

# Interaction of the Gospel and Culture in Bengal

T. JACOB THOMAS\*

## 1. Introduction:

By the middle of the eighteenth century Bengal experienced a remarkable outburst of intellectual activity and a radical transformation in the social and religious ideas. The mark of the new awakening was the increasingly critical outlook on the past and new aspirations for the future. Reason and judgement took the place of faith and belief, superstition yielded to science, immobility was replaced by progress. A zeal for reform overpowered age long apathy and inertia. New conceptions of morality and religion challenged the existing social practices and structures of society, the worth of the individual was acknowledged and a new sense of freedom and justice began to appear. New types of literature, social and economic behaviour, habits and customs, began to emerge.<sup>1</sup> These changes were stimulated by the impact of ideas which had their origin in the Gospel of Christ, which found its way through Christians from the West who came to India, as merchants, conquerors, missionaries, educationists and social workers. Christian values and ideals also entered into the life of Bengal under the guise of Western movements and ideologies, literature and philosophies. Neither all the Europeans were professed Christians nor the ideologies and movements knew themselves any longer as Christian, yet they had their origin in the liberal, progressive climate created by a Christian culture.<sup>2</sup> In this paper we shall briefly examine the history of progress in the life of Bengal and analyze its Christian claims and explore the direction it takes in the present.

## 2. Bengal Culture before its contact with Christianity

Although Christianity came to India from the very beginning of its origin and flourished in the Southern tip of India for the last two thousand years, its impact upon the rest of India was altogether absent. The first European Christians to come to India were the Portuguese and they came to Bengal in 1517. Bengal was at that time under the Mughal rule. The Muslims were the virtual rulers of

---

\*Rev. Dr. T. Jacob Thomas is Professor of Theology and Ethics at Bishop's College, Calcutta, W. Bengal.

Bengal from the beginning of the thirteenth century since when Malik Ikhtiyar-ud-din Muhammad Khilji, the Afghan Ghor conqueror defeated Lakhmana Sena, the last Hindu king of Bengal.<sup>3</sup> The Muslim population of Bengal was "highly composite", having the descendents of the Afghan invaders, Arab traders, Iranian Mughal officials, converts from Buddhism and Hinduism.<sup>4</sup> The Hindus and Muslims, even though were living together in Bengal for several centuries, "they lived in two water-tight compartments", except in sharing some local beliefs, festivals, folksongs and social etiquette.<sup>5</sup> Whatever rapprochement left between the Hindus and Muslims, writes Kazi Wadud, "came in for almost total disavowal by a powerful Muslim intelligentsia at the start of the 19th century". The reasons for this Hindu-Muslim relationship will be analyzed later. At this point what is to be noted is that when the Europeans came Muslims were the rulers and the Hindus, a subjugated people.<sup>6</sup>

Under centuries of Muslim rule the Hindu society of Bengal became "intellectually stagnant, morally torpid, and socially virulent".<sup>7</sup> The Hindu religion was "shorn of all its moral and spiritual values, sublimity and sanctity. Superstition and prejudices had taken the upper hand and men (sic) were clinging to the dead forms and trying to draw spiritual sustenance therefrom, as children cling to the corpses of their dead mothers".<sup>8</sup> "While the outside world had made rapid progress in different branches of secular learning during the preceding two hundred years, India practically stood still where it was six hundred years ago.<sup>9</sup> People remained contented with outward show, lavishness, exuberant festivals and sacrifices. "It seemed that the high principles on which Hinduism was based were going to be irretrievably lost and the Sanskrit classics and Sastras were to remain buried in oblivion".<sup>10</sup> Many unHindu and medieval customs such as female infanticide, sati, polygamy called Kulinism crept into the society.<sup>11</sup> The traditional organization of society, based on joint family and caste, divided Hindu society into small narrow communal groupings which were incapable of arriving at a sense of social wholeness. The position of the untouchable in Hindu society was "in many ways worse than slavery".<sup>12</sup> The traditional Hindu spirituality with its emphasis on undifferentiated totality of all things, inspite of its wholeness, also has created an a-historical spirituality with a sense of "passivity" and "disinterestedness", which was described by S. Radhakrishnan as "the scene of a culture of dead men walking the earth which is peopled with the ghosts".<sup>13</sup> In the eighteenth century there was no conception of India as a country. There were Bengalis, Hindustanis, Sikhs, Rajputs and Marathas but no Indian. The Bengal viewed the Marathas "not only as much foreigners as

the English, but they were hated foreigners which the English were not".<sup>14</sup>

However, inspite of all these disunity and stagnation India was distinguished itself as "geographical and cultural continuum."<sup>15</sup> The Hinduism was a cosmos in itself, a unity of thought and ideals, without regard to the extreme diversity of racial and linguistic differences. The Westerners, secularists and missionaries, discovered this cultural unity. They viewed Hinduism as one religion, one culture and one country. They either appreciated the rich cultural heritage of India, its philosophy, art and religion in its unity or criticised them as a whole, in accordance with their varied interests — romantic, commercial or religious — whatever may be. With the Western contact India rediscovered its golden past, its cultural identity, which was impossible during its own Hindu rulers who were warring among themselves or during the time of Muslim hegemony which did not provide any challenge that could rouse the Hindu from their insensibilities. It was the social and religious criticism of the Christian missionaries, and the Western ideas and ideals that roused the people from their slumber and lethargy and stirred them up to think and thus helped to end their immobility".<sup>16</sup>

### 3. The Christian Presence in Bengal

#### a) *The Merchants and Conquerors:*

The first European navigator, who discovered a sea route to India was Vasco-da-Gama, from Portugal, who arrived the South Indian port of Calicut on 17th May 1498, an event which had "far reaching repercussions" in the history of the world.<sup>17</sup> One of the sailors is reported to have said that they have come in search of "Christians and spices".<sup>18</sup> "No nation came to India with a religious zeal more fervent than that of the Portuguese."<sup>19</sup> They established themselves in Bengal as a military power by virtue of firmans granted by the Muhammad Shah (1537), the Nawab of Bengal, and later by Akbar (1579). When the Portuguese started forced conversions, emperor Shah Jahan drew them out of their Hooghly fort and made at least 4000 Christian prisoners, including many Bengali Christians and Priests.<sup>20</sup> The Dutch started the Chinsura factory in 1653, Kassim Bazaar and Baranagore in 1658. The French, with the permission of the Nawab Shaista Khan, entered Bengal in 1674 and started the famous factory of Chandranagar in 1690-92. The Danes had never an important trade in Bengal, but their settlement at Serampore became famous for the refuge it gave to William Carey and other missionaries.

The first English establishment in Bengal was in Hooghly started in 1651, but the real beginning of British supremacy was their victory at the battle of Plassy hundred years later, in 1757, in which Robert Clive defeated Suraj-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Bengal, by bribing his treacherous General Mir Jafar. The British established themselves in Bengal and built their city of Calcutta which remained the capital of India till 1912, and the city became the centre of all cultural and intellectual activities for two centuries.<sup>21</sup>

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the European interest was primarily commercial, and they not only discouraged missionary activities, but even were hostile to them. The Portuguese were intolerant of non-Catholic missions. The Danes in Tranquebar, South India, even imprisoned the first Danish missionary Ziegenbalg<sup>22</sup>, though they were kind to the British missionaries at Serampore. The English company in South India was sympathetic to the German missionaries but hostile to the English missionaries in Bengal and North India. Because of their hostility Carey had to wander around many places incognito till the Danes allowed the missionaries to settle at Serampore for mission work. The attitude and lifestyle of the Europeans companies' officials created among the Indians only a contempt for their religion which they called Feringhi religion, that is, an outcaste religion of inferior quality.<sup>23</sup> The first European contact with India was not directly helpful to the Gospel but it provided an indirect opportunity by bringing the Indians into contact with another culture, and with the introduction of new economic and administrative measures, created a climate of self-evaluation, compromise and adjustment among the Indians.

#### *b. The Secular Orientalists:*

During the early stages of the British rule the Christian values and ideals disseminated in Indian life through a group of "acculturated" civil, military and judicial officials generally known as the orientalist. Sir William Jones, the celebrated founder of the Asiatic Society, M.T. Colebrook, the Sanskrit Scholar; John B. Gilchrist, the Urdu Scholar; H.H. Wilson, the historian, and William Carey the linguist and missionary were some of the prominent names among the early orientalist.<sup>24</sup> Other important names in this group were Nathaniel Halhead who wrote the first grammar book of the Bengali language (1778), and Charles Wilkins who established the first printing press in India which produced the Halhead's Grammar of Bengali as the first printed book of any Indian language. Charles Williams also has the credit of publishing the first English newspaper-*Hicky's Gazette* and the first English translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*

in 1783.<sup>25</sup> Of the later Orientalists MaxMuller was the foremost. While many contemporary English officials considered Bengalis barbarians of an "inferior race" and undervalued their culture, the Orientalists formed enduring relations with the Bengali intelligentsia and paved the way for cultural interaction.<sup>26</sup>

Two great contributions of the Orientalists came through the Asiatic society (1784) and the Fort William College (1800). The Asiatic society, which came to be known as the Asiatic society of Bengal since 1839, did not admit any Indians till 1829, however, it played a significant role in awakening Indians to their historical past and thus infusing in them self respect. About the contribution of William Jones, David Kopf writes:

What Jones actually accomplished and which would have important repercussions in later generations, was that by linking Sanskrit, the language of the ancient Hindus, to the European language family he related Hindu civilization to that of Europe and reanimated the resplendent Hindu past.<sup>27</sup>

By laying emphasis on rational knowledge the Asiatic society helped the growth among the Indians of an intelligent understanding of their national culture through scientific research.<sup>28</sup>

Even though the College of Fort William, Calcutta, founded by Lord Wellesly and which came to be known as Oxford of the East, was intended to train the British civil servants, it made significant contributions for cultural change through the concentrated research works of its professors like Colebrook, H.H. Wilson, Gilchrist and William Carey on Indian languages and history and through its Indian staff like Ramram Bose, Mrtyunjy Vidyalkar, Tarinicharan Mitra and others. It was Colebrook who first brought to the attention of the Bengali intelligentsia of monotheistic tradition of the Vedas which became the creed of later Brahma Samaj, founded by Raja Rammohan Roy. Colebrook discovered a golden age in the Vedas, socially egalitarian, woman respecting, and unidolatrour, and found the practices of sati and caste structures as later accretions. He compiled a *Sanscrit Dictionary*, translated *Two Treatises on the Hindu Law of Inheritance*, edited *Amarakosha*, and with the help of Carey, the *Hitopadesa*. Dr. Gilchrist, who was incharge of the Urdu department of the college was a friend of Carey and was interested in the Bible translation and other missionary efforts.<sup>29</sup> H.H. Wilson demythologized the Hindu past and its heroes like Sankara and Kalidasa, brought out the first systematic history of Hindu medicine and reconstructed the Hindu legal systems. He concentrated on medieval history and offered Hindus a form of "dynamic classicism far more palatable to them than the Vedic ideal transmitted by Jones and Colebrook, and he fused the newly born cultural

consciousness with regional pride".<sup>30</sup> He was the closest of any Europeans to the conservative *Dharma Sabha*, which defended sati and opposed the reform movement of Raja Rammohan Roy.

Ramram Bose, a Persianized Hindu who served as the Pandit of Carey at Fort William wrote the first piece of original prose in any modern Indian language — *Pratapaditya Charita* (1802). Though crude in literary style it has the credit of being the pioneer historical work in modern India. He was attracted to the Gospel and wrote several pamphlets in Bengali on Christ's message, besides helping Carey in translating the New Testament. His social and familial ties prevented him from accepting baptism and Carey was much sympathetic to his dilemma. However, he did much to bring Hinduism to consciousness of its monotheistic spirit.<sup>31</sup> Mrtyunjay Vidyalankar, the most scholarly person of the Indian staff of the Fort William College wrote four books in Bengali like *Batris Simhasana* (Thirty two thrones) and *Rajaboli*, and several tracts defending Hindu tradition against Rammohan's attacks. Tarinicharan Mitra the first western trained linguist in India wrote *Sakuntala* in Romanized Bengali, just as several other works of the period. These persons and several other Indians associated with the Fort William College like, Ram Camul Sen, and the low-caste Panchanan, both of whom worked in the Hindoosthane press, carried novel western ideals and values to their fellow-Indians in Calcutta.

The Orientalists were instrumental in opening the Hindu College (1816), the Calcutta School Society (1818), the School Book Society (1819) which played very significant roles in the Nineteenth century Bengal renaissance. The Hindu College proved to be the home of the radical ideas in Calcutta, led by its students known as the Young Bengal. The Fort William College, the home of the Orientalists, was closed down by William Bentick in 1831; and its library was transferred to the Asiatic Society and the Hindu College was linked with the Sanskrit College; these events symbolized the victory of Anglicists under Alexander Duff and Thomas Macaulay over the Orientalists.

The names of other Orientalists like David Hare, of the famous Hare's School of the School Society and Drink-water Bethune, the President of the Education Council cannot be forgotten in the educational history of Bengal. "Hare had been the friend of the boys as Bethune was the friend of the girls," Sibnath Sastri wrote.<sup>32</sup> Both Hare's and Bethune's schools were free from any religious indoctrination. Bethune was very much assisted by Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, who championed the cause of female education in Bengal.

All the Orientalists were not professed Christians, some like Hare even kept themselves away from missionaries. Orientalists' interest in India was cultural and the Indians appreciated their concerns.

Through them Christian values like sense of history, freedom, spirit of knowledge and education of male and female entered into Bengal's cultural life and stayed there. These cultural discussions have not had the cultural backlash from Hindu conservatives as the direct missionary work had. The Orientalists had the full backing of the Bengali intelligentsia.

*c) The Missionaries:*

The Jesuit Fathers Antonio Vaz and Pedro Dias, the first Portuguese missionaries, came to Bengal in 1576<sup>33</sup> and built a church at Hoogli. They were followed by more missionaries and they started schools and hospitals. The kings of Chandecan, and Arakan invited the missionaries to their kingdoms and they established churches at Chittagong, Sripur, Bakla, Sandwip and Chandecan. Raja Pratapaditya and king Kedar Ray were very helpful to the missionaries. In 1599 five Augustinians came to Hooghly and built a convent. At Bandel they built a church, which became a famous pilgrim centre for both Christians and non-Christians.<sup>34</sup> The rivalry between different religious orders and that of the Pope and the king of Portugal led to the decline of Catholic missions in the 16th century but they gained a large number of Christian followers of the converts and Portuguese-Indian mixed population, called Luso-Indians, or Eurasians. The early Catholic missionary activity in Bengal was free from political and military pressures.<sup>35</sup> In 1663 a young prince of Busna accepted Christian faith and took the Portuguese name Antonio D' Rozario and made many converts in Nagori, near Dacca. The Portuguese contributed to the Indian culture many new words, western medieval knowledge, advanced methods of agriculture and stock raising, many new vegetables and fruits; and thus provided a world market for Indian products.<sup>36</sup> The Portuguese language continued to be the lingua franca of Bengal till the middle of the eighteenth century.

The Dutch and the French had no lasting influence on India and they limited themselves to commerce. However, the French influenced Bengal's intellectual development through their revolutionary ideologies of equality, fraternity and freedom. Many of the English restrictions on Indian press in later years were to check the spirit of the French revolution infiltrating India.<sup>37</sup> The Danish settlement at Serampore became the centre of missionary activity of William Carey and other English missionaries, when the East India Company was hostile to any missionary work in their areas of control. The name of Colonel Bie, the Danish Governor of Serampore will be remembered in the mission history of Bengal for his farsightedness and firmness in supporting the missionaries.

The first protestant missionary to Bengal was John Zachariah Kiernander, a Swedish national, who came to Calcutta in 1758 from the Danish mission field of Tranquebar, South India. He opened an orphanage and a school for the poor children with Portuguese as the medium of instruction. He founded the Old Mission Church in 1767. When William Carey visited him in 1794, he was a man of 83 years, residing at Chinsurah still with missionary vigour. It was due to some financial troubles he left Calcutta leaving the church and school to one Mr. David Brown.<sup>38</sup> David Brown later moved to Serampore where he purchased an abandoned temple and converted it into a church, which came to be known as "Brown's pagoda" and later as "Martyn's pagoda" when Henry Martyn, missionary to the Muslims, started living with Brown. The Anglicans, Brown and Martyn, and the Baptist Serampore missionaries closely co-operated with one another.<sup>39</sup>

Moravian Brethren also worked in Bengal between 1777 and 1792. During this short period, they learned Bengali and even prepared a Bengali dictionary. One Brento de Silvester who was associated with Kiernander wrote a catechism and a book of common prayer in Bengali.

The real missionary work however began with the coming of William Carey on 11th November 1793 and his associates, Joshua Marshman and William Ward after six years. They started the Serampore mission on 1st May 1800 as a Moravian model community.<sup>40</sup> Ward in England was the editor of radical journals like *Derby Mercury* and the *Hull Advertiser* which supported the French revolution. Carey himself, while in England, worked as a "journey man shoemaker", teacher, a Dissenting minister, and belonged to a group of radicals that agitated against slavery, war and exploitation of the colonies by England.<sup>41</sup>

The mission work at Serampore started by printing the New Testament in Bengali in the press brought by Carey from Mudnabatty.<sup>42</sup> They also started two boarding schools, for European boys and girls, under the charge of Marshman who became famous as an educationist in Bengal.<sup>43</sup>

When the missionaries baptized their first convert Krishnu Pall in December 1800, the local students deserted the school. Even though the conversions continued the missionaries were careful not to hurt the local Hindu feelings; they allowed the Brahmin converts to continue wearing their sacred thread *Poita*, and did not change the converts' names: they did not, however, allow any caste discrimination within the church, unlike that of Robert De Nobili, the Catholic missionary who worked in Madurai, South India, two centuries earlier. "The Brahmins received bread and wine after the carpenter

Krishnu".<sup>44</sup> After six years of ardent work at Serampore the missionaries adopted a document on missionary principles which said:

The missionary should be fully acquainted with the current thought which prevailed among them (the Hindus), with their habits, their propensities, their antipathies, and the mode in which they reasoned about God, Sin, holiness, the way of salvation and a future state. It is necessary to abstain from whatever would tend to increase the repugnance of the natives to the Gospel, to keep out of sight those English peculiarities which were offensive to their feelings, and at the same time to avoid any attack on their prejudices by exhibiting any degree of acrimony against the sins of their Gods and on no account to do violence to their images, or to interrupt their worship — the real conquests of the gospel being that of love. We ought also to remember that they have no common sacrifices to make in renouncing their connections, their homes, their former situations, and means of support, and that it will be difficult for them to procure employment with heathen masters.<sup>45</sup>

During the first six wandering years of Carey he mastered Bengali language very well and became quite acquainted with the popular culture. His *'Kathopakathanam'* (Dialogues) was described as a social document depicting the village life of Bengal in the eighteenth century. It was the first book by a European that did not concern itself with Hindu high culture. By this work alone, Kopf writes, Carey could be called "India's first cultural anthropologist".<sup>46</sup> Carey was the only Orientalist at Fort William college who advocated a "vernacular position on cultural revitalization. He mastered Sanskrit and other Indian languages and published the first systematic *Sanskrit Grammar (1806)* which served as a model for later philologists. Carey fought a long desperate battle with the Government to give Sanskrit and Bengali equal status with Persian and Urdu which were the official languages at that time.<sup>47</sup> He translated Bible portions into Sanskrit and several Indian languages, but between them he preferred the irregular and neglected local languages. "*The Dig Darshan*, started by Marshman in 1818 was the first Bengali journal aimed at the dissemination of knowledge, history and science among the college students. It was followed by the pioneer of modern commercial newspaper in any Indian languages, *Samachar Darpan*, which became a bilingual—English and Bengali—in 1829; it gave good coverage to the liberal progressive ideas of the Young Bengal Movement.<sup>50</sup>

Carey was accepted as a member of the distinguished Asiatic society in 1806; he continued in that position till his death on 9th June,

1834. On his death the society passed a resolution, which reflected his many contributions to Bengal's life and culture. It said:

The Asiatic society cannot note on their proceedings the death of Dr. Carey, so long an active member and ornament of his institution, distinguished alike for his high attainments in the original languages, for his eminent services in opening the stores of Indian literature to the knowledge of Europe and for his extensive acquaintance with the science, the natural history and botany of this country and his useful contributions, in every branch, towards the promotion of the object of the society, without placing on record this expression of their high sense of his value and merits as a scholar and a man of science, their esteem for the sterling and surpassing religious and moral excellencies of his character, and their sincere grief for his irreparable.<sup>51</sup>

With the arrival of Alexander Duff, The Scottish Presbyterian missionary, in 1830, a new era of Christian missions started in Bengal. His missionary methods were quite opposite to that of Serampore missionaries. Duff was Thomas Macaulay's religious counterpart. It was Macaulay, the "master of superlatives," contemptuously remarked that a "single shelf of good European library is worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." He knew India and Indians very little and contemplated a cultural conquest of India through English education. Alexander Duff also found no worth in Oriental languages, though not an "enemy" of the native languages, as generally pictured. His book, *India and Indian Missions*, ranked with Macaulay's *Minute* in its attack on Indian religions, philosophy and culture, and at times, "exceeded all sense of proportion and decency."<sup>52</sup> Duff was an ultra-Anglicist while Carey was an Orientalist or vernacularist. Duff promoted evangelization by emphasizing the difference between East and West, while Carey emphasized reconciliation of apparent differences. Duff arrived when Rammohan's Brahma Samaj and Derozio's Young Bengal group were stirring Bengali conscience, morality and religion. Rammohan himself was present at the opening day of the school at Feringi Kamal Bose's house which was once the seat of Brahma Samaj, and presided over the functions, including Gospel distribution and prayer. Duff's educational services to Bengal through his schools which later became famous as the Scottish General Assembly's Institution and then as Scottish Church College, had the credit of educating such great people like Swami Vivekananda. Many of the Derozians like Krishna Mohan Banerji, Mohesh Chander Ghosh, Gopinath Nandi, Pyari Mohan Rudra and Lal Behari Day were attracted to Duff's learning, personality and religion.<sup>53</sup> Duff's paper the *Calcutta Christian Observer* was highly polemical. Duff was inflexible and he left India

in desperation; Carey and other Serampore missionaries made India their home.

Duff and Macaulay influenced Government's educational policy in favour of the Anglicists and opened the way for English education, which was much acclaimed by a large section of the Hindu population who wanted to overthrow the dominance of Persian and Urdu, as well to capture the opportunities provided by the foreign rule. However, the conservative Hindus found it as a threat to the prevailing Hindu culture. Duff himself found that the introduction of English would break the backbone of caste and the overthrow of Brahmanical traditions.<sup>54</sup> It was Duff's students like Madhusudan Gupta who courageously dissected a corpse for the first time in India flouting all the Brahmanical injunctions. The power of his personality and enthusiasm for education imparted a peculiar strength to his movement which paradoxically gave a forceful direction to Bengal's search for a compromise with tradition.<sup>55</sup> In the words of N.S. Bose, "with all his missionary bias and lack of sympathy and understanding of India's religion and culture Duff's contribution to the Bengal Renaissance must not be lost sight of. As an educationist he will always be remembered. The part that he played in the foundation of Universities in India, the College that he founded in Calcutta, the knowledge of scientific, historical, literary and other subjects that he imparted to his students, and the keen interest he took in social reforms earned for him an esteemed place in the pages of history".<sup>56</sup>

#### d) *The Indian Christians:*

The Nineteenth century produced many great Indian Christians who affected the cultural life of Bengal like Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Madhusudan Datta, Krishna Mohan Banerji, Ramtanu Lahiri, Lal Behari Day and Brahmabandhav Upadhyay; and many of the Young Bengal group like Mohesh Chandra Ghosh, Jnanendra Mohan Tagore, the only son of Prasanna Kumar Tagore and Kristodas Pal, the author of *Young Bengal Vindicated* were also Christians.

Derozio who died at the young age of twenty-two on December 26, 1831, had become a legendary figure. R.C. Majumdar has opined that Derozio "has a just claim to share" the honour of the "creator of Modern Bengal" along with Rammohan Roy.<sup>57</sup> He was an excellent teacher of rare type, a poet and a philosopher. He had little regard for faith and tradition, hardly a Christian in the traditional sense, but the source of his radicalism was undoubtedly his Eurasian Catholic background. His disciples known as the Young Bengal, created alarm in the Hindu community, by refusing to chant *Mantras*

and worship idols, "cutting their way through ham and beef and wading to liberalism through tumbler's of beer."<sup>58</sup> Conservative Hindu newspapers like *Sambad Prabhakar* and *Samachar Chandrika* raised great hue and cry about religion in danger and Derozio was forced to resign in 1831 from the Hindu College where he taught for five years. Derozio, however, continued to be active in publishing a daily, the *East Indian*, serving as assistant editor to the ultra radical, *India Gazatte*, editor of the *Hesperus*, *Calcutta Literary Gazatte* and a regular contributor to *Calcutta Magazine*, *Indian Magazine*, *Bengal Annual* and *Kaleidoscope*. Derozio's disciples continued this literary tradition: K.M. Banerji published the *Enquirer*, Rasik Krishna Mallik the bilingual journal, *Jnanavesham*, Tarachand Chakraborty the politically critical paper, *The Quill*.<sup>59</sup> Derozio's poem like the *Fakeer of Jhungeera* were intensely patriotic. R.C. Majumdar writes: "Patriotic sentiments based on the past glories of India, such as we find in the poems of Derozio and his pupils like Kashi Prasad Ghosh are not to be found in the whole range of Indian literature before Derozio."<sup>60</sup>

Krishna Mohan Banerji, (1813-1885) son of Kulin parents was expelled from his home on account of his friends' — Derozians — polluting a Brahmin neighbour's house by throwing beef. He accepted Christianity in 1832 under Alexander Duff's influence and later became a Professor of Bishop's College between 1852 and 1867. A scholar in Hindu philosophy and Sanskrit literature, he authored many books like *Dialogue on Hindu Philosophy* (1857), *The Relation Between Christianity and Hinduism* (1881), *The Aryan Witness* (1875), *Two Essays as supplements to the Aryan Witness* (1880), Thirteen volumes of *Encyclopaedia Bengalenesis* or *Vidyakalpadruma* (1846-51) and a play, *The Persecuted* which exposed the "practical heterodoxy of the orthodoxy." If Krishna Mohan's earlier works were apologies of Christian religion, writings after 1865 were concerned with establishing a positive relationship with between Vedic religion and Christianity. His *Aryan Witness*, particularly, was an effort to show that Christianity is not a foreign religion, but the fulfilment of the Vedas, the logical conclusion of original Hinduism. Krishna Mohan Banerji, India's first dialogue theologian was also the first one to introduce the fulfilment theory to the Christian theology of religions, though it was wrongly attributed to T.E. Slater and J.N. Farquhar who later entered the field.<sup>61</sup> Krishna Mohan also interpreted Jesus Christ as the *Prajapati*, the Lord and Creator who sacrificed himself for his creation. He wrote: "Christ is the true *Prajapati* — the true Purusha begotten in the beginning before all worlds, and Himself both God and Man"<sup>62</sup> In other words, no person can be a true Hindu without being a true Christian.

Banerji was the first President of the Bengal Christian Association, organized in the seventies to develop autonomy of the Church from the Western missions. He was also the first President of the Indian Association, a political body founded in 1876, which became the fore-runner of the Indian National Congress, founded nine years later.<sup>63</sup> He was very much an essential part of Calcutta's cultural life and was involved in organizing the Calcutta University in 1857 and served as a member of its Senate. The University honoured him by conferring a Doctorate degree in 1876.

(To be continued)

### References:

1. R.C. Majumdar, H.C. Raychaudhuri and Kalinkar Datta, *An Advanced History of India* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., Third edition, 1967), p. 806ff. S. Natarajan, *A Century of Social Reform in India* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1959), p. 5f.
2. Pierre Fallon, "Christianity in Bengal," in *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance* edited by Atulchandra Gupta (1958), revised and enlarged by Jagannath Chakavorty, (Jadavpur, Calcutta: National Council of Education, Bengal 1977), p. 448.
3. R.C. Majumdar *et.al.*, *Advanced History, op.cit.*, p. 271-72. Different dates have been given for the conquest of Bengal by the Muslims. It could be either A.D. 1193 or 1202-1203 when Lakshmana Sena, the King of Nadia, fled to Eastern Bengal.
4. Kazi Abdul Wadud, "The Mussalmans of Bengal" in the *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance op.cit.*, pp. 460-462.
5. R.C. Majumdar, *Renasant India: First Phase*, (Calcutta: G. Bharadwaj and Co., 1976), p. 87.
6. Kazi Abdul Wadud, "The Mussalmans of Bengal" *op.cit.*
7. R.C. Majumdar, *Renasant India: First Phase, op.cit.*, p. 87.
8. Nemai Sadhan Bose, *The Indian Awakening and Bengal*, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay 1969), p. 114.
9. R.C. Majumdar, *Renasant India: First Phase, op.cit.*, p. 16; 20.
10. N.S. Bose, *The Indian Awakening, op.cit.*, p. 114. Three types of schools were there: *Tols* for Brahmins where Sanskrit was taught, *Pathshalas* for other high castes, where elementary mathematics was taught and *Mukhtabs* where Persian and Arabic were taught. These schools were notorious for their crude forms of punishment see. Sivnath Sastri, *A History of the Renaissance in Bengal — Ramtanu Lahiri: Brahman and Reformer*, translated and edited by Sir Roper Lethbridge (Calcutta: Editors Indian, Reprint, 1972), pp. 22-24.
11. *Kulinism* is a system of marriage introduced by Ballala Sena in the 12th century. In this system Brahmins of noble births, *Kulins*, married even very young girls, irrespective of their age or number of wives they have. Sometimes very old Brahmins married young girls of 11 or 12 sometimes 20 or 30 girls together. This system was not intended to create family but to remove the maidenhood of poor Brahmin girls, who cannot find suitable bridegrooms of noble birth and to preserve the family prestige. See Pradeep Sinha, *Nineteenth Century Bengali: Aspects of Social History* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), p. 7; R.C. Majumdar, *et.al.*, *Advance History*, p. 180. About the status of women in Indian society, K.M. Panikkar writes, "The daughter was legislated out of existence, the wife became part of the husband's family and the widow

- was presumed to have died." *Hindu Society at Cross Roads* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1955), p. 36.
12. K.M. Panikkar, *Hindu Society*, op.cit., p. 29.
  13. S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1933), p. 137.
  14. R.C. Majumdar, *Renascent India* op.cit., p. 24.
  15. L.S.S. O'Malley, (ed.), *Modern India and the West: A Study of the Interaction of their Civilization*. (London: Oxford University Press (1941), 1968), p. 1f.
  16. N.S. Bose, *The Indian Awakening*, op.cit., p. 10.
  17. R.C. Majumdar et.al., *Advanced History*, op.cit., p. 623.
  18. O' Malley, ed., *Modern India*, op.cit., p. 65.
  19. J.J.A. Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, Intro. by B.P. Ambashthya, (Patna: Janaki Prakashan (1919),1979), p. 100f.
  20. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.
  21. For European presence in Bengal see R.C. Majumdar et.al. *Advanced History* op.cit., pp. 623-636. It is generally agreed that Calcutta was founded by Job Charnock in 1690 on the three small villages in Hoogli-Govindpur, Kalkata and Sutanati: cf, P. Thankappan Nair, *Calcutta in the 17th Century, A Tercentenary History of Calcutta*, vol. 1. (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Ltd; 1986) Nair writes: "we find no less than a reference to Calcutta in the company's records, prior to its foundation by Charnock on August 24, 1690. The existence of the village before its occupation by the English and its geographical entity are now clear" (p. 25). The Agents of the East India Company paid Rs. 1500/- to Zamindars for the purchase of the three villages. Pradip Sinha, *Calcutta in Urban History*, (Calcutta: Firma KLM Pvt.Ltd., 1978), p. 1.
  22. Cyril Bruce Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (Madras: C.L.S., revised edn. 1976), p. 144.
  23. Parangi is an Indian version of the Persian Feringhee referred to the French, and the Portuguese. The Parangis were considered polluting like the outcastes. The Indians judged one's caste by observing one's habits related to food, bathing and association with low castes and so on; they easily judged that the beef eating and liquor drinking Europeans belonged to an inferior caste and their religion polluting. Cf. Vincent A. Cronin, *A Pearl to India: The Life of Robert de Nobili* (London: Rupert Hart, 1959).
  24. David Kopf, who did a detailed study of Orientals include Carey as an Orientalist because of his love for Indian languages, development of education, science, agriculture and horticulture. *David Kopf, British Orientalism and the Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization 1778-1835* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1969), pp. 4-5.
  25. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
  26. R.C. Majumdar, *Renascent India*, op.cit., pp. 12-13.
  27. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
  28. N.S. Bose, *Indian Awakening*, op.cit., p. 17.
  29. John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward*, vol. 1. (London: Longman, Brown et.al., 1859), p. 191.
  30. D. Koph, *British Orientalism*, op.cit., p. 177.
  31. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
  32. Sivnath Sastri, *A History of the Renaissance*, op.cit., p. 86.
  33. Another date - 1579- is also given. cf. JJA Campos, *History of the Portuguese*, op.cit., p. 100.
  34. P. Fallon, "Christianity in Bengal," op.cit., p. 450.
  35. *Ibid.*, pp. 449-50.
  36. Jadunath Sarkar, *India through the Ages*, (Calcutta: Sangam Books (Orient Longman), (1928), 1979), p. 65. Campos lists more than 150 Bengali words which have a Portuguese origin. The first three printed books in the Bengali

- language, but in Roman characters, were printed by the Portuguese in Lisbon in 1743. Campos, *History of the Portuguese, op.cit.*, pp. 204-205; 214-220. Also see H.V. Sreenivasa Murthy and S.U. Kanath, *Studies in Indian Culture* (Bombay *et.al.*, Asia Publishing House, 1973), p. 103. They list papaya, pineapple, cashew nut, tomato, potato as Portuguese introduction in India.
37. David Kopf, *British Orientalism, op.cit.*, pp. 45-46, 129; George Howells, *The Story of Serampore and its College* (Serampore: Serampore College, 1927), p. 2.
  38. For Carey's visit to Kiernander see Marshman, *Life and Times of Carey*, vol. I, *op.cit.*, p. 24.
  39. *Ibid.*, p. 247.
  40. Four missionaries Marshman, Ward, Grant and Brunsdon came from England to join Carey who was at Madnabetty. Because of the opposition of the English company officials who wanted to deport them back to England they secretly arrived at the Danish settlement at Serampore and took Colonel Bie's protection on 13th October 1799. Ward, managed to reach Carey at Madnabatty, 60 miles north of Serampore, and discussed with him the offer of the Danish Governor to help the missionary work. Carey, who fearing the British expulsion had not been engaging in direct missionary work, but was working as an indigo planter and school teacher, changing stations from Calcutta to Bandel, Nadea, Delhatta, Sunderbans and finally to Madnabatty. Hearing the offer of Colonel Bie, he decided to join his friends at Serampore. Dr. John Thomas who actually brought Carey from England and Mr. Fountain who was working with Carey at Mudnabatty also joined them. Mr. Grant, one of the new missionaries died with in a fortnight and Mr. Brunsdon died after one year. Mr. Fountain who became the first librarian of Serampore also died soon and his widow married Mr. Ward. Carey also had to bear the death of one of his six children and then his first wife Catherine (1807) and the second wife Charlotte (1821).
  41. S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, (1923), 1925), pp. 209f.
  42. J.C. Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey*, vol. I. *op.cit.*, p. 209f.
  43. Joshua Marshman's tract of 1816 entitled "Hints Relative to Native Schools..." which advocated a "vernacular education," served as a manual for the Calcutta Schools society. Marshman *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 119f.
  44. *Ibid.*, vol. I. p. 186.
  45. *Ibid.*, pp. 227-228.
  46. David Kopf, *British Orientalism, op.cit.*, p. 93.
  47. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
  48. Nil.
  49. Nil.
  50. Tarasankar Banerjee, *Various Bengal: Aspects of Modern History* (Calcutta: Ratna Prakashan, 1985), p. 101. Marshman also published an English newspaper *Friend of India* (1818) which was later incorporated into Calcutta based daily, *The Statesman*.
  51. J.C. Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey*, vol. II, *op.cit.*, p. 481.
  52. N.S. Bose, *The Indian Awakening and Bengal, op.cit.*, pp. 126; 99-100. Duff wrote: Of all the systems of false religion ever fabricated by the perverse ingenuity of fallen men, Hinduism is surely the most stupenduous — whether we consider the boundless extent of its range, or the boundless multiplicity of its component parts. Of all systems of false religion it is that which seems to embody the largest amount and variety of semblances and counterfeits of divinely revealed facts and doctrines." *Ibid.*, p. 126.
  53. Cf. Rajaiah D. Paul, *They Kept the Faith: Biographies of Gopeenath Nundi, Pyari Mohan Rudra and Lal Behari Day* (Lucknow: LPH, 1968). Also, Lal Behari Day, *Recollections of Alexander Duff*, (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1879), p. 47.

54. George Smith, *The Life of Alexander Duff*, vol. I (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1879), pp. 211f.
55. P. Sinha, *Nineteenth Century Bengal*, p. 100.
56. N.S. Bose, *Indian Awakening*, p. 127, Majumdar, *Renascent India*, p. 30.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 251.
58. Elliot Walter Madge, *Henry Derozio: The Eurasian Poet and Reformer* New edition (Calcutta: Metropolitan Book Agency, 1967), p. 41.
59. Susobhan Sarkar, *On the Bengal Renaissance* (Calcutta: Papyrus, 1979, 1985), p. 106.
60. R.C. Majumdar, *Renascent India*, p. 87.
61. K.P. Aleaz, *Dialogue in India* (Calcutta: Bishop's College, 1991), p. ix. Kalyan Kumar Das Gupta, "Trends in Literature," in *Renascent Bengal (1817-1857)* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1972), p. 30.
62. Quoted by M.M. Thomas, *Towards an Indian Christian Theology: Life and Thought of some Pioneers* (co-author, P.T. Thomas) Tiruvalla: The New Day Publications of India, 1999), p. 26.
63. N.S. Bose, *Indian Awakening*, p. 228.