

ation of education

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the inherited social and mental structures of traditional Indian society in a fairly drastic manner and in the process sapped the confidence and self-reliance of the native. It is usually believed by exponents of Hindutva that theirs is a bold revolt against western hegemony, but my thesis is that it is an imperfect and slavish imitation of that hegemonic system, a caricature.

It is at this point that I propose to deal with a surprisingly sensitive topic - the role of the church in colonial economy and society. Surprising because modern historians of India do not care to attend to it at all. I pick up at random a book, which happens to be Ranajit Guha's *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in*

softening up of the mental fibre of independent communities in order to encourage their voluntary submission to colonial rule.

It can hardly be overlooked that the Church had the support of the colonial government in its mission. When the European powers launched the 'Opium War' in China in the 19th century to open up the country to the deluge of opium to be released by them, the Chinese rulers resisted for the most natural of reasons. China's defeat enabled the European powers to force on her a vastly unequal treaty, with provisions like drastic reduction in customs tariff, cession of territory, and significantly "freedom for missionary activities".

When the hard-pressed peasantry

loathing, outrage and patronizing pity. Besides, these often betrayed a woeful ignorance of the finer spiritual speculations and intellectual achievements of the ancient Hindus.

As early as the first decades of the 19th century Raja Ram Mohun Roy faced the hostile propaganda of missionaries like Carey and Marshman against Hinduism. Ram Mohun brought out *Precepts of Jesus, Guide to Peace and Happiness in 1820*, explaining the irrationality and hollowness of certain teachings of the church which he considered contrary to the gospels of Jesus. He also brought the war into the camp of the enemy by pointing out in *An Appeal to the Christian Public* that beliefs like that in the Holy Trinity were not warranted by the Bible. But even Alexander Duff who received Ram Mohun's help in founding his school in Calcutta made a frontal attack on Hinduism including the Vedanta in his *India and India's Missions in 1840*. The *Tattva Bodhini Patrika*, the organ of the Brahmans, replied to these charges in a series of articles (*Ram Mohun Shmaram*, published by Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Smriti-Raksha Samiti, edited by Pulin Bihari Sen et al. in 1989, pp 84-88).

But the climax was reached in the attack by Reverend Hastie, principal of the General Assembly's Institution, run by Scottish General Missionary Board. In the pages of *The Statesman* he attacked Hinduism as betraying "mere animal licentiousness", "senseless mummeries", "loathsome impurities, and bloody barbarous sacrifices". He went on to say that "debasing idolatry" produced "a mass of shrinking cowards, unscrupulous deceivers, of bestial idlers, filthy songsters, and degraded women", and their only hope of salvation lay in embracing Christianity. It is significant that Reverend Hastie in the same of breath referred to the benefits of the "English sense of justice", "the invincibility of the new power", "our English enlightenment" and "powerful scholars of Europe".

English rule had freed them from the Muslim yoke. Evidently the idea of Hindu nationhood emerged out of an intellectual compromise with the reality of colonial power.

It is hardly a matter for surprise that in his powerful fictional work, Anadha Math, translated practically into every modern Indian language, where he proclaims the gospel of Hindu nationalism, he also identifies the decaying Muslim rule as the chief obstacle to Hindu regeneration and perceives the colonial regime as "a divinely ordained tutelage" for the rise and education of modern Hindus as a nation. Thus, both a growing sense of inferiority, and of mortified self-respect, combined with an aspiration for new strength in a newly and narrowly constructed nationhood, had been legacies of a hegemonic colonial culture. And even in the heyday of swadeshi terrorist offensive against British rule, Bankim Chandra's *Ananda Math* had as much prestige with the revolutionists as the *Gita*.

The excluded Muslim elite naturally took to the ideal of a pan-Islamic qaum, largely under Wahhabi influence. It is significant that Maulana Mohammed Ali categorically rejected nationalism as the path of salvation for India during the heyday of the Khilafat movement. He went on to assert stoutly: "God made mankind and the Devil made the nation". Most significantly he warned against the temptation of a revival of the lost domination of any community, be it Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs. (Amalendu De, *Samaj O Sanskriti*, Kolkata, 1981, pp 47-49). But the Muslim reaction had little impact on the powerful under-tow of Hindu revivalist thought in the course of Indian nationalism.

This is the excruciating dilemma of modernity in India. It had awoken into consciousness with a profoundly confused notion of national identity, under the manipulative pressures of colonial rule. In my little monograph off early 19th century Bengal I had had an occasion to underline the fact that the potentiality of a truly democratic, revolutionary and secular nationalism implicit in the 'Young Bengal' movement did not find much favour with the educated modern intelligentsia of Bengal primarily

