Situating Indian History

for Sarvepalli Gopal

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The Intellectual History of Colonial India: Some Historiographical and Conceptual Questions*

K. N. PANIKKAR

Intellectual history with a viable degree of autonomy or as an integrative tool is yet to become a part of Indian historiography. Till now it has remained confined to the study of the political, social or economic thought of a person or a period, or of ideas in an ancient or medieval text.[1] Even biographies, until recently, have not been intellectual portraits of men in society or detailed life histories basic to the craft of prosopographers. The 'new history' initiated by James Harvey Robinson in the United States or the methodological innovation of Perry Miller in his *New England Mind*, which established 'intellectual history' as a distinct branch of the discipline, hardly had any impact on Indian historiography. Not that the subject matter of this genre of history was anything new; in fact problems which fall within the domain of intellectual history have always been the concern of historians. The departure was in the methodology employed. For instance the influence of religious beliefs and attitudes on social life and social action did form the

*Chronologically this essay focuses mainly on the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, though certain intellectuals of the later period also fall within the purview of analysis.

[1]Two early examples are U. N. Ghoshal's *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, Madras, 1959, modelled on A. J. Carlyle, *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West* and Bimanbehari Majumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*, Calcutta, 1967.

subject of several studies before Miller. But what distinguished Miller's treatment from that of his predecessors, like Troeltsch, was its ability to demonstrate the interdependent character of intellectual activities and to show how changes in one intellectual domain lead to a realignment of thought in other realms as well.

Perry Miller and a host of others who followed him adopted an internal approach, an idealist view of intellectual history, concerned mainly with the logical consistency of a sequence of thought, the elaboration of a world view or the influence of an idea in further intellectual advance. In essence the focus was on the creative vitality of the human mind. It divorced ideas from events and social reality and systematized them only in the context of ideas. This method reduced intellectual history either to the history of intellectuals or to the history of ideas as such within a general theoretical and philosophical assumption of the primacy of ideas.

An external approach, a functional view of intellectual history, on the other hand, emphasized the connection between thought and deed. By treating ideas merely as a series of responses to given situations it tended to overlook the creative potential and innovative ability of the human mind. The emphasis here being on the dynamics of social activity, ideas were only of secondary importance. Given that functional utility was the yardstick for measuring the historical significance of ideas, their importance was judged by the deeds associated with them.

Admittedly, intellectual history cannot afford to overlook the notions inherent in both these approaches.

What is required, however, is not an eclectic combination of both, but a methodology which, without being either idealist or reductionist, would help to comprehend how individually differentiated thought emerges in the concrete setting of an historical-social situation. In other words a methodology based on the conception that 'the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life . . . ', and that 'consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life process'.[2] To establish how ideas are 'directly interwoven' with, but not *mere* reflections of or determined by 'the material activity and the material inter-

[2]Karl Marx and Frederich Engels, *The German Ideology*, Moscow, 1964, p. 37.

course of men' is methodologically a difficult and challenging task. It forms a part of the theoretical considerations regarding the relationship between base and superstructure and of the various elements of the latter.

In the light of the general proposition above this essay attempts to suggest a conceptual framework for the study of some aspects of the intellectual history of colonial India. By focusing on the perception of reality, it seeks to explore the relationship between ideology and consciousness in the complex cultural-intellectual situation that came into being in the nineteenth century. Neither the nature of perception nor the contours of consciousness, it is argued, could be explained solely by the political and economic context of colonial domination. Equally vital are the cultural-intellectual processes, particularly those emerging from the cultural-intellectual struggles engendered by the desire to create an ideological base of a modern society, distinct from the traditional and the colonial. Identifying the protagonists of these struggles as well as locating their social base and formative influences are dimensions crucial to an understanding of this process.

A critique of the existing historiography, which forms the first part of this essay, underlines issues which have so far remained outside the domain of the history of ideas in the nineteenth century. The second section explores the formative influences, both intellectual and social, and tries to examine the validity of the generally accepted notion of a direct relationship between Western influence and intellectual commitment as well as of characterizations like 'conservatives', 'reformers' and 'radicals' on the basis of their intellectual make-up. Another aspect relevant to this discussion is the representative character of the intellectual, either of his own class or of the class which forms his social base. An exhaustive examination of this dimension has not been attempted, nor is it possible within the limitation of this essay; yet it is suggested that the comprador-collaborator outfit hardly suits the Indian situation.

The third section highlights the nature of perception of social, political and economic reality and demonstrates how it contributed to the evolution of anti-colonial consciousness. The basic assumption of this treatment is that intellectual endeavour in the nineteenth century was an integral part of the struggle to grasp the reality of subjection. As such, compartmentalizations on the basis of the dominant activity, either socio-religious or political, has to be dis-

pensed with if the process by which the consciousness came into being is to be comprehended.

The final section is concerned with the role of cultural elements in the making of social and intellectual perspectives. The foray into the cultural terrain is influenced by an unease with the notion of religious revivalism and conservatism as the motivating urge in the nineteenth-century effort of self-strengthening and revitalizing social institutions. By recognizing the existence of a 'consciousness' regarding other elements relating to language and certain social practices, the concept of cultural defence has been suggested as an alternative. The implications of this concept for understanding intellectual attitudes would require very detailed consideration. What is offered here is only a preliminary statement.

I

The development of consciousness, dominant or contending, in a society forms one of the major problems of its intellectual history. In colonial India, notwithstanding the existence of different streams of contending consciousnesses based on contradictions within the society, the dominant strand was the growth of an anti-colonial consciousness. The early manifestation of this consciousness was not necessarily in the realm of politics. In fact, given that the institutions of the colonial state were not more retrogressive than the precolonial, it found its initial expression in the realm of ideology and culture.[3] Whether this pre-political and overtly but not inherently non-political phase was an important link in the historical process which gave rise to anti-colonial consciousness, and if so how, are themes which have not been within the focus of historical investigation. The manner in which the cultural-ideological struggle

[3]The importance of culture in national liberation movements has found forceful expression in Amilcar Cabral. He wrote: 'Study of the history of liberation struggles shows that they have generally been preceded by an upsurge of cultural manifestations, which progressively harden into an attempt, successful or not, to assert the cultural personality of the dominated people by an act of denial of the culture of the oppressor. Whatever the conditions of subjection of a people to foreign domination and the influence of economic, political and social factors in the exercise of this domination, *it is generally within the cultural factor that we find the germ of challenge which leads to the structuring and development of the liberation movement.*' *Unity and Struggle*, London, 1980, p. 143. (Emphasis added).

in the nineteenth century was a part of, and not distinct from or only contributory to, the dominant consciousness, therefore seems to have escaped notice.

The cultural-ideological struggle in colonial India had two mutually complementary facets. The first was directed against the backward elements of tradition, culture and ideology and was expressed in the reformation and regeneration of socio-religious institutions. The second was an attempt to contend with colonial culture and ideology. The first formed a part of the second; what gave birth to the first was an awareness of the inadequacies of traditional institutions to cope with the new situation created by colonial intrusion. The intellectual debate in China, Japan and the West Asian countries articulated this awareness, and so implicitly (during the early phase) did the attitude of Indian intellectuals. While in countries such as China and Japan the question of revitalization of indigenous institutions was linked with political destiny from the very beginning of the colonial thrust, in India the perception of this connection was slow in maturing. Yet the socio-cultural consciousness generated by revitalization movements was not altogether divorced from the evolving dominant consciousness, for the latter comprehended within it the socio-cultural crisis created by colonial domination.

The influences of European thought and knowledge as the decisive factor in the making of the cognition of socio-cultural reality and the idea of progress in colonial India has been an assumption common to the bulk of the exising literature on the history of ideas. They are viewed as acculturative, arising from the contact of indigenous cultures or subcultures with that of industrial Europe, leading to cultural plasticity and a creative synthesis. The analytical frameworks derived from this assumption do not seem to be sensitive to the fact that the difference in power was a major constraint on cultural-intellectual adaptation,[4] nor to the fact that Western ideas, which filtered through the medium of colonialism, did not have the same progressive function as at their sources. Thus to J. N. Farquhar, R. C. Majumdar and Charles Heimsath, English education and the Western impact were key factors which brought about a socio-cultural and intellectual regeneration; to Salahuddin Ahmad and

[4]Von Grunebaum has domonstrated this in relation to Islamic civilization. G. E. Von Grunebaum, *Modern Islam: The Search for Cultural Identity*, New York, 1964, p. 32.

David Kopf British institutions provided the push. 'The stimulating forces', wrote Farquhar, 'are almsot exclusively Western, viz. the British Government, English education and literature, Christianity, oriental research, European science and philosophy, and the material elements of Western civilization'.[5] Charles Heimsath attributed not only ideas but even the methods of organization adopted by Indians to Western inspiration.[6] David Kopf has tried to demonstrate how Fort William College, the institution created for training British officials, played a decisive role in 'the social, cultural, psychological and intellectual changes' in Bengal in the nineteenth century. The Bengal Renaissance to him was 'a result of the contact between British officials and missionaries on the one hand and the Hindu intelligentsia on the other'.[7] The social, intellectual and cultural regeneration is thus traced directly to Western influences on the Indian mind through colonial rule. Most of the historical writings on nineteenth-century India which deal with social reform, the emergence of new ideas and the rise of nationalism follow this strait-jacket explanation.

The image of the occident and what the occident meant to the Indian mind, as distinct from the general and descriptive 'Western influence' and 'Western impact', is of crucial significance in this context. European rational and humanist thought, scientific knowledge, economic development and political institutions were conceived by Indian intellectuals as progressive characteristics of the West. While these objective progressive attributes of Western society were looked upon with admiration and approval and compared with conditions in India, there was no appreciation of the social and intellectual forces which made these advances possible. In other words, the focal point of interest was what was objectively superior and progressive in the West and not what led to that objective situation. Therefore the intellectual endeavour, at least to begin with, was to a certain extent involved with the adoption and replication of these objectively superior and progressive attributes:

[5]J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, Delhi, 1967, p. 433. Also see, R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*, vol. X, II, Bombay, 1965, p. 89.

[6]Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, Princeton, 1964, p. 46.

[7]David Kopf, *British Orientalism and Bengal Renaissance*, Berkeley, 1969, p. 1.

naturally no attempt was made to test their adaptability in the context of indigenous cultural and intellectual traditions. That the English-educated middle class, alienated from mass culture and placed almost totally outside the traditional intellectual milieu, formed the social base of this quest made it all the more restricted. Moreover, since the objective attributes of the West were divorced from the historical forces which went into their making, colonial power, as a representative of the West's progress and achievement, assumed ideological dimensions for Indians. What was objective about the West, in the context of colonialism, became an illusion, an ideology. This inversion negated the possible genesis of an indigenous body of thought to cope with the problems faced by Indian society. The scramble for Tom Paine in Calcutta, the intellectuals' addiction to Mill, Spencer and Locke, the admiration for European political ideas and institutions, the approach to Western science and technology, and a host of other examples right down to the shaping of the Indian Constitution are indicative of this. How Indians in the nineteenth century arrived at this intellectual position can be appreciated only by a study of the role of colonial ideology, an area still outside the concern of Indian intellectual history.

What were the implications of the objectively advanced Western knowledge, political ideas and social thought to the Indian mind labouring under the disadvantages inherent in a colonial situation. An unequal political relationship, along with the economic exploitation and stagnation that goes with it, is hardly ideal for creative intellectual adaptation of an enduring nature. Conventional historiography, mostly caught within the 'impact-response' syndrome—whether emphasizing the Western impact or the Indian response—is not sensitive to this question. It merely follows the path chalked out by colonial ideologues who saw Britain's role as a civilizing mission. For instance, writing about the Western impact, R. C. Majumdar observed:

> A new ideology suddenly burst forth upon the static life, moulded for centuries by fixed sets of religious ideas and social conventions. It gave birth to a critical attitude towards religion and a spirit of enquiry into the origin of state and society with a view to determining their proper scope and function.[8]

An appreciation of the inherently different functions of Western

[8]R. C. Majumdar, p. 89.

ideas at their sources and in the colonies is the initial step necessary for a departure from this trend. A recognition of the differences in the nature of social formation and the character of political institutions in the metropolis and colony is equally vital. Given these differences there could be no convergence in the socio-political role of liberal principles and institutions shaped by them when superimposed on the colonies. This has two specific consequences; functional mutation and functional debility. The role of orientalism and utilitarianism in colonial societies, distinct from their basic intellectual quest, is an example of the first. The Indian intellectuals' efforts at modernization, which were blighted by the very weaknesses inherent in their historical situation, was indicative of the second. To certain aspects of these consequences attention was first drawn by D. P. Mukherjee in his seminal study of modern Indian culture.[9] A few years later Susobhan Sarkar's pioneering essays on the Bengal Renaissance, while recognizing the role of the West in the Indian awakening, emphasized that 'foreign conquest and domination was bound to be a hindrance rather than a help to subject people's regeneration'.[10] In pointing out that imperialism 'raised barriers in the Indian mind against critical ideas from the West because these ideas came from the sources that were holding India down', A. K. Bhattacharya identified another important dimension.[11] More recent researches in this area by Marxist scholars have tried to place intellectual developments within the context of the constraints and contradictions generated by colonialism.[12] Asok

[9]D. P. Mukherjee, *Modern Indian Culture*, Bombay, 1948, pp. 25–8.

[10]Susobhan Sarkar, 'Rabindranath Tagore and Renaissance in Bengal', in *Bengal Renaissance and Other Essays*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 150.

[11]A. K. Bhattacharya, 'Akshay Dutt, Pioneer of Indian Rationalism', *The Raionalist Annual*, 1962, p. 29.

[12]Asok Sen, 'Ram Mohan and Bengal Economy', and Sumit Sarkar, 'Ram Mohan and the Break with the Past', in V. C. Joshi (ed.), *Ram Mohan and the Process of Modernization in India*, New Delhi, 1975: Barun De, 'A Historiographic critique of Renaissance Analogues for nineteenth century India', in Barun De (ed.), *Perspectives in Social Sciences*, Calcutta, 1979, and 'The Colonial Context of Bengal Renaissance', in C. H. Philip and Mary Doreen Wainwright (eds.), *Indian Society and the Beginnings of Modernization c. 1830–1850*, London, 1976; Dipesh Chakrabarti, 'The Colonial Context of the Bengal Renaissance: A Note on Early Railway Thinking in Bengal', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, May 1974; Asok Sen, *Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and His Elusive Milestones*, Calcutta, 1977; K. N. Panikkar, Presidential Address, Indian History Congress, 1975.

Sen's study of the life and work of Vidyasagar has brought out admirably the consequences of this context:

> Vidyasagar was a victim of the illusions which he shared with his stage of history, about the prospects of modernization under colonial rule. The very process, which gave his genius a strong social commitment, imposed severe limits on effective social practice. Such limits were inherent in the economic directions of imperialism. This is where the colonial situation made a grievous anomaly of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, a significant individual among our first 'moderns', of his existential need for social integrity of self-development.[13]

Marxist historiography has primarily attempted to demonstrate how politico-economic structures had warped intellectual developments in nineteenth-century India. Though tending to be reductionist and deterministic at times, it does define the parameters of intellectual endeavours and thus explains why intellectuals in the nineteenth century had to face certain defeat and tragedy in their socio-cultural efforts. While it marked a distinct departure from earlier colonial and liberal historiographical trends and assumptions, it does not indicate how intellectual perceptions and positions were arrived at. This can be seen only when the analytical focus is on processes within the given historical context. The context as such does not explain the essentials of a particular phenomenon, it only defines its general character. The emphasis on context, though important, has tended to blur this distinction.

II

The ideas articulated by intellectuals which historians have tended to write about are not the only concern of intellectual history, which embraces the moods, beliefs, values and thoughts of members of all social strata. For instance, a peasant's or an industrial worker's perception of his situation in society, as well as the way in which the rationalization of primordial beliefs or the internalization of a given ideology contributes to the making of his consciousness and to his ability to struggle for emancipation, are very much within the domain of intellectual history. They are, however, not counterposed to the hitherto popular emphasis on the creators, reproducers

[13]Asok Sen, *Iswarchandra Vidyasagar*, p. 154.

and propagators of relatively enduring and effective ideas in society. Nor do they by mere virtue of the object of investigation provide a methodological advance or fuller understanding of the historical process. Therefore, although the intellectual history of a society is not the history of its intellectuals alone, given their hegemonic role an enquiry into their social and intellectual formation, their socio-political function and their ideas does form an important and integral part of intellectual history.

Preliminary to this is the question of who constituted intellectuals in colonial India. How did they come into being socially and intellectually, and what function did they perform in the given social and political situation? In describing the creators and propagators of ideas as well as early social and political activists, several categories have been employed: social reformers, marginal men, cultural brokers, westernizers, modernizers and compradors are some of them. These are based on either partial or false perceptions of their role in society. Basically they were non-conformists, critical of existing social conditions and performing the social function of generation or adoption and propagation of ideas with a view to ushering in socio-political progress and advancement. This group was not limited to a handful of activists but comprised a large number of less known people engaged in the elaboration and dissemination of ideas. What distinguished them from intellectual workers in general was the specific social function they performed, which Gramsci has characterized as follows:

> The problem of creating a new stratum of intellectuals consists in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development, modifying its relationship with the muscular-nervous effort towards a new equilibrium, and ensuring that the muscular-nervous effort itself, in so far as it is an element of a general practical activity, which is perpetually innovating the physical and social world, becomes the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world.[14]

In identifying intellectuals as a distinct social stratum the emphasis on their specific social function—what Gramsci calls the creation of a new equilibrium and the perpetual innovation of the physical and social world—has been a central concern in most studies on

[14]Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Note Books*; New York, 1971, p. 9.

intellectual development.[15] The distinction between the 'cultural objective' and 'philosophic subjective' intelligentsia made by Richard Pipes,[16] between the educated and the intelligentsia by Theodor Geiger and Boris Elkin, the concept of concentric circles for differentiating the intellectuals from intelligentsia by Milnikov[17] and Edgar Morin's definition of intellectuals based on 'a profession that is culturally validated, a role that is socio-political and consciousness that relates to universals'[18]—are some examples.

This distinction raises several questions, of which the more important for the purposes of this essay are: what enables the 'critical elaboration of intellectual activity', thus arriving at a commitment to a specific social function, and to what extent do ideological and cultural systems and the nature and direction of social formations influence or determine cognitive ability? In attempting to answer the first, formative educational influences have been generally identified as the decisive factor, excluding almost if not totally the role of social experience: how social factors mediate in the formation of intellectuals and the growth of consciousness. One reason for this emphasis is the intellectual historian's concern with identifying factors which contribute to the making of cognitive ability. Richard Pipes on Russia, Joseph Levinson on China and Edward Shils on India are representatives of this perspective. The bulk of the literature on social reform and the emergence of nationalism in India shares this point of view. Charles Heimsath, David Kopf and R. C. Majumdar on reform and regeneration in the nineteenth century, and David MacCulley, Anil Seal and Tarachand on the national movement are a few among numerous examples

[15]A notable exception to this is Edward Shils who uses the term to include 'the independent man of letters, the scientist, pure and applied, the scholars, the university Professor, the journalist, the highly educated administrator, judge or parliamentarian'. *The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation*, Hague, 1961, p. 9. Shils, however, recognizes the existence of a group with a different social function in advanced countries, but not in newly independent countries. 'Political Development in the New States', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 11, 1960.

[16]Richard Pipes, 'The Historical Evolution of the Russian Intelligentsia', in Richard Pipes (ed.), *The Russian Intelligentsia*, New York, 1961, p. 48.

[17]Martin Malia, 'What is Intelligentsia' and Boris Elkin, 'The Russian Intelligentsia on the Eve of the Revolution', in Richard Pipes, pp. 1–18 and p. 32.

[18]Quoted in Philip Rieff (ed.), *On Intellectual-Theoretical Studies, Case Studies*, New York, 1969, p. 81. Also see Syed Hussein Alatas, *Intellectuals in Developing Societies*, London, 1977, pp. 8–9.

of this tendency. The biography of Ram Mohan Roy by S. D. Collet, of Keshubchandra Sen by Meredith Borthwick and of Dayanand Saraswati by J. T. F. Jordens fall into the same category. This is not an assumption limited to colonial, liberal and nationalist historians for most Marxist historians also seem to follow a similar path. Such an approach has been detrimental to the formulation of a methodology which draws intellectual history closer to the sociology of knowledge.

An assumption inherent in this approach is that Western knowledge and philosophical notions were fundamental to the development of a critical attitude and cognition of reality. Is this supposition true of colonial India? In terms of the formative educational influences, two broad categories can be identified among Indian intellectuals: one nurtured on traditional knowledge and the other on a combination of the Western and the traditional. While Radhakant Deb, Dayanand Saraswati and Narayana Guru belonged to the first category, Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekanand, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Jawaharlal Nehru belonged to the second.

The available biographical information on several nineteenth-century intellectuals is not exhaustive enough to enable an accurate construction of their intellectual evolution. In its absence, qualitative changes in their consciousness and consequent changes in their sensitivity to social problems remain obscure and inexplicable. Even elementary biographical sketches are wanting in many cases, and where they exist there are far too many areas of darkness. For instance, the intellectual influences on and social experience of Ram Mohan during the pre-1815 period is yet to be carefully chronicled; what led to Dayanand's transition from a Vedic scholar to a social reformer is unknown; how Ranade reconciled himself to that which by conviction he did not approve is not entirely clear, in spite of the illuminating reminiscences of his wife. These are only a few examples; similar gaps exist almost everywhere else.

Despite these limitations, certain broad generalizations about formative influences can still be advanced by referring briefly to the intellectual evolution of Ram Mohan and Dayanand. Ram Mohan was born in all probability in 1772 in a devout Vaishnava family, but Vaishnava influence, if any, was only negative in character.[19] Information about Ram Mohan's life during 1972 to 1976 is scanty.

[19]Barun De, 'A Biographical Perspective on the Political and Economic Ideas of Ram Mohan Roy', in V. C. Joshi, p. 14.

One of his earliest biographers, Sophia Dobson Collet, hardly had any information about this phase and those who have followed her have not been able to go much further. Yet it seems fairly certain that by 1800 Ram Mohan had acquired a good knowledge of Islamic theology, particularly of the teachings of the rationalist school of *mutazillas*, and of the Hindu scriptures.[20] Whether he was associated with any particular *madrasa* in Patna, and if so what its curriculum was, is unknown. But the influence of Islamic theology was certainly dominant during his early life, as is evident from his first extant work, *Tuhfat-ul-muhawaddin*, composed around 1800.[21] In the absence of any specific information about the sources of this influence, a textual analysis of *Tuhfat* in the context of the knowledge in Islamic tradition would be a useful exercise. The manner in which he came to acquire a knowledge of Hindu philosophy and scriptures is equally unknown. It has been suggested that his intimate acquaintance with Hindu philosophy was through his connection with Hariharanda Tirthaswami, a *tantrik*, at Rangpur. It would be worth investigating whether his trip to Varanasi was motivated by a desire to acquire closer familiarity with the *shastras* and, if so, information on pundits with whom he came into contact would help to establish an important link in his intellectual evolution—particularly as *Tuhfat* is almost entirely of Islamic inspiration and bereft of Hindu influence. At any rate, it is certain that Ram Mohan's first exposure was to Indian traditional influence, both

[20]Lant Capenter, a friend and admirer of Ram Mohan, has recorded: 'Under his father's roof he received the elements of native education, and also acquired the Persian language. He was afterwards sent to Patna to learn Arabic; and lastly to Benares to obtain a knowledge of Sanscrit, the sacred language of the Hindoos. His masters at Patna set him to study Arabic translations of some of the writings of Aristotle and Euclid; it is probable that the training thus given strengthened his mind in acuteness and close reasoning; while the knowledge which he acquired of the Mahommadan religion from Mussulamen whom he esteemed, contributed to cause that searching examination of the faith in which he was educated, which led him eventually to the important efforts he made to restore it to its early simplicity.' Rama Prasad Chanda and Jatindra Kumar Majumdar (ed.), *Selection from Official Letters and Documents Relating to the Life of Raja Ram Mohan Roy*, Calcutta, 1938, p. xxx.

[21]In *Tuhfat* Ram Mohan dealt with the origin of religion and the nature of religious systems at an abstract and general level. He quoted profusely from the Koran and his arguments were in keeping with the rationalist critique within Islamic tradition. Jogesh Chander Ghose, *The English Works of Raja Ram Mohan Roy*, Allahabad, 1906, pp. 941–58.

Hindu and Muslim, and his familiarity with European languages, thought and philosophy came only at a later stage.[22] Thus in the make up of Ram Mohan's intellectual world traditional knowledge was a decisive factor and the East-West synthesis for which he has been generally lauded was attempted from strong indigenous moorings. Several others, such as Vivekanand, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Jawaharlal Nehru, seem to have undergone an intellectual process in the reverse order: they were initially exposed to Western knowledge and philosophy and at a later stage tried to return to their own sources.[23] After an initial intoxication with European philosophy, Vivekanand sought enlightenment in the spirituality of Ramakrishna Paramahansa; Bal Gangadhar Tilak, in spite of his knowledge of Western political praxis, took to the *Gita* for guidance. Jawaharlal Nehru, whose training at Harrow and Cambridge made him something of a misfit both in the East and the West, had to attempt a discovery of India to discover himself. These examples strongly suggest the importance of indigenous tradition in the make-up of an intellectual and his ability to perform his socio-political function. In fact those who were unable to relate themselves to their own tradition failed to rise to the level of intellectuals who could assume social and political leadership: they could engage themselves only in the elaboration of middle-class values. The bulk of the literature which explains the rise of social and political consciousness out of the contradictions inherent in English education in India seems to overlook this dimension.

In contrast Dayanand Saraswati, like Radhakanta Deb and Narayana Guru, was a product almost exclusively of the Indian intellectual tradition. All that Mula Sankara, the precocious young boy from Kathiawar born into a Shaivite family, had received

[22]Ram Mohan started learning English only in 1796 and when William Digby met him in 1801 'he could speak it well enough to be understood . . . but could not write it with any degree of correctness'. Sophia Dobson Collet, *Life and Letters of Raja Ram Mohan Roy*, Calcutta, 1962 edition, p. 24.

[23]'Return to the source' is a concept used by Cabral to explain the response to colonial culture and domination. '"The return to the source" is not and cannot in itself be an *act of struggle* against foreign domination (colonial and racist), and it no longer necessarily means a return to tradition. It is the denial by the petite bourgeoisie of the pretended supremacy of the culture of the dominant power over that of the dominated people with which it must identify itself.' *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral*, New York, 1973, p. 63.

before becoming Dayanand, the reformer, was a knowledge of Vedanta, Sanskrit grammar, tantrism, yoga and a practical experience of social conditions in the country through extensive travel. He had no knowledge of European thought and philosophy, nor did he, like many of his contemporaries, make an effort to acquire it. This intellectual make-up did not adversely affect his cognitive ability; rather it seems to have equipped him to test through experimentation the very sources of knowledge he had acquired.[24] It also provided him with the intellectual drive necessary for confronting social problems.

As in the case of Ram Mohan, there are several gaps in the biographical information on Dayanand. The three years from 1860 to 1863 which he spent at Mathura under the guidance of Swami Virjananda, and the subsequent four years in which he travelled extensively through various parts of the country, seem to have been crucial for his intellectual evolution and the development of his social vision. He reached Mathura as a *sanyasi* in quest of the path to *moksha*, but at the end of these seven years he emerged as a reformer impatient with the existing social and religious practices. The process through which this transformation took place has not been a point of enquiry in his innumerable biographies, except in the latest, and thus far the best, by J. T. F. Jordens. Jordens has posited Virjananda's involvement with the regeneration of Hinduism, his advice to his disciple to propagate the books of the *rishis* and the Vedic religion, and Dayanand's own reaction to Hinduism as he saw it around him at Mathura, as possible factors.[25] The extent to which his social experience during his journey through various parts of the country contributed to this transformation would be a rewarding investigation.

It is important to emphasize that, in spite of the differences in the formative educational influences on the members of these two groups, their perception of reality and vision of social transformation seem remarkably similar. In their understanding of the con-

[24]In order to verify the information on human anatomy contained in some religious works, he dissected a corpse at Garhmukteshwar. When he found that the description given in the books did not tally at all with the actual details, he tore the books into pieces and threw them into the river along with the corpse. R. C. Yadav (ed.), *Autobiography of Dayanand Saraswati*, Delhi, 1976, p. 38.

[25]J. T. F. Jordens, *Dayanand Saraswati: His Life and Ideas*, Delhi, 1978, pp. 33–9.

nection between social and religious practices, in their perception of British rule as a divine dispensation and in their attitude towards caste, idolatry and polytheism, this similarity was clearly manifest. In fact there was no direct correlation between their formative influences and their specific position on various social questions. Stereotype labels such as 'conservatives', 'radicals' and 'reformers', commonly employed in the existing historiography on the basis of traditional, western and synthetic intellectual influences, respectively, are therefore of doubtful validity. Neither did western influences automatically lead to 'progressive' social and political consciousness nor did traditional influences invariably create conservative attitudes. In fact some who were rooted in traditional knowledge and culture held more advanced views on several social questions than their Western-educated contemporaries. The attitude of Radha Kanta Deb towards female education and of Narayana Guru towards caste are cases in point. It would be interesting to examine whether a traditional intellectual milieu had the potential to stimulate ideas which had already made their appearance in western societies. The sources from which Akshay Kumar Dutt and Viresalingam derived the idea of an organic theory of society and Ram Mohan and Narayana Guru evoloved the idea of religious universalism are interesting pointers.

This enquiry into the intellectual evolution of Ram Mohan and Dayanand tends to suggest that formative educational influence, though important, was not the only determinant in the formation of Indian intellectuals in the nineteenth century. It also suggests that differences in the nature of formative educational influences did not prevent an identical mediation in the social process. Conversely, it may also be argued that similarity in intellectual influences did not lead to identical cognitive ability or social mediation. Access to knowledge is an essential but not a sufficient prerequisite since it only creates the basic ability to internalize social experience which plays a crucial role in the formation of intellectuals. The rearrangement of the known epistemological components or the articulation of qualitatively new ideas need not necessarily be of any social consequence. Only when those ideas are related to socio-cultural and political interests or dissent, at least potentially, do they assume social significance. The ability to establish such a relationship is a crucial component in the making of an intellectual. What underlined the role of Ram Mohan in Bengal, Dayanand in Punjab,

Viresalingam in Andhra and Narayana Guru in Travancore was that their ideas suited the social requirements of the new classes trying to break away from certain existing social norms. Although the dynamics of these classes set the parameters of their socio-political action and effectively mediated in their transition from an academic to an intellectual position, it did not limit their socio-political vision to the interests of these classes. Instead, their effort had been to develop a consciousness which was progressive at the given historical juncture. The role and character as well as the 'organicity' of the intellectuals in nineteenth-century India has to be located within this context. The tendency to characterize them 'compradors' or 'almost compradors' and representatives of a particular class or caste seems to miss this all-important point. What Marx said about Ricardo is pertinent here:

> Ricardo's conception is, on the whole, in the interest of the *industrial bourgeoisie*, only *because*, and in so far as, their interests concide with that of production or the productive development of human labour. Where the bourgeoisie comes to conflict with this, he is just as ruthless towards it as he is at other times towards the proletariat and the aristocracy.[26]

III

A study of the nature of perception is a necessary prelude to the understanding of the evolution of consciousness in society. The existing literature on the history of ideas in the nineteenth century focuses mainly on the movements and the ideas propagated by them; the perceptions of reality which generated these movements are only incidental to this central concern. The interrelationship between perception and consciousness is also relegated to the background. They are treated either in isolation, or perception is considered synonymous with consciousness.

The recent interest in the differences between the objective reality and perceived reality is integral to studies concerning the impact of colonialism on Indian social development. Why intellectuals in the nineteenth century failed to realize the true nature of colonial rule has been the focus of this interest. False consciousness, compradorism and class interest are some of the explanations offered. That

[26]Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, vol. 2, pp. 117–18.

colonial ideology and the character of the colonial state and state institutions contributed to a perception which did not correspond to the reality seems too general and perhaps too obvious an observation. Nevertheless, the manner in which colonial state apparatuses functioned as instruments of ideological dissemination, and the way colonial state institutions (which were 'over developed in relation to the structure' in the colony)[27] functioned as ideological instruments aiding political control, have remained unexplored areas.

While the former function was inherent in almost every policy pursued by the British in India, the principles on which the state system was organized and institutions functioned contributed to the latter. The first was a direct effort to superimpose an alien ideology and culture and to develop a sense of inferiority and a dependency complex in the minds of the colonized. The colonizer also created and propagated several myths about the character and capacity of the colonized which in course of time the colonized themselves began to believe.[28] Moreover the very character of the institutions created by the British in India imparted to it certain

[27]Hamza Alavi, 'The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh', *New Left Review*, no. 74, July-August 1972, p. 61.

[28]Syed Hussein Alatas has demonstrated how the myth of the lazy native came into currency in Malayasia during colonial rule. Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, London, 1977. Jose Rizal, the well-known Filipino patriot and martyr and a leading intellectual of the time, was one of the first to call attention to this. He argued that the indolence of Filipinos was not hereditary but due to historical reasons. E. Alzona, *Selected Essays and Letters of Jose Rizal*, Manila, 1964. In India also, deception, dishonesty and undependability as characterstics of Indians became a part of the self image in India only during the colonial era. Today the English-educated élite readily ascribe these qualities to the masses. Ram Mohan was sensitive to how Indians came to acquire these qualities. Pointing out that 'the peasants or villagers who reside at a distance from large towns and head-stations and courts of law, are as innocent, temperate and moral in their conduct as the people of any country whatsoever', he observed:

> The inhabitants of the cities, towns or stations who have much intercourse with persons employed about the courts of law, by Zamindars etc. and with foreigners and others in a different state of civilization, generally imbibe their habits and opinions. Hence their religious opinions are shaken without any other principles being implanted to supply their place. Consequently a great proportion of these are inferior in point of character to the former class (villagers and peasantry) and are very often even made tools of in the nefarious work of perjury and forgery.

J. C. Ghose, pp. 296–7. For an interesting study of colonial stereotypes in India, see Gyanendra Pandey, 'The Bigoted Julaha', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. XVIII, no. 5, 29 Jan. 1983.

ideological dimensions. For, those institutions based on principles which informed an advanced polity and economy were quite over-developed in the given political and social context of the colony. The effort of the colonial state to establish hegemonic control over the colonized society was aided by this objective reality. The nature of perception was contingent on these factors, what Francis Bacon called 'the idols that rule the minds of men'.[29] Indeed, idols also came from the traditional ideology and culture.

In perceiving the reality of colonial rule the intellectuals in nineteenth-century India adopted an idealized view of the state, without making any distinction between an alien and a native government. Conscious of the anomie that had preceded the colonial conquest, and faced with a well established state system based on liberal principles, most of them accepted and even welcomed British rule as divine dispensation.[30] This arose not out of any personal profit from collaboration but out of a belief in the instrumentality of British rule in bringing about a political future based on liberal and constitutional principles.[31] That Britain in the first half of the nineteenth century represented the most advanced polity and economy in the world, and that it was 'the liberator of Europe' whenever freedom and liberty were endangered by despotic rulers, reinforced this belief.[32] British rule was therefore looked upon as the 'chosen instrument' for leading India to the path of political and economic modernization. Ram Mohan characterized England as a nation of people who not only are 'blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty but [who] also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social happiness, as well as free enquiry into literary and religious subjects among those nations to which their influence extends'.[33] The attitude towards British rule during its early phase

[29]E. Curtis and John W. Petras (ed.), *The Sociology of Knowledge: A Reader*, London, 1970, p. 7.

[30]Ram Mohan Roy, 'An Appeal to the King in Council', in J. C. Ghose, pp. 446–7; Veeresalingam, *Complete Works* (Telugu), Rajamandri, 1951, p. 9; Keshubchandra Sen, *Lectures in India*, London, 1904, p. 320; and T. V. Parvate, *Mahadev Govinda Ranade: A Biography*, Bombay, 1963, p. 226.

[31]For instance Keshubchandra Sen observed: 'it is not a man's work, but a work which God is doing with His own hands, using British nation as His instrument'. *Keshubchandra Sen in England*, Calcutta, 1938, p. 90.

[32]J. C. Ghose, p. 367.

[33]Ram Mohan Roy, 'Final Appeal to the Christian Public', in J. C. Ghose, p. 284.

was integrally a part of this notion of instrumentality.

When asked whether it would be beneficial to allow Europeans of capital to purchase estates and settle on them, Ram Mohan favoured *Europeans of character and capital* to do so since 'it would generally improve the resources of the country, and also the condition of the native inhabitants, by showing them superior methods of cultivation, and the proper mode of treating their labourers and dependents'.[34] He also felt that if Europeans returning home were encouraged to settle in India with their families, it would greatly improve the resources of the country.[35] However he was opposed to the idea of admitting Europeans of all descriptions to become settlers, as 'such a measure could only be regarded as adopted for the purpose of entirely supplanting the native inhabitants and expelling them from the country'.[36] Ram Mohan was evidently concerned with preconditions necessary for industrialization, namely capital and technology. The lack of capital and backwardness of technology occupied an important place in nineteenth-century economic thought. A solution was sought through the British connection.

However, a different perception of the nature of British rule was developing simultaneously in the nineteenth century. This was an outcome of the intellectual quest to understand the economically exploitative and politically dominating nature of colonial rule. Evolving from within and not parallel to the perception of the British as 'the chosen instrument' of Indian regeneration, what gave rise to it was the contradiction inherent within the very nature of colonial rule. Beginning as a vague sense of patriotism and national pride and as abstract discussion on the disadvantages of dependence, it culminated in a definite vision of a future free from British domination. The poems of Kashi Prasad Ghose, the speeches and articles of Kylash Chunder Datta, Sharada Prasad Ghose, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Shama Charan Dutt, several anonymous contributions to contemporary journals in Bengal, the articles of Bhaskar Pandurang Tarkadkar and of anonymous pamphleteers in *Bombay Gazette* in Maharashtra—were indicative of the early attempts to grapple with political reality. A letter published in *Reformer*, a journal edited by Prasanna Kumar Tagore, while discussing the connec-

[34]Ibid., p. 284.
[35]Ibid., p. 285.
[36]Ibid., p. 284.

tion between England and India, drew the following conclusions:

> Without her [India's] dependence on England as her conqueror and possessor, her political situation would be more respectable and her inhabitants would be more wealthy and prosperous. The example of America which shows what she was when subjected to England and what she has been since her freedom, most naturally lead us to such a conclusion.[37]

This was not an isolated instance. Sharda Prasad Ghose considered 'the deprivation of the enjoyment of political liberty as the cause of our misery and degradation'.[38] Kylash Chunder Dutta, in an essay on the India of his dreams a hundred years hence, conjured up an armed rebellion for the overthrow of British rule.[39] Akshay Kumar Dutt was concerned with dependence itself which he considered a terrible suffering, worse than the *naraka* of the Hindus, the hell of the Christians and the *jahannam* of the Mussalmans.[40]

The growing consciousness about the new political situation was also reflected in periodicals published in Maharashtra. In a series of letters written in *Bombay Gazette* in 1841 under the pseudonym 'A Hindoo', Bhaskar Pandurang Tarkadkar not only focused attention on administrative lapses and injustice, like many of his predecessors, but also tried to comprehend the nature and consequences of British rule.[41] At the very outset he tried to demonstrate how British rule was alien and how it was different from that of earlier conquerors who established their empires in India. In drawing this distinction two criteria were employed: administrative and economic. In administrative matters like employment and the dispensation of justice, Muslim rulers did not discriminate on religious grounds whereas the British clearly favoured their countrymen.[42] Citing

[37]Gautam Chattopadhyay, *Awakening in Bengal in the Early Nineteenth Century*, Calcutta, 1965, p. XIV.

[38]*Bengal Hurkaru*, Oct. 1941, quoted in Gautam Chattopadhyay (ed.), *Bengal: Early Nineteenth Century*, Calcutta, 1978, p. XII.

[39]Kylash Chunder Dutt, 'A journal of 48 hours of the year 1945', *Calcutta Literary Gazette*, 6 June 1835, in Gautam Chattopadhyay (ed.), 1978, p. XI.

[40]Biman Behari Majumdar, p. 74.

[41]For a general survey of Bhaskar Pandurang Tarkadkar's ideas, see J. V. Naik, 'An Early Appraisal of the British Colonial Policy', *Journal of the University of Bombay*, vols. XLIV and XLV, nos. 80–1, 1975–6.

[42]'A Letter From a Hindoo', 28 July 1841, *Bombay Gazette*, 30 July 1841, vol. LIII, new series, no. 25, p. 103. I am thankful to Hulas Singh, Research Scholar in History, Jawaharlal Nehru University, for providing me the text of the letters of Bhaskar Pandurang Tarkadkar.

instances to show how the British were partial to Europeans in the dispensation of justice, the disparity between the principle of the rule of law and administrative practice was highlighted.[43] More important, however, was the perception of the role of law and the judiciary in promoting colonial interests. 'Whenever', Tarkadkar wrote, 'you [the British] have to establish a new act of oppression, your first precaution is to insert it in your Indian code of laws and give it the colour of justice and equality'.[44]

The second criterion used by Tarkadkar to identify the alien character of British rule was its economic activity, which was geared to the transfer of wealth to England 'at the sad expense of the prosperity and happiness of the poor and inoffensive inhabitants' [of India].[45] That he contrasted this with the lack of any such intent by earlier rulers was indicative of his sensitivity to a crucial element which distinguished British rule. He was also conscious of the fact that the British did not identify themselves with the socio-cultural life of the country.

The perception of economic conditions and the consequent involvement with economic problems was limited during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century. Yet intellectuals were neither indifferent to the general economic condition of the country nor insensitive to the economic implications of colonial rule. The poverty of the masses, inequality in society, the condition of the peasantry, the destruction of the handicraft industry and the drain of wealth through trade attracted their attention. Almost everyone from Ram Mohan to Vivekanand was concerned with poverty and inequality. Some only bemoaned the misery of the people, but others reflected on the causes which produced the misery. While Ram Mohan sought an explanation in administrative practice,[46] Akshay Kumar Dutt and Bankim Chandra Chatterji posited it

[43]'Your partiality to your countrymen is extreme and it is not very seldom that we witness your sacrificing your conscience and trampling under foot your law and casting aside every other consideration to preserve the life of your countryman or lighten his punishment however extremely heinous his crime may be and however deserved he may be to very harsh punishment.' *Bombay Gazette*, 30 July 1841, no. 25, p. 103.

[44]*Bombay Gazette*, 10 Aug. 1841, no. 37, p. 138.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Susobhan Chandra Sarkar (ed.), *Ram Mohan on Indian Economy*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 9.

within the existing socio-economic relations in society.[47] Bankim Chandra's *Samyo*, which, like Ram Mohan's *Tuhfat*, is a landmark in the intellectual history of India, was the most significant effort in the nineteenth century to deal with the problem of inequality. Borrowing from a variety of European thinkers and thus eclectic in content, *Samyo* is a good index of the strength and weaknesses of intellectual development in colonial and modern India.[48] While it indicated a certain penchant for philosophical speculation and abstract discussion that was almost non-existent in nineteenth-century India, it tended to rely heavily on an alien intellectual tradition, a tendency which has almost become a debility in our contemporary intellectual life.

That the economic consequences of British domination, particularly the drain of wealth and the decline of handicraft, were within the focus of the nineteenth-century perception of reality has not received adequate emphasis in existing historical writings. Ram Mohan was conscious of the drain of wealth from India through remittances out of salaries, savings out of the professional incomes of English civilians as well as of the earnings of English merchants, agents and planters, and through Indian revenues expended in England. On the authority of 'a very able servant of the Company, holding a responsible situation in Bengal', he estimated 'the aggregate of tribute, public and private, so withdrawn from India from 1765 to 1820 at £110 millon'.[49] In course of time attention came to be further focused on this question. The central argument in Tarkadkar's critique of British rule was the drain of wealth. In fact the very purpose of his letters was 'to show how rigorous the present policy of the British has been in operation in regard to draining India of its wealth and reducing it to poverty'.[50] He recognized British trade as the main channel of the drain and argued that it had 'more effectively emptied our purses in a few years than the predatory excursions of these tribes (Pindaries and

[47]Biman Behari Majumdar, p. 74; and M. K. Haldar, *Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Calcutta, 1915. The title of Haldar's book is misleading. It is a translation of Bankim's *Samyo*, with an introduction by the author.

[48]For a good discussion of Bankim's ideas see B. N. Ganguli, *Concept of Equality: The Nineteenth Century Indian Debate*, Simla, 1975.

[49]Ram Mohan Roy, Appendix to 'Questions and Answers on the Revenue System of India', J. C. Ghose, p. 311.

[50]*Bombay Gazette*, 30 July 1841, no. 25, p. 103.

Ramosies) could do in some five or six hundred years'.[51]

To Ram Mohan the consequence of the drain was mainly the lack of capital necessary for economic development, but Tarkadkar saw it as an important reason for poverty.[52]

The impact of British economic policies on indigenous handicraft industries also formed a part of the emerging consciousness in the nineteenth century. Ram Mohan and his contemporaries and several others soon after him were not very alive to the sad plight of the artisans whose 'bones lay bleached in the plains of Bengal' and to the changing patterns of consumption and market. That they were unaware is perhaps not altogether surprising, given their perspective on industrialization. Yet the import of this change was not entirely overlooked, particularly by intellectuals in Maharashtra. A letter published in the *Bombay Gazette* under the pseudonym 'Philanthropy' attributed the main cause of the misery of the inhabitants of Konkan and the Deccan to the destruction of the indigenous industry owing to the import from Great Britain of 'almost all the necessaries and luxuries of life, entirely superseding those produced in the country'.[53] Citing the example of the weavers of Konkan, it argued that artisans were losing their source of livelihood and were forced to take to cultivation and tillage.[54] This idea found further elaboration in Gopal Hari Deshmukh who advocated Swadeshi and boycott of foreign manufactured goods and opposed the export of raw materials:

> Our people should make a firm determination jointly not to buy foreign goods; they should buy only home-made articles, although inferior in quality. We should use our own cloth, our own umbrellas and so on. Thus we will be able to retain our money in our country. All the merchants and producers should resolve to sell to the British people only the finished Indian goods and not the raw materials.[55]

The existing literature on nineteenth-century India overlooks almost entirely the connections between these early gropings and the growth of anti-colonial consciousness. Treating the pre-national and nationalist phases as separate and independent, the former is

[51] *Bombay Gazette*, 20 Aug. 1841, no. 46, pp. 174–5.
[52] *Bombay Gazette*, 10 Aug. 1841, no. 37, pp. 138–9.
[53] Quoted in J. V. Naik.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Biman Behari Majumdar, p. 202.

assigned to socio-religious reform and the latter to the more 'progressive' nationalist political activity. Such analyses seem to miss the vital point that pre-nationalist intellectuals were the heralds of the cultural and ideological struggle, and thus were participants in and contributors to the emerging dominant consciousness in colonial India. The burden of their endeavour was to elaborate an ideology which would counter both the traditional and the colonial. Their ambivalence is explained by the necessity to draw upon elements represented by both. Viewed from this perspective the socio-cultural manifestations in colonial India call for a re-examination.

IV

Compared to their perception of the political and economic reality, nineteenth-century Indian intellectuals had a clear vision of the country's socio-religious condition. The interdependence and interconnection of religion and social life, religious beliefs and social evils, distortions and misrepresentations of religious scriptures and knowledge, the social implications of some prevalent forms of worship and the adverse influences of social institutions such as caste, were a part of this perception. Reformation in this sphere, which was the main task undertaken by intellectuals in the nineteenth century, was induced not solely by these objective conditions but by their perceived linkages with the destiny of society. The early expression of the cultural-ideological struggle in colonial India was within this ambit. This idea, namely that socio-religious reformation was not an end in itself, is a point missing in most of the innumerable studies on this subject.[56]

Almost simultaneous with this awareness, Indian society witnessed the emergence of a consciousness about the cultural-ideological implications of colonialism. Since the destruction or denigration

[56]It has even been argued that intellectuals in the nineteenth century considered religion the basis of society. S. N. Mukherjee, 'The Social Implication of the Political Thought of Raja Ram Mohan Roy', in R. S. Sharma (ed.), *Indian Society: Historical Probings*, New Delhi, 1974, p. 372. Mukherjee has based his argument on a wrong reading of Ram Mohan. Ram Mohan in fact was pointing out how religion originated out of the social necessity to preserve property rights and relations. Ram Mohan Roy, *Tuhfat-u-Muhawaddin* in J. C. Ghose, p. 947. The interpretation and use of religious texts and ideas in the nineteenth century, particularly by Ram Mohan, Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra and Vivekanand, are also important in this context.

of the indigenous culture was integral to the methods of domination and control, and because colonial rule did not bring about a sharp retrogression in the form of government and the nature of state institutions, the initial expression of the struggle against alien domination manifested itself in the realm of culture. The intellectual quest to realize the potential inherent in traditional culture was a part of this struggle.

These two tendencies, the first marked by a struggle against the backward elements of traditional culture and ideology to modernize society and the second by a reliance on the strength of traditional culture and ideology to shape the future, have been characterized as reformist and revivalist respectively. Is it possible to locate both these strands within the same process which contributed to the making of anti-colonial consciousness through a dual struggle against traditional and colonial cultures and ideologies? The classes (petite bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie) which formed the social base of this struggle, initiated and furthered by intellectuals, had experienced a dual alienation from the corresponding cultural-intellectual milieux, to begin with from the traditional and later from the colonial. It was within the world of these classes in the Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras that the reformist urge first made its appearance. So also was the attempt to 'return to the sources', which was not a return to tradition *per se* but rather an attempt to challenge and deny the pretended supremacy of the culture of the colonizer as well as to reassert the cultural identity of the colonized. This was 'not a voluntary step, but the only possible reply to the demand of concrete need, historically determined, and enforced by the inescapable contradiction between the colonised society and the colonial power'.[57] The socio-cultural regeneration in colonial India, which is generally but not altogether appropriately termed 'renaissance', was a consequence of this dual alienation and struggle.[58]

[57]Amilcar Cabral, 'The Role of Culture in the Struggle for Independence', paper presented at the UNESCO conference on the concept of Race, Identity and Dignity, Paris, 3–7 July 1972.

[58]The discussion of the socio-cultural regeneration in colonial India has tended to draw heavily on the Renaissance model. How far this model is applicable to the Indian situation has recently attracted some attention. See Barun De, 1971, and Rajat Ray, 'Man, Woman and the Novel: The Rise of a New Consciousness in Bengal, 1858–1947', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Jan.-March 1979, vol. XVI, no. 1.

Amilcar Cabral, one of the few political activists to have given his attention to the role of culture in liberation struggles, has located it in the dual alienation of the petite bourgeoisie,[59] which in fact only provided the social base for the intellectual-cultural struggle leading to the regeneration in colonial societies. Since the digits of this struggle have not been worked out in detail, at this stage it can only be suggested as an alternative to the existing typologies based either on Western inspiration or internal dynamics.

Colonial domination inevitably impinged upon cultural existence, which constituted a whole way of life and embraced all 'signifying practices' such as language, religion, arts, philosophy, etc. Two important areas in which cultural sensitivity found its articulation were language and religion. The perception of language as an important cultural component had led intellectuals in the nineteenth century to realize the consequences of the use of English as the medium of instruction in education. English, they asserted, was creating a group of people alienated from their national culture and consequently from their countrymen.[60] They were conscious of the gulf that separated the English educated—superficially educated to Bankim and spineless creatures to Vivekanand—and the uneducated masses in ideas, thought, feeling and the manner of living. The cultivation of vernacular languages therefore occupied an important place in their programme of national regeneration. Beginning with 'Young Bengal' and Akshay Kumar Dutt, up to Syed Ahmad Khan and the Dawn Society, it was a continuous and progressively developing consciousness. Making a passionate appeal for education through the mother tongue, Uday Chandra Adhya emphasized 'a proper knowledge of the language of the country' as a necessary prerequisite for progress and regeneration leading to political freedom.[61] About four decades later, Syed Ahmad Khan expressed this in more emphatic terms:

> The cause of England's civilization is that all the arts and sciences are in the language of the country. Those who are bent on improving and bettering India must remember that the

[59]Cabral, 1973, p. 63.

[60]Akshay Kumar Dutt in *Tattvabodhini Patrika*, Shrawan, 1768, no. 36, pp. 309–11.

[61]Uday Chandra Adhya, 'A Proposal for the Proper Cultivation of the Bengali Language and its Necessity for the Natives of the Country', in Gautam Chattopadhyay (ed.), 1965, p. 26.

> only way of compassing this is by having the whole of the arts and sciences translated into their own language. I should like to have this written in gigantic letters on the Himalayas for the remembrance of future generations.[62]

This emphasis on enriching the vernaculars should not be viewed in isolation. It was in fact in response to the cultural, social and intellectual consequences of colonial education, as evident from the conscious use of vernaculars in preference to English and from the endeavour to develop an alternate system of education.[63] The large number of vernacular journals and periodicals were indicative of this preference, as also the fact that several associations decided to conduct their proceedings in the vernaculars. For instance the members of the *Sarbatatva Deepika Sabha* founded in 1833 resolved to hold their discussions and speak only in the mother tongue.[64] So did Raj Narain Bose's Society for the Promotion of National Feeling Among the Educated Natives of Bengal, which advocated learning the mother tongue in place of English, the cultivation of Sanskrit, publication of the results of research into Indian antiquities in Bengali, and conversation and proceedings of meetings in Bengali.[65] Nabh Gopal Mitra, Bhudev Mukherjee, Pandit Guru Dutt and a host of others vigorously pursued this ideal, which culminated in the ideas and activities of the National Educational Council[66] and the Society for a Uniform Script.[67] Attempts to revitalize the Indian system of medicine, to probe into the potentialities of pre-colonial technology and to reconstruct traditional knowledge should be viewed in this cultural context.[68]

The cultural concern was most strongly expressed whenever religious beliefs and practices were perceived to be violated by the

[62]Shan Mohammad (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan*, Bombay, 1972, pp. 231–2.

[63]For a discussion of educational ideas in the nineteenth century and their implications, see K. N. Panikkar, Presidential Address.

[64]Gautam Chattopadhyay (ed.), 1965, p. xxv.

[65]David Kopf, *Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind*, Princeton, 1979.

[66]The object of the council was 'to impart Education—Literary as well as Scientific and Technical—on National lines and exclusively under National Control, *not in opposition to, but standing apart from*, the existing system of Primary, Secondary and Universal Education'. Uma and Haridas Mukherjee, *The Origins of the National Education Movement*, Calcutta, 1959, p. 44.

[67]Ibid., p. 230.

[68]For a brief survey of these attempts see David Kopf, 1979.

administrative measures undertaken by the colonial state or by the evangelizing efforts of Christian missionaries. Legislative interventions in social matters were interpreted as interference in ancient usages and customs, as reflected in the memorials against the abolition of sati and the Lex Loci Act.[69] A circular issued by the Hindus of Calcutta argued that the Act would prove a 'weapon of destruction to the Hindoo race and eradicate the tree of Hinduism'[70]; it would 'sap the foundation of their religion'.[71] A memorial signed by 14,000 Hindus of Calcutta expressed this fear in no uncertain terms and gave vent to their disenchantment with the British government, which, they feared, was aiding and abetting evangelization. The *Hindu Intelligencer* recorded that 'it appears that [the] Indian Government as well as the authorities in Leadenhall Street have identified themselves with the missionaries and their cause.'[72] The apprehension about the purpose of the Act and its possible consequences was shared by the Hindus in other Presidencies as well. In fact attempts were made to organize protest and opposition simultaneously in all the three Presidencies, including a call to desist from cultivation of land and payment of revenue.[73]

That British officials were actively supporting evangelizing efforts was a growing suspicion. The close social intercourse between officials and missionaries in district towns, the partiality of officials to missionaries and converts in disputes,[74] the attempts to introduce a Christian content in education[75] and the conversion of students

[69]Muhammad Mohar Ali, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities*, Chittagong, 1965, pp. 117–36; and S. R. Mehrotra, *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress*, Delhi, 1971, pp. 47–50.

[70]Ibid., p. 47.

[71]Muhammad Mohar Ali, p. 130.

[72]Quoted in S. R. Mehrotra, p. 44.

[73]Ibid., p. 48.

[74]The Tinnelvelli riot case is a good example. About a hundred Hindus who had allegedly participated in the anti-missionary riot were jailed by the local magistrate but were acquitted on appeal by the sessions judge. The Governor of Madras disapproved of the action of the judge and transferred him from Tinnelvelli. See Robert Eric Frykenberg, 'The Impact of Conversion and Social Reform upon Society in South India during the Late Company Period: Questions concerning Hindu-Christian Encounters with Special Reference to Tinnelvelly', in C. H. Philip and Mary Doreen Mainwright (ed.), pp. 187–243.

[75]Several officials advocated the introduction of Bible classes as a part of the curriculum in schools. Lord Tweeddale, who implemented it by making the

receiving English education reinforced this suspicion. Judgments in cases relating to the custody of converts, wives and children and other related matters had made even the judiciary look partisan.[76] A consciousness of the cultural implications of the colonial presence and of the need to preserve the Hindu way of life was a result of these perceptions. The opposition to the Bible Minute, in which not only orthodox Hindus such as Radhakanta Deb and Ashutosh Deb but also liberals like Devendranath Tagore participated,[77] and the mammoth memorandum from Madras signed by 70,000 people remonstrating against the use of education for religious propaganda and demanding that education be imparted without interference to religious beliefs, were indicative of this awareness.[78]

The defence of indigenous culture and institutions and an introspective study of their strength and past glory were thus a consequence of colonial cultural intrusion. It was not, to repeat an earlier argument, a voluntary act, but was forced by historical circumstances which necessitated a redefinition of identity. Rejecting all that colonialism represented, it led to a search for identity in indigenous tradition. This tendency, although it originated simultaneously with colonial conquest, became clearly manifest only during the second half of the nineteenth century with the maturing of cultural and ideological contradictions with colonialism. Shared both by Hindu and Muslim intellectuals, it made religious particularism and even communalism possible. However, its origins lay not in the perception of communal differences or communal antagonism but in the reaction to colonial culture and ideology. Viewed in this light the resurrection and reinterpretation of the past was not inherently retrogressive; it was only a means for self-strengthening and not a basis for a vision of the future. The tendency to rely on the vitality of traditional culture and to reinterpret it to meet the requirements of contemporary society—as expressed in the thought of Bankim,

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Bible a textbook of English, observed in his controversial 'Bible Minute': 'It is the only means I know of giving to the natives a practical knowledge of the sciences from which rise all those high qualities which they admire so much in the character of those whom Providence had placed to rule over them.' Quoted in S. R. Mehrotra, p. 40.

[76]Muhammad Mohar Ali, pp. 101–16.

[77]*Harkaru*, 13 Dec. 1847.

[78]Memorandum to John Elphinstone, Governor of Fort St. George, 11 Nov. 1839 in P. J. Thomas, *The Growth of Higher Education in Southern India*, Madras, n.d., p. 5.

Dayanand, Rajnarayan Bose, Bhudev Mukherjee, Pandit Guru Dutt, Syed Alavi and Mukti Tangal—was a part of this quest. It represented not cultural revivalism but cultural defence. This was not an end in itself but a component in the growth of dominant consciousness in colonial India. That it possibly hindered the growth of a secular ethos was a part of the general failure to effectively combine the cultural-ideological and political struggles.