

THE BENGALI REACTION TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY  
ACTIVITIES, 1833 - 1857

This thesis deals with the Bengali reaction to Christian missionary activities, 1833-1857, a hitherto unexplored field of study. Three main aspects of that reaction have been examined, viz., (1) the reaction to evangelising efforts in general, (2) the reaction to specific conversions to Christianity and (3) the reaction of the landed aristocracy

Thesis submitted for the degree of  
in particular to the spread of Christianity in the mufassal.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Under the title Tattvabodhini Sabha movement of the period, conducted by the Tattvabodhini Sabha in the in the  
University of London in alliance with the British Association was inspired mainly by missionary activities and how its course was influenced by missionary criticisms. The nature and effects of the Hindu anti-missionary propaganda are then discussed; and against the background of these two the reaction to missionary as well as Government education policy is noted.

By

MUHAMMAD MOHAR ALI

School of Oriental and African Studies

January 1963

These have been discussed with reference to the social and legal problems that they gave rise to and the attitude of Government towards them.

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### Abstract

This thesis deals with the Bengali reaction to Christian missionary activities, 1833-1857, a hitherto unexplored field of study. Three main aspects of that reaction have been examined, viz., (1) the reaction to evangelising efforts in general, (2) the reaction to specific conversions to Christianity and (3) the reaction of the landed aristocracy in particular to the spread of Christianity in the mufassal.

Under the first heading is discussed how the Hindu reform movement of the period, conducted by the Tattvabodhini Sabha in alliance with the Brahma Samaj, was inspired mainly by missionary activities and how its course was influenced by missionary criticisms. The nature and effects of the Hindu anti-missionary propaganda are then discussed; and against the background of these two the reaction to missionary as well as Government education policy is noted.

The reaction to conversions to Christianity had also three features: (a) attempts to reclaim the Christian converts to Hinduism, (b) attempts to enforce caste disabilities upon converts, and (c) violence upon missionaries and converts. These have been discussed with reference to the social and legal problems that they gave rise to and the attitude of Government towards them.



The spread of Christianity in the mufassal roused, for certain reasons, the jealousy and hostility of zamindars and indigo-planters. In the last section, therefore, the relationship between the landed aristocracy and the missionaries has been discussed, noting particularly the missionary advocacy for reform and the agitation that such demand for reform occasioned among zamindars and planters. The measures adopted by missionaries for protecting converts against the hostility of their landlords have also been discussed in this connection.

The conclusion that emerges is that though the missionary activities roused strong religious opposition from Hindus and Muslims alike, the rural masses had, in so far as their economic interests were concerned, their real friends in

the missionaries. In preparing this thesis I had to work in the India Office (Commonwealth Relations Office) Library, the S.O.A.S. Library, the Senate House (University of London) Library, the British Museum Library, the Public Record Office, the Baptist Missionary Society Archives, the Church Missionary Society Archives, and the London Missionary Society Archives. Everywhere I received the very best of attention and the sincerest of cooperation. My gratitude and thanks are due to the staff of these libraries and archives.



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### Acknowledgement

I am extremely grateful to the authorities of the School of Oriental and African Studies who enabled me to undertake and complete this work by the award of a postgraduate studentship. Particularly I am indebted to Professor A.L. Basham who not only recommended me for this studentship but also kept up my spirits by affectionate words and encouragements at all stages of my work.

To my preceptor, Dr. K. A. Ballhatchet, I owe a deep debt of gratitude for his having kindly supervised this thesis. Without his help and guidance I would hardly have succeeded in doing this work. He gave me the fullest of freedom in pursuing my own ideas of approach and in drawing my own conclusions.

I am also grateful to Dr. J. D. M. Derrett who was kind enough to go through some of the chapters and to give me valuable suggestions on points of Hindu Law. My thanks are also due to Dr. S. K. Das, of the India, Pakistan and Ceylon Department, whose help was readily available in checking up references to Bengali works.

In preparing this thesis I had to work in the India Office (Commonwealth Relations Office) Library, the S.O.A.S. Library, the Senate House (University of London) Library, the British Museum Library, the Public Record Office, the Baptist Missionary Society Archives, the Church Missionary Society Archives, and the London Missionary Society Archives. Everywhere I received the very best of attention and the sincerest of cooperation. My gratitude and thanks are due to the staff of these libraries and archives.

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C. C. H.

List of Abbreviations Christian Herald, The.

C.C.O.

Calcutta Christian Observer, The.

Ad. & E.

Adolphus and Ellis, English Reports, King's Bench Division. (The first number refers to the volume, and the second, to the page)

Ch.

All. M. S.

Indian Law Reports, The, Allahabad Series. (The first number refers to the volume, and the second, to the page)

Englishman.

G. S. P.

Autobiography.

Autobiography of Devendranath Thakur (Bengali text), ed. by Satischandra Chakravarty. Calcutta 1927.

I. A.

B. B. I. S.

Bengal British India Society.

Beng. Judl. Cons.

Bengal Judicial Consultations.

Beng. Pub. Cons.

Bengal Public Consultations.

B. I. A. Annual Reports.

Annual Reports of the British Indian Association.

I. P. A. Proceedings.

B. M. S. Report.

Annual Report of the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society.

John Sarker's History.

Bom.

Indian Law Reports, The, Bombay Series. (The first number refers to the volume, and the second, to the page)

Cal.

Indian Law Reports, The, Calcutta Series. (The first number refers to the volume, and the second, to the page)

C. C. A.

Calcutta Christian Advocate, The.

C. C. C. of C. M. S. Minutes.

Minutes of the Calcutta Corresponding Committee of the Church Missionary Society, Church Missionary Society Archives, North India Missions, No. 1.

Mysore.

C. C. C. of C. M. S. Report.

Annual Report of the Calcutta Corresponding Committee of the Church Missionary Society.



<u>C. C. H.</u>	<u>Calcutta Christian Herald, The.</u>
<u>C.C.O.</u>	<u>Calcutta Christian Observer, The.</u>
<u>Ch.</u>	<u>Law Reports, Chancery Division.</u> (The first number refers to the volume, and the second, to the page)
<u>C. M. S.</u>	<u>Church Missionary Society.</u>
<u>Englishman.</u>	<u>Englishman and Military Chronicle, The.</u>
<u>G. R. P. I.</u>	<u>General Report on Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency</u>
<u>Hurkaru.</u>	<u>Bengal Hurkaru and Literary Gazette, The.</u>
<u>I.A.</u>	<u>Indian Appeals.</u> (The first number refers to the volume, and the second, to the page)
<u>Ind.Judl.Cons.</u>	<u>India Judicial Consultations.</u>
<u>Ind.Leg.Cons.</u>	<u>India Legislative Consultations.</u>
<u>Ind.Pub.Cons.</u>	<u>India Public Consultations.</u>
<u>I.P.A. Proceedings.</u>	<u>Proceedings of the Central Committee of the Indigo Planters' Association.</u>
<u>John Sarkar's History.</u>	<u>Bakharganja Mandalir Itihasa</u> (Bengali manuscript), by John Sarkar, Baptist Missionary Society Archives, Box India 1847, not listed.
<u>Mad.</u>	<u>Indian Law Reports, The, Madras Series.</u> (The first number refers to the volume, and the second, to the page)
<u>M.I.A.</u>	<u>Moore's Indian Appeals.</u> (The first number refers to the volume and the second, to the page)
<u>Mysore.</u>	<u>Indian Law Reports, The, Mysore Series.</u> (The first number refers to the volume, and the second, to the page)



Parl.Pap. The Bengali reaction to Christian Missionary Activity Parliamentary Papers. ( H/C = House of Commons; H/L = House of Lords.)

P.L.C.I. Proceedings of the Legislative Council of India.

Srinath Sarkar's History. Bakharganja Mishanadhine Mandaliganer Itihasa (Bengali manuscript), 1890, by Srinath Sarkar, Baptist Missionary Society Archives, Box India 1847, not listed.

S.S.K. Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha (Selections from Bengali newspapers, ed. by efforts Brajendranath Banerji), 3rd edition, 2 Vols. Calcutta 1949-1950.

T.P. Tattvabodhini Patrika. Opponents of missions, on the other hand, represented them to be a veritable evil calculated to excite the alarm and hostility of the natives, and thus to endanger the political authority of the Company.<sup>1</sup> Since then a vast literature has developed on the history of missions in India; but hitherto no systematic study has been made regarding the attitude of the people among whom the missionaries carried on their evangelising efforts. The present study is an attempt to meet partially this want.

It has been thought necessary to localise this study in order to examine more fully the available sources of

1. See for instance the minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committees of the Houses of Parliament, appointed on the eve of the renewals of the Company's Charter in 1813, 1833 and 1853.



The Bengali reaction to Christian Missionary Activities, 1833 - 1857.

choice of Bengal has been suggested by two considerations.

First, Bengal was the nerve centre of political, commercial

and intellectual developments in India. A writer on any

aspect of the last quarter of the eighteenth century

and the first half of the nineteenth century friends of

missions repeatedly asserted that the Christian missionaries

were not unwelcome in India and that their evangelising efforts

were needed for the social and moral regeneration of the

millions of the East India Company's subjects. Opponents of

missions, on the other hand, represented them to be a veritable

evil calculated to excite the alarm and hostility of the

natives, and thus to endanger the political authority of the

Company.<sup>1</sup> Since then a vast literature has developed on the

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in order to examine more fully the available sources of

1. Kaye, J.W., Christianity in India, London 1859, pp.87-95.

1. See for instance the minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committees of the Houses of Parliament, appointed on the eve of the renewals of the Company's Charter in 1813, 1833 and 1853.



information and to obtain as clear a view as possible. The choice of Bengal has been suggested by two considerations. First, Bengal was the nerve centre of political, commercial and intellectual developments in India. A writer on any aspect of its history during this period has, therefore, to refer to Bengal in some way or other. Secondly, like the expansion of the Company's empire, it was from Bengal that the various missionary societies gradually occupied different stations in northern India, so that North India Missions were practically an extension of Bengal missions. Bengal has, therefore, a preferential claim over all other provinces in such a study as is at present proposed. The period chosen for this purpose extends from 1833 to 1857. The history of Protestant Christian Missionary activities in Bengal is generally dated from the arrival of William Carey in 1793, although there were one or two predecessors of him in that province.<sup>1</sup> Brilliant and versatile though Carey's activities were,<sup>2</sup> his period (1793-1833) was essentially one of beginnings. It was not until twenty years after his arrival in Bengal that the Charter Act of 1813 gave

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1. Kaye, J.W., Christianity in India, London 1859, pp.87-95.
  2. The best account of the activities of Carey and his colleagues is J.C. Marshman's The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward, 2 Vols., London 1859.
- Bengal, 1818-1835, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, London 1961.*



permission to the missionaries to go to the dominions of the East India Company. The next Charter Act of 1833 removed all restrictions upon the entry of missionaries in India. By that time also the great missionary societies of England and Scotland established a number of stations in Bengal and were well settled with their programme of work. In the same year Carey died. Calcutta as the centre of operations. Of the 71 The beginnings thus made, the period that followed witnessed intense and earnest endeavours to evangelise the people. On the other hand, the introduction of Western education, the abolition of Sati (1829) and the agitation that it occasioned, the establishment of the freedom of the press (1835) and the rise of a number of newspapers and periodicals in both the vernacular and English language,<sup>1</sup> all combined to prepare the stage wherein public opinion<sup>2</sup> was sure to react significantly to the efforts of the missionaries. In 1857 occurred the large-scale outbreak of disaffection and rebellion which once again occasioned a good deal of discussion as to their popularity. The period between 1833 and 1857 is, therefore, eminently suited for making an

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1. See for an account of the rise of these periodicals Barns, M., The Indian Press, London 1940, and Banerji, Brajendranath, Vangla Samayika Patra (Bengali Text), Calcutta 1948.
  2. See for the development of public opinion in the previous period Ahmed, A.F.S., The Development of Public Opinion in Bengal, 1818-1835, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, London 1961.



assessment of the nature and extent of popular reaction to the missionary activities. The extent of missionary activities in Bengal during this period may be viewed from the statistical table appended to this work.<sup>1</sup> Two distinguishing features of these activities may, however, be noted here. The first was the concentration of attention upon Calcutta as the centre of operations.<sup>2</sup> Of the 71 stations belonging to various missionary societies working in Bengal, 30 were situated in and around Calcutta. The rest were also distributed in districts near Calcutta. The northern and eastern districts of Bengal, with the exception of four isolated Baptist Missionary stations at Dinajpur, Dacca, Barisal and Chittagong, were practically outside the range of missionary activities. The second was the emphasis on English education as the means of introducing "useful" and Christian knowledge among the "natives".<sup>3</sup> The avowed intention behind this two-fold emphasis was to attract the wealthy and influential Hindu youths of Calcutta, through English education,

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1. See Appendix A.

2. See the minutes of M. Mangles, Daniel Corrie, H. Fisher, etc., dated 30 June 1834, C.M.S. Archives, North India Missions, No. 11.

3. See "Remarks on the comparative inefficiency of mere elementary education in ameliorating the moral and intellectual condition of the Hindoos", C.C.O., June 1833, Vol. II., pp. 257-266; and "On the connection between a liberal education and the spread of True Religion in India", ibid., July 1834, Vol. III., pp. 319-325; also Duff, A., India and India Missions, Edinburgh 1839, pp. 285-304, 506-518.



towards Christianity, and to raise from among them a body of educated converts through whom the ultimate evangelisation of the country was to be effected.<sup>1</sup>

The state of society in and around Calcutta was also encouraging to the missionaries. Thus the development of trade and commerce and the introduction of Permanent Settlement gave rise to a native aristocracy based on wealth rather than on birth, thus transforming the very basis of caste distinctions, the sheet-anchor of Hinduism.<sup>2</sup> The introduction of Western ideas, on the other hand, undermined many of the age-old customs and superstitions. More important was the rise of a class of young men, educated in the Hindu College (founded in 1817) and mostly the students of Henry Vivian Derozio (1809-31)<sup>3</sup> who instilled into them a spirit of criticism and independent enquiry. These young men, who came to be commonly known as Young Bengal, founded a number of debating societies and began freely to express their opinion on all subjects, particularly on the subject of religion.<sup>4</sup> They represented themselves as

1. One of them, K.M. Banerji, began to edit an English journal, called The Enquirer, from May 1831. Two others, Dakshinamukherji and Rasikkrishna Mallik, edited a Bengali journal, Samakal, from 1832.
1. Ibid.
2. See Ahmed, op.cit., Chapter I., "Bengali Society and Western Impact". See for the interest of the missionaries in undermining the system of caste Ingham, K., Reformers in India, Cambridge 1956, pp. 20-32.
2. See for his life and activities Edwards, T., Henry Derozio: the Eurasian poet, teacher and journalist, Calcutta 1884.
3. See for his life and activities Edwards, T., Henry Derozio: the Eurasian poet, teacher and journalist, Calcutta 1884.
4. Alexander's East India Magazine, London 1831, Vol. I., pp. 704-705; also C.C.O., August and October 1832, Vol. I., pp. 124 and 213.



seekers after truth<sup>1</sup> and ridiculed many of the practices and principles of Hinduism. As such orthodox Hindus denounced them as "heretics" and "atheists", while the missionaries thought that their enquiring spirit would ultimately lead them to a realisation of the truth of Christianity. In fact the missionary lectures that were delivered in Calcutta in the early thirties were especially designed to win these "enquirers after truth" in favour of Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

There was another group of Hindus who entertained liberal views of social and religious reform and who were mostly the members or supporters of the Brahma Samaj of Rammohan Roy.<sup>3</sup> The latter is said to have imbibed monotheistic ideas early in his life from a study of the Arabic and Persian literature. It was, however, after his study, somewhat later in his life, of English literature and European history, that his religious ideas began to be crystallised. He denounced both the Hinduism and the Christianity of his day as perversions

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1. One of them, K.M. Banerji, began to edit an English journal, called The Enquirer, from May 1831. Two others, Dakshinaranjan Mukherji and Rasikkrishna Mallik, edited a Bengali weekly, called the Gyananneshan ( or search for knowledge ), from June 1831.
  2. Duff, op.cit., p. 610; see also Sherring, M.A., The History of Protestant Missions in India, London 1884, pp. 95-97.
  3. There are a number of works, in both English and Bengali, on the life of Rammohan Roy. Of these the best short account is that of Collet, C.D., The life and letters of Rammohan Roy.



of the original faiths and ran, on that account, into controversies with orthodox Hindu Pandits as well as Christian missionaries. After that he tried to organise a Unitarian church in collaboration with William Adam.<sup>1</sup> But somehow or other the unitarian mission of Adam did not prosper and in August 1828 Rammohan founded the Brahma Samaj with a view to propagating the doctrine of monotheism as inculcated in the Hindu sacred scriptures ( or Vedantic monotheism, as it was called ).

The missionaries regarded the Brahma Samaj as only a manifestation of the religious consciousness caused by the propagation of Christianity;<sup>2</sup> while Young Bengal, in their rationalistic exuberance, characterised the doctrine of the Brahma Samaj as an unsatisfactory compromise between reason and superstition and called the followers of Rammohan Roy "half-liberals", unscrupulous and opportunists.<sup>3</sup> Orthodox

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1. See Brief Memoir respecting the objects and means of establishing a Unitarian Mission in Bengal with extracts of correspondence, etc., Calcutta 1825; see also Second Memoir respecting the unitarian mission in Bengal, containing a report of the proceedings of the Calcutta Unitarian Committee from its origin in 1821 to the end of 1827, etc., Calcutta 1828. Adam was at first a Baptist missionary who was later on converted to Unitarian doctrines, earning from his compeers the contemptuous title of "the second fallen Adam". He is famous for his education reports, 1835-1838.
  2. "Some particulars relative to the institution of the Brumha Shubha", C.C.O., March 1833, Vol.II., pp. 108-112.
  3. Englishman, 1 June 1836.



Hindus, who far outnumbered both Young Bengal and the followers of Rammohan Roy, did not also look with favour upon the Brahma Samaj. The apprehensions of orthodox Hindus were, however, greatly excited by Rammohan's support for the abolition of Sati (1829)<sup>1</sup> and they organised themselves, under the name of the Dharma Sabha, in order to resist this reform. Their leaders included Raja Radhakanta Deb (1784-1867), Diwan Ramkamal Sen (1783-1844), Bhawanicharan Banerji (1787-1848). The Dharma Sabha failed in its immediate object of nullifying the abolition of Sati, but it continued its existence in order to resist further incursions upon orthodox Hinduism, especially in view of the heretical tendency of Young Bengal and the evangelising efforts of the missionaries.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the beginning of the thirties witnessed intense religious excitement in and around Calcutta. The attention of the missionaries was, therefore, naturally focussed on that place. This, coupled with the existence in Calcutta of the only media of public opinion such as newspapers and journals, and the illiterate state of the rural population of Bengal, explain why the reaction that is traceable relates mainly

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1. See minutes of a meeting of the missionaries of Calcutta.
  2. See "An epitome of a twelvemonth's proceedings of the Dhormo Shobha, as reported in its annual meeting", C.C.O., June 1833, Vol.II., pp. 280-283.



to Calcutta and its vicinity. And as the Muslims were not prominent in Calcutta, and as the missionaries paid very little especial attention to the Bengali Muslims,<sup>1</sup> information about their attitude is extremely meagre, although there are a few instances showing that they entertained strong anti-missionary feelings.<sup>2</sup>

With this limitation in view three main aspects of the reaction may be identified: (1) the reaction to evangelising efforts in general; (2) the reaction to specific conversions to Christianity and (3) the reaction of the landed interests in particular.

The first corresponded to the two interrelated methods adopted by the missionaries, viz., (a) persuasion and (b) education. The one consisted of exhibiting the imperfections and fallacies of native religions, especially of Hinduism, on the one hand, and enunciating the merits and benefits of Christianity, on the other. To the same object were devoted the missionary educational institutions. These gave rise to a three-fold reaction. First, there was a movement for the

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1. See minutes of a meeting of the missionaries of Calcutta, Burdwan and Krishnagar, 2-4 July 1845 - C.M.S. Archives, North India Mission, No. 11; also C.I.C.H., 8 October 1844, Vol. I., p. 105.

2. See Conclusion, infra, pp. 333-336.



reform of Hinduism,<sup>1</sup> conducted by the Tattvabodhini Sabha in alliance with the Brahma Samaj, seeking to raise Hinduism above missionary criticisms and to satisfy the rationalistic tendency of the educated Hindu youths. Secondly, there were also counter-criticisms of Christianity which, conducted through the public press and the platform, assumed the form of an anti-missionary propaganda. Thirdly, in the field of education, attempts were made, on the one hand, to avoid or dispense with the missionary schools, and, on the other, to prevent the Government from incorporating the Bible or the doctrines of Christianity in the syllabuses of the Government educational institutions.

The reaction to conversions to Christianity had also three features. (I) Quite naturally attempts were made to reclaim the Christian converts to Hinduism.<sup>2</sup> (II) Failing in

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1. There was also a reformist movement among the Bengali Muslims during this period. It was known as the Faraidi movement because of its emphasis on Quranic injunctions and the rejection of all innovations. It was socio-religious in nature having some affinity with the Wahhabi movement of Syed Ahmad of Bereli. The Faraidi movement was not, however, inspired by missionary activities. See "Brief sketch of the Muhammadan sect of Ferazis", C.C.O., January 1856, Vol. XXV., pp. 28-31. For a detailed account see Mallick, A.R., British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal, 1757-1856, Dacca 1961, pp. 66-91.

2. As there is no caste system in Islam, no difficulty would have arisen in readmitting apostates, had they so wished, to Islam. In fact the missionaries suggested a long period of probation before the baptism of Muslims, for it was "so easy for them to be received back among Mahommedans, who apostatize from us."- C.C.C. of C.M.S. Report, 1843, p. 79.



this, the socio-economic disabilities sanctioned by the system of caste were sought to be enforced against the converts.

(III) Anti-missionary feelings, roused by the progress of conversion to Christianity, found outlets, sometimes through violence upon the missionaries, but more often through oppression upon the converts.

The last mentioned aspect had reference mainly to the spread of Christianity in the mufassal; and this again brought to the foreground the reaction of the landed interests, viz., zamindars and indigo planters. In spite of the emphasis on Calcutta, spectacular success sometimes attended the missionary efforts in such mufassal districts as Nadia, Jessore and Barisal. This roused, for certain reasons, the jealousy and hostility of the landed aristocracy.<sup>1</sup> This in its turn led the missionaries, on the one hand, to advocate reforms in the system of land tenure, thereby further causing the irritation of zamindars and indigo planters, and on the other, to adopt measures for the protection of the converts against the wrath of hostile landlords. The last, though not, strictly speaking, a reaction to missionary activities, is nevertheless relevant; for while the anxiety of the missionaries to protect their

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1. Of these periodicals the most important are the Friend

1. See Chapter VIII., *infra*, pp.264-267.

of India, edited by J.C. Marshman, the Calcutta Christian Observer, and the Calcutta Christian Advocate, both edited by the missionaries of the various missionary societies resident in Calcutta. The view-points of the latter two journals may, therefore, be regarded as representing generally the views of Bengal missionaries as a whole.



converts shows indirectly the extent of the hardships suffered by mufassal converts, a discussion of these protective measures helps one to examine, on the other hand, the truth of the allegation that the missionaries offered temporal inducements in order to gain converts to Christianity.

In discussing this manifold reaction to missionary activities in Bengal use has been made of the published and unpublished records of the then Government of India, preserved in the India Office Library, as well as the manuscript records preserved in the missionary archives, especially those of the Baptist Missionary Society, the Church Missionary Society and the London Missionary Society. And in view of the nature of the subject especial emphasis has been given not only to the reports and proceedings of the missionary societies and other public organisations of the time, but also to contemporary newspapers and journals. The dearth of some Bengali periodicals is compensated by the fact that whenever the Bengali press discussed any thing in connection with missionary activities, this was invariably reproduced, often with explanatory comments, in the missionary organs.<sup>1</sup> The

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latter also make up some deficiency in the missionary archives, for many of the day-to-day activities and proceedings of the missionaries which are not available in the archives, were published in the missionary periodicals and newspapers.

#### Part I.

1. The reaction to evangelising efforts in general

2. The reaction to the establishment of a mission

3. The reaction to the work of the missionaries

4. The reaction to the work of the missionaries

5. The Tattvabodhini Sabha and the missionaries

6. Anti-Missionary Propaganda

7. Education and Evangelisation

8. The missionaries

9. The missionaries and the public

10. The missionaries and the public

11. The missionaries and the public

12. The missionaries and the public

13. The missionaries and the public

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15. The missionaries and the public

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17. The missionaries and the public

18. The missionaries and the public

19. The missionaries and the public

20. The missionaries and the public



## CHAPTER I.

## The Tattvabodhini Sabha and the Missionaries

During the period under review the reform of the Hindu religion was advocated mainly by the Tattvabodhini Sabha in

## Part I.

The reaction to evangelising efforts in general Sabha was established on 6 October 1839, by Devendranath Thakur and nine others of his friends and relatives.<sup>1</sup> The reason d'être

and the object of the Sabha were clearly set forth in the

'Circular I. The Tattvabodhini Sabha and the missionaries

form II. Anti-Missionary Propaganda members of the Sabha

viewed III. Education and Evangelisation rapid progress of

Christianity" due to the ignorance of their countrymen about

their "own, holy religious true Shaster". (ii) They therefore

exerted their "head and heart" to "put a bar" to this

development by performing the worship of God "according to

the doctrines of the Vedant" and by the publication of Vedantic

books.<sup>2</sup> These objects were corroborated by the Annual Report

of the Sabha for 1843-1844.<sup>3</sup> After referring to the effects

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1. Autobiography, p. 65.

2. "Circular Letter of the Tattvabodhini Sabha" - C.C.A., 22 February 1840, Vol. I., p. 372.

3. Earlier Reports of the Sabha are not available. It was from 1843 that the Sabha began to publish a monthly journal called the Tattvabodhini Patrika in which alone the reports and proceedings of the Sabha are to be found.



of the introduction CHAPTER I. learning and the activities

## The Tattvabodhini Sabha and the Missionaries

It was to have been feared, therefore, that as a natural result of this course of events, the great body of the people would either imbibe the pernicious principles of atheism, or promulgated by its teachers; — a consummation which the members could not but regard with indifference, consistently with their regard for the influence of such a course like these, and inculcate on the Hindu religious sentiment. The Tattvabodhini Sabha was established on 6 October 1839, by Devendranath Thakur and nine others of his friends and relatives.<sup>1</sup> The ~~reason~~ <sup>raison</sup> d'etre and the object of the Sabha were clearly set forth in the

'Circular Letter' which was published shortly after its formation. It stated that (i) the members of the Sabha viewed with grave concern "the terribly rapid progress of Christianity" due to the ignorance of their countrymen about their "own, holy religious true Shaster". (ii) They therefore exerted their "head and heart" to "put a bar" to this development by performing the worship of God "according to the doctrines of the Vedant" and by the publication of Vedantic books.<sup>2</sup> These objects were corroborated by the Annual Report of the Sabha for 1843-1844.<sup>3</sup> After referring to the effects the Tattvabodhini Sabha in order fully to investigate into

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1. Autobiography, p. 65.
  2. "Circular Letter of the Tattvabodhini Sabha" - C.C.A., 22 February 1840, Vol. I., p. 372.
  3. Earlier Reports of the Sabha are not available. It was from 1843 that the Sabha began to publish a monthly journal called the Tattvabodhini Patrika in which alone the reports and proceedings of the Sabha are to be found.
- Chakravarty, Ajitkumar, Maharshi Devendranath Thakur, (Bengal text) Allahabad 1916, pp. 62-64.



of the introduction of Western learning and the activities of the missionaries the Report observed:<sup>1</sup>

It was to have been feared, therefore, that as a natural result of this course of events, the great body of the people, unshackled from the fetters of superstition, would either imbibe the pernicious principles of atheism, or embrace the doctrines of Christianity, so successfully promulgated by its teachers; — a consummation which the members could not bring themselves to look on with indifference, consistently with their regard for the welfare of their countrymen. It was to counteract influences like these, and inculcate on the Hindu religious enquirer's mind doctrines at once consonant to reason and human nature, for which he has to explore his own sacred resources the Vaidanta, that the Society was originally established.

This anti-missionary origin of the Tattvabodhini Sabha, however, has been overlooked by historians of the Brahma Samaj and biographers of Devendranath Thakur. It has been stated that Devendranath had a contemplative bent of mind from his boyhood, which was reinforced by the death and cremation of his grandmother in December 1838; and that in such a state of mind he came across a stray leaf of the Upanishad containing the remarkable passage: "Whatsoever is in this world is full of the Deity"; and that immediately after this he established the Tattvabodhini Sabha in order fully to investigate into the doctrines of monotheism.<sup>2</sup> The incidents of the death

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1. Annual Report of the Tattvabodhini Sabha for 1843-1844 - T.P., 1 Bhadra 1766 Saka (1844), Series I., Vol. I., p. 103.
  2. See for instance Leonard, G.S., A History of the Brahma Samaj, Calcutta 1879, pp. 70-72; Sastri, Sivanath, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol. I., Calcutta 1911, pp. 83-86
  2. Chakravarty, Ajitkumar, Maharshi Devendranath Thakur, (Bengali text) Allahabad 1916, pp. 62-64.



scene and the stray leaf, and their influence upon Devendranath's mind might have been true;<sup>1</sup> but the Circular Letter and the Annual Report quoted above show that the establishment of the Tattvabodhini Sabha was due to some other consideration than the personal spiritual yearnings of Devendranath Thakur.

This anti-missionary attitude also explains why instead of joining the already extant Brahma Samaj, of whose existence and aims Devendranath was undoubtedly aware for a long time, he founded a separate organisation to do precisely the same work of investigating into the true doctrines of Hinduism. Associated as it was with the abolition of Sati, the Brahma Samaj was looked on with disfavour by the vast majority of the orthodox Hindus. 'Young Bengal' also regarded it as a hypocritical organisation.<sup>2</sup> It would have been therefore a very feeble and unpopular prop to stand upon in a defensive campaign against the triumphant march of evangelicalism. It

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1. G.S. Leonard (op.cit., p.72) gave rather an undue emphasis to this point drawing an analogy with the "death scene and incidents in the life of the two great reformers of the East and West — the celebrated Buddha and renowned Luther, both of whom took a like predilection to religion from causes similar to those which influenced the Brahmic reformer."

These incidents are narrated by Devendranath Thakur in his autobiography (Chapters I., II. and V.); but it should be remembered that he wrote his autobiography at least half a century after the formation of the Tattvabodhini Sabha — at an age when spiritual ebullitions and attainments must have weighed heavily upon his mind.

2. See supra, pp.15-16.



was most probably with this consideration that Devendranath and his associates started afresh with a new organisation, though not with a new philosophy, for the doctrine of Vedantic monotheism was the very thing which Rammohan Roy sought to practise and propagate. The same consideration might have suggested the name Tattvabodhini Sabha or a society for investigating into religious truths<sup>1</sup> — a name apt to attract Young Bengal who were representing themselves as enquirers after truth and knowledge. Divested of the propagandist element the name becomes an anachronism, for the members of the Tattvabodhini Sabha did not start with an undecided doctrine: they had already one, with which they set out to combat the missionary influences.

At the very first session of the Sabha Ramachandra Vidyavagisha, the minister of the Brahma Samaj, was called in to perform the divine services; and at its second session he was formally appointed its minister too.<sup>2</sup> The Sabha held weekly and monthly meetings; the former for reading papers and holding discussions, and the latter for divine service.<sup>3</sup>

1. The name was adopted in the second sitting of the Sabha. Previously the name Tattvaranjini or 'illuminating the truth' was contemplated; but nothing is noted as regards the consideration behind the adoption of the name.

2. Autobiography, p. 64. (840)..105

3. Sastri, History of the Brahmo Samaj, Vol.I., Calcutta 1911, p. 87.

" 1765 " (1843)..138 — T.P., 1 Jyaishta 1766 Saka (1844), Series I., Vol. I., p. 75.

7. Autobiography, p. 67.



The service included recitation of passages of the Upanishads and their explanation in Bengali.<sup>1</sup> After that the members discoursed "on the existence of only one God".<sup>2</sup>

The Sabha opened a public fund for printing Vedantic books, to which every member had to contribute one sixtyfourth of his income.<sup>3</sup> In 1840 it started a school<sup>4</sup> and also contemplated sending out preachers against the missionaries.<sup>5</sup> During the first two years of its existence, however, the Sabha could not make much headway. Devendranath was not satisfied with the number of members or the attendance at its meetings.<sup>6</sup> He therefore held its second anniversary meeting with much advertisement and ostentation so that "all may come to know<sup>of</sup> the existence of this Sabha."<sup>7</sup>

1. Ibid. It is not known whether non-Brahmans were excluded from the room where the sacred scriptures were read, as was the case in the Brahma Samaj of Rammohan Roy.

2. Circular Letter, op.cit.

3. Ibid.

4. See for details of this school infra, pp. 112-113.

5. C.C.A., 6 June 1840, Vol. I., p. 34; see also infra, p. 55.

6. Autobiography, p. 67. Sivanath Sastri states ( History of the Brahma Samaj, Vol. I., p. 87 ) that the number of its membership rose to 500 within two years. The Annual Report of the Sabha for 1843-1844, however, gives the number as follows:

Initial members ... 10

In 1762 Saka (1840)..105

" 1763 " (1841)..112

" 1764 " (1842)..83

" 1765 " (1843)..138

2. (1844), Series I., Vol. I., p. 75.

7. Autobiography, p. 67.

— T.P., 1 Jyaishta 1766 Saka,



By the middle of the third year (beginning of 1842) Devendranath brought forward a proposal for uniting the Tattvabodhini Sabha with the Brahma Samaj. It is not known what considerations led him to this step. The following reasons may, however, be adduced to explain the move. First, the work of the Tattvabodhini Sabha, namely, the revival and dissemination of the monotheistic doctrines contained in the Hindu sacred scriptures, fell in line with the ideal of the Brahma Samaj. A proposal for union would have naturally come, sooner or later. Secondly, the appointment of Ramachandra Vidyavagisha, the minister of the Brahma Samaj, to the minister-ship of the Tattvabodhini Sabha in addition to his former duty, was probably a positive step towards that direction. The influence of this devoted and zealous disciple of Rammohan Roy upon the Tattvabodhini Sabha in general and upon Devendranath Thakur in particular has not yet been properly assessed.<sup>1</sup> The fact that he taught Devendranath and others the Upanishads, and the spirit of exultation and satisfaction with which he initiated Devendranath and his associates into the "Brahma religion" when the course was decided upon,<sup>2</sup> suggest that he

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1. A short life-sketch of him appeared in the Tattvabodhini Patrika ( 1 Baisakha 1767 Saka, 1845 A.D., Series I., Vol.I., pp. 165-167 ) shortly after his death. But this does not throw any light on this point. Nor is the work prepared on his life by the Shahitya Parishat of Calcutta ( Shahitya-shadhaka charitamala, No. 9. ) of any avail in this regard.
  2. Autobiography, pp. 84-85.



devoutly wished for the consummation and must have encouraged it in whichever way he could. Thirdly, the departure of Dwarkanath Thakur ( father of Devendranath ) for England in this year might have favoured the situation, for the latter disliked Devendranath's Vedantic tendencies and even reprimanded Ramachandra Vidyavagisha for having poisoned the mind of young Devendra with the ideas of Brahmoism.<sup>1</sup> His absence therefore left Devendranath free and probably encouraged him to advance the proposal for union at that time.

The proposal, however, did not find favour with many of the members of the Tattvabodhini Sabha who valued it more than the Brahma Samaj.<sup>2</sup> Hence what resulted was rather an open alliance than a real union between the two. The Tattvabodhini Sabha maintained its separate entity as a policy-making and preaching body; the Brahma Samaj undertook its ministerial duties. Instead of the monthly meetings of the Tattvabodhini for divine service a monthly Samaj began to be held on the first Sunday of every month. The day of the anniversary meeting was changed from 7 Paus to 11 Magha, the latter being the day on which Rammohan had permanently shifted the Brahma Samaj to its building at Jorasanko (Calcutta).<sup>3</sup>

1. Ibid., pp. 78-79.

2. Ibid., (Appendix) pp. 356-357.

3. Annual Report of the Brahma Samaj for 1766 Saka (1844-45), — T.P., 1 Falgun 1766 Saka, Series I., Vol. I., p. 149.



The alliance proved beneficial to both. Relieved of its ministerial functions, the Tattvabodhini Sabha could devote more attention to preaching and the management of its monthly journal (the Tattvabodhini Patrika) which it had started at this time.<sup>1</sup> The Brahma Samaj, on the other hand, was rescued from the point of death. Once again its meetings began to be well attended, and its name known to the public.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the alliance necessitated the formulation of specific doctrines and a system of prayer. Hitherto the philosophy of the Brahma Samaj was in an embryonic stage — its doctrines indistinct and its rituals undefined. The members of the Tattvabodhini Sabha were mere theoretical believers in a vague monotheism, conforming in practical life to all the rites and practices of popular Hinduism.<sup>3</sup> Devendranath therefore framed a "Covenant of the Brahma Samaj" according to which "a regular form of church service, including thanksgiving, praise and prayer, in the place of the old practice of mere expositions of passages from the Upanishads, attended with sermon and hymn" was introduced.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately the original

1. The first number appeared in Bhadra 1765 Saka, corresponding to the middle of August 1843.

2. T.P., 1 Agrahayan 1766 Saka (early 1845), Series I., Vol. I., p. 126.

3. Autobiography, pp. 81-83; also Sastri, op.cit., p. 89.

4. Sastri, op.cit., p. 89. The similarity of this system of prayer with Christian church service is striking.

5. T.P., 1 Aswin 1766 Saka (1844), Series I., Vol. I., pp. 112 ff.



Covenant is not traceable. On 21 December 1843 Devendranath with 20 others solemnly embraced the "Brahma Religion" according to the newly framed covenant.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the alliance the Sabha ran into a controversy with the missionaries on the merits of the Vedantic doctrines. Its avowed anti-missionary programme would have sooner or later involved it into a conflict with the missionaries. It was, however, precipitated by its noticing of India.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Alexander Duff's celebrated work India and India Missions.<sup>2</sup> The members of the Tattvabodhini Sabha regarded the work as an unjust criticism of their religion and therefore took upon themselves the duty of writing a "Refutation" in "defence of the real doctrines of Hinduism".<sup>3</sup> The "authors" of the "Refutation" did not, however, take into consideration the whole stem of Dr. Duff's analysis and arguments, but concentrated their attention upon his observations on the conception of Brahm or Supreme God. By copious extracts from their scriptures they attempted to bring home the theme of monotheism and the nature of the Supreme God as being "eternal, omnipotent,

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1. Autobiography, pp. 84-85.

2. The first edition of the work appeared from Edinburgh in 1839; and the second edition the following year. Chapters II. and III. of the work deal with the "Gigantic System" of Hinduism, distinguishing carefully the popular from the philosophical system and discussing the nature of the Supreme God and the main theories regarding the manifestation of the universe.

3. T.P., 1 Aswin 1766 Saka (1844), Series I., Vol. I., pp. 112 ff.



omniscient, unchangeable, immaterial," etc.<sup>1</sup> The essay ended in a patriotic strain accusing Duff of "artful and elaborate misrepresentation" by "urging the sweeping charge of Atheism against the millions of Hindustan, of the past and present generations!"<sup>2</sup>

Within four months of the publication of the "Refutation" four articles were published successively in the Calcutta Christian Herald, the Calcutta Review and the Friend of India.<sup>3</sup> These papers launched a four-fold attack against the Vedantists. First, the Vedantic religion was characterised as pantheistic. "This professed theism, as unfolded in the oldest standards of the Vedant", wrote the Calcutta Review, "is, beyond all debate, a system of gross Pantheism. By subsequent authorities, it was sublimated into a system of idealism, or spiritual Pantheism."<sup>4</sup> Secondly, the Tattvabodhini movement was compared with Alexandrian or Neo-Platonism, "consisting of... a new compound arising from an incorporation of many western ideas with fragments of oriental thought — to be designated Neo-Vedantism, to distinguish it from the old."<sup>5</sup> Therather

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1. Ibid., pp. 115-116.

2. Ibid., p. 116.

3. See C.C.H., 15 October and 31 December 1844; the Calcutta Review, Vol.II., pp.266-277; and Friend of India, 16 January 1845.

4. The Calcutta Review, Vol.II., p.266.

5. Ibid., p.267.



Calcutta Christian Herald put it rather blatantly: "What it finds not in purely native sources,...it borrows, without they acknowledgement, from Christianity, adopting quite the language of European ethico-religious writers, a language hitherto wholly unknown in Hindu literature."<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, the members of the Tattvabodhini Sabha were charged with inconsistency and self-delusion. They denounced idolatry verbally but adhered to it in practical life; they talked of exterminating idolatry, yet upheld the Vedas which tolerated it; the only revelation which was recognised was that contained in the "Great Volume of Nature", and yet the volumes of the Vedas and the Bhagavatgita, and such like, were constantly appealed to as authorities. "In the mildest of terms we must designate this a sorrowful self-delusion to save us from the necessity of characterising it as something worse."<sup>2</sup> Fourthly, the Vedantists' argument that the idolatry inculcated in the Vedas was intended for the ignorant people, was inconsistent with the divine nature and infallibility of their sacred scriptures. "Will our young friends remember", rejoined the Friend of India, "that their venerated propounders of the Vedantic doctrine gave their sanction to this same wicked,

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1. C.C.H., 31 December 1844, p. 207.

2. The Calcutta Review, Vol.II., p. 276.

3. T.P., 1 Falgun 1766 Saka (1845), Series I., Vol.I., pp.153-156.



brutalizing Hinduism, as the antidote to the vulgar against the evils of utter atheism. Granting they intended good, they chose the most complicated system of base and blasphemous falsehood for the accomplishment of good — they adopted a remedy which has wrought all the evils of what they professed to cure... and therefore it behoves the members of the Theophilanthropic Society<sup>1</sup> not only to renounce the Vaidant as a revelation from the God of truth, but also to discard it as a record of the wisdom of men."<sup>2</sup>

In February 1845 the Tattvabodhini Patrika published a reply to the above criticisms under the caption "Vedantic doctrines vindicated".<sup>3</sup> Referring to its previous essay it maintained that the Vedantic doctrines were "founded on the most obvious and irrefragable principles of natural reason". It expressed its "grievous" disappointment not to find the missionaries "combating" their "quotations" with "overwhelming authorities derived from the same unimpeachable source". The greater part of the essay was, however, devoted to an elaboration of the nature of the Supreme Being in an attempt to refute the charge of pantheism. But in reply to the other charges the essay was apologetic, rationalising and evasive.

1. Ibid., p.155.

1. i.e., the Tattvabodhini Sabha.

2. Friend of India, 16 January 1845, p.36.

3. T.P., 1 Falgun 1766 Saka (1845), Series I., Vol.I., pp.153-156.



Thus to the charge of the Vedas' tolerating idolatry and inculcating "evil that good may come" no direct answer was given except the reiteration of the old formula that it was intended as a preparatory step for those who could not raise their mind from Nature upto Nature's God.<sup>1</sup> Similarly rationalising was its approach to the comparison with Neo-Platonism. While challenging the missionaries to show which doctrines of Christianity had been borrowed by the Vedantists, it could not deny that its explanations of the Vedantic doctrines were based upon the principles of natural theology and the philosophy of Bacon.<sup>2</sup> But this was exactly what the missionaries objected to by stating that the imperfect doctrines of the Vedas were being sublimated and rationalised by an infusion of Western and Christian ideas. They did not mean that Christian doctrines were incorporated in the Vedantic doctrines without acknowledgement. The essay also did not utter a single word on the seeming inconsistency between the professions and practices of the Vedantists. It had, however, the plausibility of being interspersed with patriotic sentiments and counter-criticisms of Christianity and its missionaries.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., p. 155.

2. Ibid., p. 154.

3. This side of the Tattvabodhini criticisms has been dealt with in the next chapter (infra, pp. 70-72).

3. The Calcutta Review, Vol. III., p. 134.

4. Ibid., p. 139.



In reply to the "Vedantic doctrines vindicated" the Calcutta Review published a very learned article under the caption "Transition states of the Hindu mind".<sup>1</sup> In this essay the Reverend writer<sup>2</sup>, after discussing the rise of different schools of thought at different times on the philosophy of the Vedas, came to a consideration of the Tattwabodhini school and showed how the latter's interpretation of the Vedas differed from the former ones. Quoting a number of passages from the Vedant he showed that the very unity of God which they professed to uphold was "intimately connected with pantheistic views, subversive of the foundations of all theism".<sup>3</sup> The latter part of his essay was directed against the infallibility of the Vedas. Pointing out the inconsistency of inculcating two different systems of worship he asked:<sup>4</sup>

What right had the authors of the Vedas to presume that the bulk of their countrymen, whom they enjoined to worship Indra and the elements were incapable of comprehending the doctrine of divine unity? How can our friends of the Tattwabodhini Sabha readily sanction this sacerdotal arrogance?

He then expected a more generous view of the popular capacities from the "leaders of the Tattwabodhini Philosophy" and held

them responsible for having done the authors of the Vedas

"no small" injustice by the line of argument they had adopted

3. T.P. Aswin 1767 Saka (1845). Series I., Vol. I., pp. 221-226.

1. The Calcutta Review, Vol. III. (January-June 1845), pp. 102-147.

2. Most probably Dr. Duff himself.

3. The Calcutta Review, Vol. III., p. 134.

4. Ibid., p. 139.



in order to "explain away the primitive idolatry of Brahminism".<sup>1</sup> The Reverend writer concluded:<sup>2</sup>

We do not believe that the earliest Brahmins, who worshipped the sun and the planets, were such cheats and hypocrites as their Vedantic advocates are apt to exhibit them. They were not sufficiently enlightened on the doctrines of true theism, which, considering their age and many disadvantages, could entail on them no disgrace;— but such as they were, they honestly appeared in their compositions — without the varnish of philosophy and ignorant of the use that might afterwards be made of their writings.

In September 1845 the Tattvabodhini Patrika published an answer to the above article.<sup>3</sup> It was, however, like its previous essay, evasive and apologetic, and for the most part devoted to counter-criticisms of the Bible and its doctrines. After this the controversy abated and there was, for a time, a comparative lull on both sides.<sup>4</sup> The Tattvabodhini Sabha, however, published its three articles discussed above under the general caption "Vedantic doctrines vindicated".<sup>5</sup>

Although the Tattvabodhini Sabha ended the controversy with an air of victory by publishing the "Vedantic doctrines vindicated", in its own circle the more rationalistic members found it difficult to reconcile themselves with the doctrine

1. Ibid., p. 140.

2. Ibid., p. 141.

3. T.P., Aswin 1767 Saka (1845), Series I., Vol. I., pp. 221-226.

4. Only towards the end of 1846 Devendranath entered into a controversy with "Justitia" on the former's performing the Straddha of his father allegedly in an idolatrous way.

5. T.P., 1 Jyaishta 1768 Saka (1846), Series I., Vol. I., p. 296.

See the tract in India Office Library Tracts, Vol. 642.



of Vedic infallibility. Akshaykumar Datta, the editor of the Patrika, and other members of the editorial board, began to discuss the question privately with Devendranath Thakur.<sup>1</sup> Henceforth two important developments are noticeable in the Tattvabodhini Sabha — on the one hand, increased efforts to know the contents of the Vedas more fully, and on the other hand, discussion of the question of Vedic infallibility in the columns of the Patrika in the form of questions and answers. "human mind and intelligence, is possible?"<sup>3</sup> This was. In 1845-46 (Saka 1768) the Sabha sent four students to Benares to study the four parts of the Vedas.<sup>2</sup> It also offered four scholarships to study the sacred scriptures in Calcutta and promised handsome rewards on successful completion of the studies.<sup>3</sup> At the same time it began to publish independent translations of the scriptures, especially of the Upanishads.<sup>4</sup> Before this it contented itself with the publication of Rammohan's commentaries. In September 1846 the Sabha appointed Rajnarayan Basu its official translator;<sup>5</sup> and from that month

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1. Sastri, pp.cit., pp.100-101.

2. Autobiography, pp. 108-109. These students were Anandachandra Tarakanath, Vaneshwar and Ramanath. Of them the first rose to fame and honour.

3. T.P., 1 Magha 1767 Saka (early 1846), Series I., Vol. I., p.260.

4. Ibid., 1 Bhadra 1767 Saka (September 1845), Series I., Vol. I., pp. 208-211; see also the subsequent numbers of the year.

5. Autobiography of Rajnarayan Basu (Bengali text), 2nd edition, Calcutta 1915, p.50.

4. Ibid., p.241.



an English translation of the Upanishads began to appear in the Patrika.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime discussions on the question of Vedic infallibility were being carried on in the Patrika.<sup>2</sup> The questions raised in these discussions were not merely echoes but often a literal translation of the objections raised by the missionaries. For instance the correspondent asked: "How the worship and contemplation of an object, which is far beyond and above human mind and intelligence, is possible?"<sup>3</sup> This was exactly the missionary contention that the Brahm was "incomprehensible" and therefore "impossible of worship". Similarly the charge of resorting to natural theology and constructing a sort of universal religion is echoed in the question: "There is no effect without a cause; hence behind all creations there is a Supreme Creator. If such a concept is called the knowledge of Brahm (ब्रह्मज्ञान), then every man has that knowledge and every religious scripture has that teaching. What is the necessity then of invoking the Vedas alone for such a knowledge?"<sup>4</sup> In this way the missionary

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1. T.P., Bhadra 1768 Saka (1846), Series I., Vol. I., pp. 316-323; see also the subsequent numbers.

2. Ibid., Baisakha 1767 Saka (1845), Series I., Vol. I, p. 170ff. The first few questions with which the discussion started were: "Are the Vedas infallible?" "Are Smritis and other Shastras part and parcel of the Vedas?" "Is the infallibility of the Shastras dependent upon that of the Vedas?" etc. (Ibid.)

3. Ibid., Agrahayan 1767 Saka (1845), Series I., Vol. I., p. 240

4. Ibid., p. 241.



arguments that idolatrous and pantheistic ideas were inseparable from the Vedantic notion of monotheism, that the Tattvabodhini Sabha could not consistently propagate the doctrine of monotheism without discarding the Vedas, that their explanation of Vedic idolatry involved an ungenerous and objectionable notion of popular capacities, etc., were reproduced in the series of questions that were raised in this discussion. A careful perusal of them leads to the irresistible conclusion that these members of the Tattvabodhini Sabha were proceeding, consciously or unconsciously, along the lines indicated by the missionaries.

For one year (Saka 1767 = 1845-1846) this discussion continued unabated. At the beginning of Saka 1768 it appears to have taken an unpalatable turn; for the first number of the Patrika for that year, after giving answers to a few of the questions of the correspondent, dispensed with the rest on the alleged ground that the correspondent was guided by hostile intentions. It also gave a notice of the discontinuance of the discussion.<sup>1</sup>

It was at this time, however, that the Sabha was found trying to satisfy itself and its adversaries by renouncing

all Shastras except the Upanishads. Thus, in answer to a

2. Most probably the Reverend Joseph Millens of the London

1. Ibid., Baisakha 1768 Saka ( May-June 1846), Series I.,

3. Vol.I., p. 287. Intelligencer, April 1847, reproduced in C.C.A.,  
17 April 1847, Vol.IX., pp.191-192.

4. Ibid., p.191.



challenge by the Calcutta Standard the Sabha wrote:<sup>1</sup>

We do not, in the least, revere the Shastras which it has been the object of the Missionaries to vilify and vociferate so loudly against. On the contrary it has been our constant aim to put down every religious book which forms the basis of idolatry in our country. Vaidantism is our creed and Oupanishud our book of religion... We have nothing to do with the Shastras to which our contemporary alludes.

In thus rejecting the whole hierarchy of the Shastras except in order to find out the causes of the differences between the Upanishads the Vedantists were proceeding to the inevitable position of rejecting the infallibility of the Vedas also.

By the beginning of 1847 one "J.M.",<sup>2</sup> in the course of reviewing the pamphlet Vedantic doctrines vindicated, invited the attention of the Vedantists to three main points:<sup>3</sup> First, they should settle their canon and should be able to inform both themselves and their opponents "what are the books to which they refer as the original, standard and authoritative sources of their belief". The mere reference to the books comprehended under a general designation, such as the Upanishads, should not satisfy any rational and well-informed Vedantist.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, the texts of the Vedas adduced to prove any doctrine should be translated literally without imposing upon them a sense previously assumed. "It is surely reasoning in a vicious

1. T.P., Chaitra 1767 Saka (April-May 1846), Series I., Vol. I., p. 276.

2. Most probably the Reverend Joseph Mullens of the London Missionary Society.

3. The Christian Intelligencer, April 1847, reproduced in C.C.A., 17 April 1847, Vol. IX., pp. 191-192.

4. Ibid., p. 191.



circle," pointed out J.M., "first to force the Vedas into a consistency with reasonable doctrines, and then to make this assumed reasonableness an argument for their inspiration. The right mode of procedure evidently is to let these ancient books speak for themselves."<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, the Vedantists should not neglect to study the past interpretations of the Vedas in order to find out the causes of the differences between those interpretations and their own. "It is quite possible that the authors of the philosophic Vedantic system ( which the new school repudiates as unauthoritative ), of the Smriti and the Puranas may have perverted the genuine doctrines of the Vedas, but it is also possible that they may only have fully developed and carried out into its consequences a system already mystical and erroneous."<sup>2</sup>

It is not known what reaction this letter of J.M. produced upon the Vedantists in general and upon Devendranath Thakur in particular. Neither Devendranath himself nor his biographers<sup>3</sup> recognise the contribution of the missionaries to the evolution of the religious doctrines of the Tattvabodhini Sabha. Devendranath writes that on coming to know from a

1. Ibid., p. 192. pp. 131-132.

2. Ibid. Baisakha 1769 Saka (1847), Series II., Vol. I., Title page.

3. See for instance Chakravarty, A.K., Maharshi Devendranath Thakur (Bengali text), Allahabad 1919, pp. 127-146; and Bagal, Jogeshchandra, Devendranath Thakur (Bengali text), Calcutta 1944, pp. 26-31.



a passage of the Upanishad that the Vedas contained both "Superior" and "Inferior" knowledge he decided to go to Benares to study them fully.<sup>1</sup> It may be noted here that the passage of the Upanishad referred to here began to be published as the motto of the Patrika from the beginning of the year 1769 Saka ( May-June 1847).<sup>2</sup> While it shows that Devendranath had really come to know of the existence of the "Superior" and "Inferior" knowledge in the Vedas from the passage of the Upanishad, it does not show that the discovery of the passage in question was in itself the immediate cause of his going to Benares. His own admission that he accepted this information of the Upanishad because it "conformed admirably well" with the "ideas and aims" of himself and his colleagues,<sup>3</sup> and the fact that he started for Benares a few months after the publication of J.M.'s letter<sup>4</sup> rather suggest that he was seeking a justification for the trend of thought that was gradually gaining ground in the Tattvabodhini circle, and was doubtless influenced by discussions both within and without it.

At Benares Devendranath examined the contents of the four Vedas with the help of the four students sent there the first and adopted the second course as the last resort.

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1. Autobiography, pp. 131-132.

2. T.P., Baisakha 1769 Saka(1847), Series II., Vol.I., Title page.

3. Autobiography, p. 131.

4. He started for Benares towards the end of September 1847--

1. ibid., Autobiography, p. 142.



previous year. He was convinced that the Vedas mainly inculcated idolatry and that it was no longer possible to base the doctrine of monotheism on them.<sup>1</sup> It is thus evident that neither Devendranath nor his colleagues were fully conversant with the contents of the Vedas when they wrote the Vedantic doctrines vindicated. These portions of the Upanishads

The rejection of the infallibility of the Vedas was henceforth a question of time. To do this openly in 1847, however, would have involved a sudden volte-face on the part of the avowed defenders of Hinduism against the onslaughts of the missionaries. Even if Devendranath and his associates had the moral courage to brave this, they could not be expected to do this before trying the probable alternatives. As a matter of fact three courses were open to them: they could uphold any compact part or parts of the scriptures, such as the Upanishads, that seemed consistent with their own rationalism; failing this they could compile a book of doctrines; or thirdly they could accept the superiority and authenticity of the scriptures offered by the missionaries. That they did not do the last is well known; but they tried the first and adopted the second course as the last resort.

As has been shown above, the Tattvabodhini Sabha were upholding the Upanishads as the book of their religion at

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1. Autobiography, p. 142.



the beginning of 1846.<sup>1</sup> Devendranath informs us further:<sup>2</sup>

We thought, after abandoning the philosophy of the Vedanta, we would be able to support the Brahma Dharma with the help of the Upanishads. But when we found that the latter also abounded in contrary and confusing ideas, we lost faith in them too.... The Vedas could not be its basis, nor could the Upanishads be of any avail. What will then be its foundation? We came to the conclusion, therefore, that the 'pure heart enlightened by self-realised knowledge' is the only basis of it... Those portions of the Upanishads which are conformable to such heart are acceptable to us; the rest we cannot accept. Henceforth our relation with the Upanishads, the best of all Shastras, will be determined by this consideration.

It is thus clear that the Tattvabodhini Sabha, after realising the unsuitability of the Vedas, tried to uphold the Upanishads as their book of religion; but the latter having proved similarly unacceptable, they resolved to make their 'enlightened heart' (i.e., their intuition) the basis of their religion and decided to compile a book of doctrines by taking such portions of the Upanishads as were conformable to their intuition.

This position they appear to have taken by the end of Saka 1769 (April-May, 1848). Introducing a series of translations of the Rig-Veda Samhita which began to be published in the Patrika at that time it observed that these were intended for illustrating the unsuitability of the Upanishads as the

1. Supra, p. 41.

2. Autobiography, pp. 166-168.

3. The Bengali phrase stands thus: "আত্মপ্রত্যক্ষ জ্ঞানোপস্থিত

৫. বিশুদ্ধ হৃদয়। 1772 Saka (1851), Series II., Vol. IV., pp. 159-164.



basis of the Brahma religion.<sup>1</sup> The Annual Report of the Sabha for that year ( Saka 1769 ) enumerated three important tasks lying before them, the first and foremost of which was "determining our original Shastras, and from them to collect the doctrines of the Brahma Religion."<sup>2</sup>

The compilation of the "Book of Brahma Religion" (Brahma Dharma Grantha) took about one year.<sup>3</sup> It was published in August 1850 (Bhadra 1772 Saka).<sup>4</sup> In the Annual Brahma Samaj for that year Akshaykumar Datta hailed it as a great achievement.<sup>5</sup>

Thus the Shastras were set aside and the Brahma Dharma Grantha was installed in their place. The above account shows that the process was gradual. Historians of the Brahma Samaj and the biographers of Devendranath have, however, considered the matter merely as an internal development without

1. T.P., Falgun 1769 Saka (April-May 1848), Series II., Vol. I., p. 153.

2. Annual Report of the Sabha, 1769 Saka - ibid., Jyaishta 1770 Saka(1848), Series II., Vol.II., pp. 21-22.

3. It is difficult to accept literally Devendranath's statement that the book was compiled within three hours (Autobiography, p. 178).

4. See the two advertisements in T.P., Bhadra and Aswin, 1772 Saka, the first stating that the book would come out of the press very shortly and the second stating that the book was ready for sale (Series II., Vol.IV., pp. 88 and 104). It is not known on what basis the editor of the Autobiography (Satischandra Chakravarty) states that the book was published in 1771 Saka (see Autobiography, p.178, footnote).

5. T.P., Falgun 1772 Saka (1851), Series II., Vol.IV., pp.159-164.

4. Ibid., p. 181.



relating it to the controversy with the missionaries, and have been, in consequence, led to some confusion with regard to both the date and nature of the event. G.S. Leonard<sup>1</sup> and Sivanath Sastri<sup>2</sup>, without following the sequence of events, have placed it roughly between 1847 and 1850. Ajitkumar Chakravarty, in order to show that Devendranath was not influenced by Akshaykumar Datta, maintains that it took place in 1847 (Saka 1769).<sup>3</sup> The latter's arguments are mainly two: (i) that from the beginning of Saka 1769 (May-June 1847) Devendranath caused the passage of the Upanishad referring to the "Superior" and "Inferior" knowledge of the Vedas to be published as the motto of the Patrika; and (ii) that in the second month of that year the Sabha decided to adopt the name Brahma Dharma in place of Brahma Jnana or Knowledge of Brahma. These changes, argues Chakravarty, must have taken place after the Vedas were rejected.<sup>4</sup> The conclusion is obviously inconsequential. Chakravarty's arguments could prove neither that Devendranath was not influenced by Akshaykumar Datta, his main theme, nor that the Vedas were definitely rejected at that time. The incidents cited by Chakravarty were mere stages in the process of development. The main

1. Maharshi Devendranath Thakur (Bengali text), Allahabad 1916,

1. A History of the Brahma Samaj, Calcutta 1879, pp. 88-89.

2. History of the Brahmo Samaj, Calcutta 1911, Vol. I., pp. 106-107.

3. Maharshi Devendranath Thakur (Bengali text), Allahabad 1916, pp. 177-190.

4. Ibid., p. 181.



objection to his conclusion is that the Vedas were not finally rejected before Devendranath's visit to Benares, which took place in the 6th and 7th month of Saka 1769, whereas the instances adduced by him fall in the first and the second month of the year.

This fundamental confusion about the nature of the development has also led to the assumption that the rejection of the Vedas was explicit and vocal. Ajitkumar Chakravarty and Satischandra Chakravarty, the biographer and editor of the autobiography of Devendranath respectively, have even stated that Akshaykumar Datta, in his speech in the Annual Brahma Samaj for 1772 Saka, made a public declaration of the fallibility of the Vedas.<sup>1</sup> The text of the speech, however, does not contain any sentence which may be regarded as a direct and open declaration of the fallibility of the Vedas.<sup>2</sup> What he did was that he hailed the compilation of the Brahma Dharma Grantha as a great achievement, and after relating in detail the Tattvabodhini movement to the memory of Rammohan Roy, recommended the book to the reverence of his countrymen because it was based on their original Shastras.<sup>3</sup> The predominant

1. Maharshi Devendranath Thakur (Bengali text), Allahabad 1916, p. 179, and Autobiography, Appendix 45, p. 426.

2. See the text of the speech in T.P., Falgun and Chaitra, 1772 Saka (1851), Series II., Vol. IV., pp. 159-164 and 174-175.

3. Ibid. Letter of "Indicus" to C.C.A., 5 April 1851, Vol. XIII., p. 163.

4. Ibid.



note of his speech was apologetic and defensive. The same strains characterised his speech in the Annual Brahma Samaj of the following year (Saka 1773).<sup>1</sup> Both these speeches show that while the fact of the untenability of the Vedas was well understood, there was no direct declaration that they were so. This was what they could not possibly do without incurring the serious displeasure and hostility of their countrymen. Hence what they did was that they ceased referring to them as the authorities of their religion and installed in the vacuum the Brahma Dharma Grantha. The step was more in the nature of an implicit acceptance of a position rather than an explicit and vocal change of policy. Its implicit nature is best illustrated by the fact that their adversaries, the missionaries, were unaware of this great change till March 1851<sup>2</sup>; and when on coming to know this they expressed their surprise as to how any Vedantist could consistently renounce the authority of the Vedas, a spokesman of the Vedantists explained that the position taken by them did not really mean a rejection of the authority of the Vedas.<sup>3</sup> The spokesman stated:<sup>4</sup>

When we consider that the other name of the Upanishad is the Vedant (conclusion of the Vedas) we are led at once

1. T.P., Falgun and Chaitra, 1773 Saka (1852), Series III., Vol. I., pp. 146-150 and 161-165.
2. C.C.A., 1 March 1851, Vol. XIII., pp. 100-101.
3. Letter of "Indicus" to C.C.A., 5 April 1851, Vol. XIII., p. 163.
4. Ibid.



to decide that the true and genuine Vedant is the Upanishad. But as the Vedant (Upanishad) is interpreted in six different manners by six different sages, how are we to make out the right interpretation? We answer by the aid of enlightened reason and the lights those interpretations severally afford. A man may not reckon the Vedant Durshan as infallible, yet he may be called a Vedantist if he believes in the Upanishad whose other name, as I have informed you just now, is the Vedant and which commanded the veneration of primitive Vedantists....

Thus the position taken by the Tattvabodhini Sabha was not only implicit, but also paradoxical; the infallibility of the Vedas was apparently renounced; the Brahma Dharma Grantha was nonetheless based on them.

The adoption of the Brahma Dharma Grantha necessitated further reforms. A new covenant, eliminating the Vedantic element of Sankara, was framed in place of the old one.<sup>1</sup> Members of the Brahma Samaj were required to subscribe to this and also the "Four Seed Principles" based on this.<sup>2</sup> Henceforth, instead of the Upanishads, the Brahma Dharma Grantha began to be read in the prayer meetings.

Ever since 1845 the missionaries were pointing out the inconsistency between the professions and practices of the Vedantists. In 1849-50 Devendranath attempted to remove this ground of reproach and resolved to abolish the worship of idols in his family; but he could not succeed because of the

1. See for the text of the Covenant Sastri, op.cit., Appendix B.

2. These principles laid stress on the unity and omnipotence of God and the love and worship of him as the only source of bliss. See for the text T.P., Chaitra 1773 Saka (1852), Series III., Vol. I., p. 163.



opposition of his brothers.<sup>1</sup> At his earnest request, however, they agreed to discontinue the Jagaddhatri Puja; the Durga Puja continued as usual.<sup>2</sup> Evidently the reform movement did not go very deep even in the family of its leader. In 1854 an attempt was made to give up the Brahmanical cord; but the proposal fell through because of the opposition of the majority of members including Akshaykumar Datta and Rajnarayan Basu.<sup>3</sup>

The period between 1850 and 1854 was, however, fruitful in the establishment of several branches of the Brahma Samaj. In 1851 the Maharaja of Burdwan established a Samaj within the precincts of his palace.<sup>4</sup> In June 1852 some youths of Bhawanipur (Calcutta) established a society (Jnana Prakashika Sabha) which was transformed by Devendranath's efforts into a Brahma Samaj.<sup>5</sup> In July of the same year another Samaj was established at Jagaddal, a village near Calcutta, mainly through the exertions of Devendranath and his colleague Rakhal Das Haldar.<sup>6</sup> In February 1843 Rakhal Das Haldar and his friend Anangamohan Mitra founded another Samaj at Khidirpur

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1. Autobiography, pp. 191-192.

2. Ibid., p. 192.

3. Ibid., Appendix 50.

4. T.P., Bhadra 1773 Saka (1851), Series III., Vol. I., p. 82.

5. Ibid., Kartik 1774 Saka (1852), Series III., Vol. II., pp. 83-84.

6. Ibid., p. 84.

4. Especially noteworthy are "Atma-tattva Vidya" by Devendranath Thakur and "Dharma-tattva Viveka" by Akshaykumar Datta.



(Calcutta) where the innovation of conducting the prayer in Bengali attracted the special favour of Akshaykumar Datta.<sup>1</sup> In 1854 a Brahma Samaj was established at Tippera.<sup>2</sup> At Dacca and Midnapur there were already two flourishing Samaies.

At the headquarters in Calcutta, however, differences of opinion developed soon. The renunciation of scriptural infallibility and the adoption of the Brahma Dharma Grantha was essentially a measure of compromise. The more rationalistic spirits like Akshaykumar Datta and Rakhal Das Halder were ill at ease with the dependence on the Shastras that the Brahma Dharma Grantha and the mode of prayer involved.<sup>3</sup> The former insisted upon carrying the reform to its logical conclusion by making the Brahma religion a system of rationalistic Deism based on reason and intuition alone. Devendranath desired to go no farther. The viewpoints of the two leaders may be best gleaned from the series of articles that both wrote in the Patrika during this period.<sup>4</sup> The party of Akshaykumar demanded a modification in the conception of Brahm and the discontinuance of the reading of the Brahma Dharma Grantha at the time of prayer. Instead, he wanted to

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1. Autobiography, pp. 456-458.

2. Autobiography, p. 444.

3. Ibid., pp. 220-221 and 459.

4. Ibid., p. 457.

5. Specially noteworthy are "Atma-Tattva Vidya" by Devendranath Thakur and "Dharma-tattva Viveka" by Akshaykumar Datta.



introduce a simple mode of prayer and discussions in Bengali. He even denied the necessity of prayer.<sup>1</sup> For the discussion of these problems he started a sort of inner society (Atmiya Sabha) in 1852 nominally under the presidentship of Devendranath Thakur. Akshaykumar and his friends were so obsessed with the rationalistic spirit that they attempted to decide upon the attributes of God by counting votes in this society.<sup>2</sup> Devendranath was so exasperated at this development that he retired to the Himalayas for solitary prayer and contemplation.<sup>3</sup> Akshaykumar was soon afterwards (1855) stricken with a paralytic attack and left both the Atmiya Sabha and the editorship of the Patrika. His departure irrecoverably weakened the rationalistic party in the Tattvabodhini Sabha. On coming back to Calcutta in November 1858 Devendranath proposed that for the propagation of the Brahma Religion there was no need of having two organisations — the Tattvabodhini Sabha and the Brahma Samaj. At his instance, therefore, the Sabha held its last meeting on 26 Baisakha 1781 Saka ( May 1859 ) and resolved on its own dissolution.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Autobiography, pp. 456-458.

2. Ibid., p. 459.

3. Ibid., pp. 220-221 and 459.

4. Bagal, Jogeschandra, Devendranath Thakur (Bengali text), Calcutta 1944, p. 31.



Thus the Tattvabodhini Sabha came to an end. The above review, however, shows that its reform movement in alliance with the Brahma Samaj was essentially related to the missionary activities, and was responsive to an apprehension that their Hinduism was going to be supplanted by Christianity. It is significant that those who started to check the progress of Christianity with the Vedantic doctrine of monotheism could not do so simply by putting a new interpretation upon the Vedas, but were led on, through discussions and criticisms, to a rejection of their infallibility. Undoubtedly it speaks much for their sincerity and open mindedness. Nor did their efforts go entirely in vain. Despite the implicit and gradual rejection of scriptural infallibility, the doctrine of Hindu monotheism which they tenaciously upheld and propagated, offered something attractive and plausible to the rising generation of educated Hindus, and as will be seen in the next chapter, contributed largely in aligning them against<sup>1</sup> the missionaries.

But though this was noted as "A remarkable sign of the times",<sup>2</sup> neither the missionary journal nor the autobiography of Devendrenath Thakur gives further information about it. The platform was not, however, altogether neglected; it was

1. C.C.A., 6 June 1840, Vol.I., p.134.

2. Ibid.



resorted to by the CHAPTER II. more than one occasion.

## The main Anti-Missionary Propaganda in the press. The periodical

cal press of the time was roughly divided into two sections —

one The evangelising efforts of the missionaries and their criticism of Hinduism naturally provoked counter-criticisms from the Hindus. Throughout this period these criticisms were more or less continuous and assumed the form of an anti-missionary propaganda. In this respect the controversy between the Tattvabodhini Sabha and the missionaries, noted in the previous chapter, was only a part of the larger controversy that was going on between the latter and the Hindus.

Except the Tattvabodhini Sabha, however, there was no other Hindu organisation during this period which could parallel any of the missionary societies working in Bengal. Even the Tattvabodhini Sabha was partly a reformist and partly a propagandist body. As early as 1840 it was reported to

have "intended to send out preachers against Christianity".<sup>1</sup> But though this was noted as "a remarkable sign of the times",<sup>2</sup> neither the missionary journal nor the autobiography of Devendranath Thakur gives further information about it. The platform was not, however, altogether neglected; it was

2. Two of the early anti-Christian tracts of this period were

1. C.C.A., 6 June 1840, Vol.I., p.134.
2. Ibid. published in 1840. K.M. Banerji replied to these on behalf of Christianity in his Strictures upon etc., Calcutta 1841. See an analysis of these tracts in C.C.O., May 1841.



resorted to by the Hindus on more than one occasion. The main organ of propaganda was the press. The periodical press of the time was roughly divided into two sections — one devoted to religion and religious discussions, and the other dealing with matters of general interest, religion not excluded. Both these sections of the Bengali press were anti-missionary in attitude during this period. The leading part, however, was played by the Samachar Chandrika, edited by Bhavanicharan Banerji, the Sambad Prabhakar, edited by Ishwarchandra Gupta, the Sambad Purnachandrodaya, edited by Udayachandra Adhya, and his brother, Advaitacharan Adhya, and the Tattvabodhini Patrika, the organ of the Tattvabodhini Sabha. Some journals were also launched avowedly to combat the missionary preachings; but these did not prosper.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes tracts were also issued.<sup>2</sup> In the absence of any well organised propagandist body, however, the criticisms that were

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1. The most noted of these journals were the Nitya-dharmanuranjika ( January 1846 ), edited by Nandakumar Kaviratna, the Satyasancharini Patrika ( August 1846 ), edited by Ramaprasad Roy ( see also infra, p. 85 ), Durjan Daman Mahanavami ( February 1847 ), edited by Mathuramohan Das, the Dharma-marma Prakashika ( May 1850 ), edited by Girishchandra Mukherji, and the Dharmaraja ( February 1853 ), edited by Tarakanath Datta.

2. Two of the early anti-Christian tracts of this period were Harachandra Tarkapanchanan's Reply to Mr. Muir's Mataparikshma and Kasinath Basus's Hinduism and Christianity, both published in 1840. K.M. Banerji replied to these on behalf of Christianity in his Strictures upon etc., Calcutta 1841. See an analysis of these tracts in C.C.O., May 1841.



directed through these organs were more or less spontaneous. They were naturally intensified whenever there were a number of conversions or other issues rousing the feelings of the public. The content of these criticisms may be divided into two parts — (i) those directed against the persons of the missionaries and (ii) those directed against the doctrines of Christianity. These two were interlinked, often the one leading to the other. Missionaries usually ignored such criticisms. In 1843, however, the main charges against the missionaries were that (a) they were reviling and interfering with the religion of the Hindus and that (b) they were holding out education as a bait to catch unwary youths. To these were added the collateral charges of intolerance, deception, temporal inducements, the prematureness and arbitrariness. Even the Sambad Bhaskar and the Gyananneshan, the most liberal of the Bengali papers, deprecated the public and unqualified denunciation of Hinduism by the missionaries. "We cannot but protest", wrote the Gyananneshan, "against the undue zeal they manifest in publicly reviling the mode of worship followed by the people of this country...the mode they pursue only having the effect of singular irritating the feelings of the people."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Quoted in C.C.A., 29 February 1840, Vol. I., p. 378. The same issue contains extracts from the Sambad Bhaskar also.

2. See for a summary of these discussions ibid., p. 230.

3. Ibid.



The criticisms directed against Christianity were mainly retaliatory, and were in consequence, often acrimonious. As is usual in polemical and controversial discussions, each party seized upon the real or supposed weakness of his opponent and harped upon it as often and as elaborately as he could. The main targets of the Hindu attack were thus the much debated doctrine of Trinity, the birth and genealogy of Christ, etc. The missionaries usually ignored such criticisms. In 1843, however, the Reverend William Morton, of the London Missionary Society, entered into a controversy with the Hindu editors on these points. The earlier months of the year witnessed much excitement in Calcutta on account of the baptism of Madhusudan Datta, but the controversy broke out on the occasion of the conversion, in September, of two youths, one belonging to the Halidar family of Kalighat (Calcutta) and the other a Rajput.<sup>1</sup> These conversions caused extraordinary excitement among the Hindu community and almost all the Bengali papers wrote angry comments bringing the above mentioned charges against the missionaries.<sup>2</sup> There were heated discussions all over Calcutta and its vicinity. The situation was characterised as "singular and critical".<sup>3</sup> It was at this time that the Rev. W. Morton

1. C.C.A., 23 September 1843, Vol. V., p. 247.

1. The ordination of these youths was announced by C.C.A., 16 September 1843, Vol. V., p. 229.

2. See for a summary of these discussions *ibid.*, p. 230.

3. *Ibid.*



intervened through the pages of the Calcutta Christian Advocate to explain and defend the position of the missionaries. Her passed a "censure" upon the "unqualified falsehood" of the "native editors", chiefly those of the "stupid Chandrika, the babbling inane Purnochandroday, and the rabid Prabhakar."<sup>1</sup> He challenged them to substantiate their assertions and expressed his determination "never to allow them to escape the severest scrutiny".<sup>2</sup>

Upon this challenge the Purnachandrodaya tried to exculpate itself by laying all the blames at the door of the Prabhakar.<sup>3</sup> The Purnachandrodaya admitted that the missionaries were honest and straightforward in their mode of propagating Christianity and that "he who therefore charges them with acting the part of robbers and child-stealers, only convicts himself of being a liar and a calumniator."<sup>4</sup> The editor of the Prabhakar, however, did not give in. Instead, he consolidated his ground of attack and maintained that while the missionaries were at liberty to teach their doctrines in any and every way they liked to the Europeans, "whose national religion it was", they had no right to revile and interfere with the religion of the people. He then stated that the missionaries had never concealed that

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1. C.C.A., 23 September 1843, Vol. V., p. 247.

2. Ibid., 21 October and 2 December 1843, Vol. V., pp. 303 and 374.

3. Editorial remarks of the Purnachandrodaya, reproduced in ibid., 30 September 1843, Vol. V., p. 255; also the comments of Morton added to it, ibid., pp. 255-256.

4. Ibid., p. 255.



of India.<sup>1</sup> In successive editorials he elaborated upon the charge of a "pestilent and obstinate interference with other peoples' religion" and held that the missionaries exhibited an "unreasonable hostility to Hinduism", a "condemnable spirit of rivalry" and a "malignant intolerance of every religion" but their own.<sup>2</sup> He also treated the angry comments of Morton with ingenious irony and tried to force the missionaries into an uncomfortable position by observing that while "they boasted themselves as void of wrath" they had already lost their temper and were now "well exposed". "God has brought down their pride; and all discerning persons may clearly perceive where the advantage lies on the score of truth, justice and fairness."<sup>3</sup>

The sharp remarks of the Prabhakar seem to have made the missionaries feel uneasy, for in reviewing them Morton observed:<sup>4</sup>

My own practical departure from professed principle would assuredly be just ground of reproach to me, though not either to my more consistent brethren or to the pure and holy religion we seek to propagate. And deeply as I should be concerned to think I had even seemed to give room for scandal in my over-earnestness to defend even the truth, I own I am not without hope I have not greatly committed myself in the controversy with the native editors.

He then stated that the missionaries had never concealed that

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1. Quoted in ibid., 21 October and 2 December 1843, Vol.V., pp. 303 and 374.

2. Ibid., pp. 303-304.

3. Ibid., p.303. ibid., 9 December 1843, Vol. V., p.337.

4. Ibid., 2 December 1843, Vol. V., pp. 374-377.



the ultimate aim of their establishing and conducting schools was conversion to Christianity, and closed his review with a promise to refute the charge of "bigotry" and interference with others' religion in the "next week".<sup>1</sup>

For more than a month, however, no reply came from Morton. This naturally prompted the Prabhakar to assume a triumphant attitude and to preach grandiloquently that the missionaries had been silenced.<sup>2</sup> On 2 December, however, Morton broke the silence and presented an explanation as to why the missionaries sought to convert the Hindus to Christianity. He accounted for the delay by "want of time and indisposition" and adduced elaborately the following 12 reasons in favour of the missionaries:<sup>3</sup>

(1) That the Holy Scriptures and the name of Jesus Christ were the only means "whereby men must be saved".

(2) That as God is One, "He cannot, then, have enjoined upon men, possessed of the same moral faculties everywhere, to worship him through idols in one country and by a spiritual service in another".

(3) That the Scriptures contained numerous injunctions to propagate the religion they enforce; to the missionaries, therefore, the command of God was "paramount to every other

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1. Ibid., pp. 303-304.

2. Quoted in ibid., 9 December 1843, Vol. V., p. 387.

3. C.C.A., 2 December 1843, Vol. V., pp. 374-377.



consideration". Hinduism debases the minds of men, deadens their

(4) That Christianity will certainly prevail among all nations, "since He has declared that it shall; and but he has left the propagation of it to us." the missionaries, are

(5) The history of the past proved this; it had spread since its inception, "and is now the professed religion of the principal civilised nations of the world." us..."<sup>1</sup>

(6) That wherever "Christianity spreads it entails in its results benefits to society". In reply the

(7) Christianity "shows man to be universally a responsible being... It meets his case as a hapless sinner, providing him with a suitable saviour, teacher and helper." and substance

(8) "The single fact that Christianity denounces idolatry ... is a point of distinction between it and Hinduism of the most impressive kind." The Prabhakar treated the reply as evasive

(9) "There is no other professed revelation but that in which Christians acknowledge that is supported by miracles at once stupendous yet simple."; to seek to gain converts from

(10) "Christianity is the only professed" revelation from Heaven that is supported by facts of actual substantiated history. Hinduism, for instance, has no history that deserves the name."

1. Ibid., pp. 374-376.

2. Quoted in ..., December 1943, Vol. V., pp. 380-387.  
true science, astronomy, geography and general physics."



but al(12) "Hinduism debases the minds of men, deadens their consciousness, clouds their understandings, corrupts their hearts and countenances every species of vice and immorality."

missi "It is not, then, because we, the missionaries, are actuated by any bigotry, or malignity," concluded Morton, "that we seek to bring all men everywhere to know and embrace Christianity, as our opponents unjustly accuse us..."<sup>1</sup>

The Hindus were questioning the very propriety of reviling and interfering with their religion. In reply the missionaries were thus telling them that their religion was false and debasing and that Christianity was the only true and sublimating religion; for this was the sum and substance of Morton's arguments. Obviously such a proposition could be neither pleasant nor convincing to the Hindus.

The editor of the Prabhakar treated the reply as evasive and challenged the missionaries to prove the merits of their cause.<sup>2</sup> He maintained that all religions were equally venerable to their respective votaries; to seek to gain converts from one to another was both "unreasonable" and "unjust".<sup>3</sup> He not only repeated the charge that the missionaries were "using artifice and deceit" to gain converts to their cause,

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1. Ibid., pp. 374-376.

2. Quoted in ibid., 9 December 1843, Vol. V., pp. 386-387.

3. Ibid., p. 387. 1843, Vol. V., p. 388.



but also brought their colour, their imperfect acquaintance with the languages of the country, their gesture, etc., under sharp and smart remarks. "The white-faced smooth-spoken missionaries", with "foreign accent or pronunciation", using sundry "strange contortions of body and outré gesticulations"—these and similar witty phrases were skilfully employed to hold them up to public jest and ridicule.<sup>1</sup> Evidently the advantage was on the side of the editor of the Prabhakar. He was taking his stand in the name of the national religion making the missionaries appear as intruders. He was using the language of the people, employing phrases and idioms that had easier and greater appeal to their intelligence. He was also throwing upon the missionaries the stupendous task of proving to an avowedly critical and hostile audience that every tenet of Christianity was conformable to ordinary reason and common sense. From this time, the Prabhakar began to publish a series of letters of a "Searcher after truth" reflecting disparagingly on Christianity and raising doubts about many of its tenets.<sup>2</sup> To the challenge of the Prabhakar to a discussion on the merits of Christianity Morton, in consultation with his colleagues,<sup>3</sup> raised the following four objections:

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1. Ibid., p. 386.

2. Ibid., p. 387.

3. Ibid., 16 December 1843, Vol. V., p. 398.

2. Ibid., pp. 387-388.

3. Ibid., p. 388.



fear t (i) That he did not engage himself to carry on such discussions. "What I did voluntarily promise was to give an explicit statement of our principles and of the reasons on which we act in labouring to propagate Christianity among the people of other faiths; and this I have done much more in the detail than either myself at first contemplated or my opponent had any claim to expect."<sup>1</sup>

(ii) That the pages of a newspaper were not a suitable medium for such discussion because they were "mixed up with the announcements of Sheriff's sales and dacoities".<sup>2</sup>

(iii) That the course proposed by the editor of the Prabhakar for topical discussions, taking the four Gospels and chapter by chapter, commencing with the genealogy of Christ, was objectionable for with the "most of these, as well as with the principle of biblical interpretation, the nature of historical and moral evidence, etc., Hindus are at present, for the most part, largely, if not wholly unacquainted, and are therefore, incompetent to appreciate and feel the full force of the most cogent argumentation and most satisfactory replies."<sup>3</sup>

(iv) That the editor of the Prabhakar, or his correspondent, was not a "sincere enquirer", but an "enemy in disguise".

"It is not that we fear the result of enquiry as to the stability of the claims of our holy system", concluded Morton, "but we

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1. Ibid., 9 December 1843, Vol. V., p. 387.

2. Ibid., pp. 387-388.

3. Ibid., p. 388.



fear to minister to 'a mind diseased' by feeding its sceptical propensity, when we ought rather to aim at purifying its earthly and sensual affections."<sup>1</sup>

Morton's statements suggest that the missionaries were considering it inadvisable to enter into a controversy with the Hindu editors on the evidence of Christianity. But to declare its superiority as the only justification of their attempt to gain converts and then to discountenance a challenge to demonstrate such superiority on the ground that there was no such engagement, that the newspapers were not the suitable medium, that the Hindus were generally incompetent for such discussion and that especially the editor of the Prabhakar and his correspondent were insincere, could be easily construed as evasive, although the missionaries always welcomed sincere enquirers and were ever ready for verbal discussions. Such a discussion, however, could not for long be staved off. The Prabhakar continued publishing the letters of the "Searcher after Truth". On 23 December 1843 Morton published a lengthy "Reply to the Objections of the Prabhakar's Correspondent".<sup>2</sup> It appears that objections were raised by the latter on the following grounds:

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1. Ibid.

2. C.C.A., 23 December 1843, Vol. V., pp. 409-412. The "Reply" was continued in the following number of the paper - ibid., pp. 424-427..



(i) That the doctrine of the Trinity was polytheistic;  
 (ii) That the genealogies of Christ given by Matthew  
 and Luke did not agree;  
 (iii) That the virgin birth of Christ was opposed to  
 human nature and reason;  
 (iv) and that the story of Joseph's dream was a fabrication.  
 To satisfy a hostile critic on the above points was  
 almost impracticable; it was rendered all the more difficult  
 by the supercilious attitude of Morton. At the very outset  
 he reiterated that the missionaries were under no obligation  
 to answer and consequently they were free to choose such means  
 and procedure as they thought fit for such discussions, for  
 "the teacher does not receive direction as to his mode of tuition  
 from his pupils, nor is the physician held under obligation to  
 treat his diseased patient in the manner his wayward and sickly  
 fancy or fretful temper may desire."<sup>1</sup> He therefore proceeded  
 to answer "the fool according to his folly lest he be wise in  
 his own conceit."<sup>2</sup> As to the first objection he discussed at  
 length the philosophy of the doctrine and maintained that it  
 was "confessedly mysterious" and should be understood as the  
 Christians understood it. The "terms must not be so understood  
 as to injure the perfect and indivisible unity of God... The

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1. Ibid., pp. 409-410.

2. Ibid., p. 410.



mode of expression may be imperfect, but the meaning is clear."<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the second point he maintained that the object of the two genealogies was not to prove the divinity, but the even humanity of Christ, and that Matthew gave the line of Christ's reputed or supposed father whilst Luke gave that of his mother herself.<sup>2</sup> On this point he further recommended the "Searcher" to read Watson's Apology for the Bible. On the third and the fourth points he characterised the "Searcher's" arguments as preposterous, wicked, childish, blasphemous, "an outrage against the sense of mankind and a crime against all revealed religion or human charity."<sup>3</sup> He emphasised that these were "miracles" and should be accepted as such.<sup>4</sup>

Intrinsic value apart, Morton's reply tended to convey to an intelligent Hindu the following impressions. First, Morton was not calm and dispassionate in his discussions. The editor of the Prabhakar or the "Searcher after Truth" were avowed critics of the missionaries; to call them "hypocrites", "fools", "stupid", etc. was unnecessary. This, together with the unqualified criticism of the religion and character of the Hindus generally which occupied a large part of his reply tended to confirm the accusation that the missionaries were

1. Ibid., p. 411. "Hindus must admit this; for they declare

2. Ibid., 30 December 1843, Vol. V., p. 425.

3. Ibid., p. 426. "It is clear, then, that we can only make an

4. Ibid. "tributes of God..." Ibid., p. 411.



abusers of the Hindus and Hinduism. Secondly, his discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity was as abstruse and subtle as that of the Brahm (Supreme God) by the Vedantists. He even recalled the Vedantist's proposition that the Brahm was beyond human language and intelligence in order to justify the mysterious nature of the Trinity.<sup>1</sup> But the doctrine of Brahm, associated as it was with the Shastras and the tradition of the Hindus, could have a better appeal to them in comparison with the Trinity which was both foreign and difficult. Moreover, to ask the Hindus to understand the "mysteries" and "miracles" of Christianity as the Christians understood them, and at the same time to denounce the Hindu religion as irrational and superstitious, appeared inconsistent. The whole effect of the controversy thus tended to compromise the position of the missionaries, and as will be seen presently, supplied further grounds for the hostile criticism of the Hindus.

In the Annual Meeting of the Calcutta Christian Tract and Book Society for 1843 the Revds. W. Morton and D. Ewart referred to the formation of a similar society among the Vedantists, and enforced on the meeting the duty of counteracting the influence of its publications by "new and fresh issues

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1. Morton wrote: "Hindus must admit this; for they declare God to be without the range of language; i.e., ineffable—  
 1. বাক্যহীন. It is clear, then, that we can only make an approximation towards a just expression of the nature and attributes of God..." Ibid., p. 411.

3. T.P., Series I., Vol. I., p. 153.



of sound religious truth."<sup>1</sup> The reference was obviously to the editorial board of the Tattvabodhini Patrika, for it was towards the end of 1843 that the Patrika was started, and that no other society of the kind appears on record. The years 1844-1845 were mainly occupied by the controversy between the Tattvabodhini Sabha and the missionaries. It has been seen how the missionary criticisms influenced the development of the Tattvabodhini philosophy.<sup>2</sup> But in course of defending its own position the Tattvabodhini Sabha also directed counter-criticisms against the missionaries, thus practically continuing the controversy begun by the Prabhakar. The points raised by the Sabha were mainly the following:

(1) It not only reiterated the Prabhakar's claim that each religion was equally venerable to its respective votaries, but also charged it with a more philosophic and patriotic strain. "It is the most narrow view of the science of divinity", declared the Sabha, "to suppose that the Lord of all nations can prefer a particular tribe and a particular form of religion to the superior belief which constitutes the eternal foundation of religion and piety."<sup>3</sup>

(2) In meeting the criticism that the Vedas were full of 'misty metaphysics' the Sabha retorted that "there are many

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1. Ibid., 13 January 1844, Vol. VI., p. 14.

2. See supra, pp. 32-46.

3. T.P., Series I., Vol. I., p. 153.



many things even in the Bible itself to which not merely a Hindoo but even a Christian may prefer the charge of obscurity... Thus for instance, the first few verses of John are perfectly mysterious, though they, nevertheless, form part of the Gospel."<sup>1</sup> It even assailed the theory of "miracles" and "mysteries". Man has been created an intellectual being, it argued, and any aid which is deemed necessary for him is naturally directed to his intelligence. The Sabha wrote:<sup>2</sup>

For the reception of any truth by a creature endowed with reasoning faculty, it cannot be necessary for the Creator of all things and the Prime Cause of all movements... to appear in a finite shape in the midst of the wonders of the physical world... Mysteries lying beyond the stretch of human faculties cannot form a part of religion, until our nature becomes so altered as to enable us to penetrate them, or at least to glance at them. To leave man to his free thought, then to disable him from perceiving the force of a truth, and yet to oblige him to hold a certain conviction for which he is quite incapacitated, and this under pain of eternal damnation, does not seem to us to be the mark of Divine Mercy...

(3) It also contradicted the assertion that Hinduism had no history worthy of the name and that Christianity was founded upon actual facts of history. If historical facts alone were the test of revelation, it asked, "to what extent the Christian Bible can pass the ordeal so created... The ten Commandments are said to have been written down on two slabs of marbles. By whom were they written? By God or by Moses?

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1. Ibid., p. 154.

2. Ibid., p. 223.

3. Ibid.



How have they been so long preserved? And where are they now to be seen?"<sup>1</sup>

(4) The Sabha also refuted the missionary contention that Christianity was responsible for the tremendous progress of the West. They asked what explanations would the missionaries give of the centuries of darkness and ignorance which followed the introduction of the faith in Christ, of the ages of abbeys and nunneries, when confession to an Ecclesiastic would exiate the most abominable sins that a man could be guilty of.<sup>2</sup> "Surely Christianity had a very little influence in bringing about the present state of things in the west", maintained the Sabha. "But it is to the philosophy of Bacon and his followers, to the expansion of commerce, to the invention of the art of printing and the spread of education and other similar causes that Europe owes its present civilisation. Christianity itself is indebted to those very causes for all the seeds of reformation which it has since secured in its bosom."<sup>3</sup>

To the above criticisms the missionaries do not appear to have given any direct reply during this period, although they published a mass of literature criticising Vedantism particularly and Hinduism generally. Plausible as the criticisms of the Prabhakar and the Tattvabodhini Sabha were, they,

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1. Ibid., p. 222.

2. Ibid., p. 228.

3. Ibid.



together with the propagation of the Vedantic monotheism, tended to make an impression upon the educated Hindu youths that perhaps their religion was not so bad as the missionaries represented it to be, and perhaps all the doctrines of Christianity were not above doubt and criticism. Even the orthodox Hindus, who were not otherwise well disposed to the Vedantists' exposition of Hinduism, were found about this time invoking the doctrine of Vedantic monotheism in order to combat the influence of missionary preachings. Their attitude is best reflected in a small tract issued by Babu Prasannakumar Thakur<sup>1</sup> under the caption: Humble suggestions to his countrymen who believe in one true God.<sup>2</sup> The writer delineated three classes among the Europeans — (1) Those who believed God to be in every sense one and worshipped Him alone in spirit, should be regarded with affection by the Hindus, "on the ground of the object of their worship being the same as ours".<sup>3</sup> (2) Those who believed "Jesus Christ to be God himself, and conceive him to be possessed of a particular form, and maintain Father, Son and Holy Ghost to be one God", should be treated as "we act towards those of our countrymen who, without forming any external image, meditate<sup>upon</sup>

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1. He was the uncle of Devendranath Thakur, but not a member of either the Brahma Samaj or the Tattvabodhini Sabha.

2. The pamphlet was printed in the Tattvabodhini Press, Calcutta, in 1845. See India Office Library Tracts, Vol. 642.

3. Humble suggestions etc. p.3. The reference here is obviously to the Unitarians.



Ram and other supposed incarnations, and believe in their unity."<sup>1</sup> (3) Those who believing "Jesus Christ to be Supreme Being, moreover construct various images of him, should not be hated. On the contrary, it becomes us to act towards those Europeans in the same manner as we act towards such as believe "Ram etc., to be incarnations of God, and form external images of them. For the religious principles of the two last mentioned foreigners are one and the same with those of the two similar sects among the Hindoos, although they are clothed in a different garb."<sup>2</sup> When, therefore, any of the two last mentioned Europeans endeavoured to make converts of the Hindus, "the believers in the only living and true God", they should be compassionated, for possessed of wealth and power as they were, it was almost impossible for them to perceive "the errors into which they themselves have fallen".<sup>3</sup> Whatever might be the fallacy in this analysis of the writer, the pamphlet had the unmistakable tendency to diminish the effects of the missionary labours by making Christians and Christianity appear as equals to Hindus and Hinduism. It was precisely at this period that educated Hindu youths were found flocking in large numbers to the fold of the

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1. Ibid. Falgun 1767 Saka (1846), Series I., Vol. I., p. 281.

2. Ibid., 1 February 1845, Vol. VII., p. 51.

3. Ibid. infra, pp. 124-126.

4. C.C.A., 31 May 1845, Vol. VII., p. 252.



Tattwabodhini Sabha. In 1845-'46 its membership rose suddenly from 145 to more than 500.<sup>1</sup> Even those who did not become its members began to oppose missionary efforts in the name of the true religion of the Shastras. Already at the beginning of 1845 the Calcutta Christian Advocate counted "Young Bengal" as the "far more inveterate opponents" of the Gospel... than the wholly ignorant and uneducated."<sup>2</sup> In May of that year, shortly following the publication of the Draft Lex Loci Act and the case of Umeshchandra Sarkar<sup>3</sup> which caused great excitement among the Hindus, it described the different groups of them as having one thing common to them all — "Hostility to Christianity. Towards the Gospel and its claims they entertain only the most united and bitter enmity. The Dharma, Brahma and Tattwabodhini Sabhas — Young Bengal — the bigoted and the liberal, orthodox and reformer, the gross idolater, and the pure Vedantists, all were united in hatred and opposition to the Gospel."<sup>4</sup> In June the conference of the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society in Bengal abandoned the project of establishing a Central Training School at Krishnagar ( in the district of Nadia ) because of the "large influx of educated young men" who were "zealously engaged in opposing

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1. T.P., Falgun 1767 Saka (1846), Series I., Vol. I., p. 261.

2. C.C.A., 1 February 1845, Vol. VII., p. 51.

3. See infra, pp. 124-126.

4. C.C.A., 31 May 1845, Vol. VII., p. 252.



Christianity, and in propagating infidel notions."<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that in the previous meeting they had recommended the place for such a school to the Parent Committee in preference to Calcutta.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of September (1845) the Calcutta Christian Advocate stated that "Young Bengal", "a class of pretenders to liberal and enlightened views", had begun to publish a series of little tracts, entitled a Rational Analysis of the Gospel.<sup>3</sup> These were reported to be "made up of extracts from the writings of Tom Paine, and the lowest of infidel writers, with occasionally a sentence or parts of a sentence here and there, to give the whole an appearance of originality."<sup>4</sup> With a view to correcting the "evil tendency of these vile publications" the missionaries resolved to publish a series of tracts, "original or reprints", under the general name of Anti-Infidel Tracts.<sup>5</sup> Between November 1845 and January 1846 twelve such

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1. Minutes of the meeting of the Church Missionaries of Bengal, held on 3-5 June 1845 - C.M.S. Archives, North India Missions, No. 16.
  2. Ibid., dated 5-6 February 1845.
  3. C.C.A., 6 September 1845, Vol. VII., p.422. These tracts were published every Saturday from the Prabhakar Press. The price of these tracts was one anna per copy (ibid., p.424). The Tattvabodhini Sabha stated that it had no connection with these publications and that their editor was one Shyamacharan Mukherji (T.P., 1 Paus 1767 Saka, Series I., Vol. I., pp.246-47).
  4. C.C.A., 6 September 1845, Vol. VII., pp.422-423.
  5. Ibid., 1 November 1845, Vol. VII., p. 517.



tracts were published.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to ascertain how far these Anti-Infidel Tracts influenced the Hindu mind. The Calcutta Christian Advocate expressed satisfaction that "not a few" of the Bengalis had been "both instructed and informed by them"<sup>2</sup> and reproduced in support of this statement the letter of an "intelligent" Hindu who, on perusal of them, had contributed rupees four to the fund opened for their publication.<sup>3</sup> The 'Letter', however, showed that its writer was a "Hindi Idolater" and he could not therefore "agree with all that are set forth by Christians in support of Christianity" and contributed the money so that he might not be misunderstood as an "atheist".<sup>4</sup> Be that as it may, the Anti-Infidel Tracts failed to convince "Young Bengal" against whom they were mainly directed. Babu Kalikumar Das, one of the stalwarts of "Young Bengal", held that the tracts did not answer the arguments contained in the

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1. Each of these tracts was published as a Supplement to each week's Calcutta Christian Advocate. A list of these tracts was published in the Advocate of 31 January 1846, Vol. VIII., p. 59.
  2. Ibid., p. 50.
  3. Ibid., p. 51.
  4. Ibid. One month later a list of contributors to the "Anti-Infidel Tract Fund" was published. It appears from the list that none but one, "Mr. Carrau and family", had contributed rupees four; others paid either more or less. This name, however, does not appear to be that of a Hindu. - Ibid., 7 March 1846, Vol. VIII., p. 109.



Rational Analysis of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> The Tattvabodhini Patrika commented that they were directed more against the authors of the Analysis than against their arguments, and were consequently full of abusive expressions as was the wont of the missionaries.<sup>2</sup> "Let the missionaries remember", wrote the Patrika, "that this is not a country of an uncivilised people. It was from this country that in olden times learning, religion and civilisation spread in the neighbouring countries. The educated people of this country cannot be befooled by fallacious arguments."<sup>3</sup> In April 1846 some students of the Hindu College formed a society called the Satya-Sancharini Sabha ( Society for the diffusion of Truth ).<sup>4</sup> Its object was to carry on, through a monthly journal, "a fair and candid discussion on Christianity, with the Missionaries and other advocates of that religion", and to distribute "tracts and pamphlets on the subject of religion, morality and science".<sup>5</sup> The president of the society

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1. Ibid., 31 January 1846, Vol. VIII., p. 50.

2. T.P., 1 Paus 1767 Saka ( December 1845 ), Series I., Vol. I., pp. 245-246. The "strong, severe and coarse" language adopted by Dr. Duff in the Introduction to the Anti-Infidel Tracts evoked criticism even from the "Christian editor" of the Calcutta Star, and for this the latter was sharply reviewed by the Calcutta Christian Herald under the caption: "The Anti-Infidel Tracts, Dr. Duff and the Star", all quoted in C.C.A., 22 November 1845, Vol. VII., pp. 555-556.

3. T.P., 1 Paus 1767 Saka (Dec. 1845), Series I., Vol. I., p. 246.

4. Englishman, quoted in C.C.A., 16 May 1846, Vol. VIII., p. 229.

5. C.C.A., 30 May 1846, Vol. VIII., p. 257.

7. Banerji, Brajendranath, Vangla Samayika Petra, Cal. 1948, p. 90.



was Babu Ramaprasad Roy.<sup>1</sup> Three months after its formation the society started a monthly journal named after it — the Satya-sancharini Patrika.<sup>2</sup> On noticing its first number the Friend of India commented that it was established by a portion of "the large and increasing body" of the Hindu Deists who, "instead of embracing the truths of the Gospel, had taken refuge in Vedantism".<sup>3</sup> In its second number the Patrika itself wrote: "We have strong hopes in witnessing one day the young followers of Christianity in this land embrace that natural religion which is mainly advocated in the pure Vedant."<sup>4</sup> It was because of this professed Vedantism that the Bengal Hurkaru supposed the Patrika to be an undertaking of the Tattvabodhini Sabha; but the latter contradicted the supposition.<sup>5</sup> However, the Satya-Sancharini Sabha could not prosper and occupy the position of either the Tattvabodhini Sabha or the Calcutta Christian Tract and Book Society.<sup>6</sup> Its Patrika came to an end in November 1847 on account of the death of its editor.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Ibid. He was the youngest son of Raja Rammohan Roy.

2. Hurkaru, 20 August 1846.

3. Friend of India, 27 August 1846.

4. Reproduced in C.C.A., 17 October 1846, Vol.VIII., p. 449.

5. T.P., 1 Magha 1767 Saka (1846), Series I., Vol.I., p.260.

6. It appears that the Sabha started its career with a division in its ranks. See for this the letters of "A Reader" and "One connected", published respectively in C.C.A., 23 and 30 May 1846, Vol.VIII., pp. 245 and 257.

7. Banerji, Brajendranath, Vangla Samayika Patra, Cal.1948, p. 90.

8. Englishman, 15 and 16 November 1847.



Nothing more was heard of the Sabha.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of 1847 an Irish Unitarian adventurer named Tuite joined 'Young Bengal' and the Vedantists in order to oppose the missionaries.<sup>2</sup> He was reported to have agreed to write a series of articles exposing the "fallacy and absurdity of the Christian religion" and showing the "superior excellencies of unitarianism" the doctrines of which, he thought, approximated "as nearly as possible to those of Vedantism".<sup>3</sup> For a few months, however, he did not come to any clash with the missionaries, but in October, shortly following the agitation over the conversion of three students of Dr. Duff's school and a rumoured conspiracy to manhandle Duff<sup>3</sup>, Tuite, along with his Hindu allies challenged Duff to a public disputation on the evidences of Christianity.<sup>4</sup> The disputation took place on 6 and 13 November, at the Free Church Institution at Garanhata (Calcutta).<sup>5</sup> On both occasions a large number of Hindus of "all sects and parties" thronged the institution to its capacity. The reports show that Tuite did not fare well in the discussion, but that a number of

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1. The Calcutta Standard, 28 January 1847, quoted in C.C.A., 30 January 1847, Vol. IX., p. 58.

2. Ibid.

3. See infra, pp. 236-238.

4. Letter of "A Spectator" in C.C.A., 11 December 1847, Vol. IX., p. 596. Another version says that Duff challenged them for the disputation. See Hunter, R., History of the Missions of the Free Church of Scotland etc., London 1873, p. 99.

5. Englishman, 15 and 16 November 1847.



'Young Bengal' including Kalikumar Das gave a good account of themselves and opposed Dr. Duff with much ability.<sup>1</sup> The Hindu audience on the whole "conducted themselves with great decorum".<sup>2</sup> As is usual, nothing conclusive seems to have resulted from the discussions. "We in common with others feared", commented the Calcutta Christian Advocate, "that Dr. Duff, rather than benefit them, might resemble a man that would cast pearls before swine, which might turn and rend him, and we wished him opponents more worthy of his metal..."<sup>3</sup>

For the rest of the forties no other serious controversy took place although the Hindus continued to be critical of Christianity and its missionaries, and the latter were equally ceaseless in their efforts to dislodge Hinduism and Vedantism. Commenting upon the state of the Bengali press in 1850 the Calcutta Review enumerated 16 periodicals<sup>4</sup> and remarked: "All these publications have a decided anti-Christian tone, and must produce a considerable sapping effect upon the minds of their 20,000 readers, who show the value they attach to them by paying for them."<sup>5</sup> And "it should be remembered",

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1. Ibid., 15 November 1847. C.C.A., 8 February 1851, Vol. XIII., p. 63.

2. Ibid., 5 October 1850, Vol. XII., p. 469. The series consisted of lectures on different topics by different missionaries.

3. C.C.A., 4 December 1847, Vol. IX., p. 581.

4. This number is not accurate; see Banerji, Brajendranath, Vangla Samayika Patra, Calcutta 1948, pp. 105, 109-110.

5. The Calcutta Review, Vol. XIII. (January-June 1850), p. 161.



added the Dnyanodaya, "that among the natives each paper is usually read by a number of people."<sup>1</sup>

While this was the general attitude of the Bengali press a significant development took place towards the end of 1850 when the missionaries began to deliver a series of "Lectures to Educated Native Young Men".<sup>2</sup> Commenting upon this the Literary Chronicle, one of the organs of 'Young Bengal', wrote that the course adopted by the missionaries "of dealing with the attendants on the lectures, not as Hindus or Mussalmans, but as enquiring, sinful and responsible men", might have been the most suitable course in addressing a class of men, if there were such men who had "no settled opinion of their own" and whose minds "were a mere religious vacuum — and occupied with no system of religion whatever."<sup>3</sup> But the educated men of Bengal did not come under this description; they had "a system of religion of their own".<sup>4</sup> It was also decided to publish replies to these lectures. In February 1851 came out the Remarks on the Rev. K.M. Banerjea's lecture on Vedantism by "A Hindu".<sup>5</sup> In this connection the Hindu Intelligencer

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1. Dnyanodaya, quoted in C.C.A., 8 February 1851, Vol.XIII.,p.63.
  2. C.C.A., 5 October 1850, Vol.XII., p. 469. The series consisted of 9 lectures on different topics by different missionaries.
  3. Quoted in C.C.A., 18 January 1851, Vol.XIII.,pp. 26-27.
  4. Ibid.
  5. C.C.A., 1 March 1851, Vol.XIII., p. 100.



announced that replies to other lectures were in course of preparation.<sup>1</sup> In March was published a Vindication of Deism in answer to the lecture of the Rev. Mr. Mackay.<sup>2</sup> No other replies, however, appear to have been published.<sup>3</sup>

About the same time the missionaries of Calcutta, decided to address a "Letter to the Learned Pandits of Bengal" which was drawn up in English. A Bengali translation of it was published by the Calcutta Christian Tract and Book Society and was distributed to the Pandits.<sup>4</sup> In a friendly and affectionate way the letter stated that every man was sinful and that this fact was corroborated by the Hindu Shastras, but that the modes of worship followed by the Pandits were not calculated to attain salvation and that the only way of getting a redemption of sins was by a belief in Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> In conclusion the letter tried to dispel two of the popular misconceptions prevalent among the Hindus that (1) Christianity was a religion of Europeans and that (2) it was fitted only for the ignorant. "In point of fact", stated the letter, "Christianity was not

1. Quoted in ibid.

2. Ibid., 5 April 1851, Vol.XIII., p. 159.

3. In January 1853 was published a tract entitled Christianity, what is it? or a rational enquiry into the religion of the Gospel, by "A Hindu". It is not known whether this was in reply to the Rev. D. Ewart's lecture "On Christianity".

4. C.C.O., July 1853, Vol.XXII., p. 289.

5. Ibid., pp. 290-295.

For an account of these baptisms see "A narrative of events in connection with the London Missionary Society's Institution, Bhawanipur" in C.C.O. May 1851, Vol.XX., pp. 226-231. See also infra, pp. 131-133.



the religion of Europeans originally. It originated in Asia, and was introduced into Europe at an early period, when it had to maintain the same struggle with idolatry and superstition that it is now maintaining in India."<sup>1</sup> As to the second it cited the instances of Carey, Yates, Morton, etc., and concluded: "That Christian Missionaries have become Pandits, shows that there is no incompatibility betwixt learning and Christianity, and therefore no reason why Pandits should not become Christians."<sup>2</sup>

It is not known what reaction the "Letter" produced upon the Pandits of Bengal; but the attempt to represent Christianity as being compatible with the patriotism of the Hindus in general and the social status of the Pandits in particular, together with the remarkably moderate tone of the "Letter", denoted a change of attitude from the uncompromising aggressiveness of the forties.

In May of the same year, however, another wave of excitement swept over the Hindus on the baptism of a number of students of the London Missionary Society's Institution at Bhawanipur ( Calcutta ).<sup>3</sup> It was reported at that time that subscriptions were being raised among the Hindus for setting

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1. Ibid., p. 297.

2. Ibid.

3. For an account of these baptisms see "A narrative of events connected with five enquirers in connection with the London Missionary Society's Institution, Bhawanipur" in C.C.O. May 1851, Vol. XX., pp. 226-231. See also infra, pp. 131-133.



up chapels in the neighbourhood of the several lecturing huts of the English missionaries in Bhawanipur and elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> It was proposed to engage eloquent speakers for these places, "fluent of tongue and versed in Hindu Shastras, having also some acquaintance with Christian doctrines." They were also to lecture controversially, illustrating the tenets of their own faith and demonstrating the "weakness and defects of the Christian creed."<sup>2</sup> It is not known whether these anti-missionary lecturing huts were ever erected. The early fifties witnessed, however, the establishment of a number of Vedantist or Brahma Sabhas in Calcutta and its vicinity.<sup>3</sup> One of these branch Vedantist organisations started a journal, in 1856, called the Satya-jnana Sancharini Patrika (A paper to diffuse true knowledge).<sup>4</sup> The anti-Christian writings of this Patrika soon attracted the attention of the missionaries; and early in 1857 the Rev. Bomwetsch of the Church Missionary Society stated that he had still "further enlarged his treatise" entitled Justification by Faith in order "to reply to the arguments brought forward in the Satyagyana Sancharini."<sup>5</sup> It was also

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1. C.C.A., 3 May 1851, Vol. XIII., p. 215.

2. Ibid.

3. See supra, p.51-52.

4. Banerji, Brajendranath, Vangla Samayika Patra, Calcutta 1948, p. 141.

5. Minutes of the 22nd meeting of the Bengal Missionaries of the Church Missionary Society, held on 3-6 March 1857 - C.M.S. Archives, North India Missions, No. 16.



in 1856 that the missionaries decided to issue a monthly letter in English, copies of which were to be forwarded by post or otherwise to such Hindus as were familiar with the English language.<sup>1</sup> Between July 1856 and June 1857 eleven such letters were issued and distributed.<sup>2</sup> As in the case of the letter addressed to the Pandits of Bengal in 1851, so also at this time the missionaries endeavoured to allay the patriotic feelings of the Hindu youths in favour of Christianity. Thus, for instance, the first letter was "On the folly of adhering to bad customs" wherein the inadvisability of abiding by "the bad customs" of Hinduism because it was a "national religion" was illustrated.<sup>3</sup> A reply to this letter was given by an anonymous Hindu who stated that the educated Hindus were better aware of their own interests and did not, therefore, want the advice of the missionaries who were themselves victims to a number of bad customs.<sup>4</sup> No reply to the other letters was made.

No other remarkable development in this connection appears to have taken place during this period; but the above review shows that the Hindus, throughout this period, conducted a more or less sustained anti-missionary propaganda in order to

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1. C.C.O., August 1856, Vol. XXV., p. 82.

2. See for these letters the Calcutta Christian Observer for 1856 and 1857, Vols. XXV. and XXVI.

3. C.C.O., August 1856, Vol. XXV., pp. 82-85.

4. Ibid., February 1857, Vol. XXVI., pp. 76-82.



maintain their own system of religion. This, coupled with the progress of Vedantism and the alignment of the educated class with it, appears to have made the position of the missionaries desperate. Conversions were indeed not stopped; but henceforth the missionaries were fighting a losing battle. Their efforts had roused a rather hostile public opinion which they could no longer treat with indifference. It was a very different situation that they, from being mere critics of the native religions, were called upon to defend their own position, as regards both their procedures and tenets. Clearly the Hindus were in the ascendant.

The East India Company were ever zealous in maintaining a policy of strict neutrality in matters of religion. They could not, however, resist the demands of the English evangelicals to undertake the responsibility for educating the Indian subjects. To the evangelicals education and moral regeneration of the "natives" were cotermious and educating them would prepare them for the acceptance of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> The demand of the evangelicals was met by Parliament in 1813 when the Company's government of India were required to set apart annually, in the event of a surplus in the revenue, a sum of not less than one lakh (100,000) of rupees for the

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1. A characteristic exposition of their views is Charles Grant's Observations on the state of society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to morals, and the means of improving it. London 1792.



## CHAPTER III.

## Education and Evangelisation

The same apprehension of the progress of Christianity which characterised the Hindu reform movement and the anti-missionary propaganda, noted in the previous chapters, also underlay the Bengalis' attitude to the Government education policy and missionary educational efforts. This aspect of the reaction is discussed in the present chapter.

## I. Attitude to Government Education Policy

The East India Company were ever zealous in maintaining a policy of strict neutrality in matters of religion. They could not, however, resist the demands of the English evangelicals to undertake the responsibility for educating the Indian subjects. To the evangelicals education and moral regeneration of the "natives" were coterminous and educating them would prepare them for the acceptance of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

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"revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences" among the Indian subjects.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing practical was done, however, till 1823 when the Government of India appointed the General Committee of Public Instruction in order to carry out the wishes of Parliament. Even then differences of opinion existed as to (a) the class of people to be instructed and (b) the medium of instruction. There were no misgivings as to the ultimate object, which was to communicate "useful", that is, European knowledge.

A consideration of the available means, both in respect of funds and personnel, indicated that the practicable course would be to educate the "influential classes" who would "themselves be teachers" to their people.<sup>2</sup> This view, which came to be known as the downward filtration theory, was adopted

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1. 53 Geo III. Cap. 155, Clause XLIII. It is not to be understood, however, that up to that date the Company's officials in India were altogether indifferent to Indian education. In 1781 Warren Hastings established the Calcutta Madrasa. Ten years later a Sanskrit College was started at Benares by Jonathan Duncan, the Resident at that place. In 1800 Wellesley founded the College of Fort William which, though designed for training civil servants, advanced the cause of education. A few years later Minto expressed his concern over the decay of education in India. See Sharp, Selections from Educational Records, Part I., Calcutta 1920, pp. 7-11 and 19-20.
  2. Note by Holt Mackenzie, Secretary to the Government in the territorial Deptt., 6 March 1811 - Sharp, op.cit., p.59.



by both the General Committee of Public Instruction and the Government. Differences of opinion continued to exist, however, on the question of the medium of instruction — the "Orientalists" espousing the cause of the learned languages of the East, namely, Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian; the "Anglicists", that of English. The triumph of the latter seemed inevitable in view, first, of the growing desire among the Hindus themselves to be educated in English;<sup>1</sup> and secondly, of an intention of the Home authorities, "from motives of economy as well as for reasons of policy", to see "a substantial contingent of Western-educated Indians in the public services."<sup>2</sup> To these were added two more influences, those of the utilitarians and the evangelicals.<sup>3</sup>

As early as 1825 the Rev. Thomason and the Rev. Dr. Mill,<sup>4</sup> while examining the Madrasa students in mathematics, expressed serious doubts as to the efficacy of the mode of teaching

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1. In 1817 orthodox Hindus like Gopimohan Deb and Radhakanta Deb as well as liberal Hindus like Rammohan Roy were instrumental in founding the Hindu College which soon became the centre of English education in Bengal. In 1823 Rammohan Roy addressed a letter to the Governor General against the proposal to establish a Sanskrit College in Bengal and requested him to open institutions for English education. See Sharp, op.cit., pp. 98-101.
  2. Cambridge History of India, Vol.VI., p.110.
  3. See Ballhatchet, K.A., "The Home Government and Bentinck's Educational Policy", The Cambridge Historical Journal, Vol.X., No. 2, 1951, pp. 224-229.
  4. They were respectively Junior Chaplain to the Company's ecclesiastical establishment and Principal, Bishop's College.



western sciences through the medium of an Oriental language, and suggested to Dr. Lumsden, Secretary to the Madrasa, the propriety of doing so through the medium of English.<sup>1</sup> It was not, however, till the arrival of Duff in Bengal (1830) that the missionary pressure in favour of the Anglicists was systematically asserted. Duff believed,<sup>2</sup> and his belief was shared by his colleagues of the other missionary societies,<sup>3</sup> that the ultimate evangelisation of India was to be effected by a class of teachers and preachers raised from among its own population. This could be best done by instructing the "teachers" through the medium of English; for a correct knowledge of Christianity as well as of western ideas which were to pave the way for its reception by undermining the popular notions of Hinduism, could be effectively communicated only through the medium of English, the native languages being undeveloped and there being a dearth of text books in them.<sup>4</sup> The missionary attitude thus corresponded with the filtration theory as well as with the view-points of the Anglicists.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Letter from Bengal, 27 January 1826, paras 42-43.
  2. Duff, "Statement of the plan and objects of the General Assembly's Mission in India", C.C.O., December 1835, Vol. IV., pp. 651-656; also India and India Missions, Edinburgh 1839, pp. 285-304 and 506-518.
  3. "Missionary Conference and English language"/Proceedings of a conference of Calcutta Missionaries held on 4 August 1840/C.C.O., September 1840, Vol. IX., pp. 531-535.
  4. Ibid. The idea goes back to Charles Grant.
  5. The Anglicists' views were admirably embodied in Macaulay's Minute of 2 February 1835. See Sharp, opcit., pp. 107-117.



In the final stage of the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy Duff threw his whole weight in favour of English.<sup>1</sup> There were also some officials like Macaulay and Trevelyan who had strong evangelical sympathies. Especially "significant" was the latter in whom "the Utilitarian and Evangelical approaches to the educational problem were combined", and who saw in the adoption of English the ultimate establishment of his religion in India.<sup>2</sup> The combined influence of these officials and missionaries, together with a strong Bengali public opinion created in favour of English,<sup>3</sup> led to the famous resolution of 7 March 1835 which stated that "the great object" of the Government "ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone."<sup>4</sup>

The Hindus were not favourably disposed to the evangelising programme of the missionaries; nor is it likely that they were completely unaware of the evangelical intentions behind the educational discussions of 1835. What led them to accept,

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1. Mayhew, A., Christianity and the Government of India, London 1929, pp. 160-165.

2. Ballhatchet, op.cit., p.228.

3. Ahmed, A.F.S., The development of Public opinion in Bengal, 1818-1835, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, London 1961, pp. 298-309.

4. Sharp, op.cit., p. 130.



in fact to initiate, the change was their desire to profit<sup>1</sup> by English education which, they thought, was the sure way to wealth and official situations. Quite different was, however, the attitude of the Muslims. Unaware of the changes that were taking place beneath the surface, and still labouring under the mistaken impression that Arabic and Persian were needed for the purposes of administration, they submitted a memorial, signed by 8312 persons<sup>1</sup>, in which they stated that the students of the Madrasa were being instructed in "useful knowledge" for "high appointments in the cities and zillahs of Hindoostan" and that at that time nearly 200 persons, educated in the Madrasa, were "holding high offices". The main ground of objection of the memorialists was, however, religious. "From the time when the report of the abolition of the Mudrissa<sup>2</sup> gained ground", stated the memorialists, "all classes small and great of the people have taken up the idea that the object and end of this measure is to eradicate the literature and religious system of Islam, in order that the measure may tend to the dissemination of the religion of the proposers and originators of the measure itself, and so

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1. Ind. Pub. Cons., 13 March 1835, No. 9. The petition was also published in the Friend of India, 26 March 1835, Vol. I., pp. 99-100. It has also been reproduced in Ahmed, op.cit., Appendix VI.

2. Macaulay, in his minute of 2 February 1835, had suggested the abolition of the Madrasa and the Sanskrit College.



the subjects of the state may be caused to become Christians." The memorialists prayed, therefore, that the Government would, "from motives of justice" as well as "to ensure its own stability", give orders "for the continuance of the Mudrissa, and of the teaching and learning of the literature and science of Islam." upon the educational question, the Government was eager. It has been suggested that this memorial was only a protest against the abolition of the Madrasa and not against English education, and that a "love for their national literature should not have been confused with antagonism towards English."<sup>1</sup> This is to divorce the issue from its proper context. The memorial should be viewed against the background of the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy in which the suggestion for the abolition of the Oriental Colleges was only connected with the adoption of English education. The Muslim petition was not simply a protest against the rumoured abolition of the Madrasa, nor against English education as such, but clearly and predominantly against the evangelical influence behind the educational discussions of the time. The apprehension of the memorialists was plainly that of the "dissemination of the religion of the proposers and originators"

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1. Mallick, A.R., The development of the Muslims of Bengal and Bihar, 1813-1856, with especial reference to their education, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, London 1953, pp.240-241.
  2. Sharp, op.cit., p. 130.
  3. Ind. Pub. Cong., 13 March 1855, No.10.



at the cost of the "religious system of Islam", and the memorialists were "distressed and heart-broken, and bewildered and alarmed at the idea of the Government yielding to such a proposition."<sup>1</sup>

But whatever might have been the influence of Duff or Trevelyan upon the educational question, the Government was eager to avoid any religious controversy over it. Hence the resolution of 7 March added that the Government had no intention to abolish the institutions of oriental learning so long as the native population would be inclined to "avail themselves of the advantages which it affords".<sup>2</sup> The apparent contradiction in the declaration to devote all the funds to "English education alone" and at the same time to continue the institutions of oriental learning is indicative only of the Government desire to allay any suspicion that might have been caused in the native mind. This is further evident from the Government reply to the Muslim petition in which the petitioners were not only informed of the purport of the above resolution, but were also assured that the Government had no intention to impose Christianity or to destroy the religious system of Islam.<sup>3</sup> The principle of religious neutrality was more emphatically asserted by the Home Government in their despatch

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1. Muslim petition, last para.

2. Sharp, *op.cit.*, p. 130.

3. *Ind. Pub. Cons.*, 13 March 1835, No. 10.



of 14 April 1836 not only condemned Bentinck's resolution but also prohibited any further changes of policy without prior reference home.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the Muslims submitted a second petition against that provision of the resolution of 7 March which envisaged the gradual abolition of the stipendary system.<sup>2</sup> As the students of the Madrasa depended upon the Government stipends for the prosecution of their studies, the petitioners stated that to abolish stipends would be practically to abolish the Madrasa. The Hindus also were not ready to see all patronage withdrawn from their sacred learning and literature. Already the students of the Sanskrit College had petitioned the Government against the proposal to discontinue the stipends;<sup>3</sup> and now in view of the Government resolution of 7 March 1835 the Dharma Sabha, many of whose leaders like Raja Radhakanta Deb and Ramkamal Sen were enthusiastic supporters of English education, contemplated the establishment of a Tol for Sanskrit studies.<sup>4</sup> When therefore in August 1836 the English class at the Sanskrit College was abolished,<sup>5</sup> the

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1. Despatches to India and Bengal, Vol.VIII, pp. 741-744; See also Ballhatchet, op.cit., pp.224-225.

2. Ind.Pub.Cons., 24 August 1836, No. 17.

3. Ibid., 8 April 1835, No. 44.

4. Friend of India, 7 May 1835, Vol.I., p. 145. The Tol does not appear to have been established, presumably because of the continuance of the Sanskrit College.

5. Ind.Pub.Cons., 24 August 1836, No. 14.



Hindus felt much gratification as the college became once again an institution devoted exclusively to the study of Hindu literature.<sup>1</sup> And a few months later they submitted a massive memorial signed by 8,909 persons, condemning Bentinck's resolution as "most injurious, spiteful, subversive of our professions and religion and conducive to the ill-fame of the Government."<sup>2</sup> But though harsh in their condemnation, they did not raise any objection to English education, but only prayed for (i) the maintenance of the Sanskrit College on the same footing as it was before, (ii) the encouragement and cultivation of the Sanskrit language and "pure Bengali", (iii) the restoration of stipends to students and (iv) the publication of Sanskrit and Bengali translation of "works on European arts and science".<sup>3</sup> Obviously the Hindus were eager to see that the adoption of English education did not harm their religious interests. It is difficult to believe that this petition was solely instigated by the "Orientalists",<sup>4</sup> for in that case it would not have obtained such a numerous subscription.

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1. The Samachar Chandrika, quoted in S.S.K., Vol.II., p.4.

2. Ind.Pub.Cons., 28 February 1838, No. 29.

3. Ibid. year's date from England". - Auckland's letters seem

4. Ahmed (op.cit., pp. 334-335) has suggested that this petition was inspired by the Orientalists, yet the only evidence which he has adduced in support of this assumption is a letter of Wilson, written from Oxford in 1835, to Ramkamal Sen.

in Ballhatchet, op.cit., p. 227.



These petitions were submitted to Lord Auckland upon whom devolved the task of giving effect to Bentinck's resolution. The new Governor General had two distinct principles in view. He believed in the wisdom of strict neutrality in religious matters. He also believed that western knowledge could effectively be communicated only through the medium of English. Acting on these principles he rejected, on the one hand, the proposal of the education committee, then filled with Anglicists, to consolidate all education funds into a general fund, obviously for its use in promoting English education alone.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, he tried, by private correspondence, to persuade the Home Government not to revive the controversy and irritation, which had practically subsided, by "any new order". Whatever jealousy and alarm had been caused among the natives, he further wrote, those were nearly forgotten; their schools were "still kept open" and that the schools of European science and literature were also well attended. Finally he reminded Hobhouse, the President of the Board of Control, that "the folly or fault next in degree to a folly or fault committed in India" was the "attempt to reverse it by an order at nearly a year's date from England".<sup>2</sup> Auckland's letters seem

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1. Ind. Pub. Cons., 13 April 1836, Nos. 14-15.

2. Auckland to Carnac, 17 June 1836, and to Hobhouse, 20 June 1836 - Add. MSS. (British Museum), 36473, ff. 62-78, quoted in Ballhatchet, op.cit., p. 227.



to have produced the desired effect, for the Home Government did not follow up their disapproval of Bentinck's resolution by any detailed instructions. At last, by his famous minute of 24 November 1839, Auckland effected a compromise solution of the education problem.<sup>1</sup> He attributed the whole controversy to the paucity of funds, and by allocating additional funds he allowed Oriental learning its due share of patronage. The existing institutions of Oriental learning were continued, stipends were substituted by adequate scholarships, and the preparation and publication of useful books in Oriental languages were also assured. At the same time he granted more than a lakh of rupees for the promotion of European learning through English schools. The religious interest involved in the educational controversy expressed itself prominently through the unfeigned exasperation of the missionaries over Auckland's compromise solution. Their sentiments were voiced by the Friend of India<sup>2</sup> as well as by Duff who addressed a series of open letters to Auckland.<sup>3</sup> "In the influence of policy of arms", tauntingly asked Duff, "you are my lord, at this moment, the first man

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1. See the minute in Sharp, op. cit., pp. 147-170.

2. See Friend of India, 18 March, 8, 15, and 22 April, and 6 and 20 May 1841.

3. C.C.O., May, June and July 1841, Vol. X., pp. 292-311, 353-381 and 401-425. These letters were published in other periodicals of the time and were subsequently published in a pamphlet form together with Auckland's minute.



in Asia...But does it follow that the first man in Asia in policy of arms, must also be the first in the department of intellectual and moral husbandry?"<sup>1</sup> Duff described Auckland's Minute as a "production which is remarkable, chiefly for its omissions and commissions— remarkable for its concessions and its compromises — remarkable above all for its education without religion, its plans without a providence, its ethics without a God."<sup>2</sup> The object of education, stated Duff, was the formation of intellect and the elevation of morality; but the "choicest" works of Hindu literature consisted of "1st. Things frivolous and useless. 2nd. False chronology and history. 3rd. False science. 4th. False civil and criminal law. 5th. False logic and metaphysics; and 6th. False morals and religion." By his decision, therefore, Auckland had re-endowed the "error" which Bentinck had frankly and openly "disendowed".<sup>3</sup>

In spite of these criticisms Auckland's compromise solution remained the basis of Government educational policy till 1854. From this time, however, the missionaries became more urgent in their demand for the introduction of the Bible, or parts thereof, into the courses of studies in Government

C.C.O., June 1842, Vol. XI, pp. 358-359.

1. Ibid., p. 293.

2. Ibid., p. 294.

3. Ibid., pp. 297-309.

2, Vol. III, p. 893. This was purely a rumour. There is nothing in the Ellenborough Papers (P.R.O. 30/12/32 I./9) to suggest that he had any such intention.



institutions.<sup>1</sup> Their demand was based upon two grounds.

First, the "so-called" principle of non-interference with native religions was practically violated when western sciences which were opposed to native religious conceptions were introduced in Government schools. There was therefore no reason why the Bible should be excluded from them. Secondly, if the Government, consistently with its professed neutrality, could extend its patronage to Hindu and Muhammadan learning, it could also do so with regard to Christian learning.<sup>2</sup> This logic of the missionaries, however, did not carry conviction to the Government.

In face of these discussions and demands of the missionaries it was natural on the part of the Hindus to continue to be cautious against any possible use of English education as a means of conversion to Christianity, more particularly against the introduction of the Bible as a class book. Their sentiments were clearly expressed when the missionary journals published in April 1842 the rumour that Lord Ellenborough, Auckland's successor, intended to introduce the Bible in Government schools.<sup>3</sup> Commenting upon this rumour the Sambad

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1. "Missionary Conference - its discussions and resolutions", C.C.O., June 1842, Vol.XI., pp. 368-369.
  2. See C.C.O., January 1839, Vol.VIII., pp.5-8; June 1840, Vol.IX. pp. 346-349, November 1841, Vol.X., pp.665-675; also C.C.A., 1, 20 February and 21 November 1840.
  3. C.C.A., 9 April 1842, Vol.III., p.393. This was purely a rumour. There is nothing in the Ellenborough Papers (P.R.O.30/12/32 I./9) to suggest that he had any such intention.



Purnachandrodaya, one of the organs of the Dharma Sabha, reminded the Government its pledge of neutrality and stated:<sup>1</sup>

They [Government] may say that we are not trying to destroy the religion of the Hindus by force — we will only teach our own faith and if it be agreeable to their views they may follow it, otherwise not. Such an argument is mere sophism: we ask the Government whether they are advised by the missionaries to become such liars?

As to the missionary argument that religious education was needed for the moral regeneration of the people the Bengali journal reiterated the easy and short formula: "since it cannot be proved that Christianity is the only religion for procuring salvation, it seems that there is no necessity for teaching it to the native youth." Referring to the missionary schools where Hindu youths thronged despite the teaching of the Bible in them the Purnachandrodaya stated that there was a great deal of difference between missionaries and Government: whereas the proselytising efforts of the missionaries did not cause much apprehension, any attempt by Government to do so would lead the Hindus to feel that their religion was in danger. The journal concluded threateningly:<sup>2</sup>

Though the Hindus are not powerful enough to fight with the English, yet we have learned from History that every nation has a religious zeal and will undertake most dangerous enterprises for the defence of its religion. We conclude from all this that the Government ought not to interfere.

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1. Purnachandrodaya, reproduced in C.C.A., 4 June 1842, Vol. IV., p. 35.

2. Ibid.



The arguments of the Purnachandrodaya were defective and its tone was undoubtedly haughty; but that it reflected the general feelings of the Hindus in this regard was made clearer a few years later." Early in 1847 the Madras Council of Education suggested the inclusion of the Bible in the syllabus of Government schools and the Marquiss of Tweeddale, the Governor of Madras, entered a minute favourable to the suggestion.<sup>1</sup> The Madras Hindus were at once excited and on 27 May 1847 they sent a memorial to the Court of Directors remonstrating against what they called the Government interference with their religion.<sup>2</sup> Although nothing of the kind was contemplated in Bengal, the Calcutta Hindus also set on foot a movement for raising a similar memorial;<sup>3</sup> and on 15 November 1847 they submitted a memorial to the Court of Directors, signed by 652 "heads of families".<sup>4</sup> Among the signatories were both the orthodox Hindus like Raja Radhakanta

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1. Tweeddale's minute was published in various newspapers of Calcutta and other places. There were also heated discussions on this. See for instance Friend of India, 22 April and 3 June, and Hurkaru, 23 and 26 July 1847.
  2. Friend of India, 15 July 1847. For a few months past the Madras Hindus were agitated over the alleged support of Government officials to missionaries. See ibid., 19 November, 17 December 1846; 28 January, 4 February, 4 and 18 March and 15 April 1847. See also Parl. Pap., H/C, 1857-1858. Vol. II., Paper 71.
  3. Hurkaru, 23 August 1847.
  4. Board's Collections, Vol. 2224.



Deb and Ashutosh Deb and the liberal Hindus like Devendranath Thakur and Ramanath Thakur.<sup>1</sup>

The memorialists concurred in the sentiments expressed by their "Madras brethren" that the proceedings of the Madras Government were "indicative of a settled design to subvert the Hindoo religion in order to substitute the Christian faith."<sup>2</sup> They invoked the principle of non-interference with the religion of the Indians and reminded the Court of Directors that the British rule in India "owed its popularity and its stability to its having been always conducted in faithful accordance with those principles." In order further to bring home this point the memorialists made the Court "aware, that the intolerance of the Musselman Princes of India was the main cause of their overthrow, and everywhere induced the Hindus to lend their willing assistance to the British forces."<sup>3</sup> The memorialists acknowledged the impartiality of "the Present Government of Bengal", but they were not certain that "every future Governor would be equally just and impartial", especially in view of the "alarming fact" that it was "possible for a representative of the British Crown to violate a solemn

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1. The names of 30 prominent signatories were published, along with the memorial, by Hurkaru of 13 December 1847.

2. The Hindu memorial, para 1.

3. Ibid., paras 3-5. This statement is not borne out by facts. It shows, however, the Hindu attitude to both the Muslim and the British Rule in India.



pledge." They were therefore unable to overcome their apprehensions, and prayed the "Honourable Court to pass such stringent public orders as may serve to calm the fears of their countrymen, and prohibit all future Governors General from introducing into the national schools...the Christian Scriptures or any other books designed to induce the pupils to embrace a religion different from that of their parents."<sup>1</sup>

On coming to know of these developments in Madras the Court of Directors had already sent two despatches to India, one on 21 April 1847 and the other on 19 January 1848, calling "the immediate and particular attention" of the India Government to "the absolute necessity of maintaining" the "most important principle" of religious neutrality "in its fullest extent".<sup>2</sup> On receipt of the Bengal memorial they asked the Government to "avail itself of all fit occasions to remove whatever erroneous impressions on this subject may be produced on the minds of the native subjects, and to convince them that our Governments will scrupulously adhere to the principle and practice which have hitherto been strictly observed in our administration of India, to religious feelings and usages of the natives with uniform consideration and forbearance."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., paras 6-7.

2. Despatches to India and Bengal, Vol. 52, pp. 1222-1226; and Vol. 56, pp. 163-174.

3. Judicial Letter to Bengal, 29 February 1848, No. 3 — ibid., Vol. 56, pp. 907-911.



Council The reply of the Court of Directors was satisfactory to the Hindus.<sup>1</sup> They continued, however, to guard their religious interest in the educational institutions supported by Government. This is evident from three incidents in connection with the Hindu College.<sup>2</sup> Thus (i) when in August 1848 Kailash Chandra Bose, a teacher of the Hindu College, embraced Christianity, the Hindu members of its managing committee insisted upon, and succeeded in removing him from the staff of the college.<sup>3</sup> (ii) In the following year a student of the same institution, named Gorachand Singh, was converted to Christianity. On the demand of the Hindu members he had to leave the institution. The incident, however, led to a bitter controversy between Raja Radhakanta Deb, a member of the managing committee of the College, and J.E.D. Bethune, the president of both the college committee and the Education

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1. Friend of India, 8 June 1848, Vol. XIV, p. 530.

2. Though originally founded by private individuals (1817) the Hindu College was brought, because of the pecuniary assistance given by Government, virtually under the control of the Government Education Committee (subsequently the Education Council). The affairs of the College were managed by a Committee consisting of some members of the Education Council and other Hindu members, who were also Honorary members of the Education Council. The president of the Education Council was ex-officio the president of the College Committee.

3. Friend of India, 12 May 1853, Vol. XIX, pp. 292-293.

3. Friend of India, 24 August 1848, Vol. XIV., p. 630. It is well known that in 1831 H.V. Derozio was similarly removed from the staff of the College on the alleged ground of his having taught heretical doctrines to the students.



Council. It resulted in the resignation of Radhakanta Deb from the College Committee.<sup>1</sup> (iii) A few years later the Hindu members of the College Committee once again came in conflict with the Education Council over the admission of an outcaste, the son of a courtesan, in the Hindu College.<sup>2</sup> This time the Education Council did not give in but decided to throw the college open to all classes of people. The Hindus were so annoyed at this attitude of the Education Council that they set on foot a rival institution, on 2 May 1853, under the name of the Hindu Metropolitan College.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the Hindus, inspite of their desire for English education, were eager to see that that education was not in any way made a means to conversion to Christianity.<sup>4</sup> The Government also adhered to the principle of neutrality and steered clear of the demands of the missionaries on the one hand, and the apprehensions of the Indians on the other. The famous despatch of 1854 which reorganised the educational

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1. Radhakanta Deb to H.H. Wilson, 7 October 1851, quoted in Bagal, Radhakanta Deb (Bengali text), Calcutta 1951, pp. 16-17. The College Committee accepted his resignation on 29 May 1850 and passed a resolution appreciating his services to the College. See G.R.P.I., 1849-50, p. 44.
  2. C.C.A., 12 March and 9 April 1853.
  3. Friend of India, 12 May 1853, Vol.XIX., pp.292-293.
  4. See also J.C. Marshman's evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1853 — Parl.Pap., H/C, 1852-53, Vol.29, pp. 26-27.
  3. See Church Missionary Intelligencer, September 1854, Vol.V., pp. 205-212; also Kaye, J.W., Christianity in India, London 1859, p.473.



system of India emphatically asserted this principle of neutrality.<sup>1</sup> In carrying into effect the system of grants-in-aid which the despatch envisaged no notice was to be taken of the kind of religious instruction imparted in the educational institutions. Neutrality did not mean, however, hostility to any particular religion. The Court of Directors therefore rightly understood that though the education imparted in Government institutions "should be exclusively secular", the Bible could be placed in their libraries and the students should be able freely to consult it. The Court stated:<sup>2</sup>

This is as it should be; and, moreover, we have no desire to prevent, or discourage, any explanations which the pupils may, of their own free will, ask from the masters upon the subject of the Christian religion provided that such information be given out of the school hours. Such instruction being entirely voluntary on both sides, it is necessary, in order to prevent the slightest suspicion of an intention on our part to make use of the influence of Government for the purpose of proselytism, that no notice shall be taken of it by the inspectors in their periodical visits.

Though the missionaries considered these provisions of the Despatch of 1854 as a great concession to their cause,<sup>3</sup> the Hindus do not appear to have entertained any suspicion about the intentions of the Government.

1. Richter, J.A., *A History of Missions in India*, London 1908, p. 183.

1. Despatch from the Court of Directors, No.49, 19 July 1854 — Richey, J.A., *Selections from Educational Records*, Part II., Calcutta 1922, pp. 364-393. (See especially paras 8, 28, 37, 53, 56, 57 and 84)

2. *Ibid.*, para 84. See especially C.C.A., 21 October 1843, Vol.V., p.303.

3. See *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, September 1854, Vol.V., pp. 205-212; also Kaye, J.W., *Christianity in India*, London 1859, p.473.



## II. Attitude to missionary educational efforts

Education was the principal means by which the missionaries sought the evangelisation of the Indian people. Indeed so great were their educational activities that the period between 1830 and 1857 has been called the "age of the mission schools".<sup>1</sup> As has been mentioned,<sup>2</sup> the emphasis of the missionaries was, during this period, on English education. They conducted, besides a number of elementary vernacular and English schools at different stations in Bengal,<sup>3</sup> five principal institutions in Calcutta for higher English education. These were the General Assembly's Institution at Garanhata, the Free Church Institution at Chitpur Road, the London Missionary Society's Institution at Bhawanipur, the Baptist Christian Institution at Intaly and the Church Missionary Society's English Seminary at Mirzapur — all except the second founded in the thirties. The second institution was founded in 1843 after the disruption in the Scottish church. In conducting these institutions the missionaries never concealed that their object was the conversion of the students to Christianity.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Richter, J.A., A History of Missions in India, London 1908, p. 183. Bhaskar, 7 May 1844, reproduced in C.C.A.; 25 May 1844.

2. Supra, p.12. in the fifties that some Muhammadan students

3. See Appendix A.

4. See especially C.C.A., 21 October 1843, Vol.V., p.303.

5. S.S.K., II., pp.63-66.



The Bible and other books on Christianity were an indispensable part of the courses of studies in all their schools; and because of this the higher caste Hindus, though not totally averse to female education,<sup>1</sup> generally abstained from sending their daughters to the missionary vernacular girls' schools.<sup>2</sup>

The desire for English education was, however, so great among the Hindus that even the most orthodox of them sent their sons to missionary English schools.<sup>3</sup> Indeed so great was the rush of students when Duff opened in 1830 the first missionary English school in Calcutta that for want of accommodation he had to introduce some restrictive rules and a sort of admission test.<sup>4</sup> Instances were not also wanting of wealthy Hindus' seeking the cooperation of missionaries in establishing schools. Thus in 1832 the zamindars of Taki, in the district of 24-Parganas, opened an English school at that place with the help of Duff and Mackay, missionaries of the Church of Scotland.<sup>5</sup> A few years later the wealthy

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1. See Bagal, Jageschandra, Women's Education in Eastern India, Calcutta 1956, Chapter VI.; also G.R.P.I., 1 May 1848 - 1 October 1849, pp. XXVIII - XXIX.

2. See comments of the Sambad Purnachandrodaya, reproduced in C.C.A., 19 February, 12 and 19 March 1842; and of the Sambad Bhaskar, 7 May 1844, reproduced in C.C.A., 25 May 1844.

3. It was only in the fifties that some Muhammadan students attended the missionary schools; but even then their number was negligible. See C.C.O., January 1852, Vol. XXI., p. 45.

4. Duff, India and India Missions, Edinburgh 1839, pp. 525-531.

5. S.S.K., II., pp. 63-66.

India Missions, Edinburgh 1839, pp. 576-578.



Hindus of Barasat, in the same district, opened another English school there with the assistance of Long and Sandys of the Church Missionary Society.<sup>1</sup>

This popularity of English education and the general resort of Hindu students to missionary schools sometimes led the missionaries to argue that the Hindus had no objection to a system of "Christian education".<sup>2</sup> That this was not so was demonstrated not only by the opposition of the Hindus to the proposed introduction of the Bible as a class book in Government educational institutions,<sup>3</sup> but also by their excitement and agitation whenever any student or Hindu teacher of the missionary school was converted to Christianity.

As early as 1830 when Duff introduced the Bible in his school (General Assembly's Institution) the Samachar Chandrika, the organ of the Dharma Sabha, raised such a hue and cry that it caused a temporary withdrawal of Hindu children from the school.<sup>4</sup> The first serious excitement among the Hindus was caused, however, in 1839 when two students of the General Assembly's Institution, Mahendralal Basak and Kailas Chandra Mukherji, were converted to Christianity. As a result, many

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1. C.C.A., 26 November 1842, Vol.IV.,p.237.
  2. See C.C.O., February 1842, Vol.XI.,pp.68-74; C.C.A., 13 September 1851, Vol.XIII.,p.434, and Calcutta Review, January-June 1852, Vol.XVII.,p.386.
  3. Supra, pp.101-106.
  4. Duff, India and India Missions, Edinburgh 1839, pp.576-578.



Hindus withdrew their children from that institution.<sup>1</sup> A little later in the same year the conversion of a Hindu teacher of the Church Missionary Society's school at Barasat led to the "sudden" desertion of that institution by "almost all the boys" and the setting up of a rival school by the wealthy Hindus of that place.<sup>2</sup> It was in this year of excitement<sup>3</sup> that the Tattvabodhini Sabha was instituted with a view to checking the progress of Christianity; and one of its earliest efforts for that purpose was the establishment of a Pathsala (school) in Calcutta where the students were to be instructed, free of cost, in Hindu theology along with other subjects.<sup>4</sup> This institution did not, however, prosper in Calcutta due to shortage of funds and the leaders of the Sabha were obliged to remove the school, in 1843, to Bansberia near Hughly.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Friend of India, 11 April 1839, Vol.V., p.228. The first convert from the institution was Dwarkanath Bose who was baptised in 1837 and who became the subject of an abduction case (*infra*, pp.137-139). K.M.Banerji and Gopinath Nandi, converted by Duff in 1832, were not students of his school.
  2. Ibid., 16 January 1840, Vol.VI., p.41; also C.C.A., 28 December 1839, Vol.I., pp.285-286.
  3. The year witnessed a similar but more intense excitement in Bombay over the conversion of two Parsee students of the General Assembly's Institution there. The Parsee community withdrew all their children from the institution, and about 2,000 Parsee and Hindu inhabitants submitted an anti-missionary memorial to Government. See Ind.Pub.Cons., 11 March 1840, No.9; also Friend of India, 20 November 1839, Vol.VI., pp.120-121 & 126 and C.C.A., 6 July 1839, Vol.I., p.88.
  4. C.C.A., 13 June and 4 July 1840, Vol.II., pp.43 and 65.
  5. T.P., 1 Bhadra 1766 Saka (1844), Vol.I., p.103. The school was given up in 1847 due to financial stringency and it was purchased by Duff who started an English school there.



Meanwhile, during 1841-1842, a few more students of the General Assembly's Institution were converted to Christianity.<sup>1</sup> This led the Sambad Prabhakar, an orthodox Bengali journal, to urge upon the Dharma Sabha to establish "without delay near Duff's school or in some other public place, a school able to hold 1,000 children,<sup>2</sup> where they might get instruction."<sup>3</sup> The Prabhakar's suggestion seems to have produced some effect, for shortly afterwards the Andol (Howrah) branch of the Dharma Sabha, of which Raja Rajnarayan Roy was the president, resolved to establish a school in order "to rescue the deer-like children from the hands of the tiger-like missionaries".<sup>4</sup> In pursuance of this resolution a school was also started at that place.<sup>5</sup> Nothing more is known about this school, however.

It was not till 1845, however, that the Hindus of Calcutta made any serious attempt to establish an educational

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1. See Hunter, R., History of the Missions of the Free Church of Scotland in India and Africa, London 1873, pp. 77-79.
  2. At that time the General Assembly's Institution of Calcutta had on its roll 900 students - Ibid., p. 79.
  3. Sambad Prabhakar, 29 January 1842, quoted in C.C.A., 19 Feb. 1842, Vol. III., p. 338.
  4. Sambad Prabhakar, quoted in C.C.O., March 1842, Vol. XI., pp. 181-183. About this time the main Dharma Sabha at Calcutta was weakened by internal conflicts, one group being led by Raja Radhakanta Deb and the other by Ashutosh Deb.
  5. Bengal Spectator, 16 October 1842, quoted in C.C.A., 22 October 1842, Vol. IV., p. 194.



institution to counteract the influence of the missionary institutions. The year witnessed great excitement among the Hindus of Calcutta over the baptism of Umeshchandra Sarkar, a student of the Free Church Institution, and the failure of his relatives to recover him from the custody of Duff by legal proceedings.<sup>1</sup> All sections of the Hindus — Young Bengal, the Dharma Sabha and the Brahma Sabha — held a large meeting at Fauzdari Balakhana (Calcutta) on 25 May 1845 and resolved to establish a school on the model of the Hindu College with the exception that the students would not be required to pay for their education.<sup>2</sup> The proposed institution was to accommodate 1,000 students and its monthly expenditure was estimated as follows:<sup>3</sup>

Principal Teacher's salary	Rs. 250
Science teacher's "	200
1st Bengali teacher's "	100
2nd Ditto	50
6 Ditto teachers' "	200
House Rent	150
Sundry expenses	50
<hr/>	
Total	Rs. 1,000

1. Infra, pp.124-126.

2. The proceedings of this meeting were published in the Sambad Bhaskar of 26 May 1845 (reproduced in C.C.A., 7 June 1845, Vol.VII., pp. 264-265) and Hurkaru of 28 May 1845. Among those present in the meeting were Raja Radhakanta Deb, Raja Kalikrishna Bahadur, Raja Apurbakrishna Bahadur, Raja Satyacharan Ghosal, Pratapchandra Singh, Devendranath Thakur, Harimohan Sen, Nandalal Singh, Motilal Sil, Birnarayan Mallik, Sibnarayan Ghosh, Ashutosh Deb and Pramathanath Deb.

3. Ibid., 21 June 1845, Vol.VII., p.290.



It was proposed that after collecting a sum of rupees 300,000 it would be invested in the Honourable Company's loan at an interest of 4 per cent. so that the interest would meet the monthly expenses. A subscription of rupees 40,000 was at once promised by different members present in the meeting. A circular signed by the leaders of the meeting was issued forbidding Hindu parents, on pain of exclusion from caste, from sending their children to missionary schools.<sup>1</sup> The cause of the proposed institution suffered a set-back, however, from the beginning. Motilal Sil, the wealthiest of the Calcutta Hindus, wanted the institution to be incorporated with his school, founded in 1843, and to be named after him. He also promised that if the meeting agreed to his proposal his subscription would exceed all others'.<sup>2</sup> This was not agreed to and he proceeded to act alone. He transformed his school into a free and anti-missionary institution and formally opened it on 2 June 1845.<sup>3</sup> About 50 students left the Free Church Institution and joined Sil's school.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. From the list of subscribers, published by Tattvabodhini Patrika (Asadh 1767 Saka, Vol.I., pp. 195-196) it appears that Motilal Sil contributed rupees 1,000 whereas the contributions of Ashutosh Deb and Devendranath Thakur were, respectively, rupees 10,000 and 2,000.

3. Hurkaru, 4 June 1845; see also C.C.A., 7 June 1845, Vol.VII., p. 262. Sil's school was subsequently incorporated with the Hindu Metropolitan College, started in 1853 (supra, p. 107).

4. C.C.A., 21 June 1845, Vol.VII., p. 290.



These developments caused some concern among the missionaries who, with reference to the late meeting's decision to excommunicate those Hindus who sent their children to missionary institutions, expressed surprise that "such arbitrary and illiberal conduct" was exhibited by "one of the Tagores, and the liberal and unconditionally generous Motilal Sil."<sup>1</sup> The missionaries were confident, however, that the "high character of the education afforded in the Missionary schools, the perseverance, ability and devotedness of the teachers, and the fact that they are free of cost, a charm almost irresistible with a native", would give them an influence and standing which, "for a long time to come", no exclusively native effort could affect.<sup>2</sup>

The confidence of the missionaries was justified by the fact that their schools continued to be attended by Hindu students. Nor was there any attempt to enforce the decision regarding exclusion from caste. The committee appointed for the establishment of the proposed Hindu school,<sup>3</sup> however, continued their attempt to raise the necessary funds for the

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. The Committee consisted of Raja Radhakanta Deb (President), Devendranath Thakur and Harimohan Sen (Secretaries), and Ashutosh Deb and Pramathanath Deb (Treasurers). See T.P. 1 Asadh 1767 Saka (1845), Vol. I., p. 185.

4. See the letter of "NO JOKE" in Englishman, 14 July 1847, and of "Aesculapius", op.cit.; also the comments of the

5. Friend of India, 5 March 1846; also T.P., Falgun 1767 Saka (1845), Vol. I., p. 267.

6. Proceedings of the "Hindu Anti-Christian Meeting of 19 September", Hurkaru, 21 Sept. 1847; see also "Hindoo demonstration against the missionaries and Christianity", Friend of India, 23 Sept. 1847.



purpose.<sup>1</sup> But inspite of their best efforts they could not realise more than 32,246 rupees out of the proposed capital of 300,000.<sup>2</sup> Under these circumstances the Committee could neither go on with the original plan, nor could they retrace their steps. Consequently on 1 March 1846 they started the institution, on a more modest scale, under the name of the Hindu Charitable Institution.<sup>3</sup> The institution did not prosper but continued its existence in a miserable state.<sup>4</sup>

The Hindus of Calcutta were again excited in 1847 over the conversion of Radhakanta Datta, a student of the General Assembly's Institution.<sup>5</sup> Once again the liberal and conservative Hindus held a large meeting, on 19 September, to adopt measures for counteracting the efforts of the missionaries and the resort of the Hindu children to their schools.<sup>6</sup> The

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1. See Friend of India, 29 May, 12 June, 6 November and 27 December 1845; also Hurkaru, 27 November 1845.
  2. The collections stood at rupees 25,752 in July, 30,806 in August, 31,766 in September and 32,246 in December 1845. See T.P., Sravan, Bhadra, Aswin and Paus, 1767 Saka (1845), Vol.I., pp. 202, 216, 228 and 252. That no more amount was collected is known from the letter of "Aesculapius" to Englishman, 23 June 1849.
  3. Friend of India, 5 March 1846; also T.P., Falgun 1767 Saka (1846), Vol.I., p.267.
  4. See the letter of "NO JOKE" in Englishman, 14 July 1847, and that of "Aesculapius", op.cit.; also the comments of the Sambad Purnachandrodaya, quoted in C.C.A., 13 Sept. Vol. XIII., p. 434.
  5. See infra, pp.127-129.
  6. Proceedings of the "Hindu Anti-Christian Meeting of 19 September", Hurkaru, 21 Sept.1847; see also "Hindoo demonstration against the missionaries and Christianity", Friend of India, 23 Sept.1847.



result was a renewed determination to establish a large school and to expel from the privileges of caste any who should persist in sending their children to missionary schools.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing practical was done, however, and the whole movement was discredited by the rumoured conspiracy to manhandle Duff.<sup>2</sup>

The last excitement of the Hindus over the conversion of students from missionary schools was caused in 1851 when in April of that year five students of the London Missionary Society's Institution at Bhawanipur (Calcutta) offered themselves for baptism.<sup>3</sup> The Hindu inhabitants of that locality held a meeting to "taboo the Missionary Institution" and to consider ways and means for establishing an anti-missionary school.<sup>4</sup> When, however, the general meeting of the Hindus of Calcutta and its vicinity was held on 25 May, the Hindu leaders admitted the impracticability of such a project. One of the leaders explained:<sup>5</sup>

English is to us a money-making knowledge....Poor boys cannot afford to pay for their tuition. Educated in English they must be, and unless you can set up institutions to match those of the missionaries in point of efficiency and usefulness, you cannot prevent the evil of missionary infection.... But we have seen that a provision like that cannot be made by our countrymen.

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1. Ibid. Also Friend of India, 7 October 1847, Vol.XIII., p.627.

2. See infra, pp.236-238.

3. C.C.A., 19 April 1851, Vol.XIII., pp.182-184.

4. Ibid., 3 May 1851, Vol.XIII., p. 205.

5. Proceedings of the meeting, ibid, 31 May 1851, Vol.XIII., (pp. 255-257) p.256. See also infra, pp. 158-160.



## CHAPTER IV.

## Reclaiming the Christian Converts to Hinduism

Whenever any youth showed a disposition to embrace Christianity, his parents and relatives and other Hindu friends opposed it and attempted to persuade him to renounce his intentions. Even if after overcoming such opposition he took the step and embraced Christianity, his parents and relatives

## Part II.

## The reaction to specific conversions to Christianity

## IV. Reclaiming the Christian converts to Hinduism

## V. Caste and conversion : the convert's wife and children

## VI. Caste and conversion : the question of inheritance

## VII. Violence upon missionaries and converts

discipline. the convert was also beyond the easy reach and influence of his Hindu parents and relatives; for fearing the perils of excommunication with which the system of caste threatened him on conversion,<sup>2</sup> a convert sought asylum, almost invariably, before his baptism, with the missionaries. Although this gave the opportunist to the propagandist to accuse the missionaries of decoying Bengali youths,<sup>3</sup> the situation itself made it necessary to have a sort of physical recovery of the converts before anything could be done towards his readmission

1. For an account of the system of caste as it appears through Hindu sacred scriptures see Kane, P.V., History of Dharmasāstra, Vol. II., Part I., Poona 1941, Chapters II. and III., pp. 19-164.

2. See for the law on exclusion from caste, as it was administered in India during this period, Strange, T., Hindu Law, Vol. I., London 1830, pp. 160-163.

3. Supra., p. 57.



## CHAPTER IV.

## Reclaiming the Christian Converts to Hinduism

Whenever any youth showed a disposition to embrace Christianity, his parents and relatives and other Hindu friends opposed it and attempted to persuade him to renounce his intentions. Even if after overcoming such opposition he took the step and embraced Christianity, his parents and relatives did not give up hope of gaining him back to Hinduism. This was, however, no easy task. Not only was there the question of caste discipline,<sup>1</sup> the convert was also beyond the easy reach and influence of his Hindu parents and relatives; for fearing the perils of excommunication with which the system of caste threatened him on conversion,<sup>2</sup> a convert sought asylum, almost invariably, before his baptism, with the missionaries. Although this gave the opportunity to the propagandist to accuse the missionaries of decoying Bengali youths,<sup>3</sup> the situation itself made it necessary to have a sort of physical recovery of the converts before anything could be done towards his readmission

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  3. Supra., p. 57.



into Hinduism and to the caste to which he previously belonged. The work of reclaiming the Christian convert thus often fell into two parts: (a) the recovery of the convert from the custody of the missionaries and (b) such amendment of caste rules as to readmit apostates into their castes.

(a) The recovery of the convert from the custody of the missionary. Two methods appear to have been adopted for recovering the convert from the custody of the missionaries, viz., (i) the assertion of the Hindu parent's right of guardianship over his children<sup>1</sup> and (ii) the abduction of converts.

(i) The Hindu parent's right of guardianship. As a large number of converts were from among the students of the missionary schools and were generally of tender age, the recovery of a convert was often attempted by asserting the Hindu parent's right of guardianship over his children. As with English law, so with Hindu law, the father was regarded as the natural guardian, and was entitled to have the custody, of his child.<sup>2</sup>

Confusion and controversy arose, however, on account of the absence of any definite law as to the legal age of discretion

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1. The convert also sometimes claimed the same right of guardianship in order to recover his children from the custody of his Hindu relatives. See infra, pp. 167-168.
  2. Strange, T., Hindu Law, Vol. I., London 1830, pp. 65-72; also Macnaghten, W. H., Principles of Hindu and Mohammadan Law (ed. by H. H. Wilson), London 1862, pp. 117-119. For a summary of the development of the law on this point during the 19th century see Mayne, J. D., Hindu Law and Usage, 7th edition, pp. 272-283.

completion of 18 years of age.



of a Hindu youth.<sup>1</sup> The missionaries appear to have regarded 14 years as the legal age;<sup>2</sup> the Hindus, on the other hand, wanted it to be fixed at 18 years,<sup>3</sup> although they married youths of even lower age and entrusted them with family responsibilities. Cases of conversion were, therefore, often brought before the courts of law for adjudication.

The first case of this nature took place in 1833. Early in that year Brojonath Ghosh, a youth of about 14 years, the son of Rammohan Ghosh and a student of the Church Missionary Society's English School at Mirzapur ( Calcutta ), took shelter with T.Sandys, the resident missionary there. On the application of the father, a writ of habeas corpus was issued by the acting Chief Justice against K.M.Banerji ( who was said to have taken

1. The Bengal Regulations XXVI. of 1793, LII. of 1803, VI. of 1822 and the Madras Regulation V. of 1802 deferred the majority of proprietors of estates paying revenue to Government and wards of the court to the completion of the 18th year. These regulations did not, however, apply to the question of a parent's right to the custody of his child.
2. See Dr.Duff's minute on "Rights of parents over children", submitted to the Indian Law Commissioners, Ind.Leg.Cons. 10 May 1841, No. 22.
3. This is evident from the above-noted minute of Duff as well as from the discussions of the Bengali press in connection with the cases noted in this chapter. It does not tally, however, with Hindu legal texts according to which minority lasted, "according to the doctrine of Bengal", till the end of the 15th year.(See Macnaghten, op.cit., p.113.) The Indian Majority Act (IX.) of 1875 provided that in the case of a minor whose guardian was to be appointed by a court of law, or who was under the jurisdiction of any Court of Wards, minority terminated after 21 years, and in other cases, at the completion of 18 years of age.



away the youth) calling upon him to produce the body of Brojonath Ghosh. An affidavit in answer to the writ was returned, declaring that the body was not in the custody of K.M. Banerji.<sup>1</sup> The boy, however, of his own free will appeared in court, where he was ordered to be delivered up to the custody of his father on the ground that he was not of age, although he expressed before the court his unwillingness to accompany his father.<sup>2</sup> In delivering judgement Justice Rayan observed: "It appears to me that there is on the face of this return something like a contrivance. I think the child is an infant, and that he has got away from his father's house for the purpose of being made a Christian. The next question is what is to be done with him? ....the court has the power to interfere, but it has the discretion whether it will exercise it or not. In this case, the child has been allured from his parent's house for the purpose of converting him to Christianity, contrary to the usages of this country.... I therefore say, to order him to be delivered to his father, is a sound, proper and good decision."<sup>3</sup>

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1. C.C.O., August 1833.

2. Ibid. Brojonath appears to <sup>have</sup> adhered to Christianity, for in 1839 he was appointed a catechist at Krishnagar by the Corresponding Committee of the Church Missionary Society. See Minutes of their meeting held on 27 February 1839 - C.M.S. Archives, North India Mission, No. 1.

3. John Bull, July 1833, quoted in T.P., 1 Jyaishta, 1767 Saka, (1845), Series I., Vol. I., p. 184.



The court thus enforced the Hindu parent's right to the custody of his minor child and thought it necessary to interfere when it recognised that there was a contrivance to allure the youth from his parent's house for the purpose of converting him to Christianity. It did not, however, set a limit to the age of minority nor did it precisely define the nature of the contrivance and allurement recognised to have been exercised upon the youth in question. As a matter of fact, such a charge of contrivance and allurement could be made in the case of any convert who might have taken shelter with the missionaries. It was this vagueness of the court's decision which came under the critical observation of the missionaries.<sup>1</sup>

For the rest of the thirties, however, no further case occurred on this account. In 1841 a writ of habeas corpus was issued directing the Rev. Bowyer to bring up the persons of two Hindu youths, Nabinchandra Mitra and Premchand Soor. The Reverend gentleman appeared, but not with the youths in question, for the return to the writ stated that they were not residing with him.<sup>2</sup> What happened to the case is not known. In 1845, however, took place a case which caused great excitement among the Hindus of Calcutta. In April of that year Umeshchandra

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1. C.C.O., August 1833.

2. C.C.A., 18 September 1841, Vol.III., p. 165.

2. Ibid.



Sarkar, a boy of about 14 years, the son of Gangadhar Sarkar, of Jorasanko ( Calcutta), left his parental roof, and with his wife, a girl of 11 years of age, took shelter in Dr.Duff's house. The boy was a student of the Free Church Institution. His father visited him at Duff's house, and on failing to persuade him to come back home, filed an affidavit, and applied to the Supreme Court for a writ of habeas corpus against the Reverend Doctor for the production of the boy in court, and his eventual delivery into the hands of his natural guardian. The court refused to interfere with the matter, as no case of restraint had been made out on the face of the affidavit.<sup>1</sup> The Chief Justice observed:<sup>2</sup>

It does not appear that the child was detained against his will. He might have gone away with his father if he had wished, although the affidavit states, that he was detained, yet the father says, he believes that the son consented to staying. No obstruction has been offered to the father in visiting his child, and there is nothing to shew Dr.Duff has prevented any interviews between them. The child is under no illegal restraint, on the contrary he is consenting to remain where he is. In moving a Habeas Corpus a prima facie case of restraint should be made out. The court cannot act merely on the belief of parties. Here is a species of moral restraint with which the court cannot interfere. If any obstruction had been offered in preventing the father from seeing his child, we should have granted the application.

The decision of the Supreme Court was welcomed with great exultation by the friends of the missionaries, but the Hindus

I. T.P., 1 Jyaishta, 1767 Saka (1845), Series I., Vol.I., p.184.  
For further comments on this case see below, pp.129-130.

1. Hurkaru, 25 April 1845.

2. Ibid.



community received it as a dangerous encroachment upon the Hindu parent's right over their children. They recalled the case of Brojonath Ghosh (1833) and expressed surprise at the court's different decision this time. It is noteworthy that both Brojonath Ghosh and Umeshchandra Sarkar were about 14 years old and both were equally unwilling to return to their parental homes. On both occasions there was no physical restraints upon the converts. But in the former case the court recognised that the boy had been "allured away" "for the purpose of fitness", converting him to Christianity and decided to interfere. In the latter case the court emphasised upon the absence of restraint and rejected the application for a writ of habeas corpus. Supreme Almost all the Bengali papers were, however, highly critical of the decision of the court. Even the Tattabodhini Patrika had remarked:<sup>1</sup>

If the Court had the power to interfere then, why has it not the same power now? If it was thought a contrivance of the missionaries in the one, why was it not thought so in the other case? It was as much a moral restraint in the one as in the other instance, and Brojonath was as willing to remain with the missionaries as Womeshchunder was said to be with Dr. Duff.... If uniformity of decision constitutes one feature of the chief usefulness of a court of justice, we are sorry to be compelled to record, that the Supreme Court has departed from the principle which would have governed it.

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1. T.P., 1 Jyaishta, 1767 Saka (1845), Series I., Vol.I., p.184.
  2. For further comments on this case see below, pp.129-130.
  3. Friend of India, 26 August 1847, Vol.XIII., p.531.



The unfavourable decision of the Supreme Court in the case of Umeshchandra Sarkar did not, however, deter the Hindus from asserting the same right on subsequent occasions by means of a writ of habeas corpus. Two years later another case was instituted with the Supreme Court on the same ground.<sup>1</sup> In the middle of 1847 Radhakanta Datta, a student of the General Assembly's Institution, left his parent's house and went to the Rev. J. Ogilvie, the superintendent of that institution, for the purpose of being baptised. Ogilvie, "satisfied of his fitness", allowed him to remain in his house.<sup>2</sup> The lad's father soon followed and after visits being unable to persuade his son to return home, applied for a writ of habeas corpus from the Supreme Court. The writ was issued to which Ogilvie replied on 20 August stating that the young man was not detained by him, that he had always been a free agent, at perfect liberty to remain in the institution, or to return to his family, and that he (Ogilvie) "had simply prevented his taking away by force."<sup>3</sup>

After hearing various affidavits on both sides, the Chief Justice (Sir Lawrence Peel) observed that the case was governed by the properties properly applicable to the writ of habeas corpus. The question before the court was not what the power

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1. Queen v. Ogilvie, Taylor ( The Indian Decisions ) 137.

2. C.C.O., September 1847, Vol. XVI., pp. 533-534.

3. Friend of India, 26 August 1847, Vol. XIII., p. 531.



of a Hindu father was, or what was his practical remedy, but only whether there was a continuing illegal restraint of this child. The Chief Justice referred to the case of King v. Greenhill (29 January 1836)<sup>1</sup> and observed that it was decided in that case that if an infant was brought before the court by habeas corpus, the court would leave him, if he was of an age to exercise a choice, to elect where he would go.<sup>2</sup> The Chief Justice further observed that he had never heard it asserted that an English father had a right to compel his son to reside in his house until the legal age of majority (twentyone), though he might have a preferable right of guardianship. He also thought that "a child, though under the age of majority is, for many purposes, competent to act for himself." The right of the Hindu father, whatever it might be, was not by habeas corpus. "On a writ of this nature", observed the Chief Justice, "we cannot try the Hindu father's right to possession of his child. Though no doubt the father has some rights of possession; but he has other remedies. One mode of remedy is by resort to a Court of Equity." The Chief Justice saw no ground to suppose

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1. 4 Ad. & E. 624.

2. C.C.O., September 1847, Vol.XVI., p. 554. It may be noted, however, that in King v. Greenhill the principle of discretion was an obiter dictum, not the ratio decidendi, for the children involved in this case were too young ( 5 years and 3 years ) to admit of the application of such a principle. On the other hand the right of the father to the custody of his children, (as against the claim of even the mother), was emphatically asserted and enforced, and that too, on a writ of habeas corpus. Oriental Cases, London 1853, pp.91-107.



that the son was devoid of proper intelligence. Therefore he was asked where he wished to go and on his desiring to go to Bombay, Ogilvie was assured that he would be protected there.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the case of Radhakanta Datta, like that of Umeshchandra Sarkar, ended in favour of the missionaries. But unlike the latter case, the court's decision in this was not based solely on the absence of any restraint. Besides taking this into consideration, the court brought two more points to bear upon this case. First, that the youth, though under the age of majority, was considered to be competent in many respects to act for himself, thus setting aside the plea of minority as giving the father the absolute control over his child. Secondly, that whatever right a Hindu father had over his minor son, that was to be established not by writ of habeas corpus but by such other means as a resort to the court of equity.

It may be noted that similar cases were brought before the Supreme Courts of Madras and Bombay during this period. The Madras Court delivered judgements similar to those of the Calcutta Court in the cases of Umeshchandra Sarkar and Radhakanta Datta;<sup>2</sup> but the Bombay Court upheld the father's right to the custody of his child and enforced it on habeas corpus.<sup>3</sup> Sir

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1. Ibid.
  2. See for a discussion of these cases Norton, J.B., Leading Cases, Vol. I., pp. 131-132.
  3. Queen v. Benonji and Edalji, 28 Feb. 1843, and Queen v. Nesbitt 3 Nov. 1843, -Perry, Oriental Cases, London 1853, pp. 91-107.



Erskine Perry, who was one of the judges in these cases at Bombay, was of opinion that as the law of England had not marked out in precise terms at which period parental authority ceased, it was the duty of the Common Law Judges to exercise a sound discretion in every case whether they would order, on habeas corpus, the child to be given up to the father; and that such order ought to be made unless the father was seeking the child for purposes of mischief. "Indeed", further observed Perry, "if this were not so, there would be a denial of justice to all such fathers as were too poor and helpless to encounter the expenses of a suit in equity."<sup>1</sup> Perry also submitted these views, "soon after the conflicting decisions at Calcutta", to "one of the most eminent Judges on the English Bench" ( J.B. Patteson ) who confirmed that the law was "clearly so" even if the child was more than fourteen years of age and that therefore Perry was "quite right in holding that the father was entitled to the custody of his child, and enforcing it by writ of habeas corpus."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 108-109.

2. Ibid., p.109. Subsequently the Madras and Calcutta Courts enforced the father's right ( In re Cullor Narrainsamy, 1858, Norton, op.cit., p. 131 , and re Himnauth Bose, 1863, 1 Hyde, 111.), the test of age, not that of discretion being applied. These cases were later on affirmed by the Madras High Court, which held that under Act IX. of 1875 the period of parental custody lasted until 18 years. (See Reade v. Krishna, 9 Mad. 391) The Indian Penal Code (Act XLV. of 1860), sec.361, made it a criminal offence to entice from the keeping of its lawful guardian a male minor under 14 years, or a female minor under 16 years of age. See for present position the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956.



The decision of the Calcutta Supreme Court in Radhakanta's case was, however, naturally satisfactory to the missionaries and their friends. The Friend of India considered that the decision should "form the future rule in all cases of Habeas Corpus in Calcutta".<sup>1</sup> Referring to the principle that a youth under the age of majority was in many respects competent to exercise a choice, it further observed that this was consonant with reason and equity, especially in a country where the powers "of both mind and body attain an earlier development than in more northern latitudes and are subject to an earlier decay".<sup>2</sup> Conversely the result of the case was equally distasteful to the Hindu community. It was as a sequel to this case that both the orthodox and liberal Hindus of Calcutta held a grand meeting to consider the plan of boycotting the educational institutions run by the missionaries.<sup>3</sup> It was also shortly following this case that rumours of a conspiracy to manhandle Dr. Duff were afloat in Calcutta.<sup>4</sup>

The last case of this nature during the period under review took place in 1851. On Saturday 12 April of that year, five students of the London Missionary Society's Institution at

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1. Friend of India, 26 August 1847, Vol. XIII., p. 531.

2. Ibid.

3. Supra., pp. 117-118.

4. Infra., pp. 236-238.



Bhowanipur (Calcutta) sought shelter in the house of the Rev.M.E. Storrow, in the Circular Road. They were Taraprasad Chatterji, Chandranath Banerji, Keshabchandra Haldar, Bireswar, and a very young boy.<sup>1</sup> The Rev.J.Mullens of the said institution at once wrote their relatives informing them of the intentions of the young men and the place of their residence. The relatives immediately went to Storrow's house. There in front of a large crowd, which included a European police officer and a native, Jamadar "who had gone there to maintain peace", they were allowed to try to persuade their wards to go back home. The young students expressed their determination to embrace Christianity and stated that they had gone there of their own accord. The young boy, however, went with his relatives to see his kother, promising to return on Monday. On Sunday morning two of the remaining four, Keshabchandra Haldar and Bireswar, also accompanied their relatives, on the same plea to see their mothers and with the same promise to return on Monday.<sup>2</sup> On the evening of that day Taraprasad Chatterji and Chandranath Banerji were baptised by Storrow. On Tuesday, 15 April, the Reverend gentleman was served with a writ charging him with the abduction of a minor boy, and<sup>on</sup> Wednesday (16 April),

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1. The whole episode is narrated in detail in C.C.A., 19 April 1851, Vol.XIII., pp. 182-184.

2. None of these youths returned. Keshabchandra Haldar appeared in court on a writ of habeas corpus issued against his father and stated that he had gone to his father willingly and wished to stay there.



with a second writ charging him with the same offence in another case, and desiring him to produce the bodies of the young men in the Magistrate's court at Alipur ( south Calcutta ), the same day at 1 p.m.<sup>1</sup> In the trial Taraprasad Chatterji deposed that he was about 19 or 20 years of age, that he had gone to Storow and had embraced Christianity of his own free will, and that he wished to stay with the Reverend gentleman. Upon this his father, Udayachandra Chatterji, the prosecutor, stated to the Magistrate that "he wished to carry the case no further. He had been given to understand that his son was kept in closest confinement by the Padri Saheb and was crying for himself and his grandmother, and therefore had brought the present suit. As he now heard for himself that this was not the case, he wished to give up the suit, son and all." He accordingly signed a paper to this effect and left the court.<sup>2</sup> Chandranath Banerji, the second convert, also made a statement similar to Taraprasad's, and denied the genuineness of the horoscope produced by his father-in-law to show him as under age. The Magistrate credited his statement that he was about 18 years old, and dismissed the case asking the young man to go wherever he liked.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Trial Report, C.C.A.,<sup>26</sup> April 1851, Vol.XIII., pp. 198-199.

2. Ibid., p.199.

3. Ibid.



"Thus ended the ridiculously memorable case", commented the Calcutta Christian Advocate, "for never was a respectable citizen placed at the bar on a criminal charge on such grounds, or rather on no grounds at all, even in the history of the Company's courts famous as they were for extraordinary doings."<sup>1</sup> A notable feature of this case was that the relatives and friends who had been publicly apprised of the intention of the young men, and were allowed to see and persuade them, charged the missionaries with unfair practices and want of kindness. The Hindu community were, however, so greatly interested in this case that before "three hours had past, it was known for miles around that the Padris had won the day."<sup>2</sup> The neighbourhood of Bhawanipur and Kalighat ( both in Calcutta ) was in a very excited state. Rumours were afloat that the Institution was to be burnt down and that its branch at Behala ( in Calcutta ) to be broken to pieces. Messages reached the missionaries that if they went into the Kalighat Bazar or to Behala they would get their heads broken.<sup>3</sup>

The cases noticed above represent the general feelings and attitudes of the Hindu community as a whole. That these were not instances of the feelings of the individual parents

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1. Ibid., 19 April 1851, Vol.XIII.,p. 183.

2. Ibid., 26 April 1851, Vol.XIII.,p. 200.

3. Ibid., pp.125-126.



concerned is amply demonstrated by the excitement and interest they caused among the Hindus, as also by the tone of the Bengali press which invariably supported the cause of the Hindu parents on each occasion. These cases show, however, that the missionaries did not employ physical force or any other unfair methods in gaining converts. No attempt was made to prevent the relatives and friends of the converts from seeing them, and, if they could, persuading them. The missionaries utilised only the means of persuasion and instruction, or as the court put it, "the moral restraint". But as it has been seen previously,<sup>1</sup> the Hindus were questioning even the propriety of doing this.

(ii) The abduction of converts. The recovery of a convert from the custody of a missionary by appealing to the right of guardianship of the Hindu parent was, as we have seen, encumbered with certain disadvantages. It could not be proved that the missionaries put the converts under any illegal restraint. It had also to be proved that the convert in question was actually under age so that he was incapable of judging and acting for himself. The absence of any valid record of the age of a native youth made the task difficult. Moreover, even if he was proved to be under the age of legal majority, the court might think him competent to exercise a choice. Converts were also, at times,

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1. Supra., pp. 125-126.



clearly of age so that the question of the legal right of parents over them did not arise at all. All these difficulties, sometimes prompted the relatives of a convert to take the law in their own hands and to effect their purpose by the exercise of physical force. Heberlin endeavoured to rescue him, but

The earliest instance of the forcible recovery of a convert from the custody of a missionary was reported in the middle of 1835. On Friday morning, 31 July, one Ramratan Mukherji, the son of Abhaycharan Mukherji of Calcutta, took shelter with the Rev. J. Heberlin. He was stated to have been an applicant for baptism for one year and was about 20 years of age.<sup>1</sup> At 7 o'clock on Saturday morning, some friends and relatives of Ramratan visited him at Heberlin's house and after failing to persuade him (Ramratan) to renounce his intentions of becoming a Christian went away without him.<sup>2</sup> At 10 a.m. on the same day, the father of Ramratan came, "with 40 or 50 persons". They all came indoors, and took possession of the lower part of Heberlin's house. Abhaycharan Mukherji and two other gentlemen were invited upstairs and were admitted into Heberlin's sitting room, where Ramratan was at that time. Abhaycharan, after some attempts to persuade his son to go

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1. Friend of India, 13 August 1835, Vol. I., p. 259.

2. Ibid., p. 260.

3. C.C.O., March 1837, Vol. VI., p. 125.

4. Ibid., pp. 128-129.



back home, took Heberlin to an adjacent room on the plea of speaking a few words in secret to him. This was a mere ruse, for as Heberlin did so, the two other gentlemen who had accompanied Abhaycharan seized Ramratan by his arms and forced him out of the room. Heberlin endeavoured to rescue him, but was jostled against the wall by the whole party from below who rushed upstairs. Ramratan was dragged downstairs and carried away.<sup>1</sup> The Friend of India, while noticing this incident, urged Heberlin and his friends to "brave all the annoyance of appearing in court, to secure for the youth the protection of his person by the laws."<sup>2</sup> Yet no legal action was taken against the offenders and nothing more was heard of Ramratan Mukherji. Two years later took place another case of abduction of a convert which ended, however, in a lawsuit by the missionaries. The story of the case is as follows. On 17 February 1837, Dwarkanath Bose, the son of Kesabram Bose, and a student of the General Assembly's Institution in Calcutta, was baptised and granted shelter in the house of D. Ewart, a missionary of the Church of Scotland Mission.<sup>3</sup> Twice before his baptism he was stated to have been withdrawn from the school and confined for sometime in the country-village.<sup>4</sup> His father was also

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p. 259.

3. C.C.O., March 1837, Vol. VI., p. 125.

4. Ibid., pp. 128-129.



stated to have disowned him on account of his adherence to Christianity by addressing a public letter to the Samachar Chandrika, an orthodox Bengali paper, debarring him from all interest in his patrimonial inheritance.<sup>1</sup> After his baptism, however, the father and other relatives several times visited Dwarkanath for the purpose of persuading him to return home. Kesabram also addressed an Attorney's letter to Ewart and E. Mackey, a missionary colleague, demanding them to deliver his son to him. In answer they stated that so far as they were concerned, the young man was at liberty to go when and where he pleased.<sup>2</sup> A few days afterwards, however, while Ewart, accompanied by the young man, was on his way to the school at Garanahata ( Calcutta ), his horse was suddenly stopped in a crowded part of the Chitpur Road, by the father. While Ewart was endeavouring to make the father let go the horse, some people forced open the door of the carriage at the opposite side, violently dragged the youth into the street, and hurried him off.<sup>3</sup> It was further stated that bands of men were stationed at several places on the Chitpur Road so that, if the attempt failed in the first instance, it might be renewed.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid., p. 129.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

1. Ibid., July 1837, Vol. VI., p. 388.

4. Ibid., May 1842, Vol. XI., p. 306.



In October of the latter year the Bengali Hurkary reported the attempted abduction of Gurucharan Bose, one of the teachers of the Hare School, Calcutta.<sup>1</sup> He had taken shelter in the Christ Church Parsonage on 7 October. Great excitement prevailed over this incident. The missionaries, not considering the place sufficient protection for him, removed him to the Bishop's College. His relatives visited him and tried to persuade him not to embrace Christianity, but to no effect. At last they enticed him into a boat under pretence that his uncle had come to see him and wished to have a friendly interview with him. The boat pushed off, and they would have succeeded in their purpose of carrying him off, had not a European gentleman, hearing of the attempt, chased and overtaken them with his boat.<sup>2</sup> In the following month of the same year another abduction took place which caused great excitement and which became the subject of much discussion in the Bengali as well as English press of Calcutta. There are two slightly different versions of the story. According to the Rev. G. Small and the missionary papers, Shyamacharan Bose, the abducted convert, was mentioned by Small at the beginning of November. The convert was stated to be an "educated Hindu" who had taken the step "after mature and prayerful deliberation". His relatives made several

A few months after Dwarkanath's case, two converts, one in Calcutta and another at Burdwan, were reported to have been carried off by their relatives.<sup>3</sup> But the details of these, as also that of another abduction at Burdwan in 1842<sup>4</sup> are lacking.

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1. Ibid., p. 130.

2. Ibid., 13 October 1842.

3. Ibid., July 1837, Vol. VI., p. 388.

4. Ibid., May 1842, Vol. XI., p. 306.



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1. Hurkaru, 13 October 1842. Vol.IV., p. 233; see also Small's letter in Englishman, 2 December 1842.

2. Ibid.

2. Sambad Prabhakar, quoted in G.J.A., 24 December 1842, Vol.IV., p.268.



attempts to "lure him away" but without success, until on November 22 when Small complied with the request of Shyamacharan's friends and accompanied him to a neighbouring village with the professed object of seeing his ailing uncle, to whom he was much attached. On their arrival at the spot a "mob of vilent men" appeared suddenly and carried Shyamacharan off.<sup>1</sup> The Sambad Prabhakar, on the other hand, stated that Small, "not daring to retain Shyamacharan in his own house, went and placed Shyamacharan in a house at Beliaghata" (Calcutta). Thither the father of Shyamacharan went, "taking with him a great number of people". On this occasion, many Hindus having assembled to witness the affair, Small became "alarmed" and attempted to escape with the boy. "At this juncture, two strong men came up and pushing aside the missionary, seized hold of Shyamacharan and hurried him away."<sup>2</sup> The version of the Prabhakar thus differs from the missionary one in that Small went to the village in question not to comply with the request of visiting Shyamacharan's ailing uncle, but with a view to removing the convert to a safer place. But even the Prabhakar did not deny that Shyamacharan was forcibly snatched away from the custody of Small. Its story of Small's attempting to remove Shyamacharan to a safer place and trying to escape (at

1. C.C.A., 26 November 1842, Vol.IV., p. 233; see also Small's letter in Englishman, 2 December 1842.

2. Sambad Prabhakar, quoted in C.C.A., 24 December 1842, Vol.IV., p.268.



the assemblage of a large number of people thus appears to be an attempt to justify the use of force and a clumsy effort to incriminate Small.

With reference to this incident the Friend of India and the Calcutta Christian Advocate called upon the Government to put a stop to such a "flagrant breach of law".<sup>1</sup> The Bengal Hurkaru, on the other hand, disapproved of such a proposal and <sup>as</sup> ~~se~~ no necessity to trouble the Government concerning a matter within the immediate jurisdiction of the local magistrate who, upon a due representation that a party was forcibly detained against his will, would be bound to take cognizance of the application "without any reference to any question of religious controversy".<sup>2</sup> It also added that any interference by Government would be at variance with its pledge not to interfere with the religious tenets of the natives. The Hurkaru concluded:<sup>3</sup>

If, however, the Government considers itself bound to respect the religious opinions of each and all its subjects, it follows as a necessary corollary, that it is bound to cause others to respect them too. If one portion of its subjects are permitted by the Government so to interfere, the Government does virtually interfere, and we speak advisedly, by consent and collusion. If the Government allow that interference....it does not fulfil its engagement, which is, virtually, not only not to interfere directly, but not to do so indirectly, by a tacit acquiescence in the interference which it is in its power to control.

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1. C.C.A., 26 November 1842, Vol.IV., p. 233.

2. Hurkaru, 6 December 1842.

3. Ibid. Prebhakar, quoted in C.C.A., 24 December 1842, Vol.IV., p. 268.



The Englishman also spoke in the same strain and went a step forward in accusing the missionaries with "cramming religion down the throats" of the youthful Hindus, and of decoying them away from their parents.<sup>1</sup>

The Sambad Prabhakar observed that the missionaries had begun to act in a most oppressive way in their efforts against the Hindu religion, "employing like the rapacious Indigo-planters bands of violent and blood-thirsty men; armed with bludgeons, they wander about from place to place, and when they can get sight of a child they snatch him by force from his mother's arms."<sup>2</sup> Referring to the proposal of the Friend of India and of the Calcutta Christian Advocate for Government interference in the matter it expressed surprise that "when the missionaries forcibly robbed a man of his son, and made him a Christian, the Missionary gentleman at Serampore who styles himself 'the Friend of India' said not a word by way of repudiating such conduct", but rather expressed his joy, thereby increasing the "audacity of his robber relatives and acquaintances". But when the father succeeded in recovering his infant child from the hands of the missionary, there was no end of his (the friend's) grief, and he prayed Government to render assistance. But the Government could not interfere as they were "clearly bound by

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1. Englishman, 23 November 1842.

2. Sambad Prabhakar, quoted in C.C.A., 24 December 1842, Vol. IV., p. 268.



a pledge to preserve the religion of the Hindus agreeably to the Hindu Shastras."<sup>1</sup> A correspondent of the Prabhakar further advised the missionaries "to give up their discreditable trade of kidnapping boys, and making Christians of them by force", and requested them to follow "some honourable occupation, to support themselves and their families."<sup>2</sup>

To the above comments the Calcutta Christian Advocate replied on behalf of the "whole body of the evangelical missionaries".<sup>3</sup> As against the suggestion of the Hurkaru for a writ of habeas corpus it observed that such a thing was impracticable in the state of the police and judicial administration in the mufassal. "There is no such thing in Mufassal law; the precise place of confinement must be pointed out, and even then it is a thousand to one if the detained party be not removed to another prison before the writ can issue." As to the Government's neutrality in religious affairs it observed that it was certainly not a neutral law under which a man could not "dare to act up to the dictates of his enlightened conscience, for should he in so doing offend his connections, and they feel disposed to carry him off and imprison him, there is neither protection for his conscience nor his body". It also unequivocally denied that the

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., 30 December 1843, Vol. V., pp. 422-423.

3. C.C.A., 10 December 1842, Vol. IV., pp. 249-250.



the missionaries had ever used improper means in seeking for converts, far from decoying or abducting Hindu children, and maintained: "It is heathenism with its meats and drinks, and cruel system of caste, that would rather consign a child to the grave than witness him, living a life of holy devotedness to Christ".<sup>1</sup>

The Englishman and the Prabhakar were certainly wrong, in their allegations against the missionaries and the Advocate's remarks regarding the state of affairs in the mufassal were in a large measure true; but the latter was far from right in its statement that the law of the land did not afford any protection for the conscience or body of a man. It also overlooked the fact that the remarks of the Hurkaru regarding Government's neutrality were directed not so much to the state of the law of the country as to the very mode of criticising the religion of the natives and seeking converts from them, thereby interfering with their religion. It was this spirit of grievance which underlay the harshness of the Prabhakar's remarks.

The missionaries, in the meanwhile, applied to the magistrate of the 24-Parganas ( R.H. Mytton ) for the recovery of the convert.<sup>2</sup> For about a year the magistrate attempted

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., 18 January 1844, Vol. VI., p. 14.

3. Friend of India, 18 January 1844.

2. C.C.A., 30 December 1843, Vol.V., pp.422-423.



in vain to recover him, till at last when he gave orders for a reward of rupees 200, the father of Shyamacharan himself came forward<sup>and</sup> produced his son at Alipur court. There Shyamacharan denied, contrary to the evidence of a number of Hindu and Muslim witnesses, that he had ever been a Christian or that he had ever been carried off, with or against his will. The magistrate committed him to Sessions on a charge of perjury, and fined the father rupees 200 for contempt of court, for not having produced his son when summoned to do that.<sup>1</sup>

On 9 January 1844 the Civil and Sessions Judge (J. Stainforth) fully convicted Shyamacharan of perjury and recommended three years' imprisonment, but thought it proper to refer the question to the Sadr Court before passing sentence.<sup>2</sup> At this juncture the Friend of India called upon the missionaries to intervene and petition the authorities, "if not for a remission of punishment, at least for a considerable mitigation of it", for it feared that the Hindus would turn it to account "by representing it as a punishment for not embracing Christianity".<sup>3</sup> The missionaries did not, however, intervene; but the apprehensions of the Friend of India were set at rest by the verdict of the Judges of the Sadr Court who acquitted Shyamacharan,

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., 13 January 1844, Vol. VI., p. 14.

3. Friend of India, 18 January 1844.



because the charge of perjury was not clearly made out — "the young man did not allege that he had never been baptised, but that he had never been a Christian; and of course, no proof could be produced that he had ever been a Christian."<sup>1</sup>

Thus ended the case of Shyamacharan Bose. The result of the case provided food for thought to both the missionaries and the Hindus. It showed that the converts could not be forcibly carried off with impunity and that persons guilty of such conduct were accountable to the court, thus making the missionaries feel that there was, if not sufficient, at least some protection for their converts in the state of the law of the country. The charge of perjury against Shyamacharan, as it appears, fell through on a technical point of law; but his father was fined for not producing his son before the court in time. On the other hand, it was a matter of concern for the missionaries that a convert, after having been for a time under the influence of his Hindu friends and relatives, might deny having ever been a Christian and might also be readmitted into the Hindu society, a feature hitherto novel in the system of caste, thus rendering the whole trouble of carrying the case to the court unprofitable. As a matter of fact the return of Shyamacharan to Hinduism encouraged the

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1. Hurkaru, 27 January 1844.



orthodox Hindus to consider seriously whether by framing some general rules for readmitting apostates into caste a barrier could effectively be set against the progress of conversion.<sup>1</sup>

For about a year and a half after this no case of abduction<sup>2</sup> was reported. In the middle of 1845, following the excitement over the case of Umeshchandra Sarkar,<sup>2</sup> a student of the Free Church Institution took his abode with the Rev. T. Smith, seeking baptism ( 6 May ). On 14 May, a "party of natives armed with latees" decoyed the youth downstairs "under the pretence of seeing some female relative, seized him, put him in a palkee, and took him off."<sup>3</sup> Smith, having ascertained the house where the convert was confined, procured a writ of habeas corpus; but in endeavouring to serve it, the officers of the court were reported to have been forcibly opposed by the inmates of the house.<sup>4</sup> Upon this the Friend of India observed that the procedure adopted by the missionaries had not been altogether judicious, for those "who had dared so grossly to violate the law were not likely to scruple at a false return, or hesitate to remove their victim beyond the reach of a writ, or indeed to adopt any other measure, however

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1. Infra., p.154.

2. Supra., pp. 124-126.

3. C.C.A., 17 May 1845, Vol. VII., p.225.

4. Hurkaru, 17 May 1845.

4. C.C.A., 21 June 1845, Vol. VII., pp. 294-295.



violent or nefarious, which was likely to promote their Christianity. design.<sup>1</sup> It suggested that as the vigilance over the convert would relax he would rejoin "his Christian friends at a future period, if his impressions of the truth were permanent and sincere."<sup>2</sup> In speaking thus the Friend of India appears to have been influenced by the results of the case of Shyamacharan. The accused party, however, acted differently. They gave up the young man, after a few days, to the missionaries. The writ of habeas corpus was consequently withdrawn.<sup>3</sup>

In June of the same year a report came from Chittagong that a native enquirer there, belonging to a respectable family, had taken shelter with a missionary, but that in the absence of the latter, had been forcibly carried away by his relatives. When summoned before the magistrate, however, the young man deposed that he had gone away of his own accord and that no compulsion had been used against him. The case was therefore dismissed.<sup>4</sup>

No further abduction took place till 1853. In January of that year a boy named Mahendrachandra Dey, son of Haruchandra Dey, a cloth merchant of China Bazar ( Calcutta ), took shelter with Babu Tarinicharan Mitra, a senior convert of the General

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1. Hurkaru, 10 February 1853. The Hurkaru stated that it had authenticated the report of the abduction.

1. Friend of India, 22 May 1845.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 12 February 1853.

3. C.C.A., 31 May 1845, Vol.VII., p.249; also Hurkaru, 31 May 1845.

4. C.C.A., 21 June 1845, Vol.VII., pp. 294-295.



Assembly's Mission, for the purpose of embracing Christianity. His parents and relatives, after having failed to persuade him to return home, applied force and with the help of lathials (armed men) carried him off.<sup>1</sup> Communicating this news a correspondent of the Hurkaru requested the "friends and conductors of the General Assembly's Mission" to recover the youth by means of a writ of habeas corpus. Anticipating the attitude adopted by the Friend of India in 1845, he wrote that the plea that the convert, if sincere and firm in his convictions, would one day or other come back to the missionaries, was not a sound principle of policy, for he would be removed from all communication with the missionaries and his soul was bound to languish and be barren amidst the "idolatry and bigotry with which he would be surrounded".<sup>2</sup> A couple of days afterwards the correspondent further assured the missionaries that the youth in question was not under the age of majority. He therefore once again urged the missionaries to recover the youth by the arm of the law.<sup>3</sup> Yet no legal action appears to have been taken against the accused. It is difficult to account for the inaction of the missionaries in this case.

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1. Hurkaru, 10 February 1853. The Hurkaru stated that it had authenticated the report of the abduction.

2. Ibid., p. 24.

3. Ibid., 12 February 1853.



The fact that the young man was not actually baptised and that he was taken away from the custody of a native convert, and not from that of a European missionary, might have led the missionaries not to hazard a law-suit for his sake. In any case, nothing more was heard of the said Mahendrachandra Dey.

The last instance of the application of force in recovering a convert during this period was the attempted abduction of a convert of the Rev.J.Ogilvie, a missionary of the Church of Scotland mission, in June 1853. It was stated that in the absence of Ogilvie the father of the boy, backed by a band of lathials, made a forcible entry into the premises, disabling the darwan ( gateman ) at the gate. While they were on the eve of taking to their heels with the young man, the darwans of the Rev.E.Mackay, next door neighbour, "came to oppose the aggressors", when apropos, Ogilvie came home, "and the mob, seeing him from a distance, fled, and consequently the lad was brought under his protection again."<sup>1</sup>

The cases noticed above show that there were attempts to recover the convert from the custody of a missionary by means of physical force and that such efforts were at times successful. It is evident, however, that those who thus resorted

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1. Hurkaru, 9 June 1853; also the Weekly Chronicle, 13 June 1853, p.24.

1. Kane, P.V., History of Dharmasastra, Vol.II., Pt.I., Poona 1941, Chapter III. See also proceedings of the Hindu meeting held in Calcutta on 25 May 1851- C.C.A., 31 May 1851, Vol.XIII. pp.255-260.



to force were not actuated by any motive of committing violence or bodily injury upon either the missionary or his convert. They wanted to bring the convert under their own influence in order to prevail upon him to recant and re-enter the fold of Hinduism. Secondly, these cases, as also those brought before the court on the plea of the parent's right over children, also show that in practice the system of caste was not looked upon as immutable and that there was a desire to readmit apostates into their caste after performing such expiatory rites as would conform to the Hindu Shastras.

(b) Readmission of apostates into caste. The provision for atonement was not unknown to the Hindu Shastras; but the law on this point was rather severe. According to it, atonement of a sin deliberately committed was to be effected by leading a life of an ascetic in a wood far from the haunts of men for a period of 12, 24, 36 or 48 years ( 1,2,3 or 4 yugas, 12 years making a yuga ) according as the sinner might be of a Sudra , a Vaisya, a Kshatriya or a Brahman. During the period of penance the penitent must walk barefooted, lie on bare ground, bathe thrice a day, and support himself by begging, for which purpose he would be justified in visiting a village.<sup>1</sup> The hardship of such a penance was more than human nature could

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1. Kane, P.V., History of Dharmasastra, Vol.II.,Pt.I., Poona 1941, Chapter III. See also proceedings of the Hindu meeting held in Calcutta on 25 May 1851- C.C.A., 31 May 1851, Vol.XIII. pp.255-260.



bear, and in practice such an injunction was hardly ever carried out. Occasional transgressions of caste rules were either connived at or the transgressor was doomed to live in a degraded state in society.<sup>1</sup> The above mentioned law, however, was meant for the purification of the sinner who partook of the forbidden food or transgressed the rules of caste in any other way. It was not designed for readmitting apostates, who had not only forsaken Hinduism but had also embraced a different faith. The desire to reinstate such apostates into Hinduism was a new development traceable to the progress of conversion of Hindu youths to Christianity during the second quarter of the 19th century.

Even during the early thirties of the 19th century the orthodox Hindus, zealous as they were to maintain all the rites and practices of popular Hinduism, were intent upon enforcing caste discipline against both the heretical tendency of "Young Bengal" and native converts.<sup>2</sup> This attitude, instead of checking, often hastened the process of conversion.<sup>3</sup> Gradually therefore the orthodox Hindus realised the necessity

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1. It is noteworthy that the commission of a sin did not place the sinner forthwith beyond the pale of Hinduism. He was made unclean and was relegated to a lower caste.
  2. The Enquirer, Sept. 1831, quoted in Hurkaru, 15 October 1831.
  3. This was especially true in the case of K.M. Banerji who embraced Christianity immediately after his expulsion from home consequent upon his taking part in a beef-eating party. (See Duff, India and India Missions, Edinburgh 1839, pp. 625-27)



of allowing some sort of relaxation of caste restrictions.

This change of attitude was clearly noticeable in the early years of the forties. In 1843 the Calcutta Christian Advocate testified to this and wrote:<sup>1</sup>

So long as baptism can be staved off, so long as an open profession of Christianity is not made, the more bigotted or less educated members of the community are willing to connive at much on which they would previously have frowned: and by this means they contrive to hold in suspense many who are convinced of the truth of Christianity; and were the slightest compulsion resorted to, to enforce compliance with Hindu rites would, if not imprisoned, make an immediate and decided profession of Christianity.

At a "private" meeting held in early February the Dharm Sabha resolved: "As Christianity is making rapid progress in liberal of the Bengali papers, reported that the convert, Shyamacharan Bose, had been received back into caste by the aid of the Brahmans and Kayasthas of his own and the neighbouring village, "on making a recantation of Christianity, worshipping his family idol, feasting the Brahmans, etc."<sup>2</sup> It was indeed a remarkable concession in matters of caste discipline. On this occasion the Bhaskar expressed its opinion that "this restoration of the Christian convert to caste, if adopted generally by the Hindus, will prove a great obstacle in the way of the spread of Christianity."<sup>3</sup> This suggestion

1. C.C.A., 16 September 1843, Vol. V., p. 230.

2. The Sambad Bhaskar, quoted in C.C.A., 30 December 1843, Vol. V., pp. 422-423. See for Shyamacharan's case supra, pp. 140-147.

3. Ibid., p. 93.



received an additional impetus from a reported movement at Bombay to readmit Christian converts into the fold of Hinduism on making some alterations in caste rules.<sup>1</sup> Commenting upon this the Sambad Prabhakar urged the Hindus of Bengal to adopt similar measures.<sup>2</sup> It is not known what reaction these exhortations of the Bhaskar and the Prabhakar produced upon the orthodox Hindus of Calcutta at that time.

The orthodox Hindus of Calcutta moved, however, in 1847 when a series of conversions presented a problem before them. At a "private" meeting held in early February the Dharma Sabha resolved: "As Christianity is making rapid progress in the country, converting those youths that are connected with the most respectable families, proper means should be devised for restoring them to caste again."<sup>3</sup> The question having been referred to the consideration of the Pandits of Calcutta, "all expounded doctrines calculated to accomplish the object." A certain mode of atonement was proposed, the performance of which would restore "a convert to the ranks of the Hindu

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1. See for an account of this movement the Dnyanodaya, January 1844, reproduced in C.C.A., 17 February 1844, Vol.VI., p.78; also Friend of India, 20 and 27 June 1844. The movement took place after the case of Sreeput Sheshadri (Queen v. Nesbitt, - Perry, Oriental Cases, pp.103-107), 3 November 1843.
  2. Sambad Prabhakar, quoted in C.C.A., 17 February 1844, Vol.VI., p. 78.
  3. Hindu Intelligencer, quoted in C.C.A., 2 February 1850.
  4. The Calcutta Standard, quoted in C.C.A., 20 Feb. 1847, Vol.IX., p. 93.



society."<sup>1</sup> But neither the details of the proposed atonement nor the subsequent proceedings in this connection are known. A few months later, when a great Hindu meeting was held on 19 September to consider measures for arresting the progress of Christianity, nothing regarding the admission of apostates into Hinduism was discussed. It was, however, openly proclaimed to the youths present: "Babas, (i.e., dear children) eat whatever you like, drink whatever you like, but be not a Christian."<sup>2</sup> This indeed shows a remarkable change of attitude in regard to food and drink. Three years later, the question was again agitated. In January 1850, the Hindu Intelligencer published a notice "for the information of native converts to Christianity" that a Hindu gentleman of "highest respectability" had discovered a certain form of Prayaschittya (purification or atonement) to reclaim into caste "as many of our stray youths as may be disposed to come back".<sup>3</sup> The ceremony was stated to be "neither very intricate, nor in the least degrading, but, on the contrary, simple and honourable."<sup>4</sup> Further details were to be supplied on "personal application". It is not known

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1. Ibid.
  2. Hürkaru, 21 September 1847.
  3. The Hindu Intelligencer, quoted in C.C.A., 2 February 1850, Vol. XII., p. 51.
  4. Ibid.



whether any convert availed himself of the opportunity thus offered. The missionary paper, however, remarked:<sup>1</sup>

"That means would be devised to open a pathway back from Christianity to Hinduism was what might be expected. Hinduism was certainly at a disadvantage in its struggle with Christianity in this particular. It may lose adherents, but it cannot gain any.... Now it is evident that a party thus incapable of taking reprisals must in any contest eventually be vanquished."

In 1851, a number of conversions at Bhawanipur (Calcutta) caused great alarm among the Hindus of that locality.<sup>2</sup> On behalf of them one Prasannakumar Mukherji wrote a letter in the Prabhakar on 24 April "calling upon Rajah Radhakanta Deb and other leaders of the community to take into consideration the expediency of adopting measures to receive converts to Christianity back into the Hindu communion".<sup>3</sup> On 8 May an advertisement for a "Monster Meeting" in "Defence of the Faith" appeared in the Bhaskar.<sup>4</sup> It called upon all the inhabitants of Calcutta, Entally, Bhawanipur, Chakraberia, Khidirpur, Bhukailas, Shibpur, Ramkrishnapur, Howrah, Sulkeah, Bali, Uttarpura, Konnagar, Khardah, Panihatty, Ariyadaha, Dakhinshar, Baranagar, Kasipur, Chitpur, Shiti, Paikpara, etc.,<sup>5</sup>

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1. C.C.A., 2 February 1850, Vol.XII., p. 51.
  2. The case of Taraprasad and Chandranath (supra., pp. 131-133) took place as a sequel to this movement for conversion.
  3. Reproduced in C.C.A., 31 May 1851, Vol.XIII., p. 258.
  4. Reproduced in C.C.A., 17 May 1851, Vol. XIII., p.231.
  5. All these places are in and around Calcutta.



to attend a large meeting of the Hindus in which some "good rules" were to be framed for "putting a stop" to the "proceedings" of the missionaries.<sup>1</sup> A few days afterwards Raja Radhakanta Deb, Raja Kalikrishna Bahadur and Babu Ashutosh Deb openly invited the attendance of all denominations at the meeting, which was to be held at the Oriental Seminary, Chitpur Road (Calcutta), on 25 May. They also stated that circular letters had been sent to the learned Pandits of the different ranks of the Hindu community "for the purpose of obtaining their approbation to a certain mode of expiation."<sup>2</sup>

The great meeting of the Hindus took place at the appointed time and place. The number attending was variously reported to be from three hundred to one thousand, including one or two hundred Pandits.<sup>3</sup> It was mainly a meeting of the

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1. Reproduced in C.C.A., 17 May 1851, Vol.XIII., p. 231.

2. Published in the Bhaskar, reproduced in C.C.A., 24 May 1851, Vol.XIII., p. 241.

3. The Hurkaru calculated the number to be roughly three hundred, "nearly a hundred of whom were Brahmins, not Brahmins in name only, but professional Bhattachariyas, whose opinions on Shaster-law might be of infinite importance to the subject of agitation." (Quoted in C.C.A., 31 May 1851, Vol.XIII., p.225) The Citizen reported that the "conference was numerously attended", the hall was "thronged to suffocation" (Ibid., p. 257) The Calcutta Christian Advocate supposed the number to be roughly 500. (Ibid., p. 253) The Bhaskar stated the number to be about "500 respectable natives...besides 200 Udhyapaks or teachers." (Ibid., p. 260)

2. Proceedings of the meeting, ibid., pp. 253-257.

3. Ibid.



orthodox and high caste Hindus, although a few liberals attended it.<sup>1</sup> Among the gentlemen present the most noteworthy were Raja Radhakanta Deb, Raja Kalikrishna Bahadur, Babu Ashutosh Deb, Babu Jagannath Prasad Mallik, Babu Maheshchandra Das, Babu Shibnarayan Ghosh, Babu Girindranarayan Ghosh, Babu Madhabchandra Ghosh, Babu Khelatchandra Ghosh, Babu Shibchandra Das, and Babu Srinath Chowdhury.<sup>2</sup> Raja Radhakanta Deb took the chair. After sundry discussions the president placed the proposed course of atonement, which was "previously drawn up", before the house. It consisted of the presentation of some hundred kine and some 'kahuns' ( a kahun = 1200 ) of shells or 'cowries'. The number and quality of those presents were to be determined by the caste of the person seeking admission. A few isolated objections were raised against the proposed course but all "were drowned" for want of support.<sup>3</sup> The

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1. It is interesting to note that at the very outset of the meeting Raja Radhakanta Deb demanded an explanation as to why the first circular letter for the meeting was sent in the name of "Young Bengal". Prasannakumar Mukherji, the Bhawanipur representative, explained the matter to his satisfaction. Subsequently he wrote a letter to the Bengal Hurkaru explaining his position. A letter also appeared in the Hurkaru signed by "A Liberal Hindoo" stating that the liberals had no connection with the meeting. This was contradicted by "A Liberal Hindu also". See the proceedings of the meeting and the letters referred to, in the Hurkaru, all quoted in C.C.A., 31 May 1851, Vol. XIII., pp. 255-258.

2. Proceedings of the meeting, ibid., pp. 255-257.

3. Ibid.



measure was then put to the vote and "all gave their assent to it".<sup>1</sup> The Pandits, on being asked if they could subscribe to the new dispensation answered that they could so far as the question of atonement was concerned, but they could not speak with certainty whether the penitent could be admitted to a free and full social intercourse.<sup>2</sup> Thereupon the president put off the discussion of the question "till the decision of the Court of Directors be known relative to the Lex Loci petition".<sup>3</sup> The meeting was then dissolved, it being determined to call another meeting, the date to be announced later on.

Obviously the great meeting ended in indecision. It was something, however, that the vast body of the orthodox Hindus under their recognised leaders acknowledged the necessity of altering caste rules and proposed a mode of atonement far less painful and far simpler than that originally prescribed by the Shastras. "The desire to embrace the returning penitent", rightly observed the Citizen, "evinces an abatement of the extreme abhorrence for the ill committed, which in ancient days of pure Hinduism placed the transgressor beyond the possibility of forgiveness... This discloses an unwilling concession in favour of freedom of conscience, and convinces

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. Citizen, quoted in C.C.A., 31 May 1851, Vol. XIII., p. 259.

3. Infra., pp. 221-224.

3. Reproduced in C.C.A., 31 May 1851, Vol. XIII., p. 260.



us that not even the Dharma Sabha remained uninfluenced by the liberalising spirit of the age."<sup>1</sup> The Friend of India regarded the incident as "one of the most important events that has occurred in India in the present century".<sup>2</sup>

Two days after the great meeting the Prabhakar urged the "leaders of the community" to refer the question to all the Hindus of Bengal and to obtain the sanction of the chief authorities at Mithila, Benares, and all other celebrated seats of Hindu learning. This had to be done at any cost because "all the Pandits of Hindustan treat the Bengalis with ridicule and contempt; and if their approval of the course proposed is not secured, they will certainly laugh at us and say — 'the Bengalis have all become Feringhees, and eat the food of the Christians'." It expressed the hope, however, that "nobody will be found to make the slightest objection to such a law as that proposed, for some very eminent pundits have assured us that there are a great many passages in the Shastras in support of it".<sup>3</sup>

For a few months after this nothing was done and there was a comparative silence over the matter. On 16 August 1852, the Samachar Chandrika reported that a "Society for the Deliverance of Hindu Apostates" had been formed about a

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1. The Citizen, quoted in C.C.A., 31 May 1851, Vol. XIII., p. 259.

2. Friend of India, 5 June 1851.

3. Reproduced in C.C.A., 31 May 1851, Vol. XIII., p. 260.



fortnight ago. Its object was to reintroduce into society "those young men who, by the evil counsels and wills of the missionaries, may become Christians."<sup>1</sup> A week after, it gave further details about the Society and stated that about "one hundred wise and excellent gentlemen" had formed it and that they had already held three meetings during the last three Sundays, "at the house of a learned friend at Surtir Bagan, Calcutta".<sup>2</sup> The report of the Chandrika was confirmed by the Morning Chronicle and the Bengal Hurkaru. Both these papers stated that the formation of the Society was in continuation of the efforts begun last year when the great meeting was held on 25 May.<sup>3</sup> They also stated that the leader of the Society was one "respectable Mullick".<sup>4</sup> The Hurkaru further stated that in this connection the two powerful factions of the Basaks and Seths of Calcutta composed their long-standing rivalry. About four hundred persons of these two groups had assembled on 5 May 1852, "to form a native House of Commons, discussing, deliberating and determining upon the question at issue with the greatest eagerness, zeal and unanimity". Of the six applicants for expiation, "four were restored to the privileges

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1. Reproduced in C.C.A., 4 September 1852, Vol. XIV., p. 424.

2. Ibid.

3. Both reproduced in C.C.A., 11 September 1852, Vol. XIV., p. 439.

4. Ibid. Most probably Jagannath Prasad Mallik who was one of the organisers of the last year's meeting.

*patrons*



of the caste and two were driven out with contempt and disdain".<sup>1</sup>

The "Society for the Deliverance of Hindu Apostates" referred the question to the Pandits of all the seats of sacred learning in Bengal and obtained a unanimous verdict, subscribed by one hundred learned authorities. This was published in 1853 in the form of a pamphlet entitled Patitoddhar Vishayak Bhumika or Vyavastha Patrika ( Introduction to the subject of recovering apostates and the prescribed mode of expiation ).<sup>2</sup> It is significant, however, that the names of Raja Radhakanta Deb and Raja Kalikrishna Bahadur do not appear in connection with these later developments. Nor are the activities of this Society known in detail. Be that as it may, it is evident from the above review that the orthodox Hindus, though desirous of maintaining all the forms of popular Hinduism, were forced by the progress of conversion not only to change their attitude towards the question of caste discipline but also to frame new rules for readmitting apostates into caste. This change of attitude and method acted as a deterrent upon the success of the missionary efforts. This is proved not only by the instances of reconversion reported by

L. C.C.A., 4 September 1852, Vol. XIV., p. 424.

1. Ibid.

2. Bagal, Jogeshchandra, Vidroha O Voirita ( Bengali text ), Calcutta B.E. 1356, p. 94.



the Hurkaru, but also by the compromising tone of the missionary paper which wrote: "Missionaries have no wish to harbour hypocrites, and as they employ no other means to convert the natives to Christianity than those which reason and honourable conduct will approve, so they will present no obstacles in the conversion of Christians to the Hindu faith."<sup>1</sup> only by his friends and relatives, but was deserted, at times, even by his wife. Sometimes his children were also withheld from his custody and guardianship. Secondly, as an outcaste and one "degraded", he was considered as debarred from any share in his patrimony.<sup>2</sup> These disabilities were serious obstacles to the progress of conversion and were, therefore, eagerly sought by the missionaries to be removed by legislation. The Hindus, on the other hand, were equally determined upon enforcing these disabilities which they regarded as the obligations of their religion. For the sake of convenience the two questions may be discussed separately, though they were interconnected, proceeding, as they did, from the implications of the system of caste.

The convert's wife and children. Disputes regarding marital rights and obligations were dealt with, in the case

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1. C.C.A., 4 September 1852, Vol.XIV.,p. 424.

1. See Abraham v. Abraham ( 1863 ), 9 M.L.J. 199.

2. Colebrooke, H.T., (Trs), Two Treatises on the Hindu Law of Inheritance, Calcutta 1810, pp. 101 and 360. This law was subsequently changed by Act XXI. of 1830. See infra, pp. 219-220



## CHAPTER V.

Caste and conversion: the convert's wife and children obligations as between the followers of different religions,

A Hindu, upon conversion to Christianity, lost caste and was severed from his family.<sup>1</sup> This had two important consequences upon the convert. First, he was abandoned not only by his friends and relatives, but was deserted, at times, even by his wife. Sometimes his children were also withheld from his custody and guardianship. Secondly, as an outcaste and one "degraded", he was considered as debarred from any share in his patrimony.<sup>2</sup> These disabilities were serious obstacles to the progress of conversion and were, therefore, eagerly sought by the missionaries to be removed by legislation. The Hindus, on the other hand, were equally determined upon enforcing these disabilities which they regarded as the obligations of their religion. For the sake of convenience the two questions may be discussed separately, though they were interconnected, proceeding, as they did, from the implications of the system of caste.

The convert's wife and children. Disputes regarding marital rights and obligations were dealt with, in the case

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Muslims, according to Muslim law, and in the case of Hindus, according to Hindu law. The question of such rights and obligations as between the followers of different religions, and especially between a Christian convert and his Hindu wife, was, however, a peculiar one which was not specifically provided for in the law of the country. According to Hindu law marriage, being in the nature of a sacrament ( sanskara ), created an indissoluble tie between the husband and the wife.<sup>1</sup> But though divorce was not known to the general Hindu law, it was not considered, however, a punishable offence on the part of the wife to desert her husband if he had degraded himself by the loss of caste.<sup>2</sup> But such desertion by his wife did not leave the convert, according to the law of the Christian, free to contract a second marriage.<sup>3</sup> A legislative enactment to deal with such questions was, therefore, urgently called for.

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1. Change of religion does not operate, per se, as a dissolution of marriage. See Government of Bombay v. Ganga, 1880, 4 Bom. 330; Administrator General of Madras v. Anandachari, 1886, 9 Mad. 466; and Gobardhan v. Jasadamoni, 1891, 18 Cal. 252. The judgement in the case of Sinammal v. Administrator General of Madras and others, ( 1883 and 1885 ) 8 Mad. 169, is held to be wrong.

2. Macnaghten (ed. Wilson), Principles of Hindu and Mohammadan Law, London 1862, p. 64. The rule has been established that a suit will not lie by a Hindu converted to Christianity for the restitution of conjugal rights, or the person of his wife, she remaining a Hindu. See Ex parte Balaram, 1852, Perry, Oriental Cases, p. 516; Musst. Meejhoo and others v. Mukhoond Sahoo, Norton, Leading Cases, Vol. I., p. 13; also Paigi v. Sheonarain, 1886, 8 All. 78.

3. See infra., p. 169-170.



As regards the children of a convert no problem arose where both the husband and the wife embraced Christianity. The Hindus of Bengal do not appear to have made any attempt to detain the children of such parents. But where the husband and the wife followed two different religions and continued, in consequence, to live separately, a problem arose as to the custody of the children. In a dispute between a father and the mother over the custody of their children the Court in England held that the father's right was to prevail if no cruelty or gross immorality was apprehended on his part;<sup>1</sup> but the Supreme Court of Bengal, as we have seen in the previous chapter, did not during this period always enforce the father's right to the custody of his children.<sup>2</sup> No precedent was therefore established on this account in Bengal to guide its courts.

The question was first officially mooted in 1837 on a reference made by the magistrate of Agra. He asked whether any power was vested "in the magistrate under the Regulations to compel a wife who has abandoned the society of her husband, or who has been abandoned by her husband, to restore to the husband the children begotten during the course of the marriage."<sup>3</sup> The Sadr Nizamat Adalat ( Chief Criminal Court )

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1. Ibid.

1. King v. Greenhill, 14 Ad.& E. 624.

2. Supra., pp. 124-130.

3. Ind.Judl.Cons., 12 June 1837, No. 5.  
No.239, dated 14 July 1837.



of the North Western Provinces considered that such cases were cognizable only in the civil court and a magistrate was not competent to exercise any interference in such matters.<sup>1</sup> The Sadr Nizamat Adalat of Calcutta, however, expressed a contrary opinion and considered that (a) the magistrate, "as guardian of the public morals, as conservator of the peace and as protector of the rights of the people", could and should interfere, and that (b) the children should be delivered up to the husband.<sup>2</sup> When referred to the Governor General in Council for their opinion, the latter held that (a) pending the formulation of some definite rules for the guidance of the magistrates, the safest course would be to leave them to "exercise a sound discretion to exert their official authority or not, according as the propriety of one or the other course may be indicated by the circumstances of each case", but that (b) it would not be necessarily just and proper "that a mother, at least up to a certain age, should be deprived of the custody of her children."<sup>3</sup> These intentions of the Supreme Government were, therefore, forwarded to the Commissioners of Circuit, Sessions Judges, Magistrates and Joint Magistrates for their guidance.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid. eg. Cons., 10 May 1841, No. 22.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., No. 6.

4. Circular Orders of the Sudder Nizamut Adawlut, Bengal, No. 239, dated 14 July 1837.



Four years afterwards the subject of the convert's marital problems was discussed in a monthly conference of the Calcutta missionaries in 1841 and their views were embodied in a minute drawn by the Rev. A. Duff.<sup>1</sup> It was observed that the convert was bound to abide by the antecedently formed nuptial bond. "But if in consequence of the permission or sanction of the Hindu or Muhammadan law, the unbeliever depart, ... in other words...divorce the believing party, the latter not being in this case the divorcer but the divorced, must be accounted as freed by the wilful or deliberate act of the former, from the ties and obligations of the previous matrimonial union."<sup>2</sup> It was noted, however, that in the then constitution of Hindu society and in the "entire want of any legislative enactment on the subject", it was often impossible to learn the real mind of the "unbelieving party", especially if that party was the wife. It was therefore suggested that in the event of the refusal of the unbelieving party, at the first examination before the magistrate, to join the believing party, there should be a provision for a second examination after the lapse of a year or so, during which time there might be "ample scope for reflection on the one hand, and conciliation"

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1. Ind. Leg. Cons., 10 May 1841, No. 22.

2. Ibid.



on the other."<sup>1</sup> This minute of Duff, together with a memorial signed by a number of missionaries, were submitted to the Government of India for the consideration of the Indian Law Commissioners.<sup>2</sup> No legislative enactment, however, followed the memorial.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly afterwards two important cases of this nature took place which caused a good deal of discussion in the press. The first case occurred towards the end of 1843. Dwarkanath, who had embraced Christianity "some three, four or five years ago",<sup>4</sup> was stated to have been "deprived of his wife by her father, who took her out of Calcutta and refused him all access to her."<sup>5</sup> At length he heard through some friend that she wished to join him, but that if he decided to come he must come prepared to resist force. Accordingly he went on 26 October "with three European sailors and five common Portuguese," and secured his wife but committed an assault in the act of doing so.<sup>6</sup> On 27 October a complaint was made to the

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., No.21.

3. The subsequent proceedings of the Government up to the passing of the Lex Loci Act of 1850 have been discussed in connection with the question of inheritance; infra., pp.196-220.

4. Most probably Dwarkanath Bose, the subject of the abduction case of 1837; supra., pp. 137-139.

5. Friend of India, 23 November 1843, Vol.IX., p.738.

6. Ibid. The nature of the assault is not known.



magistrate of the 24-Parganas by the father of the girl that during his absence from home on the preceding day his house had been forcibly entered and plundered, and that his daughter, "who had not lived for eight years" with her husband, had been carried off, and was then held in duress in Calcutta. A warrant was immediately issued to a "discrete and trustworthy constable" directing him to release the woman from restraint if she was detained against her will, and to give her such protection to the magistrate's court as would enable her to appear and give her deposition. The constable found her in a closed room at the Medical College, Calcutta, and as she begged to be released, he brought her straight to the magistrate on the evening of the 27th; when she again stated her unwillingness to remain with her husband. The following day, her deposition and that of the prosecutor's witnesses, and the examination of the defendant, Dwarkanath, were taken. The charge of assault having been proved against the defendant, he was sentenced to two months' imprisonment. No order was passed as to the custody or guardianship of the woman. "She was simply released from whatever restraint she was under by her husband, as she was sufficiently advanced in years and discretion to judge for herself."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Hurkaru, 13 November 1843.

1. Ibid.



On this case a controversy developed through the columns of the Bengal Hurkaru. On 13 November a correspondent, under the pseudonym of Fiat Justitia, wrote a letter on the case.<sup>1</sup> He divided the case into two parts: (a) the assault and (b) the recapture of the wife. As to the first he considered the punishment awarded to Dwarkanath as disproportionate to his offence, because it was committed in an attempt to secure what is dearest to every man. As to the second he held that the magistrate had exceeded his powers in authorising "a forcible separation of a man and his wife" because one of the parties had become a Christian. It did not matter, he argued, whether the husband obtained the wife by force; he might be punished for the assault, but he was not to be deprived of that which was his. "Even supposing that a wife is unwilling to live with her husband, that should not be a reason why the law should enforce a separation — no violence having been used to her, her personal safety not being endangered." In this connection he also impugned the Government's policy of neutrality in religious matters which, he stated, eventually sanctioned persecution for conscience's sake.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Hurkaru, 13 November 1843.

2. Ibid.



Commenting upon the letter of Fiat Justitia the Bengal Hurkaru thought that the case was a proper occasion for settling the law on the matter, especially in view of the "active measures" that were being taken "in the conversion of the natives, and the general breaking up of ancient prejudices".<sup>1</sup> Without considering the particular circumstances of the case, it expressed in "general terms" its "hearty abhorrence of all persecution for conscience sake, of all exercise of might over right, of all oppression, whether of the many or of the few" and wished the Government, if they possessed neutrality, to indicate honestly "their principles by their actions."<sup>2</sup> The Hurkaru concluded:

We wish to see real toleration, not a ban on every Native Convert...The principles of caste are, in fact, notoriously used as instruments of injustice, caprice, and extortion; and when the British Government gives its sanction and backs by the power of its courts, the practical operation of these principles, it ceases, we fear, to hold the balance of neutrality with an even hand; but rather, under the name of neutrality, throws all its weight into the scale opposite to that of its own religion, and we think also, of its own interest."

In reply to the above comments of Ruat Coelum, Fiat Justitia and another correspondent who assumed the name of Fiat Justitia Ruat Coelum, wrote two letters. The former stated who styled himself — Ruat Coelum. The latter maintained that Ruat Coelum was mistaken in supposing that the wife was the magistrate was justified in punishing the prisoner for unwilling to live with her husband, and discussed in detail

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1. Ibid.

1. Ibid., 15 November 1843.

2. Ibid.

2. Ibid., 16 November 1843.



the assault, and in replacing the wife in the position in which she was before, leaving the prisoner to the remedy which the law gave him. If when the Christian's wife was taken from him, he had applied to the magistrate, he would have had the same justice meted out to him, as had been given to his father-in-law in this case. The magistrate could, and would interfere in restoring wives taken away from their husbands, but he would not interfere to restore wives who have voluntarily left their husbands; "but refer them to the civil court, where they may sue for marital rights". Ruat Coelum further held that if the wife was unwilling to live with her Christian husband on account of her retaining her belief in Hinduism, surely it would not be considered unjust to prevent her from being placed in a position in which she would lose her caste. "Reverse the table", he retorted, "supposing the Christian to turn Hindoo, would you compel his Christian wife to perform pooja?"<sup>1</sup>

In reply to the above comments of Ruat Coelum, Fiat Justitia and another correspondent who assumed the name of Fiat Justitia Ruat Coelum, wrote two letters.<sup>2</sup> The former stated that Ruat Coelum was mistaken in supposing that the wife was unwilling to live with her husband, and discussed in detail

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1. Ibid., 15 November 1843.

2. Ibid., 16 November 1843.



the difficulties of the converts, under the so-called neutral administration, in ascertaining the real wishes of their wives. The other correspondent supported Fiat Justitia's first letter, holding the magistrate unjustified in enforcing a "separation between man and wife". All that he could do, maintained the correspondent, was to see that the wife was not restrained or coerced by the husband in any way, "but permitted to go where she pleases, and live with whom, and in whatever place she pleases".<sup>1</sup>

In his turn Ruat Coelum stated that it was useless to discuss the merits of the case unless it was determined whether the wife was a Hindu and was unwilling to go to her husband.<sup>2</sup> He therefore went to the general question and stated the law as follows:

If the Christian convert has been deprived of his wife, the magistrate, provided the claim be preferred within a month of the abduction and the wife be nothing loth, will restore the wife to the husband and punish the party who took her away. If those provisos are wanting, the magistrate will refer the husband to the civil court. In a suit in the civil court the case would turn upon this point. viz., whether the woman were a Christian or a Hindoo? If the latter, she would be entitled to have the case tried by the Hindoo law. The Bywusteh<sup>3</sup> [decree] of the Pundit would declare her released from all obligation to her husband and the marriage void. This would enable the husband to marry again and would be consonant with the scripture which permits the unbelieving one to depart.

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., 17 November 1843.

3. Correctly "Vyavastha".

3. Ibid.



Fiat Justitia was not satisfied with this exposition of the law. He emphatically asserted that the wife of Dwarkanath was willing to live with her husband and that the magistrate had no right to deprive the husband of his wife.<sup>1</sup> There was no question of a "refusal to restore, but a consent to deprive". "If the Christian had applied to the magistrate for his wife he would have been referred to the civil court; but when some one else applies to take the wife away from the husband, there is no reference to the civil court, but a forcible separation."<sup>2</sup> As to the law of applying to the court within one month, Fiat Justitia maintained that this was of little avail to the converts who could not even ascertain within one month where their wives had been carried; "they are not allowed access to them to ascertain the fact of willingness, — indeed the wives are in the hands of those who soon try to settle the matter." He also asserted that nothing short of the wife's "ascertained unwillingness" to live with her husband would authorise any Christian Minister to marry the convert to another and that the strict neutrality of the Government prevented the ascertainment of the fact.<sup>3</sup>

The view-points of the two parties in the discussion thus differed on a number of points. Fiat Justitia and his

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1. Ibid., 18 November 1843.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.



allies regarded the magistrate's action as authorising former "a forcible separation of a man and his wife". In adopting this attitude they appear to have been influenced by an assumption that the original separation between the convert and his wife was "forcible" — an assumption which in this particular case was not authenticated. They do not also appear to have attached due importance to the fact of the convert's not resorting to legal action in the first instance. The absence of any specific enactment on this matter could not be a satisfactory justification of his not doing so, for the law of the country was comprehensive enough to protect against such an outrage as the forcible abduction or detention of a man's wife. Ruat Coelum, the other party, regarded the magistrate's action as placing the wife in the position in which she was before. In adopting this view he appears to have stressed the application of force in this case and to have underrated the real difficulties with which a convert was beset.

This fundamental difference in their approach to the case accounts for their difference on two more points. Thus while the first party emphatically asserted the wife's willingness to live with her husband, the second party expressed doubts about it and explained the law in general terms. Secondly, although both parties regarded the freely expressed wish of

1. It is difficult to identify who Fiat Justitia really was. Dr. Duff. First, the style of Fiat Justitia's writing Hurkaru mentioned, in answer to the remarks of the Bengal on the contrary a reliable and responsible person. Thirdly, the above mentioned minute of Duff in support of its own remarks
2. The Bengal Herald, 18 November 1843, quoted in Hurkaru, 21 November 1843.



of the wife as the determining factor in the case, the former considered the absence of any enactment on this point and the Government's policy of neutrality as an impediment to knowing the real wish of the wife, the latter thought that a reference to the civil court and to the religious law of the wife would be sufficient to solve the problem. On the whole, thus, the views of the first party ( Fiat Justitia and his supporters) fell in line with those expressed by the missionary conference of 1841.<sup>1</sup>

Hitherto the other English news papers had not taken any part in the discussion. On 18 November the Bengal Herald noticed the case editorially and supported all that Ruat Coelum had said on it.<sup>2</sup> It also commented upon the Hurkaru's remarks regarding the Government's policy and maintained that far from being a "ban on every native convert", it would have been really a persecution for conscience sake if an unwilling Hindu wife had been allowed to be compelled to live with her

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1. It is difficult to identify who Fiat Justitia really was. There are, however, some reasons to suppose that he was Dr. Duff. First, the style of Fiat Justitia's writing resembles that of Dr. Duff's. Secondly, on 28 November the Hurkaru mentioned, in answer to the remarks of the Bengal Herald, that Fiat Justitia was not an anonymous figure, but on the contrary a reliable and responsible person. Thirdly, on 21 November the Hurkaru quoted (see below, text) from the above mentioned minute of Duff in support of its own remarks on the case.

2. The Bengal Herald, 18 November 1843, quoted in Hurkaru, 21 November 1843.



Christian husband.<sup>1</sup> In answer to these remarks the Hurkaru denied its having ever advocated the propriety of restoring an unwilling Hindu wife to her husband, and quoted in support of its views lengthy extracts from the above mentioned minute of Dr. Duff drawn on the subject in 1841.<sup>2</sup>

At this stage of the discussion the Friend of India stepped in and held the magistrate's action unjustified on the ground that (a) the latter had ordered the separation of the wife before calling in the accused to defend himself as was required by Act IV. of 1840 ( For relief in case of forcible dispossession ), and that (b) according to the construction of the Sadr Court all "suits or complaints relative to marriage" were only within the jurisdiction of the civil court, and therefore, the magistrate had no authority to deal with the case.<sup>3</sup> It further pointed out that as the case was of a civil nature the convert had, instead of one month, twelve clear years before him to institute a law-suit. As to the state of the law it maintained that the case was to be governed not by the religion of the wife, as pointed out by Ruat Coelum, but by clause IX., Regulation VII. of 1832, which allowed the convert to inherit property and which laid

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1. Ibid.

2. Hurkaru, 21 November 1843. section IX. of Regulation VII. of

3. Friend of India, 23 November 1843, Vol. IX., pp. 738-739.



down that all such cases should be decided in accordance with the principles of justice, equity and good conscience. "According to these principles", stated the Friend of India, "the civil court would neither compel the woman to follow her husband and embrace Christianity, nor prevent her doing so by consigning her over to her Hindoo relatives. They would recognise her as a free agent, and leave it entirely to her own opinion to join her new connections, religious and social, or to return to the bosom of her family."<sup>1</sup>

Obviously the remarks of the Friend of India were based on a partial knowledge of the facts of the case. The magistrate did not order the separation of the wife without allowing the husband to defend himself, nor did he ( the magistrate ) decide upon a suit relating to marriage. It was also unnecessary to advocate the freedom of the wife to choose her own course of action by recalling the Act VII. of 1832, for neither party in the discussion had denied the propriety of determining the case in accordance with the wish of the wife; and though Ruat Coelum had brought in the question of the wife's religion, in its practical aspect the question of her willingness was interconnected with her choice of religion. If she decided to join her Christian husband, she would have also decided to

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1. Ibid. For a discussion on section IX. of Regulation VII. of 1832 see infra., pp. 193-194.



embrace the new faith. The real problem was how to enable the wife to exercise a free and uninfluenced choice. Towards the solution of this problem the Friend of India contributed nothing. When, therefore, on 7 December it came to know of the true nature of the magistrate's decision, it simply satisfied itself that the magistrate did not assume those functions which belonged to the civil court, and withdrew from the discussion with the observation that the conduct of Dwarkanath "was most unchristian and flagitious", and that though it (the Friend of India) would be ever ready to defend the privileges of the Christian converts, "a more unsafe case upon which to raise the question of privilege, could scarcely have occurred".<sup>1</sup>

Thus came to an end the discussions on the case of Dwarkanath's wife. It was rendered peculiar by the fact of assault committed by the otherwise aggrieved party, for though the magistrate did not pass any orders as to the custody of the wife but released her from whatever restraint she was under, in effect her liberty was compromised in consequence of her husband's having been sentenced to imprisonment. But no suit in the civil court, as suggested by those who interested themselves in this case, was instituted after the period (2 months) of Dwarkanath's imprisonment. Most probably it

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1. Ibid., 7 December 1843, Vol.IX.,p.771.

2. Ibid. ( Report of the case )



was not thought encouraging to adopt that procedure after what had happened, or probably the parties espousing Dwarkanath's cause were gradually convinced of the "determined" unwillingness of his wife to live with him.

The second case took place in 1844. In April of that year a convert named Kalicharan Banerji applied to the magistrate of the 24-Parganas for the recovery of his wife and children — a son and a daughter, the former two and a half years, and the latter only one and a half years old. The application contained some material discrepancies in that in one place it was stated that he was not allowed to see his wife and children and in another the latter were stated to have "run away" from him.<sup>1</sup> As there did not appear to have been any exercise of force, the magistrate considered the case not cognizable by the criminal court and on 22 April rejected the prayer of Kalicharan Banerji.<sup>2</sup>

Upon this case the Calcutta Christian Advocate dwelt at length on the sufferings of the converts in general, and referred to the case as that a convert having been "forcibly" deprived of his wife and children had applied to the magistrate for redress but had been told that that functionary had no power to act in such matters, and that consequently he had

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1. Ibid., 6 June 1844, Vol.X., p.354. ( Kalicharan's application )

2. Ibid. ( Report of the case )



he had to submit to the separation from his wife and children.<sup>1</sup> Commenting upon this report of the Advocate, the Friend of India recalled Dwarkanath's case and saw no reason why the same course of calling the wife before the court and setting her at liberty should not be pursued in this instance.<sup>2</sup> As regards the children it asserted for the Christian convert the same right of guardianship over his children as was recognised in the case of a Hindu parent and observed that the Government could not have resolved to recognise "this right in the case of a Hindoo and deny it to a Christian parent; to enforce parental authority only when it could subserve the interests of idolatry, and to establish one law for Hindoos, and another for Christians".<sup>3</sup> It therefore advised the convert to apply to the court for the restitution of his children and remarked that the court had "nothing to do but to identify them, and deliver them over to their natural and legal guardian".<sup>4</sup> On 30 May it further observed that suits of this nature were within the proper jurisdiction of the civil court, and once again asked the convert to petition the civil court of the 24-Parganas for redress; "and if the

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1. C.C.A., quoted in Ibid., 16 May 1844, Vol.X., p.306.

2. Friend of India, 16 May 1844, Vol.X., p.306.

3. Ibid., 6 June 1844, Vol.X., p. 354.

4. Ibid., 13 June 1844, Vol.X., pp.370-371.



judge should consider the question not cognizable in his court, to bring the matter by petition at once before the Sudder Court, who must decide to which department of justice such cases belong".<sup>1</sup> On 6 June, however, the Friend of India was in possession of a true copy of Kalicharan's application and the decision of the magistrate thereon, and saw that the magistrate's refusal was not based on an untenable ground. It was also happy to find that the magistrate was disposed to grant redress if the application was made on the ground that the man's wife and children were forcibly detained.<sup>2</sup> It therefore asked Kalicharan to present a "second petition" stating clearly that he had been forcibly deprived of his wife and children.<sup>3</sup>

At this stage the Sambad Purnachandrodaya, an organ of orthodox Hindus, discussed the question at length and asked by what law could the magistrate compel an unwilling Hindu wife to join her Christian husband. So bitter was her aversion towards the religion of her husband, it further stated, that should her relatives force her out of the family, "she would prefer the shelter of a poor Hindoo cottage, to the abandonment of her religion....The Christians, we apprehend, will not give ready credence to what we have said, until proved by the

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1. Ibid., 30 May 1844, Vol.X., pp. 338-339.

2. Ibid., 6 June 1844, Vol.X., p. 354.

3. Ibid., 13 June 1844, Vol.X., pp.370-371.



enquiries of the public functionaries, when she will be called before them to give in her free choice."<sup>1</sup> Referring to the natural right of parents over minor children, which the Hindus themselves were claiming, the journal maintained that this right was not "recognizable in the present case; for in the former instance when a youth manifested a wish to leave his creed and follow a new one, the court, conscious of the immaturity of his judgement, deemed it proper to deliver him up to the parents, but in the present instance, the children have retained the religion of the family with which they were born, and discovered no willingness to forsake it; any order to compel them to submit to a change so opposed to their existing state, would be unwarranted by law."<sup>2</sup>

The remarks of the Purnachandrodaya indicates that the Hindus also, like the missionaries and their friends, regarded the wife as a free agent to choose her own course of action; but unlike the missionaries, they considered the simple appearance of the wife before the magistrate in order to express her desire as decisive of the matter. The Purnachandrodaya was, however, mistaken in supposing that there was any suggestion of compelling an unwilling Hindu wife to join her

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1. The Sambad Purnachandrodaya, 11 June 1844, quoted in C.C.A., 29 June 1844, Vol.VI., p.269., Skinner v. Orde, 1871, 14

2. Ibid. 309, and Hawksworth v. Hawksworth, 6 Ch. 539, 542.

2. Friend of India, 20 June 1844, Vol.X., p.388.

3. Ibid.



Christian husband. Its remarks regarding the children were apparently based on the spirit, though not on the letter, of the law.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime Kalicharan, in accordance with the suggestion of the Friend of India, presented an amended application to the magistrate of the 24-Parganas who, instead of summoning the wife to his court, deputed the Assistant Magistrate in company with the applicant to the house at which she was lodged.<sup>2</sup> On being identified and interrogated, the wife "distinctly refused all further connection with her Christian husband".<sup>3</sup> "This matter is thus brought to a legal, and in one respect, a satisfactory termination", commented the Friend of India. "His wife, having unequivocally dissolved the union, he is free to contract a second marriage without

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1. Change of religion by the parent is of itself no reason for depriving him of the custody of his children. The views of the Purnachandrodaya appear to be similar to those adopted in a later case at the Mysore Chief Court ( Dasapa v. Chikama, 17 Mysore.324 ). In that case Kritsna Murti, J., held: "The rules of other systems of jurisprudence that a child belongs to his father, and that he should be educated and brought up on the religion of the father, do not seem to apply where the father has done something which the law declares shall sever him from all existing ties...According to accepted Hindu notions, a father is one of the three fore-fathers or ascendants in one group, and all the three are equally interested in the religion of the son." See for discussion of this case Mayne, J.D., Hindu Law and Usage, 7th edition, pp.279-283. Also see for the rule of bringing up the infant on the religion of his father, Skinner v. Orde, 1871, 14 M.I.A. 309, and Hawksworth v. Hawksworth, 6 Ch. 539, 542.

2. Friend of India, 20 June 1844, Vol.X., p.388.

3. Ibid.



incurring the guilt of bigamy."<sup>1</sup> It observed, however, that a "question of such magnitude should not be left entirely to the discretion of the public officers; but that the legislature should lay down certain distinct and equitable enactments for the conduct of the magistrate, as well as for the guidance of the court."<sup>2</sup> The Calcutta Christian Advocate was not, however, satisfied with the result of the case and observed: "We well knew that the wife would be frightened into compliance with the wishes of her Hindu friends, for a time at least. We are not quite so ignorant of the tricks to which Hindus can resort."<sup>3</sup> It also did not see any "shadow of pretence" for withholding the children from the father. "The one may be a suckling", it observed, "the other is not. But in the case of even the younger, there is not the least apprehension of danger, how many thousands of infants are there who at the same age are committed to the care of foster-mothers or of female servants? In regard to the proper education of the children, the whole force of the argument is, on the father's side, he is an intelligent educated Christian; the mother is an ignorant, uneducated and degraded Hindu; in this case, need we say

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1. It is to be noted that the wife's refusal was not, in itself, a dissolution of the marriage and the husband was not free to marry again.
  2. Friend of India, 20 June 1844, Vol.X., p.388.
  3. C.C.A., 29 June 1844, Vol.VI., p. 264.



who is the more competent to have the management of the children?"<sup>1</sup>

A few months later, however, Kalicharan's wife joined her husband with her son; her daughter was afterwards given up to her father.<sup>2</sup> The outcome of this case thus confirmed the views of the missionaries that the refusal of the wife to join her converted husband, when expressed before the court for the first time, could not be regarded as final. "We trust", triumphantly exhorted the missionary journal, "the result of this case will teach our native contemporaries in future to state their opinions in a less boastful spirit, and to form those opinions, not from mere prejudice, but on careful consideration of just principles, and the nature of things."<sup>3</sup>

No further case of the nature of those of Dwarkanath and Kalicharan Banerji appears to have been brought before the court in Bengal during the period under review.<sup>4</sup> These two

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1. Ibid. The welfare of the child has been recognised as a principal consideration in deciding the custody of an infant. See Re Saithri, 16 Bom. 307, and Besant v. Narayaniah, 41 I.A. 314.

2. C.C.A., 11 January 1845, Vol. VII., p.14.

3. Ibid., p.15.

4. In December 1844 there took place in Calcutta a case over the custody of a child between a Jewish convert to Christianity and his wife who did not embrace Christianity. As the wife had forcibly taken away the child from her husband, the Supreme Court ordered the wife to deliver up the child to her husband leaving her to the remedy, if any, which the Jewish law provided on this question. See C.C.A., 21 December 1844, Vol. VI., p.581.



cases, however, elicited the viewpoints of both sides. While both the Hindus and the missionaries regarded the wife as a free agent, a difference of opinion existed regarding the method of ascertaining her wishes. The missionaries' suggestion for a provision for reexamining the wife ( or the husband ) after the expiry of one year was not, however, strongly called for; for if after some time the wife changed her mind and wished to join her husband, she could do so by leaving her Hindu relatives, as did the wife of Kalicharan Banerji. If in that case her Hindu relatives exercised any force upon her, the redress for such an offence could easily be sought in a criminal court. It is noteworthy that in both the above noted cases the magistrate was called upon to see whether there was any exercise of force upon the wives of the two converts. As a matter of fact any such case would ultimately have turned upon this question of physical restraint; and there was ample provision in the law of the country to protect a person against any assault or forcible detention. If, however, it was a question of the moral influence exercised over the wife by her Hindu relatives, it does not appear why they should have ceased to exercise the same influence after her first examination before the court; nor does it appear how the law could provide against it unless it was suggested that the wife should



be kept in seclusion during the period intervening between her two examinations. In the event of any such measure, the Government could be equally accused, as was indeed done by the missionaries and their friends, of sanctioning persecution for conscience sake. Any such provision would have also tended to frustrate its object by placing the wife, if she subsequently changed her mind in favour of joining her husband, in the uncomfortable situation of contradicting her own statement made for the first time before the court, and by exposing her to the rude gaze, and even ruder remarks, of those around the court.

Regarding the children the missionaries were justified in asserting for the convert the same right of guardianship as was claimed by the Hindus. Even then there existed a difference in the positions of the two parties. In the case of Hindus claiming this right there did not appear any necessity of separating the child from either the father or the mother because, as has been seen in the previous chapter, the Hindus asserted such right only in an attempt to recover the child from the custody of a missionary. The right claimed for the convert, on the other hand, often involved such a separation. Moreover, in the latter case the child happened to be, almost invariably, of a much tenderer age. In this



respect, therefore, the sentiments expressed by the Government of India in 1837, of not separating the children from their mothers at least up to a certain age, were reasonable and practicable.<sup>1</sup> The Calcutta Christian Advocate had indeed displayed an exuberance of zeal in advocating the propriety of separating suckling babies from their "heathen" mothers.

The missionaries, however, continued to ask for legislation on the subject. Thus in 1845, while submitting a memorial on the question of the convert's right of inheritance, they drew the attention of the Government to the question of the convert's wife and children.<sup>2</sup> Once again in 1847 they submitted a separate memorial on the subject, reiterating the views adopted in 1841.<sup>3</sup> The Government confused this issue with the prayer for an Act of Parliament legalising marriages solemnised in India by dissenting ministers and others not in Holy Orders and postponed consideration of it on the ground that the subject of Indian marriages was under the consideration of the Commissioners appointed by the Crown.<sup>4</sup>

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1. This is precisely the modern view. See Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956.
  2. Ind. Leg. Coms. 2 August 1845, Nos. 21-22.
  3. Ibid., 6 November 1847, Nos. 23-25.
  4. Ibid., No. 26; also No. 7 of 4 November 1848. See for the memorial on the subject of marriages performed by dissenting ministers etc. ibid., 11 September 1847, Nos. 30-31.

notice the fact of the application of the Act of 1850 by Justice Burton.



The Parliamentary Act for marriages in India<sup>1</sup> and the subsequent Act of the Government of India to give effect to this Act (Act V. of 1852), dealt only with the rules and regulations of solemnising marriages in India and had no bearing on the question of the convert's right over, or relationship with his Hindu wife.<sup>2</sup> Since 1845, however, the attention of the missionaries was chiefly given to <sup>the</sup> convert's right of inheritance, and as will be seen presently, the Government of India also did legislate on this issue during this period.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Parl.Pap., H/C, 1851, Vol.4, papers 453 and 531.
  2. The problem was solved by Act XXI. of 1866, known as the Native Convert's Marriage Dissolution Act, which provided that where a Hindu becomes a convert to Christianity, and in consequence of such conversion, the husband or wife of the convert, deserts or repudiates the convert, the court may, on a petition presented by the convert, pass a decree dissolving the marriage, and the parties may then marry again. This position remains undisturbed by the legislation of 1955.
  3. By applying this legislation, which was known as the Lex Loci Act of 1850, and which abolished any forfeiture "of right or property" on a change of religion, Justice W.Burton of the Madras Supreme Court ordered, on an application for the restitution of conjugal right by a convert named Streenavassa Iyengar (June 1851), the wife, Lutchmee Ummal, to be given up to her husband although she was unwilling to go to him (Friend of India, 26 June 1851, Vol.XVII., pp.402-403). Such a construction of the Act of 1850 seriously compromised the wife's liberty and was not, as such, satisfactory even to the friends of the missionaries ( ibid. ), not to speak of the Hindus who denounced this judgement as being unjust and harsh ( T.P., 1 Bhadra 1773 Saka, i.e., early 1852, Third Series, Vol.I., pp.71-76 ). Erskine Perry, who discusses this case ( Oriental Cases, pp. 516-525 ) does not, however, notice the fact of the application of the Act of 1850 by Justice Burton.



jurisdiction of the CHAPTER VI. e., Hindu or Muslim, law nor under Caste and conversion: the question of inheritance opportunity for advocating the cause of the converts and demand By clauses VIII. and IX., Regulation VII. of 1832 Bentinck provided that no person would be debarred from inheriting his ancestral property on the ground of religion or race. But these provisions were insufficient in three main respects. (1) As yet the Governor General had no powers to legislate for the other provinces; the regulation in question therefore applied only to Bengal; the rest of the empire lay beyond its jurisdiction. (2) Even in Bengal its operation was confined to the mufassal areas. Calcutta, the metropolitan city, was under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and was, as such, beyond the pale of Regulation law. (3) Even in the mufassal areas it did not operate if the property was attached to some temple or was consecrated for any religious purpose. It was later on observed that in cases where native converts were by equity and good conscience, which is in each case to refer to press for a comprehensive enactment embracing all the territories under the East India Company.

On 31 October 1840 the Indian Law Commissioners recommended the enactment of a substantive law of the land (Lex Loci)<sup>1</sup> to provide for those persons who were neither under the

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1. Special Report of the Law Commissioners, 1842, Parl. Pap., H/C, 1843, Vol. 36, paper 300, p. 371. of the Dharma Sabha".



jurisdiction of the personal, i.e., Hindu or Muslim, law nor under that of the English law.<sup>1</sup> The missionaries took this opportunity for advocating the cause of the converts and demanded specific provisions in the proposed Lex Loci securing their right of inheritance.<sup>2</sup> As yet no Act was drafted, but the very news of the Law Commissioners' recommendations and the writings of the missionary papers made the Hindu community apprehensive. Towards the end of November "A Citizen" wrote two consecutive letters in the Bengal Hurkaru expressing a fear that if the law of inheritance was amended the door to conversion would be wide open and Hinduism would be imperilled. He called upon the Dharma Sabha to resist the missionary efforts to amend the law of inheritance.<sup>3</sup> His letters seem to have borne fruit for on 31 January 1841 the Dharma Sabha held

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1. Such as East Indians, Half-castes, Parsees, native converts, etc. Such a Lex Loci was not, however, passed. It was later on observed that in cases where native converts were involved the rule of decision would be "the rule prescribed by equity and good conscience, which is in each case to refer to the usages of the class to which the convert may have attached himself, and of the family to which he may have belonged." See Abraham v. Abraham, 1863, 9 M.I.A. 199 ; and Isaac Pandah v. Surbomongla Dossee, 1864, Sutherland, D., Weekly Reporter, Vol. I., p. 22. See on difficulties in the Indian Law on conversion Bartholomew, G.W., "Private Interpersonal Law", International and Comparative Law Quarterly, July 1952.
  2. See especially C.C.O., November 1840, Supplement.
  3. Hurkaru, 20 and 25 November 1840. The letters were captioned: "Attempted invasion of Hindus rights" and were addressed to "Rajah Radhakanta Deb Bahadoor, President and other members of the Dharma Sabha".



a great meeting under the presidentship of Raja Radhakanta Deb.<sup>1</sup> The meeting resolved:<sup>2</sup>

The children of Hindus who become Christians or Mussalmans have no title to their ancestral property according to the Hindu religion... But a rumour is now afloat that the Government will pass a regulation by which the sons of Hindus, will inherit their ancestral property if they are converted to any religion different from their own; and should this regulation be promulgated, then the Hindu religion will be brought to an end, so we ought to apply to Government that such rules may not be passed by them.

A sub-committee was accordingly formed for this purpose and the Secretary of the Sabha was authorised to contact the other branches of it in the country on this matter.<sup>3</sup>

Nothing practical appears to have followed the resolution of the Dharma Sabha. The missionaries, on the other hand, submitted a memorial to the Governor General in Council.<sup>4</sup>

Besides advocating the principle of religious toleration the missionaries presented three main arguments in their favour:

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1. C.C.A., 6 February 1841, Vol.II., p. 323.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ind.Leg.Cons., 10 May 1841, No. 21. The memorial was signed by 24 missionaries representing the Church of Scotland Mission, the Baptist Missionary Society, the Church Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society and the Church of England Mission. It was also accompanied by a Minute by Dr.Duff, which was accepted by the conference of the missionaries of these societies, on the "Rise, progress and present state of the Indo-British law; the Rights of parents over children under legal age, and the Hindu and Muhammadan law of inheritance." Ibid., No.22.



(i) that the British Government had authorised the introduction of useful knowledge in India, which implied that provision would be made to meet its consequences; (ii) that the Hindu and Muslim laws were not immutable, and had been actually modified on several occasions by the East India Company's administration; and (iii) that the prayer of the missionaries involved only an extension of the principle contained in Regulation VII. of 1832.<sup>1</sup> "It is contrary to the first principle of natural reason and natural justice", maintained the missionaries, "that a change of religious sentiments, more especially when that change involves an abjuration of error and superstition, should entail a forfeiture of that property which belongs to a man of natural right."<sup>2</sup>

The memorial of the missionaries was referred by the Government to the Law Commissioners on 10 May, with a request that they would consider the case of the memorialists in connection with the subject of the Lex Loci.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly in the draft of the Lex Loci Act the Law Commissioners inserted three sections ( X., XI. and XII.) which, they stated, would provide a remedy for the grievances complained of by the missionaries, — "as far at least as such an object can be

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1. Ibid., No. 22.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., No. 24.



properly connected with the purposes of this Act."<sup>1</sup> These sections stood as follows:<sup>2</sup>

X. And it is hereby enacted, that nothing in this Act contained shall apply to any Hindoo or Mahommedan unless such Hindoo or Mahommedan shall have renounced the Hindoo or Mahommedan religion.

XI. Provided always that no Hindoo or Mahommedan shall by renouncing his religion lose any rights or property, or deprive any other person of any rights or property.

XII. And it is hereby enacted, that in the territories subject to the Government of the East India Company, without the local jurisdiction of Her Majesty's courts aforesaid,<sup>3</sup> so much of the Hindoo or Mahommedan law as inflicts forfeiture of property or rights upon any party, renouncing either of these religions, is abrogated.

This incorporation of the question of inheritance with the subject of the Lex Loci complicated the issue, and when after one year<sup>4</sup> the draft Act was brought before the Legislative Council, opinions were divided on both the basis<sup>5</sup> of the Lex Loci Act and the implications of the three sections noted above. The principal critic of these sections was H.T Prinsep who pointed out that sections X. and XI. were contradictory.

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1. Ibid., 8 July 1842, Nos. 17 and 18.

2. Ibid., No. 17.

3. i.e., the Supreme Courts of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.

4. It had been detained for a long time, as A.Amos observed on 25 April 1842, "because of Lord Auckland's preoccupation with other urgent matters." - Ibid., No. 19.

5. The main point at issue was whether the English substantive law should be the Lex Loci of India, or whether it should be based upon the "customs of Asia".



The abjuration of Hinduism or Muhammadanism on the part of a person ipso facto created a corresponding right to the ancestral property in other members of his family. It was therefore impossible to secure the convert's right to that property without applying this law to the other Hindu or Muslim members of his family (Section X.), or without depriving them of their right to the property (Section XI.). Prinsep, therefore, rejected both these sections as "imperfect and impossible of application, besides being calculated to do much mischief, by exciting apprehension that they are preparatory to an attempt to produce extensively the status for which the Government thus deems it necessary to legislate." He had no objection to section XII. standing, provided the word "abrogated" was changed for "shall not be enforced by any British Court" because, he stated, "we cannot pretend to abrogate what is matter of religious belief, and supposed to have revelation for its origin."<sup>1</sup> In view of these differences of opinions the Draft Act was referred to the subordinate governments of Madras, Bombay, Bengal and the North-West Provinces for their opinions, and through them, the opinions of the Judges of the Sadr Courts and other officers of "judgement and experience".<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile the Draft Act,

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1. Ind. Leg. Cons., 8 July 1842, No. 20.

2. Ibid., Nos. 22-23.



together with the connected papers, were sent to the Court of Directors for their information.<sup>1</sup> During the years 1842-44 the opinions of the subordinate governments and the Judges of the Sadr Courts and other officers were received.<sup>2</sup> No objection appears to have been made to the Draft Act on the part of the Government of Bengal. While observations as to the basis or necessity of a Lex Loci for India came from other provinces, it was only from the North-West Provinces that objections were raised against the three sections of the Draft Act dealing with the question of inheritance. From there W.H. Sleeman ( Officiating Agent to the Lieutenant Governor ) wrote that the measure for abrogating the law of the "Koran and the Shastras" in regard to inheritance was "very injudicious". "Very few can ever stand in need of such a law", he observed, "while it may be made a continual and formidable source of disaffection by the fanatics, who are always at work somewhere or other to excite among the people feelings of discontent against their rulers."

A Muhammadan or a Hindu convert, he further observed, was a "thing of very rare occurrence, and of such converts not one

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1. Legislative letter to the Court of Directors, 17 March 1843, No. 6, paras 31-42.— Parl. Pap., H/C, 1847, Vol.43, paper 14, p. 607.

2. See for these the Special Report of the Law Commissioners for 1845. — Ibid., pp. 609-629.



in a hundred would require the aid of this law". The Government might do whatever they pleased with criminal or adjective law, he concluded, but they could not "safely insist upon, this important alteration in the rights secured by the civil or substantive law, the right of excluding from a share in the inheritance any member of a family who casts off its religion. I suppose that this right is now secured by the Koran and the Shastras; if not, the enactment now proposed cannot be wanted; if it is, it ought not to be passed."<sup>1</sup>

After receiving these observations the Legislative Council of India adopted a revised Draft of the Lex Loci Act in which, however, the three sections on inheritance stood with slight modifications.<sup>2</sup> This draft was then published for general information.<sup>3</sup>

The publication of the Draft Act at once attracted Hindu attention in different parts of the Company's dominions. On 2 April 1845 the Hindus of Madras submitted a memorial

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1. Ibid., p.623.

2. Ind.Leg.Cons., 25 January 1845, No. 32.

3. Ibid. The memorial of the Madras Hindus as well as the Government reply to it, dated 24 May 1845, mention that the Draft was published on 15 January 1845; but the India Legislative Consultations of 25 January ( no.32 ) state that the Draft Act "has been this day read in Council for the first time, and will be published for general information." The Draft Act could not have been therefore published before 25 January 1845.



against the Draft Act to the Governor General in Council.<sup>1</sup> On 9 April, Dansa Rauze Nursiah, Head Assistant Manager in the Governor's Agent's Court in the district of Vizagapatam, presented another memorial to the Law Commissioners.<sup>2</sup> In Bengal the publication of the Draft Act was shortly followed by the case of Umeshchandra Sarkar.<sup>3</sup> As a result great excitement prevailed among the Hindus of Calcutta. In their opposition to the proposed Act, however, they do not appear to have presented a united front. On 16 April Babu Ashutosh Deb and others on behalf of the "inhabitants of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa", and on 17 April Raja Radhakanta Deb and 32 others on behalf of the Dharma Sabha submitted two separate memorials to the Governor General in Council.<sup>4</sup> Whether this

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1. Ibid., 2 August 1845, No. 4.

2. Ibid., No. 20.

3. Supra., pp. 124-126.

4. Ind. Leg. Cons., Nos. 7-8 and 10-11. (a) The report of the Calcutta Christian Advocate, 7 June 1845, and of the Sambad Prabhakar, 18 June 1845, that both the Dharma Sabha and the Brahma Sabha submitted memorials to the Government does not appear to be correct.

(b) C.H. Cameron, who was the chairman of the Law Commission in 1845, was evidently mistaken when he stated in his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Lords on 7 June 1852 that only two memorials, one from Bengal and another from Madras, were submitted. He was also mistaken in stating that "the answer was given to the Madras Hindoos before the Calcutta remonstrance came in". (Parl. Pap., H/L, 1952, Vol. 19, paper 88, p. 205, answer to Q. 2096.) The Government's reply was given on 24 May when all the memorials had been received. (See below)

3. Ashutosh Deb's memorial, paras 1 and 2; and Raja Radhakanta Deb's, para 3.



was as a result of the personal rivalry of the two leaders of the Dharma Sabha, or of their desire to impress the Government by a number of memorials is not known. It was supposed, however, that there would have been more memorials against the proposed Act but for (a) "the want of combination for public purposes among the natives anywhere but in the capital towns", (b) "the scanty and partial diffusion of knowledge of the proceedings of the Legislature among the masses of the people" and (c) their "general ignorance of their right to memorialise the Government, and of the proper mode of exercising that right".<sup>1</sup> The main points raised in the two Bengal memorials were the following:

(1) The British Government had, by Acts of Parliament and Regulations of the local government,<sup>2</sup> pledged itself to protect the religion of the natives and had assured them that there would be no encroachment upon the full exercise of their religious privileges, in all matters of succession and inheritance.<sup>3</sup>

(2) Even in the case of the abolition of Sati the Government took their stand on the ground that the Hindu

1. Minute of T.H. Maddock, dated 9 June 1845-<sup>Ind. Leg. Com. 2 Aug. 1845,</sup> ~~ibid.~~, No. 29.

2. The Act specially referred to was Act 21 Geo.3, Cap.70, sections 17 and 18; and the Regulation referred to was Regulation IV. of 1793, Section 15.

3. Ashutosh Deb's memorial, paras 1 and 2; and Raja Radhakanta Deb's, para 3.

4. Raja Radhakanta Deb's, para 8.



Shastras were not actually opposed to the measure, thereby implying that due regard had to be paid to the Shastras in legislating on such matters.<sup>1</sup>

(3) In this case not only the Hindus, but also all their Shastras were agreed on the point that an apostate could not be a heir to his ancestor's property.<sup>2</sup>

(4) The proposed Act was a violation of the pledge given and acted upon from the "very period of the British connection with the Eastern Empire", and an attack and outrage upon the religion and religious sentiments of the Hindus. The memorialists observed:<sup>3</sup>

We trusted to the plighted faith of a great nation, while yet its local tenure was infinitely less firm than at present, and in reliance thereon, bound ourselves to a willing allegiance; but in the plenitude of its strength, and without on our part, the slightest deviation from obedience as subjects, it eventually strikes at the root of our religious persuasions, and appears to offer us no other apology than a mere wilful exercise of power.

(5) The proposed Act looked "very like a Government premium to conversion".<sup>4</sup>

(6) Section XIII. of the proposed Act, which provided for appeal and compensation if the religious feeling of any party was "outraged", was stated to be vague and inconsistent.

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1. Ashutosh Deb's, para 12.

2. Ibid., para 8; Raja Radhakanta Deb's, para 5.

3. Ashutosh Deb's, paras 5, 6 and 13; Raja Radhakanta Deb's, para 6.

4. Raja Radhakanta Deb's, para 8.



The memorialists asked:<sup>1</sup>

Whence is this compensation to be drawn?...How..would it be possible to avoid outrage of feeling, when, according to our Shastras, an apostate attains civil death, when communion with him becomes next to infamous, and his touch an actual pollution?...It is to be apprehended that the only two purposes likely to be answered by this process would be intolerance under another form, and litigation; for it would invariably follow, as the feelings of such members of families as did adhere to their original faith must be violently 'outraged', that appeals would rise upon appeals, invariably, and as the case might be against the inheritance or the compensation.

On 25 April 1845, a memorial from the missionaries, claiming to represent the "sentiments of a very large proportion of the Christian public both in Britain and in India" was submitted to the Governor General in Council.<sup>2</sup> The absence of certain individuals from Calcutta, and the difficulty of sending the memorial into the mufassal, was stated to be the cause of the smaller number of signatures.<sup>3</sup> It expressed satisfaction over the proposed Act but objected to clause XIII. as having the effect of defeating the "just and beneficial object contemplated by the two preceding clauses". Instead, it demanded a positive and unequivocal provision for compensation by removing the "irritating and provocative" words as "outrage of religious feelings" and such "restrictive words" as "and whether any" used in connection with the question

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1. Ashutosh Deb's, para 7.

2. Ind.Leg.Cons., 2 August 1845, Nos. 21-22.

3. Ibid., No. 21. It was signed by 16 missionaries.



of compensation and appeal.<sup>1</sup>

On 24 May the Government replied to the memorials of the Hindus.<sup>2</sup> It stated that the principle which guided the Government was toleration for "all the religions professed by any of its subjects". It also denied that the statute cited by the Hindus constituted any engagement on the part of the Government not to repeal or alter the "unjust portion of the Hindu law of inheritance".<sup>3</sup> After reminding the Hindus that under the Muslim rule the Hindu law of inheritance was "completely" set aside, the Government reply stated:<sup>4</sup>

The British Government delivered the Hindus from this oppression, and gave them the free enjoyment of their own law of inheritance. In the same spirit of justice and impartiality the Government of Bengal enacted the 9th section of Regulation VII. of 1832, to prevent the law of inheritance, which the Government had restored to the Hindoos, from being converted into an instrument of oppression against those who have ceased to be Hindoos. This law has been the law in Bengal since 1832, and has never been complained of as being oppressive, or as a breach of any engagement entered into between the Government and the Hindoos. And now, in the same spirit, the Governor General of India in Council is about to extend that principle to the whole of the British Indian Empire.

In conclusion the Government expressed surprise and regret that at a period when public opinion among a great part of the

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1. Ibid., No. 22.

2. Ibid., No. 5; also Parl. Pap., H/C, 1847, Vol. 43, paper 14, pp. 644-49.

3. Ibid. ( Parl. Pap., op. cit., pp. 644-645 )

4. Ibid. ( Parl. Pap., op. Cit., p. 646 )

5. The word "Hindu" is variously spelt in the original.



Hindus had become "in a high degree tolerant and enlightened", a memorial founded upon doctrines of so opposite a character should have been presented by "a respectable portion of that community".<sup>1</sup>

The reply of the Government did not, however, satisfy the Hindus. The Sambad Bhaskar, one of the most liberal of the Bengali papers, wrote a forceful editorial on 18 June and expressed the fear that even if the Hindus succeeded in establishing schools under their own control,<sup>2</sup> they would not be able to stop conversion, for "the only reason" why those who had studied English still professed to be Hindus was the fear of losing their property.<sup>3</sup> It also charged the Government with breach of faith and asked:<sup>4</sup>

Is it just policy to oppress the majority of a nation by whom they have been enriched? the Hindus were the first and principal rulers of India, they were the independent sovereigns of this country, and it is by their assistance chiefly that the present Government acquired its power, what shameful ingratitude!... Had the Government thus treated the Americans, they would have taught a wholesome lesson before this... These and other acts against which the Hindus have petitioned, they see that Government do not listen to their prayers. Do not the Hindoos<sup>5</sup> feel these things, yes they feel them bitterly, and wish that whilst they abounded in chariots, guns and horses, they had faced the Government, but believing that the Government were their friends, the Hindus have laid aside all these, and

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1. Ibid. ( Parl.Pap. op.cit., pp. 648-649 )

2. See Chapter III., supra, pp. 113-115.

3. Reproduced in C.C.A., 21 June 1845, Vol.VII., pp. 292-293.

4. Ibid.

5. The word "Hindu" is variously spelt in the original.



have become like stingless serpent, therefore they have neither the power nor the will to resist. Had the Hindus carefully attended to the unjust acts of Government, as their insults gradually increased, could the Government remain unmolested in this country?

The Sambad Purnachandrodaya, one of the organs of the Dharma Sabha, on the other hand, openly charged the Government with partiality to the missionaries and wrote:<sup>1</sup>

It is now nearly sixty years since the missionaries first arrived in this country<sup>2</sup> to teach Christianity to the Natives. During this time they have adopted various plans for effecting the above object,— but owing to their having received no aid from our rulers, they have not hitherto succeeded as they desired. From the Draft of the proposed Act it would now seem that our Government, influenced by partiality to their own religion, have at last begun openly to assist the missionaries in their work.

The Purnachandrodaya also alleged that the Government reply did not attempt to remove "the reasonable grounds of objection entertained by the people."<sup>3</sup>

On the whole, the discussions of the Bengali press, as also the memorials, bring out two important facts. First, like the missionaries, the Hindus also believed that the alteration of the law of inheritance would pave the way for a large-scale conversion. Secondly, they believed that the Government, after a long period of neutrality in religious

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1. The Sambad Purnachandrodaya, 8 July 1845, reproduced in C.C.A., 19 July 1845, Vol.VII.,p.339.

2. The reference is obviously to the arrival of William Carey in Bengal in 1793.

3. The Sambad Purnachandrodaya, op. cit.



affairs, had at last allied themselves with the missionaries in order to facilitate the process of conversion. The development of the latter trend of thought is particularly traceable to the Lex Loci affair. Never before do the Hindus seem to have looked with suspicion upon the religious policy of the Government.<sup>1</sup>

Further proceedings on the Draft Act, however, were stopped because of an intervention by the Court of Directors. In their previous despatch on this subject the Court had desired to be informed of the further considerations which might have been given to this subject.<sup>2</sup> As the Court now had come to know of the revised Draft of 1845 from the Government Gazette, they criticised the action of the India Government for not sending any "subsequent communication" on the subject and directed that "no law for the purpose of declaring the Lex Loci of India may be passed before being submitted for our deliberation together with a full explanation of the reasons for the proposed enactment."<sup>3</sup> The papers were, therefore,

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1. The abolition of Sati (1829) was supported by the enlightened section of the Hindus as being consonant with their Shastras; the orthodox section who opposed it, did not connect it with any intention of the Government to spread Christianity.

2. The movement for the withdrawal of Government patronage of temples did not stir Bengal — see Ingham, K., "The English evangelicals and the pilgrim tax in India, 1800-1862", Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 1953, Vol. III., pp. 191-200.

3. Legislative Despatch to India, No. 24 of 1843, dated 6 November, — Parl. Pap., H/C, 1847, Vol. 43, paper 14, p. 608.

3. Parl. Pap., op.cit., p. 608. 57-58.



sent home on 7 August 1845.<sup>1</sup> The Government, however, informed the Court of its intention to separate from the Draft regarding the Lex Loci the three sections above referred to, and to embody them in a separate enactment.<sup>2</sup> This shows that the Government of India were convinced of the difficulty involved in connecting the question of the convert's right of inheritance with the subject of the Lex Loci of India.

Meanwhile the missionaries continued to press on with their demand. On 7 July 1847, Dr. Duff and some of his missionary colleagues requested to know what steps had been taken in regard to the memorial submitted in April 1845.<sup>3</sup> The Government informed them that the memorial in question was sent to the Court of Directors along with the Draft of the Lex Loci Act.<sup>4</sup> On 27 April 1848, another memorial from certain missionaries at Kathiawar was presented to the Government of India.<sup>5</sup> In the following year the Lord Bishop of Bombay submitted a representation to the Government of India on the same subject.<sup>6</sup>

In view of these memorials I.H. Littler and F. Currie, members of the Legislative Council, recommended by a joint

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1. Ibid., p. 714.

2. Ibid.

3. Ind.Leg.Cons., 17 July 1847, No. 6.

4. Ibid., No. 7.

5. Ibid., 26 August, 1848, No. 37.

6. Ibid., 11 April 1850, Nos. 57-58.



minute ( on 26 May 1849 ) the extension of the "provisions of the Act of 1832 pending the decision of the Court of Directors, on the subject of the Lex Loci submitted in 1845."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly on 31 May 1849, J.E.D. Bethune prepared the Draft of an Act to enlarge the operation of sections VIII. and IX. of Regulation VII. of 1832 of the Bengal Code.<sup>2</sup> Before proceeding with this Draft, however, the Government of India asked ( 9 June ) the Governments of Bengal and the North-West Provinces to state whether they were aware of any civil cases in which the succession or ownership of property had been decreed under the provisions of sections VIII. and IX., Regulation VII. of 1832 in opposition to Hindu or Muhammadan law as the case might be.<sup>3</sup> In reply the Government of Bengal forwarded a letter from the Registrar of the Sadr Court which stated that the Court's Records did not show any such case.<sup>4</sup> The reply of the Government of the North-West Provinces ( 9 August ) cited only one case in 1848 and stated that on no former occasion had "any question connected with the application of Sections 8 and 9 Regulation VII. been brought before them."<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid., No. 68.

1. Ibid., No. 59.

2. Ibid., No. 60.

3. Ibid., No. 60.

4. Ibid., Nos. 61-62.

5. Ibid., Nos. 63-64.



After the receipt of these statements Bethune's Draft was read in Council for the first time on 26 October 1849.<sup>1</sup> On the same day it was published for general information and was also forwarded to the subordinate Governments for their observations.<sup>2</sup> The Draft Act was very short containing, besides the preamble, only one section which ran as follows:<sup>3</sup>

So much of any law or usage now in force within the territories subject to the Government of the East India Company as inflicts on any person forfeiture of right or property by reason of his or her renouncing or having been excluded from the communion of any religion shall cease to be enforced as Law in the Courts of the East India Company and in the Courts established by the Royal Charter within the said territories.

On this Draft the Government of the North-West Provinces saw no necessity of troubling the Supreme Government as it was "intended for the protection of the native converts from loss of property in other parts of the territories...by the extension to them of a law already current" in the North-West Provinces.<sup>4</sup> The Government of Bombay considered the proposed Act "most judicious"<sup>5</sup> and the Government of Madras thought it "desirable to extend the principle of the enactment which has been so long in force in Bengal."<sup>6</sup> The Government of Bengal,

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1. Ibid., No. 68.

2. Ibid., No. 69.

3. Ibid., No. 68.

4. Ibid., Nos. 70-71.

5. Ibid., No. 72.

6. Ibid., No. 76.

3. Ibid.



however, forwarded in reply the observations of the Judges of the Sadr Court which carried some notes of dissent. R. Barlow Bart, W.B. Jackson, J.R. Colvin and I. Danber, while approving of the intention of the legislators, recognised that the Draft did not carry the meaning it was intended to, the reason being "that recently it was incidentally argued that a claimant as heir to a Hindoo could have no title to inherit unless qualified for the performance of a certain exequal ceremonies since inheritance is a right accruing only in consequence of benefit conferred by the heir through the means of such ceremonies on the soul deceased. Consistently with this argument it might be urged that a provision against forfeiture of rights could have no effect where the rights themselves could not be created."<sup>1</sup> They desired, however, not to be "understood as intimating assent to this interpretation of the Hindoo law of inheritance", and recommended the insertion of some explanatory clause after the words "forfeiture of right or property" in order to meet this objection.<sup>2</sup> A. Dick, on the other hand, totally disapproved of the Draft Act as constituting an interference with the religion of the Hindus, for "the law of inheritance of Hindoos is founded on their Religion."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., No. 75.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.



The publication of the Draft Act at once gave "great umbrage and alarm to the native community."<sup>1</sup> The Hindu Intelligencer of 12 November vigorously denounced the proposed Act; and a writer in the Englishman stated that the Hindus contemplated a meeting "very shortly" for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of petitioning the Supreme Government against the Draft Act.<sup>2</sup> As in 1845, Madras and Bengal were stirred most. In Bengal the leaders of the Dharma Sabha appear to have united their efforts this time, and a memorial, signed by 14,000 Hindus,<sup>3</sup> was transmitted to the Governor General in Council on 25 January 1850.<sup>4</sup> The Madras memorial was submitted a few days earlier, on 16 January 1850.<sup>5</sup> The following are the main points raised in the Bengal memorial:

(1) The proposed Act was considered the "first inroad" upon the law and religion of the Hindus. Section IX., Regulation VII. of 1832 was not known until reference was made to it in the correspondence that arose out of the proposed Lex Loci

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1. C.C.A., 17 November 1849, Vol. XI., p. 538.

2. Quoted in ibid.

3. This number is reported by C.C.A., ( 2 February 1850, Vol. XII., p. 52) but neither the printed copy of the memorial nor the Ind. Leg. Cons. ( 11 April 1850, No. 80 ) contains the full list of signatories. The original memorial is not available.

4. Ind. Leg. Cons. 11 April 1850, Nos. 79-80.

5. Ibid., No. 81.



Act of 1845. Even the title of the Regulation of 1832 was deceptive;<sup>1</sup> nor was there at that time any authorised system of publication of any regulation. The memorialists were also unable to discover "one single instance in the course of the seventeen years during which it is supposed to have been the law of the land", in which it had been acted upon by any Superior Court in any such case. It was therefore "hardly a

matter of surprise, if the great bulk of the population were in utter ignorance, that so secret an attack had been made upon what they considered the law under which they lived."<sup>2</sup>

(2) The reply of the Government in 1845 stating that the proposed law was the law of the land since 1832 was thus misleading. It was also wrong in stating that the Hindu religion was "intolerant and oppressive". It was consequent on the nature of their religion that the Hindus should be

tolerant. "They seek not to interfere with any religion whatever. They do not seek proselytes—— they do not accept them... Christians and Mahomedans are proselytising Religions... The Hindoo seeks but to keep his own, according to the tenets of his religion." The Government were also incorrect in their

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1. The Regulation of 1832 was entitled "A Regulation for modifying certain of the provisions of Regulation V. of 1831 and for providing supplementary Rules to that enactment." The latter was a "Regulation for extending the powers of Moonsiffs and Sudder Ameens in the trial of civil suits.", 1853, pp. 52-53

2. Printed Memorial, pp. 3-6.



representation of the Muslim rule. The memorialists pointed out:<sup>1</sup>

The Mahomedan conquerors of Hindustan introduced their own law so far only as it affected the followers of Mahomet, leaving the conquered Hindoos to enjoy their own laws as amongst themselves...Your memorialists doubt...whether by the Mahomedan law any Mahomedan convert obtained in the Mahomedan Courts in India a decree for any ancestral property of which he was a part-owner with other Hindoos, from whose tenets he seceded.

(3) By elaborate excerpts from the Shastras the memorialists showed the indissolubility of the law of inheritance

(5) They also pointed out the ambiguity of the proposed law and asked whether the convert's share of that property most "materially and grievously" interfere with their religion, social customs, habits and mode of living. They submitted further that they did not wish to punish or persecute those who left their religion, nor to "deprive them of any self-acquired property, or of any political rights."<sup>2</sup>

(4) As to any engagement on the part of the Government to maintain the native religious laws, which was denied in their reply of 1845, the memorialists admitted that it would be difficult to point out any "such specific Agreement. The acquisition of India on behalf of the Crown of Great Britain

1. Ibid., pp. 6-11 and 19.

2. Ibid., pp. 12-16. (See on the problem of religion and law in Hindu jurisprudence Derrett, J.D.M., "The criteria for distinguishing between legal and religious commands in the Dharmasastra", All India Reporter (Journal), 1953, pp. 52-53 and 57-62; "Religion and law in Hindu jurisprudence", ibid., October 1954, pp. 79-84.)



was too gradual to allow of the existence of such a treaty." But the Hindus and the Muhammadans had been guaranteed the enjoyment of such laws by various proclamations and Acts of Parliament. Even the Government's reply reminded the Hindus that their laws were restored to them by the British. They could not therefore see why, after 92 years of enjoyment of those laws, they were going to be deprived of "any more protection of their laws, on which their religion rests."<sup>1</sup>

(5) They also pointed out the ambiguity of the proposed law and asked whether the convert's share of that property was to be determined according to the Hindu or Muslim law to which he no longer belonged, or by the English law of inheritance which again was not his lex loci. "In either case he would take according to a foreign law, and the faithful Hindoes would have the foreign law forced upon them contrary to their own law, and to the system which has been pursued since they became the subjects of Great Britain." They also asked how far the proposed Act would interfere with the "acknowledged right of Hindoes in Bengal, to dispose of the whole of their property, ancestral [sic] or self-acquired by will, to the exclusion of a converted son, or how far such a will would be recognised in the courts of law."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 21-24.

1. Ibid., pp. 16-19.

2. Ibid., pp. 19-21. (See for the prevalent law of will Montriou, W.A., The Hindu Will of Bengal, Calcutta 1870.)



1850.<sup>1</sup> (6) They assured the Government that in their opposition to the proposed Act they were actuated by no feelings whatever opposed to the strictest loyalty and attachment to Her Majesty's Government; but they submitted:<sup>1</sup>

The Hindoos are strongly attached to their religion, and deeply reverence the memory of their ancestors;... the moment...the proposed Act becomes a part of the law applicable to Hindoos, that confidence which they have hitherto felt in the paternal character of the British rulers will be most materially shaken. No outbreak, of course, is to be dreaded, but the active spirit of fervent loyalty to their sovereign, and of pride in their rulers, will be changed into sullen submission to their will, and obedience to their power; the readiness [*sic*] which many of the Hindoo body have exhibited on various occasions to contribute largely and liberally to the objects promoted by British-born subjects of Her Majesty, need not be expected, when they are told in reply to a remonstrance against a law which has for its object to sap the foundation of their religion....that they are intolerant, illiberal, and unenlightened.

(7) The memorial therefore closed with a prayer that not only should the proposed Act not be passed, but that the section 9 of Regulation VII. of 1832 should be annulled.<sup>2</sup>

Hitherto the Christian converts had not taken any part in the controversy. In view of the memorial of the Hindus they now thought it necessary to present their views before the Government. A meeting of the Christian converts of Calcutta was therefore held in the house of K.M. Banerji on 22 February

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1. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-24.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

3. *Ibid.*, No. 82.

4. *Ibid.*



1850.<sup>1</sup> In March a memorial on "behalf of the native Christians of Calcutta and its vicinity" was submitted to the Government.<sup>2</sup> The memorial, as usual, expressed satisfaction over the proposed Act and met the Hindu objection by urging that their laws were not immutable and that reform and enlightenment involved further modifications.<sup>3</sup> The memorialists did not expect that their British rulers were capable of "entertaining a proposal to disinherit converts to their own religion — whatever special pleading a few of our Calcutta countrymen, educated in English, and confident of the tolerant character of the British Government, may bring forward in support of an antiquated system, scarcely venerated by the themselves". The memorialists further assured the Government that "with whatever success" the Hindus might procure subscriptions to their memorial, "the quiet agricultural ground population of Bengal would not spontaneously raise their voice against an Act which they could not but expect under an enlightened and Christian Government".<sup>4</sup>

1. C.C.A., 2 March 1850, Vol. XII., p. 104. The Revs. Lacroix, Pearce, Sandys and Boaz were present on the occasion.

2. Ind. Leg. Cons., 11 April 1850, No. 82. The memorial does not bear any date; but as it was referred to in Bethune's minute of 26 March (ibid., No. 83) it must have been submitted between 22 February and 26 March. That it was not submitted during the last days of February may be assumed from the fact that the meeting of 22 February decided to call another general meeting of the converts, which must have taken another week or so to be convened.

3. Ibid., No. 82.

4. Ibid.



On 3 April another memorial, signed by about five hundred European inhabitants of Calcutta, was forwarded to the Government.<sup>1</sup> It expressed "cordial satisfaction" over the proposed Act by which "our native fellow subjects, embracing the Christian religion", would be delivered from "severe and ruinous disabilities". The memorialists further observed:<sup>2</sup>

The Christian faith, which we profess, constrains us to seek their good. We wish not to see any class among them stigmatised or wounded. But we ardently desire that peace, justice, and all the advantages of civil and religious liberty may be secured to the whole population.

Therefore the memorialists promised their "warmest approbation" and support to the measure and urged the Government to carry it out "undeterred by the sophistry which represents the Hindoo or Mahomedan as injured".<sup>3</sup>

Confronted with these memorials and counter memorials the Legislative Council took their stand on the "higher ground of the inherent and inalienable right of every Government to regulate the law of property".<sup>4</sup> The Governor General concurred in this view and observed that the Hindus had failed to show any pledge by the Government and that it was "abundantly demonstrated" that the Hindu law had been altered in many of

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1. Ibid., No.85., quoted in C.G.A., 20 April 1850, Vol.XII.,

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. especially the comments of the Hindu Intelligencer and the Bengal Recorder, both conducted by Young Bengal, quoted

4. Minute by J.E.D. Bethune, concurred in by F.Currie, I.H. Littler and I.Louis — Ibid., No. 83.



its essential features.<sup>1</sup> He further observed that the Government would not do its duty if it left "unchanged any portion of that law which inflicts personal injury on any one by reason of his religious belief. In now acting on this principle, I can see no semblance of interference with the religion of the Hindoos, nor any unauthorised interference with rights secured to them."<sup>2</sup> The Act was therefore passed on 11 April to stand as Act XXI. of 1850.<sup>3</sup> They now began to organise for the Act marked the triumph of the principle of religious toleration, and was rightly acclaimed by the missionaries and their friends as the "Liberty of Conscience Act". It produced, however, a great commotion in the Hindu community. So great was the excitement that the Englishman thought that the date of this Act might be an "epoch of some importance to future historians", and even regarded it as the "first legislative step towards the expulsion of the British from India".<sup>4</sup> Almost all the Bengali journals made hostile and angry comments on the Act.<sup>5</sup> The Sambad Purnachandrodaya, the orthodox organ,

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1. Ibid., No. 86. C.C.A., 4 May 1850, Vol. XII., p. 212.

2. Ibid., in ibid.

3. Ibid., No. 87. ibid., p. 23.

4. The Englishman, quoted in C.C.A., 20 April 1850, Vol. XII., p. 185. ibid., Vol. XII., p. 234.

5. See especially the comments of the Hindu Intelligencer and the Bengal Recorder, both conducted by Young Bengal, quoted in C.C.A., 27 April 1850, Vol. XII., p. 193.



urged upon its countrymen "to make it a general rule amongst themselves never to be without wills excluding the apostates, from any participation of their property."<sup>1</sup> "They might thus defeat", commented the Bengal Hurkaru, "the object the Christianising law has in view."<sup>2</sup>

In their memorial to the Governor General in Council the Hindus had indicated their intention to appeal to the Home authorities if it was necessary.<sup>3</sup> They now began to organise for that purpose. On 1 May "some of the most influential members of the Hindu community" held a meeting at the house of the late Udayachand Basak in Bara Bazar (Calcutta) to deliberate upon the question of sending a memorial to England.<sup>4</sup> On 14 May a general meeting of the Hindus was held at the same place under the presidency of Raja Radhakanta Deb.<sup>5</sup>

The meeting condemned the Act as a "gross injustice" to the Hindu community and resolved to appoint a European to present the memorial in England and to obtain "from the authorities there the justice which has been denied them here."<sup>6</sup> A Preli-

1. Reproduced in C.C.A., 4 May 1850, Vol. XII., p. 212.

2. Quoted in ibid.

3. Printed Memorial, p. 23.

4. The Hindu Intelligencer, 6 May 1850, quoted in C.C.A., 18 May 1850, Vol. XII., p. 234.

5. The Hindu Intelligencer, 24 June 1850, quoted in C.C.A., 29 June 1850, Vol. XII., pp. 307-308.

6. Ibid.



minary Committee and a Sub-Committee were also appointed, the former to carry out in general the objects of the meeting, and the latter to report on the "best means to be adopted" for the purpose.<sup>1</sup>

The report of the Sub-Committee having been sent in, the Preliminary Committee "issued circulars to the heads of castes and families" in order to assemble in a general meeting of the Hindus which was held on 19 June, in Bara Bazar (Calcutta) (Calcutta).<sup>2</sup> It was unanimously resolved to request J.F. Leith (a member of the bar of the Calcutta Supreme Court) to accept "the office of an agent and to prosecute our appeal before the Honourable Court of Directors, and eventually, if necessary, before the British Parliament."<sup>3</sup> The meeting also deprecated the attitude of the Marquis of Dalhousie's government which

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1. Ibid. The Preliminary Committee consisted of the following members:

Rajas Radhakanta Deb, Satyacharan Ghosal, Pratapchandra Singh, Boidyanath Roy, and Babus Ashutosh Deb, Ramanath Tagore, Rajchandra Mukherji, Durgacharan Datta, Abinashchandra Ganguli, Debnarayan Dey, Chandramohan Chatterji, Mathuramohan Biswas, Dinabandhu Mallik, Prankrishna Mallik, Sreekrishna Mallik, and Kasinath Mallik, with Babu Harimohan Sen as their Secretary and Babu Madhabchandra Ghosh as assistant Secretary.

2. The members of the Sub-Committee were: Raja Radhakanta Deb, Babus Ashutosh Deb, Ramanath Tagore, Durgacharan Datta, Madhabchandra Ghosh, Mathuramohan Biswas, Chandramohan Chatterji and Dinabandhu Mallik. 6-7; also Board's Collections

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. Original Memorial is preserved in the Parchment Records, India Office Library, Vol.100. It contains about 4,000 signatures.

5. Letters Received from India and Bengal, Vol.71, No.12 of 1851.



did not even give a reply to the memorial submitted to him.

"This breach of common etiquette was regarded as an insult, the reason for which we cannot divine, unless it is to be supposed that his Lordship was afraid of committing himself in writing, or that he did not think it worthwhile to be civil in his intercourse with the blackees of the land. In either case his conduct was reprehensive."<sup>1</sup> "such as he desires".<sup>2</sup> Leith

was In January 1851 the Hindu Intelligencer stated that the memorial to the Court of Directors was "ready for transmission to England by the next mail" and that Leith had undertaken to present it to the Court of Directors.<sup>2</sup> After six months, however, it was submitted to the Governor General in Council (on 11 July) for favour of transmission to the Court of Directors.<sup>3</sup> The intervening period might have been taken in obtaining subscriptions to the memorial.<sup>4</sup> The Government sent it home on 25 July and the Court received it on 23 September.<sup>5</sup>

The memorial reiterated and emphasised with additional illustration the points raised in the previous memorials.

1. Ibid.
2. The Hindu Intelligencer, quoted in C.C.A., 4 January 1851, Vol.XIII., p. 6.
3. Ind.Leg.Cons., 25 July 1851, Nos.6-7; also Board's Collections Draft 875 of 1851, Vol.2436, Collection 16.
4. The Original Memorial is preserved in the Parchment Records, India Office Library, Vol.100. It contains about 4,000 signatures.
5. Letters Received from India and Bengal, Vol.71, No.12 of 1851.



After the submission of the memorial Leith came to London, as the "appointed representative of the Hindoo subjects of Her Majesty in Bengal, Behar and Orissa", and requested the Court of Directors to grant him "an audience and hearing on behalf of the petitioners".<sup>1</sup> This was, however, refused, because "it would be contrary to the practice of the Court to grant an audience and hearing such as he desires".<sup>2</sup> Leith was further informed that the Court had declined to accede to the prayer contained in the memorial and that they had already intimated their "entire approval of the Act in question" to the Governor General of India in Council.<sup>3</sup> The latter were also informed, on 10 December 1851, of this decision of the Court on the appeal memorial of the Hindus.<sup>4</sup> Having failed in the Court of Directors the Hindus ultimately appealed to the House of Commons. A memorial, signed by 5,9000 persons of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was sent

1. Court Minutes, 3 December 1851, Vol. 178, pp. 245 and 267.

2. Minutes of the Revenue, Judicial and Legislative Committee, 3 December 1851, Vol. 7, pp. 118-119.

3. Ibid. Previous to this the Court, on receipt of the accounts of the proceedings of the Legislative Council, had intimated their approval of the Act on 2 July 1851.- Despatches to India and Bengal, No. 9 of 1851, para 8, Vol. 71, p. 834.

4. Despatches to India and Bengal, No. 19 of 1851, para 18, Vol. 74, p. 662.

3. See Parchment Records, Vol. 100, list of signatures.



to that body in 1852.<sup>1</sup> Among the signatories were recognised "a great number of persons of wealth, rank, education and intelligence".<sup>2</sup> The Select Committees of both Houses of Parliament, set up in connection with the renewal of the Charter, examined a number of witnesses on this issue; but nothing more was done. The law in question was neither annulled nor modified during the period under review. Court of Directors. The appeals of the Hindus thus failed. But the memorials of 1850-52 as well as the proceedings of the meetings preceding their submission and the comments of the native papers lead to the following conclusions. First, unlike in 1845, the Hindus were united this time in their opposition to the Act. Not only the two sections of the Dharma Sabha, but also many liberal Hindus supported the memorials. Orthodox journals like the Sambad Purnachandrodaya and the Sambad Prabhakar and the liberal organs like the Sambad Bhaskar, the Hindu Intelligencer and the Bengal Recorder, opposed and criticised the Act. It is, however, noteworthy that the leaders of the Tattvabodhini-cum-Brahma Sabha, like Devendranath Thakur and Akshoykumar Datta, did not subscribe to the memorial,<sup>3</sup> although

1. Parl. Pap., H/C, 1852-53, Vol. 27, pp. 149 and 429-432.

2. Ibid., p. 149.

3. See Parchment Records, Vol. 100, list of signatures.



a little later, their organ criticised the Act.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the list of signatures shows at least a dozen Muslim names.<sup>2</sup> The paucity of their names may preclude any conclusion that the Muslims in general cooperated with the Hindus in this movement; but there can be no doubt that some of them, who thought the Act to be detrimental to their religious and sacred laws, joined the Hindus in their appeal to the Court of Directors.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, the Act spread among the Hindus a belief that the Government had abandoned the policy of neutrality in religious affairs and had allied themselves with the missionaries in their work of evangelisation. Throughout the memorials and the columns of the *Benigali* journals this accusation is explicit. However, two instances when violence was actually committed upon him.

The first case was an attack upon the Baptist mission at Sadamahal near Dinajpur<sup>3</sup> in which the life of the Rev. H. Smylie, the resident missionary there, was endangered, and

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1. T.P., 1 Bhadra, 1773 Saka ( early 1852 ), Third series, Vol.I.,pp. 71-76.
  2. Parchment Records, Vol. 100, folios 8, 13 and 23. Of these names one, that of Abdul Wadud Khan, is written in English, and the rest in Arabic characters. See Appendix B.
  3. This invalidates the Friend of India's statement ( 9 January, 1851, Vol. XVII., p. 18 ) that no Muhammadan had joined the Hindus in their opposition to the Act.
3. Dinajpur is a district in northern Bengal. Sadamahal, a village, is situated about 27 miles north of the district town.



## CHAPTER VII.

Violence upon missionaries and converts<sup>40</sup>,<sup>2</sup> a gang of armed men attacked the place about 10 p.m. They first went

Besides the socio-economic disabilities springing from the system of caste, there were a few instances of violent opposition to the spread of Christianity. Sometimes an assault was committed upon the missionaries, but more often the native converts were the objects of oppression and harassment.

Assaults upon missionaries. In course of preaching tours a missionary often met with the opposition of a hostile critic or the petty annoyance of unsympathetic hearers.<sup>1</sup> He was at times even bullied away from the place where he had been preaching.<sup>2</sup> There were, however, two instances when violence was actually committed upon him.

The first case was an attack upon the Baptist mission at Sadamahal near Dinajpur<sup>3</sup> in which the life of the Rev. H. Smylie, the resident missionary there, was endangered, and

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1. See for instance the "Journal of a missionary visit to Sitakund Mela, by the Rev. J. Johannes, Baptist Missionary, Chittagong." in C.C.O., September 1839, Vol. VIII., p. 503.

2. Thus for instance a missionary, while attempting to preach at Santipur (in Nadia district), early in 1847, was followed by an angry mob for about a mile, and was left alone only when he approached the police thana. - "Journal of a missionary visit to Santipur", C.C.A., 20 February 1847, Vol. IX., p. 93.

3. Dinajpur is a district in northern Bengal. Sadamahal, a village, is situated about 27 miles north of the district town.



Budha, the native preacher, was killed.<sup>1</sup> The story of the assault runs thus. On Saturday 16 December 1840,<sup>2</sup> a gang of armed men attacked the place about 10 p.m. They first went to Budha's house and inflicted upon him several mortal wounds. After robbing and plundering, and stabbing his wife, they dragged him to Smylie's house and told him to produce his 'Sahib'. Smylie came out on hearing the uproar but seeing resistance out of the question, escaped by the back of his house. As he did this, the aggressors entered the house at the front door, but being disappointed of their object, they helped themselves to whatever they could get of any value and decamped. Budha died 26 hours afterwards. Ten other native Christians were also wounded, but not dangerously.<sup>3</sup> The culprits, or some of them were brought to trial. Bara Pradhan, the head of the gang, was sentenced to imprisonment for life; Jay Ram, and his son-in-law Surat Singh, for 14 years; and Birbal for 7 years.<sup>4</sup>

Smylie and two other correspondents of the Friend of India and the Calcutta Christian Observer respectively, while

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1. B.M.S. Report, 1841, p.18.

2. The Missionary Herald (London, May 1841) mistakenly reported the date of assault as 15 January 1841.

3. Friend of India, 25 February 1841, Vol.VII., p.121.

4. Baptist Herald, quoted in C.C.A., 3 July 1841, Vol.III., p.76.

1. Friend of India, 25 February 1841, Vol.VII., p.121.  
C.C.O., April 1841, Vol.X., p.231.



giving an account of the assault, attributed it to a spirit of revenge on the part of a group of persons whose interests had been adversely affected by the intervention of Smylie and his native assistant Budha. Three such causes of disaffection were narrated.

1. At the Nekmard Mela (fair) near Sadamahahal the Thanadar (an officer of the police station), in league with others, used to levy an illegal tax. Every person who purchased a bullock had, after paying for the animal, to pay four pice to each rupee before he was allowed to remove his purchase. The land on which the mela was held and paid for by the rayats was rented to those who erected booths in it at a rupee per square cubit. The Thanadar would release any thief who paid him enough. "A temporary thana was erected with a door in the front, and one at the back, and thieves, on being caught, were pushed in at one door, and drained out [sic] at the other."<sup>1</sup> All these frauds were practised in the name of the government when the fact was that it did not receive a single pice of what was thus raised. Smylie and Budha were instrumental in bringing these iniquitous dealings to light, and they were thus stopped, and the guilty parties lost about 5,000 rupees yearly.

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1. Friend of India, 25 February 1841, Vol. VII., p. 121;  
C.C.O., April 1841, Vol. X., p. 231.



2. There was also a gang of coiners in that locality who had a regular apparatus for making spurious coins, and who used to sell three or four of their rupees to one of the Company's; and what was worse, the poor people were forced to accept them.<sup>1</sup> This too the native preacher brought to the notice of the magistrate ( C. Garstin ) who rewarded him and punished the culprits.<sup>2</sup>

3. The rent-free land belonging to the mission was bought from a man who was one of the leaders in the assault. It was believed that he wanted to recover the land and thought that if Budha was removed the mission could no longer be maintained at Sadamahal.<sup>3</sup>

The reasons thus assigned for the attack on the Baptist mission at Sadamahal appear to be plausible; for though it is difficult to determine whether the persons convicted and punished for the assault were the same as the Thanadar and his compeers of the Nekmard Mela or the gang of coiners punished by the magistrate, or even persons instigated and employed by them, the assault cannot be reduced to a mere case of robbery, for the house of a poor native Christian or of a missionary

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1. Ibid.

2. C.C.O., April 1841, Vol.X., p.231.

2. C.C.O., June 1842, Vol.XI., p.360.

3. Ibid.



in the mufassal could not be a fit place for plunder. It was evidently an act of enmity towards Smylie and his native assistant. Such enmity might have been engendered by the the organisers of the Puja regarded as the "sacred Charak Tree". Those displeased by the violent language and gesticulation. Some of the efforts of Smylie and Budha.

The next case of violence was an assault upon the Rev. J. Campbell in April 1842 while he was preaching to the people at the Charak Puja in the neighbourhood of Bhawanipur (Calcutta). On the evening of the day of the Charak Puja on which the hook swinging<sup>1</sup> ceremony was to be performed, Campbell, accompanied by his colleague, the Rev. T. Boaz, went to the place of the Puja. On their arrival they found the people preparing a Charak post for the purpose of swinging. Campbell explained to them the "folly and cruelty" of the practice in which they were about to participate, and further that it was not sanctioned by their Shastras.<sup>2</sup> Upon this the workers began to take down the bamboos, strings, etc.,

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1. It was the main feature of the Puja. The mode of swinging was undoubtedly cruel. A rough iron hook was put through the fleshy part of the back, and the victim was suspended by ropes to a bamboo at an elevation of some sixteen or twenty feet, and whirled round with an amazing velocity — they uniformly intoxicated. They frequently died from the effects. (See C.C.O., June 1842, Vol. XI., p. 360.)

2. C.C.O., June 1842, Vol. XI., p. 360.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., pp. 361 - 362.



the native witnesses for the complainant were not present; they "in which Mr. Boaz assisted by putting his hand on the bamboos, and taking a string given to him by one of the men."<sup>1</sup> This by Harinath was that he was at another Charak but not at this. the organisers of the Puja regarded as the desecration of the His defence, however, failed, and he was convicted of the "sacred Charak Tree". Those displeased protested with rather offence by the magistrate (T. Sandys) of the 24-Parganas and violent language and gesticulation. Some of them endeavoured fined rupees two hundred. The magistrate was reported to have observed that "if it had been at any other time and place, and they said, of discussing the merits of the Charak Tree; but he, being warned by an intelligent boy that it was their punishment heavier." intention to maltreat him, did not go.<sup>2</sup> Suddenly Campbell was The result of the trial did not satisfy the missionaries. hustled by a party of men about fifty yards from the post, and They felt that Harinath was dealt with very leniently in as was assaulted with bricks, sticks, whips and other missiles. much as he was even given undue freedom at the time of his On Boaz's coming to his rescue he was found staggering into a trial -- "going in and out of court at pleasure; in fact he dry ditch, his face covered with blood and dust and cut in looked more like a legal adviser or complainant than a several places. In the midst of the confusion the assailants prisoner." They also regarded the punishment as of little escaped. Amongst the most conspicuous of them were, however, effect upon him, and maintained that an imprisonment for a Harinath Roychowdhury, the son of a pleader in the Sadr Diwani week or so would, in its moral effects, have been worth all Adalat, and a relative named Ghouri.<sup>3</sup>

In the investigation of the case the police Daroga was the fines that could have been inflicted. "Then the conviction would have been known to all, whereas as it is, the Chowdry reported to have shown undue partiality towards the offending has endeavoured to bruit it abroad that he has been acquitted; party.<sup>4</sup> At the trial which took place after about a fortnight, and to keep up the delusion he went the day after his trial

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1. Ibid.

1. Ibid., p. 363.

2. Ibid., p. 361.

2. Ibid., pp. 363-364.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., pp. 361 - 362.



the native witnesses for the complainant were not present; they were said to have been "decoyed away".<sup>1</sup> The defence set up by Harinath was that he was at another Charak but not at this. His defence, however, failed, and he was convicted of the offence by the magistrate (T. Sandys) of the 24-Parganas and fined rupees two hundred. The magistrate was reported to have observed that "if it had been at any other time and place, and had not the bamboo been touched, he would have made the punishment heavier."<sup>2</sup>

The result of the trial did not satisfy the missionaries. They felt that Harinath was dealt with very leniently in as much as he was even given undue freedom at the time of his trial — "going in and out of court at pleasure; in fact he looked more like a legal adviser or complainant than a prisoner." They also regarded the punishment as of little effect upon him, and maintained that an imprisonment for a week or so would, in its moral effects, have been worth all the fines that could have been inflicted. "Then the conviction would have been known to all, whereas as it is, the Chowdry has endeavoured to bruit it abroad that he has been acquitted; and to keep up the delusion he went the day after his trial

1. Ibid., p. 363.

2. Ibid., pp. 363-364.

2. Bhaskar, 31 May 1842, quoted in G.C.A., 4 June 1842, Vol. IV., p. 36.



wished to see Harinath started to Kali Ghat to make an offering to Kali for his acquittal."<sup>1</sup>

Whether Harinath did actually go to Kali Ghat is not corroborated; but that he made an attempt to give an extenuating account of the episode is known from a report of the Sambad Bhaskar. On 31 May (1842) it stated that a "Resident of Jorasanko" had written a letter to its editor giving an account of the affair in which it was shown that Harinath was not to blame. The editor of the Bhaskar declined to publish it because the information contained in it ran counter to the facts of the case as were published earlier and as decided in the court of justice.<sup>2</sup> Evidently the letter was written by a partisan of Harinath Roychowdhury.

The grievance of the missionaries was, however, further deepened by a report which circulated a few days afterwards that Harinath had been nominated for a Darogaship. The Calcutta Christian Advocate indignantly called it a "mockery of justice" and called upon the Government to institute a rigid enquiry into the matter. The comments of the Advocate called forth counter-comments from the Sambad Purnachandrodaya an orthodox Bengali paper. The latter confirmed the report of his appointment but asked whether the missionary gentlemen

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1. Ibid., p. 365.

2. Bhaskar, 31 May 1842, quoted in C.C.A., 4 June 1842, Vol. IV., p. 36.



wished to see Harinath starved to death and whether it became a "merciful Christian" and a "kind-hearted Englishman" to exhibit such a spirit of hostility towards that individual.<sup>1</sup> In reply the Advocate stated that it spoke both as a liberal Englishman and a merciful Christian when it observed that the appointment of such a man to a responsible post on the eve of his trial and conviction on a charge of criminal offence was an affront to society and administration. "We deal not with such questions as Christians and missionaries merely," it further observed, "but as men and as those who sincerely desire the welfare of India."<sup>2</sup> The Friend of India characterised the reported appointment as improper, indecent and immoral, and called upon the Government to see that the police administration of the province was not subjected to such a degradation.<sup>3</sup> A couple of days afterwards, however, the Advocate stated that Harinath had declined the appointment reportedly because the salary ( 50 rupees per mensem ) was not adequate. "We sincerely rejoice, whatever pleas be set up," concluded the Advocate, "that such has been the issue of the case. Thanks to the efforts of a free-speaking press."<sup>4</sup>

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1. Quoted in C.C.A., 4 June 1842, Vol.IV., p.35.

2. C.C.A., 4 June 1842, Vol.IV., p.36.

3. Friend of India, 9 June 1842, Vol.VIII., p.356.

4. C.C.A., 11 June 1842, Vol.IV., p.41.



Thus ended the episode of Harinath Roychowdhury. There was no further assault upon a missionary in Bengal during the period under review. In 1847, however, there was a rumour, following some conversions in Calcutta and the case of Radhakanta Datta,<sup>1</sup> that a section of the 'Calcutta Babus' had hatched a conspiracy to manhandle the Rev. Dr. Duff, whom they regarded as the principal missionary in converting Hindu youths to Christianity. The rumour had been reiterated "so often" and reached Duff from so many quarters, "alike native and European", that he thought it proper to notice it publicly. He wrote a letter in the Bengal Hurkaru addressing the "native gentlemen of Calcutta". Among them, he stated, there were many whom he "respected and esteemed" and to whose keeping he would at any time entrust his life "in the most perfect confidence of friendship and protection." If others, being ignorant of his motives and principles, entertained unkindly or hostile feelings towards him, he should not be moved by them, but would trust in God as a "guarantee of security far more sure than a lodgement in the citadel of Fort William." He further stated that it would be "preposterously vain" to attempt to drive the missionaries from the promulgation of the truths

1. Hurkaru, 25 September 1847.

1. See supra, pp. 127-129.

2. It is difficult to say who these "few babus" were. The Friend of India (30 Sept. 1847, Vol. XII p. 101) suggested that they were the same as Gorachand Basak and others who had organised a Hindu meeting on 19 September 1847 to consider measures for checking the progress of Christianity. This is, however, a mere assumption without any corroborative evidence.



of Christianity "by threats of terror or violence" and warned the Calcutta Babus "that the actual execution of such schemes would inflict deadly injury on no one but themselves, and irretrievably damage no cause but their own...."<sup>1</sup>

Introducing this letter the Bengal Hurkaru stated that it had "too much reason to believe" that such threats had actually been made. It further observed that it was far from creditable that any number of the "modern Hindoos of Calcutta" should be found ready to oppose personal violence to the progress of opinions distasteful to themselves. It therefore called upon those Hindu gentlemen who had influence over their fellow citizens "to interfere for the purpose of wiping off this stain from the character of the native public."<sup>2</sup>

show, Duff's letter and the remarks of the Bengal Hurkaru called forth a letter from a "A Hindu" who stated that the alleged conspiracy was confined to a "few baboos" whose "bigotry" and "conservatism" had already earned for them an "unenviable notoriety in the town",<sup>3</sup> and that therefore Duff and the editor of the Hurkaru were wrong in taking the whole "Hindu community to task for harbouring so base and

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1. Hurkaru, 25 September 1847.

2. Ibid.

3. It is difficult to say who these "few baboos" were. The Friend of India (30 Sept. 1847, Vol. XIII p. 609) suggested that they were the same as Gorachand Basak and others who had organised a Hindu meeting on 19 September 1847 to consider measures for checking the progress of Christianity. This is, however, a mere assumption without any corroborative evidence.



and ungrateful an emotion."<sup>1</sup> In reply the editor of the Hurkaru stated that "A Hindu" had misunderstood Duff's as well as the editor's remarks, neither of whom had implied that the feeling of hostility towards Duff and his cause was general.<sup>2</sup>

Duff's letter and the remarks of the Bengal Hurkaru and its correspondent, "A Hindu", suggest that there was some truth in the rumour. Fortunately, either because of these discussions<sup>3</sup> or because of the suggested intervention of the influential Hindus of Calcutta, the rumoured conspiracy did not materialise. That there was such a rumour at all is indicative of the extent of <sup>the</sup> excitement caused in Calcutta by some conversions to Christianity during the middle of 1847. This rumoured conspiracy as well as the two instances of assault noticed above show, however, that violence upon a missionary, or threats of it, were not used by the generality of the people. These were acts of individuals or small groups of individuals who were actuated either by selfish interests or by inordinate religious fanaticism.

Oppression upon converts. Oppression upon converts was, however, more frequent and took place mostly in the mufassal, where two general factors operated against them.

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1. Hurkaru, 27 September 1847.

2. Ibid.

3. These discussions were subsequently published by the missionaries as a tract entitled The Persecuting Section of the Calcutta Baboos Exposed, Calcutta 1847.



First, almost all of them came of the poor and illiterate section of the people, and also belonged, for the most part, to lower castes. As such, they were bereft of any power and influence in society and were, in common with others of the same class of the agricultural population of Bengal, at the mercy of their Zamindars and Talukdars.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the police administration in the rural areas was notoriously inefficient and corrupt, and did not afford adequate protection to the weak. Nor was the court of law within easy reach of all.<sup>2</sup> Under these circumstances it was not unusual that native converts would be the object of violent treatment by those whose jealousy and passion were roused by their profession of the new faith. The principal areas where such spirit of persecution manifested itself were the districts of Nadia (Kishnagar), Jessore and Barisal, presumably because it was only in those districts, besides Calcutta and its vicinity, that there were any considerable number of conversions to Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Roughly meaning landlords and sub-landlords. For a detailed definition of the two terms see The Regulations of the Bengal Government respecting Zemindary and La-Khiraji Property, ed. by R. Clarke, London 1840, (Glossary).
  2. See Minute of the Honourable F.J. Halliday, Lt. Governor of Bengal, on the state of the Police, and of criminal Justice in the Lower Provinces of Bengal, dated 30th April 1856. London 1857.
  3. See the reports of the various missionary societies working in Bengal; also the "Statistics of Missions in India and Ceylon" by J. Mullens, in C.C.O., Nov., 1852, Vol. XXI., pp. 493-519. (Also published separately as a booklet, Cal., 1852.)



There had been a mission station of the Church Missionary Society at Krishnagar, in the district of Nadia, since 1831; but no apparent success attended the missionary efforts there till 1839.<sup>1</sup> Early in that year there began a large-scale movement for conversion to Christianity. The people of 50 to 60 villages, numbering about 3,000 persons, offered themselves for baptism, of whom 600 had already been admitted into the church within the course of a month.<sup>2</sup> This at once roused the jealousy of the landlords of the locality, who began to harass the converts either by instituting false law-suits against them, or

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1. There was even a suggestion in 1834 to abandon the station altogether. See the Minute of the Rev. W. Mangles, dated 16 June 1834 - C.M.S. Archives, North India Mission, No. 11.
  2. C.C.C. of C.M.S. Minutes, 27 February 1839. The immediate occasion for this movement was a natural calamity and the consequent famine, and the liberal distribution of relief by the missionaries. While the subsequent conduct and character of many of these converts (see C.C.C. of C.M.S. Minutes, 31 March 1840) show that they made a profession of Christianity with a view to improving their temporal condition, it would be wrong to attribute this movement solely to the famine. Prior to this a new sect of Hindus, called the Karta Bhajas ( or Worshipers of the Lord ), organised a movement at Krishnagar for the worship of one True God. There is reason to believe that this sect was instrumental in preparing the minds of many for the reception of Christianity. In fact, the Rev. A. Alexander of Solo, a neighbouring station, reported on 26 May 1840 that he expected a large accession to Christianity from the members of the Karta Bhaja sect there. (See C.C.C. of C.M.S. Minutes, 25 June 1840) It may be noted that a similar movement for conversion took place in Barisal at the instance of one Kangali Mohanta, a Karta Bhaja leader ( infra, p. 247 ). For an account of the rise of this sect, and their peculiar doctrines, see T.P., 1 Baisakha 1772 Saka (1850), Series II., Vol. IV., pp. 12-17.



or by seizing and beating them, or by ejecting them, under various pretexts, from their lands.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of 1840 the missionary at Kishnagar (the Rev. W.J. Deerr) proposed to keep a Mukhtiar<sup>2</sup> in his pay for pleading the causes of the native Christians in the law courts.<sup>3</sup> The proposal was not, however, accepted by the Calcutta Corresponding Committee of the Church Missionary Society because they thought that the causes of the disputes at Kishnagar would soon disappear.<sup>4</sup> About this time a number of native Christians fled from the estates of their landlords and founded at Melipota, near the missionary station at Solo,<sup>5</sup> a Christian village which became subsequently the resort of a large number of native Christian.<sup>6</sup> In November 1840 the Kishnagar missionaries, Deerr, Blumhardt and Krauss, drew the Kishnagar of the Calcutta Committee to the "subject of the

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1. C.C.C. of C.M.S. Report, 1841, pp.17-18.

2. A Mukhtiar is a lower grade legal practitioner licensed to plead principally criminal cases in district and other subordinate courts.

3. C.C.C. of C.M.S. Minutes, 3 January 1840.

4. C.C.C. of C.M.S. Minutes, 26 March 1840.

5. As a result of the progress of conversion at Kishnagar and the surrounding locality in the northern part of Nadia four more missionary stations were opened there in 1840. These were at Chapra, Kapasdanga, Ratanpur and Solo.- C.C.C. of C.M.S. Minutes, 31 March 1840; also C.C.C. of C.M.S. Report, 1841, p. 16.

6. C.C.C. of C.M.S. Report, 1842, p.97.

2. Ibid.

3. C.C.C. of C.M.S. Report, 1842, p. 82.

4. C.C.A., 13 February, 1841, Vol.II., p. 325.



persecution of native Christians".<sup>1</sup> The Calcutta Committee requested them to "wait on the Judge and Magistrate" of that district and to consult with them as to whether anything could be done for the removal of the difficulties of the native Christians.<sup>2</sup> Whether the Kishnagar missionaries waited on those officers, and whether any step was taken by the latter regarding this, is not known.

Early in 1841 an affray took place at Bohirgachchhi, a village near Kishnagar, "between the Talukdar's people and the enquirers into Christianity", in which one of the latter was so severely injured that he died of his wounds shortly afterwards.<sup>3</sup> The actual circumstances leading to this affray are not known. The case was rendered remarkable because of the alleged refusal of the Judge of Kishnagar (J.C. Brown), to punish the offenders on the plea that as the person killed was a native Christian and the witnesses brought forward were also converts, their testimony was not deserving of credit.<sup>4</sup> Commenting upon this report the Friend of India rightly observed that if "such a principle was to govern legal decisions, there would be an end of all justice. It had never yet been admitted in cases in which Hindus or Muhammadans were the sole witnesses and in which

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1. C.C.C. of C.M.S. Minutes, 26 November, 1840.

2. Ibid. of C.M.S. Minutes, 25 February 1841.

3. C.C.C. of C.M.S. Report, 1842, p. 82.

4. C.C.A., 13 February, 1841, Vol.II., p. 325.



no evidence from men of different creed was to be obtained. To reject an evidence because it was uniform and came from Christians, was to degrade the character of our tribunals, wantonly to depreciate the character of Christianity itself, and unjustly to obstruct its progress by teaching the heathen that they may oppress the native converts with impunity."<sup>1</sup> It was therefore a matter of satisfaction to the missionaries and their friends that the Sadr Court, to whom the case was brought, reversed the Judge's decision and punished the offenders.<sup>2</sup>

Following this incident at Bohirgachchhi the Acting Secretary of the Calcutta Corresponding Committee of the Church Missionary Society, the Rev. J. Innes, visited Kishnagar and made "such arrangements as were practicable" to ensure that Christian converts and enquirers would enjoy in future "all the protection the law could afford."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless much excitement and ill-feeling continued to prevail there; and the Calcutta Corresponding Committee sanctioned rupees four for keeping a Chowkidar at the mission premises at Bohirgachchhi.<sup>4</sup>

1. Friend of India, 25 February 1841, Vol. VIII., p. 115.

2. Ibid.

3. C.C.C. of C.M.S. Minutes, 25 February 1841.

4. Ibid., 27 April 1841.



continued to be subject to the petty annoyances of their neighbours and the harassment and oppression of their landlords.<sup>1</sup>

The next scene of disturbance was Jessore, a Baptist Missionary field of labour, where the number of converts was steadily increasing.<sup>2</sup> On May 1844 the Rev. J. Parry of that place wrote to his missionary colleagues in Calcutta that the landlords were offering determined opposition to the spread of Christianity. "Whenever a Zemindar finds any disposition on the part of any Rayat to embrace Christianity," wrote Parry, "he summons him and prohibits him from reading our books, going to worship and observing the Sabbath, and compels him to sign a penalty bond that in case he should be found in future doing so, he must forfeit 20 or 30 rupees."<sup>3</sup> He further stated that a "wicked Talukdar" had plundered several native converts who had thus been deprived of all their rice and cattle, besides ready money and house-hold articles. Thirty poor creatures were placed in the most destitute condition, being driven from their houses, and obliged to take shelter in

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1. See C.C.C. of C.M.S. Report for 1842 and subsequent years.

2. Like Kishnagar this district was also the scene of the activities of the Karta Bhaja sect, many members of which had embraced Christianity.- Friend of India, 14 January 1836, Vol.II., p.11.

3. C.C.O. June 1844, Vol.XIII, pp.372-373.

4. Parry's letter, Friend of India, 11 July 1844, Vol.I., p.439.

5. Ibid.



a neighbouring Christian village. Several others had been tied up like felons and cruelly beaten and confined by the orders of the Talukdar.<sup>1</sup> Parry also observed that the petty annoyances which Christians met from their "heathen neighbours" were of little consequence, "but the conduct of the Zemindars was a formidable evil"; and if it was not restrained, the labours and exertions of the missionaries were likely to be frustrated.<sup>2</sup> On his own part Parry had represented the case before the Magistrate, (W. Tayler) but was "apprehensive of the result, owing to the host of false witnesses the landholder is capable of producing in his defence."<sup>3</sup>

On receipt of Parry's representation the magistrate of Jessore, ordered the Jamadar of the Nayabad Thana, within whose jurisdiction the case happened to be, to investigate the facts.<sup>4</sup> The Jamadar was alleged to have paid particular attention to the statements of the Talukdar's witnesses, who being his rayats, deposed in favour of their landlord.<sup>5</sup> On receipt of the report, however, the magistrate asked the complainants, if they were not satisfied with the Jamadar's enquiry, to

1. Ibid. of the Nayabad Thana to enquire into the case.

2. Ibid. Parry's letter was considered by the Calcutta Missionary Conference, but action was taken on it. (Ibid.)

3. Ibid. Magistrate convicted Ishwar Ghosh of Parikhal, the said

4. Parry's letter, Friend of India, 11 July 1844, Vol.X.,p.438.

5. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.



petition for a re-examination of their case. This was done and more witnesses were summoned.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime four converts who were kept in custody by the Talukdar, were subjected to inhuman torture. Their "legs were fastened with ropes, and they were subjected to hard labour without being allowed to rest on the Sabbath; they were supplied only with one meal a day, and at night were locked up in a little pakka building, which was used as a privy before."<sup>2</sup> The poor sufferers begged of the Talukdar in question to allow them one night to sleep in an open place, as they were nearly suffocated with the heat of the little room in which they were confined. He assented to their request, and the Chowkidar who was directed to watch them at night having fallen asleep, the prisoners managed to make their escape. Parry took them to the Civil Assistant Surgeon, who, having examined the marks on their persons, was of opinion that they were occasioned by the means above alluded to, and gave a certificate to that effect. This was forwarded with the petitions of the sufferers to the magistrate who ordered the Daroga of the Nayabad Thana to enquire into the case.<sup>3</sup>

The reports having been received, and depositions taken, the magistrate convicted Ishwar Ghosh of Perikhal, the said

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.



Talukdar, of assault, false imprisonment, torture and plunder, and sentenced him to six months' imprisonment without labour, and a fine of one hundred and sixty rupees. The magistrate further desired the police Daroga to cause the cattle which had been forcibly taken from the native Christians, to be restored to them.<sup>1</sup> An appeal against this judgement was made to the Sessions Judge, but that officer confirmed the magistrate's sentence.<sup>2</sup>

Soon after this case in Jessore, the developments in Barisal attracted the attention of the missionaries. This district also had been the scene of the Baptist missionary society's activities since 1828; but the progress of conversion there was very slow till 1846.<sup>3</sup> In that year Kangali Mohanta, a Karta Bhaja leader of north Barisal, embraced Christianity, and started a movement in favour of that religion.<sup>4</sup> This led

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1. Parry's letter, the Calcutta Missionary Herald, September 1844, reproduced in the Missionary Herald (London), January 1845, pp. 8-9.
  2. Ibid. Parry rightly complained of the leniency of the punishment. He pointed out that whereas there were instances of imprisonment for 2 or more years for a petty theft, in this case, for so grievous a wrong, the offender was simply deprived of his liberty for only six months.
  3. See B.M.S. Reports for the preceding years.
  4. See John Sarkar's History, pp. 3-6, and Srinath Sarkar's History, pp. 5-11. There are two short accounts of Kangali Mahanta, one in Bengali and the other in English, both manuscripts, in the B.M.S. Archives, Box: India, Barisal etc. 1847.



to the baptism of about 300 persons in course of a few months.<sup>1</sup> Gradually chapels and mission stations were established at several villages like Dhandoba, Askar, Suagram, Chhabikharpar, Dighalia, etc. This at once excited the jealousy and hostility of the Zamindars and Talukdars of north Barisal.<sup>2</sup> "Just as the Egyptian king Pharoah falsely suspected the Israelites", writes John Sarkar, "so did these Zemindars begin to oppress the native Christians fearing that these people, allied with the Sahebs, would gradually undermine their Zemindari and Talukdari rights."<sup>3</sup>

The first serious case of violence was an assault upon the Christians of Dighalia, in March 1847. The immediate cause of the attack was stated to be the refusal by one of the Christians to pay, on the occasion of his daughter's marriage ceremony, a contribution demanded by the Zamindar of Kotalipara.<sup>4</sup> The lathials employed by that Zamindar plundered the houses of the Christians, took away all their goods and cattle, and drove them out of the village.<sup>5</sup> About 29 of the persecuted Christians took shelter in a Musalman village, called Sitaikundu, to the

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1. B.M.S. Report, 1847, p. 16.

2. Ibid., p.18; also John Sarkar's History, pp. 5-6, and Srinath Sarkar's History, p.12.

3. John Sarkar's History, p.5.

4. Srinath Sarkar's History, p.14.

5. Ibid.; also John Sarkar's History, p. 6.

4. Ibid., pp.11-12.



south-east of Dighalia, where they received unexpected hospitality, and were provided with foods and clothes.<sup>1</sup>

Dighalia and Kotalipara being at that time in the district of Jessore, just on the other side of the north-western border of Barisal,<sup>2</sup> the missionaries (J. C. Page of Barisal and J. Parry of Jessore) brought the case of the native Christians in the Jessore court. The magistrate (R. Hampton), being satisfied with the evidence of the Christians, permitted them to recover possession of their lands and houses and forced the Zamindar to give an undertaking (Muchalka) not to oppress them any longer.<sup>3</sup>

This did not, however, secure peace for the native Christians of that locality. The Talukdars of north Barisal who were in friendship with the Zamindar of Kotalipara, continued to harass and oppress the Christians of such villages as Bakal, Pakurta, Chhabikharpar, etc.<sup>4</sup> In April 1849 two

families at Jobarpar having embraced Christianity, two native preachers, Ramjivan and Sukhiram Sarkar, were sent to teach and organise the congregation there; but the Naib (agent) of Babu Ram Ratan of Narail (in Jessore), within whose estate the village was, sent Hati Singh and other lathials <sup>who</sup> <sup>captured</sup> ~~took captive~~

1. Ibid.

2. Dighalia is now in the district of Faridpur.

3. John Sarkar's History, p.7.

4. Ibid., pp.11-12.



of the two preachers and kept them confined for three days in the Bandabari Kachchhari (Office of the landlord's agent).<sup>1</sup> But the "persecutors were so amazed" at the devotion and patience of the two preachers that they were set at liberty.<sup>2</sup> The two Christian families could not, however, be kept at Jobarpar due to the opposition of the Zamindar's people; they were removed from that village and were given shelter at Askar.<sup>3</sup> Towards the end of 1849 Page wrote to the Parent Committee that the "injustice and downright oppression" of the Zamindars kept the native Christians of Barisal "continually unsettled and in fear", some of whom had left the congregation. Page was thankful, however, that more had not abandoned the profession of Christianity.<sup>4</sup>

Such persecution and harassment upon native converts by the Zamindars of north Barisal continued with more or less

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1. Ibid., p.14. There is a pencil sketch of the Bandhabari Kachchhari, drawn by Page, with the following note: "Here Ramjivan and Sukhiram Sarkar were confined with their feet in the stocks for some days in April 1849." - B.M.S. Archives, Box: India, Barisal, etc., envelope, Sundry Photos.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Ibid.
  4. B.M.S. Report, 1850. At this time the state of the Barisal Mission was as follows: Christian population under instruction, adults 689, children 358; six day schools for boys, attendance 130; one day-school for girls, attendance 14; one boarding school for girls, residents 7; Mission stations 10, sub-stations 22.-Ibid.
1. B.M.S. Report, 1854.
  3. Ibid. This statement is confirmed by John Sarkar. See John Sarkar's History, p.17.



severity throughout the years 1850-1853.<sup>1</sup> Speaking of the nature of the difficulties the native Christians were facing, Page cited, in 1853, the instance of a person of Dhandoba who had offered himself for baptism. In the first place the Zamindar repeatedly threatened him with expulsion from his house and land; next he refused to give him a receipt for his rent; then he forged a receipt for a loan of ten rupees, more than the poor fellow's whole property was worth; then he sued him for the rent in the civil court; next to make sure of succeeding, he instituted a summary suit of ejection for nonpayment of rent, there having been no receipts given to him, and then had the fellow dragged out of house at night, bound, beaten and brought to Barisal where he was about to be cast into prison, but was rescued by the intervention of Page.<sup>2</sup> Page also stated that the Zamindars of Barisal had held several meetings during 1852 and 1853 in which it "was determined to make a united and daring attempt to rid the zillah of the odious Christians."<sup>3</sup>

That some such plot was afoot seems certain from the atrocious assault committed upon the Christians of Baropakhya in July 1855. The Baropakhya case excited great interest and may therefore be narrated in some detail.

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1. Letter of Sale, Page's colleague in Barisal, in Missionary Herald, February 1851.

2. B.M.S. Report, 1854.

3. Ibid. This statement is confirmed by John Sarkar. See John Sarkar's History, p.17.



tenantry.<sup>1</sup> It then happened that a young native convert named Ramkrishna gave up one of his empty bheetas for the purpose. The jungle was accordingly cleared, a house for the native preacher put up and some materials brought up for the erection of the proposed chapel. It was at this juncture of time that of the estate of Edward Brown of Barisal, and Mohan Munshi and Nandokumar Munshi<sup>of</sup> Goila.<sup>1</sup> Goila is about five or six miles east of Baropakhyia. In 1852 two or three men of the latter place began to enquire after Christianity; and in course of a few months were followed by others. At the beginning of 1855 some thirtyfive persons broke caste, worshipping with the Christians of Chhabikharpar, a village two or three miles distant. A few had been baptized. As the number of Christians had thus increased, they became urgent in their request for a teacher and a place of worship, "particularly as persons from three neighbouring villages desired to meet with them on the Sabath day."<sup>2</sup> It was therefore thought necessary to look out for some ground on which to erect a chapel. Two or three people offered a part of their Bheetas (elevated land); but as no suitable spot was found, application was made to Brown. He did not comply with the request on the ground that "the Hindu rayats of his estate were prejudiced against the Christians, and that he was unwilling to

take any step that might be disagreeable to the majority of his

3. C.C.O., September 1856, Vol. XXV., p. 400.

1. C.C.O., September 1856, Vol. XXV., p. 398.

2. Ibid.



tenantry."<sup>1</sup> It then happened that a young native convert named Ramkrishna gave up one of his empty bheetas for the purpose. The jungle was accordingly cleared, a house for the native preacher put up and some materials brought up for the erection of the proposed chapel. It was at this juncture of time that during the night of Sunday, 1 July 1855, a violent mob of armed men made an attack upon the Christians of that place. The immediate cause of the assault was, according to Srinath Sarkar, a dispute between the Christians and the Zemindar's agent regarding the payment of some extra taxes demanded by the latter.<sup>2</sup> The houses of the Christians were plundered, and fourteen of them were carried away with their property, — five men, two boys of twelve and fourteen years of age, six women, "one very old and infirm, and one in an advanced state of pregnancy", together with one child, "about four years old."<sup>3</sup>

From the depositions of the victims after their recovery it appears that they were bound, beaten and carried captives before the sun rose to the neighbouring village of Mollapara. There they were confined in a cow-house during the whole of the ensuing day, lathials surrounding their prison to prevent both

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1. Ibid., p.399.

2. Srinath Sarkar's History, p.15.

3. C.C.O., September 1856, Vol. XXV., p. 400 .

3. Ibid.

4. See for details E.B. Underhill's pamphlet, The case of the Baropakhya Christians, Zillah Backergunge, Calcutta 1856.



approach and escape. Ramsundar, the village chaukidar, was stated to be their jailer.<sup>1</sup> During the following night they were removed to the house of Mohan Munshi of Goila. Here the men were severely beaten. Ledoo was especially singled out for torture, "probably because he was among the first of the little band of persons in Baropakhya to receive the Gospel."<sup>2</sup> Soon after this the captives were divided into four or five parties, "as they could thus be more easily carried about from place to place, and secreted from observation." The male members among them were taken to Aurabunia, where there was a Kachchhari of Brown. There they were kept confined for about a fortnight, generally with iron fetters on their legs, and being allowed only one meal a day. Again put into boats, they were taken from place to place, sometime stopping at a house, at others wandering about in jungles and khals and jheels (forests, canals and marshes), "But all these places were within the bounds of Mr. Brown's Zemindari."<sup>3</sup> The female members were also similarly taken from one place to another.

The missionary, J.C. Page, lost no time in bringing the case before the magistrate (E. C. Craster). After about a month of fruitless efforts<sup>4</sup> to recover the captives the magistrate,

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p. 401.

3. Ibid., September 1856, Vol. XXV., p. 402.

4. See for details E.B. Underhill's pamphlet, The case of the Baropakhya Christians, Zillah Backergunge, Calcutta 1856.



"in consequence of the varied pressure brought to bear upon him", issued orders to all the Thanas and Pharies (temporary police posts), directing a vigorous search, and promising promotions and reward to those officers who should be successful. As it became almost impossible to retain the captives, they began at length to appear. Between 9 and 14 August they were found collected in three groups and brought to the gillage of Mollapara wherefrom the police officers of thana Gournadi recovered them. The visit of the Daroga to that place "a day or two previous, followed by the easy escape of the lattyals [lathials]", rightly maintained the missionaries, "presents an appearance of collusion with the offenders on the part of those officers, to effect the discovery of the captives."<sup>1</sup>

While further investigations were being made and the case was pending with the magistrate, it was rumoured that attempts were being made by the "enemies of the poor Christians" to remove their houses and give the sites to Hindu rayats.<sup>2</sup> The magistrate was in consequence applied to for an order to maintain the native Christians in possession of their homesteads, while the principal proceedings were still pending. Two orders to that end, upon the Muharrir of thana Gournadi and the Daroga of Barisal respectively, having failed to produce any effect,

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1. C.C.O., September 1856, Vol. XXV., p.402.

2. Ibid., p. 405.

5. Ibid., p. 407.



the magistrate himself went to Baropakhya on 19 October. After a thorough investigation he concluded that a great and grievous wrong had been perpetrated upon innocent persons, who ought at once to be allowed, when now liberated, to return and reoccupy their houses and fields. Judging it, however, unnecessary to bring a case "so simple and so clear" under Act. IV. of 1840<sup>1</sup> he ordered the Daroga to reestablish the Christians in their former dwelling places.<sup>2</sup> But when the magistrate was away, the Daroga evaded carrying out the orders on the plea that the Hindus who had occupied the sites would kill themselves, etc., rather than quit.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile an appeal having been made to the Judge, J.B. Kemp, he overruled the magistrate's orders. On this action under Act IV. 1840 was ordered by the magistrate to be commenced.<sup>4</sup>

In the principal proceedings of the case, the magistrate set aside the countercharge of the defendants that the Christians had voluntarily deserted their homes etc., as utterly unworthy of credence and considered "that the charge of aggravated assault, plunder and forcible and illegal confinement of the Christians of Baropakhya was sufficiently proved against the defendants, to justify their conviction and punishment."<sup>5</sup>

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1. For relief in case of forcible dispossession.

2. C.C.O., September, 1856, Vol.XXV., p. 406.

3. Ibid., p. 415.

4. Ibid., p. 397.

5. Ibid., p. 407.



Accordingly on 28 November 1855 he sentenced the defendants, five in number, each to imprisonment for a period of six months with labour, labour commutable to a fine of fifty rupees to be paid up within seven days.<sup>1</sup>

The defendants appealed against the magistrate's sentence. On 6 January 1856 the Sessions Judge, J.B. Kemp, reversed the magistrate's conviction on the ground that there were "gross and material discrepancies in the evidence", and acquitted and released the defendants.<sup>2</sup> After a few days the magistrate also dismissed the complaints made under Act IV. 1840, "instituted by his direction, and on which he had previously passed orders favourable to the Christians' claims."<sup>3</sup>

Obviously the outcome of the case did not satisfy the missionaries. They were convinced that a foul wrong had been perpetrated upon the poor and helpless Christians of Baropakhya and that the wrong-doers had been "allowed to triumph through the partial, one-sided and unjust decision of a professedly Christian Judge."<sup>4</sup> The Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, London, (E.B. Underhill) who was at that time in Bengal, prepared a pamphlet entitled The Case of the Baropakhya Christians Zilla Backergunge, in which he analysed the evidence on record,

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p. 408.

3. Ibid., p. 415.

4. Ibid., p. 397.



demonstrating how and where the Judge had erred in his judgement.<sup>1</sup> On 28 July 1856 Underhill submitted this pamphlet to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal (F. J. Halliday) with the observation that unless the Government of Bengal would in some way interfere, "there would seem to be no other alternative [*sic*] but to submit to the injustice which has been done."<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime another copy of the pamphlet having been submitted to the Government of India, the latter asked the Government of Bengal, on 22 August, to take into consideration the matter brought forward in the pamphlet, and to take such action as it thought necessary.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly the Lieutenant Governor referred the matter to the Sadr Court requesting that a Bench of three Judges of the Court, after examining the "record of the case as it was tried by the Judge of Backergunge", would favour the Government with their opinion on the essential question, "whether on the evidence adduced, the Sessions Judge

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1. The real author of the pamphlet seems to be J.C. Page, the Baptist missionary in Barisal, who was acquainted with the details of the case and who conducted the case of the Christians in the courts. There is a manuscript volume, entitled Page's remarks on the Judge's decision in the Baropakhya Case, signed by Page, in the B.M.S. Archives (Box India, Barisal, etc., 1847), with which the pamphlet in question coincides in all material points, though the latter is more detailed and illustrative,

2. Beng. Judl. Cons. 25 September 1856, No.118.

3. Ibid., No. 120.



was right or wrong in acquitting the prisoners."<sup>1</sup> The same day the Government of India was informed of the reference thus made to the Sadr Court.<sup>2</sup>

On 31 October the Sadr Court informed the Lieutenant Governor that the three Judges, Raikes, Colvin and Patton, "after considering the evidence and the whole circumstances of the case", were of opinion "that the orders of the magistrate should have been confirmed; and that the Sessions Judge was wrong in acquitting the prisoners."<sup>3</sup> Acting upon this verdict the Government of Bengal communicated to J. B. Kemp on 10 November that after the condemnation which the Sadr Court had now passed upon his judgement "in a matter of so much public interest and importance; it would not be conducive to the interest of the Government that he should remain in his present position at Barisal and that therefore he would be "removed" to another district."<sup>4</sup>

After this a lengthened correspondance ensued between J. B. Kemp and the Government of Bengal on the one hand, and the latter and the Government of India on the other.<sup>5</sup> The

1. Ibid., No. 121.

2. Ibid., No. 122.

3. Ibid., 16 July 1857, No. 89.

4. Ibid., No. 90.

5. Ibid., Nos. 91-104.

2. Ibid., No. 98; and No. 112 of 17 September 1857.



Lieutenant Governor was "anxious" to secure an impartial judge, to whom every party could look with equal confidence, for a district like Barisal, where "quarrels between the Christians and the Hindus" had been continuing<sup>for</sup> a long time and were "not likely to cease" within a short time.<sup>1</sup> The Government of India, however, reversed his decision to transfer Kemp to another district on the ground that Kemp's fault consisted simply of an error of judgement and that to punish him on that account would be to court and confirm the imputation of partiality which was neither implied in the Sadr Court's reply nor otherwise proved, and that such a procedure would seriously impair the independence of the judiciary.<sup>2</sup>

Thus came to an end the Government proceedings on this case. The Government of India were right in not allowing Kemp to be transferred to another district, but the wrongs done to the Christians of Baropakhya remained unremedied. It is not known why the missionaries submitted the case to the Government instead of appealing to the Sadr Court against the Judge's decision. Judging from the tone of Underhill's pamphlet and the letter with which it was forwarded to the Government, it may be assumed that the missionaries desired rather to draw the Government's attention to the state of

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1. Ibid., No. 96.

2. Ibid., No. 98; and No. 112 of 17 September 1857.



affairs in general than to secure justice in this particular case. representative of the kind of oppression to which converts

in the Shortly following the attack on the Baropakhya Christians, an assault was made upon the house of Kalachand, a preacher at Dhamshar, a neighbouring village, in which two persons who came to his defence were wounded. Although the magistrate committed the assailants to the Sessions, the Judge acquitted them.<sup>1</sup>

The effects of these cases were very injurious to the interests of the mission in that district. The Christian converts "felt themselves deprived of all security for goods and persons. Many of them for months could not otherwise than stealthily attend a distant chapel, for the certainty of being waylaid. Some of the female schools were closed, for people did not know what might not happen next. And in all the stations, considerable anxiety and alarm prevailed."<sup>2</sup>

Disputes between the Christians and the landlords continued in that part of Barisal throughout the years 1856-58.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Page's remarks on the Dhamshar Case, B.M.S. Archives, Box: India, Barisal, etc., 1847.

2. B.M.S. Report, 1857.

3. See the Missionary Herald for January, July and December 1859. In 1859 the Christians of Barisal appear to have been driven to desperation. In April of that year when Madan Mohan Pushali, a Christian preacher, was seized and kept confined by the orders of two Talukdars of Goila ( Bhairab Chandra Gupta and Golak Chandra Gupta ), the Christians, in retaliation, attacked and plundered the houses of the two Talukdars and recovered the preacher. See Srinath Sarkar's History, pp.17-18; John Sarkar's History, pp. 19-20; also the Missionary Herald, December 1859.



On the whole the cases of violence noted above may be regarded as representative of the kind of oppression to which converts in the mufassal were, in general, exposed. These also show that the spread of Christianity in the mufassal excited the jealousy and hostility of the landlords who were the real authors of such oppression upon the converts.<sup>1</sup>

VIII. The zamindars, the indigo planters and the missionaries

IX. Measures to protect the converts

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1. See the following chapter for an explanation of the hostile attitude of the landlords.



The zamindars, the indigo planters and the missionaries.

### Part III.

The reaction of the landed aristocracy  
in particular

large estates either through direct purchase or through leases

VIII. The zamindars, the indigo planters and  
the missionaries

IX. Measures to protect the converts  
sections of the landed aristocracy

The spread of Christianity among the zamindars was  
with the zamindar's interests in a number of ways. The  
zamindar had a personal interest in the growth of the  
"greatest man in his little world" and the respect and obedience of his vassals. When the zamindars  
embraced Christianity they did no longer regard the converts as

1. The word "Zamindar" is used in this chapter to signify both the Zamindar and the Talukdar.
2. On failure of a zamindar to pay the revenue at the appointed date the Government put up the estate for sale to the highest bidder.
3. The causes of the zamindar's hostile attitude to missionary labours were discussed from time to time in the missionary journals. (See for instance C.M.S., April 1838, Vol. VII., pp. 211-214; June 1844, Vol. XIII., pp. 372-373; The Missionary Herald, London, January 1845, pp. 4-5.) J.C. Page, a Baptist missionary working in Barisal, submitted a paper on this subject, which was in effect a summary of all these discussions, before the General Conference of Bengal Protestant Missionaries, held in Calcutta, September 4-7, 1855.



respect which they used CHAPTER VIII. ally the Christian teacher

The zamindars, the indigo planters and the missionaries. received "attention and reverence" and gained "an ascendancy in the minds of many of his hearers"; and eventually was looked

The landowning class in Bengal was, during this period, divided roughly into two sections — the native zamindars<sup>1</sup> and the European indigo planters, many of whom had procured large estates either through Government sales<sup>2</sup> or through leases from the native zamindars. The evangelising efforts of the missionaries came in conflict with the interests of both these sections of the landed interest.

The spread of Christianity among the rayats interfered with the zamindar's interests in a number of ways.<sup>3</sup> First, the zamindar had a personal interest in his rayats. He was the "greatest man in his little world" commanding the absolute respect and obedience of his rayats. When a few of his rayats embraced Christianity they did no longer render him that abject

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respect which they used to do. Gradually the Christian teacher received "attention and reverence" and gained "an ascendancy in the minds of many of his hearers"; and eventually was looked upon as little, if at all, inferior to the proprietor of the estate. The zamindar's vanity was thereby wounded in no small degree.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, the zamindar had also a religious interest in his tenantry. Himself a Hindu,<sup>2</sup> it was no little comfort to him to know that the thousands that looked upto him were also of the same faith. His own religion was honoured by their adhesion to it.<sup>3</sup> Frequently he acted as the champion of his religion, organising the principal pujas in his locality, patronising Brahmans and Pandits, and furthering the cause of Hinduism in various other ways.<sup>4</sup> Naturally he regarded any attempt to dislodge Hinduism as an affront to his religious feelings as also a step towards the weakening of his influence over his coreligionists.<sup>5</sup>

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1. J.C. Page, "The Zemindary System and Christianity", Proceedings of the General Conference of Bengal Protestant Missionaries, September 4-7, 1855. Calcutta 1855, p. 108.

2. The zamindars of Bengal were almost exclusively Hindus.

3. In many districts of Bengal the majority of a zamindar's tenants were Muslims; but in those districts missionary activities were in the minimum.

4. See for instance the role of the Kishnagar Rajas in this respect - Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Vanga Samaj, (by Sivanath Sastri) Calcutta 1909, Chapter I.

5. J.C. Page, op.cit., p. 105.



Thirdly, the zamindar used to levy, besides the usual rent, a number of extra taxes from his rayats on the occasion of a puja, a Sradhdha, a marriage and a host of other socio-religious ceremonies.<sup>1</sup> The native converts resisted these demands as being not only illegal but also irreligious from their point of view. Besides this, the zamindar or his agent often acted as a judge of his people, punishing crimes, imposing fines and composing disputes, "and just in proportion to the crime" were the payments made to him. He was therefore often interested in the concealment of crime from the notice of the authorities. The Christian converts, under the guidance of the missionary, demanded fair dealings and often made such practices of the zamindar difficult. Moreover, the introduction of Christianity meant, in some way, the introduction of education among the people, the missionaries taking special care to instruct their converts regarding their rights and responsibilities. It was not too often that the converts stood up to assert their "rights" as against the zamindar, and resisted the unjust claims of the latter by fighting him with his own legal weapons. And as a few examples of a successful resistance

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1. These practices were sought to be checked by Act X. Section X. of 1859 which made it illegal for the zamindar to exact any sum "in excess of the rent specified" in the patta. In practice this provision was of little avail to the tenant who was either ignorant of the state of the law or too weak to assert his right against the zamindar.



might prove infectious among his other rayats, the Christian converts became the objects of his relentless hostility.<sup>1</sup>

Further, the zamindari and the indigo planting systems so impoverished the rayats that they were unable to send their children to a charity school; for as soon as a boy was five or six years old, he was sent into the field to tend cattle, either in the service of others, or to save the expenses of a servant to his parents. Moreover, the "systematic" oppression and hardships upon the rayats made them "slaves to the most dire fatalism", and indifferent to a future world. The "severity and brutality" of many European planters embittered the rayats' minds against all Europeans and their religion. The rayats did not wish to "go to that heaven in which such and such a planetr would be."<sup>2</sup>

The missionaries thus became interested in the operation of the zamindari and the indigo planting systems, especially their effects upon the rayats. The condition of the rayats drew the especial attention of the missionaries in 1838 when a severe famine devastated north and west Bengal resulting in a huge loss of life and bringing misery upon a large section of <sup>the</sup> agricultural

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1. Page, op.cit., pp. 108-110.

2. Schurr, Rev. F., "On the influence of the system of Indigo planting on the spread of Christianity"-Proceedings of a General Conference of Bengal Protestant Missionaries, held at Calcutta, September 4-7, 1855. Calcutta 1855, pp. 84-93.



population.<sup>1</sup> Shortly following the famine a large-scale movement for conversion to Christianity took place at Krishnagar which aroused the jealousy and hostility of some zamindars of that place.<sup>2</sup> The immediate occasion, however, for voicing the sentiments of the missionaries and their friends regarding the condition of the people under the zamindari system was the formation, in March 1838, of the Landholders' Society, consisting of native zamindars and European landholders residing in Calcutta.<sup>3</sup> The object of this society was generally to advance the interests of the landholders, but especially to "defend" themselves "by legal means against the Resumption measures",<sup>4</sup>

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1. For some account of the relief work done by the missionaries during this time see the proceedings of the periodical meetings of the Church Missionaries of Bengal held in 1838-1839 — C.M.S. Archives, North India Mission, No. 11.
  2. See supra, pp. 240-244.
  3. A Zamindari Association consisting of native zamindars alone was formed towards the end of 1837. This was transformed, largely through the efforts of Dwarkanath Tagore and Prasanna-kumar Tagore, into the Landholders' Society by the inclusion of European members.
  4. About one-third of the total land in Bengal was at that time held rent-free. The benefits of these rent-free tenures were derived chiefly by the zamindars who, while exempt from the payment of revenue, either took rents on those lands from the rayats, or were themselves the trustees or managers of the institutions for whose maintenance those lands were nominally held. A large portion of the rent-free tenures were also fraudulently created during the days of confusion following the grant of the Diwani to the Company (1765). Ever since the declaration of the Permanent Settlement Government expressed its intention, from time to time, to resume those rent-free lands which were held under untenable grants. The work of resumption was undertaken earnestly, however, since 1828.



then in progress, and any "further attacks of the same nature, or any encroachment upon the principles of the Permanent Settlement."<sup>1</sup>

Commenting upon the formation of the Landholders' Society the Friend of India not only discussed the question of Resumption but also spoke a good deal about the condition of the rayat. It observed that the rayats had more reason to complain of their landholders, than the landholders to complain of Government; and now that they (landholders) were associated to obtain redress of their grievances from the Government, it was to be expected that they would apply themselves diligently to the removal of those grievances under which their tenants were labouring. The Friend further wished that the Society had adopted a more comprehensive designation which might have served "as a pledge that the interests of the tenants would not be overlooked."<sup>2</sup> The Calcutta Christian Observer, on the other hand, observed more pointedly that the formation of the Landholders' Society "would bind the Zamindars together the more effectually to oppress the already too much oppressed raiyats, the poor creatures whose wrongs already cry aloud

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1. "Prospectus of the Landholders' Society", - Friend of India, 15 March 1838, Vol.IV., p. 105. See also "Proceedings of the meeting for the formation of the Landholders' Society", especially Dwarkanath Tagore's speech, in Englishman, 21 March 1838, Vol.VII., pp.548-549.

2. Friend of India, 29 March 1838, Vol.IV., pp.129-130.

3. Ibid.



for redress."<sup>1</sup> At the same time a correspondent of the Observer, along with another of the Christian Intelligencer, began to "unmask the enormous evil of the zamindary system" as it was then in operation.<sup>2</sup> The Observer's correspondent illustrated the zamindar's misuse of powers and the impracticability of any remedy in the law courts, because of the bribery and corruption prevalent in them, by citing the case of a poor rayat with whom he was "personally acquainted". The rayat's rent was "wrongfully" doubled, and on his resistance, he was forcibly deprived of his land. He sought justice in the court, "but being too poor to be able to bribe the Umlahs, and other harpies of the court", his case was tossed about from court to court for the last 12 years" and was not yet decided. The zamindar had wreaked his vengeance not only upon him, but upon all his relatives by depriving them of their lands on some pretext or other. The writer further observed that this was not a "singular instance", but that he knew "thousands of similar cases". Therefore he called upon his missionary friends to agitate the subject in order to rouse public opinion in favour of the rayat.<sup>3</sup>

These discussions, especially the remarks of the Friend of India, called forth sharp replies from the landholders, through the columns of their organs, the Reformer and the

1. C.C.O., April 1838, Vol. VII., pp. 232-233.  
 2. Ibid., pp. 211-214. The Christian Intelligencer for this year this year is not available. The article in question is referred to by the Observer's writer.  
 3. Ibid.



Englishman.<sup>1</sup> The greater part of their discussions, however, turned upon the question of Resumption, with a few remarks upon the Friend's comments respecting the nature of the landed aristocracy of Bengal.<sup>2</sup> Nothing was said in contradiction to the statements regarding the rayat's condition, nor was any promise held out that his interests would not be overlooked by the Landholders' Society. were also owners of land in Bengal.

The controversy over the question of resumption continued for a few months.<sup>3</sup> In the meantime another famine ravaged the Deccan in 1839. These successive Indian famines roused the philanthropic spirits of some Englishmen, like George Thompson of and William Adam<sup>4</sup> who were quickly joined by such advocates of English Free Trade as John Crawford and Lord Brougham.<sup>5</sup> The result was the formation, in July 1839, of the British

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1. The editors of these two journals were, respectively, Prasanna-kumar Tagore and W.C. Harry. Both of them were the joint secretaries of the Landholders' Society. See Beng. Pub. Cons. 11 April 1838, No. 25.

2. See for instance Englishman, 19, 21, 22 and 30 March, 1838.

3. See Friend of India, 1, 8, 15, 29 Nov.; 6 and 13 Dec. 1838; and 7 March and 9 May 1839.

4. Thompson was famous for his anti-slavery agitation. Adam was for sometime the associate of Rammohan Roy in organising a unitarian church in Bengal and later on became famous for his reports on the indigenous education of Bengal.

5. Brougham was for many years the leader of the opposition in the House of Lords and was a prominent member of the Anti-Corn Law League. See Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. VI., 1886, pp. 448-457. See below (text) for Crawford.

2. See Crawford's evidence, Parl. Pap. 1830, Vol. V. p. 285; Vol. VI, p. 342.



India Society, with its headquarters in London. The avowed object of the Society was to rouse the best feelings of the British people in favour of the natives of India by diffusing correct information regarding their actual condition.<sup>1</sup> From the very start, however, it became the organ for ventilating the grievances of the mercantile community of England as well as of Calcutta, many of whom were also owners of land in Bengal. In fact Crawford, one of the sponsors of the society, was himself the paid parliamentary agent of the Calcutta merchants.<sup>2</sup> This combination of philanthropic enthusiasm with Free Traders and landed interests led, on the one hand, to much exaggeration of the grievances of India, and on the other, to a curious blending of the Indian land revenue question with the question of English cotton trade and Indian famines. It is interesting to note how this was brought about. Ever since the declaration of the Permanent Settlement the zamindars of Bengal were in the habit of complaining, not with much justification, that the assessment

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1. "Prospectus of the British India Society" appended to British India, Addresses before the members of the society of Friends, on 1st June 1839, London 1839. The Provisional Committee of the British India Society consisted of the following persons: William Adam (late of Calcutta), William Adam (Junior, of Leeds), Jonathan Backhouse, W. Thomas Blair, John Bowring, Major General Briggs (Treasurer), Lord Brougham, F.C. Brown (Hony. Secretary), Thomas Christy (Junior), Thomas Clarkson, John Crawford, Sir Charles Forbes, Vesey Leslie Foster, Thomas Frankland, Joseph Alfred Hardcastle, J. Haiford, W. Howitt, J. Hull, J. Pease, Sir C. Smith, George Thompson (Travelling Secretary) and E. Baldwin (Assistant Secretary).
  2. See Crawford's evidence, Parl. Pap. 1830, Vol. V. p. 285; Vol. VI, p. 342



on land was heavy. This complaint was revived with much force during the anti-resumption agitation of the thirties in order to demonstrate the hardships and unjustifiability of the resumption proceedings.<sup>1</sup> The British mercantile community took up this theme and asserted that the heavy assessment on land was retarding cotton cultivation in India.<sup>2</sup> Crawford even invoked Dwarkanath's statements in order to illustrate how the Indian Government was extracting "eighteen shillings in the pound".<sup>3</sup> George Thompson brought his anti-slavery zeal to bear upon this theme and denounced the Indian Government for its harsh land revenue policy which, he claimed, was destroying India's resources and causing famine and depopulation.<sup>4</sup> This process of development within the British India Society was disconcerting to the missionaries in Bengal who, while approving of its philanthropic intentions, were apprehensive that its noble object was likely to be frustrated by its exaggeration and want of accurate information.<sup>5</sup> Addressing the

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1. See Dwarkanath's speech at the meeting for the formation of the Landholders' Society, Englishman, 21 March 1838; also Petition of the British Indian Association, submitted to Parliament in 1852, Parl. Pap. H/C., 1852-53, Vol. 27, Paper 426, p. 494.

2. See Stokes, E., The English Utilitarians and India, Oxford 1959, pp. 129-131.

3. British India, Addresses. etc., op.cit., pp. 51-52.

4. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

5. C.C.A., 7 September 1839, Vol. I., p. 157.



Thompson the Calcutta Christian Advocate wrote that the real slaves of India were the rayats whose position was comparable to the "serf system of ancient Britain" and that the emancipation of those slaves depended upon the "enlightenment and elevation of the Barons or Zemindars".<sup>1</sup> The Friend of India had already called upon the projectors of the Society to direct their attention to the oppression practised by the zamindars and the social and moral condition of the natives, instead of holding the Government responsible for every evil of India.<sup>2</sup> It now assailed Thompson's theory of Indian famines, reiterated by Brougham and O'Connell,<sup>3</sup> and stated that the taxation itself was not heavy — a population of 90 millions paying 180 millions of rupees — but that it was unequally divided. Large bodies of men, argued the Friend, who had "surreptitiously obtained possession of land, called free," bore no part of the public burdens, and the weight of taxation, therefore, fell upon the peasantry. The latter were not only taxed heavily, beyond the established rent of lands, by their landlords, but were also obliged, because of the system of sub-letting, to support three

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1. Ibid.

2. Friend of India, 5 September 1839, Vol. V., pp. 562-563.

3. See their speeches in Speeches delivered at a public meeting for the formation of a British India Society held in Freeman's Hall, Saturday, July 6th, 1839. London 1839, pp. 2-20 and 23-34 respectively.

1. Ibid.



or four middlemen, one above the other, whose accumulated population of India. In the same strain the Friend of India weight pressed them "to the ground". Hence they were left stated that the society represented but one local interest, without any reserve fund to meet such contingencies as droughts and that too, the interest of the strong, not the weak. It or failure of crops due to other circumstances, and consequently further observed that the combination of the resentments of fell an easy prey to famines or money-lenders who, by their native landholders with the disposition of the London society extortionate rates of interest, drained "them of their very to disseminate every charge against the Indian Government would life blood."<sup>1</sup> The Friend of India further observed that it increase the chance of misrepresentations and exaggerations, was not overtaxation on land, but the transmission of 3 million while the real grievances of the rayat would remain unheard. sterling annually to England, out of the revenue raised in India, and in order to indemnify the East India proprietors — an the Landholders' Society in its annual meeting held on 7 December arrangement to which Brougham himself was a party — that was 1839. Almost all the speakers at the meeting defended the draining India of her wealth.<sup>2</sup>

It is not known what reaction these remarks of the position of the British India Society and the Landholders' Society — the former against the charge of exaggeration and Calcutta Christian Advocate and the Friend of India produced hostility to Indian Government, the latter against the charge upon the British India advocates in England. In Bengal, however, of overlooking the rayat's interests and representing only one the Landholders' Society were not unnerved and proposed to enter local interest.<sup>4</sup> The lines of argument adopted by the speakers, into more direct cooperation with the London society in order however, rather betrayed the weakness with which the two to publicise in England the grievances of India. This elicited societies were charged. Thus while the charge of hostility further comments from the Advocate which held that the

Landholders' Society was not the proper body to represent the grievances of India because it was not formed for the protection of the interests of the rayats who were the bulk of the

1. Friend of India, 17 October 1839, Vol.V., pp.568-569.

2. Ibid. December.

4. See especially the speeches of Dwarkanath Tagore, Raja Kalikrishna Bahadur, James Hume and T.Dickens. Ibid.



population of India.<sup>1</sup> In the same strain the Friend of India stated that the society represented but one local interest, and that too, the interest of the strong, not the weak. It further observed that the combination of the resentments of native landholders with the disposition of the London society to disseminate every charge against the Indian Government would increase the chance of misrepresentations and exaggerations, while the real grievances of the rayat would remain unheard.<sup>2</sup>

These observations came under the severe criticisms of the Landholders' Society in its annual meeting held on 7 December 1839.<sup>3</sup> Almost all the speakers at the meeting defended the position of the British India Society and the Landholders' Society — the former against the charge of exaggeration and hostility to Indian Government, the latter against the charge of overlooking the rayat's interests and representing only one local interest.<sup>4</sup> The lines of argument adopted by the speakers, however, rather betrayed the weakness with which the two societies were charged. Thus while the charge of hostility

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1. C.C.A., 12 October 1839, Vol.I., pp. 197-198.

2. Friend of India, 5 December 1839, Vol.V., p.969.

3. Full proceedings of this meeting were published by the Englishman of 14 December in a supplementary sheet entitled "The Great Meeting of the Landholders' Association". The Hurkaru also published the same in two parts, on 14 and 16 December 1839. In the India Office Library, however, the Englishman's sheet is erroneously bound up with the Hurkaru of 7 December.

4. See especially the speeches of Dwarkanath Tagore, Raja Kalikrishna Bahadur, James Hume and T. Dickens. Ibid.



to Indian Government was disavowed on behalf of the British India Society, a futile attempt was made to justify Brougham's and Crawford's statements by showing that the British Indian Government was guilty of bad faith, because of its Resumption proceedings, and of bad revenue policy, because of its not having extended the permanent settlement in other provinces. On the other hand the unrepresentative character of the Landholders' Society was sought to be disproved by stating that, besides the question of resumption, the society had addressed government on such other subjects of public interest as the equalisation of the duty on Indian tobacco with that of the produce of other countries, the introduction of the vernacular into law courts, and the provision of maintenance for "the lower classes" of rayats when called to a distance as witnesses in criminal cases. It is not difficult to see that these subjects, like that of resumption, were rather calculated to serve the interests of either the litigant landlords or the landlord-merchants. But then something more definite had to be said about the rayat's condition; and the theory, which was forged was a double-edged one: (i) if the rayat was oppressed, let the Government enact protecting laws, the power for which was expressly reserved to them by the resolution which declared the permanent settlement in 1793; but actually (ii) the

1. See Dwarkanath's and Leith's speech.

2. Proceedings of the "Great Meeting of the Landholders' Association", op.cit.

3. Friend of India, 12 and 19 December 1839.



sufferings of the people were due to a corrupt and inefficient judicial system, and whereas the zamindars could "purchase out justice", the poor rayat could not; it was therefore "to his door" that Government should bring justice by reforming the police and the law courts.<sup>1</sup> The whole responsibility of protecting the rayat's interests was thus thrown upon the Government. Thus consolidating their position, the Landholders' Society resolved to correspond with the British India Society for (i) the prevention of the resumption of rent-free lands, (ii) the extension of the permanent settlement to all British India, (iii) the granting of waste lands to occupants on equitable terms and (iv) the reform of the judicial and police system<sup>2</sup> — all but the last exclusively connected with the landholders' interests.

The proceedings of this "great meeting" of the Landholders' Society came under the critical observation of the Friend of India.<sup>3</sup> Its criticisms were especially directed against the theory of Government enactment for the protection of the rayat. There was indeed need for legislation on the subject, "but", observed the Friend of India, "for one grievance which Government can remove by law, there are ten which they [the zamindars], able share of the proprietary right of the Bengal Hurkaru. ( See

1. See Dwarkanath's and Leith's speech.

2. Proceedings of the "Great Meeting of the Landholders' Association", op.cit.

3. Friend of India, 12 and 19 December 1839.



and they alone, can heal in practice. There are a thousand cases of oppression, under which this land groans, arising out of the connection between tenant and landlord, which cannot be reached by any ingenuity of legislation, but which may be at once redressed by their efforts."<sup>1</sup>

These comments induced "A Member of the Landholders' Society", and another partisan who assumed the pseudonym of "Not a Lakhirajdar"<sup>2</sup> to come out through the columns of the Bengal Hurkaru, backed by its editorial comments,<sup>3</sup> to further elucidate the view-points of the Landholders' Society.<sup>4</sup> The editor of the Hurkaru and its correspondents only rehearsed the arguments already adduced in the last meeting of the Landholders' Society, "A Member of the Landholders' Society" adding that as the welfare of the rayat depended upon the measures of Government, it was necessary, in order that Government might be influenced to adopt such measures, to recognise the Society as the "proper channel of communication" between the Government and the agricultural population, and to

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1. Ibid., 19 December 1839, Vol.V., p. 801.

2. Meaning, one who did not hold a rent-free tenure.

3. About this time Dwarkanath Tagore had purchased a considerable share of the proprietary right of the Bengal Hurkaru. ( See Mitra, K., Memoirs of Dwarkanath Tagore, Calcutta 1870, p. 40) The other two proprietors, Colonel Young and Samuel Smith, were also influential members of the Landholders' Society.

4. See Hurkaru, 20, 23, December 1839; 21, 22 January, 12 and 13 February, 1840.

4. Infra., 309-312.

5. Infra., 313-316.



allow it to acquire that "commanding position" which alone could give "weight" to its actions.<sup>1</sup> The Friend of India's argument that the landholders were capable of removing much of the grievances of the rayat independently of Government legislation thus remained unanswered.

Shortly after this the Landholders' Society lost much of its enthusiasm, and with the exception of sending representations to Government on a few occasions like the Sale Law of 1841<sup>2</sup> it remained practically inactive throughout the period from 1840 to 1842.<sup>3</sup> The condition of the rayat, however, continued to occupy the attention of the missionaries. Already in 1839 they had formed a society for protecting Christian converts against the oppressions of zamindars;<sup>4</sup> and in 1841 the Rev. M. Hill of the London Missionary Society even presented a plan for forming a Christian Landholders' Society for holding estates on philanthropic principles.<sup>5</sup>

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1. The British Friend of India Magazine and Indian Review, Vol. II., p. 239. See also Friend of India, 6 January 1842. It may be noted here that this

1. Harkaru, 12 and 13 February, 1840. See counter-comments on these claims of the Society in Friend of India, 26 Dec. 1839, 2, 9, 30 January, 6 and 20 Feb. 1840.
2. Act XII. of 1841 for sale of estates for arrears of revenue. It dealt only with the procedure of sale and did not touch the condition of the rayat.
3. That the Society remained inactive during that period was admitted by its members when they met, after its "revival", on 3 April 1843. ( See Hurkaru, 5 April 1843) The reason for this inactivity is not known; but as the period coincided roughly with the troublous wars in Afghanistan it may be supposed that the members did not probably want to embarrass the Government at that critical period with the question of resumption and allied subjects.
4. Infra., 309-312.
5. Infra., 313-316.



Early in 1842 Dwarkanath Tagore sailed for England with a view to bringing the "momentous subject" of resumption under the notice of the Government and the people of that country, and "to endeavour in reference to this and other topics, to advance the interests of his countrymen."<sup>1</sup> During his stay in Great Britain Dwarkanath held frequent conversations with Brougham and Thompson,<sup>2</sup> and at the end brought the latter with him when he returned to Bengal in December, 1842.

With the return of Dwarkanath the Landholders' Society suddenly burst into activities and was joined by another society called the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, which had been in existence since 1838 but of which very little was hitherto known.<sup>3</sup> These two societies organised a series of public meetings in which Thompson delivered a course of

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1. The British Friend of India Magazine and Indian Review, (London), October 1842, Vol. II., p. 239. See also Friend of India, 6 January 1842. It may be noted here that this specific purpose of Dwarkanath's visit to England has been hitherto overlooked by writers who attribute it to his enlightenment and general desire to advocate the cause of India.
  2. Mitra, K., Memoirs of Dwarkanath Tagore, Calcutta 1870, p. 87. See also pp. 88-105 for the reception and honours accorded to Dwarkanath in Great Britain.
  3. The Hurkaru of 16 January 1843, while noticing a meeting of this society, attributed its previous obscurity to the aversion of its members to publicity. Between 1840 and 1843, however, the society had published three volumes of Selections from discourses delivered at the meetings of the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge. The most prominent of the members of this society were Pearychand Mitra, Kisorichand Mitra, Dakshinaranjan Mukherji and K.M. Banerji. See for Selections etc., India Office Library Tracts, Vols. 139 and 146.



lectures exhorting his listeners to patriotic exertion for their own benefit.<sup>1</sup> At this time the Calcutta Christian Advocate urged Thompson to avoid identifying himself with any party, and to, "see and hear for himself, and not through the medium of others, the actual condition of the people."<sup>2</sup> Repeating the same appeal to Thompson the Advocate observed, that the "greatest oppressors" of the country were "the Zemindars, wealthy natives and native officials", and if Thompson would listen "to the tales of misery from the lips of the poor", he would find that they were "far deeper evils, and more truly needing correction than all the oppressions (!) of the young men of the Hindu College, and the well-fed baboos of Calcutta."<sup>3</sup>

In spite of these suggestions, however, Thompson confined his activities among the wealthy inhabitants of Calcutta. Indeed, so greatly did he identify himself with the landholders that he was found drafting their representations to Government on the subjects of the Sale Law, Registration of deeds and

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1. See for the proceedings of these meetings Hurkaru, 8, 9, 13, 15, 22 February; 15 and 22 March and 10 April 1843. Thompson's speeches were subsequently published in a separate volume under caption Addresses delivered at meetings of the Native community of Calcutta and on other occasions, Calcutta, 1843. Another edition of it was made by Raj Jogeshur Mitter in 1895 under caption Speeches of Mr. George Thompson, Father of political education in India.
  2. C.C.A., 14 January 1843, Vol.IV., p. 293.
  3. Ibid., 18 February 1843, Vol.IV., p. 329.



Resumption.<sup>1</sup> The condition of the rayat, though once raised for discussion,<sup>2</sup> was never discussed in this series of meetings. On the other hand, it was in one of these meetings held in the Hindu College on 8 February 1843 that Dakshinaranjan Mukherji read an essay on "The present state of the East India Company's criminal judicature, and police, under the Bengal Presidency", in which he repeated and elaborated the theory, adopted in the "great meeting" of the landholders in December 1839, that reform in the law courts and the police would remove all the sufferings of the people and that the Company's administration was, on the whole, responsible for the evils of India.<sup>3</sup> The same theme, as well as the Resumption, formed the staple of his speech at another meeting held on 13 February in the Sanskrit College Hall.<sup>4</sup> So strong were the anti-Government expressions in Dakshinaranjan's essay that they called forth a note of protest from Captain D.L. Richardson, the principal of the Hindu College, who was present at that meeting, and were also the subject of animadversion by the Friend of India and the

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1. Proceedings of the meetings of the Landholders' Society, held on 28 March and 3 April 1843 - Harkaru, 30 March and 5 April 1843.
  2. The meeting held on 6 April proposed the "Relative situations of Ryut and Zemindar" to be discussed on a subsequent occasion — See Harkaru, 10 April 1843.
  3. Proceedings of the meeting together with the essay were published by Hurkaru of 13 February, 2 and 3 March 1843.
  4. Friend of India, 16 February 1843, Vol. IX., p. 98.



Calcutta Christian Advocate.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand Dakshinaranjan became the hero of the day with such advocates of the landholders as the Englishman, the Bengal Hurkaru<sup>2</sup> and the British Friend of India Magazine and Indian Review, published from London.<sup>3</sup>

The culmination of this series of meetings was the formation, on 20 April 1843, of the Bengal British India Society, modelled on the London Society and having the same object of diffusing information relating to the condition of the people of British India and the adoption of such measures as would advance their interests.<sup>4</sup> The new society was, however,

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1. Ibid.; also of 23 February and 16 March 1843; and C.C.A., 18 February 1843, Vol. IV., p. 329.
  2. Englishman and Hurkaru, 17 March 1843. It may be noted here that some modern writers have also extolled Dakshinaranjan as a great political and patriotic agitator, without making any attempt to ascertain the proper context and background of his essay and speech of 1843, or the precise reason of his choosing such a theme for discussion at that time. (See for instance Ghosha, Manmathanath, Raja Dakshinaranjan Mukherji, Bengali text, Calcutta 1918, pp. 68-72; Majumdar, B., History of political thought from Rammohun to Dayananda (1821-84), Vol. I., Calcutta 1934, pp. 117-118; Bagal, J.C., Jati Voira, Bengali text, Calcutta 1353 B.E., pp 62-63).
  3. The British Friend of India etc., May 1843, Vol. III., pp. 342 - 344. The remarks of this journal were especially saturated with a partisan spirit and were full of personal invectives directed against J.C. Marshman, the editor of the Friend of India, for his having criticised Dakshinaranjan's statements. Although the former journal professed to be connected with no party (see the editorial of its first number, February 1842), it supported, in fact, all that the Landholders' Society and the British India Society stood for. (See for instance its issues for May, August and October 1843.)
  4. "Proceedings of the meeting for the formation of the Bengal British India Society" - Hurkaru, 24 April 1843.



effectually an extension of the Landholders' Society. William Theobald, a prominent indigo planter and landholder, and at that time one of the prominent members of the Landholders' Society, became the president of the new society.<sup>1</sup> Dwarkanath became its chief patron and his garden house at Fauzdari Balakhana ( in Calcutta ) was fixed as its permanent meeting place. And although the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge was amalgamated with the new society, the members of the former were either relatives of the landholders of Calcutta<sup>2</sup> or were primarily concerned with their admission into the higher services of the Government — an object, which they thought, would be advanced by their alliance with the British India Society.<sup>3</sup>

The missionaries had, however, no delusions about the nature of the society. A few days after its formation the Calcutta Christian Advocate rightly pointed out that its members were chiefly concerned with their "non-appointment to official

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1. Ibid. Manmathanath Ghosha has erroneously stated that George Thompson was elected President of the Bengal British India Society. ( See Raja Dakshinaranjan Mukherji, Bengali text, Calcutta 1918, p.77.)
  2. The land-owning middle class and the educated middle class of that time were, in a large measure, the same group of people. See Misra, B.B., The Indian Middle Class, their rise in modern times, Oxford, 1961, Chapters III & IV.
  3. B.B.I.S. Proceedings, 4 April and 5 September 1844, - Hurkaru, 15 April and 11 September 1844.

5. Ibid.



situations, the sale of lands, registry<sup>1</sup> and the like", without turning their attention to the "millions of India" who suffered "not so much from the maladministration of the Company's Government, as from the grinding oppressions of the Zemindars".<sup>2</sup> It was to collect and disseminate correct information regarding the rayat's condition as well as to adopt other measures for bettering his condition that the missionaries called into being the Society for Ameliorating the Temporal condition of the Natives of India.<sup>3</sup> In view of this endeavour of the missionaries the committee of the Bengal British India Society prepared a questionnaire, consisting of 30 questions, relative to the condition of the rayat, and sent copies of it to "several gentlemen in some of the adjacent districts" for their replies and comments.<sup>4</sup> For about one year, however, no replies were received from those gentlemen; nor did the committee of the society, at the end of the first year of its existence, express any eagerness to proceed with the investigation.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Registration of deeds. An Act ( No. XIV.) was passed in 1843 which gave preference to registered deeds, when in conflict with unregistered deeds, in legal proceedings. pp.372-375;
  2. C.C.A., 29 April 1843, Vol.IV., p. 428.
  3. Infra., pp.317-320. June 1844.
  4. B.B.I.S. Annual Report and proceedings, 2 May 1844, - Hurkaru, 6 May 1844.
  5. Ibid.



in the In the meantime a case of oppression by a zamindar upon some Christian converts of Jessore was brought to light by the Rev. J. Parry,<sup>1</sup> who in his communications also dealt with the powers and influence of a zamindar and how these were often misused against the rayat.<sup>2</sup> The zamindari system thus became once again the subject of discussion in the periodical press. Two correspondents of the Hurkaru, signing themselves as "A.B.C." and "D.E.F." denounced in strong terms the "unblushing oppression of landlords" and called upon the Bengal British India Society to take up the subject for their consideration.<sup>3</sup> A correspondent of the Calcutta Christian Herald, signing himself as "J.L.", discussed the baneful effects of both the zamindari and indigo system upon the rayats and urged the zamindars and the planters to come forward for the amelioration of the condition of the rayats.<sup>4</sup> In view of these discussions, especially with reference to J.L.'s communication, the Bengal Hurkaru wished to see a "full, clear and detailed" account of the rayat's condition and requested those who were interested

1. See supra, pp. 244-47 for details of the case.
2. See for instance C.C.O., June 1844, Vol. XIII., pp. 372-375; C.C.A., 15 June 1844, Vol. VI., p. 248; Friend of India, 11 July 1844, Vol. X., pp. 438-439 and Hurkaru, 11 July, 1844.
3. Hurkaru, 11 and 18 June 1844.
4. C.C.H., 27 August 1844, Vol. I., pp. 52-53. The abbreviation suggests that the writer was the Rev. James Long, for there was no other missionary in Bengal at that time whose name could be represented by these two letters. It is unlikely that any layman or native was the writer of the letter.



in the subject to supply the information.<sup>1</sup>

These discussions appear to have exerted some influence upon the Bengal British India Society, for on 5 September 1844 it resolved to collect and publish informations, "obtainable from all available sources" on the condition of the agricultural class in lower Bengal, and appointed a committee for the purpose.<sup>2</sup>

From October 1844 to May 1845 the Bengal British India Society published, along with the proceedings of its every monthly meeting, replies to its questionnaire relative to the condition of the rayat.<sup>3</sup> These replies stated (a) that the zamindars were generally unsympathetic towards the rayats; (b) that they used to levy a number of extra taxes under various pretexts and that these extra demands exceeded the lawful rent; (c) that they used to have recourse to bribery, forgery, forcible detention of the person of the rayat, withholding the receipts for rents paid, institution of false

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1. Hurkaru, 29 August June 1844. ( Editorial)
  2. B.B.I.S. Proceedings, 5 September 1844 - Hurkaru, 11 September 1844. The Committee consisted of Chandrasekhar Deb, Hari-mohan Sen and M.Crow. It is difficult to imagine that the society would have undertaken the investigation even if there was no agitation over the subject in the periodical press; at least this does not appear from the proceedings of their annual meeting held in May, and their total silence over the matter for the following three months.
  3. See B.B.I.S. Proceedings for these months in Hurkaru, 12 October, 12 November, 9 December 1844; and 16 January, 6 Feb., 3 and 21 March, 16 April and 12 May 1845.



suits, and the unscrupulous use of the panjam and haftam regulations<sup>1</sup> in order to bring a recalcitrant rayat to his knees; and (d) that under the zamindari system the rayats in general were reduced to extreme poverty and degradation. These reports amounted to a confirmation of all that the missionaries had said on the subject. and that they might have been instrumental. The attention thus given by the Bengal British India Society to the rayat's condition was pleasing to the missionaries<sup>2</sup> and Dr. Duff came forward to cooperate with the society and became its member in May 1845.<sup>3</sup> The entry of Duff in the Society, together with the existence of some other members like K.M. Banerji and Pearychand Mitra who were noted for their liberal views, would have naturally led to a more vigorous pursuit of the subject of the rayat's condition. Strangely enough, this was not only not the case, but no further information on the subject was published by the Society, although a few more replies to its questionnaire were received after May 1845.<sup>4</sup> Nor did the

1. Regulations V. of 1812 and VII. of 1799 which, inter alia, gave the zamindar a summary power of distraint and eviction.

2. See for instance C.C.H., 17 September 1844, Vol. I., p. 75.

3. B.B.I.S. Proceedings, Annual Meeting, 6 May 1845, Hurkaru 12 May 1845.

4. See B.B.I.S. Proceedings, 27 January 1846, - Hurkaru, 31 January 1846. Subsequently, however, Pearychand Mitra wrote two articles, entitled respectively "The Zemindar and the Ryot" and "Indigo in Lower Bengal", based on the published and unpublished replies to the Society's questionnaire. See Calcutta Review, No. VI. (July-December 1846), pp. 305-353 and No. VII. (January-June 1847), pp. 186-219.



committee appointed for the purpose suggest any remedial measures, as they were required to do by the resolution of 5 September 1844. It is not unlikely that many members of the society, who were themselves zamindars, were chafing under the unfavourable information which the society's investigations were bringing to light, and that they might have been instrumental in bringing about this abrupt closure of the subject.

Shortly afterwards the Bengal British India Society showed signs of decline. It ceased to be punctual in meeting every month, and even the details of the proceedings of those meetings that were held were not published. In November 1845 Theobald, the president of the society, suddenly resigned from his post.<sup>1</sup> Nor did the society prosper under its new president, Ramgopal Ghosh; and after holding a couple of meetings in January and February, and an annual meeting in July 1846,<sup>2</sup> it receded

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1. B.B.I.S. Proceedings, special meeting, 9 December 1845, - Hurkaru, 11 December 1845. The actual circumstances leading to Theobald's resignation are not known. That they were not altogether happy is evident from Ramgopal Ghosh's speech in that meeting.

2. See proceedings of these meetings in Hurkaru, 27 January, 14 February and 11 July 1846.

2. Infra, pp. 323-324.

3. Infra, pp. 325-328.



completely into inaction and silence.<sup>1</sup> About this time, however, another large-scale movement for conversion took place in the district of Barisal and the necessity for protecting the converts against the opposition of their landlords led the missionaries to consider the practicability of purchasing estates in connection with missionary stations;<sup>2</sup> and a little later the Baptist Missionary Society called into existence a society for that purpose.<sup>3</sup> Hitherto the native and European landholders had been working in cooperation through the Bengal British India Society, although the European landholders, who were mostly indigo planters, had formed an Indigo Planters' Association early in

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1. This is easily accountable. Formed mainly for the purpose of resisting the resumption proceedings, the society lost its momentum when the battle over the question of resumption was practically over. Secondly, the departure of Dwarkanath Tagore for England towards the end of 1845 and his eventual death in that country deprived the society of its soul; and the resignation of Theobald who was steadfast in his duty since the inception of the society, broke its backbone. Thirdly, by 1846 most of the demands of the English Free Traders were met and they naturally ceased to supply that inspiration which had led the Bengali landholders to adopt a rather defiant attitude in 1843. Fourthly, some of the members of the society like Dakshinaranjan Mukherji and Kisorichand Mitra, who had been very enthusiastic in 1843, were by 1846 appointed as Deputy-Magistrates and were absorbed in their new sphere of activities. The Bengal British India Society thus died a natural death.

2. Infra, pp. 323-324.

3. Infra, pp. 325-328.



1840. Theobald's resignation from the presidency of the Bengal British India Society and its eventual break up marked, however, the end of that cooperation.<sup>1</sup> The interests of the two were not always identical, and in the mufassal there were frequent affrays and litigations, between individuals from both sides, over boundary disputes, terms of lease and even over the cultivation of indigo.<sup>2</sup> The estrangement between the two sections of the landholders, however, became complete in 1849-50 over the proposed legislation for bringing European residents in the mufassal under the jurisdiction of the East India Company's criminal courts.<sup>3</sup> The Bengali landholders supported the proposed legislation mainly because it would place them at par with the European landholders in the mufassal courts.<sup>4</sup> The Europeans, on the other hand, strongly opposed it on the ground of the acknowledged corruption and inefficiency of the mufassal

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1. See the comments of Hurkaru, 7 November 1845.

2. See Friend of India, 14 November 1844, 22 October and 17 December 1846; also the article in the Calcutta Review entitled "Indigo in Lower Bengal", op.cit.; and Indigo Commission's Report, pp. 12-13.

3. Three draft Acts for the purpose were published, viz., for declaring the law as to the privileges of Her Majesty's European subjects, for abolishing exemption from the jurisdiction of the East India Company's criminal courts, and for trial by jury. See Ind.Leg.Cons., 10 May 1850, Nos. 33-35.

4. See Memorial of the Hindu inhabitants, Ind.Leg.Cons., 10 May 1850, No. 72; also Ghosh, Ramgopal, Remarks on the Black Acts, etc., Calcutta 1851.

4. Supra., pp. 213-219.



courts and of the indefinite nature of the law to be administered to the Europeans.<sup>1</sup> In view of this opposition the legislation in question was postponed till the passing of the Penal Code.<sup>2</sup> It was, however, as a sequel to the so-called Black Acts controversy, and in view of the impending Parliamentary debates over the renewal of the Company's charter, that the Bengali zamindars formed, in October 1851, the British Indian Association, from which Europeans were totally excluded.<sup>3</sup> It is noteworthy that the years 1849-51 witnessed also a controversy over the Lex Loci Act (XXI. of 1850 regarding the native convert's right of inheritance) which was opposed by the Bengalis of all shades of opinion, but was supported by European inhabitants as well as the missionaries.<sup>4</sup> The latter, however, do not appear to have taken any part in the Black Acts controversy. The missionaries' attention to the condition of the rayat was drawn afresh by the developments in Barisal where the steady progress of conversion since 1847 had evoked the hostility

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1. Memorials of British inhabitants from different parts of India - Ind.Leg.Cons., 10 May 1850, Nos. 43-62.
  2. Ibid., Nos. 73-77; also No. 1 of 30 May 1850.
  3. Friend of India, 27 November 1851, Vol.XVII., pp.755-56; also Rules of the British Indian Association, Calcutta 1851. That the association represented primarily the zamindars is evident from its proceedings and annual reports. Raja Radhakanta Deb was the president, and Raja Kalikrishna Bahadur and Raja Pratapchandra Singh Bahadur were the vice-presidents of the association throughout the years 1851-'60.
  4. Supra., pp.213-219.



of some zamindars.<sup>1</sup> And now that the affairs of India were under the consideration of the Parliament the missionaries addressed a petition to that body in August 1852.<sup>2</sup> They drew the attention of Parliament principally to (i) the insecurity of life and property in the mufassal due to "constant scenes of violence, in contentions respecting disputed boundaries, between the owners of landed estates", and (ii) to the poverty and wretchedness of the rural population of Bengal, produced chiefly by the "system of landed tenures and the extortion of the Zemindars", aggravated by the inefficiency and corruption of the police and the law courts.<sup>3</sup> For the removal of these evils and for a general improvement in the system of landed tenures the missionaries suggested, among other things, (a) a complete survey of the country to fix the boundaries of villages and estates, (b) provision for a general registration of all titles and deeds relating to land and for checking the prevalent system of secret trusts, "commonly called Benamee transactions"; and (c) "a measure to encourage capitalists of enterprise and public spirit to purchase land; and also to encourage smaller

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 412-413.

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1. *Supra.*, pp. 247-251.
  2. "Petition adopted by the Calcutta Missionary Conference, in August, 1852, in reference to the East India Company's Charter" - *C.C.O.*, September 1852, Vol. XXI., pp. 409-417. (See also *Parl. Pap.*, H/C, 1852-53, Vol. 27, paper 426, pp. 416-421.)
  3. *Ibid.* in *C.C.O.*, pp. 410-411.



holders to raise themselves to the position of independent freeholders" by providing means for the "permanent redemption or commutation of the present land tax".<sup>1</sup> To support this last prayer a paper "On the desirableness of commuting the Government Land Tax", prepared by "J.W.", was also circulated in India and England.<sup>2</sup> The missionaries further suggested, as the first step towards the reform of the police, the consolidation of the body of policemen, called the village or zamindari chowkidars, who were "in fact the ministers of the most powerful of their neighbours, rather than the protectors of the people", with the Government police, "placing all under active, trustworthy and efficient superintendence."<sup>3</sup> It may be noted here that a similar proposal was made by the Government in 1851; but it was opposed by the British Indian Association who objected not only to the extra tax upon the zamindars which the plan involved, but also to the separation of the chowkidars from the zamindar's control on the ground that it was an interference with the ancient institution of the village community.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 412-413.
  2. Most probably the writer of the essay was the Rev. J. Wenger of the Baptist Missionary Society. It was published previously to the transmission of the petition to Parliament. See C.C.O., August 1852, Vol. XXI., pp. 361-368.
  3. Petition of the missionaries, ibid., p. 412.
  4. See Ind. Leg. Cons., 19 November 1852, Nos. 19-20; also Friend of India, 11 December 1851, Vol. XVII., p. 785.



Shortly following the petition of the missionaries the European community of Bengal and the British Indian Association submitted separately two petitions to Parliament relative to the renewal of the Charter.<sup>1</sup> Both these petitions dealt with a variety of subjects including the necessity for reform in the mufassal police and law courts; but while doing that the British Indian Association reiterated their objections to the amalgamation of the chowkidars with the Government police.<sup>2</sup> Neither of these petitions, however, spoke a single word on the condition of the rayat. The missionaries were naturally

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1. See these petitions in Parl.Pap. H/C, 1852-53, Vol.27, paper 426, pp. 480-491 and 492-508 respectively.
  2. Petition of the British Indian Association, op.cit., para 29. The Association continued to oppose the measure. (See B.I.A. Annual Reports for 1855 and 1856, pp. 10-11 and 4 respectively; also P.L.C.I., Vol.II., Column 1.) The measure was carried out with certain modifications by Act XX. of 1856.

The Association similarly opposed a proposed legislation, in 1854, "for the more effectual suppression of affrays concerning the possession of property" because it affected the zamindar's interest. The Bill sought to punish not only the actual participants in affrays, but also the employers of the lathials. The Association's ground of objection was that as the police and law courts were corrupt and inefficient, the people were compelled, in order to protect their rights, to have recourse to the keeping of lathials; and therefore the proposed legislation would deprive the people of their only means of self-defence. (See Petition of the British Indian Association on the Bill for the more effectual suppression etc., Calcutta 1854; also The Affray Bill and the Criminal Administration of Bengal, by A Member of the British Indian Association, Calcutta 1854.) The Indigo Planters' Association also opposed the Bill on similar grounds. (See P.L.C.I., Vol.I., 1854-55, Column 84.)

1. Supra., pp. 251-261.
2. Supra., pp. 251-261.
3. Supra., pp. 251-261.
4. Supra., pp. 251-261.
5. Supra., pp. 251-261.



surprised at this "most glaring omission" of "all reference to the hardship connected with the Zamindary system."<sup>1</sup>

The petition of the missionaries and others were referred to the select committees of both houses of Parliament, set up in connection with the renewal of the Company's Charter; but excepting a few minutes of evidence recorded by the committee of the House of Lords,<sup>2</sup> nothing specific was done regarding the condition of the rayat.

In the meantime the situation grew worse in the districts of Nadia and Barisal. In the former district the rayats became restive under the oppressive indigo planting system and when, in 1854, some villages "passed into the hands of a neighbouring Planter" the inhabitants, who were all Christian converts, expressed their determination to desert their homes in order to avoid the hardships of planting indigo.<sup>3</sup> They were, however, persuaded by the missionary (Rev.F.Schurr) not to do so.<sup>4</sup> In Barisal the oppression on the part of the zamindars culminated, in 1855, in an outrageous assault upon the Christian converts of Baropakhya.<sup>5</sup> In view of these the secretary of the General Conference of Protestant Christian Missionaries, scheduled to

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1. C.C.O., February 1853, Vol. XXII., p.50.

2. Parl.Pap., H/L, 1852-53, Vol.29, paper 20 II.

3. C.C.C. of C.M.S. Report, 1854, p.28.

4. Ibid.

5. Supra., pp. 251-261.



be held in September 1855, requested the Revs. F. Schurr of Krishnagar (in Nadia) and J.C. Page of Barisal to submit their considered views on the influence of the zamindari and indigo systems upon the condition of the rayats and the spread of Christianity among them.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly Schurr and Page read in the Conference, which was held on 4-7 September 1855, two articles entitled respectively, "On the influence of the system of indigo-planting on the spread of Christianity" and "Zemindary System and Christianity".<sup>2</sup> Schurr showed that indigo was an unjust and unprofitable cultivation forced upon the rayat and that the system as a whole was retarding the progress of Christianity among the rayats.<sup>3</sup> He also submitted to the conference a statement drawn up by the rayats of Krishnagar showing (a) the oppression committed by zamindars, (b) the injustice of planters and (c) the oppression committed by the Bengali police officials, concluded by a prayer of the rayats to the Honourable Company for help and redress.<sup>4</sup> Page, on the other hand, included in his discussion an analysis of the powers and influence of the zamindar and the planter and the reasons for their opposition to the introduction of Christianity among

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1. See Schurr's statement, C.C.O., April 1856, Vol. XXV., p. 176.

2. The Proceedings of a General Conference of Bengal Protestant Missionaries, held on 4-7 September 1855. Calcutta 1855, pp. 84-115.

3. Ibid., pp. 84-94. See also supra., pp. 266-267.

4. Ibid., pp. 94-98.



their rayats.<sup>1</sup> Another member, the Rev.A.F.Lacroix, gave a vivid description of the zamindar's oppression in a paper "On the peculiar difficulties encountered by missions in Bengal."<sup>2</sup>

The missionary conference did not adopt any resolution on the subject, but after some discussions referred it to a committee for further investigation and report.<sup>3</sup> The statements of Schurr and Page were, however, serious enough to call forth rather angry comments from the advocates of the zamindari and planting systems.<sup>4</sup> Among the latter the most prominent parts were played by Alexander Forbes, the planter at Dacca, and James Forlong, the planter at Nadia.<sup>5</sup> Their discussions were, however, more vituperative than instructive, calling the missionaries "foolish" and "hypocrites", who were selling religion for their own gains, and were otherwise incompetent to

1. Ibid., pp. 98-115.

2. Ibid., pp. 33-35.

3. Ibid., pp. 115-116.

4. These discussions were conducted principally through the columns of the Englishman, the Bengal Hurkaru, the Dacca News and such missionary journals as the Christian Intelligencer, & the Calcutta Christian Observer. These were subsequently compiled, during the prosecution of the Rev.J.Long in 1861 under caption Missionaries and Indigo Planting, by A Member of the Calcutta Missionary Conference. The writings of Forbes and Forlong were also published as tracts during the controversy.

5. See Forbes' "Reply to a paper by the Rev.F.Schurr on the influence of indigo-planting etc.", "A.F.'s notice of the Rev. Mr. Page's paper on the Zamindari system and Christianity" also Forlong's communications, in C.C.O., April and June 1856, Vol.XXV., pp. 146-152, 241-248 and 250-258 respectively.



speak about the condition of the people.<sup>1</sup> In their attempt to show, however, that indigo was not a forced and unprofitable cultivation on the part of the rayat and that the zamindari system was not oppressive, these advocates of the zamindari and planting systems practically admitted all the leading charges brought against them.<sup>1</sup> The discussions of the missionaries in this controversy were, on the other hand, remarkably calm and dispassionate exhibiting actual knowledge of the subject and real feelings for the rayats.<sup>2</sup> "We have had far too many proofs of the deplorable condition of the peasantry," declared the missionaries, "to be easily persuaded into a conviction that we have been mistaken in the estimate we have formed of it."<sup>3</sup> In pursuance of such belief and on the recommendation of the committee appointed on this subject by the Conference, the missionaries submitted, on 2 September 1856, a memorial to the Government of Bengal.<sup>4</sup> After referring to and quoting from their petition to Parliament in 1852 and their representation to the Marquiss of Dalhousie on the eve of his departure from

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1. Ibid.

2. See especially "The Rev. G.G. Cuthbert's statement in reply to the remarks of A.F. and James Forlong" and the article of Indophilus ( Dr.Duff ) entitled "Missionaries and Indigo Planters" in C.C.O., June and July 1856, Vol.XXV., pp.259-268 and 302-319 respectively.

3. C.C.O., Oct June, 1856, Vol.XXV., p. 248.

4. Ibid., October 1856, Vol. XXV., pp. 461-467.



India the missionaries drew the attention of the Government to the "state of the most abject and pitiable servitude" of the peasantry. The missionaries further expressed their belief that a "spirit of sullen discontent" prevailed among the rural population "from an impression that the Government is indifferent to their sufferings."<sup>1</sup> The missionaries, therefore, earnestly prayed for a commission of enquiry into the sufferings of the peasantry, "especially into the state of police and the Judicial system, the powers and influence of Zemindars and Planters, and how those powers are used; the resources and earnings of the labouring classes, and the proportion which these bear to the rent that they are compelled to pay; the harassing exactions and oppressions to which the poor are subject", etc.<sup>2</sup>

Hitherto the British Indian Association had not taken any part in the controversy, apparently leaving the task of their defence against the criticism of the missionaries to the European landholders. The memorial of the missionaries was virtually a challenge to their position as zamindars, and they were not slow in accepting the challenge. On 20 September 1856 they submitted a counter-memorial, requesting the Government to appoint a commission of enquiry, not because they

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1. Memorial of the missionaries, paras 7-14.

2. Ibid., paras 17-19.

2. Halliday's Minute, Parl. Pap., 1857, Session 1, Vol. 11, paper 51, pp. 8-9.



acquiesced in; "all the conclusions arrived at by the missionaries" but because they agreed in the necessity for "a searching, patient, and unbiassed inquiry into the social evils of these provinces, viz., whether they be to any, and what extent, caused by the landed system, the planting interest, the mahajunee dealings, the foudarry and dewanny administration, also whether to any and what extent, by the well-intended efforts and zeal of professional Christian Missionaries."<sup>1</sup>

On receipt of the memorial of the missionaries the Lieutenant Governor, F.J. Halliday, entered a Minute on it. He found it "impossible" to admit the statement of the missionaries as "a correct representation of facts", because he had "large and frequent opportunities" of informing himself "by personal intercourse with all classes, native and European, in and out of service, and thereby acquiring a knowledge of the real state of things."<sup>2</sup> He expressed his "absolute dissent" from the statement regarding the "sullen discontent" of the people, and observed that there was no need for a commission of enquiry to know the corruption and defects in the police and judicial administration. "The time present is, as regards those things," he observed, "not the time for investigation,

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1. Memorial of the British Indian Association, Parl.Pap., H/C, 1857, Session I., Vol.11, paper 51, pp. 11-12.

2. Halliday's Minute, Parl.Pap., op.cit., pp. 8-9.

2. See the Minutes of the Governor General and the members of his Council, and the Court's despatch in Parl.Pap., op.cit.



but for action;" and nothing would so surely and so long delay the completion of the necessary improvements as a commission for new enquiry into those subjects. The Government had also in view shortly to enact a law of landlord and tenant, and when this was done, stated Halliday, he knew not what more would "remain in the way of legislative improvement to meet the law fullest wishes of the memorialists." He also did not see what sound and practical purposes could be served by sending commissioners to open up such wide and complicated subjects as "the powers and influence of zamindars and planters and how those powers are used" or "the resources and earnings of the labouring classes", etc. Halliday thus not only made great simpletons of the missionaries but also shifted his emphasis from the real issue which they had at heart. His strongest objection to the appointment of such a commission was that it was likely to prove "dangerous, and certainly mischievous", by "evoking and setting in open and clamorous hostility to each other all kinds of class and professional interests and opinions."<sup>1</sup> In this last objection he was especially supported, in view of the challenging attitude of the British Indian Association, by both the Supreme Government and the Court of Directors.<sup>2</sup>

1. Ibid., pp. 10-11. in order to get rid of his lease-holders,

2. See the Minutes of the Governor General and the members of his Council, and the Court's despatch in Parl. Pap., op.cit.



Being thus disappointed by the Government of India the missionaries petitioned the Imperial Parliament for a Royal Commission to enquire into the condition of the people of Bengal.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime two proposed reforms placed the missionaries, the indigo planters and the Bengali zamindars in a juxtaposition. The one was a Bill for improving the law relating to the sale of lands for arrears of revenue.<sup>2</sup> It proposed, among other things, to secure the rights of lease-holders and other under-tenants in the event of such sale of an estate. According to the existing law the leases and pattas granted by the defaulting zamindar were liable to be cancelled by the purchaser of an estate at the Government sale. The indigo planters, who were mostly lease-holders under Bengali zamindars, approved of the object of the Bill and submitted a petition praying for its enactment into law.<sup>3</sup> The missionaries considered the Bill "as a step in the right direction" because it struck "at the root of two evils, benamee tenures<sup>4</sup> and the

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1. "Petition of the Calcutta Missionaries for a Royal Commission to enquire into the condition of the people of Bengal", C.C.O., January 1857, Vol. XXVI., pp.16-28.

2. The <sup>Bill</sup> was proposed by J.P. Grant in December 1855, (see P.L.C.I. Vol.I., 1854-55, Columns 71, 833 and 851.) but after having been referred to a select committee it came up for discussion early in 1857. Report for 1857, pp. 12-13.

3. P.L.C.I., Vol.II., 1856, Col.399. See also I.P.A. Proceedings. 10 May and 10 June 1856.

4. Often a zamindar, in order to get rid of his lease-holders, allowed his estate to fall in arrears of revenue, and then, at the Government sale, repurchased it benami, i.e., in the name of some one of his relatives.



insecurity of under-tenures" and otherwise curbed the arbitrariness of the zamindar.<sup>1</sup> The missionaries, therefore, also submitted a memorial, in April 1857, praying the Government to pass the Bill and such "other measures" as were necessary "for the emancipation and protection of the cultivating classes."<sup>2</sup> The Bengali zamindars, on the other hand, considered the Bill as an encroachment upon the zamindar's right, on the purchase of an estate, to get it free from encumbrances. Specially the zamindars of Calcutta, many of whom were absentee landlords leasing out their estates to others, looked upon the Bill as an attempt to deprive them of their advantage over their lease-holders and under-tenants.<sup>3</sup> Already the zamindars of 24-Parganas had petitioned against the Bill in February 1857;<sup>4</sup> and following the memorial of the missionaries the British Indian Association submitted another petition, in May 1857, against those provisions of the Bill which sought to secure the right of under-tenants.<sup>5</sup> At the same time "A Member of the

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1. C.C.O., April 1857, Vol.XXVI., pp. 190-191.
  2. P.L.C.I., Vol.III., 1857, Col. 225. The memorial was published in C.C.O., May 1857, Vol.XXVI., pp. 208-215; and also separately as a tract under caption : The Case of the Cultivators of Bengal.
  3. B.I.A. Annual Report for 1857, pp. 12-13.
  4. P.L.C.I., Vol.III., 1857, Col. 125.
  5. Ibid., Col. 279. See also Petition of the British Indian Association on the Bill to improve the law relating to sales of land for arrears of revenue in the Bengal Presidency, 1857.



British Indian Association" published his criticisms of the Bill under <sup>the</sup>caption Observations on the Sale law Bill.<sup>1</sup>

The other was the amalgamation of the Supreme and Sadr Courts into a High Court of Judicature, proposed by Her Majesty's Commissioners for the reform of the Judicial establishments and laws of India.<sup>2</sup> The British Indian Association hailed the proposal as a salutary reform and sent a petition to Parliament in support of it.<sup>3</sup> The indigo planters, however, saw in it a revival of the proposals contained in the "Black Acts".<sup>4</sup> They not only sent a petition to Parliament against the proposed measure but also deputed W.Theobald, the secretary of the Indigo Planters' Association, to England to advocate their cause as well as to watch the progress of events in connection with the memorial of the missionaries for a commission of enquiry.<sup>5</sup>

The petition of the missionaries was presented to the House of Commons by Arthur Kinnaird ( member for Perth ) who, on 11 June 1857, moved certain resolutions founded upon the

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1. B.I.A. Annual Report for 1857, p.13. The Bill was passed by Act XI. of 1859.

2. The Commissioners were appointed in pursuance of Sec.28 of the Charter Act of 1853 ( 16 & 17 Vict., c.95 ). Their Report was submitted in 1855 and it reached India in 1856.

3. B.I.A. Annual Report for 1857, pp. 6-8.

4. I.P.A. Proceedings, 10 July 1856., p. 394. Theobald was,

5. Ibid., 25 July, 11 and 25 August 1856.



petition. The President of the Board of Control, Vernon Smith, together with Mangles, Chairman of the Court of Directors, Lord John Russell, Erskine Perry and others took part in the debate. Kinnaird was induced to withdraw his motion, however, by the admissions and solemn promises for reforms made by Smith and Mangles.<sup>1</sup> "One grand object of the memorial", thought the missionaries, "was substantially answered; the attention of the people of Great Britain and of the whole civilised world was directed in a way, in which it never was before, to the deplorable social condition of the teeming myriads of Bengal."<sup>2</sup>

Before, however, either the subject of the Sadr and Supreme Courts could be taken into consideration or the pledges of Smith and Mangles for reforms redeemed, India was engulfed in the cataclysm of 1857 which stopped, for a time, all measures of Indian reform. It is quite clear, however, that throughout this period the real friends of the rayats of Bengal were the Christian missionaries. Theirs' was not a factious opposition to the indigo planters and zamindars as such, but an ardent desire to improve the lot of the peasantry, partly because of its bearing on the spread of Christianity, but mainly because

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1. Hansard., Vol. 145, III Series, Cols. 1587-1638. was tran-

2. C.C.O., September 1857, Vol. XXVI., p. 394. Theobald was, however, sarcastic on this debate in the House of Commons. See his Indian Tracts, No. II., London 1857. translator.



of the extreme sufferings of the people under the zamindari and indigo systems. It is against this background that the revolt against the indigo system in 1859-60 by the peasantry of Jessore, Nadia and Pabna, the remarkable silence of the British Indian Association on this, and the acrimonious prosecution of the Rev. James Long in 1861 for his rather unimportant work of translation and distribution of the Nil Darpan ( Indigo-planting mirror ),<sup>1</sup> could be better understood.

of oppression and the frequent applications made to them for protection and aid",<sup>1</sup> a Provisional Committee for "taking the entire subject into detailed consideration", with a view to ascertaining what measures might be adopted for the protection of native Christians.<sup>2</sup> At a meeting held on 1 May the Provisional Committee agreed that many instances had occurred, were yet occurring, and might be expected still more frequently to occur, " of great oppression and manifest injustice practised by Zamindars... upon native Christians

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1. The reference was perhaps to the state of affairs at Kishnagar. See supra, p. 240. About this time the Christians of the villages to the south of Calcutta were also facing the opposition of their zamindars. See the minutes of the Revs. J.G. Lincke and F. Wybrow, 8 and 20 December respectively, 1837, - C.M.S. Archives, North India Mission, No. 11.

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2. The author of the work was Dinabandhu Mitra. It was translated into English, under the encouragement and patronage of Long, by Michael Madhusudan Datta. Even in the darkest hour of his trial Long did not disclose the name of the translator.



## CHAPTER IX.

## Measures to protect the converts

The question of protecting the converts against the hostile attitude of the zamindars came under the serious consideration of the missionaries first in 1839. In April of that year the monthly conference of the Calcutta missionaries Committee were aware, however, that the individual or combined interference of missionaries as such in aid of their converts, of oppression and the frequent applications made to them for "even in the clearest cases of direct injustice",<sup>1</sup> was fraught with the double danger of unwittingly encouraging native Christians to disregard just claims and clear obligations on the one hand, and of presenting<sup>2</sup> inducement to a false and interested profession of Christianity on the other. Such interference was also regarded as inadvisable on account of the diversion that it would cause of the missionaries' time and energy from the proper and direct line of their spiritual calling. It was recommended, therefore, to form a society for

1. The reference was perhaps to the state of affairs at Kishnagar. See supra, p. 240. About this time the Christians of the villages to the south of Calcutta were also facing the opposition of their zamindars. See the minutes of the Revs. J.G.Linke and F.Wybrow, 8 and 20 December respectively, 1837, - C.M.S.Archives, North India Mission, No. 11.
2. "Prospectus of the Native Christian Protection Society" - in C.C.O., July 1839, Vol. VIII., p. 409. The Provisional Committee consisted of seven missionaries, namely, the Revs. Gogerly, Lacroix, Piffard, Mack, Macdonald, Aratoon and Morton.

2. Ibid., pp. 409-410.



as such", and therefore fully meriting to be called "cases of religious persecution." They further observed that from the timidity and poverty of native Christians of the villages generally, it was nearly impossible for them to defend themselves against such oppression and injustice without the aid of a missionary or of other European patronage.<sup>1</sup> The Provisional Committee were aware, however, that the individual or combined interference of missionaries as such in aid of their converts, "even in the clearest cases of direct injustice", was fraught with the double danger of unwittingly encouraging native Christians to disregard just claims and clear obligations on the one hand, and of presenting an inducement to a false and interested profession of Christianity on the other. Such interference was also regarded as inadvisable on account of the diversion that it would cause of the missionaries' time and energy from the proper and direct line of their spiritual calling. It was recommended, therefore, to form a society for that purpose, to be designated the Native Christian Protection Society.

Accordingly at the monthly meeting held in June the missionaries and laymen present called into being the Native

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., pp. 409-410. "Native Christian Protection Society", - ibid., pp. 410 - 411.

2. Ibid.



Christian Protection Society. All persons subscribing to its funds were to be members of the Society. It was to be managed by a Committee consisting of six lay members and at least one missionary from each missionary society. No case of alleged oppression except from bonafide members of the several churches, nor any case which might have occurred prior to the formation of the Society or the complainant's having become a member of the Christian Church, nor any case which was not recommended by the Pastor of the Church of which the complainant was a member, or by the missionary with whom he stood connected, was to be entertained by the Society.<sup>1</sup> A case was to be carried into court only when such a procedure was sanctioned by at least two thirds of the Committee in attendance. If the complainant possessed the means of defraying the expenses of the law suit connected with his case, he was to bind himself to the Committee to repay the same. If it was proved that in course of a law suit the party whose cause the Society espoused had adopted improper means to ensure success, that case was to be abandoned forthwith; and in case of deception, the deceiving party was to be forever debarred from any benefit which the Society might be able to afford.<sup>2</sup> Obviously these rules were precautionary in nature suggesting that the Society was anxious, from the

1. "Rules of the Native Christian Protection Society", - ibid., pp.410 - 411.

2. Ibid.



very start, to avoid the dangers apprehended by the Provisional Committee, and to save itself from any long-standing law suit or party feud.

For three years, however, the Society remained inactive. On 21 May 1842 the Calcutta Christian Advocate attributed this inaction to the "stringency of the rules adopted at its commencement" and stated that therefore the Society had been reorganised.<sup>1</sup> A revised Prospectus and Rules were also published for general information.<sup>2</sup>

It appears that two important alterations were made in the Rules of the Society. First, whereas previously no case which had occurred prior to the complainant's having become a member of the Society or of the Church was to be entertained, this time the Society reserved to itself the right to consider such cases if in its estimation the parties oppressed were "persons of moral worth and the cause such as to warrant the impression that it is for righteousness' sake". Secondly, it was no longer necessary for a complainant's Pastor to be a member of the Society.<sup>3</sup> In spite of this revision of the Rules, however, the Society remained as inactive as before and

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1. C.C.A., 21 May 1842, Vol.IV.,p.9.

2. Ibid., Chapter VII.

3. "Revised Rules of the Native Christian Protection Society", — C.C.O., September 1841, Vol.X., pp.533-544.

3. Ibid., pp. 540-541.



nothing more was heard of it. The cases of oppression upon the mufassal converts noted before<sup>1</sup> do not appear to have been supported by this society. While the Native Christian Protection Society thus remained in abeyance, the Rev. M. Hill of the London Missionary Society presented a plan, in June 1841, of forming a "Christian Landholders' Society", for the purpose of obtaining and holding estates under its management in order to protect the rayats in general and Christian converts in particular from the oppression of zamindars.<sup>2</sup> Such a society was to be formed with a capital of £100,000, to be raised in shares of £10 each. One or more estates were to be obtained from the Government by the usual way of transfer, viz., at the Government sales. An estate thus obtained was to be under the management of a European superintendent to be appointed by the Society. In letting and sub-letting the land, a preference was to be given to the Christian converts, and so soon as practicable, the agents employed by the European superintendent were to be selected from the Christian community.<sup>3</sup>

It was estimated that the Society could begin its operation if it had collected a sum of £10,000 out of the

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1. Supra, Chapter VII.

2. "Prospectus of a Christian Landholders' Society" by M. HILL, C.C.O., September 1841, Vol. X., pp. 533-544.

3. Ibid., pp. 540-541.



proposed capital. Of this amount, £1000 was to be reserved for contingencies and deposited in the Government Bank of Bengal. Supposing the purchase to cost 18 shillings per acre, then £9,000 would procure 10,000 acres or  $15\frac{1}{2}$  square miles. The revenue payable to the Government for such an estate, taking into consideration the usual average rate of 9 shillings per acre, would be £4,500. If instead of taking from the rayats double the amount of this revenue, as was "the custom of the native zamindars", the rent was fixed at 50% then the gross annual income of the Society would be £6,750 (Revenue £4,500 + 50%, i.e. £2250 = £6,750). The disbursements would be:

Dividends to shareholders at 5% on £10,000	...	...	...	...	£500 - 0 - 0
Salary of European Superintendent	...				£400 - 0 - 0
Expenses of collecting rents, 10% on Govt. Revenue of £4,500	...	...	...	...	£450 - 0 - 0
Government Revenue	...	...	...	...	£4500 - 0 - 0
					<hr/>
Total					£5,850 - 0 - 0

This sum deducted from the income of the Society, viz., £6,750, would leave a surplus in the receipts above disbursements of £900. This surplus would be at the disposal of the shareholders, and might be added to the sum of £1,000 held in reserve for contingencies, until in a few years by accumulation the fund would become adequate for procuring another estate, or the surplus might be employed for such benevolent purposes as



assisting the necessitous by loans at a moderate rate of interest, erection of schools and hospitals, improvement of poor soil, etc.<sup>1</sup>

A number of advantages were visualised from such an undertaking. The rayats in general of this Society would pay less rent and would be otherwise exempted from the extortions and litigations of the zamindar, the percentage of his agent and the bribes and exactions of the latter's servants. The Christian converts would be free from harassment and persecution and would have no fear of losing their farm or occupations. The reduction of rent, the removal of anxiety lest further demands should be made upon him, the prevention of ruinous litigation on the part of the zamindar and his agent, and the increasing confidence of the rayat that no one could disturb him in the enjoyment of the fruits of his toil, would, in general, give such an impetus to industry and honest exertion as would increase domestic happiness, elevate the standard of morality and diminish crime. Such a plan would also present no bonus to the hypocrite to profess Christianity, as it conferred no favour on the Christian rayat which the non-Christian rayats located on the estate would not possess. Nor would the plan seek to diminish the revenues of Government, nor to challenge

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1. Ibid., pp. 541-542.



its right in the soil. On the other hand a zamindari so managed would, in the increased comfort and respectability of the rayats and the diminution of crime and litigation, present such a contrast to the "surrounding half-famished miserable" inhabitants, that the Government, being interested in the welfare of its subjects, might be desirous to transfer to the Christian Landholders' Society some of the estates under its own management. In such a case the estates would be procured without the purchase money, leaving a greater surplus at the disposal of the Society for improvements upon land or the benefit of the rayat. On the whole, such a plan would procure all the benefits of a benevolent institution without imposing any tax on the philanthropist, for it offered a reasonable rate of interest on the capital invested. The Society would also differ from such private speculators or commercial companies as the indigo planters and the sugar and tea companies who held lands "for their own profit" and whose gains "did not enrich the natives of India".<sup>1</sup>

Well intentioned and well calculated though the plan was, it did not find favour with the majority of the missionaries of Calcutta. In their monthly conference held in May 1842 it was resolved that they "could not with consistency interfere

1. Ibid., pp. 543-544.

5. Ibid.



in recommending persons to purchase or rent zamindaries" for the purposes specified in the plan.<sup>1</sup> The conference also disapproved of a proposal to form colonies of Christian converts by "acquiring tracts of land on which native Christians might find refuge and protection under the care of missionaries".<sup>2</sup> It was further resolved that although it was right in extreme cases of persecution to afford refuge to the persecuted, it was on the whole "unscriptural and inexpedient, in ordinary circumstances, to separate the Christian from the unchristian portion of the population, and especially for missionaries to burden themselves with the secularity connected with such colonies".<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless the subject was not lost sight of. On 23 November 1842 a special meeting of the missionaries and those laymen who took an interest in the matter was held to consider M.Hill's plan.<sup>4</sup> After a lengthened consideration of the subject a Provisional Committee was formed "composed of the missionaries and ministers in Calcutta willing to cooperate" and some other laymen, with Rev. T. Boaz as Secretary Pro-tempore.<sup>5</sup>

1. C.C.O., June 1842, Vol.XI.,p.369.

2. Ibid.,p. 373.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., December 1842,Vol.XI.,p.371. Among those present were the Revs. A.Duff, G.Pearce, J. Campbell, J.Haeberlin, M.Hill, J.Wenger, J.Long, T.Sandys, W.Morton, T.Boaz, J.Brooks, R.deRodd, J.Bradbury and A.Grant, J.Meik, F.Corbyn and J.M. Vos.

5. Ibid.



On 16 January 1843 a meeting of the Provisional Committee was held in which it was resolved to form a new society to be called "The Society for Ameliorating the Temporal Condition of the Natives of India".<sup>1</sup> A committee was accordingly appointed, with power to add to their number.<sup>2</sup> For the more efficient working of the society the committee was divided, on the proposal of the Rev. J. Long, into four sub-committees — the Industrial, the Judicial, the Social and the Educational.<sup>3</sup> The Industrial sub-committee was to consider the plan of purchasing or renting zamindaries, "on Christian principles", and of aiding the natives in forming habits of industry in any other way. The Judicial was to take into consideration the administration of justice in the mufassal "and the Zemindary system, and other matters therewith connected". The Social had reference to "all the social or domestic events of Hindu Society", such as polygamy, infanticide, etc.

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1. C.C.O., February 1843, Vol.XII., pp. 101-102.

2. Ibid. The following were the members of the Committee: A.Duff, C.C.Aratoon, G.Pearce, G.Small, T.Boaz, J.Long, W.Morton, R.deRodd, J.Campbell, J.Bradbury, J.A.Shurman, T.Smith, A.Leslie, J.Paterson, J.Wenger, J.M.Vos, J.Meik, A.Grant, F.Corbyn, M.Wylie, J.W.Alexander and W.Byrn.

3. Ibid. The Industrial sub-committee consisted of G.Pearce, J.Campbell, R.deRodd and J.W.Wenger; the Judicial consisted of D.Evans, T.Boaz, J.W.Wenger and M.Wylie; the Social consisted of W.Morton, C.C.Aratoon, F.Corbyn, J.M.Vos and J.Meik; and the Educational consisted of A.Duff, W.Morton, J.Long and T.Smith.



The Educational was concerned with the education of the people of India.<sup>1</sup> It was further stated that one general object of the Society would be to collect and diffuse correct information "on all the great subjects" which affected the well-being of the people of India. Another object was to correspond with the friends of India in that and other countries "with a view to the effectual removal of all impediments to the happiness and welfare of the natives" of that country. A third object was to diffuse useful knowledge amongst the people of India on all those topics which might lead them to a right appreciation of their responsibilities and privileges as natives of India.<sup>2</sup>

It is noteworthy that these objects of the Society were similar to those of the British India Society (London 1839)<sup>3</sup> and the Bengal British India Society (Calcutta 1843).<sup>4</sup> The missionaries did not look with favour upon these two societies, especially the latter, because of its having been formed by zamindars for advancing their own interest.<sup>5</sup> It is not

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. See Speeches on the formation of the British India Society, London 1839, and British India, addresses before the society of Friends, etc., London 1839.

4. See "Proceedings of the first meeting of the Bengal British India Society" in C.C.A., 29 April 1843, Vol.IV., p.420.

5. Supra, pp.273-86. See also C.C.A., 12 October 1839, Vol.I., pp.197-198; 29 April 1843, Vol.IV., pp.418-420; 1 July 1843, Vol.V., pp.97-98.



improbable that the above noted objects of the Society for Ameliorating the Temporal Condition of the Natives of India were intended as a counterpoise and challenge to those of the British India Society and its counterpart in Bengal.

Commenting upon the formation of this society the Sambad Bhaskar, one of the liberal Bengali journals, stated that the missionaries were not likely to succeed in their object of carrying on zamindari because it required "much skill and many contrivances", such as the employment of lathials and the institution of false law suits, which the missionaries, as to "religious men", could neither acquire nor employ. Regarding the other programmes of the society the Bhaskar stated that it was the Government which was to effect reforms in all those fields.<sup>1</sup> In reply to these the Calcutta Christian Advocate stated that the missionaries had neither intended to employ improper means in carrying on a zamindari, nor implied that the intended reforms could be carried out without the intervention of the Government; but that in order to convince the latter of the necessity of reform, it was imperative to have that kind of instrumentality which the society intended to bring into operation.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The Sambad Bhaskar, quoted in C.C.A., 25 February 1843, Vol.IV., pp. 339-340.

2. C.C.A., 25 February 1843, Vol.IV., pp.338-339.



The new Society, however, proved itself as abortive as its predecessor, the Native Christian Protection Society. The Educational sub-committee published a report of its deliberations in June 1843;<sup>1</sup> but soon it passed, along with other sub-committees and the Society itself, into oblivion.<sup>2</sup>

Soon after this the Revs. A.Duff, W.S.Mackey, G.Pearce, A.F.Lacroix, D.Ewart and J.Osborne made especial efforts to impress upon the Christian converts of Calcutta the necessity of union and exertion for their own benefit. The result was that about 30 or 40 of them came forward and formed themselves into a society in September 1844, called the Native Christian Temporal Aid Society, with Beharilal Singh as its secretary.<sup>3</sup> It consisted entirely of native Christians and its principal object was to render monetary help to the poor and helpless of their own community out of a fund of voluntary contributions from the natives only.<sup>4</sup> An applicant for aid was required to produce a certificate from the Pastor of the Church to which

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1. C.C.O., June 1843, Vol.XII., pp.355-357.

2. It appears, however, that the Rev.M.Hill organised, at his own initiative, a Christian village at Barhampur (in Murshidabad district). See "Report of the Berhampore Mission for 1845" — Friend of India, 4 June 1846, Vol.XII., p.355.

3. "A short sketch of the Rise, Progress and success of the Calcutta Native Christian Temporal Aid Society" by Beharilal, — C.C.A., 7 February 1846, Vol.VIII., pp.68-69.

4. Ibid., p.69. At this time Beharilal Singh was the president and Chandranath Banerji was the secretary of the society. Among its prominent members were Malicharan Banerji, Radhakanta Datta, Ambikacharan Roy, Taraprasad Chatterji, etc.



he belonged, or the missionary with whom he stood connected.<sup>1</sup> During the first sixteen months of its existence<sup>2</sup> the Society relieved from its funds 34 poor Christians, besides 8 widows and 2 orphans.<sup>3</sup> From the very start, however, the Society had a very limited income, supported as it was by native contributions only. This also suffered a diminution in the third year of its existence.<sup>4</sup> From the fourth year, therefore, it began to receive contributions from the European community.<sup>5</sup> In spite of this, however, the Society could not develop itself into a strong organisation for want of funds. In 1853 its collections amounted to rupees 33 only, for which the Committee of the Society gave in to feelings of despondency.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Ibid. See also "Objects and Regulations of the Native Christian Temporal Aid Society" — C.C.A., 8 April 1848, Vol.X, pp.167-168.
  2. This period was covered by the first annual report.
  3. "The First Annual Report of the Native Christian Temporal Aid Society" — C.C.A., 7 February 1846, Vol.VIII., p.68. The receipts during the first year had been rupees 201-3 annas, and the disbursement rupees 85-15 annas, leaving a balance in favour of the society on 1 January 1845 of rupees 105-4 annas.
  4. "The third annual report of the Native Christian Temporal Aid Society" — C.C.A., 8 April 1848, Vol.X., p.167.
  5. "The fifth annual report etc." — C.C.O. April 1850, Vol.XIX., p.192. During the fifth year the income of the society was contributions from natives Rs.100, from Europeans Rs. 224, total Rs. 324, besides Rs.400 in reserve.
  6. "The ninth annual report etc." — C.C.O., March 1854, Vol.XXIII., pp.141-144. At this time Beharilal Singh was the president and Chandranath Banerji was the secretary of the society. Among its prominent members were Kalicharan Banerji, Radhakanta Datta, Ambikacharan Roy, Taraprasad Chatterji, etc.



Nevertheless the Society continued its existence for the rest of the period, assisting the poor and the indigent according to its capacity. as a minister of the Gospel of salvation";

and (While the Native Christian Temporal Aid Society was thus endeavouring to ameliorate the condition of the Christian converts, the idea of a zamindari for them was revived by the Rev. J.J. Weitbrecht of the Church Missionary Society who presented a proposal, in April 1847, as to whether it was desirable to purchase estates in connection with missionary stations "with a view to providing a refuge for enquirers and persecuted Christians and in other respects to promote the cause of missions in Bengal".<sup>1</sup> The proposal was discussed at two meetings of the missionaries of that society and it was unanimously decided : (i) "That it would be difficult for missionaries to obtain suitable Talooks and if obtained, almost impracticable to manage them to advantage in a business point of view"; (ii) "that the charge of such estates would have an effect decidedly prejudicial to the religious influences of a missionary of Christ, by engrossing his time, secularising his mind, mixing him up too much with secular affairs of his

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1. Minutes of the sixth meeting of the Church missionaries of Bengal, held at Calcutta on 5, 6 and 7 May 1847 — C.M.S. Archives, North India Mission, No. 16. ( From 1845 the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society in Bengal used to meet in conference, roughly at half yearly intervals.)

3. Ibid.



own flock, involving him in disputes and law suits, both with them and other natives, and leading them to regard him as a speculator than as a minister of the Gospel of salvation"; and (iii) "that such property might under certain circumstances be turned to advantage, if a succession of pious, zealous and well-qualified laymen could be secured for the charge of it, who would settle on the Talooks, and carry them on independently of the Church Missionary Society".<sup>1</sup>

A few years later, however, the Revs. Kruckeberg and Matchell of the same missionary society presented a similar proposal.<sup>2</sup> The proposal was again considered "most attentively", especially in view of the "tyranny and oppression of both Heathen Zemindars and Indigo planters" upon poor rayats; but once again the missionaries adopted the same views as were expressed in their meeting in October 1847.<sup>3</sup> It was further observed that the purchase of a zamindari was scarcely possible, all the land in the neighbourhood of mission stations "being either in the hands of the planters, or under their controul, so that whatever might be purchased would involve much litigation.

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1. Minutes of the 7th meeting of the Church missionaries of Bengal, held in Calcutta on 5 and 6 October 1847 — C.M.S. Archives, North India Mission, No. 16.

2. Minutes of the 17th meeting of the same, held at Burdwan on 17-20 October 1854 — C.M.S. Archives, North India Mission, No. 16.

3. Ibid. 1844-1845 there was a large-scale movement for conversion to Christianity in Jessore; and in 1847-1848 a similar movement took place in Barisal. Both these districts were the sphere of Baptist missionary activities.



Even that estate which Mr. Kruckeberg was anxious to secure would most probably have involved a law-suit with a wealthy planter before even actual possession would have been had."<sup>1</sup>

The idea of a zamindari for Christian converts was thus abandoned by the Church missionaries of Bengal. It was pursued more earnestly, however, by the Baptist missionaries. In 1849 they stated that hitherto they had not paid any "particular attention" to the temporal circumstances of their converts because they were few in number and the difficulty "of finding means for their support was not very pressing; and also because there was a fear of exciting cupidity by special efforts for such an object."<sup>2</sup> But now that their converts had greatly increased in number and had been still rapidly increasing,<sup>3</sup> a consideration of their temporal condition had become incumbent upon the missionaries; the more so because by far the more numerous portion of those converts were agricultural labourers whose circumstances, in common with the poorer classes of the peasantry, were "at all times straitened" on account of the "high rent of land, and the exorbitant rate of interest (about 80 per cent.) charged on loans whether of money or seed corn"

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1. Ibid. It is not known which estate Kruckeberg had in view.

2. Statement of the Formation and Objects of the Society for the Social Advancement of the Native Christian Community, Calcutta 1849, p. 3.

3. In 1844-1845 there was a large-scale movement for conversion to Christianity in Jessore; and in 1847-1848 a similar movement took place in Barisal. Both these districts were the sphere of Baptist missionary activities.



which they were compelled to contract in order to cultivate their farms, "together with the oppressive exactions of the zamindars in various other ways."<sup>1</sup> It was further observed that the condition of those converts could not be improved unless they "could be put in possession of land at an easy rent", and were enabled by grants of loans at low interest, to dispense with the necessity of borrowing money from extortionate native usurers at the then current ruinous rates.<sup>2</sup> The missionaries were therefore no longer to be deterred "from rendering a helping hand from the fear of drawing false professors thereby into the Christian church", for "God will not be content that his chosen ones be left to pine in adversity, because it is possible that some men may be improperly influenced by the exercised of Christian benevolence."<sup>3</sup>

Impressed with these sentiments the Baptist missionaries of Bengal took the initiative in forming, in October 1849, a society bearing the name, Society for the Social Advancement of the Native Christian Community.<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of creating in the converts a spirit of "enterprise and manly exertion" the Society proposed to adopt such measures as "the purchase or lease of estates, to be sub-let to Christian ryuts at a rent

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1. Statement etc. ( op.cit. ), pp.2-3.

2. Ibid., p. 3.

3. Ibid., p. 6.

4. Ibid., p. 4.



remunerative to the cultivator", the grant of loans at a low rate of interest to enable them to cultivate the soil, or to establish themselves in trade or business "offering a reasonable prospect of remunerative return", the establishment of a Savings Bank, distribution of prizes for the introduction and successful cultivation of new staples of agricultural produce, or of new description of handicraft, etc.<sup>1</sup> To carry out these measures subscriptions and donations were earnestly solicited, especially from the European community.<sup>2</sup> As the project was in the nature of an experiment, it was decided, however, to limit the operations of the society, in the first instance, to the native Baptists.<sup>3</sup>

1. Ibid., p.5.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. The Society adopted a simple constitution. All donors of rupees 50 and upwards, all subscribers of rupees 12 and upwards, and all members of Baptist churches "residing in or near Calcutta", were to be members of the society, and entitled to vote at the general meeting to be held once in two years, or oftener if necessary. The affairs of the society were to be administered by a General Committee, consisting of a President, a Secretary and a Treasurer, and twelve other members, to be elected by members of the society. The President, the Secretary and the Treasurer were to form the executive committee for the despatch of business, under the direction and subject to the approval of the General Committee. The first General Committee consisted of the following persons: Rev.G.Pearce, President; S.G.Wyatt, Treasurer; W.H.Jones, Secretary; Rev.J.Wenger, Rev.C.B.Lewis, J.B.Biss, D.Calder, J.L.Carrau, D.H.Chill, C.F.Holmes, A.D. Jones, E.J.Lazarus, J.Riddle, Ramkrishna Kaviraj and Shyamachandra Nath, members. (See Rules of the Society appended to ibid., pp.7-8.)



Although initiated by the Baptist Missionary Society, individual members of the London Missionary Society and the Free Church of Scotland Mission also cooperated with the Society for the Social Advancement of the Native Christian Community and became its members.<sup>1</sup> For want of sufficient funds, however, its operation could not be extended beyond the granting of loans. During the second biennial period the Society granted loans to the amount of Rs.1,794 in order to establish parties in business, or to enable them to pay their rents, or to purchase land, or to build and repair their houses damaged by the hurricane of May 1852.<sup>2</sup> Besides these, loans were also granted to establish granaries in the villages to the south of Calcutta and in the district of Barisal.<sup>3</sup>

At the end of the second biennial period the state of the finance of the society was, on the credit side, Rs.1,630-5 annas, and on the opposite side, Rs.1,829-14 annas, leaving a balance against the society of Rs.199-9 annas.<sup>4</sup> Still the society

1. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

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1. The Second Biennial Report of the Society for the Social Advancement of the Native Christian Community, Calcutta 1854, p.3.
  2. *Ibid.*, pp.5-6. There occurred a severe hurricane in May 1852 which damaged the coastal districts, especially the 24-Parganas, Jessore and Barisal, of Bengal.
  3. *Ibid.*, p.6.
  4. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

5. See for instance *Calcutta*, October 1856, Vol. XXV., pp. 451-454.

6. See Chapter II., pp. 37-50.



upheld its object of purchasing a zamindari for the Christian converts.<sup>1</sup> With such a state of finance, however, this object was never realised.<sup>2</sup>

Although the Society for the Social Advancement of the Native Christian Community was willing, if its funds permitted, to purchase a zamindari, the desirability and practicability of such a project continued to be discussed by other missionaries.<sup>3</sup> The conclusion that emerges from these discussions, as well as from those that followed the proposals of Hill and Kruckeberg, is that the missionaries hesitated to do for their converts even that which they thought to be necessary and just, out of a fear lest there should be any encouragement to an insincere and interested profession of Christianity. Nothing could be farther from truth than the allegation, often made by the Sambad Prabhakar and others,<sup>4</sup> that the missionaries offered temporal inducements in order to gain converts to their cause.

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1. Ibid., p. 5.

2. In 1853 Gyanendramohan Tagore ( the son of Prasannakumar Tagore and the cousin of Devendranath Tagore ) who had embraced Christianity in 1851, offered one of his newly purchased estates for the settlement of native Christians. Although the missionaries expressed satisfaction over his proposal, whether native Christians were settled on that estate is not known. See minutes of the 16th meeting of the Church missionaries of Bengal, 19-21 October 1853— C.M.S. Archives, North India Missions, No. 16.

3. See for instance C.C.O., October 1856, Vol. XXV., pp. 451-454.

4. See Chapter II., pp. 57-60.



### Conclusion

been, at times, based on faulty logic, but their technique and approach were clearly western. Thus in so far as the missionaries evangelised through western education, they considered considerable opposition in Bengal. This was natural; for in spite of the liberalising and enlightening influences which contact with the west and western education brought to bear upon Bengali life and society, religion and tradition had still a very great influence upon man's thought and action. The efforts of the missionaries to gain converts to Christianity were, therefore, bound to elicit the hostile reaction of those whose religion was thus threatened.

The attachment of the Bengalis to their religion was best illustrated in their attitude towards education. Thus while they were eager for English education — and indeed such leaders of the orthodox Hindus as Raja Radhakanta Deb and Diwan Ramkamal Sen were more eager than any one else — the conservative as well as liberal Hindus were anxious to see that English education was not made a means of evangelisation.

The Hindus even utilised the gifts of English education in opposing the missionaries. Thus the rational criticism and historical analysis which the missionaries themselves employed to dislodge Hinduism, were adopted by the Hindus to defend their religion and to criticise the doctrines of Christianity. Their arguments and criticisms might have



been, at times, based on faulty logic, but their technique and approach were clearly western. Thus in so far as the missionaries furthered the cause of western education, they sharpened the weapon of which they themselves were to feel the edge.

It was also the liberal spirit of the west which led Rammohan Roy to advocate the reform of Hinduism. His followers, however, set out to use a reformed Hinduism as a means of counteracting the influence of Christianity. But even here a strict adherence to rationalism obliged these Hindu reformers to modify their position. Thus it was that the very advocates of Vedantic monotheism were led, partly by discussions among themselves, and partly by the criticisms of the missionaries, to reject the doctrine of Vedic infallibility.

In spite of this, the doctrine of Vedantic monotheism was plausible enough to attract Young Bengal — that rising generation of educated Hindus who, under the impulse of liberalism and rationalism, were at first critical of the tenets and practices of Hinduism. In the mid-forties of the nineteenth century these young men allied themselves with the Vedantist and orthodox Hindus in their anti-missionary propaganda. The expectations of Duff and others that Young Bengal would be the forerunners of a generation of educated



and influential converts were thus largely belied.<sup>1</sup> Young Bengal was first an encouragement, then an enigma and ultimately a disappointment to the missionaries.

This explains the change which took place in the attitude of the missionaries in the fifties. Thus instead of concentrating attention upon the younger generation of the Hindus, the missionaries began to appeal to the older generation as well. There was also an abatement of the aggressiveness with which Hinduism was previously denounced. The "Letter" addressed by the missionaries to the Pandits of Bengal in 1851 denotes this change.<sup>2</sup> There was also a shifting of emphasis from English education to vernacular education and the education of the masses.<sup>3</sup>

But the conversion of even a limited number of Hindus raised the question of their relationship with the Hindu society

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1. Of Young Bengal proper only one, K.M. Banerji, was converted to Christianity (1832). Of the other educated high caste Hindus converted to Christianity the most prominent were Lalbehari Dey (1843), Michael Madhusudan Datta (1843) and Gyanendramohan Tagore (1851). These did not, however, belong to the group of youths known as Young Bengal. In 1852 the missionaries published the statistics of converts from the students of Government and missionary educational institutions. These show that out of 112 converts from different provinces 27 were from Government, and 85, from missionary schools. See C.C.O., October 1852, Vol. XXI., p. 475.

2. Supra, pp. 83-84.

3. See minutes of a meeting of Bengal missionaries of the Church Missionary Society, 9-11 March 1858, C.M.S. Archives, North India Mission, No. 11; also Elementary statement respecting the Christian Vernacular Education Society for India, London 1859, pp. 3-4.



in general. It was here that the system of caste came in conflict with the efforts of the missionaries. Conversion to Christianity involved the loss of caste, and the convert was, in consequence, threatened with a number of disabilities. But although the desire to regain the Christian converts to Hinduism led the Hindus to modify some of the most rigorous caste rules, they were nevertheless zealous in enforcing caste disabilities against those converts who did not reembrace Hinduism. Of these disabilities the most iniquitous was the exclusion from any right of inheritance. It needed the intervention of the Government to remove this disability by Act XXI of 1850. This called forth loud protests from orthodox as well as liberal Hindus. It was also in connection with this Act that the Government was erroneously accused of having shown partiality to the missionaries.

The Hindu attitude thus exhibited in and around Calcutta may be regarded as representative of the feelings of the Hindus of rural Bengal. But here again a distinction is to be noted. Whereas the Hindus predominated in and around Calcutta and in the western districts of Bengal, the Muslims were in a majority in its northern and eastern districts. The details of the Bengali Muslims' attitude to missionary activities are not known. There are, however, some instances showing that this



was equally or even more hostile. Thus not only did the Muslims protest against Bentinck's educational resolution of 1835, some of them also supported the Hindu opposition to Act XXI of 1850. Secondly, those missionaries who worked in the mufassal were generally of opinion "that the Mussalmans were more unwilling to listen to the preaching of the Gospel than the Hindus."<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, there were also some occasions on which the Muslims came forward to defend their religion against the criticisms of the missionaries. Thus when in 1839 Rev. C.G. Pfander's works<sup>2</sup> against Islam were distributed in Calcutta, the Muslims were "considerably excited", and their Maulavis carried on discussions with the Christian preachers.<sup>3</sup> Nor was this excitement confined to Calcutta. Thus when on 5 February 1841 the Rev. J.J. Weitbrecht visited a Muslim

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1. "Missionary Conference - discussions and decisions", C.C.O., June 1842, Vol. XI., pp. 373-374. See also C.C.C. of C.M.S. Report, 1841, p. 10.
  2. Pfander was attached to the German mission at Fort Shushy on the confines of Georgia. He visited Tehran, Isfahan, Baghdad and other places and acquired a knowledge of Persian. Expelled from Georgia by the Russian Government he joined, in 1838, the Church Missionary Society at Agra. He wrote four treatises in Persian against Islam, viz., Mizanul-Huq (The Scale of Truth), Tariqul-Hayat (The way of life), Miftahul-Israr (The key of secrets) and Thamarati-Shajarul-Hayat (The fruit of the tree of life). Of these the first was the most important. See for an account of Pfander's controversy with Maulavis Rahmatullah, Kazim Ali and Syed Ali Hasan Church Missionary Intelligencer, 1854, Vol. V., pp. 251-288.
  3. C.C.O., August 1839, Vol. VIII., p. 481.
  4. "Difficulties of preaching the Gospel to Muhammedans", C.C.O., October 1844, Vol. XIII., p. 604.



village in Burdwan he had a controversy with a Maulavi "who came with a large number of followers".<sup>1</sup> Pfander's attacks on Islam "greatly excited" the Muslims "all over Bengal". They prepared "tracts and books in opposition to Christianity" and sent "emissaries in every direction" for conducting anti-missionary propaganda.<sup>2</sup> These Muslim anti-Christian tracts were widely circulated and some of them were found at Dinajpur, near the other extremity of Bengal.<sup>3</sup> About this time the missionaries considered preaching to the Muslims as a "very difficult part" of their work, "not only on account of the hautiness and self-righteousness of the Mussalmans, but also on account of the peculiar objections which they invariably bring forward."<sup>4</sup> The common objections made by Muslims against Christianity were that God could not have a son, that there were four sacred books, viz., the Tawrit, the Zabur, the Inzil and the Quran, each succeeding book abrogating the previous one; that the New Testament possessed by the Christians was not genuine and the Quran was the only portion of the revelation which was extant in its original form; and that Christ was

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1. "Extracts from the journal of the Rev. J.J. Weitbrecht", appended to C.C.C. of C.M.S. Report, 1842, p.77.

2. B.M.S. Report, 1845, p. 9.

3. "Extract from the journal of a missionary at Dinajpur", C.C.A., 7 September 1844, Vol. VI., p. 395.

4. "Difficulties of preaching the Gospel to Muhammadans", C.C.O., October 1844, Vol. XIII., p.604.

3. Supra, pp. 264-267.



no more than a man, at best a prophet.<sup>1</sup> These objections were considered "very annoying", because they could not be "fully replied to, without entering upon the entire range of evidences of Christianity before an audience wholly incapable of appreciating the critical arguments on which the genuineness of the books of the New Testament is based."<sup>2</sup>

The evangelising efforts of the missionaries in the mufassal called forth opposition from yet another quarter, namely the landed aristocracy composed of zamindars and indigo planters, because their interests were threatened by the spread of Christianity.<sup>3</sup> This led the missionaries to examine the effects of the zamindari and indigo-planting systems upon the masses of the population and to advocate reforms in both these systems. As yet the Government had not adopted any general policy of agrarian reform; nor were the rural masses, because of their very wretched condition, capable of ventilating their grievances as against the landed aristocracy. It was therefore the missionaries' advocacy for reform which was mainly responsible for much of the stirrings and agitations of the zamindars and indigo planters during this period.

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1. Ibid., pp. 604-607. ( See also "Outline of the Tract, called 'Godwin Tract', written by Moulavi Abdullah Khansaman, of Calcutta, in refutation of Christianity" in C.C.O., August, 1846, Vol.XV.,pp. 532-543.)

2. Ibid.,p. 607.

3. Supra, pp. 264-267.



Thus in so far as their economic interests were concerned, the rural masses had their real friends in the missionaries. Whatever might have been their religious prejudices, the rural population of Bengal would not have risen in revolt against the missionaries. This may partially explain why the sepoys, inspite of their religious outcry, did not receive mass support in Bengal in 1857-58. Nor could the rebellion find favour with the landed aristocracy, for inspite of their antipathy towards missionary activities, the interests of the Bengali zamindars, not to speak of those of the European indigo planters, were bound up with the continuance of the British rule. And when a popular rising did actually take place in Bengal in 1859-60, it was neither against the missionaries, nor against the Government, but against the system of indigo planting. The part played by the missionaries in this popular revolt has yet to be assessed.

Bhawanipur	1	1.2	-	1	32				
Alipur	1	30	30	-	-				



## APPENDIX A

Statistics of Missions in Bengal ( 1850 ) : Calcutta and its suburbs													
Stations	No.	Societies	When begun	Preachers		Native Churches No. Mem- bers	No. of Native Chris- tians	Boys' Schools			Girls' Schools		
				Missionaries	Cate- chists			Vernacular Schls.& boys	Boarding Schls.& boys	English Schls.& boys	Day Schls.	Boardg. Schls.	Schls. Girls
Nimtala	1	Free Ch. of Scotland	1830	Revs. Dr. Duff, W.S. Mackey, D. Ewart, T. Smith, T. Gardinar, Lalbehari Dey.	6	1 27	52	-	-	1 1309 100	1	100	-
Simulia	1	Ditto.	1845	Revs. J. Ogilvie, J. Anderson, J. Whyte.	1	1 12	19	-	-	1 1305	-	-	-
Mirzapur	1	C.M.S.	1816	Revs. G.G. Guthbert, T. Sandys, J. Long, E.C. Stuart.	1	1 60	200	8	635	1 46	1 350	-	1 24
Lal Bazar Intally Kalinga	1 1 1	B.M.S.	1809 1838 1822	Revs. J. Thomas, G. Pearce, A. Leslie, J. Wenger, C.B. Lewis, C.C. Aratoon.	2 2 2	1 35 1 40 1 50	60 100 100	- - -	- 1 12 -	- 1 80 -	- 1 12 -	- - -	- - -
Circular Road	1	Scottish Ladies Edn. Society	1848	Rev. J. Yule.	1	-	42	-	-	-	-	7 286	1 42
Wellesley Square	1	S.P.G.	1847	Rev. W.O.B. Smith.	1	1 41	124	-	-	-	1 106	-	-
Camac Street	1	Free Ch. of Scotland	1838	Rev. J. Fordyce	1	-	35	-	-	-	-	-	1 50
Bhawanipur	1	L.M.S.	1838	Revs. A.F. Lacroix, J. Paterson, T. Boaz, J.H. Parker, J. Mullens, W.H. Hill, E. Storrow.	1	1 28	92	3	140	1 6	3 775	-	1 32
Alipur	1	St. Paul's Cath. Mission	1850	Rev. C. Davies, J. Yate, T. Moore.	1	-	10	1	87	-	1 80	1 30	-



## APPENDIX A (Continued)

Statistics of Missions in Bengal										(1850)		Vicinity of Calcutta				
Stations	No.	Societies	When begun	Preachers		Native Churches		No. of Native Chris- tians	Boys' Schools			Girls' Schools				
				Missiona- ries	Cate- chists	No.	Members		Vernacular Schls.& boys	Boarding Schls.& boys	English Schls.& boys	Day Schls.	Boardg. Schls.	Schls. Girls	Schls. Girls	
Dum-dum	1	B. M. S.	1816	-	1	1	-	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Krishnapur	1	L. M. S.	1830	-	1	1	9	100	1	15	-	-	-	-	-	-
Thakurpukur	1	C.M.S.	1830	-	2	1	44	283	3	234	1	35	-	-	1	23
Taliganj	2	S.P.G.	1829	Rev.J.T. Babonau.	-	9	507	1594	4	150	1	20	-	-	1	6
Ramakal- chak & Gungree	2	L.M.S.	1826	-	3	2	111	475	5	178	-	-	-	-	-	-
Baripur	1	S.P.G.	1833	Rev.E.Driberg	1	2	281	674	1	45	-	-	-	-	1	-
Mograbat	1	Ditto	1833	Ditto	-	1	196	482	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dhanghata	1	Ditto	1838	Rev.H.J. Harrison	-	1	142	656	1	35	-	-	-	-	-	-
Narshikdar Chak	1	B.M.S.	1829	-	5	1	50	326	1	18	-	-	-	-	-	-
Malaypur	1	Ditto	1845	-	1	1	5	20	1	50	-	-	-	-	-	-
Khari	1	Ditto	1829	-	1	1	45	235	1	30	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lakientipur	1	Ditto	1829	-	3	1	63	250	1	40	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tamluk	1	S.P.G.	1841	-	1	1	50	140	1	20	-	-	-	-	-	-
Howrah	1	B.M.S.	1818	Rev.T.Morgan	1	1	6	15	2	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
Howrah	1	S.P.G.	1820	-	1	1	25	65	1	400	1	12	-	-	-	-
Bali	1	Ditto	1848	Rev.J.Ghosh	-	1	15	78	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Agarpara	1	C.M.S.	1837	-	1	1	28	64	2	110	-	-	1	310	-	-



Statistics of Missions in Bengal ( 1850 ) Stations other than those in Calcutta and its vicinity

Stations	No.	Societies	When begun	Preachers		Native Churches No. Members	No. of Native Chris- tians	Boys' Schools				Girls' Schools			
				Missionaries	Cate- chists			Vernacular Schls.& boys	Boarding Schls.& boys	English Schls.& boys	Day Schls.	Girls' Schools			
												Schls.	Girls		
Serampore	1	B.M.S.	1799	Revs.W.H.Denham J.Robinson, J.Trafford.	4	1 94	200	4 450	-	-	1 200	1	30	1	19
Bansberia	1	Free Ch.of Scotland	1847	Rev.J.Bhatta- charjea.	1	-	2	1 99	-	-	1 196	1	27	-	-
Chinsurah	1	Ditto	1813	Rev.E.Miller, W.C.Fyfe,Rev.P. Chatterjee.	1	-	5	-	-	1 783	1	40	-	-	
Ghoshpara	1	Estd.Ch.of Scotland	1842	-	2	-	9	1 40	-	1 50	1	50	-	-	
Culna	1	Free Ch.of Scotland	1848	-	2	-	2	1 73	-	1 119	-	-	-	-	
Burdwan	1	C.M.S.	1817	Revs.A.Geidt & A.Neale.	4	1 87	164	7 471	1 28	1 30	-	-	1	1	30
Cutwa	1	B.M.S.	1804	Rev.F.Supper	3	1 24	52	-	-	-	1 10	-	-	-	
Birbhum	1	Ditto.	1808	Rev.J.William- son.	4	1 37	85	3 96	1 7	1 20	1	7	1	1	2
Berhampur	1	L.M.S.	1824	Rev.T.Lessel & J.Bradbury.	4	-	60	1 103	-	1 30	1	12	1	1	10
Krishnagar	1	C.M.S.	1831	Revs.C.H.Blum- hardt & S. Hassel.	1	1 38	360	4 166	1 32	1 177	-	-	1	1	26
Chapra	1	Ditto.	1840	Rev.C.Krucke- berg & P. Ansonge.	1	1 92	558	4 154	1 58	-	-	-	1	1	48
Kapasdanga	1	Ditto.	1840	Rev.F.Schurr.	-	1 108	833	4 305	1 65	-	-	-	1	1	68
Ratanpur	2	Ditto.	1840	Rev.C.Lipp & H.Ansonge.	2	1 133	1172	6 321	1 88	-	-	-	1	1	69
Ballabhpur	2	Ditto.	1848	Rev.J.G.Linke	1	1 57	806	3 150	1 60	-	-	-	1	1	69
Solo	1	Ditto.	1840	Rev.C.Bomwetsch	-	1 27	791	4 140	1 60	-	-	-	1	1	76



## APPENDIX A

Statistics of Missions in Bengal ( 1850 )										Stations other than those in Calcutta and its vicinity									
Stations	No.	Societies	When Begun	Preachers		Native Churches		No. of Native Christians	Boys' Schools				Girls' Schools						
				Missionaries	Cate-chists	No.	Mem-bers		Vernacular Schls.& boys	Boarding Schls.& boys	English Schls.& boys	Day Schls.	Schls. Girls	Boardg.Schls. Girls					
Jessore	10	B.M.S.	1800	Revs.J.Parry & J.Sale.	8	10	213	470	4	160	-	-	-	-	1	13			
Barisal	10	Ditto.	1828	Rev.J.C.Page	11	10	181	1250	4	111	-	-	-	-	1	22			
Chittagong	1	Ditto.	1812	Rev.J.Johan-nes	5	2	59	110	2	32	-	-	-	-	1	10			
Dacca	1	Ditto.	1816	Rev.R.Bion & R.Robinson.	4	1	25	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Dinajpur	1	Ditto.	1805	Rev.H.Smylie	1	1	21	68	2	120	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Darjiling	1	Private	1842	Rev.W.Start	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			

These statistics are prepared on the basis of the statistics of missions in India and Ceylon made by the Rev. Joseph Mullens of the London Missionary Society in 1850.



## Appendix B

Photocopies of the folios of the original memorial of the inhabitants of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa (1851) to the Court of Directors, showing Muslim signatures.

( Parchment Record, India  
Office Library, No.100)











Chief Justice  
 Clerk of the Court  
 Sheriff  
 Treasurer  
 Recorder

Mayor

City Clerk

Comptroller

Assessor

Police Judge

Coroner

Recorder

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1834, Jacket C, Box 4, Folder 2.

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Year	Volume	Paper
1831-1832	8	734
	9	735 I.
	10	735 II.
	11	735 III.
	12	735 IV.



Parliamentary Papers (Continued):

Year	Volume	Paper
1837-1838	41	275
1840	37	183
1842	30	385
1843	35	614
	36	300
1844	37	623
1845	34	60, 216, 272.
1846	31	118
1847-1848	48	20
1850	20	C.1203
1852	10	533
	36	361
1852-1853	27	426
	28	479, 556,
		692, 768.
	29	897, 897 I.,
		897 II.
1854	47	29
1857 Session I.	11	51, 111, 127.
1857 Session II.	29	43, 225, 342.
1857-1858	42	71, 72.
	43	253, 322.
1861	44	72
	45	72
1862	40	17

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1852	19	88
1852-1853	13	162
	29	20 II.



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No. 21. Correspondence Relating to the suppression of Dacoity in Bengal. 1855.

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