, a traditional mark of ascetic practice.

[11]It was often the case in Hinduism for religious initiates to receive a new (religious) name. Surprisingly, Bankim is silent on this matter where Mahendra is concerned. But see under Variants for, Part III, chapter 7.

original name? Tell me, even though you may feel reluctant to do so. No one else will know. It's the essence of the *santan* code to reveal even the unsayable to the Guru. No harm will come of it".

His new disciple said, "My name is Shantiram Debsharma".

"Your name", said Satyananda, "is Shantimani the Sinner". So saying, he stretched out his left hand, grasped his disciple's long, glossy black beard, and tugged at it. The false beard came off.

"For shame, child", said Satyananda. "How could you think to deceive me! Were you going to fool me with such a long beard for one so young? And even if you had trimmed your beard, could you disguise your voice or the look in your eyes?* If I were such a fool could I attempt the big task I've taken on?"

The wretched Shanti covered her eyes and hung her head for a while. Then she quickly removed her hands, flashed a glance at the old man and said, "Master, I've done no wrong. Surely women can have strength of arm too!"

"The tiniest amount!" said Satyananda, "Like the amount of water in a cow's footprint!"

Shanti said, "Do you test the strength of the Children?"

"I do". Satyananda fetched a steel bow and a length of iron wire and said, "They're supposed to fit this wire to this steel bow. The wire is three and a half feet long. As the bow is strung it jumps up and pitches you forward. Anyone who can string the bow is really strong".

Examining the bow and its wire carefully, Shanti asked, "Has every *santan* passed this test?"

"No", said Satyananda. "I've just used this to test their strength".

"Has no one passed this test?"

"Only four".*

"May I ask who?"

"I don't see why not. I'm one".

"And the others?"

"Jibananda, Bhabananda, and Jnanananda".

Shanti took up the bow and the wire, easily strung the bow, and dropped it at Satyananda's feet. Satyananda was amazed and taken aback—dumbfounded! After a moment he said, "Are you a goddess, or a human being?"

Placing the palms of her hands together, Shanti said respectfully, "I'm just a lowly woman, but I also live a celibate life".[12]

"How is that?"* asked Satyananda, "Were you a child-widow?[13] No, that

[12]The implication being that celibacy generates spiritual power, which can manifest in remarkable ways.

[13]The reader will recall that traditionally women were formally married at a very early age, and assumed the responsibilities of marriage later.

can't be. Even child-widows couldn't have such strength. They eat only once a day".

Shanti said, "My husband is still alive".

"Is he missing then?"

"On the contrary, I know where he is. That's why I'm here".

Suddenly, like sunlight piercing the clouds, Satyananda had a flash of memory. "I remember now", he said. "Jibananda's wife's name is Shanti. Are you Jibananda's wife?"

Nabinananda covered her face with her matted locks; it looked as if a number of elephants' trunks had fallen on a cluster of lotuses![14]

Satyananda continued, "Why have you come here to do this sinful thing?"

Suddenly throwing the locks onto her back, Shanti looked up and said, "Is it sinful, Master? The wife follows her husband. Is that sinful behaviour? If the code of the *santans* calls this sinful, then the code itself is sinful! I'm his partner in life. He's following a particular code, and I'm here to share in it. That's all".

When Shanti spoke thus, neck arched, with heaving bosom and trembling lip, eyes flashing yet tearful, Satyananda was pleased, and said, "You are a virtuous woman. But look, child, the wife is her husband's life-partner only when he follows the householder's way of life. A woman has no place in the code of the hero".

"But which great champion became a hero without a wife?" replied Shanti. "Could Rama have become a hero without Sita? Tell me how many times Arjuna married! And Bhima had as many wives as could match his strength! Should I go on? Do I have to explain to you, of all people!"

"What you say is true enough", said Satyananda, "but which hero brings his wife to the battlefield?"

"Well, who drove Arjuna's chariot while he fought with the Yadavi army from mid-air? Without Draupadi would the Pandavas have fought in the battle of Kurukshetra?"

"That's as may be", said Satyananda, "but ordinary men become very attached to women and that stops them from the task at hand. This is why the Children vow not to sit next to a woman. Jibananda is my right hand. You're here to break my right hand!"

"I'm here to strengthen your right hand!" said Shanti. "I'm a celibate woman, and I'll live as one with my husband. I'm here to practise virtue, not to attend to my husband. It's not that I'm pining for him. Why can't I have a part in the code my husband's adopted? That's why I'm here".

"Very well", said Satyananda, "I'll put you on probation for a few days".*

Shanti asked, "Will I be able to stay in this monastery?"

"Where else could you go today?" answered Satyananda.

[14]A somewhat comic reference to wifely modesty.

"And then?"

"You've fire in your forehead just like Goddess Bhabani!"[15] Satyananda exclaimed. "Do you want to burn up our Order?" Then he blessed Shanti and dismissed her.

"You just wait, old fellow!" thought Shanti. "So I've fire in my forehead? We'll see who's been cursed, me or your mother!"

In fact, this is not what Satyananda had meant. He'd been speaking of the flashing of her eyes, but how can an old man say this to one so young?*

❁ *Chapter 8* ❁

Since Shanti had been allowed to stay in the monastery that night, she began to look for a room. There were plenty of rooms lying empty, and a servant named Gobardhan, who was also a low-ranking *santan,* led her from room to room, with lamp in hand. But Shanti liked none of them. As the disappointed Gobardhan was leading Shanti back to Satyananda, Shanti said, "Brother *santan,* look, there are some rooms here, why haven't we inspected these?"

"Those are good rooms, no doubt", said Gobardhan, "but they're all taken".

"By whom?" asked Shanti.

"By our top commanders".

"Who are these top commanders?" asked Shanti.

"Bhabananda, Jibananda, Dhirananda, Jnanananda. *Anandamath* is full of *Anandas*".

"Well, let's see those rooms. Come on", said Shanti.

Gobardhan took Shanti first to Dhirananda's room. Dhirananda was reading *The Book of Drona* from the *Mahabharata,* absorbed in the way Abhimanyu fought against the seven charioteers. He said nothing, and Shanti left without a word.

Next Shanti entered Bhabananda's room. With gaze turned upwards, Bhabananda was musing on a particular face. I cannot tell whose face it was, but it was a very beautiful face, with black, curling, fragrant tresses falling about eyebrows that reached towards the ears! In the middle, on the heart-shaped space of a flawless brow, the shadows of death's dread moment had been gathering—as if death and its vanquisher were battling for supremacy. A form with eyes shut, eyebrows still, lips blue, cheeks pale and nose cold, with upturned bosom and clothes disarrayed by the wind. And then, just as the moon hidden by autumn-clouds reveals its own splendour after slowly illumining the cloud-heap, or as the rising sun shines forth itself after gradually turning to gold its

[15]"Fire in your forehead": a pun. A reference to the third eye on the goddess's forehead, which flashes fire and destruction, but also an expression for being accursed or wretched.

wavy garland of clouds, and then lights up the heavens, and gladdens land and sea with their teeming life, so did life's glow suffuse that lifeless body. And what a wondrous glow it was! It was on this that Bhabananda mused, and he too spoke not a word. So anguished was his heart in contemplating Kalyani's form, that he did not even think to glance at Shanti's.

Shanti entered another room and asked, "Whose room is this?"

"Jibananda Thakur's room".

"Who's he? There seems to be no one here".

"He's gone out somewhere. He'll be back in a moment", said Gobardhan.

"Well, this is the best room of all", said Shanti.

"Even so, you can't have it".

"Why not?"

"Because Jibananda Thakur stays here!"

"Well, perhaps he can find another".

"Impossible", cried Gobardhan. "The occupant of this room is our leader. His word is law here!"

"I see", said Shanti. "All right, you may go. If I don't find a place, I'll stay under some tree".

Having got rid of Gobardhan, she entered the room. She spread out Jibananda's own deerskin,* turned up the lamp, picked up a book, and sat down to read. After a while, Jibananda returned. Even though Shanti was dressed as a man, he recognised her at once.

"What's this!" he cried, amazed. "Shanti?"

Shanti slowly put down the book and looked at Jibananda.

"Who is Shanti, Sir?" she said.

Jibananda was speechless. " 'Who is Shanti, Sir!' " he said at last. "Why, aren't you Shanti?"

Shanti said scornfully, "I am Nabinananda Goswami". Then she turned to read the book once more.

Jibananda laughed aloud and said, "Up to some new trick, no doubt! All right, Nabinananda, why are you here?"

"It's the custom among gentlemen when they first meet", replied Shanti, "to address each other respectfully by such terms as 'Sir' and the like. Accordingly, I've spoken to you with due respect. So why do you address me in such familiar tones?"

"By your leave", said Jibananda, covering his neck with a cloth and joining his palms together. "Please accept your servant's humble salutations, Sir, and kindly inform me as to why you have graciously travelled from Bharuipur to this humble abode?"

Shanti replied very gravely, "Nor do I see any need for mockery. I have no idea where Bharuipur is. I came here to accept the *santans*' way of life, and I've been initiated today".

"Heaven forbid!" cried Jibananda. "Is that true?"

"Why 'Heaven forbid!'?" said Shanti. "You've been initiated yourself".

"But you're a woman!"

"Really! Where did you get that idea?"

"Well, I thought my wife was a woman".

"A wife! So you have a wife?"

"I'm sure I had one".

"So you think I'm your wife?"

Once again Jibananda joined his palms, covered his neck with a cloth, and said very respectfully, "By your leave, Sir, I do".

"Well", said Shanti, "now that such a laughable idea has entered your head, what do you think you should do?"

"Rip off that covering you're wearing and drink the nectar of your lips!"

"That just goes to show, Sir", said Shanti, "what a wicked mind you have, or how exceptionally fond of hashish you are! When you were initiated you swore not to sit next to a woman. If you continue to believe I'm a woman—many make the mistake of thinking a rope is a snake—then you should sit apart from me. In fact, you shouldn't even be speaking to me". And Shanti turned to the book once more.

Defeated, Jibananda prepared a separate bed for himself and lay down.

❁ END OF PART II ❁

PART III

❁ *Chapter 1* ❁

By God's grace, the year 1770 came to an end. Having despatched over a third of Bengal's population (exactly how many millions no one knows) to Death's domain, that ghastly year itself fell prey to time. But in 1771, God was very favourable. There was copious rainfall; the earth produced abundant crops, and those who had survived could eat their fill. But many, emaciated from fasting or lack of food, were quite unable to cope with a full stomach, and many died from this very condition. The earth produced abundant crops, but it was empty of people.

In village after village the empty houses became the dens of wild animals, or a reason to fear that they were haunted by ghosts. In village after village hundreds of fertile plots lay untilled and unproductive, or were covered with jungle. The whole land was filled with jungle. Where once rows of smiling dark green crops had graced the land and countless cows and buffaloes had grazed, where parks had once been the dallying-grounds of village youths and maidens, now dense jungle gradually began to grow.

Three whole years passed, and the jungle proliferated. Places where humans had lived happily now saw man-eating tigers pursue deer and other prey. Where once groups of beautiful women, their anklets tinkling on lac-painted feet, had made their way joking and laughing aloud, now bears made their lairs and reared their young. Where once little children had blossomed like the evening jasmine and laughed to their hearts' content, now herds of rutting wild elephants tore the tree trunks. The place of the Goddess Durga's festival now became the jackal's lair, the dais for Krishna's Dol festival became the owl's refuge, while in the temple's meeting hall poisonous snakes searched for frogs in broad daylight.

Crops grew in Bengal, but there was no one to consume them. There was produce to sell but no one to buy. Farmers tilled their fields but received no earnings, so they were unable to pay their landlords their rent. And because the landlords in turn couldn't pay the king, the king confiscated their lands. Deprived of their property, the landlords became destitute. Though the land brought forth plenty, wealth ceased to be produced. No one could lay claim to any wealth. People survived by plunder. Thieves and bandits flourished, while the virtuous, frightened, hid themselves at home.

The Order of *santans* worshipped daily at Vishnu's lotus-feet with sandalpaste and basil leaves while seizing every gun and pistol they could find. Bhabananda had told them, "Brothers! If you see a roomful of gems and jewels and diamonds and coral on one side, and a single broken gun on

the other, leave the gems and other jewels and come back with the broken gun".

Next the *santans* began to send a secret agent into every village. As soon as the agent entered a village and saw a Hindu he would say, "Friend, do you want to worship Vishnu?" He would collect about twenty to twenty-five volunteers, and they would enter a Muslim village and set it on fire. Whilst the Muslims tried frantically to save their lives, the *santans* would loot their belongings and distribute them among the new devotees of Vishnu. This would please the villagers, and the *santans* would bring them to the Vishnu temple, make them touch the feet of the image and convert them into Children. People saw that there was considerable gain in becoming a *santan*.

In particular, everyone was angry with the Muslims for the anarchy and lawlessness of their reign. Because the Hindu rule of life had disappeared, many Hindus were keen to establish a sense of Hindu identity. Thus, day by day the number of Children began to increase.

Hundreds of *santans* by the day, and thousands every month, respectfully touched Jibananda's and Bhabananda's feet, formed into bands, and set out in every direction to chastise the Muslim. Wherever they encountered the king's officials, they would seize and thrash them, and sometimes even kill them. They would loot and bring home any government money they could find, while whenever they came upon a Muslim village, they would burn it to ashes.

In reply, the officials of the region* sent wave upon wave of troops to suppress the *santans*. But by now the *santans* were organised into groups, armed and supremely confident. In the face of such prowess, the Muslim forces could make no headway, and where they managed to make some, the *santans* would fall upon them with boundless might and smash them to pieces, calling loudly upon Hari's name. If ever the foreign troops got the better of a *santan* band, another group of *santans* would immediately appear from somewhere, cut off the victors' heads and depart, calling out to Hari.*

At this time the renowned Warren Hastings, the rising sun of the English race in India, was governor-general of the land. From his seat in Kolkata he fashioned an iron chain and resolved to shackle the whole land, from sea to sea, islands and all. And one day, the Lord of this world, sitting on his throne, agreed without more ado to let it be so! But not yet—that day was still to come. For the present, even Warren Hastings trembled at the fearful cry to Hari of the Children!

At first Hastings sought to quell the insurrection by using troops of the local administration. But things had came to such a pass with the local sepoys that they would flee even when they heard an old woman utter Hari's name! When he saw that there was no other way, Hastings appointed a highly competent officer, Captain Thomas by name, in charge of a group of Company soldiers and despatched them to quell the rebellion.*

As soon as he arrived, Captain Thomas made excellent arrangements to stop the insurrection. He requisitioned the soldiers of the king and of the

landlords, and incorporated them into the highly-trained, well-equipped and very powerful Indian and foreign Company troops. Then dividing that assembled force into units, he appointed a suitable group of officers to command them. After that he apportioned the land to those commanders, and instructed each to sieve his region like a fisherman with his net. Wherever they encountered a rebel they were to kill him as one would an ant.

So, some dosed on ganja, and others on rum, the Company's soldiers issued forth with fixed bayonets to kill *santans*. But the Children now were both innumerable and invincible, and Captain Thomas's troops began to be cut down like crops before a farmer's scythe.

And the chants to Hari rang deafeningly in Captain Thomas's ears.*

❁ *Chapter 2* ❁

At the time the East India Company owned many silk factories. There was one in the village of Shibgram, and a Mr Doniworth was the factor or person in charge. Since these factories were well guarded, Mr Doniworth had managed to survive. Still, he had felt it necessary to send his wife and children to Kolkata for safety, and in fact he himself had been attacked by the *santans*.

It was at this time that Captain Thomas, accompanied by a few units of his force, deigned to appear on the scene. Just then a number of Choads, Hadis, Doms, Bagdis and Bunos,[1] seeing the boldness of the *santans*, made so bold themselves as to covet what was not theirs. They attacked Captain Thomas's force for its provisions, unable to resist the cartloads of the finest ghee, flour, poultry and rice being transported for the soldiers. But it took only a few blows from the guns in the hands of Captain Thomas's sepoys to repulse them. Captain Thomas instantly sent a report to Kolkata declaring that with a force of 157 sepoys he had overcome 14,700 rebels: 2,153 rebels had been killed, 1,233 wounded, and 7 taken prisoner. (Only the last was true.) Then Captain Thomas, thinking that he had won a second battle of Blenheim or Rossbach,[2] twirled his moustaches and beard and began to rove the area undaunted.

He also advised Mr Doniworth to fetch his wife and children from Kolkata now that the rebellion had been quelled. "Yes, of course", replied Mr Doniworth, "But stay on for another ten days or so, and when the region is a little quieter, I'll bring them back". Mr Doniworth kept sheep and chickens at his place, and his cheese was of the finest. Various kinds of wild fowl graced

[1]People of low-caste status.

[2]References, respectively, to the first duke of Marlborough's defeat of French and Bavarian armies near the Bavarian village of Blenheim (not far from Vienna) on August 13, 1704, and the victory, against the odds, of the Prussian king Frederick the Great over the French and their German allies on November 5, 1757, at Rossbach, a village in Prussian Saxony.

his table. Also, his bearded cook was a second Draupadi.[3] So without wasting any words, Captain Thomas began to live there.

Meanwhile, Bhabananda was beside himself. He could think of nothing else but when he might cut off this hero Captain Thomas's head, and be known as a second Shambarari—"Enemy of the demon Shambar"! Of course, the *santans* didn't know then that the English had come to rescue India. How could they? Even Captain Thomas's English contemporaries didn't know. At the time it was known to Providence alone. So Bhabananda thought that one day he'd get rid of this demonic race. "But first", he thought, "let them gather in one place and drop their guard. In the meantime, we'll keep apart". So that's what they did. And Captain Thomas, unopposed, concentrated on the talents of the cook.*

Our brave Englishman loved to hunt, and from time to time he would go out in search of game in the forest near Shibgram. One day he and Mr Doniworth rode out with a number of *shikaris*[4] to hunt game. Now it must be said that Captain Thomas was a man of extraordinary courage, of matchless prowess even among the British. The tigers, wild buffalo, bears and so on, in that dense forest were extremely fierce, and after they had penetrated deep within, the *shikaris* were reluctant to proceed. They said that the paths had run out, and that they were unable to go further. Even Mr Doniworth had encountered such ferocious tigers in that forest that he was unwilling to continue. Everyone wanted to turn back. But insisting that he would go on, and telling his companions to return if they wished, Captain Thomas entered the dense forest alone.

In fact the paths had run out, and the horse was unable to proceed. So Thomas abandoned his horse, shouldered his gun, and entered into the forest alone. He wandered about looking for tiger, but saw none. Instead, what did he see, seated there under a great tree, swathed in creepers and shrubs with flowers in full bloom?* A young ascetic, brightening the forest with his beauty! The fragrance of the blooms seemed to increase through contact with that heavenly form. Captain Thomas was amazed, then his amazement gave way to anger.* The Captain knew the local language very well, so he said in Bengali, "Who are you?"[5]

The ascetic replied, "I'm an ascetic".

"You're a rebel", said the Captain.*

"What's that?" said the ascetic.

[3]Draupadi, the wife of the Pandava brothers in Hindu folklore, had the reputation of being an excellent cook. The cook here was a Muslim.

[4]A *shikari* is a hunter of game. Here it is implied that they were Indians, assisting the hunting party.

[5]In fact, the Captain now speaks in atrocious Bengali, with a few English expressions thrown in (these are underlined). Here Bankim is poking fun, though in the early editions Thomas speaks in correct Bengali without recourse to English words.

"I'll shoot you", said the Captain.

"Shoot!" said the ascetic.

While the Captain was deliberating whether to shoot or not, the young ascetic pounced on him with lightning speed and snatched the musket from his hand. Then the ascetic threw off his covering deerskin and with a pull undid the matted hair—and Captain Thomas beheld a woman's form of wondrous beauty!

Laughing, the beautiful woman said, "Sir, I'm a woman, and I attack no one! Let me ask you something. Why do you people interfere in a fight between Hindu and Muslim? Go back to your own home".

"Who are you?" asked the captain.

"A woman ascetic, as you can see", said Shanti. "The wife of one of those you're here to fight".

"Will you come and live with me?"

"As your concubine, I suppose!"

"You can live as my wife, but I shan't marry you".

"Well, I have something to ask you too", said Shanti. "We had a red-faced monkey at home; it's dead now, and its hutch is empty. If I tie a chain around your waist, will you live in that hutch? We've got lovely bananas in our garden".

"You're a very spirited woman. I'm very pleased with your courage.* Come and stay with me. Your husband will die in battle, and then what will become of you?"

"Let's agree on this", replied Shanti. "The battle's just a few days away. If you win, I agree to live as your concubine—that's if I survive. But if we win, will you live in that hutch like a monkey and eat bananas?"

"It's a fine thing to eat bananas", said the Captain. "Do you have some?"

"Here", said Shanti with contempt. "Here's your gun. There's no point in talking to savages like you".

She threw the musket down and went off laughing.

❁ *Chapter 3* ❁

Shanti left Thomas and like a doe swiftly disappeared into the forest. After a while, Thomas could hear, sung in the voice of a woman: "Who can stop this surge of youth! *Hare Murare! Hare Murare!*"

Then from somewhere the sweet sounds of a *saranga*[6] took up the tune: "Who can stop this surge of youth! *Hare Murare! Hare Murare!*"

Now a man's voice joined in the song: "Who can stop this surge of youth! *Hare Murare! Hare Murare!*"

[6]A stringed instrument played with a bow.

The forest vegetation thrilled to the harmony of the three. Shanti sang as she went along:

Who can stop this surge of youth!
Hare Murare! Hare Murare!
The waves are stirred by breezes strong,
My new boat skims on joyous song,
The boatman steers the boat along,
Hare Murare! Hare Murare!
Smashed the dam of sand!
Fulfilled my heart's desire,
The water rushes in the surging stream,
There's none to stop it ever!
Hare Murare! Hare Murare!

And the *saranga* echoed the refrain, "The water rushes in the surging stream, There's none to stop it ever! *Hare Murare! Hare Murare!*"

Shanti entered deep within the forest, where the eye was unable to penetrate from the outside. Hidden among the foliage was a small hut made of branches. Its roof was made of leaves and it had a wooden floor over which earth had been spread. Shanti pushed aside a door made of creepers and went inside. Jibananda was sitting there playing the *saranga*. When he saw Shanti he said, "So the water's finally rushing in the surging stream, is it?"

Shanti laughed too and said, "Does the surging stream rush into ponds and ditches?" Disconcerted, Jibananda said, "Shanti, for having broken my vow one day I've to forfeit my life. I'll have to atone for my sin. In fact, I'd have done so already if it hadn't been for your request. But there's a big battle around the corner, and I will have to make my penance on that battlefield. I will have to give up my life. Till the day I die. . . ."*

But Shanti interrupted him and said, "I'm your wife in the code you've adopted, your partner and your helper in that code. You've taken on a rule that's extremely hard, and I've left home to help you see it through. I'm living in this forest so that the two of us can follow that rule together. I want to increase your virtue. So as your wife in virtue how can I act as an obstacle to it? Marriage is both for this life and the next. Think then that our marriage in this life hasn't come to fruition, but that it will do so only in the next. There it'll be doubly fruitful! But why are you talking about penance? Have you committed a sin? You promised that you wouldn't sit next to a woman. Well, we've not sat next to each other! So what need for penance?* O my lord, *you* are my teacher, who am I to teach you virtue! You are a hero. Could I teach you to live up to that calling?"

Gladdened by this, Jibananda said with a tremor in his voice, "But you have just taught me".*

Then, greatly cheered, Shanti replied, "Look, Gosai, even in this life, has our marriage been without fruit? You love me and I love you. Can there be

greater fruit than this in this life? Sing *Bande Mataram*". Then both sang *Bande Mataram* together.*

❁ *Chapter 4* ❁

One day Bhabananda Goswami went to the city, left the broad main street and made his way down a dark, narrow lane. There was a row of high buildings on either side so that even at midday the sun could only peep through now and then—otherwise darkness held sway. Entering a two-storey building along the lane, Bhabananda Thakur went into a room on the ground floor where a woman was cooking. The woman was middle-aged, rather dark-skinned and stout. She was dressed in the short, borderless cloth of a widow, and had a small black mark tattooed on her forehead.[7] A large, bound tuft of hair adorned the front of her head. She grimaced and muttered to herself, the tuft of hair bobbing and whirling about as the stick for turning the rice clinked against the edge of the pot.

As Master Bhabananda entered, he said, "My morning respects to you, Grandaunt!"

Seeing Bhabananda, "Grandaunt" tried frantically to make herself presentable. She wanted to undo that charming tuft on her head and let her hair fall but couldn't, for her hands were ritually impure! What a pity, for those tresses looked silky after her bath, and a *bak* flower had lodged in them during her morning worship. She struggled to cover her head with the end-piece of her garment, but the end-piece wasn't up to it—Grandaunt wasn't wearing enough cloth, for first the little cloth she wore was almost exhausted trying to cover that bulging midriff, and then it had to preserve some of the modesty of that ponderous bosom. By the time it reached her shoulders, the end-piece gave up the struggle. It managed to reach her ear and say, "Thus far and no further!" So, bashful as you please, Grandaunt Gauri had no option but to clutch the aforesaid end-piece to her ear and, resolving fervently to buy more copious clothing in future, she said, "Oh, is that you Reverend monk? Come in, come in. Why 'morning respects,' brother!"

"Because you're a grandaunt", said Bhabananda.

"That's you being friendly", said Gauri. "You folk are holy men, gods! Very well, so be it, and long life to you! And quite right too! After all, I'm older than you!"

In fact, the esteemed Gauri was twenty-five years older. But Bhabananda said slyly, "Not at all, Grandaunt. It's only because you're such a good sport

[7]To represent the third eye of the goddess. Today this has been replaced in Hindu women by the largely cosmetic mark in the middle of the forehead.

that I'm calling you 'Grandaunt'! Don't you remember, when last we checked you were six years younger than me? You know, we Vaishnavas can do all sorts of things. I've a mind to marry you quickly with the abbot's approval, and I'm here to tell you that".

"What a thing to say!" cried Gauri. "Talking like that! We're widows here!"

"Well, then we can't get married".

"No, no, do what you think's best", said Gauri hastily. "You're the learned ones. We're only women. What do we know? So when will it be?"

Suppressing his mirth with great effort, Bhabananda said, "As soon as I meet with the abbot. By the way, how is she?"

Gauri's heart sank. So this talk of getting married was probably a bit of fun. "The same as usual", she said shortly.

"Go and see how she is", said Bhabananda, "and tell her I'd like to see her".

Gauri threw down the stick for the rice, washed her hands, and started, one steep stair at a time, to make her way up to a room on the second floor. There, on a torn mat, sat the loveliest of women. Yet a kind of dark shadow lay over that beauty, like that of a dense cloud at midday over the surging bosom of a vast, overflowing river of clear water. Picture the waves tossing about on the bosom of the river, the banks adorned by rows of houses with flower-laden trees swaying and bowing in the wind, and the water buffeted by a line of bobbing boats. It is midday, and yet the splendour of it all is shrouded by clouds of the darkest hue. Even so was the woman's appearance.

We see the same beautiful, lustrous, shimmering dark tresses, the same noble, broad forehead etched with those incomparable arched eyebrows, the same large, black eyes, glistening with unspilt tears. But they do not sparkle or dart as before. They are somewhat subdued now. We see the same reddish lips, the same lovely heaving bosom, the same arms, more tender than forest vines. Yet today there's no radiance or sparkle about her, no intensity or liveliness, no joie de vivre. Her youthfulness seems to have gone. Only her beauty and sweetness remain. But there's a new patience and solemnity to her now. Before, she appeared as an incomparable beauty of this world, but now she seems to be an accursed goddess of the next.

About her lay a few manuscripts made from cotton pulp. A rosary to chant Hari's name hung on the wall, while at intervals hung a watercolour of Krishna as Lord of the world, with Balarama and Subhadra, and paintings of various scenes from Krishna's life in Vraja—Krishna subduing the serpent Kaliya, Krishna riding the elephant made of nine maidens, Krishna purloining the maidens' clothes, Krishna lifting Mount Govardhan, and so on. Below the paintings was the caption, "Art or Art's Fancy?"

When Bhabananda entered the room, he said, "Well, Kalyani, are you in good health?"

Kalyani replied, "Must you always ask that question? Why should you want me to be in good health, or why should I wish it for that matter!"

"He who plants a tree continues to water it", answered Bhabananda, "and he is glad when it grows. I sowed life in your dead body. Why shouldn't I inquire if it is increasing or not?"

"Can a poisonous tree die?"

"Is life a poison?"

"If not, why did I wish to destroy it by dousing it with immortality?"

"I've been wanting to ask you that for a long time", said Bhabananda. "But I've not had the courage to do so. Who has poisoned your life?"

Kalyani answered solemnly, "No one. Life itself is poisonous. My life is poisonous, and so is yours and everyone else's".

Bhabananda said, "Truly, Kalyani, my life is full of poison. Ever since that day. . . . Have you finished the grammar?"

"No", said Kalyani.*

"Your study of words?"*

"I've no mind for it".

"You seemed keen to acquire some knowledge. Why don't you care for it now?"

"When someone as learned as you can be such a great sinner, it's better not to take up learning. Tell me, Sir, what news of my husband?"

"Why do you keep asking for news?" answered Bhabananda. "He's dead so far as you're concerned".

"I may be dead to him, but he is not dead to me", said Kalyani.

"But you died because he would be dead to you. Kalyani, why harp on this?"

"Even if one dies, does one cease to belong? How is he?"

"He is well".

"Where is he? In Padacinha?"

"Yes, he's there".

"What is he doing there?"

"What he has been doing—building a fort, making weapons. Thousands of *santans* have been armed by the weapons he's made. Thanks to him we no longer lack for cannon, guns and ammunition. He's the best of the Children, and is doing us much good. He's our main support".

Kalyani said, "If I'd not offered my life would so much have been achieved? Can someone swim life's ocean with a pitcher full of mud tied to their chest? Can you run with iron shackles on your feet? Renouncer, why did you save this worthless life?"

"Because the wife is a partner, a support in virtue".

"Only in the smallest virtue. In the greater, she is a thorn.* With the thorn of poison I freed him from the thorn of not doing his duty. For shame, you wicked, sinful monk! Why did you give me back my life?"

"Well", said Bhabananda, "perhaps what I gave to you now belongs to me! Kalyani! Can you not give to me the life I have given you?"

"Tell me, do you have any news of my Sukumari?"

"I haven't heard for a long time. Jibananda hasn't gone there for some time".

"Can't you bring me some news? I've had to give up my husband, but now that I'm alive why should I give up my daughter? Even now if I were to get back Sukumari, I could have some happiness in my life. But why should you do so much for me!"

"I will do it, Kalyani. I will bring your daughter to you. But what then?"

"What then, Sir?"

"What about your husband?"

"I have left him of my own accord".

"But if he fulfills his vow?"

"Then I shall be his again.* Does he know that I'm alive?"

"No", said Bhabananda.

"Do you ever meet him?"

"Yes".

"Do you ever speak to him of me?"

"No, for how can the wife who has died still be tied to her husband?"

"What do you mean?" asked Kalyani.

"I mean", answered Bhabananda, "that you can marry again. You've been reborn".

"Bring my daughter to me", cried Kalyani.

"I shall. But you can marry again".

"You, I suppose?"

"Will you marry again?"

"Whom? You?"

"Why not?" said Bhabananda.

"And what will happen to your *santan* code of life?"

"It can sink without trace".

"And your next birth?"

"Can sink without trace".

"And your great vow? Your calling as Bhabananda?"[8]

"Can sink without trace".

"Why are you prepared to let all this sink without trace?" asked Kalyani.

"Because of you", answered Bhabananda. "Listen, Kalyani, whether one's a human being, a sage, a saint or a god, the heart will have its way.* The *santan* code is my very life, yet I tell you today for the first time, you're more than life to me! I forfeited my life at your feet the day I gave life back to you. I never knew such beauty could exist in this world. If I knew that I would ever see such beauty, I would never have embraced the *santan* code. This code is burnt to ashes in this fire. The code has been burnt, only life remains. And now the life that's survived these four years is being burnt up; it can last no

[8]That is, as a monk. "Bhabananda" means "the bliss of being".

longer! Oh, the fire, Kalyani, the fire! The torment! Now even the fuel for burning is over. My life is being consumed. I've borne it for four years, and I can bear it no longer. Will you be mine?"

"You have told me", said Kalyani, "that it's a rule of the *santan* code that if one gives in to the senses the penance is death. Is this true?"

"Yes, it is true".

"Then your penance is death".

"Death alone".

"Even if I do what you want, will you die?"

"Most certainly".

"And if I do not?"

"Even then my penance will be death, for my heart has succumbed to my senses".

"I will not do what you want", said Kalyani. "When shall you die?"

"In the approaching battle".

"Then go. But will you send my daughter to me?"

With tears in his eyes, Bhabananda said, "I will. Will you think of me, Kalyani, after I'm dead?"

Kalyani replied, "I will think of you, but as a sinner who has broken his vow".

Bhabananda left, and Kalyani resumed her reading.

❁ *Chapter 5* ❁

Night fell as Bhabananda walked towards the monastery, deep in thought. He entered the forest alone, and then saw someone walking ahead of him. "Who goes there?" he called out.

"A traveller", replied the other. "But if you knew how to ask the question, I would give a better answer".

"*Bande*", said Bhabananda.

"*Mataram*", replied the one who walked ahead.

"I am Bhabananda Goswami", said Bhabananda.

"I'm Dhirananda".

"Dhirananda, where have you been?"

"To look for you".

"Why?"

"I wanted to speak to you".

"About what?"

"It's for our ears alone".

"Well, speak here. There's no one about".

"Have you been to the city?" asked Dhirananda.

"Yes", was the reply.

"To Gauri's house?"

"So you've been to the city too?"

"A very beautiful young woman lives there, doesn't she?"

Bhabananda was both a little surprised and taken aback. "What's all this about?" he said.

Dhirananda said, "Did you meet her?"

"Well?" said Bhabananda.

"You're very attracted to her, aren't you?"

Bhabananda thought for a while. Then he said, "Dhirananda, what's all this to you? Anyway, everything you say is true. Other than you, who else knows about this?"

"No one".

"Then I can kill you and rid myself of this disgrace".

"Yes, you can".

"Come on then", said Bhabananda. "Let's fight in this deserted place. Either I'll kill you and get away with it, or you'll kill me and release me from my troubles. Do you have any weapon?"

"I do", said Dhirananda. "Who could dare talk to you about such things unarmed? If you want to fight, I'll certainly fight you. It's forbidden for *santans* to fight one another, but it's not forbidden to fight to save one's life. But before we fight wouldn't it be better to hear first why I went looking for you?"

Bhabananda said, "No harm in that. Say on". But he unsheathed his sword and placed it on Dhirananda's shoulder lest he run away.

"I wanted to say this", said Dhirananda. "Marry Kalyani!"

"Kalyani! So you even know her name!"

"Why don't you marry her?" said Dhirananda.

"Because she has a husband".

"Vaishnavas can marry even then".

"Only the bald-headed kind. Not the Children. The Children cannot marry".

"You don't have to follow their code. It chokes you to death!" said Dhirananda with disgust. "Careful! You've cut my shoulder!" (In fact, blood was oozing from Dhirananda's shoulder.)

Bhabananda said, "Why have you come here to tell me to do wrong? No doubt there's something in it for you".

"Yes, there is", said Dhirananda. "But put your sword down. I'll tell you. This *santan* code oppresses me terribly, and I long to give it up and spend my days in the company of my wife and children. I'm going to give it up. But how can I go home like this? So many know me for a rebel. If I go home now either the king's officials will cut off my head or the *santans* will take me for a traitor and finish me off. That's why I need your support".

"Why me?" said Bhabananda.

"That's the nub of it", said Dhirananda. "The *santan* army is under your command. Now that Satyananda's not here, you are its leader. Fight. You'll lead the army to victory, I've not the slightest doubt. Once you win, why don't

you rule in your own name? After all, the army will obey you. Become king, and let Kalyani be your queen. For my part, I'll back you, and enjoy the company of my family, and bless you for it! Let the code of the *santans* sink without trace!"

Bhabananda slowly lowered his sword from Dhirananda's shoulder. Then he said, "Fight, Dhirananda, for I shall kill you. I may live as a slave to my senses, but I'm not a traitor. You've advised me to become a traitor. Since you yourself are a traitor, I will not be guilty of Brahminicide if I kill you.[9] I'm going to kill you". Bhabananda had barely finished speaking when Dhirananda ran away as fast as he could. Bhabananda did not pursue him;* he remained preoccupied for a while, and when he went looking for Dhirananda, the latter was nowhere to be seen.

❁ *Chapter 6* ❁

Bhabananda did not return to the monastery; instead he entered deep into the forest. There within the jungle lay the ruins of a large, ancient building, its broken bricks and walls completely overrun by creepers and thorny undergrowth, and the home of innumerable snakes. Among the crumbling rooms, one remained comparatively intact and clean. Bhabananda went and sat down inside, and fell into profound thought.

The night was oppressively dark and the forest stretched out within it, entirely empty of human beings, dense and impenetrable with trees and creepers, resistant even to the comings and goings of the wild beasts—vast, deserted, dark, impassable, hushed! Yet in the distance amongst its sounds could be heard the roar of a tiger, or the terrible cry of hunger, terror or defiance of some wild creature! Now the flapping of wings of some large bird, now the sounds of the chase between quarry and hunter, victim and slayer! And still Bhabananda remained seated there alone in the deserted, dark ruins of the building, at times oblivious to the world, at times conscious of it only as a source of fear.

Hand to forehead, he was completely immersed in thought—motionless, seeming not to breathe, unmindful of fear. "What will be, most surely will be", he thought. "The sorrow of it is that I was swept away on the current of my senses like some puny elephant in the waves of the Bhagirathi.[10] The body can be destroyed in a moment, and when the body's destroyed so are the senses. And was I enslaved by these very senses? It's better for me to die. How could I abandon my duty? Shame! I must die".* Just then an owl hooted

[9]In Hindu tradition, killing a Brahmin was one of the greatest sins.

[10]Bhagirathi: an offshoot or part of the Ganges (depending on location), and a type of a powerful river (see also notes in the critical apparatus).

sombrely overhead. Bhabananda said aloud, "What's that! It seems as if Death calls! Who made the sound? Has someone called me, given me my orders, commanded me to die? I cannot say! O infinite, blessed One! You are sound itself, yet I cannot grasp the gist of your sound! Set me on my duty. Keep me from sin. Oh Teacher, let my mind be fixed on duty".

Then, from the midst of that terrible forest a human voice was heard, very gentle yet deep, piercing to the depth of his heart. "You will do your duty", it said, "for I have given you my blessing".

The hairs stood up on Bhabananda's body. "Who's this?" he cried. "That's the voice of my Teacher! Maharaj, where are you? Show yourself to your servant now!"

But no one appeared, and no one gave answer. Again and again Bhabananda called out, but there was no reply. He searched in every direction, but saw no one.

As night gave way to dawn and the morning sun rose, shining upon the dark green foliage that crowned the great forest, Bhabananda returned to the monastery. When he arrived he heard "*Hare Murare! Hare Murare!*" and, recognising Satyananda's voice, realised that his Master had returned.

❁ *Chapter 7* ❁

After Jibananda had left the forest hut, Shanti took up the *saranga* again and began to sing softly:

> In the waters, Krishna, of the sea of doom,
> In the form of the fish you did float
> To rescue the Vedas intact
> Gifted to us as life's boat.
> Conquer, O Hari, Lord of the world![11]

Shanti sang Jayadeva Goswami's lovely hymn, giving it its full musical expression, and allowing it to break the endless silence of that boundless forest so that it resounded as sweetly as lapping waves at full tide, swept by a spring wind. And she sang again:

> O Krishna, when you were the Buddha 'twas wondrous to see
> That a rebuke you did impart
> Against the slaying of animals (scripture's sacrificial decree),
> Revealed to a compassionate heart!
> Conquer, O Hari, Lord of the world!

[11]In this chapter the words sung by Shanti and the voice from outside are from Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* (see under Notes to Part I, chapter 13; for textual references, see the notes in the critical apparatus for this chapter).

And then from outside was heard in a voice as deep as rumbling thunder:

O Krishna, when you appear as Kalki,
To destroy the barbarian hordes,
Like a comet of doom for all to see
Will you wield that dreadful sword!
Conquer, O Hari, Lord of the world!*

Shanti bowed down devotedly, and taking the dust of Satyananda's feet, said, "Master, what good fortune allows me to see your lotus feet here? Command what you wish me to do". And taking up the *saranga* she sang again: "Allow us to bow down at your feet, and bless us who revere you".

Satyananda said, "My child, truly you will be blessed".

Shanti replied, "How can that be, Master, since it's by your command that I'll be a widow!"

"I did not know you", said Satyananda.* "Child! Without gauging the strength of the string, I pulled too hard. You're wiser than I am. So see to it that Jibananda doesn't know that I know everything. With you in mind he can stay alive, and has been doing so all this while. Only then can my work be accomplished".

Those large dark eyes flashed fiercely in his direction—like lightning bolts amongst the summer clouds. "Master!" cried Shanti. "My husband and I are one soul. I shall tell him everything we've spoken of today. If he's to die, he'll die. It won't affect me, because I'll die along with him. If he's to go to heaven, do you think I shan't?"

The monk replied, "I've never been defeated before, but today I've lost to you. Child, consider me your son, and have pity on me. Save Jibananda's life as well as your own, and my work will be accomplished!"

Now the lightning in her eyes laughed. Shanti said, "My husband's duty is in his hands. Who am I to stop him from doing his duty? In this life the husband is a god to his wife, but in the next life God becomes everyone's duty! My husband is great to me, but my duty is greater than he, and greater even than that for me is my husband's duty. I can make light of my duty any time I please, but how can I make light of my husband's duty! Maharaj! If my husband's to die at your command, let him die! I'll not stop him".

The monk sighed deeply and said, "Child,* this terrible vow must have its sacrifice, and each of us must fall a victim to it. I shall die, and so will Jibananda, and Bhabananda, and everyone else—perhaps even you, child. But let's die after accomplishing our task, else what's the point of death? So far I have called only our country Mother, nothing else, for except for that land rich in waters and rich in fruit, we have no other mother. Now I call you Mother too; as a mother do the work of your child and bring it to fruition. Do that, and also protect Jibananda's life and your own".

Then chanting "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!" Satyananda departed.

Chapter 8

Gradually the news spread among the Order of *santans* that Satyananda had returned and that he was summoning the Children because he wished to speak to them. Then the Children began to assemble in groups on the riverbank.* Ten thousand gathered on a moonlit night by the side of the riverbank in a great recess of that immense forest enlivened by the mango and the jackfruit, by palmyras, tamarinds, and peepuls, by the wood-apple, banyan, silk-cotton and other trees.

As the news about Satyananda's return spread from mouth to mouth, a great clamour arose. It was not generally known where or why Satyananda had gone. The rumour was that he had gone to the Himalayas to practise asceticism for the success of the Children. Now the men began to say among themselves that Satyananda's ascetic practices had been successful and that the time for *santan* rule had arrived. Then there was an uproar. Some began to shout, "Kill, kill the baldies!"; others cried, "Victory! Victory to Maharaj!" Some chanted, "O Hari, enemy of Mura, of Madhu and Kaitabha!"; some sang out *Bande Mataram*. Some of the men said to one another, "Brother, has the day come when even the insignificant Bengali can lay down his life on the battlefield?"; others said, "Brother, has the day come when we will be able to tear down the mosque and build a temple to Radha and Krishna in its place?" and still others said, "Brother, has the day come when we will be able to enjoy our own wealth?"

Picture the scene: the clamorous voices of ten thousand men, the rustle of the foliage swept by a gentle breeze, the soft lapping of the waves against the riverbank, moon, stars and a white cloud-mass in an indigo sky, the verdant forest on the dark earth, the clear river and its white bank, and clusters of flowers in bloom. And every now and then that cry dear to all: *Bande Mataram*!

Then Satyananda came and stood in the midst of that massed gathering of Children. Ten thousand heads, glistening in the moonlight filtering through the trees, bowed low, down to the dark grassy earth. Then, eyes filled with tears and raising both arms aloft, Satyananda cried out in a loud voice, "May he who bears the conch, the discus, the mace and the lotus, who is Krishna himself, the Lord of Baikuntha, the slayer of Keshi, the destroyer of Madhu, Mura and Naraka, the protector of the worlds, bless you, give strength to your arm, inflame your hearts, and encourage you to do your duty! Now sing out to his glory". Then those ten thousand voices began to sing out aloud:

Conquer, O Hari, Lord of the world!
In the waters, Krishna, of the sea of doom,
In the form of the fish you did float
To rescue the Vedas intact
Gifted to us as life's boat.
Conquer, O Hari, Lord of the world!

Then blessing them again, Satyananda said, "My Children, I have something special to say to you today. An unrighteous villain called Thomas has killed many *santans*. Tonight we shall slay him and his army. This is the command of the Lord of the world! What do you say?"

The forest was rent with terrible cries to Hari. Shouts of "We'll kill them now! Come, show us where they are" and "Kill, kill the enemy" echoed to the distant hills.

Then Satyananda spoke: "But for that we must be a little patient. The enemy* has cannons, and without cannons we cannot fight him. All the more so since the enemy comes from a very valorous race. Seventeen cannons are on their way from the fort in Padacinha. When they arrive we will march to war. Look, dawn is breaking! Before long. . . . What! What's this!"

Suddenly from all sides in that vast forest the loud booming of cannons—English cannons!—was heard! Like a shoal of fish caught in a net, the Order of *santans* was surrounded in the mango forest, and Captain Thomas looked set to destroy them.

❁ *Chapter 9* ❁

The English cannonfire roared repeatedly. The loud booms rocked the huge forest, resounding from bend to bend of the river* and up to the distant heavens, and echoing again and again from the riverbank to a distant wood!

"Find out whose cannon that is", ordered Satyananda. Instantly some of the *santans* mounted their horses and galloped off, but soon after they emerged from the forest cannonballs rained on them like a downpour in the month of Sraban, and all were killed together with their horses. Seeing this from afar, Satyananda cried out, "Climb high into a tree and look out". But even before he had said this, Jibananda had climbed up a tree and was looking out in the early morning rays. From a topmost branch he called out, "English cannon!"

"Horse or footsoldiers?" asked Satyananda.

"Both!" cried Jibananda.

"How many?"

"Can't tell. They're still emerging from forest cover".

"Are there any whiteskins, or only sepoys?"

"There are whiteskins".*

"Come down", said Satyananda.

When Jibananda had climbed down, Satyananda said, "There are ten thousand Children here. See what you can do. I appoint you commander today".

Jibananda armed himself and leapt onto his horse. He looked once at Nabinananda, but none could tell what the signal of his glance meant. And none grasped too what Nabinananda's eyes signalled in return. Only those two understood that it could be this life's last farewell. Then with right hand raised aloft Nabinananda addressed the company, "Brothers, sing now 'Conquer, O Hari, Lord of the world!' "

Then those ten thousand Children, with voices in unison echoing to river, forest and sky so that the sound of cannon fire was drowned out, sang out with thousands upon thousands of hands upraised, "Conquer, O Hari, Lord of the world! To destroy the barbarian hordes you wield your sword!"

A rain of English cannonballs began to fall upon the company of Children in the midst of the forest. Still they sang on, "Conquer, O Hari, Lord of the world!" Not one stopped singing, though as they sang some fell to the ground decapitated, others fell with hands blown off, and still others with hearts torn out.

When the song was over everyone fell completely silent. That dense forest, the riverbank, that boundless wilderness was plunged into the deepest silence. All that could be heard was the sound of those fearful cannons and the distant tramp and clatter of the massed weapons of the whiteskins.

Then Satyananda said aloud in the midst of that profound silence: "Hari, Lord of the world, will show you favour.* How far are the cannons?"

A voice cried out from above, "Very close to our wood. Only a small field remains to be crossed".

"Who is that?" called Satyananda.

"I am Nabinananda", was the reply.

Satyananda said, "You are ten thousand Children! Today you will conquer. Seize those cannons!"

Then Jibananda, who was in front and mounted, cried out, "Follow me!" The ten thousand, horse and foot, sped after Jibananda. Those on foot had guns slung on their shoulders, swords at the waist, and spears in their hands. No sooner did they emerge from the wood than innumerable cannonballs rained upon them and began to cut them down. Many of the Children fell dead to the ground without fighting.

Suddenly someone said to Jibananda, "Jibananda, there's no point in the useless loss of life".

Jibananda turned and saw Bhabananda. "What should we do?" he answered.

Bhabananda said, "Remain in the forest and protect ourselves under cover of the trees. Without cannon ourselves, and in an open field in the face of cannon fire, our army won't last long. But among the bushes we can fight for a long time".

"What you say is right", said Jibananda, "but the Master has ordered us to seize those cannons, and that's what we'll try and do".

"Who can do that?" said Bhabananda. "But if we have to go, then you stay here. I'll go".

"That can't be, Bhabananda. It's I who must die today!"

"No, today I shall die", said Bhabananda.

Jibananda said, "I must do my penance".

"You're untouched by sin", said Bhabananda, "you need not atone. But my heart's defiled, so I must die. Stay. I'll go".

"Bhabananda! I do not know what sin you've committed", said Jibananda, "but if you stay the Children's work will succeed. Let me go".

Bhabananda was silent for a while. Then he said, "If we must die today, we'll die. We'll die on the day we're meant to die. There's no right or wrong time for dying".

"Then come on", said Jibananda.

Bhabananda went to the front of the company. The cannonballs were falling in droves, destroying the *santan* army, ripping it apart and throwing it into disarray, while the troops of enemy sepoys armed with guns kept felling line after line of Children with unerring aim. Then Bhabananda cried, "The Children will have to plunge into this torrent today. Who dares, Brothers? Now sing *Bande Mataram*!" Then, raising thousands of voices to the skies, the *santan* army sang *Bande Mataram* with sombre hope, to the beat of cannon fire.

❁ *Chapter 10* ❁

Singing *Bande Mataram*, the ten thousand, with spears upraised, charged the rows of cannons and fell upon them. They were crushed and rent, blown up and thrown into utter confusion by the rain of cannonballs, yet even then the *santan* host did not turn back. At Captain Thomas's command a group of sepoys with fixed bayonets strongly attacked the Children's right flank. Assailed from two sides, the Children lost heart completely. Within a moment, hundreds began to be killed. Then Jibananda said, "Bhabananda, you were right! There's no further need for Vaishnava deaths. Let us retreat slowly".

Bhabananda said, "How can we retreat now? Those who fall back now will be the ones to die".

Jibananda said, "We are being attacked in front and from the right. There's no one on the left. Come on, let's turn slowly and escape from the left".

"How can you go left?" said Bhabananda. "The river's there,* and it's a torrent because of the recent rains. Do you want to escape from English fire only to drown the *santan* army in the river?"

"I seem to remember a bridge there", said Jibananda.

"If our army of ten thousand try to cross that bridge", returned Bhabananda, "there'll be such a crush that probably a single cannon shot will easily be able to destroy the lot!"

"Then do this," said Jibananda. "Keep a small force with you. You've shown such courage and wile in the battle, that there's nothing you couldn't do!—with that small force, protect the front. With your men for cover, I'll take the remaining Children and cross the bridge. No doubt those who stay with you will die, but those with me might survive".

"Good, I'll do that", said Bhabananda.

Then taking two thousand *santans* and once again raising the cry *Bande Mataram*, he attacked the English artillery with tremendous zeal. The battle raged fiercely there, but how long could that small army of Children last in the face of cannon-fire? Like paddy cut down, they began to be laid low by the gunners.* Jibananda used this opportunity to turn the face of the remaining *santan* army around slightly and move slowly towards the left along the edge of the forest. But one of Captain Thomas's assistants, Lieutenant Watson, spotted from a distance that a number of *santans* were gradually escaping and, taking a group of provincial and another of district troops,* went after Jibananda.

Captain Thomas noticed this.* Seeing the greater part of the *santan* Order escaping, he said to Captain Hay, an assistant, "I'll finish off this detached group of rebels with a few hundred sepoys, you go after the others, with the cannon and the rest of the troops. Lieutenant Watson's on the left, while you'll be on the right. See that you intercept them and block the mouth of the bridge. Then we can enclose them on three sides and kill them like birds in a net. They're native soldiers, fleet of foot, and at their best in running away. You won't be able to catch them easily. Take your horsemen round from the back and station them in front of the bridge, and you'll be able to finish the job". Captain Hay did as he was ordered.

"It was excessive arrogance that brought Lanka down." Showing utter contempt for the Children, Captain Thomas kept only two hundred footsoldiers for the fight with Bhabananda, and despatched his remaining forces with Hay. When the wily Bhabananda saw that all the English cannon and troops had gone and that those who remained could easily be killed, he rallied the remnants of his own force and said, "We must kill these few and go to Jibananda's aid. Cry out once more, 'Conquer, O Hari! Lord of the world!' "

Then crying "Conquer, O Hari! Lord of the world!", that small force of Children pounced like tigers upon Captain Thomas. Unable to sustain the ferocity of that attack the small group of sepoys and Southern troops was destroyed. Bhabananda himself went and grasped Captain Thomas, who had been fighting to the very end, by the hair.[12] Bhabananda said, "Captain Sir, I

[12]A sign of unquestioned supremacy.

shan't kill you, the English are not our enemies. But why are you here to help the Muslims? Here, I spare your life, for the time being you are my prisoner. Victory to the English! We wish you well!"

Captain Thomas tried to take up a musket with bayonet attached to kill Bhabananda, but the latter's grip was as firm as a tiger's so that he was unable to move. "Tie him up!" said Bhabananda to his followers, and a couple of Children came up and bound Captain Thomas.

Then Bhabananda said, "Put him on a horse. Come on, we'll take him and go to Jibananda Goswami's assistance". The small band of *santans* took the bound Captain Thomas on a horse and, chanting *Bande Mataram*, made straight for Lieutenant Watson.

The *santan* army with Jibananda were dispirited and ready to flee. He and Dhirananda managed to keep most of them under control, though not all; some fled for refuge to the mango forest.* Jibananda and Dhirananda took the remaining force to the mouth of the bridge, but Hay and Watson surrounded them there on both sides. There was no escape.

❁ *Chapter II* ❁

Just then Thomas's cannon reached the right flank.* The *santan* force was torn apart, so that all hope of survival for anyone was lost. The Children began to flee in every direction. In vain did Jibananda and Dhirananda make every effort to control them and keep them together. Then a voice cried out, "Make for the bridge! Make for the bridge! Cross over, or else you'll drown in the river. Turn to face the English forces and slowly make for the bridge!"

Jibananda looked round and saw Bhabananda facing him. Bhabananda said, "Jibananda, take them to the bridge. There's no other way!"

Then slowly falling back, the army of Children reached the bridge. But no sooner had many of them entered the bridge than the English cannon got their chance, completely sweeping the bridge with fire; the force of Children began to suffer heavy losses.

Bhabananda, Jibananda and Dhirananda were together.[13] The devastation of one cannon in particular was causing severe loss among the Children.

"Jibananda! Dhirananda!" said Bhabananda. "Come on! Let's swing our swords and capture that cannon". Then flashing their swords the three of them slew the gunners accompanying the cannon, while more and more of the Children came to their assistance. Once Bhabananda had captured the cannon, he climbed upon it and clapping his hands called out, "Cry *Bande Mataram!*"

[13]What had become of the captured Captain Thomas, one wonders, and why did Bhabananda not exploit his capture to influence the course of battle?

Bande Mataram! cried everyone.

Bhabananda said, "Jibananda, let's turn this cannon round and pound them to flour!" The Children turned the cannon round, and its roar sounded like a paen to Hari in Vaishnava ears! Many sepoys began to die.

Bhabananda dragged the cannon to the mouth of the bridge and said, "You two form the Children into lines and take them across the bridge, while I hold this front open. But first send me some gunners to fire the cannon". Twenty picked *santans* remained by Bhabananda's side.

Then innumerable *santans* began crossing the bridge, forming into columns at Jibananda's and Dhirananda's orders and reaching the other side. With the help of the twenty *santans*,* Bhabananda on his own began to lay low many of the enemy with that single cannon. But the foreigners' army* bore down like a river in full flood. Wave after wave surrounded, oppressed, overwhelmed Bhabananda. But Bhabananda remained tireless, invincible, fearless! How many of the enemy did he destroy with volley after volley of that cannon! The foreigners began to attack him like buffets of waves lashed by a storm, yet still the score of *santans* stood fast, blocking the bridge's entrance with the cannon. They simply refused to die—and the foreigner could not enter the bridge. Those heroes were invincible, their lives indestructible.

During this respite, the army of Children crossed in droves. If only the bridge could be guarded a little longer, all the Children would be able to cross. Just then the boom of new cannon was heard. Both forces ceased battle for a while to look round in consternation, and saw emerging from the forest a number of cannons manned by Indian gunners. Once it had emerged, that huge line of cannon belched smoke from seventeen mouths and unleashed a rain of fire upon Hay's men! Forest, river and hill echoed to the awful sound, while the foreigners' army, tired by the whole day's battle, shuddered for fear of their lives. In the rain of fire, the south Indian, Muslim, and north Indian troops started to flee. Only a handful of the whiteskins made a stand and began to die.

Bhabananda was watching the fun. "Brothers, the baldies* are breaking up", he cried. "Now's the time to attack them!" Like a stream of ants, the newly-enthused army of Children recrossed the bridge and rushed to attack the foreigners, falling upon them all of a sudden. And the latter now had no chance to resist—just as the waves of the Bhagirathi bore away that huge, proud mountainlike elephant in rut, so the Children swept away the foreigners. The latter could see Bhabananda's footsoldiers behind them and Mahendra's cannons in front. Then Captain Hay faced utter destruction. Nothing could hold out any longer—strength, valour, courage, skill, training, pride, everything was swept away! Provincial troops and imperial, English, native and foreign, black and white, were brought down and laid low. The forces of unbelief* fled, and with shouts of "Kill them!" Jibananda, Bhabananda and Dhirananda* ran in pursuit. The Children* captured their cannons and slew a great many of the English and sepoys.

When Captain Hay and Watson saw that all was lost, they sent word to Bhabananda that they would surrender and that the killing should stop. When he heard this Jibananda looked at Bhabananda. "No", said Bhabananda to himself, "for I must die today". Then raising his arm and shouting Hari's name, he cried out, "Kill them! Kill them!"

Not a single one survived. Finally, in one place there were twenty to thirty* white soldiers who were grouped together, and having resolved to sacrifice their lives, they began to put up a terrific fight.

"Bhabananda", said Jibananda, "we have won the victory, and there's no more to be done. Except for these few, there's no one else alive. Why don't we spare their lives and turn back?"

Bhabananda replied, "So long as even one lives Bhabananda will not turn back. I swear to you, Jibananda, stand aside and watch. I'll kill these few English alone".

Captain Thomas sat bound on his horse. Bhabananda ordered, "Place him in front of me. Let this fellow die first, before I do".

Since Captain Thomas understood Bengali, he cried out to the English troops, "Englishmen![14] I'm a dead man! Uphold the name of old England. I swear to you by Christ, shoot me first and then kill these rebels".*

With a whiz a bullet sped towards him. An Irishman had taken aim and fired at Captain Thomas. Thomas was struck in the forehead and died.

Bhabananda then called out, "My Brahma-weapon has failed![15] Who among you, like Arjuna, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva of old, will protect me now? Look, like a wounded tiger the whiteskins are upon me. I'm here to die. Are there any *santans* ready to die with me?"

Dhirananda was the first to come forward, followed by Jibananda. Then ten, fifteen, twenty, fifty more *santans* followed suit. Seeing Dhirananda, Bhabananda said, "So you too have come to die with me?"

"Why not? Does anyone have a monopoly on death?" said Dhirananda, wounding a whiteskin even as he spoke.[16]

"It's not that", said Bhabananda. "But if you die you'll not be able to spend your days gazing at your wife and children!"

"You're speaking of what happened yesterday?" said Dhirananda. "Haven't you still understood?" (Dhirananda killed the wounded whiteskin.)

"No", said Bhabananda. (Here Bhabananda's right arm was cut off by a blow from a whiteskin.)

"Do you think I could dare to speak like that to a holy soul like you?" said Dhirananda. "I came as an agent of Satyananda".

[14]"English" was often used in the generic sense of "British" at the time.

[15]"Brahma-weapon": a reference to an invincible mythical weapon of the god Brahma.

[16]Hand-to-hand combat with the enemy seems to have begun; see further.

"What!" said Bhabananda. "Did Maharaj not trust me?" (Bhabananda was fighting with one hand now.)

Protecting him, Dhirananda said, "He had heard with his own ears your conversation with Kalyani".

"How's that?"

"He was there at the time. Watch out!" (Bhabananda was wounded by a whiteskin whom he wounded in turn.) Dhirananda continued, "He was teaching Kalyani the *Gita* when you arrived. . . .[17] Careful!" (Now Bhabananda's left arm was cut off as well.)

Bhabananda said, "Tell him about my death. Tell him I am not faithless".

Eyes full of tears, Dhirananda kept fighting. "He knows that", he said. "Remember his words of blessing last night. He said to me before I left, 'Stay by Bhabananda's side. He will die today. When the time comes tell him that I bless him and that in the next life he will attain heaven.' "

Bhabananda replied, "Brother, victory to the *santans*! Now, as I die let me hear *Bande Mataram* once more!"

Then at Dhirananda's command all the war-crazed *santans** sang *Bande Mataram* with great vigour, their strength of arm doubling in the process. At that dreadful moment the remaining whiteskins were slain. Not a single enemy remained on the battlefield. And at that moment too, Bhabananda, chanting *Bande Mataram* and contemplating Vishnu's abode, breathed his last.

Alas, for the charm of a beautiful woman! *You* are to blame in this world of travail!

❁ *Chapter 12* ❁

After the victory, the conquering band of heroes surrounded Satyananda on the banks of the Ajay River and began to celebrate in various ways. Only Satyananda grieved—for Bhabananda.

Thus far the Vaishnavas had not indulged much in the musical sounds of battle, but now, out of nowhere, thousands upon thousands of different kinds of drums, gongs, pipes and horns sounded together. The whole area, forest, river and open ground, was bursting with the sounds and echoes of the victory din. After the Children had celebrated in this way for a long time, Satyananda said, "Today the Lord of the world has been merciful to us, and the *santan* code has triumphed! But one task remains. We cannot forget those who have been unable to celebrate with us and who have sacrificed their lives so that we could rejoice. Let us perform the rites for those who have been slain on the

[17]The *Bhagavad Gītā*, the famous discourse (ca. first century CE) between Krishna, the supreme being in embodied form, and his friend Arjuna.

battlefield, and especially for that Great Soul who achieved this victory for us by sacrificing his life. Come, let us perform Bhabananda's rites with great ceremony".

Then, repeating *Bande Mataram,* the company of *santans* proceeded to perform the rites for the dead. A great many gathered together, and with chants to Hari and many loads of sandalwood, prepared a pyre for Bhabananda. They laid him on it and lit the flame; then, walking round the pyre they began to chant *Hare Murare.* These were devotees of Vishnu, not members of some Vaishnava sect, so they cremated their dead.

When this was over, only five—Satyananda, Jibananda, Mahendra, Nabinananda and Dhirananda—remained in the forest to confer in secret.

Satyananda said, "The vow for which we gave up every other code of life and all our joys is now fulfilled. No longer is there a foreign army* in this region, and those who remain will be unable to withstand us even for a short time. What should we do next?"

Jibananda said, "Why don't we capture the capital* now?"

"My view precisely", said Satyananda.

"Well, where's our army?" said Dhirananda.

"Why, here it is", answered Jibananda.

"Where?" said Dhirananda. "Do you see anyone about?"

"They're resting in various places", said Jibananda. "As soon as you sound the call, they'll be here".

Dhirananda said, "Not a single one will turn up".

"Why not?"

"Because everyone is out looting. The villages are now unprotected. They'll plunder the Muslim villages and the silk factories and go home. You won't find a single one about. I've gone and looked for them".

Disheartened, Satyananda said, "At any rate we are now in command of this whole region.* No one is left to oppose us. So proclaim *santan* rule in Barendrabhumi,* collect taxes from our subjects and assemble an army to conquer the city. When people hear that Hindus are ruling, many soldiers will gather under the *santans*' banner".

Then Jibananda and the others paid obeisance to Satyananda and said, "We bow down to you, highest Maharaj! At your command we'll set up a throne for you right here in this forest".

For the first time in his life Satyananda showed anger. "Shame!" he exclaimed. "Do you think I'm an empty vessel? None of us are kings. We are renouncers! Now the Lord of heaven himself is the king of this land. When you conquer the city you can crown anyone you wish king, but know for sure that I'll not change my celibate state for any other. Now each of you go to his own work". The four prostrated to the monk and rose up.

Without letting the others know, Satyananda motioned to Mahendra to wait. The others left and Mahendra remained. Satyananda said to him, "All of you took a vow in Vishnu's shrine to follow the *santan* code. Both Bha-

bananda and Jibananda broke their vow, and Bhabananda today decided to pay the penalty. I'm always worried about when Jibananda too will surrender his life to make amends. Yet I live in the hope that for a secret reason unknown to you he won't be able to die just yet. You alone, however, kept your promise. The Children's task is now completed, and you had promised that until that was done you would not set eyes on your wife and daughter. But now that our task is accomplished, you can go back to living as a householder".

Eyes streaming with tears, Mahendra said, "Master, with whom can I live as a householder? My wife has taken her own life, and I've no idea where my daughter is or how to find her. You've told me that she's alive, and that's all I know".*

Then Satyananda called Nabinananda and said to Mahendra, "This is Nabinananda Goswami, most pure of mind, and a dear disciple. Nabinananda will tell you how to find your daughter". He made a sign to Shanti, who understood. She paid her respects to Satyananda and was about to leave when Mahendra said, "Where will I meet you?"

"Come with me to my hermitage", said Shanti, and walked on ahead.

Respectfully touching the monk's feet, Mahendra took his leave and accompanied Shanti to her hermitage. It was now late at night. Even then, without resting, Shanti headed for the city.

When everyone had left, Satyananda lay prostrate by himself on the earth, and placing his head on the ground, began to meditate on the Lord of the world. The night had turned to dawn* when someone came up, touched his head and said, "I have come".

Roused and startled, the monk said in great agitation, "You have come? But why?"

"Because it is the appointed time", said the other.

"My Lord", said the monk, "excuse me today. On Magh's approaching full-moon day, I will carry out your command".

❁ END OF PART III ❁

PART IV

❁ *Chapter 1* ❁

That night the whole region was filled with cries to Hari. The Children roamed about in bands, shouting *Bande Mataram!* or "Hari, Lord of the world!" Some seized the weapons of the enemy soldiers or stripped their clothes, others kicked the faces of the dead or committed some other outrage.* Some rushed towards the villages, others towards the towns, catching passers-by or householders and saying, "Say *Bande Mataram* or we'll kill you!" Some looted the confectioners' shops and ate the sweets, others went into milkmen's houses, pulled down their pots and enjoyed the curd. Some even said, "We're milkmen from Braja, where are the milkmaids?"[1] There was a great furore that night in the towns and villages.

Everyone said that the Muslims had been defeated and the land was the Hindus' once more! Let all cry "Hari" freely now! No sooner did they see a Muslim, than the villagers chased after him to kill him. Some formed into gangs that night and went into Muslim areas, burning their houses and looting their property. Many of the foreigners were killed, and many Muslims got rid of their beards, smeared clay on their bodies and began to call on Hari; when questioned they would say, awkwardly, "I'm a Hindu".

Terrified groups of Muslims fled towards the city.* The king's men rushed there from all directions, while the remaining sepoys, now well equipped, were formed into ranks to defend the city. The guards in their quarters at the wharfs of the city's moat were armed and instructed to guard the gates with the utmost care. Everyone stayed awake all night wondering anxiously what would happen. While the Hindus said, "O may the monks come and with Mother Durga's help make this the Hindu's lucky day!" the Muslims cried. "Allah Akbar! Is the holy Koran completely false after all! We pray five times a day, even then we can't conquer this Hindu lot with their smears of sandalpaste! The whole world's a sham!" And so, while some lamented and others exulted, everyone passed the night in the keenest anticipation.

All this reached Kalyani's ears, for everybody—man, woman, and child—knew what had happened. "O conquer, Lord of the world!" she thought. "Today your work's been done! And today I'll go in search of my husband. O Krishna, be my help today!"

Late at night Kalyani rose from bed, opened the side door alone, and looked about her. She saw no one. Carefully and silently she emerged into the

[1]A reference to Krishna's amorous exploits with the milkmaids of Braja (Sanskrit: Vraja).

main street from Gauri's house. Praying silently to her God, she said, "Please Lord, let me meet him today in Padacinha".

Kalyani reached the city gate.

"Who goes there?" said the guard.

"A woman", said Kalyani timidly.

"You can't leave. Orders", said the guard. But the officer in charge heard them talking and said, "There's no bar to going out. No one's allowed to come in".

When he heard this, the guard said to Kalyani kindly in broken Bengali, "You may go out, there's nothing to stop you, but it's very dangerous tonight. Who knows what might happen to you? You could fall into the hands of bandits or into some ditch and die. Who knows? Don't go out tonight".

Kalyani said, "Friend, I'm a poor woman. I haven't a single cowrie to my name! No bandit's going to worry about me!"

"But you've come of age, yes, you have!" said the guard. "That's wealth enough in this world! Even I could be a bandit for that!"

Kalyani realised how dangerous this was, and without a word moved slowly past the gate. Seeing that she didn't appreciate the joke, the guard sadly took a deep puff of ganja and broke into a little love song. Kalyani slipped away.

Many were afoot in bands on the road that night. Some were shouting, "Kill! Kill!"; others, "Run! Run!" Some were crying, others were laughing. People ran to seize others on sight. Kalyani was in real trouble. She didn't know the way, and was unable to ask for help, everyone was looking for a fight. She was forced to make her way furtively in the dark. Even then, she came upon a group of fierce, crazed rebels, who came rushing to get her, yelling. Kalyani ran with all her might into the jungle, but even there in no time a couple of thugs ran after her. One of them grabbed the end-piece of her sari, crowing, "Now, my beauty!" Just then someone suddenly appeared and struck her attacker with a stick; the latter fell back wounded. The stranger, who was very young, was dressed like a renouncer, chest covered in a black deerskin.

"Don't be afraid", said the stranger to Kalyani. "Come with me. Where are you going?"

"To Padacinha", answered Kalyani.

"What!" said the other, startled and astonished. "To Padacinha!" Placing both hands on Kalyani's shoulders, the stranger peered into her face in the darkness.

Touched by a man, Kalyani suddenly shivered, frightened and upset. She was taken aback and her eyes filled with tears. Terrified, she was unable to run away.

When the scrutiny had ended, the stranger exclaimed, "*Hare Murare!* I recognise you! You're that wretch Kalyani!"

Frightened, Kalyani said, "Who are you?"

"Your most humble servant", replied the stranger. "Pretty lady, be kind to me!"

Kalyani quickly moved away and said angrily, "So you saved me only to insult me! You look like a monk. Is this how monks should behave? I'm helpless now, otherwise I'd have kicked you in the face!"

"O Smiling One!" said the monk. "Long have I desired the touch of your beautiful body!" And the monk ran up to Kalyani and embraced her tightly. Kalyani burst out laughing and said, "You wretch! You should have told me you're a woman too!"

Shanti said, "You're looking for Mahendra, aren't you?"

"Who are you?" said Kalyani. "You seem to know everything?"

Shanti replied, "I'm a monk, a leader of the *santan* army, a terrific hero, so of course I know everything! Since the *santans* and the sepoys are up to no good on the roads today, you can't go to Padacinha".

Kalyani began to cry.

Shanti rolled her eyes and said, "Well, what's there to fear! We kill a thousand enemies with the darts from our eyes! Come on, then, let's go to Padacinha".

Getting the help of a clever woman like this was a real godsend, thought Kalyani. "I'll follow wherever you lead", she said. Then Shanti led her away through the forest.

❁ *Chapter 2* ❁

When Shanti had left the hermitage by herself late at night and headed towards the city, Jibananda was at the hermitage. Shanti had told him she was going to the city. "I'll return with Mahendra's wife", she said. "Tell Mahendra that his wife is alive".

Jibananda had learned from Bhabananda how Kalyani's life had been saved, and also where she now lived (the latter from the ubiquitous Shanti). Step by step he gave Mahendra the news. At first Mahendra didn't believe what he heard, but finally, overcome with joy, he was almost stupified.

At dawn that night, with Shanti's help, Kalyani met Mahendra. In the silent forest, amid the dark shadows of dense rows of *sal* trees, before the animals and birds had woken up, Kalyani and Mahendra saw each other once more, witnessed only by the assembled stars, their radiance fading in a deep blue sky, and those still, endless rows of *sal* trees. In the distance one could hear the gentle murmur of a stream as it dashed against the pebbles, and the joyful call of a *koel* on seeing the sun rising in the east, crowned by the dawn.

It was still early when Shanti and Jibananda arrived. Kalyani said to Shanti, "We are wholly in your debt. Please complete your kindness by telling us where our daughter is".

Shanti looked at Jibananda and said, "I need to sleep. I've had no rest in the last twenty-four hours, and haven't slept for two nights. I'm only a man, after all!"

Kalyani gave a smile. Jibananda looked at Mahendra and said, "I'll see to that. You and Kalyani go to Padacinha, you'll get your daughter there".

Jibananda went to Bharuipur to pick up the child from Nimai—but it wasn't quite as simple as that. At first Nimai gulped, not knowing where to look. Then nose and lips bulging, she burst into tears. At last she said, "I won't give up the girl!"

When Nimai had finished wiping her eyes by rubbing them with the back of her well-shaped hand, Jibananda said, "There's no need to cry. They don't live that far away. You can visit them from time to time and see the child".

"The girl belongs to you lot", said Nimai pouting, "so you can have her. What do I care!" She brought Sukumari and angrily dumped the child near Jibananda, then sat down to cry, her legs stretched out before her. So, without referring to the matter further, Jibananda began to ramble on about one thing or another. But Nimai's anger hadn't abated. She got up and, bringing one by one a bundle of Sukumari's clothes, her box of ornaments, cords for her hair, her dolls and other things, began to fling them down in front of Jibananda. It was Sukumari who gathered them up and asked Nimai, "Where are we going now, Mummy?"

Nimai could bear it no longer. She took the girl in her arms and went away sobbing.

❁ *Chapter 3* ❁

In the new fort at Padacinha, Mahendra, Kalyani, Jibananda, Shanti, Nimai, Nimai's husband, and Sukumari, now happily assembled, gladly mingled together. Shanti had come in the guise of Nabinananda. On the night she had brought Kalyani to her forest hut, Shanti had forbidden Kalyani to tell Mahendra that Nabinananda was a woman.

One day Kalyani sent for Nabinananda in the women's quarters. When Nabinananda entered the women's quarters, the servants objected but Nabinananda did not listen. Shanti went to Kalyani and asked why she had been called.

Kalyani said, "How long will you remain in the guise of a man? We can't meet or talk together. We'll have to reveal your identity to my husband".

In a quandary, Nabinananda remained silent for a long while. Finally, Nabinananda said, "There are many obstacles to that, Kalyani". While they discussed the matter, the servants who had forbidden Nabinananda access to the women's quarters went to Mahendra and informed him that the monk had forced entry there in spite of their protests. Curious, Mahendra also en-

tered the women's quarters and went to Kalyani's bedroom. He saw Nabinananda standing there and Kalyani untying the knot of the monk's tigerskin.[2] Mahendra was amazed, and also furious.

Nabinananda saw him and said, laughing, "What's this, Gosai, distrust between us Children!"

"Was Bhabananda Thakur trustworthy?" Mahendra replied.

With a roll of the eyes, Nabinananda said, "Did Kalyani ever untie Bhabananda's tigerskin?" But as she spoke, Shanti held Kalyani's hand and stopped her from undoing the tigerskin.

"Well?" said Mahendra.

"You may distrust me", said Nabinananda, "but on what grounds do you distrust Kalyani?"

Nonplussed, Mahendra said, "I don't distrust her".

"Then why have you followed me to the women's quarters?" said Nabinananda.

"I had something to say to Kalyani, that's why".

"Then kindly leave", returned Nabinananda. "I too have something to say to Kalyani. Please go away and let me speak first. This is your house and you can come here whenever you please, but I've had great difficulty coming here just the once".

Mahendra stood there at a loss. He had no idea what was going on. This wasn't how a guilty person spoke. Even Kalyani was behaving oddly. She didn't act in the least like a faithless person—running away, cowed, ashamed. On the contrary, she was laughing softly! Indeed, could Kalyani—she who had so easily swallowed the poison beneath that tree—ever be a wrongdoer? Just then, as Mahendra thought this over, the hapless Shanti, seeing his predicament, smiled and glanced archly at Kalyani. In a flash the darkness lifted and Mahendra realised that this was the glance of a woman. Plucking up courage,* Mahendra grasped Nabinananda's beard and pulled at it—the false beard and moustache came off in his hand! Kalyani, seeing her chance, undid the knot on Shanti's tigerskin, and that too fell away. Caught out, Shanti stood there, dismayed.

"Who are you?" asked Mahendra.

"Mr Nabinananda Goswami".

"That's a bluff. You're a woman?"

"Well, clearly".

"Then let me ask you this. Since you're a woman why are you always in Jibananda Thakur's company?"

"I cannot tell you".

"Does Jibananda Thakur know you're a woman?"

[2]Apparently Shanti wears a deerskin when disguised as a wandering ascetic, and a tigerskin when disguised as a monk of the *santan* order!

"Yes".

When he heard this, the chaste Mahendra was crestfallen. But Kalyani could contain herself no longer. "This is Shanti-debi, Jibananda Goswami's lawful wife", she said.

For a moment, Mahendra's face cleared, then it darkened. Kalyani understood, and said, "But she's a celibate woman".*

Chapter 4

Northern Bengal was no longer under Muslim control.* But none of the Muslims admitted this—how the eye can deceive the mind! "A number of bandits are up to much mischief", they said. "But we're taking them in hand!" There's no knowing how long this would have continued, but at the time, by God's will, Warren Hastings was governor-general in Kolkata. Now Warren Hastings was not the man to let his eye deceive his mind; if he was so inclined, where would the British empire be in India today? Without delay, a second commander called Major Edwards* arrived with a new army to put the Children in order.

Edwards realised that this was no European campaign. The enemy had no army, cities, capital or forts, and yet everything was under their control. When the British encamped in a certain place, they were in charge for the time, but as soon as the British forces left, *Bande Mataram* rang out from all sides! The newcomer was unable to discover from where his enemies issued like ants at night, burning any village that was under British control, or despatching instantly any small contingent of British forces that came their way. After careful inquiry he learned that they had built a fort at Padacinha where they protected their armoury and their treasury. So he decided that the thing to do was take possession of the fort.

Through spies he started gathering information as to how many *santans* lived in Padacinha. But when he found out, he didn't think it politic to attack the fort there and then. Instead, he hatched a wonderful plot.

The full-moon day of Magh was almost upon them, and there was to be a fair not far from his camp, on the riverbank.* This fair would be a grand occasion. Usually more than a lakh of people gathered at the fair. However, since this was now the Vaishnavas' domain, surely they would attend with great show. In fact, it was quite possible that all the *santans* would gather for the occasion on the full-moon day. And, thought Major Edwards, it was equally possible that all those guarding Padacinha would turn up too. That's when he would pounce on Padacinha and capture the fort!

With this in mind, the major spread the rumour that he was going to attack the fair; he'd get all the Vaishnavas in one place and finish off all his enemies in one day. He wouldn't let the Vaishnavas have their fair!

The news spread from village to village, and wherever a member of the

santan Order lived, he seized his weapons and hurried immediately to protect the fair. All the Children arrived at the riverbank and assembled there on Magh's full-moon day, exactly as the major had thought. And, fortunately for the English, Mahendra too fell into the trap. Leaving only a few soldiers behind in Padacinha, he set off with most of his troops for the fair.

Jibananda and Shanti had left Padacinha before all this happened, and since there was no prospect of battle, they didn't have this in mind. What they had resolved to do was expiate the great sin of the broken vow by surrendering their lives at an auspicious moment in holy waters, on the sacred full-moon day of Magh. But on the way they heard that there was to be a great battle between the English army and the *santans* assembled at the fair. Jibananda said, "Well, then we'll die in that battle. Let's hurry!"

As they hurried on, they reached the top of a small hillock. There, a little below them, our heroic couple spotted the English camp. "This is no time to talk of dying", said Shanti. "Say *Bande Mataram* instead!"

❁ *Chapter 5* ❁

After a whispered consultation, Jibananda hid in one clump of trees while Shanti entered another and was then engaged in something wonderfully secretive!

Shanti was on her way to die and had decided to face death in the clothes of a woman. For Mahendra had said that her male guise was a fraud, and she couldn't die a fraud. So she had brought along a small wicker basket with a lid in which she had kept her clothes. Now Nabinananda had opened the basket and was busy changing clothes!

Shanti drew a fine line with brown paste from the bridge of her nose to the middle of her forehead culminating in a large spot. Then masking that lovely face with a spray of fluttering curls in the style of the day and dressed like a Vaishnavi with *saranga* in hand, she presented herself in the English camp. When they saw her, those sepoys with their glossy, black beards lost their heads! They bade her sing all sorts of songs for them—*tappas*, *gazals*, now a song to Kali, now one to Krishna—and plied her with rice, lentils, sweets, copper and silver in return.

As the Vaishnavi, who had reconnoitred the camp with her eyes, was about to leave, the sepoys asked, "When will you come again?"

"I don't know", said the Vaishnavi. "I live quite far away".

"How far away?" the sepoys asked.

"In Padacinha", was the reply.

Now that very day the major was gathering information about Padacinha. One of the sepoys who knew this called the Vaishnavi and escorted her to the captain. The captain brought her to Major Edwards. When she reached the

major's presence the Vaishnavi smiled sweetly, charmed him with a piercing seductive glance, and striking her tambourine, sang: 'To destroy the barbarian hordes, You wield that dreadful sword!'[3]

The Major asked,[4] "Where do you live, lady?"

The "lady" replied, "I'm not a lady, I'm a Vaishnavi. I live in Padacinha".

"Well, that is Padsin—Padsin, is it? Is there a *gar* there?"[5]

"*Ghar?* House? Yes, plenty of houses!"

"No, not *gar*— . . . *gar, gar!*"

"Sir, I think I understand what you want to say. Do you mean *gaḍ*, 'fort'?"

"Yes, yes, *gar*! Well, is there one?"

"Yes, there's a fort there. A wonderful fort".

"How many men?"

"You mean how many men live in the fort? Twenty to fifty thousand".

"Nonsense! Not more than two to four thousand could live in a fort. Are they still there? Or have they left?"

"Now where would they go!" said Shanti.

"To the fair.* When did you come from there?"

"I came yesterday, Sir".

"Well then, they would have left by today", said the major.

Shanti thought, "If I don't see your father dead first, I've dressed up in vain! Oh to see the jackals gnaw away at your skull!" But aloud she said, "That may be, Sir. They could have left today. But I wouldn't know. I'm a Vaishnavi. I earn my living by begging and singing songs. I don't keep that abreast of things. My throat is parched with talking, so give me some money and I'll be on my way. For a good tip, I could bring some news by the day after tomorrow".

With a clatter, Edwards threw Shanti a rupee coin and said, "Not the day after tomorrow, lady!"

"Enough of this lady nonsense", said Shanti, annoyed. "I'm a Vaishnavi!"

"Not the day after tomorrow", said Edwards. "I must have the information by tonight".

Shanti muttered, "Go take a swig of something and sleep with your gun under your head and mustard-oil up your nose! So I'm supposed to walk over forty miles there and back again, just to bring him news! Where's this chump of a man from!"

"What do you mean 'chump of a man'?" said Edwards.

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[3]Sung (to Krishna) in Sanskrit, so that the major would not understand. But where is the *saranga*?

[4]In the conversation that follows, the major speaks a grotesque mishmash of Bengali and Hindi (except for the English words, underlined in the text).

[5]The following exchange involves a play on three words: Edwards's *gar* (meaningless), *ghar* (house), and *gaḍ* (fort), which Edwards cannot pronounce properly.

"I mean 'champion,' " said Shanti, "A great general."

"Yes, I could be a Great General", said Edwards. "Just like Clive! But I must have the news by tonight! I'll give you a hundred rupees bakshish".

"A hundred, a thousand, makes no difference", said Shanti. "Can't do forty miles on foot".

"Well, on horseback then", said Edwards.

"If I could ride a horse", said Shanti, "do you think I'd come to your tent, playing a *saranga* for alms?"

"We'll carry you", said Edwards.

"You mean you'll carry me on your lap? Do you think I've no shame?"

"Well, why not? I'll give you five hundred rupees!"

"Who'd take me?" said Shanti. "You?"

Edwards pointed to a young ensign called Lindlay who was standing in front and said, "Lindlay, will you go?" Lindlay, eyeing Shanti's youth and beauty, said, "With pleasure!"

A large Arabian horse was saddled up and brought, and Lindlay got ready. He caught hold of Shanti to lift her up. "Really!" said Shanti. "In front of all these people! Am I supposed to be shameless? Ride on, let's leave the camp first".

Lindlay mounted the horse and went on ahead slowly; Shanti followed on foot. In this way they came out of the camp. When they had reached an open and deserted tract of land, Shanti put her foot on Lindlay's and in a single bound mounted the horse. Lindlay laughed and said, "So you're a fine horsewoman!"

"We're so good", said Shanti, "that I feel ashamed to ride with you. Really, riding a horse with your feet in the stirrups!"

So in bravado, Lindlay removed his feet from the stirrups. Shanti instantly grabbed the foolish Englishman by the neck and pushed him off the horse. Then righting herself in the saddle and striking the horse's side with her anklets, Shanti rode off on her steed like the wind. Moving about with the *santan* army for four years had taught her horsemanship, else could she have lived in the company of Jibananda? Lindlay was left lying there with a broken leg, while Shanti rode off like the wind.

Shanti went to the wood in which Jibananda was hiding and told him all that had happened.

"I'll go quickly then and alert Mahendra", said Jibananda. "You go to the fair and tell Satyananda. Go on horseback, so that the Master hears the news without delay".

Both rushed off in different directions—needless to say, Shanti once more as Nabinananda.

❁ *Chapter 6* ❁

Edwards was a proper Englishman.* He had watchers at every post, and soon news reached him that the Vaishnavi had thrown Lindlay off the horse* and had ridden off somewhere by herself. "An imp of Satan!" he cried. "Strike the tents!"[6]

Then the steady sound of mallets on tent pegs could be heard. The city of canvas vanished like Indra's city of clouds.[7] Stuff was loaded onto carts, men set off on horses or on foot. Hindu and Muslim, Southerner and whiteskin marched with the scuffing of feet, their muskets on their shoulders, the gun carriages rumbling as they went along.

Meanwhile, Mahendra had been advancing towards the fair with his army of *santans*. That very evening, thinking that it was late, he decided that it was time to pitch camp.

The Vaishnavas had no tents. They would spread sacking or patched cloths under the trees and lie down, and pass the night with sips of nectarlike water blessed at Hari's feet—and what hunger remained would be assuaged by dreaming of the nectarlike kisses of Vaishnavi ladies.

Nearby was a suitable place to pitch camp, a large grove of mango, jackfruit, acacia and tamarind trees. Here Mahendra gave the order to set up camp. Near the grove lay a small hill, dauntingly hard to climb. It occurred to Mahendra that it might be a good idea to pitch camp there on the hilltop, so he decided to investigate. He mounted his horse and slowly began to ascend the hill.

He had made some progress when a young warrior entered the Vaishnava ranks and urged them to climb the hill. Those about him were astonished and asked why. The warrior stood on a small mound and cried, "This very moonlit night on that hill-top, as we breathe in the fragrance of new flowers of a new spring, we shall have to do battle with our enemies". The *santans* saw that it was the commander Jibananda.

Then shouting *Hare Murare!* the whole *santan* army leaned on their spears and rose up and, with Jibananda as their leader, swiftly began to ascend the hill. Someone saddled up a horse and brought it to Jibananda.

Watching from afar, Mahendra was surprised. "What's this!" he thought, "Why are they coming up without instructions?" He swung his horse's head round, the dust flying as he struck with the whip and started to descend the hill.

"What kind of fun is this?" he asked, as he met up with Jibananda who was in advance of the army.

"Big fun today", laughed Jibananda. "Major Edwards is on the other side of the hill. Whoever gets to the top first will win!"

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[6]Thus in the original.

[7]Indra is a ruler of the gods.

Then Jibananda turned towards the army of Children and cried: "You know who I am! Jibananda, who's killed a thousand of the enemy!"

"We know who you are! Jibananda Goswami!" came the thunderous reply, echoing over wood and field.

"Then say *Hare Murare!*" cried Jibananda.

Thousands upon thousands of voices rang out over forest and field, "*Hare Murare!*"

"The enemy's on the other side of the hill", cried Jibananda. "Today on this hilltop, as the deep blue heavens meet the night, the Children* will do battle. Come quickly, for the first to reach the top will triumph. Cry *Bande Mataram!*"

Then the woods and fields resounded with the chant, *Bande Mataram!* Gradually the *santan* army* began to climb towards the top of the hill, when suddenly they were alarmed to see Mahendra Simha racing down the hill, sounding his war trumpet. There, on the hilltop, against the canvas of the deep blue sky, the gunners of the English forces could be seen with their cannons drawn in a line!

Then the Vaishnava army sang out mightily:

You our wisdom, You our balm,
Mother, you're our strength of arm,
In our bodies, You the living force!

But the sound of this mighty song was drowned in the English cannonade. Hundreds of *santans* lay there on the hill, killed or wounded, together with their horses and weapons. Once more the cannons roared, and the English thunderbolts began to pour forth, making a mockery of the Children's sacrifice of their lives, louder by far than the breakers of the ocean. Like ripe paddy under the farmer's sickle, the *santan* army was being cut to bits and laid low. Jibananda and Mahendra struggled to rally in vain. Like an avalanche of rocks the *santan* army* began to flee in disarray from the hillock. Then, in an effort to destroy them all, the English forces came down the hill, shouting triumphantly. With bayonets raised, they rushed swiftly after the fleeing Children, rampant, irresistible, invincible, like a mighty waterfall released from the mountain. Jibananda and Mahendra met but once. "Today we're finished", said Jibananda. "So let's die here".

"If dying brought us victory in battle, I'd die", answered Mahendra. "But to die in vain is not a hero's duty".

"Well, I will die in vain", retorted Jibananda, "but I'll die in battle".

Then looking back he cried out in a loud voice, "Those who wish to die with Hari's name on their lips, follow me!"

Many came forward. "Not so", said Jibananda. "First swear with Hari as witness that you'll not return alive!"

Those who had come forward, fell back. Then Jibananda said, "Will no one follow? Then I go alone!" Raising himself on horseback, he turned back

and called out to the distant Mahendra, "Brother, tell Nabinananda that I've gone, and that we'll meet in another world".

Then, with spear in his left hand and musket in his right, and repeatedly shouting *Hare Murare,* this hero of a man urged his horse forward amid that hail of shot. With no prospect in battle, and with courage that could bear no fruit, and still chanting *Hare Murare,* Jibananda entered the ranks of the enemy.

Mahendra called out to the retreating Children and said, "Look! Just turn and look at Jibananda Goswami! You won't die by looking". Some of the Children turned and saw Jibananda's superhuman courage. At first they were amazed, then they said, "Jibananda knows how to die. Can't we follow suit? Let's also go to paradise with Jibananda!"

When they heard this, some *santans* turned back. Seeing them, some more turned back, and then some more! There was a huge uproar. By now Jibananda had entered the enemy ranks and was lost to view. Meanwhile, from around the battlefield the Children could see that some of their number were turning back. The Children are winning, they thought, and putting the enemy to flight! Then shouting "Kill! Kill!" the whole *santan* army turned round and rushed upon the English forces!

Now there was great confusion among the English army. The sepoys, caring for the fight no more, fled from the right and the left, while the white-skins, with bayonets no longer at the ready, turned and ran towards their camp. In the meantime, Mahendra peered upwards and saw countless Children on the crest of the hill! With heroic audacity they were descending the hill and attacking the English army.

"*Santans*!" he cried out to the Children, "Look, our Master, Satyananda Goswami's banner can be seen at the top! Today the Lord himself, Mura's Foe, Slayer of Madhu and Kaitabha, Destroyer of Kamsa and Keshi, has entered the battle. There are a hundred thousand *santans* on the hillside! Shout *Hare Murare! Hare Murare!* Rise up! Crush the Muslims and kill them! There are a hundred thousand *santans* on the hillside!"

Then forest and field shuddered at the dreadful cries of *Hare Murare,* while the Children dazed every creature with their shouts of "Nothing to fear!" and the sonorous clatter of their weapons. Powerfully, Mahendra's army began to ascend to the top, and just as the rulers' troops stood there shaken, stunned, cowed, like a river thrust back by the force of rocks, the monk Satyananda dashed against them from the summit with an army of twenty-five thousand *santans,** like the torrent of an ocean. A terrific battle followed.

And even as a tiny fly is crushed by the collison of two massive blocks of stone, so the rulers' huge army was crushed by the two *santan* armies. And none remained to carry the news to Warren Hastings.*

Chapter 7

It is the night of the full moon, and that terrible battlefield is now still. No more the stamp of horses' hooves, the clash of muskets, the cannon's boom, that pall of smoke everywhere. No longer shouts of "Hooray" or cries to Hari. Only the dogs, jackals and vultures are now heard. Yet above them rise the brief, piteous cries of the wounded, hands cut off, heads or feet broken, chests pierced, or lying under horses. Some call out to mother or father, others ask for water or crave for death. Bengali, Northerner, English, Muslim are strewn in each other's embrace; the living, the dead, man and horse, lie jumbled together. In the bitter cold, in the bright moonlight of that full-moon night of Magh, the battleground looked truly dreadful. No one dared to venture there.

No one dared—yet deep into the night a woman wandered on that unapproachable battlefield. With lighted torch she searched for something among the pile of corpses. She would place the torch near the face of a dead body, and after inspecting the face, take the torch to another. Now and then she would come across a corpse lying beneath a dead horse; then, placing the torch on the ground, the young woman would move the horse with both hands and release the body. When she saw that it was not the one she looked for, she picked up the torch and moved on. Thus did the young woman search the whole field, but she could not find what she sought. Then throwing the torch away, she threw herself on the bloodstained earth piled with corpses and wept. It was Shanti; she had been looking for Jibananda's body.

As Shanti lay weeping on the ground, she heard in the gentlest, kindest voice, "Get up, child. Don't cry". Looking up, Shanti saw standing before her in the moonlight the wondrous, massive frame of a great sage, with matted hair piled high. Shanti stood up and the stranger said, "Do not weep, child. I'll find Jibananda's body for you. Come with me".

He took Shanti to the middle of the battlefield; there countless corpses lay piled one upon another. Shanti could not shift them all. But moving the pile that immensely strong man brought out one body in particular. Shanti recognised the body of Jibananda, covered in wounds and soaked in blood. Like any other woman, she broke out in a loud wail.

Again the man said, "Don't cry, child. Do you think Jibananda's dead? Calm yourself and examine his body. First, check his pulse".

Shanti checked the corpse's pulse and could find none. The man said, "Now place your hand on his chest".

Shanti placed her hand above the heart but felt nothing. Everything was cold.

Once more the man spoke: "Now put your hand near his nose. Is there any breath at all?"

Shanti could find none. "Look further", said the man. "Put your finger

into his mouth. Is there any warmth there?" Shanti put her finger inside and said, "I can feel nothing". She had been dazed by hope.

The great one touched Jibananda's body with his left hand,[8] and said, "You've lost all hope through fear, and so could not understand. I think there's still some warmth in the body. Try once more".

Shanti tested the pulse again—there was a faint throb! Amazed, she placed her hand above the heart, and felt a faint beat! She put her fingers in front of the nose—and felt a slight breath, and, yes, there was some warmth in the mouth! Astonished, she exclaimed, "Was life already there, or has it returned?"

The sage replied, "Now how can that be, child! Do you think you can carry him to the pool? Since I am a healer, I will heal him".

Shanti easily carried Jibananda in her arms towards the pool. The Healer said, "Take him to the pool and wash away all the blood. I'll bring some medicine".

Shanti carried Jibananda to the side of the pool and washed off the blood. Just then the Healer returned with a paste of leaves from forest creepers and applied it to each open wound, then he rubbed Jibananda's body for some time. Finally, Jibananda gave a deep sigh and sat up. Looking into Shanti's face, he asked, "Who won the battle?"

"You did", said Shanti. "Now show reverence to this great person". But when both looked round they saw no one there to show reverence to!

Nearby they could hear the wild uproar of the victorious *santan* army, yet neither Shanti nor Jibananda rose—they sat there on the steps of the pool shining in the light of the full moon. By virtue of the medicine, in a very short time Jibananda's body regained its health, and he said, "Shanti, that healer's medicine has wonderful properties! My body no longer feels pain or exhaustion! Now where would you like to go? Just listen to the din of the Children's victory celebrations!"

"Let's not go there", said Shanti. "The Mother's work's been done. This land now belongs to the Children. Since we have no desire to share power, why should we return?"

Jibananda said, "We must protect by strength of arm what we've taken by force".

"Mahendra can do that", replied Shanti, "and so can Satyananda himself. You've done your reparation by sacrificing your body for the *santans*' code. The *santans* have no further claim on this newfound body. From the Children's point of view, we're dead. When they see us now the Children will say, 'Jibananda hid during the battle because he was afraid to do his reparation, and now seeing that we've won he's here to share our rule.' "

[8]He was a Tantric, a practitioner of occult wisdom. The left hand symbolises his active Tantric powers.

"How can you say that, Shanti?" said Jibananda. "Should I abandon my work for fear of criticism? My work is to serve the Mother, and whatever anyone might say, that's what I'll do".

"You're no longer entitled to do that", said Shanti, "for you've sacrificed your body to serve the Mother. If you're able to serve the Mother again, then what's the point of your reparation? The chief part of your reparation was to exclude you from serving the Mother. Else do you really think the sacrifice of your insignificant life was such a great thing in itself?"

"Shanti! Truly you've understood the point of it all!" exclaimed Jibananda. "I shan't leave my reparation unfulfilled. My happiness lay in the Children's code, and I'll give up that happiness. But where will I go? I can hardly give up the service of the Mother for the joys of married life!"

"For shame!" said Shanti. "Do you think that's what I meant? We're no longer worldly folk. The two of us must remain just as we are, renouncers, forever following the path of celibacy. So let's wander about as pilgrims from region to region".

"And then?" said Jibananda.

"And then", replied Shanti, "we'll build a hut in the Himalayas, and worship God there, praying for the boon of the Mother's well-being".

Then both rose up, and hand in hand were lost to view in the boundless expanse of the moonlit night.

Alas, Mother, will they ever return? Will you ever again bear in your womb a son like Jibananda and a daughter like Shanti?

❁ *Chapter 8* ❁

Without saying a word to anyone, Satyananda Thakur returned to *Anandamath* from the battlefield. Deep into the night he sat meditating in the Vishnu temple. It was then that the Healer appeared on the scene. When he saw him, Satyananda arose and paid his respects.

The Healer said, "Satyananda, it is Magh's full moon today".

"Let us go", said Satyananda. "I am ready. But, oh! Great One, resolve a doubt for me. Why is it that just when I've won the battle and freed the Eternal Code* from all obstacles, I've received this command of dismissal?"

The other replied, "Your work's been done, and Muslim rule has been destroyed. There's no more for you to do. There's no need for the pointless killing of living beings".

"Muslim rule has been destroyed", said Satyananda, "but Hindu rule has not been established. Even now the English remain powerful in Kolkata".

The other said, "Hindu rule will not be established at this time. If you remain, people will die needlessly. So, come away".

When he heard this, a sharp pang of anguish pierced Satyananda. "Master", he said, "if Hindu rule will not be established then who will be king? Will the Muslims rule again?"

"No", replied the other. "Now the English will rule".

Satyananda's eyes streamed with tears. Turning to the image of his birthland in the form of the Mother mounted on high, he joined his hands together and said in a voice choked with tears, "Oh Mother, I've not been able to set you free. Once more you will fall into the hands of unworthy foreigners. Do not be offended with your Child. Alas, Mother! Why did I not die on the battlefield today?"

The Healer said, "Satyananda, do not grieve. It was mistakenly, by means of banditry, that you gathered wealth and won your victory. Wrongdoing can never produce holy fruit. So you will not be able to free the land.* What will happen will happen for the good. Unless the English rule, it will not be possible for the Eternal Code to be reinstated. Listen carefully, I'll explain it to you according to the mind of the Great Ones.

"To worship three hundred and thirty million gods is not the Eternal Code. That's a worldly, inferior code. Through its influence the real Eternal Code—what the foreigners call the Hindu rule of life—has been lost. The true Hindu rule of life is based on knowledge, not on action. And this knowledge is of two kinds—outward and inward. The inward knowledge is the chief part of the Eternal Code, but unless the outward knowledge arises first, the inward cannot arise. Unless one knows the gross, one cannot know the subtle.

"For a long time now the outward knowledge has been lost in this land, and so the true Eternal Code has been lost too. If one wishes to reinstate this Code, one must make known the outward knowledge first. The outward knowledge no longer exists in this land, and there's no one to teach it; we ourselves are not good at teaching people such things. So we must bring in the outward knowledge from another country. The English are very knowledgeable in the outward knowledge, and they're very good at instructing people. Therefore we'll make them king. And when by this teaching our people are well instructed about external things, they'll be ready to understand the inner. Then no longer will there be any obstacles to spreading the Eternal Code, and the true Code will shine forth by itself again. And till that day comes—so long as the Hindu is not wise and virtuous and strong once more—English rule will remain intact. Their subjects will be happy under the English, and they will be free to follow their religion.* Therefore wise one, refrain from fighting the English, and follow me".

Satyananda said, "O Great One! If English rule was your aim, and if it is good for the land to be under English rule at this time, then why did you engage us in this cruel war?"

The Great Man replied, "At present the English are traders. They're intent on amassing wealth and do not wish to take on the burden of ruling a kingdom. But because of the Children's rebellion, they'll be forced to take on the

burden of ruling, for without this they cannot collect wealth. The rebellion came about to usher in English rule. Now come—as you acquire knowledge, you yourself will be able to understand everything".

Satyananda said, "O Great One, I do not yearn to acquire knowledge. I have no use for knowledge. All I want is to keep the vow I have taken. Bless me so that my love for the Mother remains steadfast".

"You have kept your vow", returned the other, "and you've ensured the Mother's well-being, for you have brought in English rule.* Now give up warfare, let people cultivate the land, may the earth abound in crops and let the people grow in prosperity".

Satyananda's eyes sparked fire as he said, "I'll make the Mother abound in crops by drenching her in the blood of her enemies!"

"Who is the enemy?" asked the Great Man. "The enemy's no more. The English will rule as friends. Besides, no one has the power to fight the English and win".*

"That may be", said Satyananda, "but I can surrender my life here, in the presence of the Mother's image".

"In ignorance?" said the Great Man. "Come with me, you'll understand in time. There's a temple to the Mother on a crest of the Himalayas, and from there I will show you the form of the Mother".

When he said this, the Great One took Satyananda's hand, and a wondrous radiance shone forth. There, in the dim light before the massive four-armed image, in the solemnity of the Vishnu temple, those two human forms filled with a great wisdom shone out, one clasping the hand of the other. Who had clasped hands there? Knowledge had come and taken hold of dedication. Duty had come and taken hold of action. Sacrifice had come and taken hold of honour. Kalyani had come and taken hold of Shanti. Satyananda was Shanti, and the Great One was Kalyani. Satyananda was honour, and the Great One was sacrifice.

Sacrifice had come and departed with Honour.*

❁ END OF PART IV ❁

Critical Apparatus

❁

❁ *Dedication* ❁

The Sanskrit verse is taken from the epic poem *Kumārasambhava* (The Birth of Kumāra, chapter 4, v. 6; ca. fifth century CE) by the great classical poet Kālidāsa. Rati, the wife of the god of love, Kāma, is lamenting the sudden death of her husband. Kāma has just been reduced to ashes by fire emitted from the great god Śiva's third eye for disturbing his meditation.

It is generally believed, though this is not explicitly stated, that *Ānandamaṭh* was dedicated to Bankim's close friend, Dinabandhu Mitra (1830–1873), who died an untimely death.

"a broken dam": *kṣatasetubandhano.*

"a bond": *sambandha.* There is play here between *bandhana* and *sambandha.*

THE GĪTĀ TEXT

The Gītā text is taken from chapter 12, verses 6–9. It stresses selfless devotion to God (Kṛṣṇa, hereafter spelled Krishna), either through meditative absorption or, if this is not possible, through the performance of disciplined, that is, knowledge-based, action (*abhyāsa-yoga*). In effect, *Ānandamaṭh* is an endorsement of the latter alternative. The Gītā played an increasingly important role in the development of Bankim's spiritual philosophy in the later period of his life. "[Bankim] regarded [the *Gītā*] as *the* central Hindu text, and it was his most important point of reference for ancient Hinduism" (Harder, 2001, 170).

❁ *Notice to the First Edition* ❁

A curious and cryptic combination of sentences. One senses Bankim's (and the novel's) ambivalence towards British rule. This notice indicates that the novel is to be suitably decoded in several respects.

This edition was published by Radhanath Banerji at the Johnson Press, Calcutta, on December 15, 1882 (for further details about this and subsequent editions, see *AMcb*: Part I, 94–96).

"social rebellion": *samājbiplab.*

"self-torment": *ātmapīḍan.*

❁ *Notice to the Second Edition* ❁

The extract quoted here is part of a much longer review. *The Liberal*—or more precisely, *The Liberal and New Dispensation*—was an English-language weekly, published from Calcutta (1882–1884), setting out the official views of the New Dispensation branch of the Brahmo Samaj, an influential movement for upper-

caste socioreligious reform in nineteenth-century Bengal. The "knowledgeable critic" was Krishnabihari Sen, the younger brother of the leader of the New Dispensation, Keshab Sen.

Bankim's reasons for publishing this extract invite scrutiny. Since his intention behind the inclusion in the novel of the sentiments justifying British rule (as quoted by the reviewer) is open to interpretation, it is possible that the extract was meant to throw government critics off the scent from the underlying political implications of the story and the way the British are portrayed in it. This is the generally accepted view. For an account supporting this position see *AMcb*: 37–41. Bankim's ambivalence towards British rule remained throughout the course of the publication of the novel's various editions. On the one hand, he regarded this rule as an instrument for dragging his compatriots into the modern world; on the other, he deplored its heavyhandedness and lack of insight, especially into high Hindu culture. Though he thrived on some aspects of it, he looked askance at other aspects.

This edition was published by Umacharan Banerji at the Chikitsa Prakash Press, Chinsurah, on July 20, 1883 (1,000 copies).

❁ *Notice to the Third Edition* ❁

"*sannyasi*": a celibate renouncer; an ascetic; a wandering holy man.

This edition was published by Umacharan Banerji, Calcutta, on April 15, 1886 (1,000 copies).

The fourth edition was published by Umacharan Banerji from Calcutta, on December 20, 1886 (2,000 copies).

❁ *Notice to the Fifth Edition* ❁

"Shanti" means "peace", "calm". The reader will see that particularly in the earlier editions, Shanti's nature hardly reflects her name.

This edition was published by Umacharan Banerji from Calcutta, on November 21, 1892 (1,000 copies).

The translation in this book follows the fifth edition. Under the variants to the text that follow (signalled by an asterisk), it should be assumed that the text of the serial version first published in the *Baṅgadarśan* and that of the first edition are the same (or that only insignificant differences exist), unless differences are actually specified. In that case, a direct reference to *AMsv* signifies that the text quoted does *not* occur in the first edition, whereas direct references only to the "first edition" or "the first three editions" etc. (that is, book editions) implies that the text of the serial edition is the same (or has only insignificant differences, such as differences of spelling or punctuation, etc.).

❁ *Prologue* ❁

VARIANTS

* "Life is trifling; anyone can give up their life": *AMsv* has instead: "That pledge won't do".

* "Dedication": *AMsv* has instead: "The life, the all, of your loved ones" (*tomār priyajaner prāṇsarbbasva*).

NOTES

"Dedication": *bhakti*; not quite the conventional "devotion" of traditional religious Hinduism, but rather, wholehearted commitment to the nationalist cause. The *Nārada Bhakti Sūtra* (tenth to twelfth centuries CE), an important devotional text, glosses *bhakti* as *āsakti* : "an adhering or sticking to" (see v. 82), which gives a fundamental sense of the term. At the time the novel was being written, Bankim was moving towards an understanding of *bhakti* which suggested a commitment that integrated the different kinds of human faculties—physical, intellectual, volitional and asethetic—in a focus on the highest human goal. Love of self, of family, of society, of country, and of all sentient beings was to be incorporated in one's love of God. Each facet, beginning with the first, is subsumed in its successor, so that it is impossible to love and serve God properly without including the other forms of love, and incorporated in this devotion to God is the conscious pursuit of its various constituents. Thus service of and love for one's country (itself a complex idea) is a necessary and superior facet of *bhakti,* and it partakes of the all-consuming nature of *bhakti* per se.

This conception is articulated in Bankim's treatise, *Dharmatattva,* which was published as a book in 1888, but which was begun serially in 1883. For Bankim, "Human happiness lay in the fullest possible development of human faculties, which, when directed to God, involved sublimation of egoism" (Tripathi, 1965, 171).

Bankim's sense of *bhakti* will become clearer as the story unfolds (see also introduction, section 2). Sen-Gupta translates *bhakti* as "devotion"; the Ghose translation has "Thy soul's worship"; *MF* has "L'amour".

—PART I—

❁ *Chapter 1* ❁

VARIANTS

* "the king's revenue officer": *AMsv* adds here: "who was a Bengali Muslim" (*eke bāṅgāli tāhāte musulmān*), while the first edition has: "and a native Muslim, no less" (*eke deśī tāhāte musulmān*), that is, his ancestry was indigenous.

* "to the town": instead of *sahar* (town), here and elsewhere in this chapter the first three editions have *nagar* (town, but also the name of the capital of the old kingdom of Birbhum, where the novel was originally set). The first three editions had an asterisk here with the footnote: "*Nagar* or *Rājnagar*—the capital of the ancient kingdom of Birbhum" (*A[BSP]*: 123). The first edition adds here: "Mahendra's aunt [*pitṛsvasā*: father's sister] lived in *Nagar*".

* "as she entered the house": the first edition adds here: "Mahendra followed her indoors. He saw Kalyani remove a silver dagger from somewhere and replace it, saying, "This isn't a woman's weapon". She searched for something else. "Now what?" asked Mahendra. "Nothing", said Kalyani. She hid a tiny box of poison about her clothing. She had stored up . . ." (*A[BSP]*: 124).

NOTES

"1770": that is, 1176 of the Bengali San era, which is the year given in the text. This corresponds more precisely to the year mid-April 1769 to mid-April 1770 of the Western era, since the Bengali year begins in mid-April. All dates in the Bengali text follow the Bengali era. Bankim's story must have begun in the early summer of 1770, still the Bengali year 1176. Subsequent conversions of dates in this translation are made to accord with this calculation in step with Hunter's chronology, on which Bankim relied (see further). *MF* has 1769, in which year, according to Hunter, the crisis had not reached its peak.

"Because there was a poor harvest in 1768" etc.: as noted in the introduction (section 3), Bankim's description of the famine was heavily influenced by W W Hunter's account. According to Hunter, "In the early part of 1769 high prices had ruled, owing to the partial failure of the crops in 1768" (1897, 20).

"During the rainy season in 1769, it rained heavily": "and the rains of 1769, although deficient in the northern districts, seemed for a time to promise relief" (Hunter, 1897, 21).

"the gods": *debatā*.

"a silver bracelet": *paicā*, or perhaps an ornament worn around the waist like a girdle.

"The paddy withered . . . and became like straw": " 'The fields of rice,' wrote the native superintendent of Bishenpore at a later period, 'are become like fields of dried straw' " (Hunter, 1897, 21).

"First, they skipped a meal", etc.: traditionally people ate two full meals a day.

"Then Muhammad Reza Khan . . . at once increased taxes by 10 percent": "In April [1770] a scanty spring harvest was gathered in; and the Council [of the East India Company], acting upon the advice of its Mussulman Minister of Finance, added ten per cent. to the land-tax for the ensuing year. . . . [T]he

local administration [emphasis added] continued in the hands of the former native officers. A Mussulman Minister of State [a footnote adds: "The celebrated Mahomed Reza Khan"] regulated the whole internal government" (Hunter, 1897, 23, 24).

"First people started to beg . . . Then disease had its day": "All through the stifling summer of 1770 the people went on dying. The husbandmen sold their cattle; they sold their implements of agriculture; they devoured their seed-grain; they sold their sons and daughters, till at length no buyer of children could be found; they ate the leaves of trees and the grass of the field . . . At an early period of the year pestilence had broken out" (Hunter, 1897, 26–27).

"The low-caste": *itar*.

"musket": *banduk* (gun). In the middle of the second half of the eighteenth century this could hardly have been a rifle (which came into regular use later in the century), but would probably have been a matchlock or a flintlock longarm firing a muzzle-loaded musket ball. Bankim, writing a hundred years later, seems at times to have glossed over this fact (see, for example, Part III, chapter 11, the killing of Captain Thomas. Muskets were not very accurate; such precision was the work of a rifle. On the other hand, in Appendix B, reference to "dense clouds of smoke" during small-arms fire in the battle suggests the use of muskets). Throughout the text Bankim uses the generic term *banduk*. *MF* has *fusil* here, the Ghose translation has "musket" (Aurobindo's revised manuscript translation has "gun"). Hunter quotes an interesting reference about the weapons used by the marauding "sannyasis" of the time: "[In 1789] Mr Keating reported to Government that the marauders, having crossed the Adji in 'a large party armed with tulwars (swords) and matchlocks', had established themselves in Beerbhoom" (1897, 79).

"babul tree or date palm": the babul (*acacia nilotica*) is a smallish, hardy tree more able than most to survive in arid conditions. The date palm (*phoenix sylvestris*) is also a shortish, hardy tree with a tuft of spiky branches. In either case, the shade given would be sparse.

"Once, as they rested": the image of the gracious tree with its clinging creeper provides traditional literary symbols of femininity, but also, in this case, a counterpoint to Kalyani's strength of character.

"by God's grace": *Śrīkṛṣṇa dayā karun*: May Śrī Krishna be merciful.

❁ *Chapter 2* ❁

VARIANTS

* "Kalyani nearly fainted": after this *AMsv* has: "One of the forms seized Kalyani and she fainted. Then the black . . .".

❁ Chapter 3 ❁

NOTES

"Power to Kali!": *Bom Kālī*: an invocation to stiffen one's resolve. Kālī is looked upon here as a fearsome goddess with destructive powers. For important articles on the changing faces of the goddess Kālī in Bengal, see McDermott, 1996, and "A Tantric Icon," forthcoming.

❁ Chapter 4 ❁

NOTES

"O Hari, enemy of Mura . . .": *Hare murāre madhukaiṭabhāre, gopāl gobinda mukunda śaure, hare murāre madhukaiṭabhāre.* A Sanskrit invocation primarily to Viṣṇu, but also applicable to Krishna, recalling the destruction of various demons, that is, Mura, Madhu and Kaiṭabha. Madhu and Kaiṭabha are cosmogonic demons; their destruction by Viṣṇu affirms his divine supremacy as creator and protector of the world, and allows the demiurge Brahmā to proceed with the unfolding of creation. I am grateful to Lynn Thomas for showing me her unpublished article on the subject: "The Cosmogonic Significance of Madhu and Kaiṭabha". See also Coburn, 1984, 211–21. In his translation, Sen-Gupta omits these refrains entirely.

"the Puranas": ancient collections of folklore, myths and other material. See Lipner, 1994, ch. 6.

"the divine sage Narada": *devarṣi,* which refers to Nārada in terms of the description given.

❁ Chapter 5 ❁

NOTES

"archaeologists": *purāṇatattvabiderā.*

"what had once been a Buddhist abbey (*vihāra*)", etc.: note the contrast here between "Buddhist" and "Hindu"—an instance of the boundaries drawn between various kinds of religious and ethnic identities in the novel. For a discussion on the possible original location of this monastery (*maṭha*) see the introduction, section 3.

"a meeting-hall": *nāṭamandir.*

"My child": *mā,* literally, "mother", the tender address of a parent or elder to a female child or younger woman.

"The monk": *brahmacārī,* here someone who has taken a vow of perpetual celibacy (unlike other members of the Order who had taken a vow of temporary celibacy).

❁ Chapter 6 ❁

VARIANTS

* "left his house": the first three editions add, "heading for Murshidabad" (*A[BSP]*: 124).

* "the monk interrupted": the first edition adds, "The Children (*santān*) didn't do this" (ibid.).

❁ Chapter 7 ❁

VARIANTS

* "the town": here the first three editions substitute *Rājnagar,* the capital of the ancient kingdom of Birbhum (*A[BSP]*: 124).

* "went to ruin": *utsanna jāy.* Here the first three editions include the following passage: "This was the general situation in Bengal, though in regions such as Birbhum the arrangement was slightly different. Birbhum was under the rule of its kings, and their capital was Rajnagar or Nagar. In the past the kings of Birbhum were independent, though latterly they were subject to Murshidabad. The independent kings of the past were Hindus, though the current royal line was Muslim. The king just before the time of which I write, Alinaki Khan Bahadur, got a bit above himself and with the help of Siraj-ud-daula attacked and looted Kolkata. Then, fulfilling his birth as a Muslim by grovelling at Clive's feet, he made ready to enter heaven" (*A[BSP]*: 124–25).

* "a white man": the first three editions add, "He was not a Company servant. At the time many white men occupied positions of authority in the armies of the local kings" (*A[BSP]*: 125).

NOTES

"In 1770 Bengal had not yet fallen under British sway": this is misleading. See the introduction for further information.

"sepoys": *sipāhī,* Indian soldiers.

"British": *iṅgrej.* In the literature of the times *iṅgrej* could stand for both "English" and "British", often masking the distinction.

"tax collectors": *deoān* (*dewan*).

"Mir Jafar": who had in fact died in 1765. Note the epithet, "treacherous" (*biśvāshantā*), in Bankim's description of Mir Jafar. For discussion on Bankim's view of the Muslim presence in India, see the introduction.

"white man": *gorā.* Elsewhere in the chapter the term *sāheb* is used.

"in broken Bengali": *ehi ekṭho ḍāku bhāgtā hai.* Many of these sepoys would not be Bengali speakers. *MF* has "en langue hindi"—a moot point.

"Scoundrel": *śālā* (*MF*: Scélérat).

"the English officer in charge": *senāpati sāheb.* That he is English or British will become clear later.

"Take the scoundrel and marry him": *śālāko pākaḍ leke sādi karo.* See footnote in text. *MF* has "Attrapez ce chenapan et mariez-le, dit-il en hindi. En fait, il voulait dire simplement: gardez-le" (63), but the point has not really been explained.

"their master": *sāheb.*

❁ *Chapter 8* ❁

VARIANTS

Once again the first edition has *Rajnagar* instead of *nagar* ("town[s]").

* "The present roads . . . didn't exist at the time": after this sentence, *AMsv* reads as follows: "If you wanted to go to Kolkata from Rajnagar, you had to take what is now known as the old Benares road. You had to travel mainly south from Rajnagar. On his way to the town from Padacinha, Mahendra . . .".

* "for in times of danger . . . addictions": this clause was not in the first edition (*A[BSP]*: 125).

NOTES

"Muslim": *musalmān.*

"ascetic": *brahmacārī sannyāsī.*

❁ *Chapter 9* ❁

VARIANTS

* "Just like . . . job to be done": *jamidārer chele, dudh ghīr śrāddha karite majbut—kājer belā hanumān.* Instead of this passage, the first edition has: "Are you a coward, that you're afraid to fight?" (*A[BSP]*: 126).

* "What kinds of bandits are these?": the first edition has instead, "Are these bandits, or gods?" (ibid.).

❁ *Chapter 10* ❁

VARIANTS

The early editions of the song had no *hasanta*s or syntactical pauses; *anusvāra*s were used throughout. This gives a strong impression of the song's continuous

momentum, though it overlooks the technicalities of grammatical punctuation. However, the standard edition has *anusvāra*s and *hasanta*s (on occasion rather confusingly), and this is reflected in my transliteration below. Also, the line-structure of the early versions is different from that of the standard edition. I have taken these details into account when making my translation and division into verses.

* "Powerless? How so, Mother, With the strength . . .": the first three editions had instead, "Who dare say, Mother, that you're weak!" (*ke bale mā tumi abale*; see below) (*A[BSP]*: 126).

* "A king who doesn't look after . . .": instead of this sentence, the first edition has: "Should there be a Muslim king (*musalmān rājā*) in a Hindu kingdom (*hindu rājye*)?" (ibid.). Earlier editions of the novel were set in Birbhum, and the reader will remember that Bankim as narrator had commented: "In the past the kings of Birbhum were independent, though latterly they were subject to Murshidabad. The independent kings of the past were Hindus, though the current royal line was Muslim" (see under Variants for chapter 7). But the sentence here may also be a subtle attempt to use Hindu-Muslim "history" to query British paramountcy in India.

* "but does our Muslim king protect us?": the first three editions do not have "Muslim" (*musalmān*).

* "bearded degenerates": *neśākhor deḍeder* (*deḍe* means "having a long beard"). Orthodox Muslims have prominent beards (Ghose: "vice-besodden long-beards"). The first edition has simply *neḍeder. Neḍā/neḍe* refers to someone who is "shaven", "clipped", "lopped" (as opposed to *deḍe*). This could refer to the fact that orthodox Muslims do not keep long hair, but also to the fact that Muslims are circumcised. In Hindi-speaking parts of India even today, Muslims are crudely referred to as *kaṭwā*, "cut/clipped" (see later in the novel). *MF* has "tondus fumeurs d'opium" (75), but it is not clear how the "tondus" is derived, since *MF* is a translation of the fifth, not the first edition.

NOTES

"One's mother and birthland . . . heaven itself": quoted in the Sanskrit: *jananī janmabhūmiś ca svargād api garīyasī.* A well-known saying, generally attributed to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, one of the two great Sanskrit epics (ca. 300 BCE–300 CE). After conquering Laṅkā, Rāma was supposed to have been asked by his half-brother, Lakṣmaṇa, to stay on and rule the island. Rāma answered: "I would not want to, Lakṣmaṇa, even if Laṅkā were made of gold (*api svarṇamayī laṅkā na me lakṣmaṇa rocate*). One's mother and birthland are greater than heaven itself". These lines do not occur in the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa*s known to me. *VMBS* says that this eulogy of the mother and birthland "occurred in the version of Valmiki's Ramayana current in Bengal" (78)—perhaps in a Bengali *Rāmāyaṇa.* The concept of "motherland" may be a fairly recent one, but that of

"birthland" (*janmabhūmi*) is not. For instance, the expression occurs in the *Harivaṃśa,* an important and lengthy appendix to the other great Sanskrit epic, the *Mahābhārata* (ca. 400 BCE–400 CE). Instead of "birthland", Sen-Gupta has "the land of birth" while the Ghose translation has "Motherland"; *MF* has "la terre natale" (71). It may be of interest to note that this text is carved on the entrance to the Kālī temple at Dakshineswar outside Kolkata, which was completed in 1855. The reason for this inscription is not known to me.

"I revere the Mother! . . . This ever-plenteous land of grace": this song is an interesting combination of Sanskrit and Bengali, blank verse and rhyme. It may be transcribed as follows (with *hasanta*s and *anusvāra*s as given in the standard edition):

1. *vande mātaram*
   sujalāṃ suphalāṃ malayajaśītalāṃ
   śasyaśyāmalāṃ mātaram.
2. *śūbhrajyotsnāpulkitayāminīṃ*
   phullakusumitadrumadalaśobhinīṃ
   suhāsinīṃ sumadhurabhāṣiṇīṃ
   sukhadāṃ varadāṃ mātaram.
3. *saptakoṭīkaṇṭhakalakalaninādakarāle*
   dvisaptakoṭībhujair dhṛtakharakaravāle
   abalā kena mā eta bale.
4. *bahubaladhāriṇīṃ namāmi tāriṇīṃ*
   ripudalavāriṇīṃ mātaram.
5. *tumi bidyā tumi dharmma,*
   tumi hṛdi tumi marmma,
   tvaṃ hi prāṇāḥ śarīre.
6. *bāhute tumi mā śakti,*
   hṛdaye tumi mā bhakti,
   tomāri pratimā gaḍi mandire mandire.
7. *tvaṃ hi durgā daśapraharaṇadhāriṇī*
   kamalā kamaladalavihāriṇī
   vāṇī vidyādāyinī namāmi tvāṃ
8. *namāmi kamalāṃ amalāṃ atulāṃ*
   sujalāṃ suphalām mātaram
9. *vande mātaram*
   śyāmalāṃ saralām susmitāṃ bhūṣitām
   dharaṇīṃ bharaṇīm mātaram.

As noted already, this song is officially called the national song of independent India, and has recently come into the limelight together with its slogan *Vande*

Mātaram. For further discussion on the song's composition and importance, see the introduction.

A footnote in the original gives the musical mode as *mallār,* and the metre (*tāl*), "as in Qawalli". Classical Indian musicology reaches back many centuries into the distant past and is immensely complex and sophisticated, harbouring a great many traditions of musical theory and practice. In what follows my principal source has been the well-known Bengali treatise of Swami Prajñān-ānanda, *Rāg o rūp* (see vol. 1: 171–84, 220), since it was within a Bengali context that Bankim composed his song. I am also grateful to Dr Richard Widdess, of the Department of Music at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for guidance and insights relevant to this topic. According to the tradition mentioned above, *mallār* was eventually classified as the first *rāgiṇī* or lighter form of its lead-mode, *megh-rāg,* though as a name it first clearly makes its appearance before (ca. the seventh century CE); *megh-rāg* establishes itself in about the eleventh century or so. The *rāg*s and *rāgiṇī*s have traditionally been visualised anthropomorphically, and *megh-rāg* has been described here as an embodiment of unfulfilled love (*vipralambha-sṛṅgāra*) having the soft, youthful beauty of a blue lotus, with a face radiant and peaceful as the moon, smiling sweetly and as if clad in heavy monsoon clouds from which a flock of swallows seeks water with thirsty eyes. But the calm depicted here is an inner (and somewhat deceptive) calm, for as a musical mode of the rainy season, *megh-rāg* can also display the anguished exterior of a monsoon storm. It is a mode given to expression through song, and redolent of heroic, lofty sentiments (and in its visualised form has even been described as having a sharp sword in hand), but it is important to note that it is not properly a martial mode.

Mallār, as the principal lighter form (*rāgiṇī/nāyikā*) of *megh-rāg* in this tradition, partakes of the latter's qualities. It expresses calming, refreshing, ennobling, expectant sentiments (hence note the transforming effect of its mood on Bhabananda through the *Vande Mātaram* song, *after* the battle with the sepoys). It evokes an anguished, plaintive air, yearning for the fulfillment of loving-tenderness. The reader may recall that the action takes place in summer, just before the rains are due; thus the song, as an expression of the *mallār* mode, may even be understood as beckoning the rains to come and drive away the drought, restoring the natural bounty of the land (depicted in the song). Varieties of *mallār* and its combination with other musical modes are spoken of in Indian classical tradition, so that the melodic structure appropriate to this mode may be expressed through a range of subtly different tunes. Dr Widdess informs me that he has found "*rāga*-verses describing *Mallār* as an ascetic in two sources, the *Saṅgītadāmodara* of Śubhāṅkara (16th century) and the *Saṅgītanārāyaṇa* of Puruṣottama (17th century). These sources are from Bengal and Orissa respectively. The ascetic associations may be a specifically Eastern Indian tradition" (e-mail commu-

nication, May 8, 2003). This would make Bankim's choice of mode for *Vande Mātaram* even more appropriate.

"Qawalli" is an eight-beat popular or lighter metre, used in medium or fast speeds.

Further details of the song's renditions and history have been given in the introduction.

Sen-Gupta's translation of the hymn and Aurobindo Ghose's translation are given in Appendix D. They are included in this book because they occur in the other two English translations of the novel available that are known to me.

The first two verses of the song are in (Bengalified) Sanskrit. The third verse has Bengali forms, with the line *abalā kena mā eta bale* capable of yielding a number of (interactive) meanings (see the verse analysis below). Verse 4 is again in Sanskrit, but verses 5 and 6 are in Bengali (except for the last line of verse 5, which is in Sanskrit). The remainder of the song is in Sanskrit.

v. 1: "I revere the Mother!": *vande mātaram* (or *bande mātaram* in its Bengali form), a Sanskrit expression. *Vande* is the first person, singular (present tense, active voice) of the verb *vand,-ate,* to praise, venerate, greet respectfully, worship. Hence "revere", on the grounds that the object revered is at the same time praiseworthy (Sen-Gupta: "Hail thee mother!" and later, "To such a mother down I bow!"; Ghose: I bow; *MF:* Je te salue). The acclamation thus connotes an approach to the Mother that is individual and personal, and not directly collective. Of course, it can be used in a context that expresses a sense of solidarity. In recent times, *Vande Mātram* in its sung form has been rendered into Hindi as *Ma, tujhe salaam.*

"Cooled by the southern airs": *malayajaśītalām. Malaya* are the Western Ghats in southern India, where sandal trees grow, from which fragrant sandalwood is produced. The idea is to evoke the cooling, fragrant breezes of spring.

"Verdant with the harvest fair": *śasyaśyamalām; śyamalā* connotes a darkish colour, here the full-bodied green hues of rice and other crops in Bengal, as also beauty: hence "verdant" and "harvest fair". *Śyamalā* can also be a name for the goddess Durgā.

v. 3: *MF* has "Toi, qui es douée de soixante-dix millions de voix tantôt douces, tantôt terribles" (72), for *sapta-koṭī-kaṇṭha-kalakala-ninādа-karāle.* Grammatically, this may just be viable, but it is semantically dubious. No other translation known to me makes this distinction. No doubt *kalakala* can signify a melodious hum/twitter, but not in this combination of compounds, which evokes the (potential) power and fearsomeness of the inhabitants of the birthland. Here, *kalakala* means an indistinct noise—together with *ninādа-karāle,* the fierce and tumultuous roar of an angry populace.

"Powerless? How so, Mother?": for *abalā kena mā eta bale. Abalā* can mean "powerless/weak", "silent", and "woman", and *bale* can refer to the verb

"to speak", as well as to strength. In other words, the supposedly weak, silent Mother speaks with the strength of millions. This statement is more resonant than the one it replaced from *AMsv* and the first three editions, that is, *ke bale mā tumi abale,* "Who dare say, Mother, that you're weak!"

v. 4: "To her who saves": *tāriṇīm.* Also a form of the goddess Durgā. Though the Goddess of the hymn assimilates features or personae of other goddesses, the dominant persona of the Goddess is that of Durgā.

v. 5: "law": *dharma.*

"the living force": *prāṇāḥ.* The last line of this verse is in Sanskrit.

v. 6: "the loving balm": *bhakti.* Bhakti is a form of attachment, a sort of "smearing" love.

"the form": *pratimā,* an image, a copy of an original.

v. 7: "For you are Durga": *tvaṃ hi durgā.* Here the Mother is clearly identified with the powerful ten-armed goddess Durgā, a favourite of Bengalis and celebrated in the chief Bengali festival of the year, the autumnal Durgā-pūjā. In the festival, Durgā is depicted as Mahiṣāsuramardinī: slayer of the buffalo demon.

"And wealth's Goddess, dallying on the lotus flower": *kamalā kamala-dala-bihāriṇī.* In this and the next verse, *kamalā* refers to the goddess Lakṣmī.

"You are Speech": *bāṇī. Bāṇī* (*vāṇī* in Sanskrit) can be personified as the goddess of speech or Sarasvatī, which is how *MF* has translated the term. Sen-Gupta: "Durga bold who wields her arms, With half a score of hands, The science-goddess, Vani too, and Lakshmi who on lotus stands—What are they but, mother, thou, To thee in all these forms I bow!"

v. 8: "the Goddess Fair": *kamalām:* a beautiful, fair woman, the goddess Lakṣmī.

v. 9: "and also true": *saralām. MF* has "candide".

"This ever-plenteous land of grace": *dharaṇīṃ bharaṇīm. Dharaṇī* is the earth, and *bharaṇī* refers to a nurturing mother. The combination evokes a gracious land of plenty.

See the introduction for further discussion of the hymn's structure and terminology.

"We are the Children": Children: *santān* (pronounced "shontaan"). *MF:* "Les Fils", but *santān* is gender-neutral, meaning "offspring", "child".

"mother-love": *mātṛbhakti.*

"a devourer only of fine things!": thus *kebal dudh ghīr jam.*

"Look at all the other places. . . .": some of these had Muslim rulers, too, so the argument here is not against Muslim rule as such.

"our religious way of life, our caste status": *dharma, jāti.*

"Hindu identity": *hindur hinduyānī.* The Ghose translation has "the Hinduism

of the Hindu" as has *MF:* "l'hindouisme des hindous" (75). Sen-Gupta: "a Hindu can no longer hope to save his religion", thus equating *dharma* earlier with *hindur hinduyānī.*

"Englishman": *iṅgrej*; as noted already, "English(man)" was often used as a synonym for "British(er)" at the time. The British can act as examples to both Muslims and Hindus in certain respects.

"renouncers": *sannyāsī.*

"worldly concerns": *māyā.*

❁ *Chapter 11* ❁

VARIANTS

* "in the monastery of the sacred brotherhood": *"ānandamaṭhe".* Instead of this expression, *AMsv* has *"ānandamandire"* (also within inverted commas), that is, "in the temple of the Anandas" or "in the temple of joy/bliss".

* "On Vishnu's lap": the first three editions have instead, "At the very top, above Vishnu's head, on a raised dais studded with many jewels sat . . ." (*A[BSP]*: 126).

NOTES

"in the monastery of the sacred brotherhood": the word used is *ānandamaṭhe* (in inverted commas), after a play on *ānanda* qualifying "dawn" and "forest" (*ānandamay prabhāte ānandamay kānane, "ānandamaṭhe"*). For a discussion on the meaning of the novel's name, see the introduction (section 3).

"early morning worship": *sandhyāhnik,* the worship sanctifying a particular juncture in the twenty-four-hour day. There are three such junctures: the juncture of night and day (dawn), the juncture of midday, and the juncture when day meets evening time (twilight). This was the ritual of the dawn juncture.

"Friend of the needy": *dīnabandhu.*

"Bearer of the earth": *jagaddhātrī.*

"to the motherland in the form of the nurturing Goddess": *jagaddhātrīrūpiṇī matṛbhūmike*: an explicit identification of the motherland and the Goddess.

"a club and begging-bowl": *kheṭak kharpar,* emblems associated with *Kālī. Kheṭak* can also mean "shield", though this is unlikely here (Ghose translation has "club"; Sen-Gupta has simply: "Why are there arms in her hand?"). *Kharpar* is usually the cranial part of the skull. This image of a denuded Kālī, representing what is virtually a destroyed and self-destructive motherland awaiting regeneration at the hands of her "children", reflects parallel images of the

iconised motherland current before the publication of *Ānandamaṭh*; see *FHVH,* esp. 98–102.

"You who are blessed . . . salutations to you": a Sanskrit invocation: *sarvamaṅgalamaṅgalye śive sarvārthasādhike, śaraṇye tryambake gauri nārāyaṇi namo'stu te.* This is a well-known verse which, to some extent, seems to have assumed an independent status from about the time of the literary crystallization of the tradition of the Goddess as supreme power (ca. sixth century CE.). *DM* (63) points out that it occurs, more or less in the same form, in the *Devī Māhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa,* as the last verse of the *Śrī Sūkta,* a hymn attached to the *Ṛg Veda,* and in a dedicatory inscription in Jodhpur dated to the seventh to ninth centuries CE.

Tryambakā is Śiva's consort, as is Gaurī, the "brilliant or fair-hued One", while Nārāyaṇī is probably Viṣṇu's consort here. *MF* has "C'est Toi qui donnes toute bénédiction Auspicieuse, Protectrice; Par toi tout se réalise Blanche Déesse a trois yeux! Hommage à Toi, Narayani!" (83; Ghose translation is similar). But this is to miss the point of the vocatives, which indicate the nonsectarian character of the Goddess-to-be, who, unlike the first two images (the Mother-as-she-was and the Mother-as-she-is) is not named in the introductory description. Sen-Gupta does not translate.

"And protect them continually": Probably a reference to Mahendra, his wife and daughter.

"code of the Children": *santāner dharma.*

❁ *Chapter 12* ❁

VARIANTS

* "(for the renouncer-monks . . . possession)": this is not in the first edition.

* "Say it": the first edition has *prāṇādhik bala,* "My dearest, say it".

NOTES

"Those who starved. . . . available tree": this sentence (and a word or two of the following sentence) has been (inadvertently) omitted from *A(BSP)*: 28.

"renouncer-monks": *sannyāsī ṭhākurder.*

"the Forest of the Monks": *ānandāraṇya,* "the forest of the Anandas". *MF* has "la foret de la Félicité" (88); neither Sen-Gupta nor Ghose translates the *ānanda.*

"past merit": *puṇyabale.*

"jasmines of various kinds and gardenias": the flowers mentioned are *mallikā, mālatī, gandharāj.*

"a blue glowing mountain": the Vaiṣṇava deity is often depicted as (dark) blue.

doel, papiya, kokil, bhringaraj: birds of Bengal. The *doel* is a magpie-robin; the *pāpiyā* possibly a kind of cuckoo; the *kokil* is the Indian koel, often translated as "cuckoo", while the *bhṛṅgarāj* is probably the northern large racket-tailed drongo (*Dicrurus paradiseus grandis*). The *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan* (abbr. *HBIP*), observes that this drongo is "very noisy, especially in the early mornings and at sunset.. . . .has a large repertoire of loud metallic calls and rich melodious notes and whistling" (vol. 5, no. 976, p. 139).

"God": *debatā.* So also for other occurrences of "God" in this chapter.

"even to heaven": *baikuṇṭhe-o,* the Vaiṣṇava heaven. Similarly for other references to "heaven" in this chapter.

"Enjoy it the moment you get it!": quoted in Sanskrit: *prāptimātreṇa bhoktavyam.*

"Kalyani, what have you done?": in his great agitation, Mahendra actually calls her by name.

"the deity": *īśvar.*

Sen-Gupta omits the "O Hari, enemy of Mura . . ." refrain throughout this chapter.

The scene describing Kalyani's sinking is a fine example of Bankim's dramatic style.

❁ *Chapter 13* ❁

VARIANTS

* "On a wooded . . . woman fair": in the first edition, the relevant portion of *Gītagovinda* 5.8 is quoted verbatim instead: *dhīrasamīre yamunātīre vasati vane vanamālī* (*A[BSP]:* 127; see also below).

NOTES

"ascetics": *sannyāsīrā,* identified by their saffron robes (in contrast to wandering mendicants, perhaps, who might wear only a loincloth).

"It was only Satyananda . . . saffron robes": saffron robes (*gairikbasan*), yet the reader will recall that Satyananda was described as dressed in shining white when he rescued Kalyani in the forest. Bankim nods from time to time.

"the Almighty": *īśvar.*

"devotion to God": *īśvarpreme.*

"On a wooded . . . fearful there": sung in Sanskrit: *dhīrasamīre taṭinītīre vasati vane varanārī; mā kuru dhanurddhara gamanavilambanam ati vidhurā sukumārī.* The first sentence is an adaptation of a line from the twelfth century

poet Jayadeva's famous composition, the *Gītagovinda* [abbr. *Gg*], which depicts the love-play between Krishna and his paramour Rādhā, in the forests of Vrindaban (see Canto 5, verse 8; and above, under Variants). The monk's song is a coded message alluding to Kalyani (whose name can also mean "kindly/fair woman"), and her child (Sukumari, the "young maid"), for the hearing of any *santān* in the vicinity.

❁ *Chapter 14* ❁

VARIANTS

* "God": *debatā.* The first edition has the plural: *debatārā.*

NOTES

"a holy man with special powers": *siddha puruṣ.*

❁ *Chapter 15* ❁

VARIANTS

* "Satyananda, had in mind": here, the first edition adds: " 'Do what I say quickly'—but what must I do?" The "Do what I say quickly" is a quotation in Sanskrit (*kuru mama vacanaṃ satvara-racanam*) from the *Gg,* 5.14.

* "On a wooded river-bank . . ." once again the first edition quotes verbatim from the *Gg* (see variants under ch.13 above) (*A[BSP]:* 127).

* "some other starving wretch lying": the first edition has instead simply, "someone else" (ibid.).

* "asked the other wonderingly": *AMsv* adds here: "Or have you found someone else?"

* "Where's that sari?": *AMsv* adds after this: "One of the two it seems!"

NOTES

"wretch": *māgī.*

"Muslims": *musulmān.*

"patterns of rice-paint on the walls": *deoāle ālipanā.*

"a deep, beaked spoon": *jhinuk.*

"in those afflicted eyes": *chāi poḍār cakṣe.*

"the child's Kayastha": *uṭi kāyeter meye.*

"or eat my head!": *āmār māthā khāo.*

"the seat for Jibananda to sit cross-legged on": *piḍi.* It was not the custom to sit on a conventional chair in the villages.

"a dish made from green pulses . . . from the lake": *kācā kalāyer dāl, jaṅgule ḍumurer dālnā, pukurer ruimācher jhol.*

❁ *Chapter 16* ❁

VARIANTS

* "onto a smouldering fire": thus *nibān āgune;* but the first edition has *jvalanta agnite:* on a blazing flame.

* "You've enough . . . clothing": instead of this sentence, the first edition has: "You're not short of money. I've not made it hard for you in that respect".

NOTES

"God knows": *jagadīśvar.*

"penance": *prāyaścitta.* An expiation, or reparation that can expunge the transgression.

"duty, wealth, pleasure, salvation . . . its religious rites": *dharma, artha, kām, mokṣa, jagatsaṃsār . . . brata, hom, jāg, jagña.* The first four terms indicate the *puruṣārthas*, the four traditional goals of human existence. The last three terms are meant to represent the various rites of a way of life dedicated to a sacred cause.

"You're the prop . . . duty": *āmār sakal dharmer sahāy.*

"the Eternal Code": *sanātan dharma.*

"hero's duty": *bīrdharma.*

❁ *Chapter 17* ❁

VARIANTS

* "an extremely spirited . . . Jnanananda": the first three editions have "Dhirananda" here and subsequently, instead of "Jnanananda" (*A[BSP]*: 127).

* "in Bengal": the first three editions have "in Birbhum" (ibid.).

* "I know . . . gone after him": this sentence is omitted in the first three editions.

* "in her nostrils": the first edition has "in her eyes and nostrils".

NOTES

"baldies": *neḍerā.* See last item under Variants for chapter 10.

"saffron/saffron robes": *geruyā kāpaḍ/gairik basan.*

"and began to rub her body": Bhabananda's protracted and intimate physical contact with Kalyani in extenuating circumstances, when otherwise such contact would be unthinkable, will lead to his infatuation with her (see Part III, ch. 4). Bankim uses this device elsewhere to create situations that circumvent the rigid social norms of traditional Hindu society, as in *Krishnakanta's Will* (Part I, ch. 16), where the main male character, Gobindlal, happily married at the time, rescues the young widow Rohini from drowning by lengthy mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. This leads to his infatuation with her and to the eventual destruction of his marriage. The tensions created by such situations help reveal Bankim's religious and social ideals.

❁ *Chapter 18* ❁

VARIANTS

* "Jnanananda": here and further on, the first three editions have "Bhabananda" instead (*A[BSP]*: 127).

* "into the river": here and further on, the first three editions have instead, "into the [waters of the] Ajeya" (ibid.).

* " 'Go back!' cried Satyananda . . ." to the end of the chapter: instead of this passage, the first three editions have: But much time was wasted in such activities. Taking advantage of this, the city's king, Asad-ul-ajman Bahadur, regrouped the forces stationed in the city and armed with cannon, musket and shot confronted the Order of Children. The Children, armed only with shields, swords and spears, were somewhat daunted when they saw the cannon, musket and shot, and countless numbers began to die in the face of the cannon fire. Then Satyananda cried, "Retreat, there's no need for Vaishnavas to die in vain". Defeated and downcast, the Children abandoned the city and entered the jungle once more (*A[BSP]*: 127–28).

NOTES

"Order of Children/*santans*": *santānsampradāy.*

"weaver-birds": *babui:* the Baya weaver bird (*Ploceus philippinus*), a highly gregarious bird. The *babui* has a reputation in Bengali folklore for remaining outside its nest even when it rains; in other words, it can stand for a foolish person who refuses to see the solution of a problem even when it presents itself. Is this a way of saying that the Muslims could have tried to be more effective in integrating with the land? The precise meaning is not clear.

"foreigners": *jaban* (Sanskrit form: *yavana*): originally applied to the Greeks ("Ionian"), but then extended to Muslims as a type of any (generally unsympathetic) foreigner who stands outside the pale of Vedic or Hindu civilisation. For further information, see Killingley, 1997, and the introduction, section on "The Future in the Past".

"the very essence of Vishnu's earthly form": *biṣṇur abatārsvarūp.*

"salvation": *mukti.*

"O Hari, enemy of Mura . . .": Sen-Gupta omits the invocation here and further on.

"Hiranyakashipu, Kamsa, Dantavakra, Shishupala, Shambhu": powerful demons and villains of Hindu folklore.

"the slapping of thousands of arms": the wrestler or fighter, when psyching himself up for combat, noisily slaps his upper arm(s) as a mark of belligerence.

"thousands of bucklers began to grate": another mark of readiness for combat.

"Forest of the Monks": *ānandakānan.* Sen-Gupta: "the *Wood of Bliss*"; Ghose: "the forest of Ananda"; *MF:* "la forêt de Félicité" (125).

—PART II—

❁ *Chapter 1* ❁

VARIANTS

This whole chapter is an addition of the fifth edition (see the notice to the fifth edition).

NOTES

"Her father was a Brahmin . . .*tol*": *tāhār pitā adhyāpak brāhmaṇ chilen.* He was the traditional village schoolmaster.

"the rituals at the junctures of the day": *sandhyāhniker samaye* (see under Notes to Part I, ch.11).

"When the teacher was not around . . . what they meant": Sen-Gupta leaves this passage out, and inserts three asterisks: * * *

"the great Sanskrit poetical works and their glosses": *bhaṭṭi, raghu, kumār, naiṣadhādir ślok byākhyā sahit.* These refer to the *Bhaṭṭikāvya, Raghuvaṃśa, Kumārasambhava, Naiṣadhacarita* and so on, and their commentaries. The *Bhaṭṭikāvya,* originally called the *Rāvaṇavadha,* teaches the intricacies of Sanskrit grammar by recalling the exploits of Rāma (one of Viṣṇu's avatars and hero of the epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa*); it is ascribed by some to Bhaṭṭi (ca. fifth to sixth centuries CE) and by others to Bhartṛhari (seventh century). The *Raghuvaṃśa* and *Kumārasambhava* are the works of the great poet Kālidāsa (third to fifth centuries CE), while the *Naiṣadhacarita* by Śrīharṣa (ca. twelfth century?) tells the story of Nala, prince of the Nishadhas. The references to works in this chapter give some idea of what was taught in a traditional *ṭol.*

"What will be, will be": quoted in the Sanskrit: *yad bhaviṣyati tad bhaviṣyati.*

"ascetic": *sannyāsī.*

"the modesty that comes naturally to a woman": *strīsvabhābsulabh lajjā.*

"would lose caste": *jāti jāibe.*

"Eros": *puṣpadhanvā.* In this section, I have interposed brief descriptions in the text of some of the figures mentioned, such as "god of storms", "the god of wealth", for easier understanding by the general reader.

"the Creator": *prajāpati.*

"the code of the *santans*": *santāndharma.*

❁ *Chapter 2* ❁

VARIANTS

* "covered her bosom": the first edition adds: "But it could hardly conceal it! The wonderful shape of that bosom was perfectly detectable through the cloth" (*A[BSP]*: 128).

* "But she just couldn't put them on . . . strands of hair into her clothes": instead of this passage, the first three editions have, "Her lovely face looked charming with the new beard and moustache!" (ibid.).

* "covered her body from neck to knee": the first three editions add here, "If any bard were to see her now—this new 'beknotted object in the black deer-skin' [this phrase is partly in Sanskrit: *kṛṣṇatvacaṃ granthimatīṃ dadhānāke*]—leave alone consigning the god of love to destruction, he'd doubt if he'd ever be able to resurrect him again!" (ibid.)—a reference to Kālidāsa's account of the incident in which the god Śiva, the supreme ascetic, reduced the god of love to ashes for attempting to distract him from his meditation (see the note to the novel's dedication in the critical apparatus). In other words, Shanti looked most charming as an ascetic!

* "looked carefully around the house": the first three editions add here: "After making sure that no one was about, she opened a chest that she had kept in a secret place. She took out a bundle, undid it and arranged the contents, which consisted of some manuscripts made from cotton pulp, on the floor. 'What do I do with these?' she thought. 'They'll be of no use to me! I can't carry all this, and there's no point in keeping them. I've seen there's no further joy in knowledge. They're just a heap of ashes. Well, then, ashes to ashes. . . .' So saying, Shanti threw the manuscripts one by one into the blazing fire. Works of poetry, literature, rhetoric, grammar and I know not what else, were burnt and reduced to ashes" (ibid.). ["manuscripts made from cotton pulp": *tulaṭer puthi.* The chief constituent of paper is cellulose, which before the mid-nineteenth century was derived mainly from linen and cotton. Such cotton-pulp manuscripts tended to weather well. During the course of the nineteenth

century, wood pulp increasingly became the chief source of the cellulose required for making paper.]

* "goddesses of the wood": *bandebīgaṇ;* the first three editions have, instead, "the village folk".

NOTES

"removed some ash from the oven and kept it aside": presumably to smear on her face, arms etc., later on, as was the custom with ascetics—see further. Bankim seems to have forgotten this, since he doesn't refer to it again.

"matted locks of an ascetic": *jaṭābhār.*

"the old fellow": *buḍo beṭāke,* that is, her husband, Jibananda.

"Clip-clop on your horse . . .": a footnote describes this "Song" (*gīt* in the main text) as belonging to the musical mode (*rāgiṇī*), *bāgīśvarī,* its *tāl* or beat being *āḍā. Rāgiṇī Bāgīśvarī* is a mode suitable for late at night, and evokes the mood of lovers in spring. "It seems to go back at least to 17th century, and is considered by some to be the 'graceful and seductive' consort of *Malkauns* and 'plays her songs of love on the *vīṇā.*' The time of performance is given as 'around midnight' " (quoted from e-mail communication by Dr R Widdess, May 8, 2003). *Āḍā* may be a sixteen-or fourteen-beat *tāl* or metre.

The song itself can be transcribed from the Bengali as follows:

daḍa baḍi ghoḍā caḍi kothā tumi jāo re.
samare calinu āmi hāme nā phirāo re.
hari hari hari hari bali raṇaraṅge,
jhāp diba prāṇ āji samara taraṅge,
tumi kār ke tomār, kena eso saṅge,
ramaṇīte nāhi sādh, raṇajaya gāo re.

pāye dhari prāṇnāth āmā cheḍe jeo nā.
oi śuna bāje ghana raṇajaya bājnā.
nāciche turaṅga mor raṇa kare kāmanā,
uḍila āmār man, ghare ār raba nā,
ramaṇīte nāhi sādh, raṇajaya gāo re.

❁ *Chapter 3* ❁

NOTES

"in their monastery": *ānandamaṭhe.*

"God": *debatā.*

"For what fault": *ki doṣe.*

"Muslims": *musalmān.*

"our Lord who bears . . . mace": *sei śaṅkha-cakra-gadā-padmadhārī banamālī.* Bankim combines attributes of Viṣṇu with a name for Krishna (*banamālī*).

"divine grace": *daibānugraha.*

"on a pilgrimage": *tīrthajātrā.*

"In our monastery?": *ei ānandamaṭhe?*

"And God has now": *īśvar.*

"You said that the Lord": *bhagabān.*

"Did you meet your wife?": *brāhmaṇīr saṅge sākṣāt kariyā āsiācha ki?* The use of the word *brāhmaṇī* for "wife" reveals Jibananda's caste.

"our Teacher": *gurudeb.*

❁ *Chapter 4* ❁

VARIANTS

* "This is what we do": *AMsv* has the following footnote here: "This was not the view only of the *santans.* One should keep in mind here the exploits of the warring religious Orders like the Knights Templar, etc. Further, this view held by the *santans* was also the view held by Muhammad's followers".

NOTES

"One must call those in charge of monasteries Raja": *Rājā,* of course, means "king", and *Mahārāj,* "great king". William S Sax, 2000, has shown the traditional connection between royalty and renouncers/ascetics in Hindu culture, describing this relationship as one of "alter egos".

"code of the *santans*": *santāndharma.*

"by the rope of worldly concerns": *māyārajjute.*

"God's work": *debatār kāj.*

"Order": *sampradāy.*

"How can I renounce a mantra?": besides performing other functions, accepting a mantra from a guru is like receiving a password into a particular way of life. It is often perceived as implying a permanent commitment. For more on mantras see Alper, 1991.

"nonviolence is the highest code of practice": *ahiṃsāi parama dharma.*

"Lord Caitanya": *caitanyadeb.* Caitanya was a sixteenth-century saint from Bengal who preached a highly extroverted form of devotionalism to Krishna and his divine consort, Rādhā.

"false/authentic": *aprakṛta/prakṛta.*

"rescuing the world": *dharitrīr uddhār. Dharitrī* is a feminine noun, here personifying the earth.

"chosen deity": *iṣṭadebatā.*

"Vaishnava code": *vaiṣṇavadharma.*

"consists only of love": *premamay. Prem* is a "soft" love, expressive of emotion and tenderness, and not infrequently used in contexts of erotic love. The Order of *santans* is not a family for emotive love, a *prem-paribār,* as described, for example, by Srinath Canda in a Brahmo context of the 1870s; see Canda, 1968, 87.

"consists of power alone": *śudhu śaktimay.*

"the Lord": *bhagabān.*

"Christian priest": *pādri.*

"God is love": *īśvar premamay.*

"You must love Jesus": *tomrā jīśuke prem karo.* See above for the meaning of *prem.* Interestingly, *prem* is rarely used to translate the Greek *agape* (the preferred term for nonsensual love) and its derivatives in the current, acclaimed Bengali translation of the New Testament (from *The Maṅgalbārtā Bible*) by Bandyopadhyay and Mignon, 2003 edition.

"God consists of three attributes": *īśvar triguṇātmak.*

"goodness, energy and quiescence": *sattva, rajaḥ, tamaḥ.* This can also be translated as "brightness/being", "passion", "darkness/inertia" and so on, respectively. In traditional Hindu thought, these three attributes are the constituents of all created beings (including humans, in whom they manifest through the full gamut of human experience from thought and ethical qualities—including vices—to the various physical attributes). The three attributes are generally distinguished from the dimension of pure consciousness (*caitanya*) which is also an aspect of personhood, so that the whole individual is a dynamic combination of the three constituents on the one hand, and pure consciousness on the other. In fact, Satyananda's bald description of God as consisting of the three attributes would be rejected by most traditional Hindu thinkers, who would prefer to describe the supreme being in terms of some form of consciousness only. Sen-Gupta, Ghose and *MF* do not translate *sattva, rajaḥ,* and *tamaḥ.*

"spiritual practice": *upāsanā.*

"loving devotion": *bhakti.*

"an order of religious devotees": *upāsaksampradāy.*

"temporal power": *rājya.*

"All we wish to do . . . enemies of our Lord": *kebal musalmānerā bhagabāner bidveṣī baliyā tāhāder sabaṃśe nipāt karite cāi,* that is, extirpate their authority

to rule (which has violated or undermined Hindu dharma), rather than annihilate or banish them.

I translate as "our Lord" here to indicate that *bhagabān* is a distinctively Hindu term.

❁ *Chapter 5* ❁

NOTES

"disciplined": *saṃjata.*

"the Children's code": *santāndharma.*

"the householder's life": *gṛhadharma.*

"Do you agree . . . next to a woman?": *strīloker saṅge kakhana ekāsane basibe nā?*

"the Eternal Code": *sanātandharma.* Sen-Gupta: the True Religion; Ghose: the true religion; *MF:* Au nom du *dharma* éternel.

"caste": *jāti.*

"I am a Brahmin. I'm not married": *āmi brāhmaṇkumār.*

"of equal standing": *ek jātīya.*

❁ *Chapter 6* ❁

NOTES

"the renouncer's code": *sannyāsdharma.*

"embankment": *bā̃dh.*

"Also, build a first-class strongroom made of iron there": we may have some idea of what Bankim had in mind by reference to a similar construction described in chapter 18 of Bankim's very first (English) novel, *Rajmohan's Wife*: "A solitary and feeble lamp lighted a gloomy and low-roofed room, whose sombre and massive walls looked more grim in the dim light. The room was as small in area as it was low in altitude. . . . A low small thick door of iron shut the only entrance to this gloomy apartment, and was furnished with bolts and bars of a proportionately massive character. As if still suspicious of the character of the security of this cell, the architect had taken the unusual precaution of plating the very walls with a coat of iron".

❁ *Chapter 7* ❁

VARIANTS

* "or the look in your eyes?": the first three editions add, "from this old man?" (*A[BSP]*: 128).

* "Only four": the first three editions have, "Only two" (with Jibananda being mentioned as the other later) (*A[BSP]*: 129).

* "How is that?": the first edition has after this, "You're neither a Bhairabi nor a Vaishnavi" (ibid.), that is, two kinds of female ascetic. Shanti didn't display their distinguishing marks on her person.

* "Why can't I have a part. . . . probation for a few days": the first three editions omit these lines and substitute the following passage:

> "I'm afraid my husband may fall from virtue (*dharmacyuti*). For lack of rain even a great tree can wither. I'll be the rain that falls on the great tree. There's no need to worry".
>
> "So that's it", said Satyananda. "You're afraid that a great tree will have no rain—that Jibananda will fall from virtue!"
>
> "Well, what's happened once can happen again".
>
> "What happened?" said Satyananda. "Has Jibananda fallen from virtue—the Himalayas have sunk into a great hole, have they?"
>
> "Only for lack of his helpmate in virtue (*sahadharmiṇī-sāhājyer abhābe*)", said Shanti.
>
> "I've no idea what you mean", said Satyananda.
>
> "He met me yesterday at midday. He broke his vow".
>
> At this the grey-haired monk covered his eyes, sat down and wept. No one had seen Satyananda cry before.
>
> Shanti asked, "Master, why are you crying?"
>
> Satyananda said, "Do you know what the penance is?"
>
> "Yes," said Shanti. "Self-immolation (*ātmahatyā*)".
>
> "That's why I'm crying", said Satyananda. "I'm crying because I'm grieving for Jibananda".
>
> "And that's why I'm here", said Shanti. "To make sure Jibananda doesn't die".
>
> Satyananda replied, "Child, may your wish come true. And I pardon all your transgressions. You've become one of the Children. I hadn't really understood you, that's why I reprimanded you. But how could I understand? After all, I'm only a forest monk, how could I get the measure of a woman? Jibananda will end his life; neither I nor you can prevent that. [Here *AMsv* adds: My pledge for this great vow is the life of my loved ones.] Jibananda is dearer to me than life itself, but if my right hand goes I cannot accomplish God's (*debatā*) work. Keep Jibananda in this world for as long as you can, but also preserve your celibate way of life. You've become my dear disciple. The Children are my only happiness (*ānanda*). That's why all of them have *ananda* in their name and this place is called "the monastery of the *Anandas*" (*e ānandamaṭh*). [This is an important passage for determining the meaning of the novel's title. See Introduction for further discussion.] So you too must take the name *ananda*. Let your name remain Nabinananda". (*A[BSP]*: 129–30)

* "but how can an old man say this to one so young?": instead of this sentence, the first edition has: "but can one say such a thing!"

NOTES

"black deerskin": *kṛṣṇājin.*

"Shantimani the Sinner": *śāntimaṇi pāpiṣṭhā.* Here the *maṇi*-suffix implies that it is a woman who is addressed.

"but I also live a celibate life": *kintu āmi brahmacāriṇī.*

"child-widow": *bālbidhabā.*

"code": *dharma.*

"I'm his partner in life": *āmi tāhār sahadharmiṇī.*

"You are a virtuous woman": *tumi sādhvī.*

"the householder's way of life": *gṛhadharme.*

"the code of the hero": *bīrdharme.*

"practise virtue": *dharmācaraṇer janya.*

"in this monastery?": *ānandamaṭhe.*

❁ *Chapter 8* ❁

VARIANTS

* "Jibananda's own deerskin": after this phrase until the end of the chapter, the first three editions substitute the passage given in Appendix A.

NOTES

"*Anandamath* is full of *Anandas*": *ānandamaṭh ānandamay.* This is another sentence that provides a clue to the meaning of the novel's title. Sen-Gupta has: "The Abbey of Bliss is full of bliss"; Ghose translation: "Ananda Math is full of Ananda", which also means that Ananda Math is full of bliss/joy. *MF* has: "Le monastère de la Félicité est plein de ces hommes dont le nom *ananda* est félicité" (158), which is closer to the point.

"Abhimanyu fought against the seven charioteers": the Sanskrit Poona edition mentions six champions (*ṣaḍrathāḥ*): 7.45.19. This episode, a dramatic account of how Abhimanyu eventually dies, begins at 7.45.1.

"the *santans*' way of life": *santāndharma.*

"my wife" (and subsequently): *brāhmaṇī.*

—PART III—

❁ *Chapter 1* ❁

VARIANTS

* "In reply, the officials of the region": instead of this phrase, the first three editions have, "Then the king of Nagar took note of the situation (and . . .)", Nagar being the capital of Birbhum District (*A[BSP]*: 134).

* "depart, calling out to Hari": the first three editions add after this: "King Asad-ul-jaman was now in a big quandary. He despatched many cannons with ammunition, elephants and horses, but nothing could stop the *santans*' cry of 'Conquer, O Hari, Lord of the world!' Asad-ul-jaman realised that the end of his reign was nigh, so in distress he wrote to the English saying that it had become quite impossible for him to collect revenue or to send it on. Only under their protection, he said, would he be able to collect taxes, otherwise they were welcome to come themselves and collect them. The English had already been collecting some taxes themselves, but now even their own efforts began to be in vain" (ibid.).

* "to quell the rebellion": the first three editions add, "in the region of Birbhum" (ibid.).

* "Captain Thomas's ears": the first three editions add here, "Thus did the *santans*' fame spread in Birbhum in the year 1773" (ibid.).

NOTES

"By God's grace": *īśvarkrpāy.*

"over a third": *chay ānā,* that is, 6 annas. There were 16 annas to the old rupee, so 6 annas is about 37 percent of the whole. In *Krishna Kanta's Will,* Miriam S Knight's English translation of Bankim's novel (1895), there is a note to explain: "Fractional quantities are frequently expressed in India by the fractional parts of a rupee, which consists of 16 annas. Thus, an 8-anna estate is half the estate; 3 annas is three-sixteenths, and so on. Similarly, a farmer may say he expects to get only a 12-anna crop—that is, a quarter less than a full crop. If he has paid his rent in full, he will call it a 16-anna rent; if he only cultivates a fourth of his land, it is a 4-anna cultivation" (257). Since the old rupee has gone, this figure of speech has virtually died out in modern Bengali parlance.

"God": *īśvar.*

"the Goddess Durga's festival": *durgotsab,* the great autumnal festival of Bengal.

"the dais for Krishna's Dol festival": *dolmañce,* when images of Krishna and his beloved, Rādhā, were placed in cradles on a platform made of clay or brick and rocked. This feast is combined with the celebrations of Holi, a spring

festival of regeneration, during the full moon of the month of Phālgun (February–March).

"the virtuous": *sādhu.*

"Because the Hindu rule of life . . . Hindu identity": *hindudharmer bilope anek hindui hindutva sthāpaner janya āgrahacitta chila.* Note this early and important use of the term *hindutva* in a context standardising Hindu identity and demarcating Hindus from Muslims. The Ghose translation here is misleading: "Because of the disappearance of Hinduism, many Hindus were eager to establish Hinduism": here *hindudharma* ("the hindu rule of life") and *hindutva* ("Hinduness") are both translated by the same word, "Hinduism", which seems inappropriate for either. Similarly, Sen-Gupta: "Many people were really anxious to revive Hinduism on seeing that it was gradually sinking". *MF* has: "À la suite de la dégradation de leur religion, beaucoup d'hindous étaient très désireux de rétablir l'hindouisme dans sa grandeur" (166).

"the foreign troops": *jabansainikrā.*

"the rising sun of the English race . . . of the land": *bhāratīya prātaḥsūrya . . . bhāratbarśer gabarnar jenral.*

"the Lord of this world": *jagadīśvar.*

"troops of the local administration": *faujdārī sainya.*

"insurrection/rebellion": *bidroha.*

❁ *Chapter 2* ❁

VARIANTS

* "of the cook": the first edition had instead, "of the Santal girls, for the English in India at that time were not as virtuous (*pabitracaritra*) as the English of today" (*A[BSP]*: 134). The Santals, regarded as an aboriginal people, inhabit parts of Bengal and adjoining areas.

* "in full bloom": here the first three editions add, "A tiger? No, not a tiger (but)" (ibid.).

* "gave way to anger": the first edition adds the following sentence (not given in *A[BSP]*): "He had heard, and even seen on occasion, that the rebels would secretly roam about in the guise of ascetics".

* "You're a rebel": instead of "rebel", the first edition has the Bengali word *bidrohī,* to which the ascetic replies, "Maybe I am".

* "You're a very spirited . . . courage": the first edition has instead (in Bengali): "You're a fine woman, and I'm pleased with your courage".

NOTES

"Choads, Hadis, Doms, Bagdis, and Bunos": there is some ambiguity here since *coāḍ* can also be translated as "ruffianly", and *buno* as "unruly". In that case the text would read, "Just then a number of ruffianly Hadis, Doms and Bagdis, seeing the boldness of the unruly *santans*" and so on. For a demographic breakdown of lower castes in upper Bengal at the time in which *Ānandamaṭh* was written, see Maitra, 1988, 9–13, who refers to W W Hunter's *Statistical Account of Bengal* (1872). Maitra points out that there is no mention of *Coāḍs* in Hunter's statistics (which referred to upper Bengal). They were inhabitants of Birbhum District, the original location of the novel. Bankim seems to have conflated data in this respect.

"Shambarari—'Enemy of the demon Shambar!' ": a Rigvedic character, who also appears in later epic and poetic literature, where he is killed by Pradyumna, a son of the god Krishna, and a reincarnation of Kāma, the god of love, who in his earlier form had been burnt to ashes by Śiva's third eye (see the novel's dedication and its endnote). The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (10.55) tells a popular version of the story. Pradyumna killed Shambar by cutting off his head. The fact that Shambar is described as having coppery facial hair (*tāmraśmaśru*, 10.55.24) may also have had something to do with mentioning him here. This is not a fanciful connection. In his satirical work, *Kamalākānter Daptar*, Bankim explicitly connects this expression with the English. In chapter 5, *Āmār man*, while deploring the cult of "material prosperity" that seems to have overwhelmed his compatriots, Kamalakanta intones: "Hara hara bom bom! Worship material prosperity. Seers with English names and coppery-haired faces (*tāmraśmaśrudhārī*) are the priests of this worship."

"India": *bhāratbarśa.*

"Providence": *bidhātā.*

"demonic race": *asurer baṃśa.*

"Our brave Englishman": *sāheb bāhādur.*

"concubine": *upapatnī.*

"a red-faced monkey": *rūpī bā̃dar.* A reference to the common rhesus monkey (*Macaca mulatta*), found over most of the northern half of India. "Its naked face is livid pink and it is the largest of the five species [of the genus *Macaca*]": Hawkins, 1986, 361. "Red-faced monkey!" was a common insult to Westerners by Bengali children even in modern times. The Ghose translation and *MF* have "a tame monkey" and "une belle guenon", respectively. Sen-Gupta has simply: "We had a monkey".

"Here. . . . Here's your gun": *ne, tor banduk ne.* The use of the second person familiar/inferior here to a strange man signifies contempt, especially from the mouth of a woman.

Thomas's use of bad Bengali in this version, in contrast to his command of Bengali in earlier editions, reflects Bankim's enduring ambivalence towards the British. Whereas Bankim toned down some references (such as Thomas's lechery earlier in this chapter), he compensated by making the Englishman look ridiculous as a speaker of the vernacular, and therefore more aloof from the local inhabitants.

❁ *Chapter 3* ❁

VARIANTS

* "Till the day I die . . .": an unspoken question, made clearer by the addition of "till" (*parjyantai*) in the first edition (not given in *A[BSP]*): see further, under Notes below.

* "But why are you talking about penance? . . . So what need for penance?": this passage is not in the first three editions (*A[BSP]*: 135).

* "But you have just taught me": the first three editions add, "and I have learnt my lesson! Blessed are you among women" (*tumii strīkule dhanyā*) (ibid.).

* "Then both sang. . . .": at the end the first three editions add, "and wept even as they sang" (ibid.).

NOTES

"Who can stop this surge of youth . . .": a song heralding the dawn of a new era:

E jauban-jaltaraṅga rodhibe ke?
Hare Murāre! Hare Murāre!
Jalete tufān hayeche,
Āmār nūtan tarī bhāsla sukhe,
Mājhite hāl dhareche,
Hare Murāre! Hare Murāre!
Bheṅge bālir bā̃dh, purāi maner sādh,
joār gāṅge jal chuṭeche rākhibe ke?
Hare Murāre! Hare Murāre!

"atone/penance": *prāyaścitta* (*karā*).

"Till the day I die. . . .": that is, "Since I'm to die anyway, do we have to refrain from living as husband and wife till I die?" Shanti understands this and answers as she does.

"I'm your wife . . . and helper in that code": *āmi tomār dharmapatnī, sahadharmiṇī, dharme sahāy.*

"rule": *dharma.*

"I want to increase your virtue": *tomār dharmabṛddhi kariba.*

"your wife in virtue": *dharmapatnī.*

"O my lord, *you* are my teacher, who am I to teach you virtue!": *hāy prabhu! tumii āmār guru, āmi ki tomāy dharma śikhāiba?*

"You love me and I love you. Can there be . . .": *tumi āmāy bhālabāsa, āmi tomāy bhālabāsi. . . . VMBS*: 87 says that this is "a statement till then unheard in the literary representation of conjugal relationship in Bengal", that is, in that an explicit declaration of true love is the guiding principle of this relationship. But in the preceding conversation Shanti has spoken clearly of her *duty* as a wife. The implication is that duty and true love (not necessarily sensual love) go together.

❁ *Chapter 4* ❁

VARIANTS

* " 'No', said Kalyani": instead, in the first three editions Kalyani says, "Everything's finished. Only my being a wife is not" (*kebal strītva śeṣ hay nāi*) (*A[BSP]*: 135).

* " 'Your study of words?' ": (see also below) in the first three editions this is followed by:

> K: "I couldn't understand the bit about the different heavens. Could you explain it?"
> B: "I can't explain what I don't understand myself. Are you still reading those literary works?"
> K: "I don't understand them at all. I've given up the *Kumarasambhava* and I'm reading the *Hitopadesa*". [For *Kumārasambhava* see note under the Dedication. The *Hitopadeśa* is an ancient Sanskrit work giving salutary advice based on animal fables.]
> B: "Why's that, Kalyani?"
> K: "Because the former is about gods, while the latter is about animals".
> B: "Well, why have you given up reading about the gods and taken this interest in animals, then?"
> K: "Because the mind's not under control". [Instead of this line, the second and third editions have simply: "Fate".] (ibid.)

* "In the greater, she is a thorn": here the first edition adds the Sanskrit expression: *kaṇṭakenaiva kaṇṭakam,* "a thorn to remove a thorn" (ibid.). See the following sentence in the text.

* "Then I shall be his again": the first edition has instead: "Then I'll fall at his feet" (ibid.).

* "the heart will have its way": here *AMsv* inserts the following: "Virtue

(*dharma*) is overcome by vice (*adharma*). Didn't Yudhisthira say, 'Asvatthama's been killed! (I mean the elephant)'? The god Indra had a thousand eyes, the moon has a stain, while god Brahma had sex with his daughter. The *santan* code . . .". Bhabananda refers to folklore here to show how even superior beings have flaws. Yudhisthira was supposed to be the embodiment of truth, but even he resorted to sophistry to gain an advantage (during the great *Mahābhārata* battle, he fatally disconcerted his guru Drona, who was fighting on the other side, by declaring, "Asvatthama is dead!"—Asvatthama was the name of Drona's son—and then adding sotto voce, "I mean (Asvatthama) the elephant"). The thousand "eyes" of Indra were vagina-shaped marks—a punishment for his lust.

NOTES

"dressed in the short, borderless cloth of a widow": *ṭheṭi paḍā.*

"a small black mark tattooed . . . forehead": *kapāle ulki.*

"Grandaunt": *ṭhākruṇ didi.*

"for her hands were ritually impure": *sakḍ(r)i hāt.* Only after formally washing her hands could she engage in other activities.

"end-piece of her garment": *bastrāñcal.*

"You folk are holy men, gods!": *tomrā hale gosāi mānuṣ, debatā!*

"to marry you quickly": *sāṅgā karā.* This refers to a form of widow remarriage with minimal ceremony. Instead of *sāṅgā, AMsv* has *nike,* a more Muslim expression.

"abbot": *maṭhdhārī brahmacārī.*

"a rosary to chant Hari's name": *harināmer mālā.*

"a watercolour": *paṭ.*

"paintings of various scenes": these depict various well-known incidents from the life of the youthful and amorous god Krishna in the idyllic setting of the Vraja forest on the banks of the Yamunā; this was in Mathurā in northern India. For a description, see the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (eighth to ninth centuries CE). "Krishna riding the elephant made of nine maidens": *navanārīkuñjar,* "l'éléphant dont le corps est fait de neuf jeunes femmes" (*MF,* 181), that is, "[Krishna portrayed] as an elephant whose body is made up of nine young maidens"—a motif in Indian art. In this case it would be difficult to see how this would illustrate "la geste de Krishna" in the context of his exploits in Vraja, as the text specifies. Sen-Gupta translates this whole passage as follows: "and, here and there, there were pictures of Jagannath, of the chastisement of Kaliya and on other subjects connected with Srikrishna's life in Brindaban".

"Art or Art's Fancy?": *citra nā bicitra?* Sen-Gupta makes no reference to the

caption. The Ghose translation has: "Pictures or Wonders?"; *MF:* "coloriage ou bariolage" (182).

"Your study of words?": thus, *abhidhān?*

"Renouncer": *sannyāsī.*

"Because the wife is a partner, a support in virtue": *strī sahadharmiṇī, dharmer sahāy.*

"Only in the smallest virtue . . . thorn": *choṭo choṭo dharme. baḍa baḍa dharme kaṇṭak.*

"of not doing his duty": *adharma.*

"the *santan* code": *santāndharma.*

"penance": *prāyaścitta.*

❁ *Chapter 5* ❁

VARIANTS

* "Then he said. . . . Bhabananda did not pursue him": instead of this passage, the first edition has: "and Dhirananda slipped away" (*A[BSP]*: 136).

NOTES

"Only the bald-headed kind": *neḍā bairāgī.*

"code": *dharma.*

"let Kalyani be your queen": literally, "Let Kalyani be your Mandodari": Mandodarī has a somewhat ambivalent status in the *Rāmāyaṇa.* She was the wife of Rāvaṇa, the ogre king of Laṅkā and the enemy of Rāma, the righteous king of Ayodhyā. After Rāvaṇa's death, Vibhīṣana, Rāvaṇa's upright brother (who defected to Rāma, Rāvaṇa's conqueror, before the final battle) was installed as king of Laṅkā, and Mandodarī accepted him as her husband.

"Brahminicide": *brahmahatyā.*

❁ *Chapter 6* ❁

VARIANTS

* "The sorrow of it is. . . . Shame! I must die": instead of this passage, the first edition has:

> "What can I achieve by setting this puny body (*gajadeha*) against the currents of the Bhagirathi? I had to do what I did—fate will have its way! Without first getting the measure of myself, I tried to get the

> measure of others! Can a covetous, sinful person, a slave to the senses, a reprobate, have any sense of duty, of integrity? (*je lobhī, je pāpiṣṭha, je indriyaparabaś, je adharmī, tāhār ābār dharma ki? tāhār ābār satya ki?*). Why should I fear sin, for eternal hell is my lot for sure! I can go to ruin in this very life—why should I fear that? So let fate take its course, I'll do this evil deed (*duṣkarma*). After all, I face death in this life and also in the next. Save yourself from the danger at hand, I say, without worrying about distant dangers! I'll follow Dhirananda's advice. . . . No! Duty (*dharma*) is the Teacher (*guru*) above all else. This life can end right now by the bite of a snake, but the next life is endless. I would be happy in this life for a short while, but miserable in the next for ever." (*A[BSP]*: 136)

NOTES

"The night was oppressively dark": *rajanī ati ghor tamomayī. Tamas* is the restraining, stifling attribute (*guṇa*) of the material essence, *prakṛti.*

"only as a source of fear": *kebal bhayer upādānmayī.*

"like some puny elephant . . . Bhagirathi": a well-known image to indicate useless defiance. Though the elephant is a large, powerful creature, it is helpless in the strong currents of a great river (the river Bhagirathi, the Ganges by another name, takes its name from a king, Bhagiratha). The image occurs in Hindu folklore. In his third Bengali novel, *Mṛṇālinī* (published in 1869), Bankim uses this image in a didactically more explicit yet somewhat different way. In Part III, chapter 6, Manoramā, one of the leading women in the novel, is explaining love's way to the hero, Hemcandra, who is confused by his love for another. She says: "Have you heard the Puranas? . . . It's written there that [the king] Bhagiratha brought the Ganges down [from heaven] and an arrogant, frenzied elephant, while trying to check its force, was swept away. What does this mean? The Ganges represents the current of love (*premprabāhasvarūp*). . . . The arrogant elephant is pride incarnate, and it is swept away by the force of love. Love (*praṇay*) at first resorts to a single path, but in due course it becomes a hundred-faced".

"How could I abandon my duty?": thus, *dharmatyāgī?*

"O infinite, blessed One!": *puṇyamayi anante*: a feminine vocative (to the Goddess).

"duty": *dharma.*

"sin": *pāp.*

"Teacher": *gurudeb.*

"Master": *prabhu.*

Chapter 7

VARIANTS

* "Conquer, O Hari, Lord of the world!": after this verse, the earlier editions have the following passage:

> Shanti recognised the voice and muttered, "Keep away, you wretch! So you're here in your old age to sing along with a woman!" Adjusting the strings of the *saranga,* she raised her voice to a higher pitch and sang:
>
> Hail to you, Krishna,
> Who, fashioning ten forms,
> Rescues the Vedas,
> Supports the worlds,
> Lifts up earth's orb,
> Tears open the demon,
> Outwits Bali,
> Destroys the warrior caste,
> Conquers Ravana,
> Wields the plow,
> Dispenses compassion,
> And confounds the barbarian! (*Gg.* 1. 16)
>
> [These descriptions refer to Viṣṇu's leading *avatāras*: the fish, the turtle, the boar, Nara-Siṃha the man-lion, the dwarf, Paraśurāma, Dāśaratharāma, Balarāma, the Buddha, and Kalki.]
>
> Then abandoning the slow beat with its loud and piercing tone, Shanti sang:
>
> Conquer, Lord Hari, O conquer!
> You, who've lain on Radha's round breasts,
> Sporting your earrings and wood-garlands
> With zest! (*Gg.* 1.17)
>
> Then he who sang with her from outside [could restrain himself no longer. White-bearded and bright with splendour, robed in white and adorned with white flowers, he entered the hut and said, "Sing on, child, for the Eternal Code will be rescued through you." And he] himself sang: "Bedecked with the sun, destroying the worlds, Free Spirit within the sages. . . ." (*Gg.* 1.18) (*A[BSP]*: 136–37)

The words in square brackets in this final paragraph occur in the first edition.

* "I did not know you", said Satyananda: the first edition adds the following passage here:

> "If I had, I would have urged Jibananda to swear to me not to stop living with his wife! Child, I have a request. Stop dressing as a woman.

> Dress like a *santan,* take up sword, shield and spear, and enter the *santan* army."
>
> "Master, why do you command this?" asked Shanti. "At your command I've overcome Shiva's foes [the passions], and now must I conquer Vishnu's enemies too [that is, the enemies of the *santans* who are Vaishnavas]?" Then Shanti sang out:
>
> Conquer, Lord Krishna, O conquer!
> You who destroyed Madhu, Mura and Naraka,
> And are seated on the eagle Garuda,
> Who make the joy of the saints to endure,
> Whose glance is like the lotus-leaf pure,
> Who from the thrall of existence set us free,
> Yet continue to support the worlds three! (*Gg.* 1.20–21)
>
> "Heavens!" she continued. "Why do you remain silent? Can't you see how strange this is?"
>
> "How strange what is?" asked Satyananda.
>
> "Don't you see?"
>
> "I don't know everything".
>
> "Then I'll tell you tomorrow", said Shanti. "But I want to ask you something. I'm the reason my husband broke his vow, and his fate is to suffer death. Since he's fallen from his code, he must die. So I too must die. But then will your work be accomplished? Who will do it?"

The text now continues with Satyananda replying, "Child!" and so on. (*A[BSP]*: 137).

* "The monk sighed deeply and said, 'Child' ": after this, the first edition continues as follows: "to you I reveal my innermost thoughts. No one but you—not even Jibananda, Bhabananda, Mahananda or anyone else—is able to understand them" (*A[BSP]*: 137). Then: "this terrible vow" and so on. "Mahananda" is a new name, not encountered again. Can we assume that Mahendra was given this name during his initiation? (see Part II, note 11). The full-fledged *santan* must receive a new name, but in Mahendra's case it is never mentioned. Perhaps he was not to use his name because he was to live, not openly as a *santan,* in the village of Padacinha, working for the *santans*' cause. But this point is never adverted to or explained.

NOTES

"In the waters, Krishna . . . Lord of the world!": *Gg.* 1.5. The reference is to Viṣṇu's descent (*avatāra*) in the form of a great fish to rescue the Vedic scriptures from destruction in the primeval waters of an earlier age. Jayadeva identifies the Viṣṇu-Godhead with Krishna.

"giving it its full musical expression": *stotra . . . rāg-tāl-lay sampūrṇa haiyā.*

"O Krishna, when you were the Buddha . . . Lord of the world!": *Gg.* 1.13. The reference here is to the Buddha's teaching against animal sacrifice (prescribed by the Veda), which was incorporated into some strands of Vaiṣṇava theology by the inclusion even of the Buddha in Viṣṇu's repertoire of *avatāras*.

"O Krishna, when you appear as Kalki . . . Lord of the world!": *Gg.* 1.14. Kalki is the final *avatāra,* yet to come, who will bring this era to a close and destroy the unrighteous ("the barbarian hordes").

"Allow us to bow . . . who revere you": *Gg.* 1. 24.

"Child": *mā.*

"one soul": *ek ātmā.*

"heaven": *svarga.*

"duty": *dharma.*

"In this life the husband is a god . . . God becomes everyone's duty!": *ihaloke strīr pati debatā, kintu parloke sabāri dharma debatā.* Sen-Gupta: "In this world the husband is the god of the wife, but in the life beyond Duty is everybody's God". The Ghose translation: "In this life, to a woman, her husband is a God, but in the life to come to us all, our religion is our God"; *MF:* "Dans ce monde-ci, le mari est une divinité pour son épouse, mais dans l'autre monde, le *dharma* est la divinité de tous" (196); none of these makes much sense.

"sacrifice/victim": *bali.*

❁ *Chapter 8* ❁

VARIANTS

* "on the riverbank": here and in the next line, the first three editions have instead: "on the bank of the Ajay River" and "by the side of the Ajay River," respectively (*A[BSP]*: 137). In the first reference, the earlier editions also describe the gathering *santans* as "armed" (not mentioned in the endnotes of *A[BSP]*).

* "The enemy": the first edition has instead, "The English".

NOTES

"to practise asceticism": *tapasyārtha.*

"a temple to Radha and Krishna": literally, *rādhāmādhaber mandir,* that is, "a temple to Radha and Madhava". *Mādhava* refers to a descendant of Madhu, and in particular to Krishna here.

"Krishna himself": *banamālī.*

"inflame your hearts, and encourage you to do your duty": *mane bhakti din, dharme mati din.*

"unrighteous villain": *bidharmī durātmā.*

"This is the command . . . world": *jagadīśvarer ājñā.*

❁ *Chapter 9* ❁

VARIANTS

* "of the river": the first three editions have instead, "of the Ajay River" (*A[BSP]*: 138).

* "There are whiteskins": *AMsv* has instead: "There are red-faces" (*rāṅgāmukh āche*).

* "show you favour": the first edition adds here, "Now accomplish his work" (*A[BSP]*: 138).

NOTES

"whiteskins": *gorā.*

"penance/atone": *prāyaścitta.*

"You're untouched by sin": *tumi niṣpāpśarīr.*

"my heart's defiled": *āmār citta kaluṣita.*

"sin": *pāp.*

"while the troops of enemy sepoys . . . with unerring aim": this is not the work of muskets, but of the much more accurate rifles (which came into regular service in India after the time in which the novel is set).

"sang *Bande Mataram* with sombre hope, to the beat of cannon fire": *megh-mallār rāge . . . toper tāle gāyila, 'bande mātaram.'* For a comment on this *rāg* or musical mode, see under Notes, Part I, chapter 10.

❁ *Chapter 10* ❁

VARIANTS

* "The river's there": references to "the river" in this chapter include or substitute its name, "Ajay", in the first three editions (*A[BSP]*: 138).

* "the gunners": the first edition has instead, "the English" (not mentioned in the *A[BSP]* Notes).

* "taking a group of provincial and another of district troops": the first edition has instead: "taking a group each of local, the king's and British troops" (not mentioned in the *A[BSP]* Notes).

* "Captain Thomas noticed this": but the first edition has: "Captain Thomas hadn't noticed this" (not in the *A[BSP]* Notes). Probably a mistake of the text.

* "to the mango forest": the first edition replaces what follows in the text with the following ending:

> When they entered the forest, someone called out from the branches above, "Climb into the trees! Climb into the trees! Or else the English will enter the forest and kill you!"
>
> The frightened Children climbed into the trees. It was Nabinananda Goswami who had been speaking from the trees.
>
> When everyone had climbed up, Nabinananda said, "Keep your guns ready. We can kill the enemy without danger from here."
>
> Everyone kept their guns at the ready". (ibid.)

NOTES

"a group of provincial and another of district troops": *ek dal faujdārī sipāhī, ek dal parganā sipāhī.*

"It was excessive arrogance that brought Lanka down": *atidarpe hatā laṅkā.* A Sanskrit expression referring to the defeat of the ogre Rāvaṇa, ruler of the island kingdom of Laṅkā, by the forces of Rāma.

"and Southern troops": *o tailaṅgīr dal,* that is, those generally from the region of Andhra.

"the English are not our enemies": a statement meant to placate Bankim's colonial masters?

❁ *Chapter 11* ❁

VARIANTS

* "Just then Thomas's cannon . . .": the first edition has a different beginning to this chapter. See Appendix B.

* "With the help of the twenty *santans*": *AMsv* has instead: "With the help of the twenty Vaishnavas".

* "the foreigners' army": here and subsequently in this chapter, instead of "foreigners", the first edition has "English" (*A[BSP]*: 140).

* "the baldies": the first edition has instead, "the English" (ibid.)

* "The forces of unbelief": the first edition has instead, "the English forces" (not mentioned in the Notes to (*A[BSP]*).

* "Dhirananda": *AMsv* has instead (strangely): "Nabinananda". Probably a mistake.

* "Children": *AMsv* has "Vaishnavas" instead.

* "twenty to thirty": the first edition has instead, "fifty to sixty" (not mentioned in the Notes to (*A[BSP]*).

* "kill these rebels": the first edition has instead, "kill this *kaffir* rebel": *bidrohī kāfrike* (not mentioned in the Notes to *A[BSP]*).

* "war-crazed *santans*": *AMsv* has instead: "war-crazed Vaishnavas".

NOTES

"pound them to flour!": *lucir maydā taiyār kari,* let's make flour for *lucis* out of them! *Lucis* are puff-ball pastries, made from fine flour and fried in oil.

"the foreigners' army": *jabansenā.* The text will show that this is meant to include the British and the Indian soldiers in their employ.

"Indian gunners": *deśī golandāj.*

"the south Indian, Muslim, and north Indian troops": *tailaṅgī, musalmān, hindusthānī.*

"whiteskins": *gorā.*

"the fun": *raṅga.*

"the baldies": *neḍe.* A reference to the Muslim soldiers present.

"Provincial troops and imperial, English . . . black and white": *faujdārī, bādśāhī, iṅgrājī, deśī, bilātī, kālā, gorā.* "Imperial", *bādśāhī,* that is, the soldiers of Muslim imperial rule.

"The forces of unbelief": *bidharmīr dal.*

"With a whizz": *bho kariyā.* The accuracy of the shot indicates a rifle (unlikely in the circumstances of the time), rather than a musket.

"as an agent": *car haiyā.*

"faithless": *abiśvāsī.*

"heaven": *baikuṇṭha.* Vaikuntha is Vishnu's heaven.

"Vishnu's abode": *biṣṇupad;* or possibly, "Vishnu's feet" (thus Sen-Gupta, the Ghose translation and *MF*).

"Alas, for the charm of a beautiful woman! *You* are to blame in this world of travail!": not Bhabananda! *hāy! ramaṇīrūplābaṇya! ihasaṃsāre tomākei dhik!*

❁ *Chapter 12* ❁

VARIANTS

* "foreign army": the first edition has "English army" instead, followed by "in this region, and those from among the Muslims who remain", etc. (*A[BSP]*: 140).

* "the capital": the first three editions have Nagar, the name of the region's capital, instead (ibid.).

* "of this whole region": the first three editions have instead, "of all Birbhum except Nagar" (ibid.).

* "Barendrabhumi": the first three editions have instead, "Birbhum" (ibid.) "Barendrabhumi" is a curious insertion here: probably a carryover from the earlier editions.

* "and that's all I know": here the first three editions insert:

> Then someone, sitting above them in the branch of a tree, said, "I know where your daughter is!"
>
> Mahendra looked up and said, "Who's that?"
>
> Somewhat annoyed, Satyananda looked up too. "Nabinananda!" he said. "I said you could go! Why are you still here?"
>
> Shanti said from the tree, "Master, your power extends to heaven and earth—does it also extend to the branches of trees? [that is, in between heaven and earth]?" And with that she leaped down. Satyananda said to Mahendra . . . (*A[BSP]*: 140–41)

* "The night had turned to dawn": the first edition has instead, "It was late at night" (not mentioned in the Notes to *A[BSP]*).

NOTES

"out of nowhere, thousands upon thousands of different kinds of drums, gongs, pipes and horns sounded together": *kothā haite sahsara sahasra kāḍā nāgrā, ḍhāk ḍhol, kāsī sānāi, tūrī bherī, rāmśiṅgā, dāmāmā āsiyā juṭila.*

"Great Soul": *mahātmā.*

"not members of some Vaishnava sect": *baiṣṇabasampradābhukta nahe.*

"every other code of life": *sarbadharma.*

"foreign army": *jabansenā.*

"renouncers": *sannyāsī.*

"to pay the penalty"/"to make amends": the word *prāyaścitta* is used.

"Because it is the appointed time": *din pūrṇa haiyāche.*

"On Magh's approaching full-moon day": *āgāmī māghī pūrṇimāy. Māgh* is the tenth month of the lunar calendar, from mid-January to mid-February. The full moon is a particularly auspicious time for religious duties, the fulfilling of vows and so on.

—PART IV—

❁ *Chapter 1* ❁

VARIANTS

* "or committed some other outrage": instead *AMsv* has: "and then excreted etc. (*purīṣādi parityāg karā*) on them".

* "fled towards the city": here the earlier editions add: "The terrible news that his reign had been destroyed reached the ruler of Birbhum, Asad-ul-jaman, as he sat contentedly on his throne. Then in great agitation . . ." and so on (*A[BSP]*: 141).

NOTES

"Muslims": *musalmān.*

"foreigners": *jaban.*

"they would say awkwardly, 'I'm a Hindu' ": *mui hēdu.*

"O may the monks come": *āsuk, sannyāsīrā āsuk.*

"Allah Akbar!": *sic.*

"O Krishna": *he madhusūdan,* that is, Krishna in his role as slayer of the demon Madhu.

"to her God" *iṣṭadebatā.* The form of God she had chosen to follow.

"and broke into a little love song": *jhijhiṭ khāmbāje sorir ṭappā dharila.* Though not all *ṭappās* are love songs, the context indicates that this was a love ditty, to be sung late at night. *Ṭappās* were generally composed in a north Indian vernacular.

"renouncer": *sannyāsī.*

"monk": *brahmacārī.*

"Is this how monks should behave?": *brahmacārīr ki ei dharma?*

"You wretch! You should have told me you're a woman too!": *o poḍā kapāl! āge balte hay bhāi je, āmār o ai daśā.* Literally, "You should have told me you're in the same condition [that is, of being a woman]!"

"was a real godsend": *jena hāt bāḍāiyā svarga pāila.* Literally, "was like reaching out and catching heaven!"

❁ *Chapter 2* ❁

NOTES

"*koel*": the indian koel (*Eudynamys scolopacea scolopacea*) or *kokil,* generally translated as "cuckoo". It emits "a loud, continuous, rollicking. . . . uttered by the male at earliest dawn as the first call of the day": see *HBIP,* vol. 3, no. 590, p. 227.

"It was still early": *belā ek prahar haila.* The Ghose translation (incorrectly): "It was one hour past noon". There were eight *prahar*s or divisions in a day, beginning with the first at dawn. Sen-Gupta has: "When it was one prahar

after daybreak", with a footnote attached to "prahar": "One *prahar* is about three hours".

"in the last twenty-four hours": *aṣṭapraharer madhye.*

❁ *Chapter 3* ❁

VARIANTS

* "Plucking up courage": the first two editions add, "and saying, 'Here goes!' " (*A[BSP]*: 141).

* "But she's a celibate woman": after this, the first three editions conclude the chapter as follows:

> "That may be", said Mahendra, downcast. "Still, there's a penance (*prāyaścitta*)".
>
> He looked at Shanti and said, "Do you know what it is?"
>
> "Death", said Shanti. "Which *santan* doesn't know that! It's been decided that the penance will take place on Magh's full-moon day. So you needn't worry", and with that Shanti went away.
>
> Mahendra and Kalyani were left standing there, thunderstruck". (ibid.)

NOTES

"women's quarters": *antaḥpur.*

"bedroom": *śayanghare.*

"the knot of the monk's tiger-skin": *bāghchāler granthi.*

"lawful wife": *dharmapatnī.*

"But she's a celibate woman": *ini brahmacāriṇī.*

❁ *Chapter 4* ❁

VARIANTS

* "Northern Bengal . . . under Muslim control": the first edition has instead, "Birbhum was no longer under English and Muslim control", while the second and third editions have, "Birbhum was no longer under Muslim control" (*A[BSP]*: 141).

* "Major Edwards": in the earlier editions, this commander's name is Wood (ibid.).

* "on the riverbank": instead, the first three editions say that the Goswamis would be holding a fair in the village of Kendubilla (the first edition mentions that the fair was in honour of "Jaydeb Goswami") (ibid.).

NOTES

"by God's will": *bhagabāner niyoge.*

"the British empire": *britiś sāmrājya.*

"newcomer": *sāheb.*

"lakh": a hundred thousand.

"the great sin": *mahāpāp.*

"our heroic couple": *bīrdampati.* So the Ghose translation too; *MF:* "le couple héroique" (237); Sen-Gupta: "the heroic pair".

❁ *Chapter 5* ❁

VARIANTS

Once again, in the earlier editions, the major's name is Wood.

* "To the fair": the first three editions add, "of course! Kindel . . ."

"Keduli", said Shanti. "They won't go to the fair at Keduli". (The conversation continues as in the text; see *A[BSP]*: 142).

NOTES

"*tappas, gazals* . . . Krishna": *keha ṭappā, keha gajal, keha syāmābiṣay, keha kṛṣṇabiṣay*: for the meaning of *ṭappā,* see under Notes, Chapter 1 of this Part. *Gazals,* like *ṭappas,* were usually love songs, but unlike the latter they were composed in Urdu or Farsi.

"tambourine": *khañjanī*; as noted earlier, the *sāraṅga* seems to have been forgotten.

"lady": *bibi,* a Muslim term used generally for a respectable, married woman.

"If I don't see your father. . . . in vain": actually, *tomār bāper śrāddher cāl jadi āmi nā caḍāi,* that is, if I'm not the one who'll cook the rice at your father's funeral rites.

"Where's this chump of a man from!": *chuco beṭā kothākār,* to chime with Shanti's reply that Edwards was a *baḍa bīr,* a great hero, a champion.

"the Master": *prabhu.*

❁ *Chapter 6* ❁

VARIANTS

* "Edwards was": once again, in the earlier editions, the major's name was Wood.

* "had thrown Lindlay off the horse": the first edition has instead, "had sent Lindlay to a bad place called 'hell' (*jamālāy*)" (*A[BSP]*: 142).

* "the Children": *AMsv* has instead: "English and Vaishnava will do battle".

* "the *santan* army": *AMsv* has instead: "the Vaishnava army".

* "the *santan* army": again *AMsv* has "the Vaishnava army".

* "with an army of twenty-five thousand *santans*": *AMsv* has instead: "with an army of twenty-five thousand Vaishnavas".

* "to carry the news to Warren Hastings": here *AMsv* adds: "The English fought as the English do, but all the Indian sepoys retreated and fled", *iṅgrej iṅgrejer mata juddha karila. kintu deśī sipāhīrā sakale bhaṅga diyā palāila.*

NOTES

"Hindu and Muslim, Southerner and whiteskin": *hindu musalmān mādrājī gorā.*

"by dreaming of the nectarlike kisses of Vaishnavi ladies": Sen-Gupta, modestly: "by dreaming sweet dreams".

"What kind of fun is this?": thus *e ābār ki ānanda*? Perhaps also a play on *ānanda* as referring to Jibananda, and to his "diversion" of leading the *santans* up the hill without warning.

"You our wisdom, You our balm . . . You the living force!": *tumi bidyā tumi bhakti, tumi mā bāhute śakti, tvam hi prāṇāḥ śarīre.* A different form of words from those given in the hymn in Part I, chapter 10.

"making a mockery of the Children's sacrifice of their lives": *dadhīcir asthike byaṅga kariyā*: literally, "making a mockery of [the weapon of] Dadhici's bones". Dadhici typifies the selfless surrender of one's life. He was a sage who sacrificed his life so that a weapon to kill the demon Vṛtra could be made out of his bones. Vṛtra's weapon was a thunderbolt. In this case, the thunderbolt of the English cannon was overpowering the weapon of the *santans*: the sacrifice of their lives.

"hero's duty": *bīrer dharma.*

"paradise": *baikuṇṭhe,* Viṣṇu's heaven.

"Crush the Muslims and kill them": *musalmāner buke piṭhe cāpiyā māro.* An instance of metonymy (that is, representing the whole by a part: the reader will recall—see beginning of this chapter—that Muslims formed part of the British forces).

❁ *Chapter 7* ❁

NOTES

"It is the night of the full moon": *pūrṇimār rātri.*

"Bengali, Northerner, English, Muslim": *bāṅgālī, hindusthānī, iṅgrej, musalmān.*

"great sage": *mahāpuruṣ.*

"healer": *cikitsak.*

"great person": *mahātmā.*

"reparation": *prāyaścitta.*

"code": *dharma.*

"My work is to serve the Mother": *āmār kāj mātṛsebā*

"worldly folk": *gṛhī.*

"renouncers, forever following the path of celibacy": *sannyāsīi thākiba—cira-brahmacarya pālan kariba.*

"So let's wander . . . to region": *cala, ekhan giyā āmrā deśe deśe tīrthadarśan kariyā beḍāi.*

"worship God": *debatār ārādhanā.*

"well-being": *maṅgal.*

❁ *Chapter 8* ❁

VARIANTS

* "Eternal Code": here and subsequently, instead of "Eternal Code" (*sanātan dharma*), the earlier editions have, "the Aryan code", *ārya dharma* (*A[BSP]*: 142).

* "It was mistakenly . . . to free the land": the earlier editions do not have this passage (ibid.).

* "Their subjects will be . . . to follow their religion": this sentence is absent in the first edition (ibid.).

* "You have kept your vow . . . brought in English rule": the first edition has instead, "Your vow will not be fulfilled. Why then do you needlessly wish to soak the earth with human blood?" (ibid.).

* "Who is the enemy? . . . and win": the first edition has instead, "You can do nothing further. Your arms have been cut off, and you do not have long to live" (ibid.).

* "Sacrifice had come and departed with Honour": the first edition continues

as follows: "The Vishnu temple was now deserted. Suddenly the lamps in the temple burned brighter. And they did not go out. The flame that Satyananda had lit before departing did not die out easily. If I get the chance, I'll tell you about that some other time" (ibid.).

NOTES

"Great One": *mahātman.*

"Eternal Code": *sanātan dharma.*

"Muslim rule/Hindu rule": *musalmānrājya/hindurājya.*

"Turning to the image. . . . mounted on high": *uparisthitā mātṛrūpā janmabhūmi pratimār dike phiriyā*; this is the position of the image in the earlier editions. The standard edition has this goddess seated in Viṣṇu's lap (see Part I, chapter 11), which Bankim seems to have forgotten.

"unworthy foreigners": *mlecchā,* as applied to the British: a dismissive epithet.

"Wrongdoing.. . . .holy fruit": *pāper kakhana pabitra phal hay na.*

"Great Ones": *mahāpuruṣerā.*

"what the foreigners call the Hindu rule of life": *mleccherā jāhāke hindudharma bale.*

"The true Hindu rule of life . . . action": *prakṛta hindudharma jñānātmak, karmātmak nahe.* Sen-Gupta: "The True Faith which Mlecchas call Hinduism"; Ghose: "the true religion, as the *Mlecchas* call it".

"outward and inward": *bahirbiṣayak o antarbiṣayak*: literally, "having an external object" and "having an internal object", respectively. Ghose: "secular or external and spiritual or internal". Not quite: *bahirbiṣayak* includes knowledge of internal states such as emotions, mental images and so on. In Hindu epistemology this is still knowledge of "external" things in so far as the psychical-physical dimension of our beings is different from the *atmanic* or interior dimension. "Outward" and "inward", on the other hand intimate the referential direction of the knowledge, that is, going towards outward and inward objects of knowledge, respectively. Sen-Gupta: "This knowledge is of two kinds, subjective and objective", which is misleading. *MF:* "Cette connaissance est de deux sortes, celle du monde extérieur et celle du monde intérieur" (258).

"the gross . . . the subtle": *sthūla* (that is, something readily experienceable, as opposed to) . . .*sūkṣma.*

"so long as the Hindu is not wise . . . once more": *jata din nā hindu ābār jñānabān, guṇabān ār balabān hay.*

"will be free to follow their religion": *niṣkaṇṭake dharmācaraṇ karibe.*

"love for the Mother": *mātṛbhakti.*

"the form of the Mother": *mātṛmūrti.*

"Knowledge had come . . . departed with Honour": *jñān* (knowledge) *āsiyā bhaktike* (dedication) *dhariyāche—dharma* (duty) *āsiyā karmake* (action) *dhariyāche; bisarjjan* (sacrifice) *āsiyā pratiṣṭhāke* (honour) *dhariyāche; kalyāṇī āsiyā śāntike dhariyāche; ei satyānanda śānti; ei mahāpuruṣ kalyāṇī. satyānanda pratiṣṭhā, mahāpuruṣ bisarjjan. bisarjjan āsiyā pratiṣṭhāke laiyā gela.* Sen-Gupta: *jñān*: knowledge, *bhakti*: devotion, *dharma*: faith, *karma*: action, *bisarjjan*: sacrifice, *pratiṣṭhā*: active duty; Ghose: *jñān*: knowledge, *bhakti*: devotion, *dharma*: religion, *karma*: action, *bisarjjan*: renunciation, *pratiṣṭhā*: success; *MF: jñān*: la connaissance, *bhakti*: la dévotion, *dharma*: le *dharma*, *karma*: l'action, *bisarjjan*: le renoncement, *pratiṣṭhā*: la consécration (261).

Appendices

APPENDIX A

Earlier Version of Part II, Chapter 8

[She spread out Jibananda's own deerskin, turned up the lamp] and reclined upon the skin.[1] After some time, Jibananda Thakur returned. Not noticing in the dim lamplight that someone was already lying upon the deerskin, Jibananda bent down to sit on it and ended up on Shanti's knee, whereupon the knee suddenly shot up and sent him flying.

Somewhat the worse for wear, Jibananda got up and said sharply, "Who dares to be so bold!"

"You're the bold one, not I!" said Shanti. "Is someone's knee the right place to sit?"

"How was I to know you'd sneaked into my room and were lying there?"

"This isn't your room", said Shanti.

"Then whose is it?"

"Mine".

"Not bad", said Jibananda. "And who are you?"

"Your brother-in-law".

"Maybe you are and maybe you're not", said Jibananda. "But I seem to be yours. Your voice sounds a bit like my wife's!"

"Well, your wife and I've been close for a long time now, perhaps that's why we sound alike", said Shanti.

"I see you've got a big mouth", said Jibananda. "If we hadn't been in the monastery, I'd have smashed your teeth in".

"Oh, I'm used to that from my friends", said Shanti. "By the way, how many teeth did you smash in at Rajnagar yesterday?[2] You've nothing to brag about. I want to sleep now. You're a group of Children, aren't you? So why don't you tuck in your tails and go hide behind the *acols*[3] of some Brahmin ladies".

Now Jibananda Thakur was in a bit of a quandary. On the one hand, Satyananda had forbidden the *santans* to fight amongst themselves in the monastery; on the other, such colossal cheek cried out for a blow or two! Jibananda began to burn with fury! And yet—from time to time that voice sounded so

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[1]This passage appeared in the earlier editions instead of the section ending Part II, chapter 8 of the standard edition. It displays a somewhat uninhibited sense of humour, and suggests why Bankim may have thought it advisable to tone down Shanti's character for this edition.

[2]The region's capital (as noted earlier), and the scene of the *santans*' defeat in battle (see end of Part I, chapter 18).

[3]*acol* (pronounced with a soft "c"): the loose end of a sari.

sweet. It was as if someone had opened heaven's very door and called out to him—and then said, "Come in and I'll whack your legs with a stick!" Jibananda didn't know what to do. So, in a quandary, he said, "Sir, this is my room. I've always enjoyed the use of it. Kindly leave the room".

Shanti replied, "This is my room, even though I've enjoyed very little use of it. *You* kindly leave the room".

"Because we're not allowed to fight in the monastery, I've not kicked you into hell's pit", said Jibananda, "but I can get Maharaj's permission right now and send you packing".

"But it's with Maharaj's permission that I'm sending you packing. Get out!"

"I see. In that case, the room is yours. I'll just go and inquire of Maharaj first. Tell me, what's your name?"

"My name is Nabinananda Goswami. What's your name?"

"My name is Jibananda Goswami".

"So *you're* Jibananda Goswami. So that's why . . .".

"So that's why what?"

"Well, it's what people say about you. Nothing to do with me".

"What do people say?"

"See if I care! People say Jibananda Thakur's a complete fool".

"A complete fool! What else?"

"Quite stupid".

"What else?"

"A funk in battle".

Jibananda began to fume with rage. "Anything else?" he said.

"Much else. You've got a sister called Nimai . . .".

"You, how can you dare . . .".

"And you're a bear!"

"You're an idiot, an imbecile, a reprobate, a villain, a fraud, a good-for-nothing!"

"And you! You're . . .". Shanti let fly a stream of unintelligible words in Sanskrit.

"Get out of here, you scoundrel", cried Jibananda. "I'm going to rip off your beard!"

At this Shanti realised her predicament. If he grabbed her beard, she'd be in trouble. The false hair would come off. Shanti suddenly gave up the battle and made a run for it. Jibananda went after her.* He was hoping to give the impostor a thump or two if he left the monastery.

But all said and done, Shanti was a woman, and unused to such commotions, whereas Jibananda was expert in such things. So he quickly caught up with Shanti. Thinking to throw her to the ground and thrash her now that she was cornered, he grabbed hold of her. But he had barely touched her when he released her in shock. Shanti, however, put her arm round Jibananda's neck and pulled him to her.

"What's this! You're a woman!" cried Jibananda. "Let me go, let me go!"

But Shanti paid no heed. She began to cry out, "Look out, everyone! There's a Gosai here forcibly violating a woman!"

Jibananda put his hand over her mouth and said, "For heaven's sake, don't say such things! Leave go of me. It's my fault. Let go!"

But Shanti wouldn't let go. She called out the louder. Nor was it an easy thing to force Shanti to let go! Jibananda put his palms together and said, "Please, I beg of you, let go". But no—the forest reverberated with a woman's cries for help!

Meanwhile, when they heard that a woman was being attacked, many of the monastery's monks lit lanterns and emerged with sticks and cudgels. Jibananda began to tremble violently when he saw this, but Shanti said, "Why are you trembling so much? You're such a coward, and people call you a great hero!"

Seeing the monks approaching with lights, Jibananda said piteously, "Yes, I'm a complete coward. Now leave go and I'll run away".

"Go on then, try and get away", said Shanti.

Ashamed to admit that he couldn't get the better of a woman's strength, Jibananda said to Shanti, "You're a very wicked woman".

Suppressing a grin, Shanti threw him a glance and said, "Dearest, I'm so attached to you! I've come here to be your slave. Tell me I'm yours and I'll let you go".

"Get away, you sinful wretch", cried Jibananda. "How dare you say such things!"

"I'm a sinful wretch, no doubt", said Shanti, "else as a woman could I beg a man for love! Will you do as I want? Say yes, and I'll let you go".

"Shame, shame", said Jibananda. "I'm a celibate. You're not to say such things to me. You've . . ."

"Oh, be quiet", said Shanti apprehensively. "Be quiet! I'm Shanti!" She released Jibananda and put the dust from his feet on her head. Then she joined her palms together and said, "My lord, don't be offended. But really! So much for the pretensions of a man's love! Couldn't you recognise me at all?"

Then it all became clear to Jibananda! Who else but Shanti could do such a thing? Who else but Shanti could get up to such tricks, who else but she had such strength of arm! Glad, disconcerted, he was about to say something but didn't get the chance for the other monks had come up. Dhirananda was in front. He asked Jibananda what all the fuss was about.

But Jibananda was in a fix! What could he say? Shanti whispered to him, "Should I tell them, you grabbed hold of me?"

With a smile, she answered Dhirananda, "The fuss was that a woman kept screaming that someone was violating her, but we found nothing. Jibananda Thakur made a big search, and so did I, but we saw nothing. Perhaps all of you should check the forest—we heard the noise come from there".

She pointed to a dense patch of forest. Jibananda whispered to her,

"What's the point of giving the Vaishnavas such trouble? If they go into that forest they'll never come out; they'll get bitten by snakes or tigers!"

"Now that they know a woman's involved", replied Shanti, "they won't give up so easily. But I'll see if I can stop them".

She called out to them, "Be careful, all of you! It may be the trick of a ghost!"

When he heard this, one of the Gosais said, "That's quite possible, otherwise how could a woman get here?" The others agreed, and concluding that it was a ghostly delusion everyone returned to the monastery.

Then Jibananda said to Shanti, "Let's sit here for a while and you can explain the whole matter to me. Why are you here? How did you come? Why are you dressed like this, and where did you learn such tricks?"

"Why am I here?" replied Shanti. "Because of you! How did I come? On foot. Why am I dressed like this? Because I wanted to! And where did I learn such tricks? A certain man taught me! I'll explain everything in detail, but why should we sit here in the forest? Come on, let's go to your arbour".[4]

"My arbour?" asked Jibananda. "Where's that?"

"In the monastery".

"Women are not allowed in there".

"Do I look like a woman?"

"I don't want to disobey Maharaj's rules".

"But I've got Maharaj's permission", said Shanti. "Let's go to your arbour and I'll tell you everything. Unless I enter your room, I can't remove my beard, and if I don't remove my beard you'll never recognise this wretched face of mine. Really, men!"

VARIANTS

* "Jibananda went after her": instead of the next sentence, *AMsv* has the following: "Satyananda had forbidden fighting among the Vaishnavas in the monastery. But if the scoundrel (*śālā*) left the monastery he'd give him a thump or two".

NOTES

"And you! You're. . . ." . . . "unintelligible words in Sanskrit": unintelligible to the uninitated: though they were not standard Sanskrit words, they were coded expressions for grammatical rules in Sanskrit, derived from the thirteenth-century grammarian, Vopadeva's well-known treatise, the *Mugdhabodha*: *yalāyavāyāvo'īcaḥ* (rule 35), *stuścubhiḥ ścvaśāt* (rule 47) *and ṣṭubhiḥ ṣṭvaṣyadāntaṭoḥ* (rule 48)—meaningless if one didn't know how to interpret them, but

[4]arbour: Shanti uses the special term for a Vaishnava's retreat, *kunja*. She wants to go to a place where they will not be disturbed.

impressive-sounding nonetheless. Evidently, Shanti had learnt these *sūtras* off by heart while still a child in her father's *ṭol* and was firing them off.

"I am a celibate": *āmi brahmacārī*.

"arbour": *kuñja*.

APPENDIX B

Earlier Version of Part III, Chapter 11

Lieutenant Watson foolishly skirted the mango forest.[1] What else could it be but folly! Seeing Captain Hay proceeding to Jibananda's right, Watson thought that he would circle Jibananda on the left, and so he skirted the mango forest. Suddenly, from above in the trees, amid reports of gunfire, bullets began to strike his army from behind. Watson gazed upwards wondering aloud whether bullets could fall from the sky!

"No, Sir", said a voice from a neighbouring tree. "We're firing from the trees! Why don't you stand there and try firing a few shots at us?"

Another voice said, "Sir, remain there if you will, I hear that Jibananda wants to pay homage to Jesus Christ.[2] Look, there he comes!"

Lieutenant Watson realised that he was in a fix and that he could do nothing against this enemy.

"Advance quickly", he said to his soldiers. "Once you go on ahead, the monkeys in the trees won't be able to bite any more".

Taking his forces beyond gunshot range of those monkeys in the trees, Watson hurried on to attack Jibananda.

Then Shanti called from up in a tree, "Brother monkeys, it's time to jump down and run after those red-faces to show them what the sting of a monkey's bite can be!" "If only I wasn't a woman . . .", she thought bitterly (I couldn't repeat everything she thought!).

Nabinananda jumped down first, then the rest of the Children stationed in the trees came whizzing down.

"Careful, brothers", said Nabinananda. "Don't mill about. Form a line, gun on shoulder, spear in hand, and go quickly! Run! Shout *Bande Mataram*". Then crying *Bande Mataram,* they rushed after Lieutenant Watson's battalion.

But Shanti drew back. "Shame!" she said. "What am I doing! I'm a woman, how can I go to battle? That's not my line of duty. Since I'm a monkey I'd better stay in the trees". So Shanti returned, climbed into a tree and began to follow the battle.

Jibananda had nearly reached the bridge when he heard the cries of *Bande Mataram* from afar. "Brothers, I can hear *Bande Mataram* in the distance," he said. "Let's die if we have to, but there's no point in staying here at the bridge. Let's join them and cry *Bande Mataram* too".* No longer did Jibananda's forces

[1]Chapter 11 of Part III begins with the text in this appendix. See *A(BSP)*: 138–40.

[2]By despatching you to him.

flee in fear of their lives. Shouting *Bande Mataram* the remaining *santan* army of five thousand rushed towards Lieutenant Watson, breaking into his forces like a thunderbolt. With Jibananda's army on one flank and the men despatched by Nabinananda on another, the English forces began to suffer damage like a sturdy hill struck by the blows of two mighty waves.

Suffer damage but not break! The English had matchless strength, courage, resilience! Round after round was discharged, "Fire!" upon "Fire!" was heard, with hails of bullets and dense clouds of smoke. The earth became dark and the sky was pierced with the echoes. A storm blew through the forest, the birds and animals took cover in terror, and a gale arose in the Ajay River!

Nabinananda called out from the trees, "Kill, kill the foreigners! You, over there! Jibananda's on the other side of this army. Go on, men! Break through the emperor's troops and the *faujdaris*. Kill the *faujdaris*!" Then pierced on the right and on the left, wounded, slain, overwhelmed, disordered, routed, Lieutenant Watson's troops fled, scattering in all directions, with Jibananda's forces and the men sent by Nabinananda meeting in the middle.

Shanti could restrain herself no longer. Cursing her birth as a woman, she jumped down from the tree, and sped like a deer to where the two victorious *santan* forces were assembled. There in the midst of the battlefield Jibananda and Nabinananda met, and the two embraced.

As soon as he got the chance, Jibananda said, "Shanti, what joy if I had died in your presence today!"

"There's time enough for that", said Nabinananda. "But since as a man you have little sense, when you need to die let me know and I'll show you the way. Now let's see if you can find the priceless treasure of death along that way," and she pointed to Captain Hay's forces. As Jibananda was preparing to go, she whispered in his ear, "You're not to die today. Satyananda's orders".

Then mounted and chanting *Bande Mataram,* Jibananda rushed with his army towards Captain Hay, while Shanti, dejected, and ruing her birth as a woman, returned to the tree and climbed it. "Jungle girl", she said as she proceeded to rebuke herself.

Captain Hay realised that the very person he had sought to prevent from escaping was now coming towards him! He turned and faced Jibananda to attack him. As two mountain rivers flowing from opposite directions crash into each other in the hollow of a valley, sending huge cascades of foamy waves into the sky and rending the mountain caverns with their roar, the two armies clashed in the terrible fray of battle.

Defeat and victory hung in the balance! Hundreds of lives were lost. Now the English forces, charging and shouting "Hooray!", would press hard against hundreds of the *santans*,* now the *santan* army crying "You wield the sword!", would get the upper hand. Defeat and victory hung in the balance, it was impossible to predict the outcome. The handpicked English soldiers around Captain Hay, many of them chosen whiteskins, had never known defeat either in Europe or India; they stood firm like rows of stone walls. Try as they might,

the Children could not breach the English walls, while the latter slew hundreds of the Children without retreating a single step!

Fortunately for the English, just then their cannon . . .[3]

VARIANTS

* "Let's join them and cry *Bande Mataram* too": here *AMsv* adds the following: " 'Look at the red, black, yellow, green, and multi-coloured sweets! There's local, imperial and British troops there. Come on, let's make them into a Vaishnava offering!' No longer did Jibananda's forces", and so on. "Look at the red, black, . . .": a reference to the coloured uniforms of the enemy troops. They are like so many sweetmeats, fit to be despatched like a religious offering of the Vaishnavas.

* "*santans*": here *AMsv* substitutes "Vaishnavas" for "*santans*".

NOTES

"wants to pay homage to Jesus Christ": *jībānanda nāki jiṣukhrīṣṭa bhajibe.*

"battalion": in theory, about a thousand men at the time.

"line of duty": *dharma.*

"foreigners": *jaban.*

"*faujdaris*": provincial troops.

"whiteskins": *gorā.*

"India": *bhāratbarṣa.*

[3]The story continues from this point as given in the main text.

APPENDIX C

History of the Sannyasi Rebellion

From Warren Hastings's Letters in Gleig's Memoirs

You will hear of great disturbances committed by the Sinassies, or wandering Fackeers, who annually infest the province about this time of the year, in pilgrimages to Jaggernaut, going in bodies of 1,000, and sometimes even 10,000 men. An officer of reputation (Captain Thomas) lost his life in an unequal attack upon a party of these banditti, about 3,000 of them, near Rungpore, with a small party of Pergana sepoys, which has made them more talked of than they deserve. The revenue, however, has felt the effects of their ravages in the northern districts. The new establishment of sepoys which is now forming on the plan enjoined by the Court of Directors, and the distribution of them ordered for the internal protection of the provinces, will, I hope, effectually secure them hereafter from these incursions.

—*Hastings to Sir George Colebrooke, dated 2nd February* 1773. Gleig's *Memoirs,* Vol.I.282.

Our own provinces have worn something of a warlike appearance this year, having been infested by bands of Senassies, who have defeated two small parties of Purgunnah sepoys (a rascally corps), and cut off the two officers who commanded them. One was Captain Thomas, whom you knew. Four battalions of the brigade sepoys are now in pursuit of them, but they will not stand an engagement, and have neither camp equipage, nor even clothes, to retard their flight. Yet I hope we shall yet make an example of some of them, as they are shut in by the rivers, which they cannot pass when closely pursued.

The history of this people is curious. They inhabit, or rather possess, the country lying south of the hills of Tibbet from Caubul to China. They go mostly naked. They have neither towns, houses, nor families, but rove continually from place to place, recruiting their numbers with the healthiest children they can steal in the countries through which they pass. Thus they are the stoutest and most active men in India. Many are merchants. They are all pilgrims, and held by all castes of Gentoos in great veneration. This infatuation

Note: In the final edition, this Appendix appeared immediately at the end of the Bengali text. A number of typographical errors appearing in the *A(BSP)* edition have been corrected here, including the portions inserted in square brackets. For the full title of this work, see under G R Gleig in the Select Bibliography.

prevents our obtaining any intelligence of their motions, or aid from the country against them, notwithstanding very rigid orders which have been published for these purposes, insomuch that they often appear in the heart of the province as if they dropped from heaven. They are hardy, bold, and enthusiastic to a degree surpassing credit. Such are the Senassies, the gipsies of Hindostan.

We have dissolved all the Purgunnah sepoys, and fixed stations of the brigade sepoys on our frontiers, which are to be employed only in the defence of the provinces, and to be relieved every three months. This, I hope, will secure the peace of the country against future irruptions, and as they are no longer to be employed in the collections, the people will be freed from the oppressions of our own plunderers.

—Hastings to Josias Dupre, 9th March 1773 [pp. 303–4]

We have lately been much troubled here with herds of desperate adventurers called Senassies, who have over-run the province in great numbers, and committed great depredations. The particulars of these disturbances, and of our endeavours to repel them, you will find in our general letters and consultations, which will acquit the government of any degree of blame from such a calamity. At this time we have five battalions of sepoys in pursuit of them, and I have still hopes of exacting ample vengeance for the mischief they have done us, as they have no advantage over us, but in the speed with which they fly from us. A minute relation of these adventurers cannot amuse you, nor indeed are they of great moment; for which reason give me leave to drop this subject and lead you to one in which you cannot but be more interested etc.

—Hastings to [John] Purling, dated 31st March 1773, para. 4. Gleig's *Memoirs of Hastings*–Vol.1.294.

In my last I mentioned that we had every reason to suppose the Senassie Fakiers had entirely evacuated the Company's possessions. Such were the advices I then received, and their usual progress made this highly probable; but it seems they were either disappointed in crossing the Burramputrah river, or they changed their intention, and returned in several bands of about 2,000 or 3,000 each; appearing unexpectedly in different parts of the Rungpoor and Dinagepoor provinces. For in spite of the strictest orders issued and the severest penalties threatened to the inhabitants, in case they fail in giving intelligence of the approach of the Senassies, they are so infatuated by superstition, as to be backward in giving the information, so that the banditti are sometimes advanced into the very heart of our provinces, before we know anything of their motions; as if they dropt from heaven to punish the inhabitants for their folly. One of these parties falling in with a small detachment commanded by Captain Edwards, an engagement ensued, wherein our sepoys gave way, and Captain Edwards lost his life in endeavouring to cross a nullah. This detachment was formed of the very worst of our Purgunnah sepoys, who seem to have behaved very ill. This success elated the Senassies, and I heard of their

depredations from every quarter in those districts. Captain Stuart, with the 19th battalion of sepoys, who was before employed against them, was vigilant in the pursuit, wherever he could hear of them, but to no purpose; they were gone before he could reach the places to which he was directed. I ordered another battalion from Burrampore to march immediately, to co-operate with Captain Stuart, but to act separately; in order to have the better chance of falling in with them. At the same time I ordered another battalion to march from the Dinapoor station, through Tyroot, and by the northern frontier of the Purneah province, following the track which the Senassies usually took, in order to intercept them, in case they marched that way. This battalion, after acting against the Senassies, if occasion offered, was directed to pursue their march to Cooch Bahar, where they are to join Captain Jones, and assist in the reduction of that country.

Several parties of the Senassies having entered into the Purneah province, burning and destroying many villages there, the collector applied to Captain Brooke, who was just arrived at Panity, near Rajahmahl with his new-raised battalion of light infantry. That officer immediately crossed the river, and entered upon measures against the Senassies; and had very near fallen in with a party of them, just as they were crossing the Cosa river, to escape out of that province; he arrived on the opposite bank before their rear had entirely crossed; but too late to do any execution among them.

It is apparent now that the Senassies are glad to escape as fast as they can out of the Company's possessions; but I am still in hopes that some of the many detachments now acting against them may fall in with some of their parties, and punish them exemplarily for their audacity.

It is impossible, but that, on account of the various depredations which the Senassies have committed, the revenue must fall short in some of the Company's districts; as well from real as from pretended losses. The Board of Revenue, aware of this last consideration, have come to the resolution of admitting no pleas for a reduction of revenue, but such as are attended with circumstances of conviction, and by this means they hope to prevent, as much as in their power, all impositions on the Government, and to render the loss to the Company as inconsiderable as possible. Effectual means will be used, by stationing some small detachments at proper posts on our frontier, to prevent any future incursions from the Senassie Fakiers, or any other roving banditti; a measure, which only the extraordinary audacity of their last incursions hath manifested to be necessary. This will be effected without employing many troops; and I hope, that in no future time the revenues shall again suffer from this cause.

—Hastings to Sir George Colebrooke [per Hector], 31st March 1773 [Memoirs, 1.296–98]

The Seniassies [*sic*] threatened us with the same disturbances at the beginning of this year as we experienced from them the last. But by being early provided

to oppose them, and one or two severe checks which they received in their first attempts, we have kept the country clear of them. A party of horse which we employed in pursuit of them, has chiefly contributed to intimidate these ravagers, who seem to pay little regard to our sepoys, having so much the advantage of them in speed, on which they entirely rely for their safety. It is my intention to proceed more effectually against them by expelling them from their fixed residences which they have established in the north-eastern quarter of the province, and by making severe examples of the zemindars who have afforded them protection or assistance.

—*Hastings to Laurence Sulivan [Esq. Fort William], 20th March 1774 [Memoirs, 1.395]*

From *The Annals of Rural Bengal*

"A set of lawless banditti', wrote the Council in 1773, 'known under the name of Sanyasis or Faquirs, have long infested these countries; and, under pretence of religious pilgrimage, have been accustomed to traverse the chief part of Bengal, begging, stealing, and plundering wherever they go, and as it best suits their convenience to practise". In the years subsequent to the famine, their ranks were swollen by a crowd of starving peasants who had neither seed nor implements to recommence cultivation with, and the cold weather of 1772 brought them down upon the harvest fields of Lower Bengal, burning, plundering, ravaging, "in bodies of fifty thousand men." The collectors called out the military; but after a temporary success our Sepoys "were at length totally defeated, and Captain Thomas (their leader), with almost the whole party, cut off". It was not till the close of the winter that the Council could report to the Court of Directors, that a battalion, under an experienced commander, had acted successfully against them; and a month later we find that even this tardy intimation had been premature. On the 31st March 1773, Warren Hastings plainly acknowledges that the commander who had succeeded Captain Thomas "unhappily underwent the same fate"; that four battalions of the army were then actively engaged against the banditti, but that, in spite of the militia levies called from the landholders, their combined operations had been fruitless. The revenue could not be collected, the inhabitants made common cause with the marauders, and the whole rural administration was unhinged. Such incursions were annual episodes in what some have been pleased to represent as the *still life* of Bengal.

—Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*, 70–72.

APPENDIX D

Nares Sen-Gupta's Translation of the Song

Vande Mātaram

Hail thee mother! To her I bow,
Who with sweetest water o'erflows
With dainty fruits is rich and endowed
And cooling whom the south wind blows;
Who's green with crops as on her grow;
To such a mother down I bow!

With silver moon beams smile her nights
And trees that in their bloom abound
Adorn her; and her face doth beam
With sweetest smiles, sweet's her sound!
Joy and bliss she doth bestow;
To such a mother down I bow.

Resounding with triumphal shouts
From seventy million voices bold
With devotion served by twice
As many hands that ably hold
The sharp and shining rapier bold,
—Thou a weakling we are told![1]

Proud in strength and prowess thou art,
Redeemer of thy children thou;
Chastiser of aggressive foes;
Mother, to thee thy child I bow.

Thou art knowledge, thou my faith,
Thou my heart and thou my mind.
Nay more, thou art the vital air
That moves my body from behind.

Of my hands thou art the strength,
At my heart devotion thou,

[1]There is a footnote here saying: "Another reading would give 'why art thou so weak with so much strength?' "

In each temple and each shrine,
To thy image it is we bow.

Durga bold who wields her arms
With half a score of hands,
The science-goddess, Vani too,
And Lakshmi who on lotus stands,-
What are they but, mother, thou,
To thee in all these forms I bow!

To thee! Fortune-giver, that art
To fault unknown, beyond compare,
Who dost with sweetest waters flow
And on thy children in thy care
Dainty fruits dost rich bestow,
To thee, mother, to thee I bow!

To thee I bow, that art so green
And so rich bedecked; with smile
Thy face doth glow; thou dost sustain
And hold us—still unknown to guile!
Hail thee mother! To thee I bow!

Sri Aurobindo's Translation of the Song

Vande Mātaram

Mother, I bow to thee!
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Cool with thy winds of delight,
Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
Mother free.

Glory of moonlight dreams
Over thy beaches and lordly streams;
Clad in thy blossoming trees,
Mother, giver of ease,
Laughing low and sweet!
Mother, I kiss thy feet,
Speaker sweet and low!
Mother, to thee I bow.

Who hath said thou art weak
in thy lands,
When the swords flash out in

seventy million hands
And seventy million voices roar
Thy dreadful name from shore to shore?

With many strengths who art
mighty and stored,
To thee I call, Mother and
Lord!

Thou who savest, arise and save!
To her I cry who ever her
foemen drave
Back from plain and sea
And shook herself free.

Thou art wisdom, thou art law,
Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,
Thou the love divine, the awe
In our hearts that conquers
death.

Thine the strength that nerves
the arm,
Thine the beauty, thine the charm.
Every image made divine
In our temples is but thine.
Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen,
With her hands that strike and her
swords of sheen,
Thou art Lakshmi lotus-throned,
And the Muse a hundred-toned.

Pure and perfect, without peer,
Mother, lend thine ear.
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Dark of hue, O candid-fair
In thy soul, with jewelled hair
And thy glorious smile divine,
Loveliest of all earthly lands,
Showering wealth from well-stored
hands!

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