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Politics of Fictionalizing History: A Study of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Anandamath*

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Abstract: *Anandamath* is a characteristic example of the way that Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote for social purposes. This historical (but anachronistic) novel constructs a narrative to project the masculine and violent aspects of Vaishnavism in the form of nationalism. It juxtaposes a gratifying literary discourse with the academic history of the then Bengal which does not have much to boast of. Vaishnav nationalism in the novel does not correspond exactly to Indian or Bengali nationalism documented in the mainstream history of Bengal, as the novelist "frames the events within an overarching agenda of Hindu nationhood: an idea that would not have existed even in prototype in the late 18th century" (Sarkar 3960). The article attempts to show how history is fictionalized to serve socio-political interests.

Bankim as a magistrate is like Prometheus and he shows an ambivalent attitude towards the British (Das 56). He does not castigate them in the novel due to his professional constraints. On the other hand, he appears to be a virulent critic of the Muslims. His criticism against the Muslims is a clever maneuver to facilitate the presentation of his Hindu nationalist agenda in the novel. The actual message of the novel is not made explicit in the story; it is deeply rooted in the socio-political contexts that influenced the writer and his work in one way or another.

Keywords: traditional approach, sanyasis, children, muslims.

Art was not only for art's sake for Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, who advised his younger contemporaries that they should write only if they were sure of "their power and intention to create beautiful things, or do some good to mankind" (Das x). He adopted "almost a Utilitarian view of Literature" (Haldar 116) and *Anandamath*, one of the most controversial novels of Bankim, is the epitome of his commitment to social dynamism. The novel is "no ordinary novel;

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it is a novel with a purpose" (Bose 76). It emphasizes the didactic message of "the deliverance of the Motherland" (76).

Anandamath has received a lot of criticism on multiple fronts. Many people view it as an anti-Muslim novel; many others criticize it as a political novel which promotes colonialism; several critics call it an artistic failure. Some critics were quick to notice and "point out how the Santans[1] in *Anandamath* were modelled more on Protestant monks than Hindu sanyasis even though they wear the gerua" (Sen 67). In the opinion of Das, the novel "has got all the defects of Bankim's art- his tendency to pontificate, his theatricality, his crude burlesque, his mock-heroism, his dull and predictable rhetoric, and his frequent intervention of *dues ex machina*" (148). On the other hand, a number of scholars find *Anandamath* allegorical and highly patriotic in spirit; they view it as "Chatterjee's way to symbolize the need for continuing the struggle against British imperialism in the mid-nineteenth century" (Lochtefeld 35). For Tagore, "Bankim Chandra's *Sanyasis* are fabulous men, rather like characters in *the Mahabharata* — where God Krishna appears as a character among Princes, Princesses, sages, heroes, noblemen, evil courtiers, soldiers!" (Chatterjee *Anandamath*, Trans. Roy 15).

This article critiques *Anandamath* in the light of its social, political and historical contexts. It rests on the premise that every piece of art is influenced by socio-cultural forces or 'race, milieu, moment'[2] (Hippolyte A. Taine), and it studies some extrinsic factors that influenced *Anandamath*, the novel which "brought about an upheaval" (Bose 1-2), to explore how the historical context of the novel is a product of particular social conditions and political motives.

[1] It refers to 'the Children' in the native language.

[2] "**race, milieu, and moment,** according to the French critic Hippolyte Taine, are the three principal motives or conditioning factors behind any work of art. By 'race' he meant the inherited disposition or temperament that persists stubbornly over thousands of years. By 'milieu' he meant the circumstances or environment that modify the inherited racial disposition. By 'moment' Taine meant the momentum of past and present cultural traditions." *(Encyclopædia Britannica)*

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Anandamath (1882) is based on the Sanyasi 'rebellion'[3] against Mir Jafar, the ruler of Bengal, and the British tax collectors. On the literary canvas, it is the portrayal of the 'historical' conflict between the Children of Mother Earth and the Muslim ruler of Bengal, who rules but does not govern, in league with the British. The terrible famine that occurred in Bengal in 1770 and its aftermath provides a socio-economic backdrop to the confrontation: "The low-caste and those who lived in the forests started to eat dogs, mice, and cats" (Chatterjee *Anandamath*, Trans. Lipner[4] 132). Those who ran away to unknown parts died of starvation there and those who did not flee "died of disease, either because they ate the uneatable, or for want of eating at all" (132). The novelist paints the cruelty of 'the haves' during the crisis in the following words:

> The people suffered, but the king extracted taxes to the full. And because they had to pay their taxes in full, the poor ate but once a day…Once again people went hungry…Then Muhammad Reza Khan, the king's revenue officer, thinking to show how important he was, at once increased taxes by 10 percent, and great was the lament in Bengal. (131-2)

The famine is estimated to have caused the deaths of 10 million people (one out of three, reducing the population to thirty million in the then Bengal[5]). The natural catastrophe did not soften the Company to lower its revenue demand. The Company's administration is known to have collected nearly as much revenue in the following year (1771-72) as it did during the year preceding the famine (Sen 6).

Pradip Bhattacharya says that the painstaking research[6] of Kishanchand Bhakat, an assistant teacher in the district of Murshidabad, seems to have proved that Bankim came up with the idea of *Anandamath* during his stay with Rao Jogindranarain in Lalgola after the Duffin

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[3] This historical incident is popularly known as a rebellion. However, some people view it quite differently.

[4] For the present study, I have chosen the Oxford edition of *Anandamath*, translated by Julius J. Lipner. All subsequent references to this source will be given in the text with the author's surname and page number.

[5] The territory of the then-Bengal included modern West Bengal, Bangladesh and parts of Assam, Odissa, Bihar and Jharkhand.

[6] spanning over two decades

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controversy[7]. Bhakat asserts that Bankim most probably took the first few lines of "Vande Mataram" from a book kept by the family of Kali Brahma Bhattacharya, who was the Guru of the Raja's family in Lalgola and who provided inspiration for the portrayal of Satyananda. Besides, the Children's cult of Vaishnavism in the novel drew its inspiration from Lord Vishnu, the dynastic deity of the Lalgola Raja family, and the images of goddesses were inspired by the temples in Lalgola. According to Bhakat, most of the characters in the novel were moulded from real people:

> Dhirananda is based on the court poet and priest of Lalgola, Trailokyanath Smritibhushan; that Bhabananda is based on the character of Raja Jogindranarain Roy (himself a tantric Sadhak), who stood by Bankim and helped him get away from the wrath of the British militia; that Jibananda reflects much of Bankim himself. (Bhattacharya)

Chittaranjan Bandopadhay in his edition of *Ananda Matha* (Calcutta, 1983) suggests that the novel was inspired by the life of Vasudev Balwant Phadke,[8] whose case "created a sensation all over the country" (Das 144) and whom R. C. Majumdar calls "the father of Indian militant nationalism" (Bose 76). Phadke, a fearless Hindu, was against the British. In 1879, he formed an army of tribal people in a forest and gathered arms by the unfair means of plunder to loot the Kheda Treasury "as a first step towards overthrowing the foreign rule" (Sarkar 3961). "His diaries were translated into Bengali by Dakshinacharan Chattopadhyaya in *Amritbazar Patrika* in 1879. Bankim started writing *Anandamath* very shortly after that" (3961).

Bankim has admittedly borrowed material for *Anandamath* from Hunter's *The Annals of Rural Bengal* (1868). However, it is pertinent to mention here that the novel is not completely faithful to history. E.g., the Sanyasis, unlike their portrayal in the novel, were not Bengali and

[7] Almost immediately after the Duffin controversy, Bankim took leave for three months. Pradip Bhattacharya says that after the incident, there must have been a considerable resentment among the British militia in the Berhampore Cantonment. Due to a reasonable apprehension of bodily harm, Rao Jogindranarain Roy took Bankim away to stay with him in Lalgola.

[8] Mentioned in (Haldar 92), (Gupta 27) and (Sarkar 3961).

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they were not moved by the spirit of nationalism. It is also notable that Mir Jafar who had, in fact, died in 1765[9] is presented as the Nawab of Bengal during the famine of the 1770s. According to the novel, besides, the British rule had limited political powers at that time; the British were only tax collectors under the rule of the Muslim Nawab, Mir Jafar. The narrator says,

> In 1770 Bengal had not yet fallen under British sway. The British at the time were Bengal's tax collectors. All they did was collect the revenue; they took no responsibility for life and property of Bengalis. Their task was to collect the money, while the responsibility for life and property belonged to the evil Mir Jafar, a vile, treacherous blot on the human race. (Chatterjee 140)

The 'history' within the novel presents (rather constructs) a period of independent Nawabs of Bengal, free from any direct interference from the British in the socio-political affairs of the province. The portrayal of the British being politically inactive in the 1770s does not fit in the frame of the academic history of Bengal. "From 1765, in fact, the East India Company was effectively in control of Bengal, being the power that appointed the Nawab and his ministers, a fact that Bankim with his strong historical sense must have known" (Lipner 60). The British were granted the right to collect tax in Bihar, Orissa and Oudh in addition to Bengal by 1772. Sengupta says, "The granting of the dewani to the company was to become the legal foundation for British rule in Bengal" (185). Thus, the British were not only tax collectors but also a strong and fast-spreading foreign power in the Indian subcontinent.

The battles Bankim has mentioned in the first four editions were not fought in the old kingdom of Birbhum. The novelist admits as much: "The battles described in the novel didn't

[9] The Commander-in-Chief of his army, Mir Jafar, betrayed Siraj-ud-daula in the battle of Plassey in 1757. With the support of the Company, Mir Jafar proclaimed himself the Nawab of Bengal. Siraj-ud-daula was captured and put to death. When Jafar failed to satisfy heavy demands for money from the Company, he had to give the place to his son-in-law, Mir Kasim, who was a nominee of the Company, in 1760. Jafar preferred to reside at Calcutta on a pension of Rs. 1,500 p.m. grudgingly sanctioned by the new Nawab, Kasim. And when Kasim and the English did not gel with each other, Kasim was defeated in the battle of Buxor (1764). Later, Clive, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the British possessions in Bengal, came forward with the dual system whereby the Company acquired real power while the responsibility for administration rested on the shoulders of the Nawab of Bengal. (Grover 51 & 65)

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take place in the Birbhum region; they took place in northern Bengal…I don't consider this to be a fatal discrepancy, for a novel is a novel, and not history[10]" (qtd. in Lipner 36). Indeed, the novel was not meant to be a docufiction, a factual account dressed up in the garb of a novel (59). The novel, in fact, is critically acclaimed for the creative reflection of the prevailing mood in the province during the famine[11]. The ambience in the novel is inventively suffused with national sentiment. Rabindranath Tagore remarks in his conversation with Mulk Raj Anand, "This novel is a legend of the struggle for freedom, and the passion behind it seems to reflect Bankim's vision of free India" (Chatterjee *Anandamath,* Trans. Roy 15).

Critics and scholars hold widely differing views on the significance of the Sanyasi 'rebellion' in Indian history. Some of them refer to it as an early India 'war' of independence against the foreign rule since the right to collect tax had been given to the British East India Company after the Battle of Plassey in 1757. On the other hand, other scholars view it as 'the acts of militant banditry' following the famine of 1770. Bankim also delineates this confusion in the novel: at first glance, Mahendra takes the Sanyasis for robbers. He says, "But a bad job! Banditry no less!" (Chatterjee 143). Through this dialogue, the novelist presents a common opinion about the Sanyasis. Despite the fact that most of the historical accounts depict the ascetics as bandits in disguise, the novelist has given a new shape to this story of violence by portraying it in the colors of nationalism and Vaishnavism and artistically brushing away the basic materialistic motives of the real ascetics mentioned in the academic history[12]. He has

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[10] "Although the famine and the rebellion are historically recorded facts, Bankim didn't emphasize the historicity of the novel in the first edition. In the second edition (1884), by popular demand he added an introduction where he quoted from Gleig's *Memoirs of the Life of Warren Hastings* and W. W. Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal* to show what had actually happened in 1773, but he went on to add that he did not want to write a historical novel." (Mukherjee 903)

[11] R. M. Gay says, "Every age has had its own special spiritual atmosphere, which is the sum total of its attitudes towards the unknown, supernatural, divine, as well as towards nature and mankind in general; and unless a historical novel somehow conveys this it is not really a historical novel at all." (qtd. in Dickinson 16)

[12] "Prior to 1800, monks of the Shaiva and Vaishnava cults exercised political and economic influences as merchants, bankers, and most importantly soldiers. With the East India company consolidating its base in India with the same commercial and profit-making interests, a prolonged series of skirmishes resulted in Bengal and Bihar between 1760 and 1800, referred to as the 'Sanyasi and Fakir rebellion.'

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constructed a 'truth'/ 'post-truth' that oppose the mainstream history by replacing the historical Sanyasis with the nationalist *Santans*/Children, about whom there is no reference in the actual history of Bengal. The author has challenged the British version of Bengali history, as the British, according to him, exaggerated the facts of their bravery in official documents. The novelist writes:

> Captain Thomas instantly sent a report to Kolkata declaring that with a force of 157 sepoys he had overcome 14,700 rebels: 2,153 rebels had been killed, 1,233 wounded, and 7 taken prisoner (Only the last was true.). (190)

The novel problematizes history by questioning the western historiography and documentation, thereby posing a challenge to the reader to correlate nationalism in *Anandamath* with nationalism documented in the mainstream history of India. In the novel, the depiction of nationalism in the setting of the 1770s does not correspond to the 'outside-the-novel' discourse of nationalism, as the beginning of Indian nationalism is generally traced back to the outbreak of the First War of Independence/ Rebellion of 1857/ 1857 Sepoy Mutiny. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the novel indirectly states a reason for this factual inconsistency (190). And interestingly, the cinematic adaptation of the novel also touches upon the issue and offers the same explanation; it proclaims that the historic event upon which *Anandamath* is based, could not find its due place in the textual history of Indian independence because of the clever maneuver by the British, who called it a mere "infestation by bands of Senassies (Hastings)" (qtd. in Lipner 293). In the beginning of the movie, the 'rebellion' is referred to as 'the Sanyasi War'. Such an understanding of the event gives birth to a new debate: was this historical event a mere insignificant rebellion or the first historic war of independence against the British? Notably, the information gained from numerous historical accounts clearly contradicts some crucial

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The rebellion was not ideologically motivated by the perils of the nation. Bankim draws upon this historical event to legitimize his ascetic nationalist trope; however the nationalist rhetoric is entirely his invention. Further he is completely silent about the role of Muslim fakirs." (Chakraborty, End Note 15)

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details about the 'rebellion' in the novel and the hyperbolic statement given in the beginning of the movie. With regard to *Anandamath* and *Debi Chaudhurani*[13], historian Sengupta says:

> But the sanyasi rebels in actual history were far removed from the idealized picture of both *Debi Chaudhurani* and the Santans of *Anandamath*. They were from upper India while Debi Chaudhurani and the Santans were Bengalees. Also, they were generally devotees of Shiva while the latter were Vaishnavites. The principal motivation of the real sanyasi rebels was looting while the characters of Bankim were highly motivated patriots. Despite the halo of patriotism bestowed on the sanyasi and fakir rebels, the real sanyasis and fakirs, to quote Jadunath Sarkar, 'were plunderers though some of them were zamindars of Oudh. Freedom of the country, suppression of the wicked and protection of law-abiding people were ideals unknown to them and the attribution of these to them is only born of Bankim Chandra's imagination.' (222)

Thus, the nationalist sentiment which is vividly depicted in the novel, did not actually exist at all among the Sanyasis of the then Bengal. Despite the fact that Indian nationalism was a later phenomenon in reality, the novelist has purposefully constructed the idea of active nationalism during the famine of the 1770s. The novel cannot be easily situated in the Indian history of nationalism, as it does not simply represent but rather construct an alternative history of Indian nationalism. Chakraborty calls *Anandamath* "a foundational text for the understanding of Indian nationalism" and "a representative text"; he writes, "*Anandamath* is a good exemplar for showing how representation is constructed and authorized within specific socio-cultural contexts and patronages".

Anandamath carries postmodern overtones, as it deconstructs and de-historicizes history by fictionalizing the historical context; it problematizes and interrogates the traditionally assumed authority of the historical data. In other words, *Anandamath* falls under the category of those historical novels which are based on the premise that it is impossible to know exactly what

[13] Another novel of Bankim with the overtones of history.

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happened in the past, at least in an objective sense, and which move away from modernist truth. The novelists of such novels deliberately modify, invent and present altogether different versions of history. Robert Scholes calls such histories "fabulative histories that mix fact with fantasy in ways unique to this time (206). When fiction and fact are inextricably entwined, they form a better world of imagination which lays a foundation for future history. History takes its newer version over time because of its encounter with different socio-political groups. Nehru calls this kind of history "imagined history". He states:

> [T]his imagined history, mixture of fact and fiction, or sometimes only fiction, becomes symbolically true and tells us of the minds and hearts and purposes of the people of that particular epoch. It is true also in the sense that it becomes the basis for thought and action, for future history. (102)

Bankim's urge to create the "fabulative history" or "imagined history" in the form of a tale of valour and self-assertion in the historical setting of Bengal seems to lie in his concern about and regret over the lack of 'masculine' literature of Bengal/India and the effeminate representation of the Hindus by the British rulers. "It was assumed in England that most Indians lacked manliness[14] and courage and were innately effeminate. Kipling popularized this image of 'effeminacy,' especially of the Bengalis" (Bald 17). Bankim openly expresses his dislike for effeminacy and Bengali people's indifference to the display of courage and bravery. In "Popular Literature for Bengal," he disapproves of traditional Bengali literature for its alleged femininity and turns instead to the masculine virility of 'modern' European rationality (Chakraborty). He draws a direct link between the 'effeminate poetical' literature of Bengal and the existence of an 'effeminate and sensual race' (Chakraborty). At the same time, he views Westernization as one of the causes of the emasculation of the indigenous Hindu male:

[14] From the Indian standpoint, on the other hand, the British were unable to understand the "ideal form of courage" for the Hindus due to their cultural differences (Bald 16). "For the Hindu, the ideal form of courage was the ability to master one's self, to bear pain rather than inflict it; his battles were internal. It was difficult for those used to defining manliness in the context of the feudal chivalric life to appreciate the Hindu's version." (16)

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> In essays such as 'Bharat Kalanka' (India's Shame), 'Kamalakanta', and 'Babu,' his conceptualization of the degeneration of the body of the Hindu male becomes the symbol of the negative impact of colonial rule. He identifies the elite's obsession with studies as the cause of 'brain fever' and 'feeble developments of muscles' (Rosselli 124-5). He holds English education responsible for the widespread desire to mimic British manners and customs. He suggests that the material security that the British administration provided led to the elite's neglect of the physical culture of *akharas* and indigenous sports (Chakraborty).

It can be said that Bankim emphasizes the 'external'/chivalric form of courage in *Anandamath* to shatter (or, at least to counter) the effeminate representation of Bengali men by the British. Another rationale for the author's focus on physical courage and action can be found in the first issue of *Bangadarshan*, where Bankim holds the lack of unity and desire for freedom among the Hindus responsible for the ignominious position of the land. In his opinion, the enervating climate, along with the philosophical system encouraged inaction and valorized salvation here As Irfan Ahmed observes, "the weakness of Hinduism, as he (Chatterjee) saw it, was its quietism and perhaps its undue stress on the spirit" (29).

Roy says that the projection of the courageous Sanyasis on the canvas of fiction was a witting effort "to valorize the spiritual principle of the rising nationalist consciousness" and to construct a masculinist anti-imperialist discourse that could counter the colonial projection of a 'superior' western masculinity (388). "The reinterpreted and reconstructed figure of the sannyasi was to prove the easy interchangeability of martial and spiritual values- *Kshatratej* and *Brahmatej* were projected as the two sides of the same coin" (388).

> *Anandamath* attempts to remind the supposedly emasculated Bengalis that 'in the long history of subjection there are great episodes of resistance' (Kaviraj 107)[15]. It counters allegations of the Bengali male as 'helpless, timid, and accustomed to

[15] Kaviraj, Sudipta. *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India*. Oxford: OUP, 1995.

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> couch under oppression' (Macaulay 12)[16] and proves 'Western historiography as false' (107)…The presence of physical prowess in the past is then established as constitutive of Bengali/Hindu masculinity. (Chakraborty)

Mukherjee also opines that the novel, which could be "the first political novel" (903) of India, was written to fill the lacuna of a glorious past. The history of Bengal was "a history of defeat, surrender, and exploitation" (904). In *Anandamath*, Bankim "fused for the first time a revived Hindu religious fervor with a newfound nationalistic zeal" (903), since he "wanted to create a new myth of valor for Bengal in order to shake the people out of their somnolence" (904). In this context, Mukherjee traces three reasons for the popularity of historical novel in India. She says that the life of the middle-class Indian writer was "limited, hedged, in by social restrictions and politically servile" amid "a whole new world of imagination, humanism, and triumph of the self over hierarchical society" that was established through "contact with the British literature" (904). The creative writer often turned to the past for an infinite glorious, heroic and wide picture of human stature. Secondly, she adds, historical novel was traditionally closer to storytelling than the realistic fiction of the western world. Thirdly, the historical framework provided the author with an opportunity to glorify the past, rejecting the prevalent servitude.

In the ending of the novel, Bankim's enthusiastic support for the British leaves the reader flabbergasted. Sen writes, "The conclusion in *Anandamath* appears to be in consonance with the argument, often articulated in the contemporary Bengali press, that Hindus, in their own self-interest put the British into the position of power" (61). From another perspective, it cannot be refuted that Bankim was the first Bengali Deputy Magistrate under the British rule and the glorification of the British in his novel is quite comprehensible in the light of his official

[16] Macaulay, Thomas Babington. "Macaulay's Essay on Warren Hastings". Ed. Margaret J. Frick. New York and London: Macmillan, 1913.

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position. Bankim's willing or unwilling[17] embrace of the British can be summed up as: "…under the pressure of a foreign government, even the truest patriot turns a traitor to his country" (97).

Bankim's career as an administrator, spanning 33 years, was a period of constant transfers, tours and postings[18]. At that time, the Presidency of Bengal comprised the provinces of Bihar, Orissa and Assam in addition to Bengal proper. Bankim was posted in no less than 15 districts and sub-divisional towns of Bengal and Orissa and sometimes more than once at one place. He is known for his popular clashes with Col. Duffin in 1873 and Rev. Hastie in 1882 during his job. As regards the novel, Bankim had expected trouble from his seniors. To guard himself against anything unpleasant and untoward, he requested Keshub Chandra Sen, a Brahmo reformer, to write a preface to the second edition of *Anandamath*, "underlining its politically inoffensive character" (Sarkar 3962). Finally, Keshub's younger brother wrote the preface and Keshub himself wrote to Lt. Governor that *Anandamath* was a patriotic text but not a seditious one. In the first edition, Bankim wrote something uncharacteristic about the novel; he presented the 'rebellion' as a social revolution (not a political one!):

> Bengali women are often of great help to the Bengalees; but sometimes they are not. Social revolution is often only self-inflicted pain. Revolts are self-destructive. The British have rescued Bengal from lawlessness. An attempt has been made in this book to clarify all this. (qtd. in Haldar 93)

One can legitimately infer that Bankim wittingly "made the novel sound aseptic to avoid trouble" (Sarkar 3962). It is interesting to note that the Santans used offensive language against the British troops in the serialized version dated 16th January 1882. After that, Bankim was removed from the post of Assistant Secretary, stating that the post was abolished. He was

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[17] "The seeds of Bankimchandra's anti-British sentiments were sown in Berhampore, the district headquarters of Murshidabad district where he was posted as a Deputy Magistrate. Lt. Col. Duffin, who didn't know that Bankim was a magistrate, abused him. Bankim filed a criminal case against the Colonel. Later, Duffin offered an unconditional apology to Bankim in an open court." (Bhattacharya)

[18] Once Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita (The Gospel of Ramakrishna) "jokingly asked Bankim what had caused to 'bend' his body (in Bengali, the word 'bankim' means 'bent'), the latter quipped that this had resulted from the kicks of the white master's boots!" (Sen 41).

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transferred as an Undersecretary (said to be a demotion) on 22nd January 1882. Sarkar says, "It is difficult to imagine that the colonial bureaucracy moved with such alacrity, noting, translating, deliberating on and finally taking action against a passage within less than a week" (3962). She argues that colonial censorship was more alert against newspaper articles and audio-visual theatre rather than literary texts (3963). However, it cannot be overlooked that the post of Assistant Secretary was "restored in no time and an Englishman was appointed to it" (Haldar 15). The British's antipathy against Indian officers as well as commoners was a well-known fact in those days. After Bankim's retirement in 1891, the government conferred the title of Raibahadur on him in 1892. In 1894, Bankim was awarded the title of the Champion of Indian Empire. In March, the same year, his problem of diabetes took a serious turn and he passed away in April 1894.

Anandamath portrays the Muslims in dark colors; it seems to promote communal hatred and violence, as it romanticizes brutal attacks on the Muslims by the Sanyasis. The novelist holds the Muslim ruler responsible for the misfortune of the Vaishnavs, and "the Muslim ruler, who is a concrete individual, is expanded into an entire community" (Sarkar 3960). Sarkar says that the agent of the famine is shown as the Muslims, whereas the victims are identified with the Hindus. She adds that the novel was like an open text because of the additions and alterations made in it. During Bankim's own lifetime, five different editions were printed. "Scholars have identified 259 alterations across the five versions" (3962). It is wrong to say straightforwardly that the earlier version was anti-British and the later anti-Muslim under the colonial pressure, since "the earlier version also contained fulsome praise for British martial valour. That was edited out in the later version….Moreover the ferocious denunciations of Muslims remain constant across different editions" (3962). In the view of Sarkar, Bankim has "layered ambiguity with uncertainty" for a purpose in the novel (3960).

Bankim wrote this novel with the implicit aim of inspiring people to launch a retaliatory attack against the British, and it seems that "his criticism of Muslims was only incidental" (Gupta 29). The Muslims are presented as foes to mislead and distract the British and to present Hindu nationalism in action. Apart from it, the criticism of the Muslim regime may have been

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inspired by the historical decadence during the Muslim rule in Bengal and "if the decadent Muslim regime is condemned, it is not because it is Muslim but because it is decadent" (Bose 99). In "Epilogue" to *Rajsinha*, Bankim says, "A man, whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim, who has *Dharma* along with other qualities, is superior. A man who with all his qualities, lacking in *Dharma* is inferior, no matter whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim" (qtd. in Bose 99-100).

In the novel, the healer, who presents the British as friends, describes the Muslims as the foes of the motherland. It is important to point up that in the actual 'rebellion', both Hindu Sanyasis and Muslim Fakirs fought against the British East India Company. Bankim as an employee serving under the British rule must have realized that history would ultimately reveal that the Muslims had actively participated in the 'rebellion' as allies, not foes. He took a fair amount of poetic license to portray them in dark colors to conceal his real political agenda.

> Bankim's earlier portrayals of good Muslims as well as his later critique of Hindu patriots who degenerate, are scoured out of his larger literary corpus to cancel out the force of the image of the Hindu nation and the power of the words of anti-Muslim violence and denunciation within Anandamath. (Sarkar 3964)

The novel depicts the strength and valor of the Bengali Hindu nationalists during the Muslim rule in league with the British; the real message of the novel is masqueraded under the explicit, surface meaning. Although the novel portrays the British with fine qualities (Chatterjee 142, 147,148 & 209), yet the main focus of the novel is on the Bengali Hindu nationalists, the Sanyasis. The positive picture of the British is not wholly lovely; the novelist makes fun of the British for not being able to understand the native language (141 & 221-2). It, in a way, shows the downside of the foreign rule. Symbolically, it reflects a sense of cultural alienation between the ruler and the ruled. The fine words for the British are used to mask the deeper message of Hindu nationalism in the novel. Otherwise, what was the need to write a story about the masculine and virulent aspect of the Bengali Hindus if the novelist only wanted to praise the British?

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Notably, Bankim's job as a magistrate was never his "personal calling" (Haldar 16). "His mission was literary and his commitment was to intellectual pursuits for the good of his own people" (17). For him, his professional job was a means of earning his bread and butter. In *The Artist in Chains,* Das throws a flood of light on Bankim's life and works, and the dilemma between Bankim's anger for and reconciliation with the British authorities is expressed as follows: "Like the chained Prometheus he would often scream in pain and anger, and like Prometheus again he would accept the authority and reconcile with it" (56). Mukherjee also speaks about the "ambivalence of the educated Indian of the nineteenth century" (905). "Colonialism, for Bankim, was a historical necessity" (Sarkar 3961). "Indeed, although the novelist said many hard things about the Britishers, as a Government servant he would not expose all his cards, for with a little caution he might save himself and the book without obscuring his meaning" (Gupta 26). Das asserts that there is enough evidence to show that the novel was designed to arouse patriotism, and that was directed against the British (141). Bankim never made his intention explicit; rather he made several changes in the subsequent editions of the novel to camouflage it (141).

To conclude, the historical-biographical approach to *Anandamath* reveals that Bankim has been influenced by his socio-cultural forces. Altick puts very succinctly that "almost every literary work is attended by a host of outside circumstances which, once we expose and explore them, suffuse it with additional meaning" (qtd. in Guerin et al. 53-54). The novelist has (re)constructed a history and seemingly attempted to relieve his contemporaries of collective amnesia and abject servitude. The novel, which draws more on imaginative truth than historical accuracy, resonates with the historical past along with the political issues that were quite relevant during Bankim's lifetime. It is rightly said that a real historical novel is the "one which would rouse the present, which contemporaries would experience as their prehistory" (Lukacs 78).

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