

**KNOWLEDGE AND GOVERNANCE: POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION
OF THE INDIAN CHILD WITHIN COLONIAL SCHOOLING
AND NATIONALIST CONTESTATIONS IN INDIA (1870-1925)**

by
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(History)
in the University of Michigan
2010

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2010

*I dedicate this dissertation to
Ma and Baba*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing and completion of this dissertation would have been difficult without the generous encouragement and support of many individuals and institutions. First and foremost I would like to thank my co-chairs Tom Trautmann and Sumathi Ramaswamy for their support all through graduate school and sharing their vast wealth of knowledge of South Asian history with me. Tom Trautmann has been an advisor and a teacher that any student would covet to be associated with. He has given me his intellectual support, constant encouragement, generous care, and above all, steadfast belief without which it would have been hard for me to succeed in overcoming the various challenges of graduate school life. As an advisor, scholar and human being he is exemplary and to me a point of reference on how an academic should be. Sumathi Ramaswamy boosted me to engage with new avenues and possibilities for this dissertation. The constant rigor she put me through helped me polish my conceptual approach and become a better writer. I thank both Tom and her for reading every word of the numerous drafts of this dissertation that I sent them with patience and meticulous attention to detail.

My dissertation has also been enriched by the discussions I had with the other members of my committee-- Mrinalini Sinha and Manishita Dass. Minnie has the exceptional quality of a gifted teacher who can ignite a student's mind. My

discussions with her encouraged me to approach some of my research questions from newer angles, ones that I had not conceived of before. Her passion for History is infectious and has energized me to approach my research with fresh vigor. Manishita has always been very supportive, warm and friendly. The long hours we spent together over cups of coffee thrashing out my ideas in the formative chapter drafts helped me sharpen my analysis and write a cohesive narrative. To my all my committee members I express my profound gratitude. The strengths of my dissertation stem from their heartfelt efforts and dedicated engagement in this project.

The genesis of this dissertation lies in my M.Phil thesis at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi. I owe special thanks to my teachers Majid Siddiqi, Neeladri Bhattacharya, Muzaffar Alam and Sabyasachi Bhattacharya for shaping my intellectual trajectory at various points of this research. They have always been generous with their time, sharing their knowledge and offering constructive criticism. Their classes have built my foundations of History and modeled my love for the discipline. At the University of Michigan, I wish to thank Kathleen Canning and Michele Mitchell for offering the extraordinary graduate seminar *History 615* in Fall 2003. I was introduced to the fascinating world of “the body” as a theme of historical analysis for the first time in their class. This is one lesson that I will spend exploring for many years to come in my academic scholarship. I also thoroughly enjoyed and felt intellectually enriched by participating in the graduate seminar on gender offered by Nancy Hunt and Helmut Puff in Winter 2005. Barbara Metcalf

provided meticulous critiques on the initial chapter drafts of this project. I thank Farina Mir for being extremely supportive and accommodating of my schedule as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for her classes when I was finishing my dissertation. From her I have learnt several invaluable lessons of pedagogical methodology that I will use in my own classroom in future. I owe a huge debt to my teachers both in JNU and Michigan and offer them my tribute for intellectually grooming me.

My project has benefitted from the research guidance that several scholars have provided over the years of its gestation period. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to Dipesh Chakrabarty and Gautam Bhadra for providing valuable leads to locate several archival resources that helped me shape this dissertation in its early stages. Swapna Banerjee has shown a great deal of interest in my research right from our first meeting and has always eagerly shared her immense knowledge on Bengali children's literature. I have discussed this project with Pratik Chakrabarti since its very inception as an M.Phil thesis. He has always enthusiastically provided intellectual fodder towards molding its contours over the years. Aparna Vaidik has patiently read several chapter drafts with a pair of critical eyes and helped me polish my arguments. She has provided me with a sense of belonging to a scholarly community which has helped me thrive intellectually.

Institutional support for my project has come from various sources. The research and writing for this dissertation was made possible with the financial support of the Department of History Dissertation Fellowship (2010); Barbour Fellowship (2008-09); Rackham International Research Award (Fall 2007); John H. D. Arms

Graduate Student Award (2007); Rackham Humanities Research Fellowship (2006-07); International Institute Pre-dissertation Research Awards (2004); Michigan Fellowship in History (2004); N. R. Michigan Fellowship in History (2003- 2004) and the Mamata Bhattacharyya Graduate Fellowship in History (2003). These fellowships helped me conduct research in various libraries and archives in India and Britain. The assistance of library and staff at the Oriental and India Office Collections, School of Oriental and African Studies, the Institute of Education at the University of London in London, the Nehru Memorial and Museum Library, National Archives of India, Central Secretariat Library in New Delhi and the West Bengal State Archives, the National Library (especially Ashim Mukhopadhyay), Center for Studies in Social Sciences and Sahitya Parishat in Calcutta was valuable. The librarians at the Hatcher Graduate Library and the Interlibrary Loan service at the University of Michigan are simply excellent and the most cooperative in their profession.

I thank my friends in Ann Arbor, New Delhi, Varanasi and London who not only helped me surmount the various unexpected challenges during my research but also brought cheer and maintained a sense of balance in my life. Hemant Kannan exemplifies the spirit of a great friend, ever generous with his time, company, humor and cooking the best *biryani* in Ann Arbor. I cannot imagine a life in Ann Arbor without his friendship. Clapperton Mavhunga, Uthara Suvrathan, Howard Tsai, Phanindra Somraj, Pranothi Jalakam, Nagesh Belludi, Sridevi Nair, Navaneetha Mokkal-Maruthur, Swapna Kollu, Areeta Bridgemohan, Blake Charlebois, Huzefa Khalil and Simon Walsh have made life in graduate school enjoyable and lively.

Vaidyanatha Gundlupet became a close confidant and lent a patient ear during the trying times of this dissertation. The cozy get-togethers Aswin Punathambekar and Mandira Banerjee hosted helped me to unwind from the rigors of dissertation writing and relax over delicious food. Lynn Noellert provided the care of a mother and the supportive hand of a friend. In London Abhishek Amar Singh, Shweta Sachdeva Jha, Shalendra Yadav and Ruchi Khurana provided the best company I could have ever asked for. Bhawna and Gaurav Rohela were the most gracious hosts who opened their home and hearts to me. Without these friends living in London would have hardly had the charm that it did. Diwakar and Chandrahas Singh stood by me at every step of the way during my research in India. During my research trip to Kolkata, Ranjita Dawn was an immense help in locating several archival education records while with Maroona Murmu I shared unforgettable moments of laughter and frolic. I am extremely lucky to have Mondira Bhattacharya as my friend for almost two decades now. Right from our schooldays where our friendship began until the present she has believed in me and all my pursuits by providing a strong undercurrent of strength even when vast geographical distances separate us.

I wish to thank my parents Topesh and Purabi Topdar and my brother Akash Topdar for their unconditional love, encouragement and personal investment in my education. My parents have taught me to value knowledge from a very young age. All through my life I have seen them give up their own share of comforts and live through hardships without a second thought just to ensure that my brother and I received the best education. This dissertation is a humble attempt at honoring their

efforts and explaining the long absence away from home. As I finish this dissertation I miss the presence of my grandfather Bireshwar Chakrabarty, a Professor of History at the Calcutta University, who would have celebrated every moment of this achievement if he was in our midst today. He introduced me to the world of books and sparked my fascination for History through his captivating narrations. During the research trips to Kolkata my extended family, the Topdars and the Chakrabartys, provided support in every diverse form possible. I cannot even begin to describe their kindness. They provided generosity and warmth despite the little time I could solely spend with them.

Finally, I want to thank Hemanth Kadambi for encouraging me to take the first steps to apply to graduate school at Michigan. He has provided intellectual and emotional sustenance and uncomplainingly lived through the socially isolated life I spent while writing this dissertation. The loving support and joy he brings has made graduate school and life in Ann Arbor worth every minute.

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge and Governance: Political Socialization of the Indian Child within Colonial Schooling and Nationalist Contestations in India (1870-1925)

by

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This dissertation examines two sites of knowledge production in colonial India between 1870 and 1925 that specifically targeted the Indian child. The first site was the colonial school and curriculum, specifically, textbooks and physical education. The second site that I explore lay *outside* the school-walls in the form of the nationalist pedagogy of Bengali children’s magazines. I highlight the political significance of the Indian child in the cultural projects of colonialism and nation building. This dissertation orbits around four major themes: the colonial child; colonial school curriculum; body as a political site; and education as contestation.

By late nineteenth-century as Indian nationalism developed, the native child increasingly became a political being and his/her politicization considered a “sign of progress.” Against this background the British colonial state devised methods to extend greater control over processes of curriculum selection and proscription to combat its anxieties over “sedition” and generate loyal imperial subjects. I highlight

the corporeality of British colonialism by uncovering the child's body as a site of colonial control through exploring physical education. The colonial school was involved in the project of corporeal re-construction by teaching habits of discipline and cleanliness to children-- integral to the Raj's social reform agenda. Physical education was crucial to de-politicize "seditious" native bodies. I contend that the child's body was also a site of nation-building. For the nationalists the child embodied a political space where they contested colonial cultural projects and undertook their projects of remasculinizing the youth through renewed emphasis on physical culture and revival of indigenous martial sports.

Education was not confined to classroom pedagogical relationships alone but also shaped by its social contexts. I problematize colonial knowledge production by emphasizing it as a contested terrain since the late nineteenth-century. I study contestations at two levels. Firstly, through the creation of parallel sites of knowledge production, specifically Bengali children's literature as nationalist projects that interrogated school curriculum and contested ideologies defining colonial educational practices. Secondly, I examine the challenge students and teachers posed to colonial authority in the Bombay Presidency in the 1890s and in Bengal as part of the *Swadeshi* movement (1905-1908).

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This dissertation examines the various loci of colonial knowledge production-- both institutional and alternative pedagogies-- that specifically targeted the Indian child. In this context, I examine two sites of knowledge production for children in colonial Bengal between 1870 and 1925. The first site I explore is the institution of the colonial school through its curriculum, specifically, the textbook and physical education. The second site of knowledge production for children lay *outside* the walls of the school in the form of the nationalist pedagogy of Bengali children's magazines. Shifting away from the psychoanalytical thrust of childhood studies in India, I instead focus on the colonial child as a subject of historical inquiry and demonstrate the relevance of this approach. My dissertation emphasizes colonialism as a cultural project. The central question I raise is: How did the Indian child fit into the cultural project of colonialism? To investigate this question I examine the native child as the focus of two simultaneous and mutually implicated pedagogical projects-- of British colonial governance and the creation of colonized subjectivities on one hand and of nationalist citizenship engineering on the other-- each shaped by and reflecting its own anxieties. Four major themes provide the leitmotif to this dissertation and connect the chapters with each other. The themes are: first, the colonial child;

second, the colonial school curriculum; third, the body as a political site; and finally, education as contestation.

Childhood as a category of analysis remains largely unexplored in Indian historiography.¹ Children and childhood have remained, as Satadru Sen describes it, on the academic “periphery” despite the fact that an investigation on the subject can open up the space to understand the “historical processes of colonization, experimentation and nationalist reclamation from a new angle.”² In this context, children and childhood can be perceived to be another fragment within the category of the marginalized and “subaltern” whose history needs to be written. Much of the challenges to explore children and childhood as subjects of historical analysis in South Asian history stems from the limitations of the “archives” in uncovering the child’s “voice.” However, despite these archival complexities and constraints the child has to be highlighted as a category of historical analysis. This dissertation is an attempt in this direction.

Most of existing historical scholarship that has focused on children and their experiences are those related to the lives of British and European children within the imperial setup of India.³ Overlapping with the trend in western academia, the early

¹ Though definitions of childhood differ, scholars concur on two points: first, viewing childhood as a chronological stage in human life when children do not work, experience extensive adult supervision and have their own social spaces distinct from those of adults. The second views childhood as a biologically bounded stage of life recognized in all societies. For a detailed discussion, see Julia Grant, “Children versus Childhood: Writing Children into the Historical Record,” *History of Education Quarterly* 45, no.3 (2005): 468-490.

² Satadru Sen, *Colonial Childhoods: The Juvenile Periphery of India, 1850-1945* (London: Anthem Press, 2005). For an earlier scholarly work on childhood in India see Judith Walsh, *Growing up in British India: Indian Autobiographies on Childhood and Education under the Raj* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983).

³ See Denise Comer, “‘White Child is Good, Black His [or Her] Slave’: Women, Children, and Empire in Early Nineteenth-Century India,” *European Romantic Review* 16, no. 1 (2005): 39-58; Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Dane

decades of childhood studies in India was dominated mostly by psychology, specifically psychoanalysis.⁴ In many of these works the historical processes under which childhood has emerged and developed was marginalized.⁵ Historiographies which have focused on Indian children, albeit tangentially, were confined to the field of gender studies focusing on the vectors of domesticity (particularly in relation to the family and mother-child relationships),⁶ colonial legal reforms regulating socio-religious traditions⁷ and issues related to women's bodies and biological reproduction

Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); David Arnold, "European Orphans and Vagrants in India in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 7, no. 2 (1979): 104-127; Austin D'Souza, *Anglo Indian Education: A Study of its Origins and Growth in Bengal upto 1960* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976).

⁴ See Ashis Nandy, *Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983); "Reconstructing Childhood: A Critique of the Ideology of Adulthood," in *Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness*, Ashis Nandy (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 56-76; Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World: A Psycho-Analytical Study of Childhood and Society in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981); Judith Walsh, *Growing up in British India*.

⁵ For instance, Sudhir Kakar, *The Inner World*.

⁶ See Nupur Chaudhuri, "Memsahibs and Motherhood in Nineteenth Century Colonial India," *Victorian Studies* 31, no. 4 (1988): 517-535; Sonia Amin, "Childhood and Role Models in the Andar Mahal," in *Embodying Violence: Communalising Women's Sexuality in South Asia*, ed. Kumari Jayawardena, Malathi de Alwis (London, New Jersey: Zed Books, 1996), 71-88; Alison Blunt, "Imperial Geographies of Home: British Domesticity in India, 1886-1925," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24 (1999): 421-440; Lionel Caplan, "Iconographies of Anglo-Indian Women: Gender Constructs and Contrasts in a Changing Society," *Modern Asian Studies* 34 no. 4 (2000): 863-892; Judith Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India: What Women Learned when Men Gave them Advice* (Lanham, MD : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004); Indrani Chatterjee, ed., *Unfamiliar Relations: Family and History in South Asia* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Swapna Bannerji, "Down Memory Lane: Representations of Domestic Workers in Middle Class Personal Narratives of Colonial Bengal," *Journal of Social History* 37 no.3 (2004): 681-708; Swapna Banerjee, "Child, Mother, and Servant: The Discourse of Motherhood and Domestic Ideology in Colonial Bengal" in Avril Powell and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley eds. *Rhetoric and Reality: Gender and Colonial Experience in South Asia* (New Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁷ Geraldine Forbes, "Women and Modernity: The Issue of Child Marriage in India," *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 2 (1979): 407-419; Janaki Nair, "Prohibited Marriage: State Protection and the Child Wife," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 29 (1995): 157-186; Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife Hindu Nation: Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism* (London: Hurst, 2001); Himani Bannerji, "Age of Consent and Hegemonic Social Reform," in *Gender and Imperialism* ed. Clare Midgley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 21-44; Judy Whitehead, "Modernising the Motherhood Archetype: Public Health Models and the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 29 (1995): 187-209.

entailing childbearing and childcare.⁸ The focus on the relation of the child to the nation and his/her political socialization in the process of nation building has been limited in this scholarship. While many of these historical studies are seminal in their contribution, in these accounts children remained subsumed in a small subset within the larger set of gender studies, in the process marginalizing them as the subjects of analysis.

The idiom of childhood figures in most studies of imperialism as a metaphor of colonial paternalism (for instance, the powerful characterization of the native as “childish”). In British liberal discourse the Indian subject was confirmed to be a misguided being and, as a corollary, a subject of redemption. James Mill’s characterization of India at a stage of infancy in the path of “progress to civilization” or Charles Trevelyan’s observation that India would “grow to man’s estate” brings out the intimate entanglement of the idea of childhood with imperial thought and project.⁹ In the colonial imagination the humanity of the ordinary Indian was taken to be “already there”-- it had to be awakened and nurtured by education to be qualified to embark on the path of civilization. This was a task which the colonialists had taken upon themselves to execute. The act of imparting knowledge to the natives involved a deep sense of paternal generosity. In the widely held colonial imagination the foremost trait of the Indians was that they were children. Because Indians were seen

⁸ Dagmar Engels, “Politics of Childbirth: British and Bengali Women in Contest, 1890-1930,” in *Society and Ideology: Essays in South Asian History*, ed. Peter Robb (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 222-; Barbara Ramusack, “Embattled Advocates: The Debate over Birth Control in India, 1920-40,” *Journal of Women’s History* 1, no. 2 (1989): 34-64.

⁹ James Mill, *History of British India* (New York: Chelsea House, 1968), Vol. 2: 107; Charles Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* (London: 1838), 187.

as children, they had to be handled in certain ways. In an age when “sparing the rod” was equivalent to “spoiling the child” relations with a race of “childish” people justified the involvement of considerable degree of force.

The image of the adult Indian as a teachable child fitted well with the British self-perception of being a “strong masculine” all-knowing leader. In this equation the supposed childishness of the native had a special value. As Asish Nandy has demonstrated, the converse of masculinity was not just femininity and effeminacy but also childishness. By gaining an upper hand in this gendered equation the British colonialists ascribed to themselves the legitimacy not only to lead but also to guide the Indian-- as a father would guide his child-- and the right to punish if colonial authority was challenged to make the latter recognize the error of his behavior. The role of the colonialist as the competent guardian is evident in John Stuart Mill’s writings where he urged the British to establish a government that would serve as a “means of gradually training the people to walk alone.”¹⁰ The trope of the “childish native” played out in assumptions that the native population was eager to learn and “willing” to be impressed. *The Pall Mall Gazette*, a British newspaper, clearly expressed this view as early as 1873:

It would probably be difficult to find any population so teachable and so much interested in receiving instructions as large sections of the natives of India. There is no population on earth so completely involved with the doctrine that it is the duty of the ruler to govern, and that his duty ought to be obeyed...We have accordingly *a government ready and willing to teach, a people willing to be taught.*¹¹

¹⁰ John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1872), 16.

¹¹ Cited in John Murdoch, *Hints on Government Education in India with Special Reference to Schoolbooks* (Vepport: Falmer Press, 1873), 1. (Emphasis mine)

“A government ready and willing to teach”

Moving beyond the metaphor of childhood this dissertation began with the question: What was the political significance of the child in the colonial project? I examine this question by investigating a key locus of knowledge production and dissemination for children-- the colonial school. Building on Bernard Cohn's scholarship, I conceptualize the colonial school as one of the “cultural technologies of rule,” which deployed techniques of governance that involved minimalistic or no coercive measures such as military aggression and war.¹² Scholars such as Nicholas Dirks and Bernard Cohn have argued that while the power of superior arms, military organization, political power or economic wealth formed an integral part of the early phase of colonization, in the subsequent stages, it was equally sustained and strengthened by ideological dominance through the creation of consent that justified colonial occupation.¹³ Colonial education was thus a means of preserving not only the colonial state's cognitive authority but also political authority.¹⁴ Cohn's analytical framework which privileges the creation of consent as a key component of colonial rule is situated against Ranajit Guha's contention that colonial rule was sustained through brute force as opposed to persuasion and hegemony.¹⁵ Although Cohn brought focus on colonialism as a project consolidated by cultural technologies, his

Though primarily a missionary, Murdoch was an important figure and his books were read widely in India within the academic community and referred to in official discussions.

¹² Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹³ *Ibid.*, ix. See the Foreword to the book by Nicholas Dirks.

¹⁴ Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, “Introduction: The Contested Terrain of Education,” in *The Contested Terrain: Perspectives on Education in India*, ed. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1998), 7.

¹⁵ Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

emphasis has been confined to the adult world leaving children invisible in his analytic. Among recent scholars Sanjay Seth emphasizes modern education as an important site of colonial governmentality. He contends that colonial education was a form of governmental rationality which was directed at regulating populations and producing subjectivities through a range of disciplines and practices instead of being coded and represented primarily in public law or through sovereignty. Seth argues that colonial schooling was vested with state power which made it both the site and means (both in terms of location and mechanism) for disciplining and regulating the native population.¹⁶

Building on the works of these scholars, I argue that the question of knowledge production and dissemination was crucial in the process of colonization. The colonial state's engagement with education increased considerably from the 1870s, which forms the starting point of my project. Education policy under Macaulay's "Filtration" theory (1835) limited state participation only to the higher education of Indian elites who would then instruct the masses.¹⁷ The Woods Despatch (1854) highlighted the slow pace of filtration and announced that the state would take greater responsibility for education at all levels.¹⁸ The Hunter Commission Report (1882) advocated increased state involvement in education by

¹⁶ Sanjay Seth, "Governmentality, Pedagogy, Identity: The Problem of the 'Backward Muslim' in Colonial India," in *Beyond Representations: Colonial and Postcolonial Constructions of Indian Identity*, ed. Crispin Bates (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 68.

¹⁷ Thomas Babington Macaulay advanced the idea of "downward filtration" in his famous Minute of 1835, which proposed that the parliamentary grant given towards education be used to cultivate a class of anglicized Indians who would not only serve as cultural brokers between the British and their Indian subjects, but who would also refine and enrich the vernacular languages and thereby render them fit for imparting Western learning to the masses.

¹⁸ S. N. Mukerji, *History of Education in India Modern Period* (Baroda: Acharya Book Depot, 1966).

asserting that the government would not cede western style education to missionaries and instead create an education system supported by state subsidies. Though between 1880 and 1890 Indian initiatives in education grew, the state directly ran or subsidized most primary and secondary schools until 1902.¹⁹ Education was an important component of the functioning of the modern colonial state. This was more so in the late nineteenth century, particularly in the decade of the 1890s, when the colonial state's intervention into regulating curriculum and thwarting the spread of "sedition" among students, against the background of an emerging nationalism, became very evident.

Drawing from the scholarship of education theorists (M. F. D. Young, Michael Apple and Krishna Kumar), as well as historians (J. A. Mangan, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Nita Kumar, Sanjay Seth) I conceptualize the colonial school as an essential site and means of cultural distribution in society. I understand the process of cultural distribution through colonial schools by using J. A. Mangan's concept of political socialization.²⁰ The role of the school in colonial society was to initiate the young to its acceptable forms of behavior, cultural consciousness, social order and values, and to train them to adjust to its economic, political and military requirements. Political socialization of children was an important part of this process.

Mangan contends that political socialization is the process of inducting children through education into the colonial state's normative rules and promoting

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ J. A. Mangan, *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialization in British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

dominant ideologies.²¹ He conceives political socialization in two possible ways. Narrowly conceived, it is “the deliberate inculcation of political knowledge, values and practices by agents and agencies formally charged with this responsibility.” In its broader scope political socialization includes both political and non-political forms of learning (imparted through formal and informal means) which affects the learning of politically relevant individual and group behavior.²² The process of political socialization therefore involves the power to define relationships including how an individual was to situate herself/himself in relation to other members of the larger social community.²³

Mangan argues that induction during childhood through the process of political socialization is crucial. This is because children and youth have a greater facility to adapt to new cultural changes. As a consequence, strenuous efforts have always been made by the dominant groups to socialize the youth. This is a process one can observe in the context of British colonization too. Mangan contends that the presentation of carefully selected images of superiority, the constant repetition of clichés of imperial beneficence, the confident and unchallenged depictions of “native” inadequacy, all played a crucial role in establishing lasting notions of superiority and inferiority in the impressionable minds of the young recipients.²⁴ In the imperial context, the political and cultural socialization of children and youth had been undertaken by a wide range of mediums of colonial propaganda such as

²¹ Mangan, *Making Imperial Mentalities*, 1.

²² *Ibid.*, 2

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

children's literature and tales, theater, films, newspapers, advertisements and so on. Here, the colonial classroom too can be envisaged as one of the crucial locations of subject formation. The process becomes all the more crucial because at this stage of growth, the habit of analysis and criticism of a child is in a very rudimentary condition, making their minds impressionable.

Schools did not simply create literate subjects, but also shaped children's bodies and minds in terms of a colonial agenda. Therefore, I focus on two components of the colonial curriculum--school textbooks and physical education--as sites to promote colonial ideology and forces to legitimize colonial rule.

The Colonial School Curriculum

Colonial education policies and educational institutions have been the object of study by a number of leading scholars.²⁵ On the other hand, very little has been written on the curriculum of colonial schools. Gauri Viswanathan's seminal work on the introduction of English literature in Indian universities as a study of British culture and an instrument of discipline is among the few to investigate colonial curriculum.²⁶ Specific studies on school textbooks mostly relate to post-colonial India, such as a comparative study of post independence school textbooks in India and Pakistan by Krishna Kumar and Veronique Benei's study on teaching nationalism

²⁵ See Aparna Basu, *The Growth of Education and Political Development in India, 1898-1920* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1974); Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); Nita Kumar, *Lessons from Schools: A History of Education in Banaras* (Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000).

²⁶ Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Studies and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

in schools in contemporary Maharashtra.²⁷ Among recent works that focus on the colonial period, Manu Goswami's discussion of the issue of "colonial pedagogical consolidation" is significant.²⁸ Though Goswami's work is primarily a study of the socio-spatial restructuring under colonialism, she makes interesting observations on how post-1857, modern disciplines such as geography, mensuration, arithmetic, and mechanical arts were introduced in schools and vocational institutions to secure the state's monopoly over sociospatial relations. In this project of colonial pedagogical consolidation, the science of geography had both a pedagogical and disciplining function.²⁹ My project aligns with the kind of renewed emphasis that the colonial curriculum has received from scholars in the past decade.³⁰

I build my examination of the colonial school curriculum drawing from Gauri Viswanathan's argument that the colonial curriculum was not an objective essentialized entity but a discourse, a process, and a mechanism through which knowledge was socially distributed and culturally validated.³¹ In terms of curriculum, the school textbook enjoyed a certain symbolic value. The textbook is present in schools as a symbol of bureaucratic control. Being prescribed by the highest

²⁷ Krishna Kumar, *Prejudice and Pride: School Histories of the Freedom Struggle in India and Pakistan* (New Delhi: Viking, 2001); Veronique Benei, "Teaching Nationalism in Maharashtra Schools," in *The Everyday State and Modern Society in India*, ed. C. J. Fuller and Veronique Benei (Delhi: Social Science Press, 2000): 194-221; *Schooling Passions: Nation, History and Language in Contemporary Western India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

²⁸ Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 134.

³⁰ For an exploration of maps, globes, geography as part of the colonial pedagogy in schools in the Madras Presidency see Sumathi Ramaswamy, "Catastrophic Cartographies: Mapping the Lost Continent of Lemuria," *Representations* 67 (1999): 92-129; "History at Land's End: Lemuria in Tamil Spatial Fables," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 3 (2000): 575-602; "Maps and Mother Goddess in Modern India," *Imago Mundi* 53 (2001): 97-114.

³¹ Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*

bureaucratic authority textbooks relate to the distribution of state authority in the education system.³²

Colonial schooling helps to understand how those in positions of power defined “knowledge” and how the access to this knowledge enabled the state to consolidate and assert its power over its subjects. Much of this power was extended because the British colonial state was fully aware of the potential dangers that western education could create. This is evident from the earliest writings dating back to Charles Trevelyan who warned in 1838 that imparting knowledge to the natives was tantamount to giving them power, “of which they will make the first use against ourselves.”³³ Decades later in 1873 John Murdoch would echo similar sentiments:

It cannot be denied that the education of such an empire is fraught with momentous consequences. “Knowledge is power,” but it may be used for evil as well as good. Unless controlled by moral principle, it may prove a curse-- not a blessing.³⁴

Mangan understands the processes of the state’s attempt to consolidate its power over education by emphasizing the role of stereotypes in the colonial curriculum in shaping racial images of dominance and deference. On the role of the colonial school textbook Mangan highlights two points. First, he observes that image construction in the colonial school textbook had the potential of shaping the cultural consciousness of students. The racial stereotypes that textbook images created provided explanations of relationships and patterns of expected behavior. Creating

³² Krishna Kumar, “Origins of India’s Textbook Culture,” *Comparative Education Review* 32, no. 4 (1988): 453.

³³ Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India*, 187.

³⁴ Murdoch, *Hints on Government Education in India*, 1.

stereotypes therefore became a means of rationalizing, legitimizing and controlling human action.³⁵ In this respect, the colonial school curriculum became what Mangan calls an “ideological statement.”³⁶ The colonial school preserved and distributed what was perceived to be “legitimate knowledge” (something that we all must have). By doing so it conferred cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups. The act of imposing meaning thereby also became an instrument of social control.³⁷ Second, the colonial curriculum was a medium for expressing political relationships. By its power to establish the parameters of acceptable knowledge, the colonial school textbook promoted and sustained political ideologies and determined the range of permissible interpretations.³⁸ The “political agenda”³⁹ of colonial education has been shown explicitly by scholars such as John Mackenzie.⁴⁰ Mackenzie demonstrates how in the nineteenth century, at the height of Empire, the composite curriculum of History, Geography, Religion and English was the main thrust of British public school education. For instance, the school curriculum was shaped to promote larger concerns of patriotism, service to the Empire, adulation of the monarchy and imperial concerns. Disciplines such as History and Geography were used to promote a series of simplistic narratives of “development,” civilizational “progress” and “racial

³⁵ J. A. Mangan, *Imperial Curriculum: Racial Images and Education in the British Colonial Experience*, New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 7.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ This is a position taken by education theorists as well. For instance see Michael Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 72.

³⁸ Mangan, *Imperial Curriculum*, 17.

³⁹ I borrow this term from Krishna Kumar, *The Political Agenda of Education: Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991).

⁴⁰ John Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 174.

superiority.”⁴¹ These fundamental concepts were instilled in British children in the public school from a young age and enacted in the daily performance of duties towards the Empire and interactions with natives within an imperial setup.⁴² On the issue of the interlinkages between power and knowledge production, Nita Kumar asserts that the dominance of the colonial state in defining knowledge lay in its power to rename and reorganize, and pass that knowledge on to the next generation. She notes that the colonial state used its power to name every value on its side as pro-civilizational and those on the other side as pre or anti-civilizational.⁴³ Thus, the colonial school curriculum also provided the much needed ideological impetus for the civilizing mission.

The significance of colonial education in nineteenth century India lies in the fact that the colonial school opened up the space for multiple mobilities. First, the school curriculum was deployed as a mechanism that allowed the mobility of “modern” western knowledge and the transfer of ideas. In an age when western education was seen as the harbinger of modernity and held the promise of social and economic upward mobility, colonial schooling provided a certain edge to its students which traditional systems of schooling such as the *pathshala*, *tal* and *madrassa* did not offer. Scholars such as Kazi Shahidullah have noted the enormous degree of changes that the colonial school ushered in. For instance, printed books were not used in the *pathshala* and lessons were imparted through oral tradition. The *pathshala* curriculum

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² For a brilliant piece of historical work on the subject see Patricia Hayes, “‘Cocky’ Hahn and the ‘Black Venus’: The Making of a Native Commissioner in South West Africa, 1915-46,” *Gender and History* 8, no. 3 (1996): 364-392.

⁴³ Kumar, *Lessons from Schools*, 15.

was mainly secular, designed to meet the practical requirements of rural society. Thus, the stress was mainly on reading, writing, arithmetic, accounting, letter composition, elementary Sanskrit grammar, and *zamindari* and *mahajani* accounts.⁴⁴ Daughters of zamindars were given the necessary education required to manage estates so that they could take charge in the event of widowhood.⁴⁵ *Pathshalas* did not have the elements of a classroom introduced through “modern” western education, such as a fixed class routine, timetable, school calendar, annual examinations or attendance registers.⁴⁶ The *guru* (teacher) wielded supreme authority, had the freedom to determine lesson content and did not have to submit to a higher authority or external control.⁴⁷

Colonial education, on the other hand, introduced a textbook-centered and examination-oriented pedagogical setup regulated by a state-controlled Education Department. The establishment of the Company Raj and the dominance of the Anglicist viewpoint over the Orientalists saw the introduction of English as the language of governance and colonial authority. By the mid nineteenth century English came to be associated with education and its knowledge was seen as a sign of social prestige. This meant a gradual fading away and demise of the pre-colonial literary heritage, particularly Persian the Mughal court language. As Sanjay Seth has noted, colonial education involved the processes of creating “new technologies of the self” which he describes as governing of the self in terms of individual disciplining and

⁴⁴ Kazi Shahidullah, “The Purpose and Impact of Government Policy on *Pathshala Gurumohashoys* in Nineteenth Century Bengal,” in *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia: Essays on Education, Religion, History and Politics*, ed. Nigel Crook (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 121.

⁴⁵ Poromesh Acharya, “Indigenous Education and Brahmanical Hegemony in Bengal,” in *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia: Essays on Education, Religion, History and Politics*, ed. Nigel Crook (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 112.

⁴⁶ Kazi Shahidullah, “The Purpose and Impact of Government Policy,” 121

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.

shaping. Second, colonial education was also connected with the production of skills and competences.⁴⁸ The acquisition of these skills was necessary to be marked as a “modern” and “civilized” being. The socio-economic mobility that colonial education promised was possible also because-- at least theoretically speaking-- institutionalized education was open to children across all social strata without being the privilege of upper castes. All these factors made colonial education, as Sanjay Seth calls it, both “a site and object of desire.”⁴⁹ Formal education was therefore one of the many means of cultural ascendance within an imperial setup.

The primacy given to the role of the British colonial state in terms of its actual engagement with the spread of education in the Indian context is often questioned. The goal of the colonial education in India is usually seen to have been driven by the necessity of generating English educated natives to fulfill the demand for cheap labor for government clerical jobs. Since the government’s monetary investment in public education was initially limited and education as a field had several non-government actors, particularly the missionaries and private individuals, the stakes of the colonial state is often perceived to be relatively low. However, I argue that in the wake of rising nationalist politics and with the first forays of Indian students into political activism in the late nineteenth century, the colonial state could not afford to be lax towards education. I emphasise that from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, school textbooks were meant to work towards the dual ends of promoting loyalty to the government and preventing “sedition” among students. In particular, the decade

⁴⁸ Sanjay Seth, “Governmentality, Pedagogy, Identity,” 68.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

of the 1890s witnessed an active role of the British colonial state in devising various methods to extend a greater control over curriculum selection and the dissemination of knowledge among children and young students. Much of this exercise was to combat the colonial anxiety over “sedition” and desire to generate imperial subjects who would be loyal to the Empire. After the immense loss of life and property and escaping the possibility of a near political annihilation during the Revolt of 1857, the threat of native “sedition” against British power constantly loomed large in the minds of the colonial administration. Another rebellion on this scale was something that the British colonial state simply could not afford to risk.

A discussion on school textbook history and the increasing interest of the government in controlling the process of school textbook selection has to be understood in relation to the political milieu of the turn of the twentieth century. As I show through my research, changes in the education policies of the state were driven by the administrative imperatives and political concerns that an emergent Indian nationalism posed in the period between 1870 and 1925. The decades of the 1870s and the 1880s were the phase when the Indian national movement emerged.⁵⁰ The period saw the emergence of the nation as a major ideological force of identification in the subcontinent. Culture, what constituted the historical past, and local language became primary signifiers for identifying and representing the modern nation and generating national identities. After 1900 the flow of anti-colonial and nationalist ideas extended from being limited to urban elites to the masses in small towns and

⁵⁰ C. A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1.

the countryside.⁵¹ For instance, the *ulgulan* (great tumult) of 1899-1900 was a movement spearheaded by the Munda tribes in the Bengal region.

Although this phase cannot be characterized as popular nationalism (of the kind we see with Gandhi's entry into the political scene), anti-colonial sentiments began to be forcefully manifested notably by a section of the vernacular press. Constant comparisons were made between the governance of the British colonial state in India and that of the pre-colonial Mughal rule. To give an example, the Bengali weekly *Som Prakash*⁵² (with which social reformer and educationist Vidyasagar was closely associated) observed in its issue of 18th February 1878 that "while under the Mohammedans the people enjoyed liberty and were appointed to all high offices in the state, under the present government they have really lost their independence."⁵³ The weekly also emphasized with enthusiasm that such opinions were not only limited to the middleclass *bhadralok addas* but had also crept out to school and college campuses: "Even the common school boys were heard discussing the issues of circumvention of human rights. *This is a sign of progress.*"⁵⁴ As we enter the twentieth century the politicized child becomes much more visible. For instance, in his autobiography *A Nation in Making* (1925), Congress leader Surendranath Banerjea

⁵¹ Ibid., 2-3.

⁵² *Som Prakash* (established in 1858) was edited by Dwarkanath Bidyabhusan. The weekly saw the involvement of key social and educationists including Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. Dwarkanath himself was a professor of Sanskrit grammar in Sanskrit College, Calcutta. *Som Prakash* was primarily a non-profit enterprise and was actively involved in promoting nationalist ideas. The Bengal Government's *Catalogue of Sanskrit and Bengalee Publication* (1865) describes *Som Prakash* as the "ablest paper." In 1878 when Lytton passed the Vernacular Press Act which imposed draconian laws to restrict the freedom of the native press, *Som Prakash* was one of the leading vernacular newspapers to protest. The circulation and readership of the newspaper was primarily confined to urban centers. For more on *Som Prakash* see Swarupa Gupta, *Notions of Nationhood in Bengal: Perspectives on Samaj 1867-1905* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009).

⁵³ *Report on the Native Press* (henceforth RNP) Bengal, 1878, 477.

⁵⁴ RNP Bengal, 1877, 194. (Emphasis mine)

while recalling the *Swadeshi* movement⁵⁵ talks of his then five year old granddaughter who returned a pair of shoes gifted by a relative because they were foreign made. He narrates another incident where an eminent doctor told him how one of his patients, a six year old girl, “cried out in her delirium” and refused to take foreign medicines.⁵⁶ The above examples suggest that a certain section of native children-- both in the public realm of the school and at home-- were affected by the political processes that the nationalist upsurge brought in its wake from the late nineteenth century. These episodes have to be understood in light of the nature of transformation Bengal witnessed in the late nineteenth century when most child rearing manuals taught that children should be raised to serve the needs of the future nation and bring glory to it. An outcome of this emergent discourse was the focus on the new family which assigned children the position of central importance at home.⁵⁷ I examine colonial education at this historical moment in Indian nationalism when the native child was

⁵⁵ The *Swadeshi* movement in Bengal (1905-1908) was characterized by the campaign to boost indigenous industry through the economic and cultural boycott of British products and government employment. The movement started in Bengal in 1905 with the decision of Viceroy Lord Curzon to partition the province of Bengal. The partition came into effect on October 16th 1905. Although the official justification for the partition was administrative, archival records of the British colonial government show that the motive was primarily political aiming to quell growing radical nationalism in the region. As Sumit Sarkar has shown, H. H. Risley (the then Secretary to the Government of India) sent at least two notes to the government, dated February 4th and December 6th 1904, promoting the idea of the partition. Risley argued that, “Bengal united is a power; Bengal divided will pull in several different ways. That is perfectly true and is one of the merits of the scheme.” (Sumit Sarkar, 17) In 1925 reflecting on the partition Surendranath Banerjea wrote in his autobiography that the Partition of Bengal was “a national calamity, in the sense that it would alienate Hindus and Muhamedans, interfere with the solidarity of the Bengali speaking population and weaken their political influence.” (*A Nation in Making*, 215) The partition was ultimately revoked in 1911 due to the powerful oppositions from the Indians. For the debates that preceded the final decision of partition see Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal-1903-1908*, particularly Chapter One.

⁵⁶ Surendranath Banerjea, *A Nation in the Making: Being the Reminiscences of Fifty Years of Public Life* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), 196.

Banerjea does not provide exact dates for either anecdote but informs that these occurred “at the height of the *Swadeshi* movement.” Based on this information one can infer that the incidents took place sometime between 1905 and 1908.

⁵⁷ Pradip Kumar Bose, “Sons of the Nation: Child Rearing in the New Family” in *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal*, ed. Partha Chatterjee (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 119.

seen as a political being and the politicization of young children was seen, as *Som Prakash* described it, as a “sign of progress.”

In this dissertation I will focus on children and youth ranging from the ages of around six to seven years old, by which time most (schooled) children begin to read, to late adolescence. The readers of the Bengali children’s magazines that I examine would have fallen within this broad age bracket. This was also the age group that was specifically targeted as readers for the magazine publishers and contributors. I will discuss the significance of the Bengali children’s literature and magazines to my project shortly. For the moment I want to point out that school children who read the textbooks under survey in this dissertation and towards whom the state policies were directed were mostly at the Intermediate and Matriculation level.⁵⁸ I focus on students at this level of education because the colonial state saw them as particularly vulnerable to the growing influence of the anti-colonial political ideology of the Indian National Congress (founded in 1885). Correspondence among education officials reveals that students were influenced by the ideas of Congress leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji,⁵⁹ Bal Gangadhar Tilak and other nationalist leaders and gathered

⁵⁸ These were the exams taken to earn the right to enter University.

⁵⁹ Dadabhai Naoroji was a Moderate Congress leader most famously known for his critique of the economic policies of the British colonial government in India. He began his career as a professor of mathematics and natural philosophy at the Elphinstone College in Bombay before turning to full-time politics. He was the first Indian to be elected as a Liberal member of the British House of Commons in 1882. Naoroji was one of the founders of the Indian National Congress in 1885 and presided over the annual Congress sessions in 1886, 1893 and 1906. He tried his best to bring in reconciliation between the Moderates and the Extremist wings of the Congress. Due to his conciliatory efforts a split in the party along ideological lines was averted in the 1906 annual Congress session held in Calcutta. Naoroji articulated an economic critique of British rule in his book *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901). In the book he articulated for the first time the drain of wealth theory which he argued was the cause for the poverty and destitution of India under British rule. The idea was further developed by Romesh Chandra Dutt, a retired civil servant, in his book *The Economic History of India* in two volumes (1902 and 1904). The economic

among themselves in small groups to discuss “seditious” ideas.⁶⁰ Similarly, incidents of students’ groups disseminating anti-state pamphlets and student participation in secret societies were reported in newspapers in Bengal.⁶¹ Though these incidents might not have been a part of a students’ resistance movement, they were deemed significant enough to be discussed in government circles. Official education records of the period also reveal that the state saw the Intermediate degree and Matriculation as crucial stages of a student’s education when the supervision and control of the state should be most effective.

I argue that in the period between 1870 and 1925 the colonial school curriculum became a contested terrain which, on one hand, was implemented by the state for legitimizing colonial rule and on the other, was interrogated and re-tooled by the nationalists to contest colonial ideology and promulgate the idea of freedom among young students. I begin my project in the decade of 1870 because it marks a transition in British colonial policy towards a state controlled system of selection and production of school curriculum. The establishment of the Simla Textbook Committee in 1877 to examine and regulate the production and content of school textbooks prescribed in all schools that received any kind of formal support from the state was a significant measure in this regard. Before the 1870s, production of school

critique of colonialism was popularized by several other prominent nationalist leaders such as M. G. Ranade, G. V. Joshi, G. Subramanya Iyer and Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

⁶⁰ Home Department, Education, June 1901 33-59 (A)

⁶¹ For instance, see *Sanjivini*, November 5th, 1892, *Reports on Native Press Bengal* July-December 1892.

textbooks was largely outside the purview of the state and in the hands of missionary presses and autonomous organizations such as the Calcutta School Book Society.⁶²

The Body as a Political Site

Apart from shaping the mind and intellect, the colonial school curriculum also disciplined and shaped children's bodies. Therefore the second theme of this dissertation is to study the role of physical education in the colonial school curriculum. Physical education in colonial schools in India has received very little academic attention. In this context my project is one of the few that has examined physical education as part of the colonial school curriculum and the child's body as a subject of historical analysis. Another academic research of a similar focus is that of Satadru Sen who studies the introduction of physical education in colonial boarding schools as a colonization of the student's body and acts of resistance by students and parents.⁶³ Scholarship on physical culture in India have focused on the adult world looking at specific sports such as wrestling and akharas,⁶⁴ military sports⁶⁵ or at the

⁶² Sharadadevi Vedalankar, *The Development of Hindi Prose Literature in the Early Nineteenth Century (1800-1856)* (Allahabad: Lokbharati Publications, 1969).

⁶³ Satadru Sen, "Schools, Athletes and Confrontation: The Student Body in Colonial India," in *Confronting the Body: the Politics of Physicality in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 58-79.

⁶⁴ On wrestling and akharas see Joseph Alter, *The Wrestler's Body: Identity and Ideology in North India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992); "The Body of One Color: Indian Wrestling, the Indian State and Utopian Somatics," *Cultural Anthropology* 8, no. 1 (1993):49-72; "Somatic Nationalism: Indian Wrestling and Militant Hinduism" *Modern Asian Studies* 28, no. 3 (1994) :557-88; "Subaltern Bodies and Nationalist Physiques: Gama the Great and the Heroics of Indian Wrestling," *Body Society* 6, no.2 (2000): 45-72; "Indian Clubs and Colonialism: Hindu Masculinity and Muscular Christianity," in *Comparative Study of Society and History* 46, no. 3 (2004): 497-534; "Nervous Masculinity: Consumption and the Production of Embodied Gender in Indian Wrestling," in *Everyday Life in South Asia*, eds. Sarah Lamb and Diane Mines (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 132-45.

⁶⁵ For instance see David Lorenzen, "Warrior Ascetics in Indian History," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 98, no. 1 (1978): 61-75; Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Military Sports and the History of the Martial Body in India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50, no. 4 (2007).

genealogy of colonial sports such as cricket.⁶⁶ Significant scholarly literature which has approached the politicized body through the lens of colonial masculinity include Mrinalini Sinha's work on colonial masculinity and the idea of Bengali 'effeminacy' and John Rosselli and Indira Chowdhury's studies on the reception of colonial stereotypes within Indian society.⁶⁷

My dissertation highlights the corporeality of colonialism in India by analyzing the colonized body of the Indian child as a politicized space of mediation. I conceptualize the child's body in two ways. First, the native child's body became a site of colonial control through physical education in schools. I am using the term "physical education" to mean not just games and physical exercises but also broadly to include the bodily training of how to conduct oneself socially. Second, the child's body became a site of nation-building and reclaiming what was lost-- freedom, the "motherland" and, in the case of colonial Bengal, masculinity. I argue that for the Bengali *bhadralok*, the child embodied a political space for contestation and undertaking their project of remasculinizing the youth through a revival of indigenous martial sports such as wrestling, sword fighting and *lathi* playing (self-defense using bamboo sticks). Using physical education as a point of entry I contend that the colonial school was involved first, in the project of corporeal re-construction and second, in the de-politicization of "seditious" student bodies.

⁶⁶Boria Majumdar, *Lost Histories of Indian Cricket: Battles off the Pitch* (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006); *Cricket in Colonial India, 1780-1947* (London: Routledge, 2008). Also see Ramchandra Guha, *A Corner of a Foreign Field: the Indian History of a British Sport* (London: Picador, 2002).

⁶⁷ John Rosselli, "The Self Image of Effeteness: Physical Education and Nationalism in Nineteenth Century Bengal," *Past and Present* 86 (1980): 121-148; Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Indira Chowdhury, *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal* (New Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

I use Kathleen Canning's concept of the "body as method" of history to understand how bodies are imbued with meaning, how they become stakes in power struggles and how they become sites of knowledge and power.⁶⁸ Instead of the Foucaultian approach of studying the body as discursive (where the emphasis is solely on the ideology, the sign and the symbolic), Canning focuses on "embodiment" or the actual lived experience and identity formation as a conceptual tool for historical analysis. "Embodiment" thus denotes the "becoming a body in social space."⁶⁹ For my project "embodiment" becomes a useful conceptual tool since it encompasses moments of encounter, agency and resistance.⁷⁰ Building on Canning's thesis I study bodies as sites of colonial "inscription/reinscription" on one hand, and on the other as "allegorical emblems that promise new understandings of nation and social formations" in the context of Indian nationalism.⁷¹

Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton argue that bodies carry various political, social and cultural meanings. They are not just the grounds of political economies but also the pretext that opens up the space for intrusion, discipline and punishment both individually as well as collectively.⁷² I emphasize the centrality of the body in the articulation of imperial ideologies.⁷³ In the colonial context, the school aimed at training native bodies into new "reformed" corporealities. Here we see the process of "embodiment" at work where native children's bodies were trained

⁶⁸ Kathleen Canning, "The Body as Method? Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History," *Gender & History* 11 (1999): 504.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 505.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*,

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 7.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 5.

to be marked by self-discipline, “civilized” clothing, bodily refinement and “correct” social conduct in terms of good posture, speech and bodily movements in a prescribed manner. These were “reformed” bodies of children where the transformation brought through by colonial schooling was visually conspicuous. The project of corporeal re-construction involved teaching habits of disciplined mobilities and cleanliness to native children as an integral part of the civilizing mission and social reform agenda of the British Raj. Physical education as a disciplined movement was meant to harness and “correct” undisciplined and “deviant” sexual behavior such as masturbation, homosexuality and extramarital sex. This colonial project not only stemmed from an agenda of moral regulation but also as a means of improving the health and hygiene of the native body.

Physical education was also a crucial part of disciplining and de-politicizing “seditious” and disloyal native bodies. Corporeal re-construction thus aimed at controlling growing political activism of students since the late nineteenth century in colonial Bengal. Against the background of growing nationalism it was important for the colonial state to steer away “seditious” students’ bodies from “undisciplined” into “disciplined” movements. Deploying Canning’s analytic of the body as a site of intervention in this dissertation I aim to expand our grasp over the processes of social disciplining within a colonial context.

Education as Contestation

Discussions on colonial education orbit too much around the benefits it bestowed,” i.e. the merits of colonial education in creating an “enlightened” native community.⁷⁴ We need to reexamine this perception since it does not bring into academic focus the conflictual nature of colonial education in India. The dissertation is based on the understanding that irrespective of the magnitude of colonial power there can never be complete hegemony. To assume otherwise would mean denying historical agency to the natives and negating the possibilities of intercultural contestations. While discussing colonial education we talk about how it impacted Indians and the changes it brought (a point which is difficult to deny), but not about how Indians modified it. In recent scholarship, Sanjay Seth encourages a new historical approach towards colonial education that makes modern western knowledge a “matter for investigation and problematizing” by focusing on how western colonial education was received, consumed and criticized by the natives.⁷⁵ My aim in this dissertation is to precisely problematize modern western education as a “gift” of colonial rule and instead highlight the aspect of its contentious reception within the native population. I do not propose to entirely dismiss the aspect of reproduction in colonial education but to examine whether its impact was totalizing.

⁷⁴ One of the arguments in favor of British education is that the growth of Indian nationalism was spurred by the formal training of Indians in the liberal doctrines of Western thought. For scholarship on the transformative influence of English education see Bruce McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940); David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: the Dynamics of the Bengal Renaissance, 1773- 1835* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). I borrow the phrase and idea of “benefits bestowed” from J.A. Mangan, ‘*Benefits bestowed*’? : *Education and British Imperialism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988).

⁷⁵ Sanjay Seth, *Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.

It is crucial to highlight that however successful, no assemblage of ideological practices and meanings and no set of political, cultural and economic arrangements can be totally monolithic.⁷⁶ The colonial school has to be understood in relation to the larger social context in which it existed.⁷⁷ Although the colonial school was governed by state policies and stated colonial intent, its understanding needs to be complicated by not perceiving it as a “total institution”-- i.e. an autonomous entity in itself, hermetically sealed off from its subjects-- but by locating its complex engagements with Indian society.⁷⁸ Hence, it is crucial to examine the two mutually-implicated processes of the colonial state’s intent to socialize the young to its political ideology and the actual results. The reception of education is not always what it was intended to be. While formal education does play a crucial role in socializing children to the state’s political ideologies, knowledge as it percolates to the student is mediated by the teacher, parents, guardians and the student himself/herself. Thus there is always a potential scope for the reconfiguration of meanings. Contestations to colonial educational practices grew from the 1880s in various parts of India. This was a period marked by complex contestations between British governance, Indian students and society over the practice of education and the definition of knowledge. These contestations have to be understood as a matrix of complex negotiations between colonial and indigenous ideologies. They also help to understand how

⁷⁶ Michael W. Apple, “Reproduction and Contradiction in Education: an Introduction,” in *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education: Essays on Class, Ideology and the State*, ed. Michael W. Apple (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 8.

⁷⁷ For recent scholarship that has focused on the sociology of colonial education, specifically in the context of missionary schools, see Hayden Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India, 1860-1920* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007).

⁷⁸ Sanjay Srivastava, *Contesting Postcolonial India: National Character and the Doon School* (London: Routledge, 1998), 15.

competing cultural agendas of the state and nationalists shaped the political socialization of the native child.

In this respect the colonial school becomes what Sabyasachi Bhattacharya has described as a “contested terrain.”⁷⁹ His scholarship has explored the colonial education as a “terrain of contestation between ideologies, interests and powers.”⁸⁰ Bhattacharya argues that the contestation in education lay between the British colonial state which commanded the power to produce and disseminate knowledge, and the recipients of this knowledge within the colonial school system.⁸¹ Building on his scholarship I nuance our understandings of the reception of colonial education within Indian society by highlighting the colonial school as a contested site particularly at the turn of the twentieth century when the Indian child increasingly became the subject of modern nation building and citizen formation projects.

I study contestations on two levels: first, in terms of the creation of alternative centers of knowledge production. Here I investigate how the Indian nationalist projects interrogated school curriculum and challenged ideologies that defined colonial educational practices by creating the alternative and parallel pedagogies of the Bengali children’s magazines. Since these magazines formed a part of extra-curricular leisure reading for children, they were read mostly in spaces outside the school, primarily the home. I situate the Bengali children’s magazine as part of nationalist projects that targeted the home as the site for reform and the creation of a politically aware “new child” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As

⁷⁹ Bhattacharya, *The Contested Terrain*.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸¹ Bhattacharya, *The Contested Terrain*, 7.

Pradip Bose has shown in the context of Bengal, most of these projects sought to redefine childhood by developing strategies that linked the child to the nation. He argues that as a part of the nationalist projects of reforming the home, children were assigned a position of significance within the family. They were expected to be raised to serve the nation and bring glory to it.⁸² The significance of the home as a site of reform has been highlighted by Tanika Sarkar as well. She has noted that, quite contrary to the Victorian middle-class household, for the colonized Bengali *bhadralok* the home was not a place for refuge or rest. Rather, it was the “real place for work” -- the only zone where native autonomy and self-rule could be preserved.⁸³ Sarkar contends that this also explains the usage of metaphors of governance that were evoked in contemporary vernacular prose literature to highlight the significance of the home-- “an enterprise to be administered, an army to be led, a state to be governed.”⁸⁴ I argue that the children’s magazines need to be conceptualized as part of this *bhadralok* project of “real work” that needed to be undertaken at home.

Children’s literature in India remains largely unexplored in Indian historiography. Recent scholars who have specifically focused on Bengali children’s literature include Shibaji Bandopadhyay and Satadru Sen. Bandyopadhyay’s work draws from literary criticism to bring a comparative study of two nineteenth century Bengali texts for children - Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar’s Bengali primer, *Varnaparichay*,

⁸² Pradip Kumar Bose, “Sons of the Nation,” 118-119.

⁸³ Sarkar, *Hindu Wife Hindu Nation*, 197.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

and Tagore's *Sahaj Path*.⁸⁵ He analyses *Varnaparichay* to understand the polarized constructions of childhood by highlighting the binaries of the "good" boy versus the "bad" in the form of the characters of Gopal and Rakhal introduced by Vidyasagar. Bandyopadhyay effectively engages with the themes of race, inscription of gender and class roles as deployed by children's literature under colonialism. Focusing his study in the period between the Russo-Japanese War (1905) and the Second World War (1939), Satadru Sen explores Bengali children's literature as a form of "juvenile periphery" defined as a "set of experimental and institutional spaces."⁸⁶ The juvenile periphery became the space where childhood could be redefined in preparation for "battles of adulthood" and ascribed with a set of moral meanings and normative behaviors that could be mapped on the "colonizer and the colonized, the dominant and the upstart, the 'modern' and the 'traditional.'" Apart from Bengal there has been limited scholarship in other regions in India specifically by Shobna Nijhawan in the field of Hindi children's journals published between 1910 and 1930 with a special focus on the girl child.⁸⁷

The second realm of contestation I examine is in terms of active students' politicization that the colonial state labeled as "seditious." Official education records from the 1890s reveal growing participation of school students in anti British political agitations organized by nationalist (mostly Indian National Congress) leaders such as

⁸⁵ Shibaji Bandyopadhyay, *Gopal-Rakhal Dwanda Samas: Upanibeshbad o Bangla Sishusahitya* (Calcutta: Papyrus, 1991).

⁸⁶ Satadru Sen, "A Juvenile Periphery: The Geographies of Literary Childhood in Colonial Bengal," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 5, no.1 (2004), http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v005/5.1sen.html.

⁸⁷ Shobna Nijhawan, "Hindi Children's Journals and Nationalist Discourse (1910-1930)," *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no.33 (2004): 3723-3729.

Tilak in the Bombay-Pune region. Much of this was manifested in instances of students writing ‘seditious’ answers in examinations and participating in the Shivaji and Ganapati festivals. Teachers including Tilak himself published their own textbooks replete with nationalist ideas, much to the discomfort of the colonial state. The anxieties of “sedition,” when the memory of the Revolt of 1857 was still fresh in their mind, shaped how the colonial state cracked down on students’ politicization. The second case study that I undertake is the participation of schoolboys during the Anti-Partition and *Swadeshi* movement (1905-1908) which called for an economic and cultural boycott of British products and government jobs.

Ambiguity of the “child”

Before proceeding further it would be useful to unpack “the child” as a historical category during the period under survey. By the mid-Victorian period in England, the understanding of the “child” was elaborated and extended. During this period, childhood was increasingly defined in terms of boyhood and girlhood.⁸⁸ Simultaneously, categories of adolescence and youth emerged. In the context of colonial India in the nineteenth century, the categories of “child” and “adolescence” remained ambiguous with a complex history.⁸⁹ The answer to “who is a ‘child?’” is

⁸⁸ Arguments of scholars such as Aries that childhood was an “invention” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe have been discounted. See Philip Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*, London: Jonathan Cape (1973); Lloyd DeMause, *The History of Childhood*, New York: Psychohistory Press (1974). Replaying the “invention” of childhood debate in the Indian context needs a thorough cross-regional investigation into historical records from across the ancient to the medieval, pre-colonial and colonial periods and is outside the scope of this research.

⁸⁹ Stanley Hall’s work on the biological processes and distinct psychological developments of puberty in early twentieth century has shaped modern understandings of adolescence. Mass schooling and restrictions on child labor during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries lengthened childhood to what was known as

undefinable primarily because there was a lack of social consensus regarding at what age “childhood” ended and “adolescence” began. When did a boy or a girl child grow to be an adult man or woman? The category of the “child” becomes more ambiguous due to the differential nature of childhood experiences.

One of the arenas, in the period of my study, where the ambiguity of childhood played out in the late nineteenth century was in the context of the Age of Consent Debate (1891) when the definition of what constituted the threshold of girlhood and initiation into womanhood were debated. The controversy started with the death of a ten year old girl, Phulmonee Dasi, in 1881 as a result of marital rape by Hari Mati, her much older husband aged thirty five years. According to the existing legal framework the husband was not found guilty of rape since Phulmonee was well within the statutory age limit of ten years which was assigned as the legal age of consent. While Hari Mati emerged scot free after a long acrimonious legal battle, the episode triggered a socio-reformist movement to raise the age of consent from ten to twelve years, a debate in which legal and medical experts as well as the reformists and revivalists pitched in their voices with equal vigour and ferocity.

While the Age of Consent Act itself was controversial on several accounts, for the purposes of this discussion, I want to highlight the debate surrounding what

adolescence. At the turn of the twentieth century Hall along with other scholars, particularly, Havelock Ellis and Margaret Mead shaped the ideas about “feminine adolescence.” According to these scholars adolescence was characterized as a phase of human development marked primarily by three axes of transition and change- biological (onset of puberty and becoming sexual beings), psychological (cognitive development) and cultural (socialization and belonging to specific culture groups). In recent years, with the rise of childhood studies in western academia, the genealogy of girlhood has been charted out. See for instance Catherine Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Crista DeLuzio, *Female Adolescence in American Scientific Thought, 1830--1930* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007). Similar scholarly explorations have yet to be undertaken in the context of Indian history.

should be considered appropriate to be fixed as “the age,” i.e. the minimum age at which a girl supposedly acquired the capacity for cohabitation with her husband.⁹⁰ Defining this age was critical because it legally demarcated the line between childhood and womanhood. The process involved the medicalization of the female native body by British authorities whereby the onset of puberty was the watershed moment that divided her life into two parts-- childhood, which was (or ideally speaking ought to be) pre-sexual and pre-reproductive; and womanhood which constituted her remaining life marked by the supposed readiness for sexual intercourse, conception and a healthy pregnancy.⁹¹ It is striking that in these conceptualizations adolescence as a transitional phase of development from child to adult was completely disregarded. It is equally peculiar that legal, medical and religious experts should choose the first menstrual blood to define the age of childhood because first, as some contemporary medical-rationalists had argued, the onset of puberty does not occur properly before the ages between fourteen and sixteen in both India and Britain thereby rejecting the colonial medical rhetoric of girls in tropical countries attaining puberty earlier than those who lived in colder climates.⁹² Second, medically speaking, puberty does not simply mean the beginning of menstruation but also the physiological maturity of the female body for biological reproduction without posing

⁹⁰ For a detailed discussion see Tanika Sarkar, “Rhetoric Against Age of Consent: Resisting Colonial Reason and Death of a Child Wife,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 28, no. 36 (1993): 1869-1871; Himani Bannerji, *Inventing Subjects: Studies in Hegemony, Patriarchy and Colonialism* (London: Anthem Press, 2002); Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The Manly Englishman and the “Effeminate Bengali” in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1995); Antoinette Burton, “From Child Bride to ‘Hindoo Lady’: Rukhmabai and the Debate on Sexual Respectability in Imperial Britain,” *The American Historical Review* 103, no.4 (1998): 1119-1146.

⁹¹ Himani Bannerji, *Inventing Subjects*, 36.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 33.

a life risk to either to the woman or her offspring. The ambiguity in the debate over the Age of Consent meant that the “child” remained a fuzzy and fluctuating category.

There was no consensus regarding what should be the upper age limit at which childhood ended socially and legally. Depending on the period under purview, this upper age limit kept changing. For instance, under the Special Marriage Bill of 1872 the minimum age of marriage was set as fourteen years for girls and eighteen years for boys.⁹³ This law was applicable to only Brahmos and other communities that did not declare themselves to be either Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh or Jains, thereby keeping the practitioners of majority of religions outside its legislation. The inclusion of the Brahmos in this list was primarily due to their image as a progressive and unorthodox socio-religious community. However during this same period, for the girl child of most religious denominations “childhood” could legally end at the age of ten years (pre-1891) or at twelve years (post 1891 when the Age of Consent Act was passed). Similarly, in 1927 the Children’s Protection Bill sought to raise the age of consent to fourteen years within marriage and sixteen years outside of marriage. In the same year the publication of Katherine Mayo’s *Mother India* with its scathing attack on the evils of child marriage and the degeneration of Hindu culture invigorated the social-reformist crusade to raise the age of marriage for all religious

⁹³ Geraldine Forbes, “Women and Modernity: The Issue of Child Marriage in India,” *Women’s Studies International Quarterly* 2 (1979): 407-419.

communities further to fourteen for girls and eighteen for males. This was finally passed as the Sarda Act in 1930.⁹⁴

The point I want to underline here is that the difference in upper age limit for age of consent and marriage for the male and female child indicates the differential nature of childhood in nineteenth century India. The ambiguous definition of childhood is compounded when the male child enters the equation. The age limit for the age of consent or marriage (and as a corollary mental and biological maturity) for girls is always kept lower than that for boys. This stemmed from contemporary scientific literature and social assumptions which claimed that girls mature earlier than boys and thereby can have shorter childhoods, a perception that lasts even in the contemporary twenty-first century popular social imagination. In an age when child marriages were a common practice girl brides were expected to take up the role of responsible adults at a much younger age whereas for boys childhood days extended to late teens. As Swapna Banerjee demonstrates the experience of differential childhood is reflected clearly in the narratives of men and women when they recounted their childhood experiences. While recalling their childhood, most women

⁹⁴ I will not discuss the Sarda Act further since it lies outside the period of study for this dissertation. For more information see Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: the Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

In this discussion it is also important to bring in the complexities surrounding the category of “girl” and the various meanings that could be ascribed to the term. I bring this point up primarily in the context of how scholars from The Modern Girl Around the World Research Project such as Tani Barlow, Lynn Thomas et. al have used the category “girl” to signify the “contested status of women who lie both outside childhood and outside contemporary social codes and conventions related to marriage, sexuality and motherhood.” In this project the term “girl” is used as a theoretical alternative to “woman.” Scholars in this project deployed the category of “girl” to denote a stylized (and sexualized) female who was shaped by globalization and consumerism in early twentieth century (primarily the decades of the 1920s and 1930s) as a “modern girl” who sidestep or flout social conventions of feminine roles. These were young women who transgressed national, imperial or racial boundaries. See The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

described their experiences as young brides or adults while men described themselves as boys.⁹⁵

Since “the child” is not a homogeneous category of analysis I would like to unpack the term “Indian child” as I use it in my dissertation. I am using the term “Indian child” to highlight the processes through which the Bengali child was self-consciously refashioned by nationalist projects to become the “Indian” child. As I will show in this dissertation, in the context of Bengal, these processes have to be understood as a part of the conscious nationalist processes of mapping the regional and the provincial i.e. Bengal to the larger processes of generating Indian nationalism on one hand and tying Bengal within the Indian nation on the other. Thus the treatment of “Bengal” is not in isolation but *in dialogue* with the larger canvas of India.

As mentioned earlier, the age group that I study in my project ranges from six to seven year olds, by which time most children who receive education begin to read, to those in late adolescence years. The children and youth who fall within this age bracket were subjects of the nationalist project of creating the “new child” in Bengal. From my research children within this age group come across as most politically sensitized to contest colonial rule. The range of their contestation ranged from the mundane and the everyday (as in the case of Surendranath’s granddaughter or students discussing political ideas in the company of friends) to the more radical

⁹⁵ Swapna Banerjee, “Down Memory Lane: Representations of Domestic Workers in Middle Class Personal Narratives of Colonial Bengal,” *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 3 (2004): 681-708.

(such as incidents of students' groups disseminating anti-state pamphlets and students' participation in secret societies reported in newspapers in Bengal.)⁹⁶

In terms of gender composition, in India, the proportion of boys attending government schools during the period of my study was much higher than girls.⁹⁷ Considering that education was accessible mostly to the privileged classes, most students would have been from middle and upper classes. Children from a different class background who were a part of this education system would have been taught and expected to adopt these values both as a necessary element of becoming “civilized” with appropriate social manners as well as a means for upward economic mobility. Both in absolute and proportional terms most children who form the subject of this study would have been upper caste Hindu males since this was the largest demographical category that availed itself of government education although neither the government policies under examination nor the school textbooks and children's magazines under survey were exclusively formulated or written for a specific religious community or caste.

Chapter Overview

This dissertation is constituted by four core chapters and an Introduction and Conclusion. The core chapters orbit around the four major themes of the dissertation that I have laid out in the preceding discussion. These themes provide the leitmotif to

⁹⁶ For instance, see *Sanjivini*, November 5th, 1892, *Reports on Native Press Bengal July-December 1892*.

⁹⁷ Mukerji, *History of Education in India*.

this dissertation and connect the chapters with each other. To recap, the themes are: first, the colonial child; second, the colonial school curriculum; third, the body as a political site; and finally, education as contestation.

Chapter One serves as the introduction to my dissertation where I lay out main themes and the intellectual genealogy of my project. Chapters Two and Three discuss two fundamental elements of the colonial school curriculum: first, the school textbook and second, physical education.

Chapter Two relates to the use of the colonial school textbook as a form of bureaucratic control. Curriculum and textbooks being prescribed by the highest bureaucratic authorities and taught in the government aided schools symbolized state authority. The chapter examines the way in which colonial textbook policies were formulated and revised against the backdrop of growing nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As I see it two aspects emerged significantly here. Firstly, these policies aimed to guarantee that the local government and Education Department, headed by state officials, had a powerful voice in the determination of the curriculum and supervision of textbook committees and universities. Secondly, they ensured that textbooks of an “aggressive character” generating hostile state feelings were censored and substituted by ones imparting lessons on “state feeling” and the duties of a “good citizen.” This chapter also entails a study of the discourse of textbook literature in the production of knowledge about British colonial governance and the natives, often stereotypical in nature, and which legitimized and facilitated colonial relations.

Chapter Three interrogates the second component of school curriculum, physical education. Here the emphasis is to understand the child's body as a zone of cultural encounters and contestation. In this context I examine colonial ideologies governing the implementation of physical education in the colonial school curriculum. I argue that the role of physical education in Indian schools was primarily to discipline the native child's body and discourage students' "seditious" political activism. However, it is important to note that the natives inverted this order of things by using physical education as a means to exercise their agency and challenge ideologies, particularly that of Bengali male effeminacy, which the colonial state sought to promote. I argue that in the nationalist discourse in Bengal, the child embodied a political space for resistance. This project of resistance was undertaken through remasculinizing the youth by reviving fading indigenous martial sports such as wrestling, sword fighting and *latbi* playing (stick-fighting). I suggest that the emphasis on these indigenous sports primarily stemmed from the *Swadeshi* spirit of promoting regional and national cultural traditions. At the same time the nationalist revisitation had a crucial class factor at play whereby sections of the educated *bhadralok* middle class, schoolboys and college students for the first time took up sports customarily associated with the "rustic" uneducated lower classes and rural martial traditions.

The primary sources for Chapters Two and Three chiefly comprises of Government of India Home Department Education reports, teachers' manuals, colonial school textbooks, physical education manuals, autobiographies and press

reports of the period. Official documents and education reports are useful resources to understand policy making and debates behind curriculum selection and proscription. Many include lists of school textbooks that were considered seditious by the British state and discussions surrounding them. More importantly, they contain classified and private correspondence between education officials which reveal information that cannot be otherwise gathered from public reports and newspapers. Furthermore, addressing the challenges that the government faced, they can reveal much about the nature of the anxieties which drove colonial state policy making. The official records also provide us a glimpse of “the child,” student culture and politics. Although this information comes to us through the mediation of colonial hands they are nevertheless a significant resource to explore some of the questions in my project. Similarly, teachers’ manuals are a good source for identifying under what state directives teachers had to function and their role in subject formation.

Chapter Four explores the question: what were children reading outside the school? I analyze popular Bengali children’s magazines as an informal schooling-- a nationalist pedagogy-- that acted as active catalysts for reimagining the nation and its history. I see the children’s magazines under survey as part of the contested terrain that education became since the late nineteenth century. Here the contestation lay in the realm of nationalist ideas and thoughts-- the literary space and the mind -- that challenged powerful colonial categories and myths, the colonial economic setup and ultimately colonial governance itself. I argue that the strand of nationalism that we see unfolding in the magazines under survey was one which was defined by how their

editors perceived the nation. Much of this nationalist imagination did not simply focus narrowly on the regional but also extended to a greater community of the national and the global. Through most of the period of my study we witness the predominance of a strand of nationalism which derived primarily from the ideologies and principles of the Indian National Congress.

In this chapter, I explore three recurring themes central to the nationalist project of connecting children to the nation. The first theme was the idea of nation as an “imagined community.”⁹⁸ The magazines under survey introduced ideas of nationalism, *swadeshi* and *swaraj* (self-rule) to children and provided the literary space for creating future democratic Indian citizens. They fostered an “imagined community” through the medium of the written word. I explore the child’s voice in this historical process of nation-building through their entries in essay, short story writing competitions and their letters to the editor to determine magazine contents and demand a space for their self-expression. I tease out how the nationalist space the magazines sought to create was not simply confined to the topography of Bengal but was also shaped by transnational influences, particularly Japanese nationalism, capitalism and racism. The second main theme discussed in children’s magazines from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the focus on the native body and the related anxieties of masculinity. Much of the discussion surrounding the native body was triggered by the internalization of the powerful racial stereotypes of Bengali effeminacy-- a Macaulayan idea, as I will show in this chapter, which was

⁹⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1993).

promulgated through school textbooks as well. Finally, as the project of nation-building was intrinsically also tied with the quest for “modernity” children’s literature put a great deal of emphasis on introducing science in a language that was simple, entertaining and, most crucially, accessible to a young reader. This feature is noteworthy because the emphasis on teaching children science at the school level, at the turn of the twentieth century, can best be described as weak. The dialogue between nation-building and science therefore forms the third main theme that I explore in this chapter.

The primary sources for this chapter include popular Bengali magazines published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries- *Sakha* (The Friend; started in 1883), *Balak* (The Child; started in 1885); *Sandesh* (meaning both “News” and a popular Bengali sweet; started in 1913), *Mauchak* (The Beehive; started in 1920) and *Amaar Desh* (My Country; started in 1920) -- I also draw from other popular children’s literature published as part of the *Swadeshi* influence, particularly *Thakumar Jhuli* (Grandmother’s Bag of Stories; published in 1907) and *Thakurdar Jhuli* (Grandfather’s Bag of Stories; published in 1907). The magazines are useful archival resources since they provide the opportunity to “hear” the children’s “voices” directly through the letters they wrote to the editors. Here again, although the selection of whether a letter should be published or not depended on the subjectivity of the editors, they remain valuable to understand both the reception of ideas promoted in the magazines as well as the processes that shaped the child as a nationalist.

While Chapter Four deals with contestations at the level of ideas, Chapter Five discusses contestation in terms of actual action on the ground through the participation of native students in political agitations against the colonial state towards the closing decade of the nineteenth century. In these agitations teachers were the main promoters of ideas of “sedition” and consequently came under the surveillance of the colonial state as well. In this context I examine two case studies. First, I focus on the Bombay Presidency in the decade of the 1890s. Here I study the role of emerging oppositional educational practices-- particularly vernacular textbooks as strong anti-establishment forces and a major influential factor in the creation of a strong “seditious” tone among sections of Indian students in the 1890s. Contestation, in the case of Bombay, saw the upholding of an indigenous hero, Shivaji, in rejection to personalities as Clive and Hastings who were promoted as role models in imperial school textbooks and other agencies of colonial propaganda. These festivals became centers where not only Congress leaders but also school and college teachers disseminated nationalist ideas thereby attracting a considerable degree of students’ participation. In this context, I study the role of teachers such as Professor Bhanu and Professor Jinsiwale in politically mobilizing school students against the colonial state. It is important to bring in a study of the Bombay Presidency for my project because the “seditious” answer scripts written there by students influenced by Bhanu, Jinsiwale and Tilak (among other nationalist leaders) caught the colonial state’s attention in the 1890s and unleashed an extensive discussion on education policies across colonial India, including Bengal, and the

growing politicization of young native children. The second case study involves students' participation in anti-colonial protests organized by Congress leaders during the Partition of Bengal in 1905. I focus specifically on the Broja Mohan School (Barisal) which became one of the major centers for early students' politics, the publication of "seditious" political pamphlets and support for the *swadeshi* movement. Finally, in this chapter I explore the ways in which the state retaliated by enforcing stricter control, censorship and more rigid surveillance. The sources for Chapter Five primarily consist of official documents from the Government of India Home Department (Political and Education) and native press reports.

Chapter Six functions as the conclusion to the dissertation and provides a summation of its main findings.

CHAPTER TWO

School Textbooks and Colonial Policies in Late Nineteenth-Century India

In this chapter I examine the processes of political socialization of Indian children through the colonial school curriculum with a specific focus on the school textbook. As I discussed in Chapter One, colonial educators realized the significance of inducting native children into a colonized setup right from a young age. This was primarily because since children and the youth are deemed to have a greater facility to adapt to cultural changes. As early as 1860 missionary and educationist John Murdoch, whose influential treatise *Hints on Government Education in India with Special Reference to School Books* was used not simply in mission schools but also in government ones, highlighted the above point. His writings reflect the functioning of the processes of what scholars such as Ashis Nandy have theorized as the “colonization of the mind.”¹ Murdoch argued that:

Books form an important part of the educational machinery. Their influence is of no mean value...*whatever you would put into the life of a nation, put into its schools.* The most effective mode of accomplishing this is to put it into the schoolbooks. They are read by the children when the memory is quick and retentive. Impressions are thus produced

¹ Ashis Nandy, *Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

which remain through life... and if pupils can read as well hear the lessons will be doubly impressed upon the mind. ²

The significance of education in introducing the Indian child to the functioning of the British government and infusing ideas of loyalty, duty and responsibility towards the Empire was an idea not lost to state administrators either. Lord Lytton, the Viceroy of India (1876-1880), underlined that all school primers should include lessons that inculcate “state feeling” or the sense that the membership to the British Empire in itself was a privilege, a matter of “honor,” and familiarize them to a “simple sketch of the duties of a good citizen.”³ As we will see in the following pages it was this emphasis on being a loyal and *good citizen* which guided both textbook selection procedures as well as curricular content.

Lytton’s viceroyalty marks the beginning of the phase of colonial education that this chapter examines. It is crucial to underscore that the emphasis on being a good citizen should arise during Lytton’s era which was marked by a new ethos of conservatism.⁴ His emphasis on the issue of “loyalty” to the colonial state is not only reflective of his own personal sense of duty to the Empire, a virtue to be replicated in native school children but

² John Murdoch, *Hints on Government Education in India with Special Reference to School Books* (Madras: C. Foster and Co, 1873 edition), 4. (Emphasis mine)

³ Home Department, Education, January 1881 20-46 (A), 187.

⁴ David Washbrook, “Lytton, Edward Robert Bulwer-, first earle of Lytton (1831-1891),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/17315> (accessed 23 June 2010).

also a response to the nature of political unrest that marked the tenure of his viceroyalty. For Lytton faithfulness to the Crown was important. One of the first measures he took as a Viceroy was to organize the Great Durbar in 1877 to celebrate Queen Victoria's assumption of the title of "Empress of India." The durbar in itself was an exercise to celebrate British political clout by a blatant ceremonial display of the loyalty of the Indian maharajas and princes to the Empress marked by ostentatious exhibition of wealth and performance of elaborate rituals influenced by the Mughal courtly culture. Lytton sanctioned the spending of obscene amounts of money at a time when large parts of western and southern India were facing famines (1876-78) resulting in five million deaths out of starvation making his term one of the most controversial in viceregal history.⁵ Lytton's relation with the rising western educated Indian intelligentsia can be best described as skeptical, alienated and conflictual, something which appears to have shaped his own outlook on English education in India. The western educated Indian intelligentsia had a better understanding of the idiom of liberal politics, an idiom which they deployed to critique British governance. I argue that many of the new regulations promulgated to curb the processes of textbook production and selection were aimed precisely to clip the scope of turning the ideas of liberal politics against the colonial state. The anxiety surrounding the idea of

⁵ Lytton's decision to fight the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–1880) was another controversial decision. He resigned in 1880 following widespread public outcry.

“sedition” plagued the government especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Much of the contemporary criticism against Lytton, particularly the loss of lives during the 1876-78 famines due to British misrule, was brought to light in India and Britain by the western educated Dadabhai Naoroji who was to soon become a leading nationalist figure under the Indian National Congress and journalist William Digby.⁶ In March 1878, the colonial government passed the “Act for the better control of Publications in the Oriental Languages”⁷ which virtually abolished the freedom of the Indian vernacular press on the pretext of regulation.⁸ Lytton argued that since native journalists were “prone” to indulge in libelous attacks on the British rulers and used a highly seditious language against the Raj, the act was the most appropriate measure to curb disloyal tendencies by inflicting high penalties on journalists and newspaper publishers.⁹ While English education for the natives was necessary for administrative purposes and could not have been rolled back, it often became a contested terrain with unintended consequences as reflected in the acrimonious relation between the Indian press and the colonial state. Therefore with a growing trend of popular political unrest in the last

⁶ Washbrook, “Lytton, Edward Robert Bulwer,”

<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/17315>, accessed 23 June 2010.

⁷ The new law decreed that the publisher of any article which the District Collector deemed libelous or seditious would be penalized. If the author failed to pledge good behavior then proof sheets of his journal would be sent to a censor appointed by the government. A second offence would bring his journal under the arbitrary control of the District Officer and result in the slapping of a heavy fine.

⁸ Lionel Trotter, *History of India under Queen Victoria from 1836 to 1880* (London: W. H Allen & Co, 1886), 393.

⁹ *Ibid.*

quarter of the nineteenth century, it became imperative to politically socialize the Indian child away from dissension and more towards loyalty towards the state.

Before proceeding further with this discussion it is important to delve into a brief history of the school textbook in India to understand the system that existed before and was replaced by the new rules that the government brought into practice.

History of Textbook Publishing

Prior to the formation of a centralized Textbook Committee in India in 1877, there was no unitary official body which monitored and examined the school textbooks prescribed in schools.¹⁰ The system for selecting and prescribing textbooks in schools and universities was not uniformly regularized for the entire country at a single moment of time. In fact it was considered in its various dimensions in different phases for different provinces and the evidence for the whole of India is unevenly available. While providing an outline of the provincial nuances and differences in textbook selection policies for every province is outside the scope of this dissertation, I will focus

¹⁰ Before the introduction and popularity of mass printing in India the concept of a standardized printed textbook that each student in a classroom would read was new in the indigenous school system (such as the pathshalas and maktabas). The more conventional method of teaching was one where the school teacher would write down each individual child's lesson on palm leaves. Earliest accounts on the reception of printed school textbooks in India reveal that initially there was a strong opposition to the use of printed books by native teachers. For a discussion on pathshala education see Kazi Shahidullah, "The Purpose and Impact of Government Policy on Pathshala Gurumashays," in *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*, ed. Nigel Crook (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

on two models followed in India (in Bengal and the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh) to highlight that textbook selection processes prior to 1877 often significantly differed from one province to the other.

In Bengal there was no direct government agency for the production and distribution of school textbooks; it was a task undertaken through the instrumentality of the Calcutta School Book Society. The Calcutta School Book Society, established in 1817, was instituted by a committee of men (mostly European but also included a few native members) interested in disseminating a supply of suitable textbooks for primary schools together with vernacular publications for general reading and as a means of spreading education among the people. Those entrusted with the task of writing textbooks for the Society included prominent social reformers and educationalists of the times including Rammohan Roy, Radhakanta Deb, Ramkamal Sen, Gour Mohan Vidyalankar, James Stewart and several Christian missionaries.¹¹ The Society traded in books like any ordinary bookseller deploying various mofussil agents who received a percentage in the profits from all sales.¹² To facilitate the distribution of schoolbooks, numerous country agents were established throughout the Lower Provinces in Bengal. These were chiefly entrusted to the masters in government schools and Deputy School Inspectors.¹³ In a short span of five years, in

¹¹ Jogesh Bagal, "Primary Education in Bengal 1818-33," *Bengal: Past and Present*, Vol. LXXXI, no. 152 (1962): 84.

¹² A. M Monteath and A. P Howell, eds. *Educational Reports, 1859-1871, Being Two Notes on the State of Education in India*. Vol.1, *Selections from Educational Records of the Government of India* (Delhi: Manager of Publications, Government of India, 1960), 112.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 278.

1824, the Calcutta School Book Society had eighty-four schools under its jurisdiction within the city of Calcutta alone.¹⁴

The first book that the Society published was a book of eighteen short stories called *Nitikatha* (“Narration of Laws”, 1818) authored by Tarinicharan Mitra and Ramkamal Sen. The book is also credited to have been the first school textbook written in Bengali for children.¹⁵ The Society published several “readers,” English spelling books, primers and dictionaries that had a wide circulation in the Bengal Presidency. Among the most popular ones included the English reader series by Peary Charan Sircar (Professor of English at Presidency College, Calcutta). Like several popular textbooks of this period, the Peary Charan Sircar Series too was an adaptation of textbooks originally written in the English language and with specific socio-cultural references to England. One of the main complaints regarding the Calcutta School Book textbooks therefore was their content was alien to the sensibilities of young Indian students. One of the chief concerns of the Director of Public Instruction was thus to introduce a textbook series which was better adapted to the taste and comprehension of the Indian students, emphasized teaching the history and geography of India (not simply that of England), and used a language which was not abstruse for native children.¹⁶ Another key feature of the Peary Charan Sircar Series was the strong moral and religious component of their subject matter. Although there was no direct reference to Christianity, religious concepts

¹⁴ Anon, “Progress of Education in India,” *The Christian Observer* 24, no. 265 (1824): 333.

¹⁵ Bani Basu, *Bangla Sishusahitya Granthpanji* (Calcutta: Navana Printing Works Private Limited), 23.

¹⁶ Bengal Public Instruction Report, 1869-70 (A), 234, 245.

such as the idea of God as the Creator and the duty of all human beings to follow Him, were fundamental lessons.¹⁷

Though the Society received partial funding from the government, school textbooks published by it were not checked or regulated by any means by government agencies. In 1862 the Calcutta School Book Society was merged with the Vernacular Literature Society resulting in the proliferation of publications in various languages including Bengali, Sanskrit, Arabic, Urdu and Persian. While the contribution of the Society towards the spread of mass education had been commendable, as highlighted by the Hunter Commission Report by the early 1880s, private competition opened up other options of procuring schoolbooks making it less prudent for schools to depend upon any single outsourcing agency.¹⁸

In the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, on the other hand, the preparation of vernacular class books had received the early attention of the local government and a Curator of Schoolbooks had been appointed as early as September 1844 for the control, supervision and proper circulation of school books.¹⁹ In the late 1840s the government wanted to reduce its reliance on printing in missionary presses and gave huge incentives to the setting up of new government presses. Many of these printing presses were established under the initiative of Lieutenant Governor James Thomason who pioneered the promotion of primary education and the production

¹⁷ Murdoch, *Hints*, 40.

¹⁸ W.W. Hunter, *Report of the Indian Education Commission* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1882).

¹⁹ J. A. Richey and H. Sharpe, *Selections from Education Records Part II, 1840-1859* (Delhi: National Archives of India, 1965, reprint), 229.

of elementary textbooks.²⁰ After the directive of the Wood's Despatch (1854) to promote mass education, the government had to rely on the collaboration of Indian publishers to accomplish the official program of disseminating what it considered "useful" knowledge and ideas of Western Enlightenment in vernacular languages. Although the definition of what constituted "useful" knowledge remained officially undefined and nebulous, strict restrictions were imposed on what the government considered to be "obscene" or "immoral" books and, as I will discuss shortly, "seditious" textbooks.²¹ The emergence of Agra as one of the main centers of the production of official educational printing upto the 1850s was a direct consequence of government patronage.²² Official patronage of textbook production in Agra opened up vast avenues for employment to government jobs associated with the printing business most of which related to getting official contracts for textbook printing. The system of official patronage also became a means of extending state control.²³ Through a system of government licenses and rewards a group of loyal editors and publishers could be cultivated who were given contracts to carry out the

²⁰ For a detailed discussion on the history of book publishing in the three main centers of Agra, Lucknow and Benaras in the United Provinces see Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007), 50

²¹ For a thorough discussion on the issue of "obscene" literature see Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001).

²² Stark, *An Empire of Books*, 84.

²³ Prior to government engagement, in the 1830s, Agra was an important center of textbook publication due to immense missionary activities by the American Presbyterian Society and the Church Mission Society. During this period, a significant percentage of missionary tracts and educational literature was published by the Agra School Book Society (established in 1835) which controlled the monopoly over the production and supply of textbooks. The Agra School Book Society gradually loses its grip over the textbook market in the 1840s once the government stepped into textbook production. Also see Avril Powell, "Creating Christian Community in Early Nineteenth Century Agra," in *India and the Indianness of Christianity: Essays on Understanding-- Historical, Theological and Bibliographical-- in Honor of Robert Eric Frykenberg*, ed. Richard Fox Young (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009).

publication of a large percentage of printed government educational literature. Often a major percentage of the publisher's income was secured by clinching official contracts. Thus both his economic prosperity and the flourishing of his printing press were closely linked to a steady flow of government contracts. The withdrawal of official patronage also became a means of exercising effective control since its application often meant the publisher going out of business.²⁴

Official education reports for the years 1861-1862 reveal that the sale of textbooks was directly in the hands of the Deputy Inspectors who were appointed by the government and dependent on the Allahabad Depot for books in demand in their respective districts.²⁵ To encourage quick sales at low prices, the government allowed large discounts on cash purchases of these books while granting commissions to the Deputy Inspectors on such sales. English textbooks for the North-Western Provinces of Oudh and Agra were procured from the Calcutta Schoolbook Society's depot and its upcoming agencies whereas vernacular textbooks were usually obtained from the Allahabad Government Depot and from the Newal Kishore Press at Lucknow, another significant center for the publication of school textbooks in the United Provinces.²⁶

All the vernacular schoolbooks for which the government had copyright were printed and published at the Government Press. The Curator of the Allahabad Depot, who was also the Superintendent of the Government Press, maintained a large stock of these books at his disposal. Vernacular books over which the copyright

²⁴ Stark, *An Empire of Books*, 86.

²⁵ Monteath and Howell, *Selections*, 113.

²⁶ Hunter Commission Report, 334.

did not belong to the government, but which the Director of Public Instruction often recommended as suitable for prizes as well as use in schools, were obtained from their authors or publishers. The duties of the Curator of Schoolbooks in the North Western Provinces included keeping himself fully informed of all schoolbooks in English and vernacular languages that were being commonly used in the schools in the province. He had to prepare a “Catalogue Raisonné,” giving all necessary details regarding the content, place of production of the book and the number of copies in circulation. This list had to be printed, published and periodically updated. The Catalogue had to be so methodical and the information in them so complete that a person consulting the Catalogue could form an opinion regarding the book and learn where he could obtain it from.²⁷ Many of these strict criteria came into effect in 1867 with the passing of the Regulation of Printing Press and Newspaper Act XXV which primarily aimed at keeping the government fully informed regarding the activities of a growing number of private commercial printing enterprises. The Act also required that the name of the publisher, date and place of publication must be printed on the title page of all books to provide complete information regarding the origin of a book.²⁸

The auxiliary depots at the District Headquarters managed the distribution of schoolbooks to school masters and students. Headmasters of Zillah schools and Deputy Inspectors were in charge of these depots. To facilitate the distribution still further and to render school textbooks easily procurable in towns and villages, the

²⁷ Richey and Sharpe, *Selections*, 237.

²⁸ Stark, *An Empire of Books*, 89.

Deputy Inspectors kept a small stock of books at each tahsil school for the teacher to sell. The village schoolmaster, while coming every month to the district headquarters for his pay, purchased from the tahsil schools all the books that were required by his students.

1877: Formation of the Simla Textbook Committee

The first attempt made by the government to synchronize and regulate the production of schoolbooks across India was the Simla Textbook Conference in 1877. The genesis of the Textbook Committee can be traced back to the 1873 Government of India Resolution of the Home Department directing the formation of provincial committees for revising textbooks in use.²⁹ The Resolution requested all local governments to appoint committees to examine and report upon the textbooks prescribed in all schools which received any kind of formal support from the state. The aim was to find out defects in either form or substance and to bring them into harmony with the principles declared in the Resolution. Further, it decided that after the reports of the provincial committees had been received the government should consider summoning a small general committee to meet at Simla.³⁰ The committees were to be constituted of representatives of different provinces. A general Committee consisting of a President, a Secretary and members as the representatives of the larger educational department in the several provinces was set up. The governments in

²⁹ Home Department, Education, March 29, 1873 143- 152(A).

³⁰ Hunter Commission Report, 338.

Madras, Bombay, Bengal, the North Western Provinces and Punjab had to send one representative each to the Committee.

The Resolution of 1873 resulted in the convening of the Simla Textbook Committee in 1877. Sir E. C. Bayley was chosen for the post of the President of the Committee, while Roper Lethbridge was appointed its Secretary.³¹ The Simla Textbook Committee was primarily appointed to consider the provincial education reports in detail, ascertain how successfully the recommendations of various provincial reports had been carried out at the local level and select successful operations which could be usefully extended to other parts of the country. One of the main themes of discussion for the Committee was to look into the production of vernacular textbooks on subjects such as law, jurisprudence and the principles of evidence that were adapted to train native candidates to serve better in public life as official employees under the government. Finally, on the basis of successful models of education in various provinces, the Committee had to recommend a complete

³¹ Edward Clive Bayley (1821-1884) was a British administrator in Bengal who started his career as a civil servant in 1841 gradually rising, after a series of executive and judicial appointments, to the rank of the Officiating Secretary of the Government of India in the Foreign Department in 1861 and Home Secretary in 1862. Bayley also served as the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University from 1869 to 1874. He was closely associated with the Asiatic Society of Bengal for twenty-one years and served as the President of the Society in 1863, 1864, 1866, 1875 and 1877. (*Law Times*, May 10th 1884, 34)

Roper Lethbridge (1840-1919) was a British civil servant and academic. He was appointed a Professor in the Bengal Education Department in 1868 and subsequently held the positions of Fellow and Examiner at the Calcutta University between 1868 and 1876. Lethbridge was a prolific author who served as the editor of the *Calcutta Review* and contributed articles to the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*. He also wrote several books of which the *History of India* and the *History of Bengal* are well-known works. He served as a Conservative member of the House of Commons from 1885 to 1892. Lethbridge was felicitated with the Knight Commander of the Indian Empire in 1890. (Victor Plarr, *Men and Women of the Time: a Dictionary of Contemporaries* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1899), 646).

scheme of measures to the Government of India which could be then implemented for general observance in the rest of India.³²

The most significant outcome of the Simla Committee's deliberations was the formation of Standing Committees which acted as the machinery through which the government could control and regulate the production of vernacular and English textbooks used in each province. The local governments were given complete control to select the members of the Standing Committee under their jurisdiction and regulate their functioning. The Standing Committees were to be comprised of at least ten members, constituted by both European and Indian representatives "in as early equal proportions as the circumstances of the province would admit."³³ The Director of Public Instruction was nominated as the ex-officio President with a casting vote.

It was unanimously decided that a Standing Committee would be set up in each province to choose, and if necessary, prepare both vernacular as well as English textbooks. Each Committee was entrusted with several vital functions which included drawing up two separate lists of suitable books, one appropriate to be used in government and aided schools and the other listing schoolbooks which might be only used in aided schools. With the establishment of the Standing Committees, for the first time, there was an official body answerable to the local governments (and subsequently the Education Department) which would examine all the textbooks taught in a province. The Standing Committees had to provide in writing the reasons why certain school textbooks were rejected. They had to publish a quarterly list of

³² Home Department Resolution No. 101-106, April 1877.

³³ Ibid.

books authorized to be used in government schools in the local gazette. The use of any other books in schools was strictly prohibited. The Inspectors of Schools and Deputy Inspectors were required to report on the extent to which these rules and regulations were implemented in their annual reports. Subject to the restrictions imposed on prohibited and objectionable textbooks the local governments in order to encourage competition and production of a thriving vernacular literature were recommended to allow free trade in textbooks as far as possible. This meant that Headmasters and school committees were free to choose their textbooks from the list of authorized books printed in the gazette. Since the Standing Committee had already examined and approved all such books, it provided the guarantee that this freedom of choice was not abused.

The Standing Committees also devised methods for obtaining new books where suitable ones did not exist. As part of this measure, the Committee had to put up a notification stating the kind of books that were required and invite applications from qualified authors. From among the applicants the Standing Committee in all provinces chose a small number (between two and four) of authors of high repute who were then asked to produce a book on a given subject. The government covered the cost of printing and publishing a small first edition (usually around five hundred copies) of each of the production of these selected authors. All books so produced and those which were approved by the Committee were put on the Government-authorized textbook list. The works found to be the best in each discipline were given awards and often handed as prizes to school children.

Although the creation of the Standing Committees was a step towards extending the power of the state across local governments, a certain degree of interconnectedness among different provinces was maintained. For instance, each Provincial Committee had to share its own lists of approved works with other provinces. This measure was possibly also a means to warn and update other provinces of the most recent list of “objectionable” schoolbooks. Harmonious cooperation, especially in the case of provinces sharing a common vernacular language, was advised. Each Standing Committee had to procure copies of all the textbooks approved in other provinces to form the nucleus of a textbook library of reference. It was also expected that, as soon as the constitution of the Standing Committees and their duties became operational, authors of textbooks (both in English and vernacular languages) would send specimens of their work to be selected on the Government approved list of books.

The Simla Committee, despite being a landmark in the history of education in colonial India, generated some controversial debates and critiques. Many of the oppositions raised related to the composition of the Committee and the appointment of its members. Much of this contestation came from sections of the vernacular press. Both the Indian members of the Committee and the native press argued that the ratio between European and Indian as well as official and non-official members was not judiciously balanced. The *Sabachar*, a Bengali newspaper, argued that the job of selecting textbooks for Indians should have been entrusted to the natives rather than bestowed upon the English who were unaccustomed not only to the needs of

the Indian population but also unsupportive to indigenous forms of knowledge.³⁴ Similarly, Babu Kristodas Pal, a member of the Simla Committee, argued that the Standing Committees could not command public confidence unless it included additional independent and neutral members to ensure a more balanced membership ratio.³⁵ An article published by the *Sabachar* on 21st May 1877 criticized the appointment of Mr. Lethbridge as one of the Secretaries to the Simla Committee: “The appointment of Mr. Lethbridge to the Simla Book Committee is also open to serious objection; because he himself is an author and has a private interest in the question of the revision of textbooks.”³⁶ The editor of another vernacular newspaper, the *Sadharani*, disapproved the appointment of those members who lacked the experience of working with the Education Department and argued that well-known native intellectuals and public figures such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Bhudev Mukherjee would have made better candidates for the job.³⁷

Empire and Control

Despite the implementation of the new regulations, the government felt that its supervision over textbooks needed to be reinforced. The discussions emerged notably in the last decade of the nineteenth century extending into the early twentieth century when a large number of students were drawn into anti-government agitations

³⁴ Report on the Native Press (Henceforth RNP) Bengal, 1877, 175.

³⁵ Home Department, Education, January 1881 20-46 (A), 16.

³⁶ RNP Bengal, 1877, 176.

³⁷ Ibid., 179.

particularly during the Swadeshi movement over the partition of Bengal in 1905.³⁸ The first major concern was regarding the composition of textbook committees. The implementation of the rules of the Textbook Committee passed in 1881 which demanded that the committees should be constituted by a “fair intermixture of independent members,” resulted in the appointment of a large number of members who were not officials in the Education Department.³⁹ Sometimes the President of the textbook committee himself was not an officer of the Department and occasionally a non official.⁴⁰ The issue was also highlighted by Lord Curzon, who by virtue of his position as the Viceroy of India (1899-1905), also held the post of the Chancellor of the Calcutta University. In a letter to the Education Department (dated October 20, 1899) Curzon noticed that the weakening of central control resulted in a situation where some of the local governments abdicated their powers to bodies over which officials of the Educational Department did not always preside. In such bodies natives enjoyed substantial majority and consequently “dictate to Englishmen what English books shall be used for English exams in schools which but for the government would have no existence.”⁴¹ This he found was “both an abnegation of responsibility on the part of government and a source of political danger to which it is necessary to put a stop.”⁴² These discussions are important to highlight because first, they mark a shift away from the official position of 1881 with a clear emphasis

³⁸ The aspect of students’ political agitations during the Swadeshi movement is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

³⁹ Home Department ,Education, February 1900 25-36 (A), 55.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 18.

⁴² Ibid.

by the government on a larger representation of its own officials in various textbook committees. Second, the link between the loosening of government control over education thereby opening up the possibilities of “political danger” is officially identified as a threat for effective governance. Finally, as evident from Curzon’s letter, the government was no longer willing to continue with a system where native members often outnumbered British officials thereby wielding substantial authority over the management of the Education Department. The issue of numbers became particularly critical when it came to making decisions by casting votes.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the government was also concerned that the University prescribed the books for the two most senior classes of schools (i.e. Matriculation and Intermediate). For instance, in the high schools at the secondary level of education, books prescribed for the University Entrance Exams were used. The Principal of the college to which these schools were attached selected the books. A. H. L. Fraser, the Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, argued that during these crucial stages of a student’s education when the supervision and control of the state should be most effective, the “*Universities dictate over the government. This is wrong and has to be corrected.*”⁴³ The problem arose because the Universities being incorporated by the Acts of Legislation were not government institutions but autonomous bodies with a constitution modeled on the University of London. They were self-supporting agencies which survived on the fees extracted from the candidates for examination. Financial independence from government grants and aids

⁴³ Ibid., 13 (Emphasis mine).

insured that their autonomy was maintained. Second, by their power to grant or refuse affiliation they were able to dominate the entire system of higher education, from secondary schools upwards.⁴⁴ At the same time, with real executive powers being vested in the hands of the Senate, the Chancellor (the office of which was held by the Governor or Viceroy) and the local government had little power to control the decision making process. Sir F. W. Maclean, the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, cautioned about the lack of government representation in the Syndicate: “The Native vote in that [Syndicate] body is greater than the European, and there is an important section of the native members – *the more radical and militant section* – which is strongly opposed to anything like government interference in such matters as that now under consideration.”⁴⁵

This fear of the “radical and militant” was explicitly manifested in 1900 in the Bombay Presidency when William Lee-Warner, the Secretary in the Political and Secret Department in the India Office, observed that in the recent Bombay matriculation exams, certain answer papers had an alarmingly seditious tone. Further inquiry traced these to the Fergusson College, which was seen as the focal point from where such ideas were emanating.⁴⁶ The government inquiry into the schools in the region revealed that the Fergusson College, the New English School, and the Deccan Education Society were becoming centers of political agitation among students. A vernacular textbook entitled *Tales from Maratha History* which was deemed to contain

⁴⁴ Ibid., 8-13.

⁴⁵ Home Department, Education, February 1901 5-6 (Deposit), 2. (Emphasis mine).

⁴⁶ Home Department, Education, February 1900 2-3 (Deposit), 5.

several objectionable passages on the government and glorified the might and valor of Shivaji's rule, was seen as the main instigator in promoting hostile state feelings.⁴⁷ The book was written by one Professor Bhanu who was closely associated with the New English School. It was also found that two assistant masters of the New English School were editors of the *Sudharak*, a newspaper which promoted volatile anti-government ideas. The government observed that such "seditious" vernacular textbooks became more potent when they were taught by teachers who, despite being government employees, were politically active against the state. Many predominantly participated in the Shivaji celebrations and Ganapati melas which became centers for the diffusion of anti- government sentiment from the 1890s. The government also felt that considering the social respect and "immense influence" teachers commanded in India, their participation in anti-government politics had the potential of giving an undesirable direction to the impressionable minds of the Indian students.⁴⁸ This colonial anxiety was substantiated when official investigations caught the students of Professor Bhanu and the New English School and Fergusson College participating in anti-imperialist political agitations. The issue of seditious answer scripts was an important turning point at the turn of the century leading to an in-depth focus on government policies on curriculum selection and pedagogy.⁴⁹ Bhanu was suspended for a year and fresh focus was put on the system according to which textbooks were prescribed.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Home Department, Education, July 1898, 19-31.

⁴⁹ The issue of the Bombay Matriculation exam answer script will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

While many in the native press applauded students' participation in political agitations, the trend was not seen favorably by sections of the British press. Many of the articles published in these newspapers were brought to the notice of the Education Department. While the exact details of the dialogue within the official circle surrounding these articles are not always available in archival records, the fact that they were often quoted or referred to in official reports indicates the level of attention they received when published. For instance during the discussion on the need for greater state control over the production of school textbooks, two articles published in *The Times* (London) dated 21st September 1897 and 11th October 1897 which criticized the British education system in India were discussed. The articles argued that the education system "not only failed of its benevolent intention, but has actually trained up the youth of India in such a manner as to render them unfaithful to their teachers, discontented with their lot, and eventually disloyal and treasonable towards the settled and beneficial rule which we have so strongly established over all India."⁵⁰ The authors maintained, rather sarcastically, that the influence of the "well meaning" English Indophiles on young educated Indians had been "most injurious" since they diverted their emotions and energies from the "channels of beneficent and profitable activity into the wasteful, violent and vain paths of political agitation." *The Times'* stand was that the Education Department should be held responsible for sowing the seeds of "sham patriotism" by ignoring the circulation of school textbooks which preached young students conceptions of India's past greatness and a

⁵⁰ Home Department, Education, July 1898 19-31(A), (Confidential).

history of past unity of the Hindus.⁵¹ Such ideas when promoted through school textbooks posed the threat of spreading feelings of political discontent and dissent against the government among young students. According to the *Times* report books written by Macaulay and Burke shaped false conceptions of English rule in India among students. Without specifying much the reasons for its position, the newspaper argued that Macaulay provided “misleading word pictures” of India while Burke’s writings were laced with “partisan interpretations” with the aim to “secure a political conviction” which did not necessarily adhere to historical facts.⁵²

The question of what was being taught in Indian schools and what *should* be taught evoked fervent arguments on both sides of the debate. While on one hand the indigenous press became the platform where much of the criticism surrounding textbooks unfolded, on the other hand key government officials identified several textbooks currently taught in schools that were seen to provoke “seditious” ideas among the youth. In Bengal, for instance, the *Hitavadi* (10th January 1902) expressed surprise that none of the works of experienced and reputed educationalists such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (except for his primer *Varnaparichay*) and Akshay Kumar Dutt had been included in the list of textbooks prescribed by the government.⁵³ Instead, textbooks “unpopular” in schools including Ishan Chandra Ghosh’s *History of India* had been recommended simply because he was an employee of the Education Department. The *Hitavadi* also felt that some of the textbooks were “outdated” such as geography books by Tarini Charan Chattopadhyay and Shyama Das Majumdar

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ RNP Bengal, 1902, 300.

both of which had not been updated keeping in view contemporary political changes. For this purpose it observed that Babu Sasi Bhusan Chattopadhyay's book on geography was more appropriate and should have been included instead. Similarly, the *Samata* (18th July 1890) found John Strachey's book, *India*, which had been prescribed as a course book by the Allahabad University in schools and colleges under it, as unsuitable because it was written in a spirit of antipathy to Indian reformers. It strongly opposed the inclusion of Strachey's work as one "which *breathes race feelings in every line*, which is calculated to set race against race, and which freely indulges in an ungentlemanly abuse of all reforms seeking natives."⁵⁴

Many of the objections raised in *The Times* article were replicated within official discussions as well. Lord George Hamilton noticed that some of the vernacular reading books patronized by the Education Department in Bombay had lessons which however harmless they might have seemed when the books were compiled, were capable of being used as "apologies for disloyalties."⁵⁵ These included books referred to in the Tilak trial⁵⁶ such as *Balbodh*, *Pushpavatika*, *Hitopadesa*

⁵⁴ RNP Bengal, July-December 1890, 695.

⁵⁵ Lord George Hamilton was the Secretary of State for India during this period (1895-1903). He was a British politician from the Conservative Party who served as a Member of Parliament from 1868 to 1885 and held several key administrative positions in India including the posts of the Under-Secretary of State for India (1874-1878) and the Vice-President of the Committee on Education (1878-1880).

⁵⁶ The reference here is to Tilak's trial in 1897 on grounds of sedition. The immediate background to the trial was the famine and bubonic plague of 1896-97 for which the British colonial state came under immense criticism in the vernacular press for its failure to alleviate the problems of the victims. This period also witnessed a meteoric rise in terms of popular support for Tilak which included a large section of the student population. In June 1897 Tilak organized a ceremony to commemorate the coronation of Shivaji marked by the usual display of patriotic songs and lectures. While the festival went off without any untoward incidents, it was reported about in his newspaper, *Kesari*, and was followed by the murder of W. C. Rand, the Plague Commissioner. This resulted in charges of sedition being levied against Tilak and his subsequent imprisonment and trial. The legal procedures against Tilak were driven by an aggressive campaign launched by the imperialist Anglo-Indian press, particularly *The Times of India* and the *Bombay Gazette*. Justice James Strachey who presided over the case was apparently known for his bias against

and a Marathi reader.⁵⁷ It is not clear whether *Balbodh* was taught in government schools but the *Pushpavatika* was awarded to children as a prize and advertised in Government Central Book Depots.⁵⁸ Hamilton's concern emerged from the fact that both these books which were deemed as objectionable by the colonial state had been written by its own employee, a Deputy Educational Inspector. Thus "disloyalty" and "sedition" ran not only within a certain section of the student population but equally (or more dangerously) among those who were supposed to be the representatives of the state and by extension an upholder of its ideology. Second, the fact that such "seditious" literature was being produced and sold at government depots as school textbooks raised apprehensions regarding the effectiveness of the existing system of textbook selection. Similarly John Strachey noted that:

Much of the hostile attitude we meet in India is due to the books we have placed in the hands of schoolboys: we have fed them with the invectives of Milton and Burke and they, with their great initiative faculty, have conceived that we stand to the people of India in the position of the Stuart and the Georges to the people of England.

(Sir John Strachey – *Reign of Victoria Vol. I*, p.506).⁵⁹

natives and is known to have distorted the law to suit a verdict in favor of the government. The jury found Tilak guilty and he was sentenced to 18 months of imprisonment. A crucial outcome of the trial was an amendment in Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code which dealt with sedition to make it more comprehensive and draconian. For more details on the trial see A. G. Noorani *Indian Political Trails 1775-1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), Marianne Vardalos, *Engaging Terror: A Critical and Interdisciplinary Approach* (Florida: Brown Walker Publishers, 2009), Mariam Dossal and Ruby Maloni, *State Intervention and Popular Response: Western India in the Nineteenth Century* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan Private Limited, 1999).

⁵⁷ The report does not mention specifically what in particular the state found objectionable in these books apart from a general comment that these carried ideas which were "seditious" and could be interpreted in ways that posed threat to the government. I have tried to locate the books and have been unable to find *Pushpavatika*. I have found different editions of *Balbodh* and *Hitopadesha* both of which were books with moral stories. The books were written in Bengali and it is hard to ascertain if the Marathi version was the same in terms of content or a different piece of literature all together. I am limited in terms of my linguistic skills since I do not read Marathi. It would be a much required project of historical investigation to read the original Marathi textbooks and understand what passages would have prompted the colonial state to object to these books.

⁵⁸ Home Department, Education, July 1898 19 –31(A) Confidential.

⁵⁹ Home Department, Education, July 1898 19 –31(A) Confidential.

The colonial anxiety arose from the fact (best summarized in a *Times* London article dated 11th October 1897) that the impact of such text books on Indian colleges was more “painful” because “a school child may fail to realize the deductions which follow from what he is taught but the keen witted college youth, not only perceives the corollaries but he pushes them to their utmost length.”⁶⁰ Therefore, because college students were deemed to pose a greater threat, it was necessary to rein them in.

Strachey’s evocation of Burke and the Stuarts is significant. His objection to the use of Burke’s works in schools is not surprising in the background against which the discussion surrounding school textbooks gained momentum. Burke (1729-1797), a prolific writer, philosopher and political commentator was best known for initiating the impeachment of Warren Hastings and supporting the cause of the American Revolution.⁶¹ In his famous Fox’s East India Bill Burke projected himself as the spokesman of the “undone people of India” against the corruption and atrocities of the rule of the East India Company. As a contemporary of William Jones and early British Orientalist scholars his perception of India was shaped by scholarship which mostly exalted the classical age of Indian civilization. For Burke India was a civilization which had lost its past glory which needed to be reinstated. So for him the British colonization of India after the downfall of the later Mughals made sense. However, he was clear that the role of the British government in India should not be to plunder and acquire wealth but to earn honor. In his scheme of ideas British

⁶⁰ *The Times*, 11th October 1897.

⁶¹ Warren Hastings was the first Governor General of Bengal from 1774 to 1785.

presence in India should be specifically for the protection and preservation of Indian authority at every level. Ironically enough, Burke conceded that the British had failed in this regard and it was the Indians who needed to be protected from the British themselves. The British should respect the complete independence of their Indian allies and safeguard the rights of the landowners and subordinate authorities within their own province. The Parliament's role in Indian governance should essentially be judicial and not legislative. A staunch proponent of the rule of law, Burke insisted that British imperial rule should not only be governance according to law but equally importantly rule in the interest of the ruled.

The rule of the East India Company was of course anything but antithetical to what Burke espoused. It is thus no surprise that he would be so dismissive of the Company Raj and believe that even under "the most oppressive Mughal rule Hindu policy and a Hindu government was left intact" whereas wherever the British had intruded conditions were worse than what existed under the "troubled and vexatious era of the last Muslim rulers in Bengal." For Burke Indian rulers such as Raja Chet Singh of Benaras and the Begums of Oudh symbolized the victimization of the East India Company's oppression. When Burke introduced the Fox's East India Bill, he made provisions for the compensation and restoration of these rulers from the injustices of the Company. The Bill also had clauses to end the East India Company's monopoly over salt and opium and control over textile trade. Such proposals overlapped with the economic critique of colonialism popularized by R. P. Dutt and Dadabhai Naoroji, predominantly the latter's Drain of Wealth theory, in the late

nineteenth century. Although the Fox's East India Bill was eventually not passed, it was an attack on those who exercised power in India. Burke's critiques of the Company, particularly of Hastings who personified the corruption of the Company Raj, would have found resonance in the anti-government sentiments emerging in late nineteenth century India. In this context Crown rule became just an extension of the Company rule which it overtook.

That Strachey would be uncomfortable with the parallels drawn in these books between the contemporary British government and the reign of the Stuarts is of interest too. The regime of the Stuarts (1603-1714) in England was marked by a period of political and religious unrest. Under the reign of the first Stuart ruler James I (1603-1714), who was also the King of Scotland, for the first time the crowns of England and Scotland were combined. The Stuarts had a reputation of being unfavorable to and in conflict with the English Parliamentary system, a concept alien to contemporary Scottish monarchies, and did not earn the respect of their subjects the way their predecessor the Tudors did. As a wastrel in perpetual need of money James I made constant demands from the Parliament to fund his royal extravagances. If the Parliament refused, he imposed heavy taxation on goods imported into England which made him unpopular among most English people.⁶² It is possible that for Strachey the immediate correlation that he could make between the issue of popular discontent due to heavy taxation under James' reign was with the nationalist slogan of "no taxation without representation" and the economic critique of the British rule in

⁶² Katherine Coman, *A Short History of England* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1902), 257.

late nineteenth century. James' rule was significant as it marked the colonization of Ireland, a political move which embittered the relations between the two countries for centuries to come. Widespread rebellions erupted in North Ireland against James I which were ruthlessly repressed.⁶³ The reference to the Irish case would have resonance in the contemporary context of colonization of India. James' successor Charles I (1625-1649), a firm believer in the divine right of kingship, dissolved the Parliament in 1629. The dissolution lasted eleven long years. The Parliament met again in 1640 but when the House of Commons refused to vote to pay for the financial demands of Charles I, within three weeks it was dissolved again. Charles' reign, like his father's, was marked by a series of popular riots and protests mostly over issues of taxation.⁶⁴ The conflict between the crown and the supporters of the Parliament eventually led to the English Civil War (1642-1651) resulting in Charles' defeat by the military commander Oliver Cromwell. He was executed in 1649 for being a "tyrant, traitor and public enemy", paving the way for England to become a republic."⁶⁵

As these issues became matters of anxiety for the government, it passed a Resolution on 8th February 1900 to ensure that the textbook committees were brought more under the control and supervision of the Education Department and local government. Under the new regulations textbook committees were to be constituted to ensure that first, the proportion of non-official members was not

⁶³ Ibid., 267.

⁶⁴ One of the first public protests happened in 1637 when John Hampden, a young Buckinghamshire squire, refused to pay his taxes. He was tried in court but the judges passed a judgement in favor of Charles. The court ruling was not received sympathetically by the people and unleashed a chain of popular protests.

⁶⁵ Coman, *A Short History of England*, 285.

unduly large; second, the interests of different groups were well represented; and finally, competent government officials who might not be members of the Education Department but “could be relied upon” to fulfill the goals of the committee were recruited.⁶⁶ The Resolution strongly reiterated that since state resources aided many schools, it could not abrogate its rights to a powerful voice in the determination of the course of studies which was imparted there.⁶⁷ New measures were introduced which limited the tenure of membership to textbook committees to two to three years to give the government the authority to renominate any member and strengthen the composition of the committees by appointing its own officials.⁶⁸ The Director of Public Instruction was provided the power to prescribe a list of textbooks which would be introduced in all schools and colleges. Any book not included in this list could not be introduced in any government aided school without the permission of the circle inspector.⁶⁹ This basic prerequisite had to be adhered to by the managers of aided schools in order to receive state grant in aids. The inclusion of any textbook which was not prescribed into the syllabus would be possible only after being referred to the committees. However, in most cases such books were not approved. Another significant official measure implemented was to reiterate that utmost care should be taken to avoid as far as possible textbooks deemed to be of “aggressive character.”⁷⁰ A list of books deemed “undesirable” by the Education Department was drawn and

⁶⁶ Home Department, Education, February 1900 25- 36 (A), 8th February 1900, 147.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 148.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Home Department, Education, February 1900 25 – 36 (A), 144.

all government and aided schools were forbidden from prescribing the textbooks recorded in this list.

Although these regulations were introduced, the issue of effective implementation of these rules posed a challenge since the government did not have the power to prescribe textbooks in unaided schools. To counter this concern, the Governor General in Council passed a clause stating that candidates from unaided school were liable to be excluded from any public examination or competition for a government scholarship if any of the textbooks which were disapproved by the government were used in the school in question.⁷¹ Since government employment was one of the few avenues available for the English educated youth as a means of both social prestige and economic prosperity, any association with a school that defied the regulation meant halting one's prospects of higher education and employment. It also meant that fewer guardians would be willing to send their wards to such schools and more students could be "taught" as per colonial guidelines. Moreover to ensure that the education of the natives was largely within government regulation, all native undergraduates or graduates chosen for the highest posts in revenue and judicial offices were trained for a period of two to three years with the intention that the government could "concentrate its efforts and bring to bear the *full force of its European agency*."⁷² As part of this scheme the Deccan College was converted into a provincial college for the final examination of selected candidates for higher offices in Bombay.

⁷¹ Ibid, 147-148.

⁷² Home Department, Education, February 1900 2-3(A) Deposit, 6. (Emphasis mine).

The task of recasting knowledge was therefore based on its censorship which also became a state necessity keeping in view the swiftly changing political scenario of the time. Care was taken to ensure that books were not “too scientific” and would “supply the Indian raiyat with such information as will be useful to him in his ordinary occupations.”⁷³ It is noteworthy that the British colonial state was aware that its policies would interfere with the liberties of the Indian and might evoke opposition. Fraser cautioned, “It is quite possible that the proposals might have been opposed by the disloyal or suspicious among the fellows and the native papers as retrograde and as an *interference with liberty* on lives of policies already attributed to the Government. The proposals may be misunderstood, misrepresented and unpopular. At the same time I believe that the chance of this is far less now than it will be a little later... *It will be well to keep the matter confidential until it is finally settled.*”⁷⁴ Hence, argued Fraser, it was important that the local government thoroughly understand and sympathized with the objects in view to introduce these changes “quietly” and made efforts to carry them out quietly with the aid of official representatives.⁷⁵

India in Imperial School Textbooks

Image construction or the creation of stereotypes constitutes an integral part of any colonial discourse. A stereotype is a construct of ideological imperatives or a theoretical framework constituted by its associated concepts, believed facts,

⁷³ Government of India orders of 1881 Education Commission, 378.

⁷⁴ Home Department, Education, February 1900 25 – 36 (A), 16.

⁷⁵ Ibid. (Emphasis mine)

conclusions and applications.⁷⁶ The metaphorical use of language, the choice of concepts and the nature of relationships that are emphasized upon help to construe the ideological functions of an image.⁷⁷ In the context of colonialism, the function of the image was cultural. To understand the role of stereotypes in colonial textbooks I find J. A. Mangan's scholarship valuable. As Mangan argues, the problems confronted in a colonial encounter included first, the significant differences between the colonizer and the native which threatened order, security and control and second, the issue of how to successfully control and accommodate these differences.⁷⁸ This control, which was manifested as political power, social status, religious persuasion or economic domination, established a set of carefully selected and constructed vocabulary and images in the form of the stereotype to fully accommodate these differences within a colonial setup. These stereotypical depictions therefore, to borrow from Mangan, were mechanisms of control linked to structures in society which provided power and status to the colonizer. They also acted as what he terms as "accommodating symbols" in the colonial discourse and provided the foundation for secure solidarity.⁷⁹ The education system was one such structure through which this is achieved.

In this section, I will undertake a survey of a few school textbooks prescribed by the colonial state in India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁷⁶ Rob Gilbert, *The Impotent Image: Reflections of Ideology in the Secondary School Curriculum* (Britain: Falmer Press, 1984), 45.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁷⁸ J. A. Mangan, *The Imperial Curriculum: Racial Images and Education in the British Colonial Experience* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 7.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

These include five history textbooks and one moral science book. The textbooks include:

- Macaulay's essays – *Lord Clive & Warren Hastings* (1864) which was prescribed as a textbook for standards VI and VII of all government and aided schools;
- E. Lethbridge – *A History of India for schools* (1872) which was prescribed for the University Entrance Exams and High Schools in Allahabad;
- John Strachey – *India* (1888);
- W. W Hunter – *A Brief History of the Indian peoples* (1897, 21st edition), prescribed as a textbook for the Entrance Exam to the Calcutta University;
- W. Lee-Warner – *The Citizen of India* (1897) prescribed for the upper secondary schools in Madras, the intermediate level at Punjab, high schools in Bengal and Bombay and for the University Entrance Exams;
- John Stuart Blackie⁸⁰ – *Self Culture: Intellectual, physical and moral* (1902)

These textbooks have been chosen since they formed an integral part of the curriculum in during the period of my study. Since most of the authors of these textbooks were significant members of British officialdom, they signify the engagement of the colonial state, more specifically its representatives, in matters of education that went beyond the realm of official policy making. These textbooks are

⁸⁰ John Stuart Blackie was a prominent figure in the Scottish intellectual life of the second half of the nineteenth century. He was a Professor of Greek at the University of Edinburgh from 1852 to 1882. See Anna M. Stoddart, *John Stuart Blackie: A Biography*, Vols. 1 & 2 (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1895).

also informative since they throw invaluable light on the works of the other widely acclaimed historical treatises of the period by Pope, Alfred Lyall, Robert Seely and Orientalists such as Wilson, Colebrook, Max Muller, Weber and others from which the authors heavily borrowed ideas. While Hunter, Lethbridge, Lee-Warner and Strachey's works provide a comprehensive description and interpretative historical account of India from the advent of the Aryans upto the British rule, Macaulay educates on the lives and careers of the first Governor General of India, Warren Hastings (1773-1784) and Governor of Bengal, Robert Clive (1755–60 and 1764–67). Lessons of moral science were promulgated in Blackie's textbook. These textbooks taught young students lessons on India's past and its people, informed them about the benefits bestowed by the British rule and emphasised the important issue of character formation. A study of these textbooks shows how history had been marshaled to support a hegemonic view of "race" and Empire. Most of the writers conformed to a similar pattern of narrating a historical trajectory beginning with the geographical features and racial groups in India, the periodization of Indian history along religious and communal demarcators: the "Hindu period" (marked by the advent of the Aryans, the Vedic age, the age of the Guptas and Mauryas), the "Muslim age" (marking the rule of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Emperors) and the "British Period" (signified by the establishment of the East India Company, the consolidation of the Company Raj through its struggle for supremacy with the French and Dutch in the eighteenth century, the conquest of rebellion during the Revolt of 1857) and invariably culminating the discussion by highlighting the period

of tranquility, harmony and “good” governance inaugurated in the post Mutiny era of consolidation. This way the student was encouraged to view India’s history as beginning with its recognition by the western world.

What strikes immediately about these textbooks is their totalizing character. They provide an account of the widest array of Indian life and account for all elements that an inquisitive reader would want to know. One finds an exhaustive detailed account of India including its physical geography, political divisions, “races” (interestingly Aryans, Dravidians and the aboriginal tribes are projected as separate racial groups) and languages, the Aryan invasion, the Epics, Hindu schools of philosophy and religious doctrines, the rise and decline of Buddhism, the invasion of Alexander, histories of the Southern dynasties of Pandyas, Cheras and Cholas, the early “Mohamaddan invasions”, political histories of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals, Muslim literature, the Bahamani empire, the history of the Marathas, British conquests over the Portuguese and Dutch in India, the European East India Company, Anglo- French rivalry, the foundation of British rule in Bengal, the Black Hole Tragedy and Plassey, Clive and his administration, administrative progress made under various Governor Generals in India, the progress made in India as a result of the British rule and so on.

The focus on “racial” features and the preoccupation with geography is a common characteristic found in most of these readings. Mangan argues that the focus on the diverse “racial” groups in colonial histories is indicative of the influence that the new ideology of mid-nineteenth century racism, which declared that moral,

intellectual as well as physical traits were biologically determined, had on the writing of school curriculum. He points out that this new ideology gave “race” an all inclusive meaning and made it the most significant determinant of man’s past, present and future.⁸¹ Drawing from Ronald Inden one can argue that the preoccupation with geographical and climatic features in these textbooks can be explained by the naturalist or organicist nature of arguments which explain the threatening differences in the Indian setup.⁸² In Orientalist discourse while Indian civilization was projected as a “defective” product of its physical environment, European civilization was perceived as a product of rational human action and scientific reason as an influence of the Enlightenment. By virtue of its scientific knowledge, Europe had been able to reform and revolutionize itself to be able to conform to nature’s laws better and make the optimum use of her resources. India, because of its environment and racial compositions, was doomed to be the way it was and remain at a low evolutionary scale. The models of Asiatic Mode of Production and Oriental Despotism that characterized the distinct nature of economy and state in India further substantiated such arguments. Inden explains that once the reader came to know of the natural reason for the Other’s otherness, the threat of it was neutralized. Such an explanation was one which fostered the idea of the Western Man as the perfect embodiment of mankind.⁸³

In most of the textbooks cultural diversity in India was portrayed as a cause of conflict between competing linguistic, racial and religious groups. Such portrayals

⁸¹ Mangan, *The Imperial Curriculum*, 12.

⁸² Ronald Inden, “Orientalist Constructions of India,” *Modern Asian Studies* 20, no. 3 (1986): 416.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

were deployed to question the very idea of “India” which became a political construct and a gift of British rule. The most popular idea in this context was Strachey’s who argued that there was “no India.” In his textbook, *India*, he argues that the first and foremost fact that the native students needed to learn about India was that:

There is not, and never was an India, or even any country of India, possessing, according to European ideas, any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious, no Indian nation, no ‘people of India’ of which we hear so much. *India is the name which we give* to a great region including a multitude of different countries. The name Hindustan is never applied to India, as we apply it, to the whole of the Indian continent, it signifies the country north of the Narbada River, and especially the northern portion of the basins of the Ganges and Jamuna.⁸⁴ (Italics added)

Strachey noted that the different “countries” of India lacked the concept of nation that existed in Europe. Quoting from Sir Alfred Lyall’s seminal work, Strachey argued that the geographical boundaries had no correspondence at all with distinctive institutions or groupings of people and had comparatively little political significance. Unlike Europe where the political concepts of fatherland, the mother country, patriotism and domicile were well known, India was a “a strange part of the world” where political citizenship was yet quite unknown and territorial sovereignty or even feudalism was only just appearing.⁸⁵ In concert with another contemporary scholar, J. R. Seeley Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge, Strachey shows that “there was never any conquest of India by the English,” according to the ordinary sense of the word “conquest.” He argues that the conquest

⁸⁴ Strachey, *India*, 2.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 5.

was in the nature of an internal revolution directed by Englishmen but carried on for the most part by the natives of India themselves. No superiority of the British could have enabled England to conquer or subjugate through her own military power the continent of India factoring its huge population, if India had indeed been a distinct nation. India had no “jealousy” of the foreigner because “there was no India, and therefore properly speaking, no foreigner.”⁸⁶

Strachey argues that the British had never destroyed any national government in India, wounded any national sentiment, or humiliated any national pride because “no Indian nationalities ever existed.”⁸⁷ Princes who were “almost as much foreigners to their subjects as we are ourselves” ruled the most important of states.⁸⁸ According to him the British had a minor role to play in the actual administration of India while the chief provinces had their separate and independent governments. Therefore, good or bad governance in India depended to a far greater extent on the government in the provinces than on the distant authorities in Calcutta or Britain. He argued that it was wrong to believe that the Secretary of State for India, the Viceroy and his Council were solely responsible for running the Government of India. On the contrary, the vast majority of the people were hardly conscious of the British government.⁸⁹ Highlighting its futility and impossibility, Strachey counsels students that any bonds of union against the British could not lead towards the growth of a single Indian nationality: “It is conceivable that national sympathies may

⁸⁶ Ibid, 6.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 7.

arise in particular Indian countries but that they should ever extend to India generally, that men of the Punjab, Bengal and the northern Provinces and Madras, should ever feel that they belong to one great Indian nation is impossible.”⁹⁰

Strachey’s contention has to be understood against the background of growing political unrest in the late nineteenth century when nationalism had begun to germinate in India. When he first wrote the book in 1888 the memory of the Revolt of 1857 was still fresh in British minds. It was important to drive home the point that India as a unified political entity was a myth which was dependent on British governance for its existence. In terms of knowledge production, for Indian scholars this was a period of looking back into the Indian past to assert that there had always been an India attested by its physical, political and social unity. Nationalists such as D. R. Bhandarkar, R. C. Dutt, and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee conveyed the idea that the concept of warring factions and regionalism as an integral characteristic of the past was a misreading of Indian history and the unity of India was more of a continuing legacy than merely a western import.⁹¹ The validation of these arguments was drawn from references to ancient classical texts, in particular the *Vishnu Purana*, which alluded to a cultural and geographical entity that corresponded to the British image of India. The particular hymn from the *Vishnu Purana* often evoked in this context mentioned that the country south of the Himalayas and north of the ocean

⁹⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁹¹ Anslie T. Embree, *Imagining India: Essays on Indian History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 12.

was called *Bharat* and all born in it called “*Bharatiya*.”⁹² By the end of the nineteenth century the early nationalists highlighted that the political unity and achievements in art, literature and religion that was witnessed during the Mauryan, Gupta and Mughal period, specifically under the reigns of Ashoka and Akbar, could be attained in the independent India of the future too.⁹³ During the time these debates occurred, the Indus Valley Civilization had not yet been discovered, making the Vedic period the oldest known reference to the Indian past. In this context references were also drawn from ancient Sanskrit classical texts making this discussion Hindu-centric and alienating a sizeable section of the Muslim population from this discourse. This also laid the foundations of Dravidian nationalism which was pitched as a linguistic battle against Hindi. While Strachey’s view is nothing but a flirtation with nonsensical perspectives, contemporary Indian historiography in the past four decades have shown that the picture that the nationalist scholars portrayed is also rather simplistic. Moreover it was a history which did not account for the alternative historical narratives of minorities (women, lower castes-dalits, marginal ethnic groups and religious identities). These new historical narratives spurred by post-colonial critiques and Subaltern studies has strengthened the view that political legitimacy in the subcontinent was always contested and the sense of common belonging, while always

⁹² I examine the idea of “Bharatiya”/ “Bharat”/ what constitutes “India” further in another site of nationalist knowledge production, the Bengali children’s magazines, in Chapter Four. I argue that the nationalist engagements with defining and imagining what constituted “India” were attempts to challenge and question the very notions of a disembodied “India” that textbook authors such as Strachey propounded. Manu Goswami offers another angle of analysis, the inversion and vernacularization of “India” into “Bharat” in nationalist discourses primarily by Bepin Chandra Pal and vernacular geographic textbook writers such as Raja Shiva Prasad and Bapudeva Sastri. See Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), particularly Chapter Six.

⁹³ Embree, *Imagining India*, 25.

existing, vacillated between political classes. The British emphasis on their contribution to uniting India could also be seen as a great preoccupation of nineteenth century European politics with the unification of Germany and Italy as a trend of historical greatness.⁹⁴ However, drawing comparisons between the trajectory of India's political development with that of Europe was tenuous since India with its own unique historical experience did not become a continent of nations as Europe did. Unlike Europe in India the concept of territorial sovereignty, based on brahmanical ideology, did not stress the importance of a defined territory over which the ruler had sovereignty. Instead, the emphasis was on the ruler as part of a universal order as opposed to the European sense of territory.⁹⁵ Although, one law, one constitution and one executive (features of a modern nation-state and thereby anachronistic to search for in India's deep-past) may not have been enforced, but its idea was ever present and applied with varying degrees of success over time in the subcontinent.

The image of pre-colonial India as introduced to students in most of these textbooks was that of a state in anarchy with a mass of people ravaged by continuing warfare between various states, an image in complete antithesis to the European standards of a nation. Reminiscent of the principles of Oriental Despotism, the basic unit of the Indian state, the village, was described as isolated, segregated and stagnant.⁹⁶ The depiction of the British as protectors is strongly emphasised in Lee-Warner's description of an average Indian village. In this narrative the best form of

⁹⁴ Ibid, 20.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ W. Lee-Warner, *The Citizen of India* (London, Bombay and Calcutta: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1897), 5.

protection that a ruler could provide to his subjects was in terms of the “stout fence of prickly pear” which skirted the village and “offer[ed] a substantial obstacle to the intrusion of robbers.”⁹⁷ Village communities were seen as unsuited to any effective form of governance. They were portrayed as political units which received no real protection or help from the government in times of distress. There was no sense of justice and the interpretation and execution of law was dependent on the authority and judgement of the headman. During the breakdown of law and order in the village, the rulers employed no police to protect their subjects and the people had to provide for their own safety. Lee-Warner illustrates how during the invasion of Nadir Shah, while the capital towns were defended, the villages were “left to their fate.” Public wealth was abused for the adornment of the city with little spent on areas of public welfare. Artists were looted and the rulers themselves illegitimately extracted the produce of the peasants.⁹⁸ The instability of India and the insecurity of her population were underscored by the characterization of the Indian ruler. The textbooks are replete with stereotypes of the “cunning Maratha,”⁹⁹ (described as a clan of “robbers” who rose to the dignity of conquerors) the “Mussalman despot,”¹⁰⁰ the “Maratha freebooter,”¹⁰¹ the “sagacious Hindoo,” Haider Ali the “oppressor” and the omnipotent stereotypical Indian ruler who “chewed *bang* and toyed with dancing girls.”¹⁰² The masses in the pre-colonial period were characterized as a people

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 5-9.

⁹⁹ Macaulay, “Lord Clive” in *Macaulay: Historical Essays* (London: Collins, 1864), 691.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 692.

exploited by the debauchery and greed of the native leadership. With such depictions the preferred choice of governance for students was already predetermined by the textbooks – either “political disorder and misery” under the native rulers or “peace and a settled government” bestowed by the Empire.

India’s need for order and peace under British rule was further augmented by the fashion in which English heroes and administrators were depicted in sharp contrast to Indian rulers. In this context, Macaulay’s essays on Lord Clive and Hastings acquire significance especially because both these personalities embodied “British character” and were presented as heroes not only to the Indian but also to British students. Both Clive’s and Hastings’ claim to glory was their valor in the battlefield and the ability to “master” and subserviate the Indian environment. In most British history readers Clive was described as “England’s champion,” her “deliverer” and a “hero” glorified for his victory at Plassey and avenging the Black Hole Tragedy.”¹⁰³ As a fearless and experienced army general he was considered at par with Napoleon Bonaparte for the ability to lead with a military prudence that warranted success. Macaulay points out how Clive’s mere landing on the battleground was the signal for immediate submission by the enemy and subsequently peace: “There was no small reason to expect a general coalition of all the native powers against the English. But the name of Clive quelled in an instant all opposition. The enemy implored peace in the humblest language, and submitted to such terms as the

¹⁰³ Kathryn Castle, “The Imperial Indian: India in British History Textbooks for Schools 1890- 1914,” in *The Imperial Curriculum: Racial Images and Education in the British Colonial Experience*, ed. J. A. Mangan (New York: Routledge, 1993), 29.

new governor chose to dictate.”¹⁰⁴ In sharp contrast was the cowardice of the Indian ruler such as Siraj ud Daula, who “flung himself on the ground in convulsions of fear, and with tears and loud cries implored the mercy which he [Mir Jaffer] had never shown.”¹⁰⁵ The valorization is complete when Clive exercises suzerainty over the other white powers – the mighty French Governor of all times in India, Dupleix, and outshines him as a military leader: “Dupleix...was ill qualified to direct in person military operations. He had not been bred a soldier, and had no inclination to become one.”¹⁰⁶ As the final stroke to embarrass Macaulay writes, “his [Dupleix’s] enemies accused him of *personal cowardice*.”¹⁰⁷ (Italics added)

Emotive language was used to describe what was depicted as a conscious and planned act of atrocity against the British – the Black Hole incident at Calcutta. The villainous picture painted of Siraj ud Daula is striking:

Oriental despots are perhaps the worst class of human beings; and this unhappy boy [Siraj ud Daula] was one of the worst specimens of his class. His understanding was naturally feeble, his temper naturally unamiable. His education had been such as would have enervated even a vigorous intellect and perverted even a generous disposition. He was unreasonable, because nobody ever dared to reason with him, and selfish, because he had never been made to feel himself dependent on the good-will of others. Early debauchery had unnerved his body and his mind. He indulged immoderately in the use of ardent spirits, which inflamed his weak brain almost to madness. His chosen companions were flatterers, flung from the dregs of the people, and recommended by nothing but buffoonery and servility.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Macaulay, “Lord Clive,” 617.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 594.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 576.

Siraj ud Daula was painted at the nadir of human depravity when “*cruelty becomes pleasing for its own sake,*” and when the sight of pain of pain becomes an “agreeable excitement.” Siraj ud Daula thus became a representative of a civilization in decline. Fitting the depiction of the Oriental Despot, students learnt that his source of amusement came from torturing beasts and birds and “relishing” the misery of his fellow beings. Horrific details of the Black Hole were portrayed to evoke rage against the perpetrator:

They cried for mercy...But the answer was that nothing could be done without the Nabob's orders, that the Nabob was asleep, and that he would be angry if anybody woke him. Then the prisoners went mad with despair. They trampled each other down, fought for the places at the windows, fought for the pittance of water with which the cruel mercy of the murderers mocked their agonies, raved, prayed, blasphemed, implored the guards to fire among them...At length the tumult died away in the low gaspings and moanings. The day broke. The Nabob had slept off his debauch, and permitted the door to be opened. But it was some time before the soldiers could make a lane for the survivors, by piling up on each side the heaps of corpses on which the burning climate had already begun its loathsome work. When at length a passage was made, twenty-three ghastly figures, such as that their own mothers would not have known, staggered one by one out of the charnel-house. A pit was instantly dug. The bodies, a hundred and twenty- three in number, were flung into it promiscuously, and covered up.¹⁰⁹

The horror in the narrative of the Black Hole is predictable. The account confirms the general public expectations of Islamic cruelty a European stereotype dating back to the Crusades. Scenes such as the ones quoted above are undoubtedly related to the old image of East as a barbaric splendor. The acceptance and enjoyment of physical cruelty is projected as an intrinsic trait of the general Indian

¹⁰⁹ Macaulay, “Lord Clive,” 578.

character. Siraj ud Daula's characterization matches the role of an oriental despot, an eastern tyrant who was completely unmoved by the agony of the prisoners ("The Nabob had slept off his debauch"). Such representations attempted to establish a structure of absolute difference between the East and the West. In this version of colonial history, the Black Hole justifies British military intervention and the subsequent establishment of political and territorial control. When the news of the fall of Calcutta reached Madras, Clive set out the British troops to recapture the city. Calcutta was regained in January 1757 and Siraj ud Daula forced to restore British trading privileges. In the same year in June, the Nabob's army was defeated in the famous Battle of Plassey, which marks the beginning of the British rule in India. The Nabob was later captured and killed. These two events, the Battle of Plassey and Siraj ud Daula's death, appear more as retribution not so much for the capture of Calcutta as much as for the Black Hole deaths.

The specter of colonial guilt also plays an important role in the narrative of the massacre. The portrayal of the Nabob as an oriental despot and that of Clive as a righteous avenger became questionable by 1772 when stripped of his status of a national hero, Clive was attacked in the English press and put under investigation by the British Parliament on charges of profiteering and extortion in Bengal. The Company itself was accused of cruelty, tyranny and oppression. The question therefore was: who is the actual despot here? This was a moral dilemma that threatened the authority of colonial command. It can be suggested that to contain this threat Macaulay emphasized upon Siraj ud Daula's despotic nature more

emphatically in an attempt to redeem Clive's reputation. Macaulay's explicit aim seems to be to exonerate Clive and place him "in the list of those who have done and suffered much for the happiness of mankind."¹¹⁰ It is also important to highlight that such stereotypical depictions tend to isolate individual character traits as universal instead of contextualizing the causes of their actions. In the case under discussion, students only read the official version of the Black Hole without an explanation of the context of Siraj ud Daula's "cruel," "violent," "despotic" and "treacherous" behavior.

The issue of morality looms large in the discussions in most textbooks. In a passage on the general of morality of the Indians, Macaulay writes:

He [Clive] knew that he had to deal with men destitute of what in Europe is called honour, with men who would give any promise without hesitation, and break any promise without shame, with men who would unscrupulously employ corruption, perjury, forgery, to compass their ends.¹¹¹

The moral uprightness of the Britons was highlighted through references to high personal traits: "when offered large bribes, Clive "rejected [them] with scorn,"¹¹² "he kept his word," or statements such as, "in neither private nor public life did Clive show any signs of a propensity to cunning."¹¹³ Similar moral high ground was allegedly found lacking among Indian rulers. For instance, Macaulay wrote that during

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 549.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 582.

¹¹² Ibid., 26.

¹¹³ Ibid., 581.

the war with Haider Ali, “some forts were *surrendered by treachery*.”¹¹⁴ Such prejudices in interpreting history not only failed to acknowledge genuine bravery of deserving Indian rulers but also discounted native merit even in the face of victory. On the issue of morality however, the controversial aspects of the lives of Clive and Hastings posed a problem which had to be tackled. Interestingly the weaknesses and errors of judgment made by both statesmen were attributed to the result of being infected by the corruption and venality characterized as inherent features of the Indian power structure. Although Macaulay did introduce students to the charges leveled against both Clive and Hastings, any blot on their character was seen as an outcome of contact with India and her people. Hastings’ crimes were projected as “misdemeanors” and a rationalization for each was provided. One of the accusations against Hastings was the heavy extraction of money from the Begums of Oudh and during the Rohilla War. His actions were legitimized by the argument that burdened with the responsibility of financing the government of Bengal and simultaneously fighting costly wars against Indian and European enemies in the Carnatic left Hastings with no better option than to resort to extraction. If Hastings was at all projected in a moment of weakness in Macaulay’s narrative, it was in the latter’s argument that the pressures of making remittances to England forced him to extort money from the native rulers thereby shifting the burden of guilt to the faceless and vague entity of “his employers”:

¹¹⁴ Macaulay, “Warren Hastings,” in *Macaulay: Historical Essays* (London: Collins, 1864), 704. (Emphasis mine)

The pressure applied to him [Hastings] by his employers at home, was such as only the highest virtue could have withstood, such as *left him no choice* except to commit great wrongs... or to resign from his high post, and with that post all his hopes of fortune or distinction... “Govern leniently, and send more money; practice strict justice and moderation towards neighboring powers, and send more money” this is in truth the sum of almost all the instructions that Hastings ever received from home. *Now these instructions, being interpreted, mean simply, “Be the father and oppressor of the people; be just and unjust, moderate and rapacious.”*¹¹⁵

Similarly, the agenda of impeaching Hastings was explained as an act of personal rivalry and political conspiracy where his growing political clout and friendly relations with the British king became a threat for some. In this context he was specifically projected as a victim of Burke’s personal aversion.

In the school text books under survey, the image of India and its people was one that would invite British military penetration. Lee-Warner argued that British intervention was something “forced” upon the English. Students were told that the British had always proceeded “peacefully and lawfully” to establish their factories and had no wish to extend their responsibilities. However, in order to protect their possessions they were drawn into wars with the Indian chiefs.¹¹⁶ He highlighted that even when they were forced by attacks to defend themselves, the British Parliament had passed an Act in 1793 to restrain the Company from undertaking responsibilities. The Act stated that conquest and extension of domination were measures repugnant to the wishes, honor and policy of Great Britain as a nation.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Strachey informs students that it was unjust to conclude that English conquests had absorbed

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 661-662. (Emphasis mine)

¹¹⁶ Lee-Warner, *The Citizen of India*, 54.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 65.

Indian territories, displaced long seated dynasties and leveled ancient nobilities. The one significant reason why the English could so rapidly conquer India was because the latter lacked any nationalities, had no long seated ruling dynasties or ancient aristocracies and lay exposed as a “treasure trove” at the disposal of anyone who could first find and keep it. Highlighting British benevolence, Strachey argued that wherever indigenous political institutions of long standing still existed it was because British protection saved them from annihilation.¹¹⁸ Thus, among the so called “Native states” of India there was not one government that could be said to have a more legitimate or national origin than that of the British Government itself. On the issue of the foreign character of British rule, Strachey argued that the most important of “Indian” rulers, the Mughals and the Marathas, were of foreign origin themselves making them as much an outsider as the British themselves. Their principal officers were usually as foreign as their chiefs and the armed forces consisting mainly of foreign mercenaries. Most importantly, he points out, there was no closer sympathy between the people and their rulers than that which existed in the British territories.¹¹⁹ The second category of native states comprised of those parts of India where ancient political institutions and dynasties still survived during the time of British rule. Strachey boasts that the preservation of these states, including the small princely kingdoms in Rajputana, Central India, Bundelkhand and the Bombay Presidency, was possible only due to the British government. The Rajputana states were, for instance, saved by the British state from destruction by the Marathas.

¹¹⁸ Strachey, *India*, 6.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 300.

Similarly, the ancient Hindu states of Mysore and Travancore were rescued from Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan by the English and restored to the old Hindu dynasties.¹²⁰ The principal Native state of Punjab also owed their continued existence to British protection: “without it [protection] they would have been utterly swept away by Ranjit Singh.”¹²¹

On the issue of British intervention into the internal administration of native states, Strachey explained that some of them, as far as their internal administration was concerned, were substantially independent unless their government became “so scandalously bad and oppressive” that intervention was “*forced upon us.*” Legitimizing British intervention further, students were told that as a necessary consequence of British absolute power in an event of gross and systematic injustice and tyranny, the Government reserved the right to interfere for the protection of its people especially since the attitude of “despotic egoism” which was “fatal to all progress and civilization” was found to be a common feature of all native states. Significantly enough the yardstick for justice and trial for these “crimes of special atrocity” was a tribunal constituted by the British government itself. By discounting the native rulers, the imperial government had usurped for itself the role of a benevolent paternalist ruler who took upon itself the right to decide what was beneficent for the general good of the people and mete out justice and punish accordingly.¹²²

Illustrating his point further, Strachey puts forth the ever-handly classic example of “misgovernance” in Oudh based on the account of General Sleeman who

¹²⁰ Ibid., 305.

¹²¹ Ibid., 306.

¹²² Ibid., 317 (Emphasis mine).

was stationed for a considerable duration of time in the province. From this account the reader is informed that there was no government in Oudh and that the king was divorced from fulfilling his public obligations or addressing the grievances of his people:

His [the Nabob of Oudh's] ambition was limited to that of being the best drum beater, dancer and poet of the day. Sometimes he might be seen going in procession through the streets of Lucknow, beating the drum tied around his neck. Singers, fiddlers, poets, eunuchs and women were his only associates... The Prime Minister, himself a consummate knave, after keeping an enormous share for himself and his creatures, distributed the revenues and produce of the country. The fiddlers controlled the administration of civil justice; that of criminal justice handled by the eunuchs while each of the king's favorites had authority over some court or office through which he would make a fortune for himself. Every office was sold and commands in the army were put up for sale. The commander-in-chief was an infant. Courts of justice were unknown. The charge of the so-called police throughout the country was sold to the highest bidder.¹²³

It is very obvious that an account like this, if held true, could only generate distrust for such governance and become a justifiable pretext for intervention and annexation. Such intervention was completely legitimate when the will and the mandate of the people were projected as being involved. In Strachey's textbook, people of Oudh are shown to respect the British government, its officers and Europeans in general for having relieved them of their sufferings and seeking redressal for grievous wrongs inflicted upon them. This juxtapositioning of Indian governance with that of the colonial state becomes more effective when legitimacy is (supposedly) also derived from the subjects themselves: "The people of the country

¹²³ Ibid., 310- 311.

see that he [the British officer] never interposes except for such purposes, and their only regret is that his interposes so seldom, and that his efforts when he does so should be so often frustrated or disregarded.”¹²⁴

Kathryn Castle notes that the histories of the end of the nineteenth century were clearly responsive to the needs of the Empire.¹²⁵ By the turn of the twentieth century, in the midst of growing political agitation against the British state, it became increasingly important to reassure the students about the need and relevance for the Empire. What emerges as a consequence are textbooks that disseminate images of imperial benevolence and the benefits bestowed on India by the Raj – peace, justice, roads and railways, education, hospitals, health and sanitation, irrigation, press and so on. At the same time it was important to inform the students that they too had “rights” and duties -as if to discount the idea of them being a part of a subjugated society. An entire corpus of schoolbook literature was written to fulfill this aim. Prominent among these was W. Lee-Warner’s textbook, *Citizens of India* which won awards from the government and was widely recommended as an essential reading in all government schools.

An important goal for colonial schooling was to sustain order and promulgate the view that rule of law must prevail over any injustice or anarchy. It was important that the students learnt to adhere to the value of reverence to authority and the unmitigated benefits resulting from obedience to law. Michael Apple points out that an important motive of education is to fuse individuals into coherent groups and

¹²⁴ Ibid., 313.

¹²⁵ Castle, “The Imperial Indian,” 35.

discordant groups into large internally cooperative groups so that they act together for common ends, with common vision and with united judgment.¹²⁶ More often than not it would be the moral science textbooks that would be deployed to achieve these aims. Blackie in his book, *Self Culture: Intellectual, physical and moral*, informs his young readers that “liberty was unquestionably an unqualified good” however it did not take a man “very far.” It only gave one a stage to act without directing what role had to be performed. Liberty was only a series of limitations but there should not be much to complain about since “regulation is only another name for reasoned existence.”¹²⁷ Blackie argued that since all regulations were mostly those that had been laid down by others for the general good of society, it was logical that to become a “good member” of any social system it was important to obey. He warns, “every random or willful move is a chink opened in the door which, if it be taught to gape wider, will in due season *let in chaos*... Let the old Roman [principle of] submission to authority be cultivated by all young men as a virtue at once most characteristically social, and most becoming in unripe years. *Let the thing commanded by a superior authority be done simply because it is commanded*, and let it be done with punctuality.”¹²⁸

The teaching of moral science thus aimed not only at erasing the moral depravity of the Indian people but also was a means to promote submission. Blackie argues that every young man should be taught to cultivate reverence. He explains the

¹²⁶ Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 70.

¹²⁷ John Stuart Blackie, *Self Culture: Intellectual, Physical and Moral* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1902), 63.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 63 -64. (Emphasis mine)

qualities of moderation, a necessary virtue for all young men to learn “*timely*” in a “prophylactic way” before the “*touch of danger*” and to “avoid perilous experience.”¹²⁹ Advising students he underlines that caution was no less necessary than courage for any successful campaign. But the undercurrent of warning in his tone becomes explicit from the following passage:

Those who are just starting in the career of life, however fond they may be of strong phases, strong passions, unbridled energies, and exuberant demonstrations of all kinds...[should] learn to recognize the great truth that those are the strongest men, who the most carefully curb their activities...*Be warned* therefore, in time: *violent methods will certainly produce violent results*...Wisdom is a good thing but it is not good even to be wise always. “Be not wise overmuch: why shouldst thou die before thy time?”¹³⁰

Similar instances of hidden threats were found in passages in other textbooks too. In a particular discussion on the role of the police in the state, Lee-Warner warns:

The policeman’s finger carries with it a *double warning*. Disobedience to it means a breach of that law. It also warns those who would disregard it that behind the police stand other forces of order, the trained troops, who can never be called into action without arms in their hands and cartridges in their pouches.”¹³¹ (Italics added)

Thus the action of the police was shown to be dependent to a large extent on the way in which the general public behaved. Lee-Warner tries to rationalize that those who condemned the police should judge for themselves to what extent their own behaviour was responsible for police abuses especially since their ranks were drawn from the native population and can be assumed to have been equally influenced by

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 74. (Emphasis mine)

¹³¹ Lee-Warner, *The Citizen of India*, 127 -128.

local feelings.¹³² Such arguments also project the British self-image of one protecting the Indian from himself during periods of a breakdown of law and order or simply from the dangers of the India's own moral character with its purported tendency towards rioting and pillage.

With the emergence of nationalist political parties and the Indian National Congress, it became important to educate the young to train their minds to carefully observe and build the subtle structure of reasoning. This was an issue which was addressed in almost all the textbooks under examination in this study. Strachey argues that it was the folly of the Congress to assume that certain abstract principles could be always applicable to all sorts of governments and all men.¹³³ This was further supported by the belief that the degree of political maturity achieved in India was in no way closer to that attained in Europe thereby relegating the former to a position much inferior in the civilizational scale. Lee-Warner argued that while in European countries there was a keen sense of personal liberty and “freedom of conscience” that acted as a social cohesive force, in India the binding influences of law and patriotism had not been cultivated: “... *the word patriotism or love of country was unknown in India*”¹³⁴ and that “*the British have brought from the far West to the East new ideas of freedom and toleration.*”¹³⁵ In such representations one finds a conscious effort to deny human agency to the Indians in different ways: by denying them an identity as a nation, by postulating that external factors such as geography and climate shaped their actions

¹³² Ibid., 130.

¹³³ Strachey, *India*, 357.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 9.

¹³⁵ Lee-Warner, *The Citizen of India*, 76 (Emphasis mine).

and by underlining their high incapacity for political survival (and in later colonial discourses, political impotency for self governance). Similarly, Blackie denounced the proposition of emerging nationalist voices that the miseries of India was a result of the British colonial state and could be only cured by the introduction of a democratic government. For him this assumption itself was vitiated since it was based on an imaginary cause of all of India's evils and an equally imaginary cure.¹³⁶ Like Strachey, Blackie argued that those who believed such political "harangues" to be the genuine expressions of the great "People of India" should realise that such an entity as the people of India did not exist.¹³⁷

Reinterpreting textbooks

As a matter of principle education is largely driven by the humanitarian interest of promoting social welfare and aims at infusing a participatory and egalitarian ethos in society. However, there is a clear incongruency between curriculum goals and its actual practice in a social setup. Susie Tharu argues that colonial education had betrayed the spirit of Enlightenment humanism, the very premise which legitimized the act of colonization in the first place.¹³⁸ She notes that the basic principles of Enlightenment humanism speak of awakening, vitalizing and vivifying the subject in a final totalizing move. The precise technologies of power embedded in such promises of freedom and humanity become apparent with an

¹³⁶ Blackie, *Self Culture*, 7.

¹³⁷ Strachey, *India*, 357.

¹³⁸ Susie Tharu, "Government, Binding and Unbinding: Alienation and the Teaching of Literature," in *Subject to Change: Teaching Literature in the Nineties* ed. Susie Tharu (London: Sangam Books, 1998), 13.

inquiry into the history and politics of liberal individualism. Tharu notes that Liberal individualism or humanism took form in Europe in a long drawn battle between the landed interests and religious orthodoxies on one hand and the emerging mercantile classes on the other. The emergent ideas of freedom, equality and autonomy were articulated for a critique of the order and promoting the interests of the new class. On the other hand, there was a closing off of all aspirations for liberty and equality for its unacknowledged “other” while the bourgeois-mercantile (as also the imperial agenda) was designated as embodying the aspirations of all humanity and human nature itself. Tharu argues that the consolidation of this new Self and the expansion of the world remade on its image was effected by a brutal process of exploitation and homogenization with cultures destroyed and knowledge systems delegitimized.¹³⁹

Drawing from Ronald Inden one can argue that the schoolbooks discussed above were what he has termed as “hegemonic textbooks.” Inden defines hegemonic textbooks as ones which were not concerned with the narrow and internalist issues pertinent to a discipline alone but engaged with the broader issues such as India’s place in the world, in history and issues in which those outside the discipline, particularly business and government leaders and the masses are interested.¹⁴⁰ The textbooks discussed above present an ethnocentric understanding of Indian history and society, and had been marshaled to rationalize and legitimize the British colonial rule. As mentioned earlier, these textbooks also provide a totalizing account of every aspect of Indian life, another trait of a hegemonic text. Curricular goals for children

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 43-48.

differed in the context of India and Britain. In Britain school textbooks were especially important in transmitting a nexus of ideas about patriotism, citizenship and character, providing strong legitimacy to supremacist tendency that had become virtually impossible to challenge. An important purpose of education was to inculcate in the children of the Empire appropriate attitudes of dominance and deference, create appropriate racial images, develop convictions about colonial benevolence and give legitimacy to their rule.¹⁴¹ For Indian students, on the other hand, school textbooks propagated cultural stereotypes to shape them into patterns of proper subservience and “legitimate” inferiority.¹⁴² The Code of Regulations for Public Elementary Schools, passed in England in 1906, instructed that the desirable qualities that moral education should foster were courage, self-denial and “love of one’s country.” The Regulation resulted in the production of a series of history and geography textbooks stressing what had been termed as the “Holy Trinity” of Citizenship, Empire and Patriotism.¹⁴³ In the context of India the scheme was to infiltrate subversive ideas and servitude in the minds of the students. Gustav Lenz, a German pedagogue who spent a considerable duration of time in England to study English schools, noticed that schools in England aimed at developing an independent and firm character of the child. He observed that schools emphasized to teach children to judge for themselves what was right and learn to execute it. A young child was not expected to submit entirely to the will of his parents and masters, instead the

¹⁴¹ Mangan, *The Imperial Curriculum*, 6.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Pamela Horn, “English Elementary Education and the Growth of the Imperial Ideal: 1880- 1914,” in *‘Benefits Bestowed’? Education and British Imperialism*, ed. J. A. Mangan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 42 -43.

English gave a free choice to these boys and educated them to act independently because they held the belief that the interference of the teachers hindered the free development of the child. English society, Lenz observed, allowed its boys to behave in society in a manly, free and independent way from an early age. In schools, great stress was laid upon the development of self-reliance, responsibility and self possession.¹⁴⁴ Comparing this with the English outlook towards education in India, one would find that paternalism governed their attitude towards Indians. The native, who supposedly had no sense of history at all, had to be given an identity and “taught” since he lacked the intellect, the capability to be “self reliant” or responsible.

As is the problem with any kind of colonial discourse, colonial school textbooks too were based on the assumption that they could present “real” images of society. In actuality, however, this is not possible. Accurate conceptions of social relations are difficult to derive because they project the image through the subjective eyes of the writer. Gilbert argues that in studying people, scholars and teachers are studying themselves, and what they present is the preconceived images of what they are trying to understand.¹⁴⁵ Second, image construction is based on the assumptions of political and social theory that may be incorrect, leading to misjudgments.¹⁴⁶ Finally, the problem with textbook images is that they are selective in nature whereas any social situation can be perceived in numerous ways.¹⁴⁷ Therefore the process of selection and defining what is “relevant,” “useful” or “legitimate” knowledge is a

¹⁴⁴ Gustav Lenz, *English Schools: Experiences and Impressions of English School Life*. (Darmstadt: Druck der L.C Wiltich'schen Hofbuchdruckerei, 1891), 3-4.

¹⁴⁵ Gilbert, *The Impotent Image*, 8.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

construct determined by the significance accorded to it by the interpreter and his theoretical underpinnings. Multiplicity of facts is ignored and only one paradigm is elevated as the ultimate truth possible. Moreover, since the perspective promulgated in the textbooks was presented uncritically or in isolation and competing perspectives were not allowed, whatever was taught would appear as the only one possible view and accepted as such. Since the young native was often stripped of articulating an oppositional position, especially so within the classroom, no space for alternative views or questioning was allowed. Hence, in a generated discourse, what textbooks do not say is as important as what they actually say.

A negative consequence of such a colonial discourse would be what Mangan calls the “interpretative imprisonment” of the native.¹⁴⁸ Mangan argues that to avoid mass cognitive dissonance, to rationalize control and justify policy colonial stereotypical discourses contributed to the institutionalization of racial ideologies that were knowingly discriminatory and biased. Since the colonized population was known to have “fallen astral spirits,” discriminatory and authoritarian forms of political control were considered relevant and appropriate. This made the subject population both the cause and effect of the colonial system imprisoned in this interpretative cycle. For instance, as studied earlier, native states in India were annexed because they provoked the British by disrupting the Company’s trade. Similarly on the issue of law and order, it was explained that people’s behaviour determined how the police would react and retaliate. Such representations when

¹⁴⁸ I owe this term to J. A Mangan.

enacted daily in colonial society in a continual and repetitive chain with other stereotypes attained a certain kind of rigidity or “fixity.”

CHAPTER THREE

The Body as a Political Space: Physical Education in Colonial Schools and Nationalist Regeneration in Bengal

This chapter highlights the corporeality of colonialism in India by analyzing the colonized body of the Indian child and youth as a zone of cultural encounters and contestation. I focus on two aspects related to physical culture among children and the youth in Bengal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. First, I study colonial ideologies governing the implementation of physical education in the colonial school curriculum to discipline the child's body and discourage students' "seditious" political activism. I emphasize activism as an actual movement of bodies and minds and how the colonial state hoped to engineer the native away from "undisciplined" into "disciplined" movements. It is notable, however, that the natives inverted this order of things by using that very education as a vehicle for exercising their agency and launching a project of contestation to challenge ideologies that the colonial state sought to promote. Second, I show that for the Bengali educated elites, the child embodied a political space for resistance and undertaking their project of remasculinizing the youth through a revival of indigenous martial sports such as wrestling, sword fighting and *lathi* playing (stick-fighting). For the nationalists the revival of physical culture was specifically aimed at training the native body to

overthrow colonial rule in India. I suggest that the nationalist revisitation of these indigenous sports primarily stemmed from the *Swadeshi* spirit of promoting and practicing regional and national cultural traditions. At the same time the nationalist revisitation had a crucial class factor at play whereby sections of the educated *bhadralok* middle class, schoolboys and college students for the first time took up sports customarily associated with the “rustic” uneducated lower classes and rural martiality.

Through a close reading of official reports on education in India and autobiographies of prominent Bengali intellectuals (Rabindranath Tagore and Lila Majumdar), a Congress leader who was renowned as a powerful galvanizing force of student activism (Surendranath Banerjea) and a student revolutionary (Nagendranath Sen Gupta), the chapter focuses on the nationalist attempts at a corporeal regeneration through encouraging physical culture among children and youth both at home and in the secrecy of volunteer movements during the *Swadeshi* period in Bengal. I argue that the British colonial state consciously discouraged indigenous martial sports post-1905-- when the anti-partition and *Swadeshi* movement reached its peak-- as a means of stamping out “sedition” among students and as part of the larger colonial policy of demilitarizing Indian society pursued since the Revolt of 1857. I contend that it was in the British colonial interest to keep the Indians passive. Therefore they could not wholeheartedly promote physical education in schools in India the way they could in the English public schools in the metropole.

While studying the ideologies that governed colonial attempts at disciplining bodies of native children in schools, I will unpack the different meanings that the concept of “disciplining” held for the British imperial state in a colonized setup. For a nuanced understanding of disciplining in schools I unravel the unalienable tensions and ambiguities that constantly shadowed the implementation of colonial ideologies guiding the introduction of physical education in schools in Bengal, as reflected in official reports, physical education teaching manuals and testimonies of school inspectors. I also attempt to understand how the practice of physical culture and the processes of cultivating an ideal body were entangled with social and cultural anxieties among the *bhadralok* class over issues of masculinity, racial stereotyping and the strengthening wave of nationalism during the period of my study in Bengal.

Colonial empires used the body as a site for constructing their authority, legitimacy and control.¹ Inspired by Kathleen Canning’s thesis, this chapter will study bodies as sites of colonial “inscription/reinscription” on one hand, and on the other hand as “allegorical emblems that promise new understandings of nation and social formations” in the context of Indian nationalism.² The various possibilities that Canning presents for the use of the “body as method” of history helps to look at how bodies are imbued with meaning, how they become stakes in power struggles and how they become sites of knowledge and power. Canning argues that the notion of “embodiment” is important because it encompasses moments of encounter, agency

¹ David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State, Medicine and the Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

² Kathleen Canning, “The Body as Method? Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History.” *Gender & History* 11 (1999): 499-513.

and resistance.³ In other words, the body is not only a site for social inscription of laws, morality, knowledge-power, but also of resistance/reinscription. It is this aspect of Canning's conceptualization of the "body as method" that I try to use as a methodological and interpretative tool in the case of Bengal. Deploying Canning's analytic of the body as a site of intervention I aim to expand our grasp over the processes of social disciplining within a colonial context.

The Physicality of Race

A muscular male body characterized by the qualities of character and self-control were the prime hallmarks of Victorian ideals of masculinity. The British imperial project also relied upon and promulgated the ideology of hegemonic masculinity derived from Christian manliness that sponsored the qualities of self-control, discipline, muscularity, military heroism, heterosexuality and a rational mind.⁴ These traits that characterized an ideal masculine body were not only absolutely essential for the expansion of the British Empire but also served to counter widespread anxieties over the emasculation of British metropolitan society in the metropole as reflected in the works of Charles Dickens, Thomas Hughes and Charles Kingsley.⁵ The discussion of racially stereotyping certain Indian peoples as "manly" (particularly the Sikhs, Gurkhas and the Muslim male) or "effeminate" (the Bengali Hindu male) deflected an important anxiety within the Victorian bourgeoisie in mid-

³ Ibid.,505.

⁴ Subho Basu and Sikata Banerjee, "The Quest for Manhood: Masculine Hinduism and Nation in Bengal," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 26 (3, 2006):480.

⁵ Ibid.

nineteenth century England regarding the supposed degeneration and deterioration of the British race caused by industrialization and urbanization. Contemporary socio-medical surveys in Britain pointed to the widespread race deterioration particularly among the impoverished factory workers and the deplorable working, sanitary and living conditions in cities which generated the possibility of an impending “race suicide.”⁶ This supposed degeneration not only meant a debility of colonial masculinity but also a loss of muscle to the mechanics of industrialization which had to be supplanted by the muscular power of the colonized natives as slaves, factory workers, laborers or domestic servants in various socio-economic sectors of the Raj. Key Victorian theorist of the nineteenth century, John Brookes, highlighted the correlation between national progress and masculinity in his book *Manliness: Hints to a Young Man* (1859) where he proposed that “manly” nations alone could conquer “unmanly” nations-- an ideology which provided impetus to the age of colonial expansion. Brooke bolstered his argument by providing examples of the Jewish, Greek and Roman nations that had collapsed because they failed to imbibe the ideals of Christian manhood.⁷ The intimate interlinkages between the body and colonialism thus entangled with a fundamental component of colonial rule: race.

David Arnold points out that the concept of race projected as a biological truth and verified and bolstered through modern scientific research unquestionably became the governing principle of the high age of imperialism. In this project British

⁶ Harald Fischer-Tiné, “From Brahmacharya to ‘Conscious Race Culture’ Victorian Discourses of ‘Science’ and Hindu Traditions in Early Indian Nationalism,” in *Beyond Representation: Colonial and Post-Colonial Constructions of Indian Identity*, ed. Crispin Bates (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 244-45.

⁷ Basu and Banerjee, “The Quest for Manhood,” 480.

ethnographer and administrator H. H. Risley, through his research on anthropometry and craniology, established the scientific veracity of racial differences which was pivotal in defining and differentiating Indian society in biological terms. Risley patronized the view that physical characteristics were the best and the “only true tests of race” thereby highlighting the physicality of race which found expression not only in colonial ethnography and census reports, but also in various institutional practices of the colonial state such as in prisons, for the identification of criminal tribes and recruitment of the Indian police and army personnel.⁸ A firm belief in the tyranny of geography and climate undergirded this so-called scientific and medical theory of the racialized body. It was widely held amongst British theorists that the climate and physical environment of India determined the character as well as the health of its inhabitants. Geography was also inherently tied to the theory of martiality.⁹ There were two dominating strands of this theory. First, martiality was considered an inherent trait and therefore an aspect of race. Second, martiality was predicated upon climate and environment. By this “logic” warlike people lived in the hills and cooler places while timid and servile people lived in hot and flat topographies.¹⁰ As early as 1770, Alexander Dow posited in his theory of despotism that the hot and sultry climate of India naturally predisposed the native of India to be indolent. Dow further argued that the “seeds of despotism” sown in the Hindus by India’s geography and

⁸ David Arnold, “Race, Place and Bodily Difference in Early Century India,” *Historical Research* 77 (196, 2004): 260.

⁹ Lionel Caplan, “Martial Gurkhas: the Persistence of a British Military Discourse on ‘Race’,” in *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, ed. Peter Robb (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 261.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

climate was “reared to perfect growth by the Mahommedan faith” thereby bringing in a vicious communal factor to the colonial discourses on the native body.¹¹

Any discussion on native bodies, colonial ideologies on martiality, race and masculinity would remain incomplete without invoking a discussion on Thomas Babington Macaulay. As early as 1853, Macaulay wrote in his famous essay on Robert Clive-- which was taught as a textbook in colonial schools-- that the “soft climate of Bengal” enervated its population and conditioned them to be an emasculated community that was subservient to superior racial powers. Though oft-repeated, for the purposes of this chapter it is important to recall this notorious quote to highlight the kinetics of colonial racializing:

The physical organization of the Bengalee is feeble even to effeminacy. He lives in a constant vapour bath. His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid. During many ages he has been trampled upon by men of bolder and more hardy breeds. Courage, independence, veracity are qualities to which his constitution and his situation are equally unfavourable. His mind bears a singular analogy to his body. It is weak even to helplessness for purposes of manly resistance...There never, perhaps, existed a people so thoroughly fitted by nature and by habit for a foreign yoke.”¹²

With these few sentences Macaulay defines the Bengali male body as degenerate and a site of idleness. The language of effeminacy at once makes the native body a cultural and political construct marked by powerlessness. The passage also stresses the British emphasis on the intimate relationship between the body and character. Macaulay establishes the hierarchies of power by mapping out the imaginary bodily differences

¹¹ Arnold, , “Race, Place and Bodily Difference,” 255.

¹² Thomas B. Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays* (London: Longman Brown and Longmans, 1852), 502-3.

between the native male body and that of the British colonialist. His characterization of the Bengali male conjures the imagery of a slovenly sloth, muscularly maimed and politically disembodied across historical periods by the superior “masculine races.” The resultant stagnancy and immobility is a deficit that brakes the paradigms (and possibilities) of civilizational progress. His depiction also lends a childish quality to the Bengalis who were eager to be led as opposed to leading. Macaulay’s stereotyping of the native body, circulated through colonial narratives and reinforced in government school textbooks, outlined the direct connection between the effete male *bhadralok* body and the colonized state of Bengal. Such corporeal, political and social paralysis could have received the much needed stimulus towards civilizational mobility only through colonial interjections. The internalization of the racialized stereotype of Bengali effeminacy powerfully contributed to a pejorative self image evoking the nationalist anxiety and a resultant pursuit of the (ever-elusive) ideal of masculinity.¹³

The Imperial Agenda of Physical Education

Studies on physical education and games as part of the Victorian and Edwardian public school curriculum in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reveal the intimate nexus between school games and the promotion of the idea of Empire, masculinity and

¹³ See John Rosselli “The Self Image of Effeteness: Physical Education and Nationalism in Nineteenth Century Bengal,” *Past and Present* 86 (1980): 121-148; Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: the Manly Englishman and the Effeminate Bengali in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 1995); Indira Chowdhury, *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal* (New Delhi & New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

militarism among the English public schoolboys.¹⁴ Patriotism, courage, perseverance, discipline and stamina were virtues that English schoolboys were expected to cultivate. The spirit of “Muscular Christianity” promoted games such as rugby, cricket and rowing which not only infused team spirit, crucial for serving the Empire, but also encouraged athleticism and a cult of robust masculinity.¹⁵ This involved establishing and encouraging team games, clubs, gymnasiums and a reformed school syllabus. Housemasters and teachers-- as powerful enforcers of athletic distinction in English public and being harsh critics of failures in the playground-- were the main transmitters of this imperial “games ethic.”

In the context of a colony, however, there was a paradox. Achieving the ideals of the Tom Brownesque English public school boy in the Indian setting was not necessary for the British colonial state. Physical education in colonial schools catering to Indians-- barring the curriculum in schools and colleges specifically meant for princely and European/Eurasian children-- did not have the same (or similar) pedagogical utility for the colonial state when compared to the direct correlation that was charted out between sports, the British public school system and fortification of imperialism in the metropole. Here I concur with Satadru Sen’s argument that the character that Indians learned by playing English games in colonial schools could not have been exactly the

¹⁴ See J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: the Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); J. A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (New York: Viking, 1985).

¹⁵ The Duke of Wellington is said to have famously stated that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the play-fields of Eton.

same as that learned by English school boys unless the political structure of the empire was drastically changed to provide Indian boys the identity and privileges of whiteness.¹⁶

I argue that physical education in colonial schools was organized within a racialized ideology, as a non-coercive cultural means of governance. The purpose of physical education in colonial schools in Bengal changed over the course of history. Physical education for native children was primarily meant to serve three basic purposes. In the early stages of its introduction in school curriculum the focus was first, to discipline and stir into action the degenerate, lethargic Bengali body that Macaulay described-- a stagnating body rendered immobile due to lack of muscle. Physical education was laced with the language of improvement. It aimed to improve the character of a race which had been imagined-- by European travelers, ethnographers and Christian missionaries-- as morally sterile. Second, physical education was important for purposes of the public health agenda of the British colonial state which underlined the critical need to discipline native bodies considered indolent, unhygienic and disorderly. Third, from the late nineteenth century and particularly during the *Swadeshi* movement (1905-1908), as incidents of students' political activism rose, disciplining of children -- primarily male students-- meant depoliticizing their bodies to restrain them from participating in "seditious" activities.

The problem arose when the very bodies that Macaulay described as "feeble," "languid" and "sedentary" became too muscular and active for the colonial state's liking.

I argue that the process of depoliticization was linked with the sculpting of colonial

¹⁶ Satadru Sen, "Schools, Athletes and Confrontation: The Student Body in Colonial India," in *Confronting the Body: the Politics of Physicality in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, ed. James Mill and Satadru Sen (London: Anthem Press, 2003), 61.

subjecthood. This is evident from physical education manuals written by contemporary British educationists. For instance in his manual for secondary school teachers, educationist H. C. Buck clearly chalked out that the aim of physical education in schools was “to establish a stable, enlightened citizenry, capable of performing satisfactorily the social, vocational, and moral obligations incumbent upon citizens.”¹⁷ He instructed that physical education should become the basis for disciplining children to embody qualities essential for social life such as the “acquisition of habits of obedience, subordination, reverence, self sacrifice, co-operation, friendliness, respect, loyalty, patriotism, capacity for leadership, proper spirit towards victory and defeat, spirit of fairplay, civic pride and honesty.”¹⁸ The entanglement of the ideals of morality and discipline, crucial elements for forging a governable colonial subject, is clearly evident in Buck’s writing.

The discourse on discipline and morality put an emphasis on certain sports such as swimming, boxing and drill that were preferred due to the special benefits they could potentially bestow on students. For instance, a contemporary textbook for physical education in schools, *A Textbook of Physical Training for School Boys*, noted that swimming not only kept the body clean but, by invigorating the functioning of the heart with pure air, apparently improved “the nobler side of our heart” and helped to “inculcate[d] the

¹⁷ H. C. Buck, *Syllabi of Physical Activities for Secondary Schools and Manual of Instructions for Teachers* (Madras: Government Press 1930), 5-6.

Harry Crowe Buck (b. Nov 25th, 1884) was an evangelist from Liverpool, United States who worked mostly in Madras and set up and served as the Principal of the YMCA College of Physical Education in 1920. The college moved to a spacious building at Royapettah in 1927 where a local Reverend’s house served as a plot to lay courts for volleyball, basketball, badminton court, an athletics track and a temporary boxing ring. Buck also served as Advisor to the Government of Madras on Physical Education. <http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/mp/2003/04/17/stories/2003041700230400.html>, accessed December 19th 2009.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

seeds of morality” in the child.¹⁹ This was important not only to “improve” an “Oriental character” that was supposedly characterized by its immoral practices and traits but also a useful quality for a loyal colonial subject to possess. Much of the discussion in colonial physical education textbooks focused on the male child, for instance by emphasizing on sports such as boxing that held the promise of bestowing the benefits of manliness thereby imparting an education that was gendered. Though “degrading and brutal,” boxing was a manly sport and inculcated the “spirit of personal contest.”²⁰ Therefore boxing was a sport that developed agility, quickness of decision making, will power and above all the Victorian manly ideals of self-control and discipline.

Though certain sports were introduced with the intention of controlling children’s bodies, at times the results did not match the desired success. In the late nineteenth century, teachers found drill to be a valuable aid for disciplining although it was initially seen as a useless pastime. By 1904 drill was practised in all government and aided schools and in many unaided schools.²¹ However, after the partition of Bengal in 1905, the government initiative of introducing drill into schools aroused suspicions among natives in Bengal and was met with stiff opposition. In 1905 a school inspectress reported that the government found it increasingly hard to introduce drill in schools in Eastern Bengal due to resistance from local people. She pointed out that while high schools in Dacca taught musical drill in their lower grades, the authorities had to

¹⁹ S.C. Chatterji, *A Textbook of Physical Training for School Boys* (Ajmer: Rajputana Printing Works, 1929), 215.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 217.

²¹ *General Report on Public Instruction in Bengal 1903-4* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1904), 48.

proceed with caution.²² Similar sentiments can be observed in other contemporary physical education manuals which suggest that by the turn of the twentieth century students in government schools came to see physical training as part of curriculum as a “subject of dislike and hatred in schools.”²³

In the next few pages of this section I will highlight three key aspects of physical education in colonial schools in Bengal: a) disciplining of native children’s bodies; b) the male student and fear of sedition; and c) the girl student and the domestic body.

i) Disciplining Native Children’s Bodies

Disciplining the native child’s body was a continuous process that happened in schools. The task of engineering “enlightened” subjects, of the kind that Buck proposed, who conformed to the criteria of being “civilized” based on “appropriate” personal habits, appearances and manners played a central role in the conception and development of colonial education in India. The old pedagogical setup of the *patshala*, *maktab*, *tol* and *madrassa* characterized by the cacophonous sounds of students collectively reciting lessons, ill-disciplined students chatting simultaneously and the resultant “babel” and “din” were frequent complaints of school inspectors.²⁴ In 1855 narrating his visit to an indigenous school the Secretary to the Bengal Council of Education described students as squatting on the clay floor “without any order or

²² Hornell, *Progress of Education in Bengal*, 238.

²³ George Andrews, *Physical Education for Boys in the Secondary Schools in India* (Madras: Jupiter Press, 1934), 14.

²⁴ Sanjay Seth, “Governmentality, Pedagogy, Identity: The Problem of the ‘Backward Muslim’ in Colonial India,” in *Beyond Representation: Colonial and Postcolonial Constructions of Indian Identity*, ed. Crispin Bates (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 67.

regularity.” It is no surprise that he was unimpressed since his immediate frame of reference was the stark contrast that the government school across the road posed with its classes held in “a neat, open, small puckah building” where students conducted their activities with “an order, regularity and earnestness.”²⁵ The lack of order and control was not only antithetical to the perception of an “ideal” classroom setting, epitomized by British public schools such as Eton, but also went against the grain of the Victorian philosophy of the child who was supposed “to be seen but not heard.”

Since the mid-nineteenth century reports of British education reformers and school inspectors depicted the indigenous school as a site where native bodies were in disarray. Invoking the accounts of two British observers on the issue-- education reformer Mary Carpenter and an Inspectress of School in Bengal, Mrs. Wheeler-- it is hard to miss that although their respective accounts were separated by a gap of almost two decades their gaze was fixated at specific aspects of the native body. In her accounts on the visits to schools in India, Carpenter observed derogatively in 1868 how “heathen” children, men and women lacked the “sense of personal decency” being devoid of garments except the loin cloth. She also found it peculiar that while girls (and women) wore “miserable raiment” which only partially covered their little bodies, they were “bedizened with any ornament they can get hold of” often worth hundreds of pounds in the process becoming gullible victims of a thief or murderer.²⁶ The Indian

²⁵ “Correspondence Relating to Education in the Lower Provinces of Bengal,” *Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government*, no. XXII (Calcutta: 1855), 9-10. Cited from Sanjay Seth, “Governmentality, Pedagogy, Identity,” 67.

²⁶ Mary Carpenter, *Six Months in India* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1868), 79.

body by its state of semi-nakedness thus became an invitation for reform. Carpenter's narrative presents a curious depiction of the native body. On one hand is its semi-nakedness marking a civilizational deficit. And on the other, are the expensive jewels (a symbol of wealth and status) that partially conceal its nakedness but are reduced to emphasize the body's gaudy opulence-- an opulence marked nevertheless by foolhardiness and victimhood. Focusing on the language of improvement Carpenter stresses the benefits of British education by contrasting this body-image with the one she encountered in the colonial schools she visited. In the colonial schools everyone was dressed "neatly and decently" and she "did not notice any ornaments in the place" because they were "forbidden."²⁷ Neat clothes, tasteful appearance and a clean body were thus physical markers of a child "reformed" through colonial education.

In such narratives one can see Sanjay Seth's "technologies of the self" at work. Seth has argued that colonial education was constituted by the process of governing the self in terms of individual disciplining and shaping. It also involved the production of skills and competences that were projected as essential for one to acquire.²⁸ The colonial school involved itself into training native bodies into new corporealities marked by self-discipline, bodily refinement, correct posture and "civilization." Evidence of the progress that the "civilizing" mission made could be read on the bodies described in Carpenter's and the Secretary's accounts. Neat clothes, tasteful appearance and a clean body became physical markers of a child "reformed" through colonial education. With their comparisons both Carpenter and the Secretary established the success that colonial

²⁷ Ibid., 53-54, 79.

²⁸ Sanjay Seth, "Governmentality, Pedagogy, Identity," 68.

education had already charted in terms of initiating native children into the basics of bodily refinement and shaping their bodies into the mold of “civilized” imperial subjects. The comparisons also served to mark the bodies of the children in the government school as different from their lesser civilized counterparts across the road. By doing so they also charted out that although social evolution had several stages (with the native child “not yet there”), there was one true “civilization” and one path towards “progress” which can be achieved through colonial education.

On a similar note, in 1884 in her report, school inspectress Mrs. Wheeler found it “degrading” that children came to classrooms with dirty hands and faces, untidy hair and dirty clothes. While a Bengali girl was decked up in gorgeous saris and jewels on special occasions only, she remained unkempt on an everyday basis.²⁹ For Mrs. Wheeler the problem lay at home from where children imbibed dirty habits. The school therefore was to serve as a means to correct the (often impregnable) space of the domestic. “It costs nothing to wash the face and hands clean, and comb the hair tidy every day,” she continued, “but these things they will not learn at home, they must be taught at school.”³⁰ Such basic hygiene training for girls had the advantage of preparing them for their subsequent roles as good wives and mothers who could pass on these “civilized” habits to their children and practice cleanliness in the space of their marital households. Such narratives contributed to the production of colonial discourse on India and convinced their audience of the virtues of colonial rule.

²⁹ *Education Commission Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1884), 385.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

The focus on the native child's body also emerged from contemporary scientific theories of eugenics and medical research on tropical medicines that considered native bodies as a source of contagion and disease. The myth of sexual licentiousness of the Orientals supposedly promoted by social practices such as early marriage, fatherhood and deviance from Victorian behavioral norms of homosexuality were described by medical experts as chronic problems. Medical journals decreed that a key reason for the physical deterioration of Bengali students was the prevalence of the "disgusting habit" of masturbation which was seen as an outcome of child marriages and early sexual intercourse. And at times the rationality of medical science marched into the realm of the bizarre. For instance doctors pronounced that masturbation, and not the Bengali diet of rice, was the cause of diabetes among Bengalis.³¹ Physical education as a disciplining movement was therefore supposed to harness and "correct" undisciplined sexual mobilities through colonial schooling. It was also meant to provide another entry-point to reforming the native home. Disciplining sexual "deviances" meant stringent surveillance over student hostels and messes. The rhetoric of correction and disciplining children's bodies thus also became a means to critique the larger social fabric of Indian society.

ii) The Male Student and Fear of "Sedition"

A close reading of official education records from the late nineteenth century in Bengal reveals how the anxiety surrounding the volatile nature of youth was one of

³¹ Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*, 158.

the governing principles for regulating physical education in colonial schools. I argue that the need to engineer the Bengali male student away from indiscipline and “seditious” ideas towards bodily regimentation and punishment was reflected in the conscious politics of demilitarization which the British colonial state followed since the late nineteenth century. These were the same kind of anxieties that propelled the changes in curriculum policies by the colonial state that I discussed in Chapter Two.

In his report on the *Review of Education in India* (1886), Alfred Croft noted that Bengal was the only province that drew special attention due to the lack of discipline in schools.³² He emphasized the episodes of public misconduct by schoolboys in Bengal in the late nineteenth century that led the Government of Bengal to order the Director of Public Instruction for a special investigation on the “want of discipline and the spirit of insubordination” that prevailed among Bengali schoolboys and to suggest necessary measures required to maintain stricter discipline in educational institutions.³³ In the preparation of his report Croft consulted Magistrates, District Committees, Inspectors of schools, Principals of Colleges and School Head Masters. He observed that there had been occasions in Bengal when “there is a sudden and violent outbreak of lawlessness” in which all the students of a class were involved leading to “the moment discipline is entirely at end.”³⁴ “...[S]choolboys as a class are growing impatient of control,” continues Croft, “and are losing even the form of respect for authority.” Though the

³² Alfred Woodley Croft was the Director of Public Instruction in Bengal from 1877 to 1897. An Oxford graduate, he joined the Bengal Education Service in 1866 as Professor of Philosophy at Presidency College, Calcutta. He spent several years as a school inspector in the *mufassil* towns of Bengal. In 1882-83 as a key member in the Indian Education Commission he wrote the annual report and in 1886-87 was commissioned to write the First Quinquennial Report on the progress of education in India.

³³ Alfred Croft, *Review of Education in India, 1886* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1888), 334.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

causes of disrespect for authority were mostly seen by the government to have stemmed from the character of the teacher and the system of instruction, for Croft the problem lay deeper into the “peculiar conditions of Hindu society” that apparently “encourage[d] the spirit of lawlessness” among the youth.”³⁵ For him the solution lay in the reform of Hindu society. In coming up with this solution he drew a causal relation between religion and personal traits.

The government’s anxiety was most palpable in the last decade of the nineteenth century. It took a series of measures to extend an “effective supervision and control” over the crucial and malleable stages of a student’s education, primarily at the Intermediate and Matriculation levels, when they were deemed vulnerable to nationalist mobilization.³⁶ The emphasis on High school students meant that there was very little or no focus on physical training at the primary and middle school level.³⁷ Several contemporary education reports themselves document that sanitary primers taught in middle schools in Bengal were “useless”³⁸ and limited attention was paid to instruction on gymnastics at the primary and middle school level.³⁹

I argue that the immense need to maintain school decorum and discipline was an extension of the state’s need to contain native rebellion. The first decade of the twentieth century-- when the *Swadeshi* movement was at its peak-- was marked by the participation of schoolboys and young (mostly) male students in political agitations often

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Government of India Home Department, Education, February 1900 25-36(A), 55.

³⁷ *Report on Public Instruction in Eastern Bengal and Assam 1910-1911* (Shillong: Eastern Bengal and Assam Secretariat Printing Office, 1911), 134.

³⁸ *Education Commission Report by the Bengal Provincial Committee* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1884), 251.

³⁹ *Report on Public Instruction in Eastern Bengal and Assam 1910-1911* (Shillong: Eastern Bengal and Assam Secretariat Printing Office, 1911), 134.

violent in nature involving manufacturing bombs, political dacoity and assassinations of British colonial officials. The movement spawned revolutionary *Swadeshi* organizations, with a membership chiefly comprising of male students. Their training primarily constituted of a variety of martial techniques including wrestling, sword fighting and *lathi* play. Official reports from this period stress upon how the formation of character and morality should be one of the main aims of education and that school life should prevent children from forming “bad habits.”⁴⁰ Given the context in which these reports were produced, the emphasis on preventing “bad habits” did not simply extend to the correction of children’s bodies that lacked sartorial neatness, order and punctuality but primarily hinted at “seditious” activities by students in the *Swadeshi* agitations.

With the growing politicization of students, the role of school teachers had to be state-regulated. The government felt that since children learn by imitating what they see and hear in the everyday setup of school life, the involvement of the teacher was important to encourage the inculcation of the ideals of punctuality, good manners, cleanliness, neatness, obedience to duty, truthfulness and respect in the child by setting personal examples: “In the matter of this moral training the most important factor will be the habitual conduct of the teacher in the school. If he is thorough, patient, kind but firm, and scrupulously fair, these traits will evoke similar traits in his pupils; and will give point and force to any moral instruction he may attempt. A teacher who is obviously slipshod and lazy, discoursing to children about the value of industry and thoroughness, is an absurdity which cannot but prove

⁴⁰ *Report on Public Instruction in Bengal 1905-06* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1907), 49.

morally disintegrating to a child.”⁴¹ This consequently brought focus on the role of the school teacher as an important catalyst in promoting morality in schools on one hand, and on the other hand brought them under state surveillance for participating in “seditious” activities against the government and encouraging their students to get involved as well.

iii) Girl Students: The Domestic Body

The preoccupation with controlling a growing generation of politically volatile schoolboys and youth possibly also explains the asymmetrical attention given to physical education for male students as opposed to girls in most government and aided schools in Bengal. Considering the widespread harrowing tales on the “barbaric” treatment meted out to the girl child in Indian society (female infanticide, child marriage, sufferings of child widows and widow immolation), one would expect that physical education was an important component of female education from the perspective both of colonial administrators and Bengali reformers.. However, very little official literature exists regarding government policies on methods to ameliorate the health and well-being of girl children in schools. Contemporary education reports, such as Hornell’s *Progress of Education in Bengal* (1912-1917), published accounts of school inspectresses such as Sister Mary Victoria (Principal of Diocesan College, Calcutta), who observed that the average girl student was “very weak” and required good food, exercise and remedial gymnastics. “The chest is contracted and the spine often curved” she stressed, “She has no desire

⁴¹ *Report on Public Instruction in Bengal 1905-06*, 49.

for games. She cannot sit well or walk freely.”⁴² The descriptions of the deformity of the girl child’s body--“weak,” “curved” and immobilized-- have resonances with the debility question raised by Macaulay. Similar observations were made by another school inspectress Miss Janau, a teacher at the Bethune College, who reported that the health of girls deteriorated as they advanced from school through their University courses.⁴³ And yet, Hornell’s report chronicles how hygiene instruction in girls’ schools in Eastern Bengal was not well structured.⁴⁴

When it came to physical education for girls the preoccupation lay in the kinetics of hygiene and women’s domestication within the confined mobilities of the home. The colonial idea (of which Mrs. Wheeler was one of the many proponents) that the reform of the domestic began at the school finds manifestation in the physical education curriculum meant for female students. From the *Fifth Quinquennial Review* (1912-1917) we know that schools where physical education was taught as part of a prescribed curriculum to girls also offered compulsory teaching of hygiene and emphasized the skills of domestic economy from grades as early as one upto six. Between grades five to seven the scope was broadened, but restricted within the parameters of matrimonial duties, to include themes like “cleanliness, ventilation, exercise, filtered water, drains, care for the sick and care of children.”⁴⁵ The focus on domesticity for girls continued in upper grades, particularly grades eight and nine,

⁴² W. W. Hornell, *Progress of Education in Bengal 1912-13 to 1916-17* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1918), 236. Hornell was also the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal during this period.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ I want to draw attention to the usage of the term “Eastern Bengal” in official documents between 1905 and 1911. It is important to recall that the usage of the term stems from the partition of Bengal in 1905 when the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was formed with Dacca as the capital.

⁴⁵ Hornell, *Progress of Education in Bengal*, 237.

where textbooks such as *Santanpalan* (Upbringing of Children) formed part of the prescribed curriculum. In his report Hornell commented that while valuable work had been done in mission schools on the subject of child rearing, in schools managed by Indians the subject was not treated seriously.⁴⁶ In 1913 the School and College Hygiene Committee proposed the establishment of a properly equipped school in Calcutta and employing a Bengali female medico with European qualifications to teach domestic hygiene to girls. The Committee also proposed the construction of a women's gymnasium in the city. However, the local government did not accept these proposals.⁴⁷ It is odd that the Committee did not deem it necessary to explain the cause for their rejection, exposing the lackadaisical manner in which physical education for girls was handled at the school level.

Accounts of several contemporary school inspectresses reveal that in the early twentieth century physical education for girls received more attention in missionary schools when compared to state-run schools. By 1913, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) was very active in Bengal. Weekly lectures on drill were held at the YWCA for teachers. Drill was taught to children at all missionary boarding schools in Bengal and a few "Hindu schools" that had female teachers.⁴⁸ In the same year Miss Bose, a Christian school inspectress, notes that drill could not be introduced in schools run by pandits owing to the supposed repugnance towards physical training among Hindus. She however felt that this problem could be

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 236.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

addressed with women teachers and that introduction of physical training was the right measure towards ensuring a better health for native girls.⁴⁹

In the occasional references in official education reports regarding the Indian girl child, the focus was on her body as a site of biological reproduction. In her manual on physical education for girls in Indian schools, Methodist missionary Florence Salzer, criticizes the daily erroneous postural habits of the Indian body that jeopardized the reproductive capabilities of the girl child.⁵⁰ Her textbook began with the photograph of an Indian girl between eight to ten years of age balancing a big earthen pot on her hips, a common sight in India. She warned that “anything carried on the hip, be it a baby or a water *ghara* [pitcher] displaces the internal organs. Besides, it makes the baby bowlegged.”⁵¹ She also concluded that the bodily frailties of the Bengali girl emanated from a life accustomed to the wretched conditions of the *zenana* (women’s chamber where men outside the family were forbidden entry). Salzer recommended a nutritious diet for the girls and advised that they take sufficient rest and avoid late work hours.⁵²

The fixation with the domestic space in relation to female students not only stemmed from the gendered role of wives and daughters that the girl child was expected to play but was also a product of the colonial preoccupation with the supposed impregnability and mystery surrounding the *zenana*. Salzer’s account

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Florence Salzer became the Director of Physical Education at the Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, the oldest Christian college in India in 1920. She was an American Methodist missionary who was educated at Wellesley College.

⁵¹ Florence Salzer, *A Manual of Physical Education for Girls for Use in Indian Schools* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1923), 1.

⁵² Hornell, *Progress of Education in Bengal*, 236.

resonates with Mary Carpenter's depiction of the *zenana* as the "sunless, airless" unhygienic and oppressive Oriental space which had kept the "passive" Indian women confined for generations. The *zenana* was conceptualized as a secluded space devoid of the rationality of modern science and one permeated by superstition and disease. Thus the *zenana* became a site where British women and missionaries could carry out multiple agendas of reform. For instance, the British female medicos who provided medical care to the *zenana* women, saw the *zenana* as a site for fulfilling the imperial obligation of providing health care to the colonials.⁵³ For the British missionaries in the first half of the nineteenth century the *zenana* was a hitherto uncharted site for religious reform, i.e., conversion.⁵⁴ While missionaries were successful in converting Indian men, the impregnability of the *zenana* meant that many women lay outside the fold of Christianity. In the perception of the missionaries, therefore, Christianity could not be spread widely until women in the *zenana* were reached. By the 1860s the *zenana* was transformed into a site for education where the virtues of Christianity could be fully realized.⁵⁵ Janaki Nair observes that the focus on the *zenana* as a site of education reform paralleled the development of British interest in universal education as a form of social control in the 1860s and 1870s.⁵⁶

⁵³ Antoinette Burton, "Contesting the *Zenana*: The Mission to Make "Lady Doctors for India," 1874-1885," *Journal of British Studies* 35 (July 1996): 368-397.

⁵⁴ Janaki Nair, "Uncovering the *Zenana*: Visions of Indian Womanhood in Englishwomen's Writings, 1813-1940," *Journal of Women's History* 2, no. 1 (1990): 15

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

The metaphors of discipline, upliftment, improvement and the cultivation of morality of the Indian child were strongly emphasized as a part of the nationalist agenda as well. However the nationalist project sought to go beyond what the colonial state endeavored. It did so by politicizing the body and drawing a connection between physical culture and the regeneration of the nation. Following Dipesh Chakrabarty, one can argue that physical education and sports as a cultural phenomenon could be seen as a means of “subject production” and “ideological struggles in which modern disciplinary techniques could be implanted, for instance, for training boys for roles in public life.”⁵⁷

Politicized Bodies: The Child and Nationalist Contestations in Bengal

Joseph Alter observes that the “body is the nation and the nation is the body in a direct, one to one equation.”⁵⁸ Physical culture in this context involved recruiting the young to forge a community in service of the nation. Alter argues that by doing so nationalism is “embodied as both individual and collective biomoral strength.”⁵⁹ For the Indian nationalists, physical culture and exercises were means for not simply making bodies of children fit but also for inculcating the philosophy of national character, discipline and citizenship. Alter suggests that disciplining the body was both the means and ends of nationalism.⁶⁰ As mentioned earlier while for the British colonial state disciplining aimed more at the de-politicization and restraining of the

⁵⁷ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Fall and Rise of Indian Sports History,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 21 (3/4, 2004): 339.

⁵⁸ Joseph Alter, “Body, Text, Nation: Writing the Physically Fit Body in Postcolonial India” in *Confronting the Body: The Politics of Physicality in Colonial and Postcolonial India* ed. James Mill and Satadru Sen (London: Anthem Press, 2003), 21.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

bodies of children and youth, the Bengali nationalists laid a premium on a disciplinary reform of the body to challenge deeply entrenched colonial stereotypes of Bengali effeminacy and undertake their project of creating a remasculinized identity.

The idea of a strong nation was premised on the conviction that its security and resilience could only be safeguarded by strong and healthy male citizens-- not only militarily in the battleground but equally importantly in the public sphere too. Such patriotic citizens had to be produced by fostering physical culture and strong healthy bodies. The native body thus became a political space where the discourse on an independent nation was shaped in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Bengal and the revival of physical culture became an integral process of nation building. The overwhelming consensus among the western educated middle class was that the average physical condition of the Bengali was deplorable making them unfit for self-governance. In search for the causes of physical debility, both scholarly and popular Bengali literature complained how the burden of English education, with its emphasis on bookish knowledge and a rigorous examination oriented pedagogy, resulted in a gradual deterioration of the health of students with each successive generation. In this respect the educated Bengali *bhadralok* saw himself as the worst sufferer.

As Fisher-Tiné has shown, from the 1880s the discourse on eugenics that gained popularity and scientific endorsement in Britain also started to influence ideas in India. Positive eugenics, proposed by scientists such as Francis Galton and Karl N Pearson, professed that the intellectual and physical qualities of humans were

hereditary and could be transmitted to one's children through calculated breeding among talented sexual partners. This was "mathematically proven" by Pearson who claimed that positive eugenics was indeed the solution to Britain's racial decline. Backed by the prophets of western science and thereby "modernity," these ideas found support among the likes of Bernard Shaw in Britain and Annie Besant⁶¹ and Swami Dayananda in India.⁶² By the early twentieth century the Bengali intelligentsia also did not remain unaware of or unaffected by these scientific theories. The positive eugenics argument in Bengal converged on to an attack on child marriage by colonial medical specialists. They theorized that child marriages resulted in the physical deterioration and consequently "effeminacy, mental imperfection and moral debility" of the Hindus which explained the low rank Hindus occupied in "the scale of nations."⁶³

In addition to this was the belief, both among colonial medical theorists and the *bhadralok* class, that Indians lacked the "impulse of rivalry" which helped one to triumph over a rival when locked in a fierce competition.⁶⁴ On the other hand, the impulse of rivalry was deemed to be very strong among Europeans which explained the rapid progress they made in education, trade and industry. By the 1920s writers of physical education manuals such as S.C. Chatterji, flagged the concern that *swaraj*

⁶¹ Annie Besant was an Indian nationalist of Irish origin who settled in India in 1893 after having spent a politically active career in England as a socialist, theosophist and advocator of women's rights. She was one of the earliest advocates of birth control and became a member of the Fabian socialist group in the early 1880s under the influence of George Bernard Shaw. Besant is most famously known for her contribution to theosophy which she started to follow after being deeply moved by Helena Blavatsky, the co-founder of the Theosophical Society in 1875.

⁶² Fischer-Tiné, "From Brahmacharya to 'Conscious Race Culture'," 247.

⁶³ Ibid., 248.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

[self-rule] was unattainable by a nation of emasculated and degenerated people.⁶⁵ Chatterji alerted that one could not build the India that Gandhi imagined with a weak body because such a body could only generate a weak mind. This complex stereotyping of the effeminess of the Bengali race and the *bhadralok* in particular evoked the consciousness of the average educated Bengali resulting in a focused and engaged political project of remasculinization through a physical cultural movement. As John Rosselli has argued the revival of physical training in Bengal in the nineteenth century was rooted in the nationalist discourse of seeing colonialism as an experience of physical humiliation of the native body.⁶⁶ In this context Macaulay's depiction of Bengali effeminacy would be evoked time and again in nationalist discussions. Building a remasculinized native body was therefore important to regain lost political strength back.

Subho Basu and Sikata Banerjee note that the nationalist project of remasculinizing the Bengali male involved an incorporation of the ideals of hegemonic masculinity that the British Empire celebrated. But at the same time, it also involved the incorporation of nationalist myths and icons borrowed from traditional cultural ideas to challenge colonial rule.⁶⁷ As Bengali elite males consumed the history of India produced by the colonialists they imbibed the realization that Bengalis as a race had never possessed a culture of political virility when compared to the Rajputs, Sikhs and Marathas. The experiences of physical violence unleashed by British soldiers in Calcutta and the growing political and social chasm between

⁶⁵ Chatterji, *A Textbook of Physical Training for School Boys*, 137.

⁶⁶ Rosselli, "The Image of Effeminess."

⁶⁷ Basu and Banerjee, "The Quest for Manhood," 478.

Hindus and Muslims by the early twentieth century further legitimized the need to undertake the project of remasculinizing the Bengali Hindus.⁶⁸

In this section I will focus on how physical training politicized the bodies of children and youth both publicly through the “seditious” practices of the volunteer movement during the *Swadeshi* years on one hand and privately through the active involvement of parents and elders at home on the other.

Beginning with the partition of Bengal in 1905, the nationalist for the first time began to strongly pursue the idea of promoting physical culture among schoolboys and college students as an essential component of constituting an independent nation. Following the pronouncement of the partition, schoolboys from across Bengal began participating in increasing numbers in the volunteer movement that organized student brigades to persuade people to buy *swadeshi* products. Several of these volunteer movements promoted physical training in various forms of indigenous martial arts such as *lathi*, sword and dagger play.⁶⁹ These martial sports were traditionally practiced in rural Bengal under the patronage of zamindars (landlords) who had their personal *akbaras* and hired *lathiyars* (expert *lathi* fighters) as bodyguards and extortionists of land revenue from peasants. With declining patronage as the zamindari system in Bengal continued to degenerate over decades, starting with the Permanent Settlement of 1793, and the lack of interest by the

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ A pioneer in such volunteer training was Barindra Kumar Ghosh, who was one of the founders of the revolutionary group and Bengali newspaper, *Yugantar*, in 1906. *Yugantar* emphasised on the cultivation of physical strength as a principle means of attaining *swadeshi*. Similar revolutionary organizations-- of which *Anushilan Samiti* founded in 1905 was the most influential-- were intimately involved with physical training, use of militant methods including arms and ammunitions, manufacturing of bombs, political dacoity and assassinations of British colonial officials. *Yugantar* and *Anushilan Samiti* had close links as well and involved leaders such as Pulin Behari Das who was famous as an ace swordsman and teacher.

western-educated *bhadralok* elites in promoting indigenous martial sports, the tradition was slowly fading. With the focus on the indigenous as an intrinsic precept of the *swadeshi* ideology, schoolboys, college students and young men revisited this “lost” Bengali martial culture thereby co-opting a rustic and rural martial tradition- customarily practiced by the uneducated lower classes and the Muslims and gave it a new political direction. .

All the annual reports on public instruction in Bengal between 1900 and 1911 show that this trend caused great anxiety among the colonial authorities as it led to a “breach of discipline” among students in both schools and colleges . For instance, the annual report for 1906-07 alerted that “political agitation continues to have a very harmful effect on the discipline of schools....The [government] recognised institutions still remain an easy hunting ground for the political agitator. Meetings are held, at which pupils are occasionally edified by inflammatory speeches from their own school masters...[who then] fan the flame of disloyalty in neighbouring schools or villages.”⁷⁰ The involvement of teachers heightened the colonial anxiety. The colonial state expected the teachers to serve as loyal representatives of the state in the school and to remain apolitical. Instead they were spearheading the politicization of their students by encouraging them to participate in picketing raids through the bazars.

Commenting on the “seditious” trend, the Government’s *Report on Public Instruction in Bengal* for the academic year 1907-08 warned of a general disrespect for

⁷⁰ *Report on Public Instruction in Bengal 1906-07* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1907), 61.

authority as a result of a “parallel physical culture movement whereby students were organized in clubs and semi-military organizations.”⁷¹ According to the Report this problem was compounded by the “unsettlement of tradition by the introduction of Western ideas and the gradual subversion of the social order” which led schoolboys and the youth to actively participate in the recent political agitations following the partition.⁷² Meanwhile, in his report of 1907, the Inspector of Dacca expressed his anxiety over the trend of school activities being diverted into channels of agitation. He held up the growing unpopularity of football and cricket because of their foreign origin and the swelling esteem of indigenous sports such as *lathi* play as an example.⁷³ In 1911 N. L. Hallward, the Director of Public Instruction in Bengal noted that the focus in schools in Bengal had been solely on the intellectual aspect of education was an “undisputable truth.” He argued that the spirit of unrest prevalent in recent times was the result of failure of secular western education to replace old discredited Indian values with western ideals of discipline and self control and in establishing moral ethics among the Indians He argued that western education had failed to replace old discredited Indian values with western ideals of discipline and self control contributing to the spirit of unrest prevalent in recent times.⁷⁴ W. W. Hornell noted that the wave of defiance to authority continued after the partition of Bengal was revoked in 1911. He cautioned that indiscipline among students’ took a more definite political form during the *Swadeshi* movement and was aggravated by the

⁷¹ *Report on Public Instruction in Bengal 1907-08* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1908), 45.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Report on Public Instruction in Bengal 1906-07*, 62. Similar observations were made by H Sharp, the Director of Public Instruction, Eastern Bengal and Assam in his annual report on education in 1910.

⁷⁴ *General Report on Public Instruction in Eastern Bengal and Assam 1910-1911.*

widespread dissemination of seditious pamphlets across Bengal and arrests of their peers.⁷⁵

The *Swadeshi* period also saw the encouragement of physical culture and exercises among children outside the boundaries of the school-- within the domain of the home. The focus on the regeneration of the child's body (and consequently the nation) in the late nineteenth century lay within the larger nationalist and social reformer positions which saw the home as a "charged ideological space,"⁷⁶ "a new cultural logic"⁷⁷ and a space for change for the educated Bengali *bhadralok*. Much of the spirit behind the fashioning of new domestic ideals came as a result of the internalization of the colonial critique of the home, particularly the *zenana*, as the location of degeneration, dirt, disease and oppression that I discussed in the previous section. The *zenana* therefore became a site of multiple reforms. Much of the tenets of the reformation of the home borrowed selectively from the liberal western philosophies and Victorian ideology that the men of the household learned to appreciate as colonized subjects. In this context the Victorian ideals of discipline, routine and order became the most desirable qualities that the *bhadralok* aspired for.⁷⁸ As Ranajit Guha highlights, the nationalists embraced the European idea of "improvement" as a means of self-refashioning. The ethic of improvement when enacted within the premises of the home led to a reformulation of the Bengali

⁷⁵ Hornell, *Progress of Education in Bengal 1912-13 to 1916-17*, 339.

⁷⁶ Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7.

⁷⁷ Swapna Banerjee, "Debates on Domesticity and the Position of Women in Late Colonial India," *History Compass* 8 (2010): 455-473.

⁷⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 224.

domestic culture where new focus was laid on the renunciation of *purdah*, encouraging women's education, hygiene, household management and methods of effective child rearing.⁷⁹ The late nineteenth century saw the publication of several domestic manuals, mostly written by men, aiming at the refashioning of the woman of the household in their roles as wife and mother. Many of the domestic manuals dealt with the health, diet and upbringing of children.

The engagement with the child's health, particularly the inculcation of physical culture, and the workings of this new "improved" and reformed home can be witnessed in the autobiographies of several Bengalis from the period. In a memoir published in 1925, Congress leader Surendranath Banerjea narrates how he had been taught the need of regular and daily exercise under parental mandate from a very young age in his family. His physician father took personal interest in his physical education and taught him and his brothers that health was the basis of all success in life. The Banerjea household had an *akhara* in their home where a trained *pahalwan* (wrestler) would teach the children various forms Indian athletic exercises.⁸⁰ Physical training at home was given as much emphasis as regular education through

⁷⁹ For studies on domestic manuals for women that taught these virtues to the "new" Bengali woman, see Judith Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India: What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

⁸⁰ Sarala Debi (1872-1945) was another major historical figure who promoted the cultivation of a martial physical culture in Bengal by establishing an *akhara* and a gymnasium at her home which became a major center for revolutionary outfits-including the *Anushilan Samiti*- in the early twentieth century. In her *akhara*, a Muslim expert on martial sports Professor Murtaza, taught boxing, sword-fighting, *lathi* play, wrestling, games with knives and so on. However her *akhara* catered mostly to young men.

schooling.⁸¹ In his later life Banerjea supported the idea of making physical education mandatory for all children.

Similarly, Rabindranath Tagore narrates how as a little boy he and his brothers would have to wake up before dawn and wearing loin-cloths learn wrestling from a *pahalwan*. After returning home from school, their gymnastic master would be ready waiting to begin his lessons.⁸² The habits of physical culture that Tagore inculcated during his own childhood were extended to a larger student body years later as part of the curriculum in Shantiniketan. Through his pedagogical experiments we can see how experiences of the home coalesce with the ideas of the global world. Tagore pioneered the introduction of judo in India. He was also influenced by the Japanese martial art form of ju-jitsu from which judo has been derived. He invited a noted judo instructor, Sano Jinnosuke, to Shantiniketan to serve as faculty in 1905. Though this lies beyond the period of this dissertation by a few years it is useful to note that in 1929 Tagore visited Tokyo Kodokan, the mecca of learning judo in Japan, to arrange for a judo teacher at Shantiniketan. The result of this endeavor saw the arrival of Shinzo Takagaki as the new ju-jitsu and judo instructor at Shantiniketan in 1929.⁸³ That Takagaki's travels and stay was funded for two years by Tagore's personal funds shows the latter's commitment to promote the Japanese martial art form and self defense techniques among Bengali children (both boys and girls as he would note in a

⁸¹ Surendranath Banerjea, *A Nation in Making: Being the Reminiscences of Fifty Years of Public Life* (London, New York, Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1925), 4.

⁸² Rabindranath Tagore, *My Reminiscences* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 38.

⁸³ The intricate webs of networks in the Takagaki story are very fascinating. Satyajit Ray recalls learning judo as a teenager in Calcutta in 1934 in his autobiography *Jakhan Chhoto Chhilam*. His teacher was Takagaki. Ray also talks about ju-jitsu performances in the famed Shantiniketan Poush Mela in 1934 in true Tagorean fusion of the indigenous with the global. For a detailed discussion see Satyajit Ray, *Jakhan Chhoto Chhilam* (Calcutta: Ananda Publishers, 1982), 37-39.

letter written in 1931 to the Bidhanchandra Roy, the Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation).⁸⁴ Takagaki's influence was not just limited to Shantiniketan where he wrote his seminal text *Techniques of Judo* but also extended to Afghanistan where he trained the Afghan king's army in judo.⁸⁵

The engagement with physical education at home was not limited only to the male child alone. Lila Majumdar, a prominent writer of Bengali children's literature and a daughter in the Upendrakishore Raychaudhury family, describes in her autobiography how her strict disciplinarian father was very particular about his children-- including his daughters-- exercising and would punish if they deflected from their responsibilities.⁸⁶ Majumdar's training in physical education could be seen as part of the process of the molding of a girl child into the role of the *bhadramahila* (respectable and refined Bengali lady). Scholars such as Meredith Borthwick, Tanika Sarkar and Malavika Karlekar have shown how the question of women's emancipation became an important agenda of the *bhadralok* reform in the late nineteenth century.⁸⁷ The *bhadramahila* was to be the female counterpart of the *bhadralok* and embody the virtues of both the Hindu woman and the Victorian

⁸⁴ Tagore's letter (dated April 25th, 1931) to Bidhanchandra Roy was precisely over the funding issue. Tagore's had invested his personal funds to appoint Takagaki at Shantiniketan for two years but now needed to supplement that source so that the latter's stay at Shantiniketan could be extended longer. In this letter he underlines the need to promote self defence and physical training as a requirement for both boys and girls.

⁸⁵ Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 400.

⁸⁶ Lila Majumdar (1908-2007) was a prolific writer of Bengali children's literature. She was born to Pramada Ranjan Ray (the younger brother of Upendrakishore Raychaudhury) and Surama Debi and grew up in a family which has contributed enormously to the development of Bengali children's literature. Her cousin was Sukumar Ray who is known for his literary non-sense writings for children.

⁸⁷ See Meredith Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal 1849-1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Malavika Karlekar, *Voices from Within: Early Personal Narratives of Bengali Women* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991); Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

“perfect lady” who could contribute to the careers of their husbands and raise children in “enlightened” ways. Majumdar’s girlhood also appears to be a far-cry from the depictions of girl children encountered in Mary Carpenter, Salzer or Sister Victoria’s narratives. Here one can also see the process of the politicization of the girl child in elite Bengali *bhadralok* households. As a western-educated elite family the Raychaudhury children grew up in an environment where nationalism was discussed and taught from an early stage in life. Majumdar wrote that as children they learnt that to defeat a mighty enemy one had to be more powerful than the enemy. The reference in this context was to the British rulers. In an era of *Swadeshi* fervour the Raychaudhury children also learnt that merely boycotting British schools was not enough to attain independence, rather, it was equally important to be courageous and physically powerful.⁸⁸

In most narratives, the father or an avuncular figure is depicted as the major promoter (at times inspiration/role model) of physical culture and reform at home. Most contemporary scholarship on the histories of home focuses on the mother-child relationship. The home conjures up the imagery of a feminized space. However, in these memoirs we can see how the enactment of the role of the male family head (or its equivalent, for instance the uncle who too would command a father-like position particularly in the joint family set-up) shaped masculinity and male authority at home. The father-figure image, as an inspiration and role model, shaping the personhood of young children also comes to fore in these narratives. As Tanika

⁸⁸ Lila Majumdar, *Ara Konokhane* (Calcutta: Mitra and Ghosh Publishers, 1967), 74.

Sarkar notes, in the contemporary printed vernacular prose literature of the nineteenth century the household was compared to an enterprise to be administered, an army to be led and a state to be governed-- all colonial spaces from which the colonized Bengalis were excluded from positions of authority. She argues that, unlike the Victorian household, the Bengali home was not the place for refuge after work but rather, the real place of work for the *bhadralok*.⁸⁹ In these personal memoirs we see the enactment of this “real work” at play.

In these narratives, as Swapna Banerjee points out, one can see how the idea and practice of fatherhood-- and I would extend that to include an adult avuncular figure-- was inextricably entwined with the question of masculinity.⁹⁰ Childhood heroes for many children growing up during this period were close family members or friends who commanded physical strength and masculine vigour. For Lila Majumdar that childhood hero was Saradaranjan Ray, her father’s older brother. As one who took over fraternal responsibilities of his younger siblings after their father’s death and with his tall, hefty frame and a baritone voice, Saradaranjan was an authoritative figure in the family. He was an educationist and the Principal of the Metropolitan College. From him Lila learnt that classroom education was not enough to become a worthy human being (*manush*). It was essential to excel in the playground as well. His views, needless to say, were very much influenced by the British games ethic. As a Principal, he encouraged sports in his college and

⁸⁹ Tanika Sarkar, “Rhetoric Against Age of Consent Resisting Colonial Reason and Death of a Child-Wife,” *Economic and Political Weekly* (September, 1993):1870.

⁹⁰ Swapna Banerjee, “Debates on Domesticity,”: 467.

participated along with his students.⁹¹ For little Lila, Saradaranjan's charismatic appeal lay not only in his authoritative demeanor and masculine body but also in his control over moral values. Narrating one such incident, she recalled that in one of his early jobs as a teacher in a government college, Saradaranjan was asked by the Principal-- a British man-- to pose as a student in an inter-college cricket competition and play for the college team for an assured victory. When Saradaranjan questioned this order, the Principal retorted back that no one would be able to catch the fraud. Saradaranjan-- who would always teach Lila and her siblings that there could be no compromise on injustice-- responded, true to his words, by refusing to relent to the wishes of the Principal and resigned from his job. ⁹²

The appeal of the brave, masculine male is visible in Nagendranath Sen Gupta's autobiography too, published in 1974. Sen Gupta had been an active student revolutionary and a member of the *Anushilan Samiti* during the *Swadeshi* agitation. As he recounts it retrospectively in his memoirs one of the earliest influences on his life was his high school senior, an enigmatic figure who is revealed to the reader only as "A." The first depiction of "A," a prominent revolutionary during the *Swadeshi* movement, is a eulogy of his masculine attractiveness: "There was a brightness and manliness in his appearance which compelled attention. As one who had been expelled from school and who could stand up and make a stirring speech in elegant Bengali, he was greatly lionized in the town at that time."⁹³ Other influential personalities in Sen Gupta's life were mostly men with strong spiritual and physical

⁹¹ Majumdar, *Ara Konokhane*, 77.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 76.

⁹³ Sen Gupta, *Repentant Revolutionary*, 35.

appearances. He recalls another revolutionary, Babu Krishna Kumar Mitra, who with his “flowing beard and powerfully built body” looked “like a lion among men.” Sen Gupta goes on to describe how when Mitra spoke, “his words had the fire and earnestness of a prophet.” Like Saradaranjan, Mitra too was morally strong and his “burning hatred of injustice, tyranny and vice” had immense appeal to the young Sen Gupta.⁹⁴ This emphasis on the moral high ground of childhood heroes resonates against the much trite colonial critique of Indians as a morally sterile racial group. In both Majumdar and Sen Gupta’s accounts there is a celebration of masculinity, in the case of the latter the masculine becomes an ideal to be embodied and inspiration to be emulated.

Politics of Demilitarization

The British colonial state policy of demilitarization of Indian society and the remasculinization of the youth through a regeneration of combative or martial indigenous sports were intricately entangled with the scheme of nationalist politics and the nation building process in Bengal. The fear of spawning a generation of young Indian men involved in “seditious” activities was one the prime reasons for the surveillance of physical education in government schools from the late nineteenth century onwards. Earlier in this chapter I discussed how as early as 1886, in the *Review of Education in India*, Alfred Croft had noted that Bengal was the only province that drew attention of the government due to the lack of discipline and “the spirit of

⁹⁴ Ibid., 37.

insubordination” in schools. He also observed that schoolboys as a class were growing impatient of control and were often participants in sudden and violent outbreaks of lawlessness.⁹⁵ As discussed earlier, the Government in response resorted to a variety of repressive measures to discourage “sedition” and the rising political activism among students. Commenting on these colonial policies, Piyush Kanti Ghose, a contemporary observer who wrote on the state of physical culture in India, mentions that the repressive measures of the government following the partition of Bengal demoralized some sections of the youth such that many refrained from taking up any form of physical exercise.⁹⁶

Ghose’s observation on repressive state measures that discouraged some sections of students from taking up indigenous physical culture and local martial arts is in alignment with a long existing trend of colonial demilitarization the colonial state followed systematically after the Revolt of 1857. Scholars including Rosalind O’Hanlon have illustrated this trend of demilitarization and how it led to the decline of local cultures of indigenous martial arts and sports. O’Hanlon has shown that even prior to 1857 the East India Company struggled to successfully accomplish the demilitarization of Indian rural societies, a task that posed complex challenges. This started since the late eighteenth century with the ban on Shaivite and Vaishnavite warrior monks by the East India Company. The collapse of the military labor market (often constituted by local militia and warrior monks) and India’s political fluidity with the decay of the Mughal rule meant an increase in the demand for fighting skills

⁹⁵ Alfred Croft, *Review of Education in India*, 334.

⁹⁶ Piyush Kanti Ghose, *Sad Neglect of Physical Culture Among the Indians* (Calcutta: Amrita Bazar Patrika, 1925), 26.

of the warrior monks in smaller kingdoms across the subcontinent. The Company authorized the criminalization of wandering people which limited such military movement and banned religious men from any pursuits apart from religious activities.⁹⁷ O'Hanlon also shows that the colonial state's plan to disarm Indian society was aligned with the reconstitution of the Indian army regiments on communal, ethnic and provincial lines. An outcome of this restructuring was to deploy the so called "martial races" of India, particularly the Sikhs, for the military recruitment of a loyal British army.⁹⁸

Taking O'Hanlon's thesis further I argue that the Bengali *bhadralok's* engagement with body culture was to a great extent in contestation to the process of the demilitarization of Indian society associated with the colonial period post-1857. The process of demilitarization was practised in various aspects of Indian society. For the purposes of this chapter I will discuss the early years of the Boy Scout movement in Bengal when as a conscious policy-- both of the British colonial state and founder Baden-Powell himself-- Indian boys were prohibited from joining the movement due to the fear of their misusing the militaristic angle of the scout training for nationalist and "seditious" purposes. The Boy Scout movement started in India in 1908 independent of state-support under the missionary initiatives such as the YMCA.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Military Sports and the History of the Martial Body in India," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50 (4, 2007): 492.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 493.

⁹⁹ The Boy Scout Movement was started in 1907 by Robert Stevenson Smith Baden-Powell at an experimental camp at Brownsea Island, England. He held the rank of a Major General in the British Army and was a decorated British army officer. Baden-Powell developed a scheme of physical training that was primarily meant for soldiers but he later adapted it as part of the Boy Scout movement to train British young boys-- both in England and British colonies worldwide-- towards the service of the Empire. Within a

The first scout troop in Bengal was formed at the Christian Missionary School in Krishnanagar.¹⁰⁰ As a decorated British Army General and a great enthusiast of military reconnaissance, Baden-Powell developed a system of physical training that established a direct association between manliness and military training culminating into duty towards the King and Empire. With its focus on civics, citizenship training, public spirit, character building and physical fitness that incorporated principles of eugenics and Social Darwinism, the utility of scouting to British boys lay in training the future generation of imperial servants.

Scouting in India was initially meant only for European and Anglo-Indian boys.¹⁰¹ The government's anxiety regarding inclusion of Indian boys was discernible considering that it was in the politically volatile year of 1908 when the Boy Scout movement made its earliest forays into Bengal. Against the background of growing youth radicalization most colonial officials were not in favour of encouraging Indian boys to actively participate in a physical training programs which imparted military training. The first Boy Scout group in the sub-continent constituted entirely of Indian boys was established in the Central Provinces in 1908 by Reverend Alexander Wood but was dismantled by 1910 owing to strict official opposition.¹⁰²

N. N. Bhose, a scout master from Bengal, observed in his semi-autobiographical account (published in 1965) on the Boy Scout movement in Bengal:

period of two years he was knighted by the British Government in recognition of his efforts with the Boy Scout Movement and received a Peerage from the King of England in 1929.

¹⁰⁰ N. N. Bhose, *A Review of the Early History of the Boy Scout Movement in Bengal, 1910-1923* (Calcutta: Sudhindra Mohan Chakravorty, 1965), 6.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Boy Scout Association in India. Year Book and Annual Report for Year ending September 30th, 1935* (Calcutta, 1935).

From the political point of view, Government of India became nervous to see this speedy growth of the [Boy Scout] movement fostering the spirit of unity and brotherhood amongst the youth of India and tried various ways and means to bring it under control... On one hand from the political point of view there was apprehension on the part of the British rulers lest our young men should be trained into revolutionaries with such training, and the consequent strict watch kept on my own personal activities and the movement as a whole; and on the other hand the suspicion of my own countrymen that this was one more clever stroke on the part of our rulers to tighten their grip on our servitude by such an insidious move. By preaching “Loyalty to the King” [as part of the Scout pledge] I was helping them in their nefarious task. There was opposition from the Congress.¹⁰³

Bhose further informs that the Education Department in Bengal swung into action with the rapid spread of the Boy Scout movement in the province in the 1910s especially since the government had little control over its functioning and expansion. To gain greater control over the movement the Education Department proposed that the Director of Physical Education would be the Provincial Scout Commissioner, a position hitherto held by the Governor of Bengal. Bhose suspected that this move was aimed at curtailing the powers of the Scout Executive and transferring authority instead to the Government.¹⁰⁴ He tried to oppose the measure by arguing that in England the British government did not interfere with the Scout movement and therefore a similar policy should be followed in India. Although he opposed government intervention, Bhose’s views did not stem from a radical critique of colonialism. He saw the Raj “benign” and to the Boy Scout movement as being a useful instrument for creating “loyal” and “useful” citizens for the British state: “I

¹⁰³ Bhose, *A Review of the Early History of the Boy Scout Movement in Bengal*, 24.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

pleaded that it was no good shutting our eyes to reality and living in a dreamland under the hallucination as if we were an independent nation. It was up to us to train our boys while living in bondage under the Britishers as good and useful citizens of our country.”¹⁰⁵

By 1911, the official position on Boy Scouts became much stringent. In his official correspondences, Education Department official H. Sharp wrote to H. H Risley in August 1911 that although the Boy Scout movement started in India without the government’s support, it was about time that the government intervened openly and discouraged the movement “lest by doing so they should stimulate emulation in schools for Indian boys.”¹⁰⁶ He further warned against the introduction of Indians to scouting as it “would probably lead to seditious associations in certain parts of India and cannot be seriously considered until educational and political conditions have considerably altered.”¹⁰⁷ Baden-Powell himself disapproved of the inclusion of Indian boys in the Boy Scout movement.¹⁰⁸ In India the Boy Scout Association followed a conscious policy of refusing admission to Indian boys. However, both Sharp and Baden-Powell categorically mentioned that there was no need to interfere in the chapter of the movement involving European and Eurasian boys.

Notwithstanding Baden-Powell and the colonial administration’s resistance to the inclusion of Indian boys, scouting did make inroads into Indian society by the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 28.

¹⁰⁶ L/PJ/6/1492, OIOC, Letter from H. Sharp to H. H Risley dated August 9th, 1911.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

early twentieth century as a result of interest shown by non-governmental organizations and individuals. In Bengal, scouting had aroused the interest of the intelligentsia and native army personals such as Lt. Col. Suresh Prasad Sarbadhicary who formed the first Bengalee Regiment which fought on the side of the British in the First World War.¹⁰⁹ By the end of 1914 Sarbadhicary along with other Bengali scout enthusiasts such as Rajendra Nath Mookerjee and Satyendra Prasanno Sinha formed the Bengalee Boy Scout Association.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile Alfred Donald Pickford, the District Commissioner of the Calcutta Boy Scout Association, began to introduce native boys to the Baden-Powell association without the approval of the government.¹¹¹ With encouragement from Pickford and Major Norman Ross (another scout enthusiast) the first Scout Troop for Bengali boys was started in 1916. However, due to the First World War, Major Ross was given orders from the British Army to disassociate himself from all scout work which acted as a disincentive to the movement.¹¹²

Finally, in 1917 the Government of India backed away from its hard stand and decreed that Indian scout movements should tow the line of rules as stipulated by the Baden-Powell Boy Scout Association and that they could be based in only a few

¹⁰⁹ Scouting for boys gathered momentum in other provinces in India too around this period. Important nationalist leaders such as Annie Besant and Madan Mohan Malaviya were involved in the movement. The earliest scout organization for Indian boys and managed by Indians was started at Theosophical Society societies in United Provinces in 1910 and 1913. Annie Besant started the Indian Boy Scout Association in Madras in 1916. Madan Mohan Malaviya and Hridaynath Kunzru formed the Seva Samiti Boy Scout Association in Allahabad in 1918.

¹¹⁰ Bhose, *A Review of the Early History of the Boy Scout Movement in Bengal*, 4.

¹¹¹ Carey Watt, "The Promise of 'Character' and the Spectre of Sedition: The Boy Scout Movement and Colonial Consternation in India, 1908-1921," *Journal of South Asian Studies* 22, no. 2 (1999): 47.

¹¹² Bhose, *A Review of the Early History of the Boy Scout Movement in Bengal*, 61.

selected schools that were under the direct control of local governments.¹¹³ This measure allowed the British colonial state adequate opportunities for surveillance and control over scouting activities but did not alleviate the official unease regarding the inclusion of Indian boys in the movement. For instance, General May, the Chief Commissioner of the Boy Scout Association in India, continued to oppose Pickford's drive to affiliate Indian boys to the Baden-Powell organization. The Association declined to support any initiative that involved the participation of Indians. It underlined that any support to such efforts would be limited to giving advice to scouting in government schools and only upon a formal request from the state.¹¹⁴ In 1918 Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, in a personal letter to Viceroy Lord Chelmsford wrote, "I recognize that the Boy Scout movement is not a government matter, but the dangers to be avoided and the objects to be gained are of such importance that I consider that government intervention is required."¹¹⁵ Eventually in 1921 as an effort to discourage seditious currents and "offer proper guidance," a plan was passed to integrate the Indian scout organizations with the Baden-Powell Boy Scout Association with the Viceroy as the Chief Scout and pledges of loyalty towards the British monarch as a mandatory ritual.¹¹⁶

The government response to the early years of scouting in Bengal reveals two significant aspects of contemporary physical culture. First, the exclusion of Indian boys exposes the differential stands the colonial state took in relation to physical

¹¹³ Watt, "The Promise of 'Character'," 51.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Watt, "The Promise of 'Character'," 53.

¹¹⁶ Madan Mohan Malaviya's Seva Samiti Boy Scout Association refused to affiliate with the umbrella organization due to its loyalist overtures.

culture. What was considered beneficial and important for “character building” for British boys in the metropole and in India, was not deemed safe enough or useful for Indian boys owing to the deep-rooted colonial anxiety regarding native rebellion. Second, it brings out the class factor that formed an important facet of the demilitarization of the youth on an everyday basis. The colonial practice of depoliticizing the young student, disbanding Indian soldiers and local militia, banning inter-regional movements of warrior saints also tie in with Satadru Sen’s argument that in the colonial imagination only selected “types” of Indians were considered suitable for martial sports and physical activities whereas the vast majority was excluded. While the colonial state encouraged Indian princes--who were seen as natural allies -- to take up “manly” sports such as shooting, hunting and train militaristically as part of their education at the Chief’s Colleges or in English public schools in Britain , the same was not expected of or encouraged for children of the non-ruling classes.

“Manly” sports formed a crucial component of princely education that aimed at their racial modification based on a colonial perception of the Indian ruler as idle, effete and despotic--traits which prevented them from providing able governance.¹¹⁷ Restoring back manliness to the princes was one of the goals of English education. While British demilitarization of Indian society struck foremost at the princely states after 1858, the procedure was crafted carefully to clip the rulers’ military strengths to render them so weak that although any rebellion on their part would become

¹¹⁷ Satadru Sen, “The Politics of Deracination: Empire, Education and the Elite Children in Colonial India,” *Studies in History* 19 (1, 2003): 23.

ineffectual, it still allowed them to provide military support for British colonial wars and expansion. Therefore the emphasis on the health and physical well-being of the princes was also tied to the colonial need to maintain dependable and strong military connections. Sen points out that education for the princes was driven by a strand of Orientalist imperialism which aimed at the restoration of a “fallen” Indian civilization to its former glory by reverting Indian princes to “a fantasy model of Indian kinship” and reversing their current state of decay and decline.¹¹⁸ These colonial concerns and political motivations explain why it was so crucial for the British state to emphasize inculcation of manly sports among the Indian princes on one hand but on the other, it did not deem it necessary that children of the non-ruling classes should be made conscious of the need for physical culture.

The colonial politics of demilitarization was met with further militant political agitations during the *Swadeshi* period in the form of nationalist secret societies. Sen Gupta’s autobiography provides an insider’s perspective into the significance accorded to physical culture in nationalist revolutionary societies such as the *Anushilan Samiti* during the period of the *Swadeshi* agitations. He recalls that the repressive policy of the colonial government and police in Bengal evoked a spirit of retaliation: “People had lost their timidity and inaction; there was a new emphasis on developing the strength of body and mind; a spirit of sacrifice was in the air.”¹¹⁹ In this project of national self-regeneration, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Ananda Math* with its militarist nationalist appeal was an inspiration to many young men and

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 25.

¹¹⁹ Sen Gupta, *Repentant Revolutionary*, 61.

women across Bengal, including Sen Gupta.¹²⁰ Sen Gupta provides a vivid description of *lathi* playing which was revived during the *Swadeshi* period in Bengal. He joined the Dacca branch of the *Anushilan Samiti* which was started by Pulin Behari Das, a prominent *lathi* player and teacher.¹²¹ While the cult of *lathi* play as a form of fencing had already been introduced in Sen Gupta's home town by expert practitioners from Dacca, it was at the *Anushilan Samiti* that he received elaborate *lathi* training. Pulin Das worked as an assistant in the laboratories at the Dacca College and received a lot of support from its college principal, Dr. P.K Roy in the perusal of his *lathi* training. He first learnt *lathi* in 1903 from a Bengali Muslim *lathiyar* (*lathi* expert) and later from Prof. Marwaza-- a magician and circus performer.¹²²

Sen Gupta provides a vivid picture of *lathi* training as followed in the *Anushilan Samiti*.¹²³ All members of the *Samiti* had to abide by the organization's rules that laid great emphasis on the purity of both the body and mind. The training of new members into the *Samiti* included teaching and practice of *lathi* and drill every afternoon. *Lathi* playing was also one of the vows all members had to take. As part of

¹²⁰ *Anandamath*, a Bengali novel authored by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and published in 1882- was an intrinsic symbol of the nationalist movement in India. It is perhaps most controversial for the famous hymn *Vande Mataram*- also independent India's national song- which is seen as antagonistic to Hindu-Muslim relations. For a more detailed discussion on *Anandamath* and Bankim see Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism* (London: Hurst and Co., 2001); Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Julius Lipner, *Anandamath or The Sacred Brotherhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For a history of the song *Vande Mataram* including its conception and how acquired different meanings across different periods of time in Indian nationalist thought see Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *Vande Mataram: The Biography of a Song* (Delhi: Penguin Books, 2003).

¹²¹ Contemporary critics considered Pulin Das as one of the best experts in *chota lathi* play in his times. His style of execution and teaching of *lathi* strokes was considered to be the most scientific and dexterous among his contemporaries.

¹²² Anilchandra Ghosh, *Vyame Bangali* (Dacca: Narayan Machine Press, 1928), 90-91.

¹²³ There were two styles of *lathi* play: the *bada lathi* which involved the use of long staff and daggers both for self-defence as well as for attacking and the *chota lathi* which was an imitation of the sword.

the *Swadeshi* fervor to shun foreign cultural imports, sports such as football and cricket were shunned and the revival of indigenous games including *lathi* and sword play was encouraged. Several of these practices were derived from indigenous military sports some of which had remained in practice during the nineteenth century. In Bengal the tradition of hiring *lathi* experts by zamindars for the protection of life and property and to extort rent was common since pre-colonial times. However, it had gradually fallen out of custom by the late nineteenth century.

Similar indigenous traditions of martial sports were practiced in other parts of India as well. As Dirk Kolff argues, military sports formed a popular and integral part of the daily life of the Indian village. For the Hindustani infantry soldier of North India-- who was often also a peasant during certain months of the year and constituted a major segment of the East India Company-- the roots of his martial tradition lay more in the small village or town of North India than in the army camp.¹²⁴ One of the most common indigenous sports in the North Indian countryside was *pata bilana*-- a form of sword fighting-- practiced mostly by weavers. *Rustam kbani*-- a form of stick fighting-- was popular both among lower class Hindus and Muslims.¹²⁵ Contemporary chronicles from the nineteenth century narrate how an expert in *pata bilana* could single-handedly prevent as many as ten swordsmen from approaching him. New techniques and nuances were introduced with the spatial movement of the infantry in the nineteenth century and an extensive dissemination of militaristic sports practices in regions where the soldiers relocated. Thus, as Kolff

¹²⁴ Dirk H. A Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 27.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

points out, it was not uncommon to find north Indian emigrants in Calcutta practicing martial sports from their villages.¹²⁶ The *Swadeshi* movement strove to revive these fading or lost traditions of indigenous physical culture.

Sen Gupta narrates how *Anushilan Samiti* members would gather for daily *lathi* practice. The training process was rigorous and neither frivolity nor flippancy was allowed. Punctuality, dedication and perseverance were expected from all participants and one had to have a strongly compelling reason to excuse oneself from the otherwise mandatory training.¹²⁷ As members progressed with the training, exercises became complicated putting to test the player's concentration, skill and physical stamina.¹²⁸ Apart from sword and dagger play, members of the *Anushilan Samiti* also had to learn military drill and marches. The militaristic nature of their training was unmistakable. Sen Gupta wrote, "Mock battles were organized from time to time, and we almost felt we were becoming soldiers!...As a result of so much military discipline and the administration of vows etc, there was a general feeling that we might easily be called upon to engage in something deeper in the national movement."¹²⁹ Due to their revolutionary methods, often involving violence, the *Anushilan Samiti* came under government surveillance, especially *lathi* play which, as Sen Gupta informs, members expected could be officially banned any day.¹³⁰ Here we see the molding of a masculine figure which is a complete anti-thesis of the Bengali male stereotype that Macaulay imagined. This is a body which, borrowing from Canning, had been re-inscribed as an

¹²⁶ Ibid., 29.

¹²⁷ Sen Gupta, *Repentant Revolutionary*, 62.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 63.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 65.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

organic vehicle for resistance. The *Swadeshi* movement strove to revive fading or lost traditions of indigenous physical culture. In the process the “martial” in the martial arts was no longer an art. It transformed to become martial weaponry-- militant, muscular, aggressive and (in its soon to be unleashed next phase of the 1930s) at war with the colonial state. Physical education meant to be a symbol of discipline became a symbol of “indiscipline.”

Conclusion

This chapter investigated the relevance of physical education as part of colonial school curriculum in Bengal and within a nationalist framework entrenched in the colonial racial stereotyping of *bhadralok* effeminacy. The transformatory role that colonial ideologies governing the implementation of physical education in schools played in disciplining the Indian child’s body was a way of discouraging students’ anti-colonial political activism in Bengal. Physical education could not have had the same or similar pedagogical utility for the colonial state in the context of India when compared to English public schools in Britain. While in the British public school the sports-field was the preparatory ground for military service and training for duty towards the Empire, such roles were not required of a physical culture movement for children in India nor were they promoted beyond a superficial level. The colonial state adopted a preferential outlook as far as inculcating physical culture and games in government schools was concerned. The exclusion of Indian boys from the Boy Scout movement illustrates this attitude. Sports and activities of militaristic

nature considered beneficial and good for British boys were seen as unnecessary for the Indian youth. The discouragement of a martial physical culture, particularly during the *Swadeshi* period, was part of the larger policy of demilitarization pursued by the colonial state since the Revolt of 1857. The demilitarization process, however, allowed princes and ruling elites to engage in certain kinds of militaristic sporting activities such as shooting and hunting since these were considered fit and an essential knowledge for the “natural allies” of the colonial state. The vast masses were however excluded from this measured encouragement.

Not surprisingly, physical culture and various forms of indigenous sports emerged as an important component of Bengali nationalist revival since the concept of an independent nation depended on the robustness and masculinity of its male population. For the *bhadralok* the child embodied a political space for contestation and remasculinizing the youth through a revival of long-forgotten and fading indigenous martial sports particularly *lati* playing, wrestling and swordsmanship. The nationalist revisitation of these indigenous sports did not stem only from the *Swadeshi* spirit of promoting regional and national cultural traditions. It also had a class factor at play whereby sections of the *bhadralok*, schoolboys and college students, for the first time, took up sports customarily associated with the “rustic” uneducated lower classes and rural martiality. Although the colonial state aimed at a total curbing over the spread of these sports among students through greater surveillance, it faced inherent tensions while implementing its program. What the colonial school did not provide, the inner domain of the home did. Autobiographies of educated (and elite)

Bengalis of the period indicate an active involvement of the family, often the father or a male relative, in encouraging physical culture among the children. Here, as Lila Majumdar shows us, girl children (atleast those of elite families) were expected to participate in this physical regeneration. In the revival of physical culture and sports a social premium was laid on masculinity as illustrated in all the autobiographies discussed in this chapter. In childhood memories an intellectually composed, morally restrained and physically well-built man stood out, inspiring awe and admiration from the authors. The emphasis on remasculinization helped to neutralize racially motivated myths of Bengali effeminacy and focused on children who were expected to conform to the requirements of their role as capable citizens of an independent India.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Child and the Nation in the Nationalist Pedagogies of Bengali Children's Literature

This chapter examines how the child became a subject of nation building and citizen formation in early twentieth-century Bengal. Education and the processes of learning for children were not simply limited to the colonial school. Rather, it extended into the space of the home as well which, in late nineteenth-century Bengal, had become the site for reform and nationalist activities. While Chapters Two and Three explored the education of children through the medium of the state sponsored school curriculum, in this chapter I examine the question: what were children reading *outside* the school curriculum? With the commercialization of print in the nineteenth century in India as the printed text transformed from being a cultural asset to a cheap and widely accessible consumer commodity, general readership also expanded.¹ In this context the development of the Bengali children's literature as a distinct genre from the late nineteenth century opened up the space for leisure reading to children (mostly) in Bengali *bhadralok* families. While formal education was an institutionalized

¹ Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007), 4.

Stark defines "commercialization of print" as a number of parallel and interconnected processes that shaped the regional-language book trade from around the 1840s: the introduction of new reproductive techniques and the ensuing shift to industrialized mass production; the decline in production costs and the concomitant possibility of the reduction in book prices, the transition from European to large-scale Indian ownership, agency, and investment in the book trade; the rise of the marketplace as a dominant force in literary culture; the emergence of commercial genres; and, finally, the creation of a new class of professional authors."

means for socializing children, as Krishna Kumar argues, another process of reconstructing and disseminating worthwhile knowledge was simultaneously undertaken by children's magazines and literature.² Children's magazines can serve as analytical tools to investigate an alternate and parallel form of learning-- a nationalist pedagogy and an informal schooling practiced outside the walls of the school. They provided supplementary reading materials in a language that was simple, amusing and appealing to most children. They not only became a forum where larger debates surrounding childhood were contested but also acted as active catalysts that shaped and conceptualized the metaphor of childhood. In the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Bengali children's literature was inspired by India's nationalistic mood and introduced the idea of the nation and nationalism to the young. Benedict Anderson argues that a nation is "an imagined political community and that communities are distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."³ This imagined community was envisioned through the medium of the written word and imagery of the children's magazine in Bengal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In this chapter I will examine the Bengali children's magazines as, what Sabyasachi Bhattacharya calls, a contested terrain. The contestation in the magazines lay in the realm of nationalist ideas and thoughts articulated in the literary space that challenged powerful colonial categories and myths, the colonial economic setup and ultimately colonial governance itself. We have to understand the children's magazines

² Krishna Kumar, *Political Agenda of Education* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991), 138.

³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1993), 6.

of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in relation to their location in the changing socio-economic context of the nation on one hand and power relations of colonial subjection on the other. I argue that the Bengali children's magazine provided an ideological technique for imagining the nation and building a political community from the late nineteenth century. As I will discuss in this chapter, the strand of nationalism promoted in the magazines (refracted through the mediations of their editors) primarily reflected mainstream Indian National Congress' ideologies and borrowed from its political programs such as the Moderate leaders' economic critique of nationalism, *khadi*, *satyagraha* (Gandhian principle of "truth force" or adherence to truth) and *swaraj* (self-rule). In a world that believed in and propagated Samuel Smiles' dictum that the individual was a physical embodiment of the nation⁴ and operating within a colonized space, children's magazines played a significant role in creating democratic citizens for the future decolonized state of India by transmitting the idea of nationhood in the minds of its young readers. As Partha Chatterjee argues, it is in its cultural form that "nationalism launches its most powerful, creative and historically significant project: to fashion a 'modern' culture that is nevertheless not Western."⁵ Children's magazines formed a part of what Dipesh Chakrabarty has described as "public narratives" that emerged both "as products as well as constituents of a modern print culture or a public sphere- in the European, or even Habermasian, sense" and as a consequence of an "encounter with

⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Difference—Deferral of a Colonial Modernity: Public Debates on Domesticity in British Bengal" in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California University Press, 1997), 376.

⁵ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 6.

a post-Enlightenment European imperial nation.”⁶ Prescriptive in nature, these magazines aided the endeavor of Bengali self-fashioning to generate a modern public life and modern future citizens.⁷

Shifting away from the psychoanalytical thrust of childhood studies in India, this chapter interrogates the relevance of the colonial child as a subject of historical inquiry.⁸ I highlight the role ascribed to the child as a participant in the nationalist project and explore the child’s voice in the historical process of nation-building by critically engaging with the letters they wrote to the editors. The chapter enters the world of the colonial child through Bengali children’s magazines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and examines their role in creating national identities and etching out the connection that children-- as responsible and patriotic future citizens-- ought to have with the colonized land of India.⁹ Bengali children’s magazine provides a valuable point of entry because it was a literary genre which primarily served as a site of alternative, non-institutionalized knowledge production *outside* the colonial school. An analysis of Bengali children’s magazines reveals three recurring themes which were central to the nationalist project of connecting children with the nation: a) the idea of the nation as an imagined community, b) the focus on the body and the related anxieties of masculinity and c) the intertwining of science and the nation. An examination of these themes reveals how from the late nineteenth

⁶ Chakrabarty, “The Difference—Deferral of a Colonial Modernity,” 374.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ I want to remind the reader about the discussion in Chapter One regarding the category of “the child.” I argued that in much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the category of “the child” was not naturalized, but one that was ambiguous with shifting meanings. As I discussed earlier, this was a period when the idea of “who is a child” itself was being interrogated and shaped.

⁹ The aim of this chapter is not to provide a comprehensive history of children’s literature in colonial Bengal.

century children became crucial in the larger scheme of reclaiming freedom and the lost land of India.

While I primarily focus on popular Bengali magazines published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries-- *Sakha* (The Friend; started in 1883), *Balak* (The Child, established in 1885), *Sandesb* (meaning both “News” and a popular Bengali sweet; started in 1913), *Maachak* (The Beehive; started in 1920) and *Amaar Desh* (My Country; started in 1920) -- I also draw from other popular children’s literature particularly *Thakumar Jhuli* (Grandmother’s Bag of Stories; first published in 1907) and *Thakurdar Jhuli* (Grandfather’s Bag of Stories; first published in 1907). The readership for the Bengali children’s magazine in the period of this study was rather fluid with the audience confined to not just both boys and girls but also adults.¹⁰ This indicates the broad breadth of readership of the magazines in terms of age. Adult readers could have been drawn to them due to the pleasure of reading the universally appealing themes published in the magazine pages-- old tales, riddles, puzzles and so on. Though the narrative in the magazines was simple and entertaining directed at children, the world they projected was a reflection of the adult colonized world. This could also perhaps explain why adults were interested in reading these magazines.¹¹ Finally, adult readers might have been drawn to the literature considering that many of the contributors themselves were the most renowned contemporary literary figures

¹⁰ After reading *Sakha* Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay congratulated editor Pramadacharan Sen for publishing a magazine which not just children but also grey haired older generation were delighted to read, suggesting a wide readership across the age spectrum. See Aruna Chattopadhyay, *Sakha, Sakha o Sathi* (Calcutta: Kallol, 2002), 1.

¹¹ Although the discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation it will be an interesting project to unravel in greater detail the issue of adult readership, the production and circulation of children’s literature both within Bengal and beyond among diasporic population.

(such as Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay) or political (such as Bepin Chandra Pal) leaders. Based on the letters written to the editors by children and the result of various competitions in which they participated-- where the names of children and their town or city were mentioned-- one can deduce that the catchment area of readership extended to beyond Calcutta to Dhaka, Faridpur, Shillong, Assam, Hazaribagh, Patna and even Bengalis settled in Varanasi, Kanpur and Lucknow. As the above list indicates the reader of the magazines was primarily the urban child.

Folk Culture, Swadeshi and Bengali Children's Literature

The proliferation of children's literature in Bengal emerged as a technique for imagining the nation in the nationalist political milieu of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Bengali intellectual elites, the main creators of the genre, were influenced by ideas of Romanticism. Bengali liberals, particularly the progressive *Brahmos* including the Tagores and the Upendrakishore Raychaudhury family, took the lead to create a literature specifically targeted to children.¹² The deepening roots of the idea of individualism associated with Romanticism found expression in Bengal during this period with the child "taken seriously for the first time."¹³ Some of the most popular children's books of the period-- such as Dakshinaranjan Mitra

¹² *Brahmos* were members of the *Brahmo Samaj*, a monotheistic movement that grew as an offshoot of Hinduism founded by Indian social and educational reformer Raja Rammohun Roy in 1828. The *Brahmos* rejected idol worship, polytheism, religious dogmas, doctrines of karma and the caste system and were influenced by Islamic and Christian precepts.

¹³ Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 131.

Majumdar's *Thakumar Jhuli* and *Thakurdar Jhuli* published in 1907-- emerged from traditional Bengali folklore, a growing *swadeshi* interest in local cultural and literary heritage and a desire to link the colonized present with the past. Since the Bengal "renaissance" was mainly an urban intellectual movement based in and around Calcutta, there was little engagement with the non-urban folk. With the rise of nationalism in the late nineteenth century and the *Swadeshi* fervor from 1905, fresh focus was put on the traditional and the question of what constituted heritage.

As early as 1883, Tagore began collecting and drawing literary attention towards an appreciation for age-old orally transmitted Bengali folk and epic traditions, including medieval *Vaisnava* lyrics and *Baul* songs. He founded the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat in 1894 to encourage other intellectuals such as Dinesh Chandra Sen and Jogindranath Sarkar to collect these "relics of national treasure."¹⁴ The collection of folk tales was driven by a celebration of "people's culture" which formed an integral part of the *Swadeshi* movement. The trend of collecting folklore, fairy tales and stories as a nationalist endeavor was prevalent in other parts of the world too during the nineteenth century-- the most famous example being the Grimm's fairy tales from Germany. Similar projects were undertaken in Denmark and Norway in the middle and late nineteenth century respectively. Kumkum Chatterjee argues that in the context of Bengal the collection of children's folktales was reminiscent of

¹⁴ Rabindranath Tagore, "Lokshahitya", *Rabindrarachnabali*, 10 (Calcutta: West Bengal Government Press, 1962), 148-168. This article was first published in 1907.

similar projects undertaken in Japan by folklorists such as Yanagita Kunio.¹⁵ On the question of a text like *Thakumar Jhuli* being modeled on a European parallel such as Grimm's fairy tales, Satadru Sen argues that such comparisons must be "treated with caution" because the nature of compilation in Bengal was not the same as in Germany or Denmark. He notes that, for instance, in *Thakumar Jhuli* the authorial voice of the compiler, Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar is not as assertive when compared to that of the Grimm brothers in the Grimm's fairy tales. Sen observes that by doing so, *Thakumar Jhuli* "locates the Romantic child within a mythical collective that resists historicization."¹⁶

As a manifestation of the *Swadeshi* spirit, within the first decade of its foundation (1894-1905), the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat serialized about three hundred rhymes that had been collected by experts from various corners of Bengal. The first collection of Bengali folk rhymes, *Khukumonir Chara* (Rhymes for Kids), was a compilation of four hundred rhymes collated and published by Yogindranath Sarkar in Calcutta in 1899. Tagore's emphasis on folklore heritage stemmed from his belief that folklores were the verbal creation of Bengali society passed through storytelling from one generation to the next orally. For him the preservation of Bengali folklores-- which themselves had helped forge a sense of community in the past-- was an essential ingredient in contemporary times too to build social cohesion and to

¹⁵ Kumkum Chatterjee, "The King of Controversy: History and Nation Making in Late Colonial India," *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 5 (2008), <http://www.historycooperative.org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/journals/ahr/110.5/chatterjee.html>.

¹⁶ Sen, "A Juvenile Periphery," http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.lib.umich.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v005/5.1sen.html

preserve collective memory and the national past. He considered these as national treasures that needed to be preserved and saved from being lost. This endeavor also became a subset of the larger drive to unearth and compile Bengali folktales with mainstream “high brow” Bengali literary culture. Another important factor in the celebration of the folk was the belief that folk tradition was indigenous and untouched by the “outside” or “new” influences of colonialism, westernization and industrialization.¹⁷

Compilations of age-old Bengali folklores, fairy tales and rhymes, particularly *Thakumar Jhuli* and *Thakurdadar Jhuli*, by Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar form the most popular series of writing for children in this context. In the preface of *Thakumar Jhuli* Tagore asked: “Is there anything else as immensely *swadeshi* as *Thakumar Jhuli*?”¹⁸ He lamented that the current state of affairs was such that even *Thakumar Jhuli* had to be published by the machinery manufactured in Manchester. He found it distressing that in his age foreign folk tales were the only recreational reading option available to children, a process that had completely “bankrupted” the *swadeshi* “Grandmother [storytelling] company.”¹⁹ Tagore’s observations were clearly directed at the educated-- possibly western educated-- elites who he felt were increasingly distanced from the national hereditary culture. These sentiments were expressed more vividly in his essay *Swadeshi Samaj* in 1904 where Tagore wrote, “Our hearts have signed the written bond of slavery to the whites, our refinements and tastes have been sold in the sahib’s

¹⁷ Chatterjee, “The King of Controversy,” <http://www.historycooperative.org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/journals/ahr/110.5/chatterjee.html>

¹⁸ Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar, *Thakumar Jhuli* (Calcutta: Mitra and Ghosh Publishers, 2006), 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

shop.”²⁰ He went on to add, “We regret the various forms of the drain of wealth²¹ from our nation, however if we lose the heart of our nation along with those very characteristics that are beneficiary for us to the foreign [British] government, we will have nothing to call our own culture. Is this any less an issue of regret than the monetary loss incurred through the drain of wealth?”²² Thus, for Tagore, the economic poverty of the country and the degeneration of the individual self (*atmik patan*) were equally disturbing and interrelated in some sense. For him a political freedom that came with the loss of the indigenous cultural heritage was of no value.

Imagined Community and the Idea of Nation

In this section I will explore how the literary sphere of the Bengali children’s magazines provided a space for nation building. I argue that children’s magazines became a technique through which the idea of an independent and democratic India could be inculcated onto the vision of the “new child” as the future citizen of the nation. As repositories of this new cultural model both girls and boys were important.

²⁰ Rabindranath Tagore, “Swadeshi Samaj,” *Rabindracharnabali*, 16 (Calcutta: West Bengal Government Press, 1962), 1187-95.

²¹ Dadabhai Naoroji was the first to articulate the drain of wealth theory in his book *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901) which was taken up by the Moderates to launch an economic critique of British colonialism in India. Naoroji argued that the poverty of India was a consequence of the “continuous impoverishment and exhaustion of the country” brought about due to the British rule. He contended that India’s poverty was not an inheritance of the past. Rather, it was a result of the drain of wealth which he estimated to be equivalent to “one half of government revenue, more than the entire land revenue collection and over one-third of India’s total savings.” The drain of wealth happened primarily as a consequence of the colonial policy of “home charges” which was based on the British manipulation of export surplus and having India pay for the administrative expenses in England. The drain also took place as a result of profits through unfavorable balance of trade, export of Indian raw materials at cheap rates to England and siphoning off of Indian revenue to pay salaries, pensions and savings of British officials. The Indian nationalist critique was that the wealth which was drained to England could have been used to contribute towards the economic development of India had it remained in the country.

This definition of the drain of wealth is primarily drawn from K. N. Panikkar, “From Revolt to Agitation: Beginning of the National Movement,” *Social Scientist* 25, no. 9/10 (1997): 36-37.

²² *Ibid.*

However, as I will show in this chapter, the roles ascribed to them were gendered. Pradip Bose notes that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the child was believed to possess distinctive attributes such as impressionability, vulnerability and innocence-- that required a “correct,” protected, and prolonged period of nurture.²³ This discourse was part of the larger project of creating the “new family” in Bengal in which children had a distinct role from adults and held the position of central importance at home.²⁴ Bose highlights that as social prestige began to be ascribed to good parenting, child rearing manuals gained increasing popularity. Much of the new discourse in these manuals that sought to redefine childhood emphasized on developing strategies for building the child’s character. These projects maintained that the child belonged to the nation and therefore they should be raised to serve the nation and bring glory to it. ²⁵ This thought is well depicted in *Stricharitra*, a popular Bengali domestic manual, where author Pratapchandra Mazumdar professed that “when the child is ruined, the family is ruined; when the family life crumbles, society decays, and when society is polluted, no nation can advance.”²⁶ The child therefore became the crux of the progress, wellbeing and pride of the nation. In the process, childhood was crucially restructured and redefined nationalism.²⁷

The project of creating the politically aware “new child” was carried out in multiple sites. I argue that from the late nineteenth century the Bengali children’s

²³ Pradip Kumar Bose, “Sons of the Nation: Child Rearing in the New Family,” in *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal*, ed. Partha Chatterjee (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 118.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Cited in Bose, “Sons of the Nation,” 123.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

magazine became a vibrant literary, political and public space where the creation of this “new child” was shaped. Although the first children’s magazine to be published anywhere in India was *Digdarshan* by John Marshman of the Serampore mission in 1818, the genre developed in Bengal only from the late nineteenth century. The individuals who founded the magazines were prolific personalities of their times. For instance Jnanadanandini Debi, Tagore’s sister-in-law who started *Balak* (1885), was one of the first women editors of an Indian magazine. She was one of the earliest women to break the orthodoxy of strict purdah restrictions and venture in public space. Pramada Charan Sen, a member of the Brahmo Samaj, edited *Sakha*. He was one of the first to underline the need to think about “our boys and girls” in the process of national regeneration.²⁸ A distinguishing characteristic of Bengali children’s magazines was that the authors who contributed to them also wrote for adults. Thus it was not unusual to see Tagore contributing to *Balak* and *Mauchak* or Bepin Chandra Pal writing about Surendranath Banerjea and economic nationalism in the pages of *Sakha*. Tagore’s most famous poems were first published in *Balak* in 1885, one of the foremost children’s magazines of the 1880s. Similarly, noted painter Nandalal Bose drew illustrations for Tagore’s popular children’s poem *Birpuruṣ* (The Valiant), published in *Balak* in 1885.

The content of children’s magazines was not determined at the editor’s desk alone but also shaped through public dialogue with the most creative contemporary authors, critics, illustrators and social and political leaders. The engagement of such

²⁸ Sisir Kumar Das, *A History of Indian Literature, 1800-1900* (Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1991), 253.

public personalities in the genre of Bengali children's magazines shows the kind of social premium placed on grooming the child during this period. Second, their involvement vested social, cultural and intellectual authority to the genre thereby providing it with a legitimacy that made the magazines appealing to the Bengali *bhadralok* readers. Finally, it is also indicative of the closely knit social network within which the Bengali children's magazine of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was generated. Often these networks were built through the process of acquiring knowledge, for instance, Upendrakishore Raychaudhury, a pioneer in Bengali children's literature, first started as an apprentice working in the office of *Sakha*.²⁹ Similarly in 1908 as a schoolboy Sudhir Chandra Sarkar (who would later establish and edit *Mauchak*) not only contributed to the Bengali journal *Bharati* but also had its editor Swarnakumari Debi as his mentor.³⁰

The social cohesiveness of these networks were also fostered through personal associations and friendships. For example, Sudhir Chandra Sarkar was closely affiliated with the Tagores and invited Rabindranath to write the title poem for

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Sudhir Chandra Sarkar, *Amaar Kaal Amaar Desh*, (Calcutta: S.C. Sarkar and Sons Private Limited, 1974), 18-19.

Swarnakumari Debi, a poetess, novelist, editor and social worker, was Rabindranath Tagore's elder sister. She edited the monthly journal *Bharati* (started in 1877 by Jyotirindranath Tagore) for over fifteen years (1884-94 and 1908-14). Although *Bharati* was a literary and cultural magazine, under Swarnakumari's editorship she gave specific priority to popular articles on science so that women, particularly those who did not speak English, had access to new scientific ideas and developments. She contributed several articles on geology in Bengali and was one of the first people to coin Bengali terms for scientific concepts with the aim of popularizing science. Along with her husband, Janakinath Ghosal who served as a Secretary to the Indian National Congress, she devoted herself to nationalist causes. Swarnakumari (along with Kadambini Ganguli) was one of the first female delegates to the Indian National Congress at the Calcutta session in 1890. In 1886 she started *Sakhi Samiti*, an association to educate and assist widows and orphans. For more on Swarnakumari Debi see, Bharati Ray, *Early Feminists of Colonial India: Sarala Devi Chaudhurani and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002) and Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha, *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present, Volume 1* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1991).

Mauchak's first edition. The magazine was christened by Rabindranath himself.³¹ It was his affiliation with *Bharati* that gave Sudhir Chandra the opportunity to build literary and cultural ties with Abanindranath and Sayendranath Tagore both of whom wrote for the magazine. The *Bharati* circle brought him close to the poet Kazi Nazrul Islam who too published poems in *Mauchak*.³² The social network between the literati that produced the Bengali children's magazines and political leaders was also forged through public discussions in the practice of the *adda*. The word *adda* refers to a place of gathering in Bengali (and in other Indian languages such as Hindi and Urdu).³³ From the early twentieth century the *adda* became a (primarily urban) public space where a modern Bengali reading public was produced.³⁴ It was the space where arts and literature was publicly discussed. The debates in *addas* significantly contributed to the dissemination of literature among the middle classes.³⁵ *Addas* were often nationalist in character and a forum through which political groups flourished in the urban setup.³⁶ In this context, Sudhir Chandra Sarkar is an important figure. In the early 1920s Sudhir Chandra's *addas* were well-known and frequented by eminent literary figures such as Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay³⁷ and Bibhutibhusan

³¹ Ibid., 68.

³² Sarkar, *Amaar Kaal Amaar Desh*, 110.

³³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Adda: A History of Sociality," in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 188.

³⁴ Ibid., 188.

³⁵ Ibid., 197.

³⁶ Ibid., 194.

³⁷ Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay was a powerful Bengali playwright and novelist. His most famous work includes *Badadidi* (Elder Sister, 1907) a short novel based on the theme of a widow in love; *Parineeta* (1914), *Devdas* (1917), *Charitraheen* (Characterless, 1917) and *Pather Dabi* (The Demands of the Road, 1926).

Bandopadhyay³⁸ as well as nationalists including Makhanlal Sen (head of the *Anushilan Samiti* after Pulin Das) and Tusharkanti Ghosh (an eminent Bengali journalist who campaigned with Gandhi).³⁹ These *addas* became the forum where the content of *Mauchak* was debated. The inclusion of political figures such as Makhanlal Sen and Tusharkanti Ghosh in a literary *adda* could be explained by the fact that Sudhir Chandra himself was deeply influenced by the *Swadeshi* movement since his own schooldays. Although not directly involved in the movement as a student activist, he secretly supported some of his classmates who were members of the revolutionary groups. This was the time when he was introduced to revolutionary nationalism by reading *Jugantar*, the mouthpiece of the *Anushilan Samiti*. At times he also skipped school to go to Alipur Court to see Aurobindo's trial in the Maniktala bomb case.⁴⁰ Through an examination of issues of *Mauchak* from the 1920s one can make the argument that the ideas of political activism which Sudhir Chandra inculcated as a schoolboy molded the content and tone of the magazine.

Both *Mauchak* and *Amaar Desh* were started to inculcate the spirit of service towards the country and to familiarize and map the nation onto the child. One of the earliest editorials of *Amaar Desh* illustrates this point:

With the arrival of a new year, we make new resolutions... We hope that after reading *Amaar Desh* you will offer yourself towards the service of our country; having learnt about the indigence of our birth land (*janmabhoomi*) and the progress made by foreign nations you will

³⁸ Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay was a Bengali novelist. He wrote several novels including *Pather Panchali* (The Song of the Road, 1929), *Aparajito* (One Who Cannot be Conquered, 1959) and *Aranyak* (In the Forest, 1976), among several others. He also wrote *Chander Pahaar* (The Mountain on the Moon 1937) which was published as a series in *Mauchak*.

³⁹ Personal correspondences with Sudhir Chandra Sarkar's grandson, Mr. S. Sarkar.

⁴⁰ Sarkar, *Amaar Kaal Amaar Desh*, 14-15.

realize that today almost every other community in the world is strong and independent but India remains in a state of beggary. Promise that you will save the country from this miserable state and adversity.⁴¹

The call to serve the nation was made to children of both genders. As the editor of *Mauchak*, Sudhir Chandra wrote: “You must always remember that whether it is a boy or a girl we all have to serve our country, otherwise there is no salvation for our nation.”⁴² The success of the equation between the magazine editor and the children in the creation of the “new child” and future citizen was dependent on a mutually constitutive role to be played by both parties. While the child reader was expected, encouraged and at times rebuked into practicing and enacting the role of a young patriot, the editor’s role was mostly pedagogical. In this context the magazines provided one of the earliest platforms to introduce children to complex nationalist concepts such as *swadeshi*, *satyagraha* (Gandhian principle of “truth force” or adherence to truth) and *swaraj* (self-rule) in a simple and entertaining way.⁴³ Their content was not just limited to literary genres usually meant for children such as short stories, poems and puzzles but also included short biographies of nationalist leaders such as Surendranath Banerjea, Gopalkrishna Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sarojini Naidu, Gandhi and Nehru. News of Congress rallies and the imprisonment of nationalist leaders kept the child reader updated about latest political developments not only in Bengal but also elsewhere in India. In this regard, as I will argue in this chapter, the strand of nationalism that emerges in the pages of

⁴¹ *Amar Desh* 1, no. 3 (1920): 30.

⁴² *Mauchak*, 3 (1922): 36.

⁴³ Satyagraha is a political philosophy conceived by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in the early twentieth century to oppose British colonial rule through non-violent resistance.

children's magazines under survey had an all-India focus instead of being narrowly regional.

One of the earliest references to nationalist ideas in a children's magazine dates back to 1886 when *Sakha* published an article on Surendranath Banerjea's imprisonment written by Bepin Chandra Pal.⁴⁴ The reference to Surendranath is significant since he was one of the key Moderate leaders who had an enormous following among schoolboys and the youth. Pal's article emphasized Surendranath's role as a leader of the youth. He praised Surendranath's oratory skills which not only evoked *swadesh* love but also stirred the youth into participating in the nationalist movement. In an era when the vernacular press became one of the most powerful critics of the colonial government it was important to socialize children to the mainstream nationalist press. In this context, Pal's article served to introduce its young readers to Surendranath's newspaper *The Bengalee* (established in 1879) as a forum where the indigenous voice could be and was being expressed. Here the reference to *The Bengalee* was pitched against pro-British newspapers particularly *The Englishman* in the process subtly guiding children to choose what they should read and what was to be read with caution. Pal himself was a great enthusiast about initiating the youth, particularly students, into the nationalist movement. Writing for children in *Sakha* could be seen as an earlier foray of his attempt at the politicization of young. As I will discuss in Chapter Five, Pal's role as a leader of student politics reached its apogee, a few years after this article was published, during the *Swadeshi* movement.

⁴⁴ Bepin Chandra Pal, "Surendrababur Karavas" *Sakha* 1, no. 6 (1886): 88-91.

During the *Swadeshi* agitations his influence was not just limited to Bengal but also extended to the Madras Presidency where he was instrumental in spreading *swadeshi* principles among students through his political speeches in the city of Madras and the districts of Vizagapatam, Godavari and Kistsna.⁴⁵

As the influx of cheaply priced British manufactured goods captured Indian markets, the political discourse of economic nationalism, need for self-sufficiency and the financially exploitative aspects of colonial rule emerged as repeated topics of discussion in most magazines of the period. Based on my research I argue that one of the dominant strands of nationalism visible in the children's magazines was economic nationalism. A replay of the economic critique of British colonialism, pioneered by Moderate leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji and Surendranath Banerjea, runs as a leitmotif through the magazines published in the 1880s continuing till the late 1920s. In this context the line of critique often overlapped with the mainstream nationalist position of the Indian National Congress. For instance, in the above mentioned *Sakha* article Pal strongly underlined the drain of wealth from India: “[The British] collect money from us but expend it according to their own will; we have no say regarding how this money should be spent. This has been extremely damaging for us... Since we have no rights to create our own laws the misuse of government funds has persisted. The British are foreigners who differ from us in language, religion, food and lifestyle. Therefore they fail to recognize our needs.”⁴⁶ The discussion on the economically exploitative aspect of British colonialism that Pal initiated continued in

⁴⁵ V. Sankaran Nair, *Swadeshi Movement: The Beginnings of Student Unrest in South India* (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1985). See in particular Chapter Two of this book.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

successive issues of *Sakha*. The aim was to unpack the fundamentals of the economic exploitation of the Raj as it unleashed down to the grassroots level. Here the folk again captured attention, albeit not in the Romantic imaginings of Tagore and Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar, but in its ugliness stripped to its economic bare-bones due to economically repressive colonial policies. In this conversation with the child reader, the distant world of the rural peasant and weaver had to be brought inside the homes of the urban *bhadralok* household not only to expose the child to its nation but also to shake up the majority of the middle class from its apathetic aloofness to the rural. This was achieved through the publication of a series of essays regarding how British manufactured clothes had destroyed the local economy and weavers of Bengal:

In the latter part of the eighteenth century as the political control over India came into the hands of the East India Company, they set up trading centers in those regions of British conquered Bengal which were renowned for their superior cloth weaving. Local artisans were employed in these centers to prepare clothes. The East India Company traded in the clothes manufactured in their factories and those woven by the local artisans; they shipped Indian manufactured clothes to their country and made huge profits. During this period Indian clothes were so popular [in Europe] that the East India Company and its merchants traded twenty five lakh rupees worth of *muslin*⁴⁷ and *jamdani*⁴⁸ clothes from Dhaka alone.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Muslin is a kind of finely hand-woven cotton fabric traditionally popular in Bengal, especially Dhaka. The finest quality of muslin is characterized by its extremely delicate and sheer texture such that it could be passed through the hole of a finger ring. As the article in *Sakha* described, it was “as fine as cobweb.”

⁴⁸ Jamdani is a superior variety of muslin traditionally hand-woven in Bengal, Dhaka being the most famous artistic center of its production. Jamdani is particularly famous for its rich, elaborate motifs and colored geometric and flowered patterns. It was under Mughals patronage that that jamdani craftsmanship attained its excellence and the finest specimens created.

⁴⁹ *Sakha*, 4: no.1 (1886): 126.

In the discussion of the present economy, the past again became crucial but this revoking was diametrically in opposition to the narratives of history I discussed in a Strachey or a Lee-Warner textbook in Chapter Two. The nature of nationalism visible in the surveyed children's magazines reflects a strand of *swadeshi* movement that the editors perceived to be inclusive. Discussions on the economic exploitation of weavers in Bengal led to a comparative exploration of economic conditions under the Mughal rulers and during the contemporary British rule. Mughal rulers are depicted as benevolent and patrons of the local economy. For instance, children were told how under the reign of Mughal emperor Jehangir trade in muslin prospered. Weavers earned Rs.400 for 1 unit of Dhakai muslin cloth but a paltry sum of Rs.15-20 under the British.⁵⁰ Children read that as a result of the declining market for muslin in India and the popularity of British mill manufactured cloth, the specialized art of weaving muslin was getting lost. In places such as Nawabpur, once celebrated as a center for the production of muslin clothes under Mughal patronage, only one artisan remained who practiced the skill of weaving the superior gossamer cloth.⁵¹ Such depictions of the Mughals questioned the very basis of Oriental Despotism and oppression on which British colonial rule was predicated and legitimized. By focusing on cotton the magazines drew a connection between the urban world of its child reader to the rural as an important site where nationalism unfolded. This pedagogical exercise meant having the child discover the economy of cotton cultivation and

⁵⁰ Ibid., 124.

⁵¹ Ibid.

production through several articles on weaving and sketches depicting the mechanism of the spinning wheel and the handloom.

Themes related to the rural economy of cotton cultivation, production, conditions of peasants and weavers dominated the discussion in much of the period from the 1880s. As we proceed in time and enter the twentieth century, particularly the 1920s, when clothing became a political symbol we find the new element of home weaving and *khadi* entering the equation. Much of this discussion was an influence of Gandhian political thought. Wearing of *khadi* was promoted through short stories featuring a protagonist-- often of a similar age as the reader and a patriot-- who would convince other characters in the story to boycott the use of British manufactured products and wear home spun clothes. Other articles discussed the economic principles behind the propagation of *khadi* by highlighting the unfavorable balance of trade plaguing Indian markets. In its first year of publication itself (1920), *Amaar Desh* published an article titled *Vanijyar Katha* (Issues of Commerce) underlining that British manufactured cotton cloth and yarn constituted over one-third of Indian imports from England. The dependence on foreign manufactures could be ended by popularizing the spinning wheel in every home.⁵² In this discussion clothes became a means to make a political statement against the colonial state. First, *khadi* symbolized traditional India thereby promoting the *swadeshi* principle. Second, by wearing *khadi* the flow of money spent on paying for imports

⁵² *Amaar Desh*, 1, no. 4 (1920): 15.

could be staunched.⁵³ Third, wearing handloom clothes held the promise of resuscitating ruined local artisans and weavers and reviving village industries.⁵⁴ Finally, wearing *khadi* in lieu of western attire visibly marked the body in social space as a site of protest. This was clearly, as Emma Tarlo notes, a manifestation of Gandhian thought where garments became a badge of patriotism.⁵⁵ In this context how the body was (or not) clothed became a visual marker of one's nationalist stand. As Tarlo has shown, with Gandhi's promotion of the spinning wheel the sartorial emphasis shifted from how to westernize one's dress to how to simplify and re-Indianize it.⁵⁶ Tarlo argues that Gandhi also gave a moral angle to wearing *khadi*. Thus while previously it was morally and culturally acceptable to dress to suit an occasion and wear western clothes for a western event or wear a combination of Indian and European clothes, Gandhi made it immoral to wear anything except *khadi* on an everyday basis.⁵⁷ The above discussion highlights the predominance of Congress ideologies and political techniques in the narratives of the nationalism in the children's magazines under survey. These discussions highlight the tensions within Indian nationalism where oppositional positions and views that questioned Congress political methods and ideological stands were not discussed.

In addition to the economic aspect of *khadi*, a larger connection was built between the child and the national leader through inspirational anecdotes and tales of

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 117.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 94.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

boycott. In one of the short stories published in *Mauchak* in 1922, children were informed about Nehru's imprisonment for a year and a half because of his campaign in Lucknow where he urged customers and shopkeepers at popular market places to practice *swadeshi*, wear *khadi* and not buy or sell foreign made clothes. In the article Nehru is projected as a role model to follow, as one who with the best of western education could have had an affluent life but decided to give up his government job as a barrister to boycott British governance and devote himself to the nation.⁵⁸ Tales of imprisonment of Surendranath or Nehru were meant to encourage children to take up the sacred duty of serving the nation: "One day you would sanctify the prison, one day you would bring an end of the nation's misery; one day you would bring pride to the Bengalis."⁵⁹ These ideas were reinforced in editorials often by posing questions such as, "If you wear *khadi*, you can staunch the drain of wealth from India. Are you all wearing *khadi*?"⁶⁰ The drive to popularize *khadi* involved its own dynamics of controversies. For instance during the Prince of Wales' official visit to Bombay in November 1921 Gandhi gave a call to burn foreign manufactured cloth. Though meant to be a peaceful protest meeting, mobs turned frenzied and *khadi* capped volunteers attacked people who wore foreign caps or head dresses. Many of these were Parsis and Eurasians, most of whom wore foreign cloth in European styles. This resulted in retaliatory counter attacks in the Anglo-Indian quarters of Bombay where those who wore *khadi* caps were forced to take off their caps and on refusal to comply were assaulted. The coercive aspects of these incidents and the associated

⁵⁸ *Mauchak*, (1922): 124.

⁵⁹ Bepin Chandra Pal, "Surendrababur Karavas," 91.

⁶⁰ *Mauchak*, 3, no. 8 (1922): 329.

violence troubled Gandhi himself who wrote disapprovingly about them in his writings.⁶¹ Thus *khadi* acquired different meanings for different social groups. But these challenges and differences of opinions were not discussed by the editors at all, in the process projecting a sanitized version of nationalism to the child reader.

The connection between the child and the nationalist leader as part of the imagined community was forged through stories and anecdotes from an entire spectrum of nationalist leaders ranging from the moderate Surendranath Banerjea to Nehru. The relevance of these discussions lay in the fact that nationalist leaders such as Surendranath Banerjea, Bipan Chandra Pal, Nehru and Gandhi could now directly gain entry into the home and engage with the child's world through the written word and images of the magazine pages. It is also important to highlight here that although there were sharp divisions within the different strands of Indian nationalism-- for instance ideologically speaking Surendranath (a Moderate) and Pal (an Extremist) were at diametrically opposite ends-- these differences did not creep into the magazine's content.

The strand of nationalism promoted in the magazine is one which did not simply focus narrowly on the regional. Rather, the editors ensured that it extended to the greater community of Indians as well as the global. This is evident from the emphasis laid on travel narratives. At a time when travelling was an expensive proposition, the magazines introduced the idea of India to their child readers by familiarizing them with the topography of the nation and thereby encouraging them

⁶¹ I cite these examples from Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 98. Tarlo discusses the controversial aspects of *khadi* in great detail particularly in Chapter Four of her book.

to develop a shared sense of an imagined community-- an Indian identity, connected to each other through its landscape on one hand and the written word of the magazine text on the other. In the special section on essay competitions and riddle solving, children were called upon to participate in the process of creating this imagined community. The most common themes for essay competitions included: "Which Indian town/city did you travel to during your summer vacations? Write to us about the local people, the streets, about everything you saw there. Which country did you visit, what did you see there?"⁶² "What are the various kinds of rice grown in Bengal? How many varieties can you name? When is each variety sown? When are they harvested?"⁶³ The essays were part of the nationalist project of expanding the idea of the home from the immediate geographical context of birth and dwelling to that of the national space. Through these narratives the nation was no longer an abstraction but a geographical configuration. In this context, the idea of knowing the country translated to be acquainted with its geography and territory.⁶⁴ While our understandings of the making of modern nationhood is premised on the idea of the imagined community, as Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet argues, imagination alone could not have sustained or made acceptable the idea of the nation.⁶⁵ She notes that to build a cohesive national community it was important for its members to be able to visualize the physicality of the nation. Through narratives of land and the visual images of the country's geography, therefore, the magazines made the nation more tangible, lending

⁶² *Mauchak*, 1, no. 1 (1920): 219.

⁶³ *Amaar Desh* 1, no. 2 (1920): 6.

⁶⁴ Sumathi Ramaswamy, "Maps and Mother Goddess in Modern India," *Imago Mundi* 53 (2001): 99.

⁶⁵ Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 7.

it materiality.⁶⁶ The imageries created by the written word (and by pictorial depictions in the 1920s) allowed the children to imagine the invisible: towns, people, cultures and national geographies they had never visited or encountered. It is this intertwining of the imagined and the material, suggests Kashani-Sabet, which helps to forge nations and shape patriotism.⁶⁷

Although children were being introduced to the national and the regional, the need for them to explore the indispensable link between India and the larger global world was also emphasised. The mood of self reliance and confidence was greatly strengthened by political events abroad. Japan, in particular, emerged as an icon of Asian modernity, a small non-white nation that had challenged and defeated-- a supposedly invincible European power-- Russia in 1905. Contemporary Bengali newspapers carried extensive reports of Japan. Efforts were made to collect funds for the Japanese who were rendered sick or injured in the war by organizing entertainment shows for the public at the City College and Overtoun Hall in Calcutta. Some enthusiasts even nicknamed their children after Japanese leaders.⁶⁸ The larger excitement that Japan's victory generated among the Bengalis can be seen in the contemporary Bengali children's magazines as well. Stories abound of the spirit of nationalism and discipline among Japanese children who were upheld as models for Bengali children to follow. One manifestation of the Japanese influence was seen in the growing interest in ju-jitsu, the Japanese system of physical training practised by

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁸ Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908* (Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1973), 28-29.

the Samurais as a form of athletic exercise. As I noted in Chapter Three Tagore introduced ju-jitsu and judo in Shantiniketan as part of the curriculum. Ju-jitsu allowed scope for personal initiative because it offered an endless range of movements which were not tightly defined. The inculcation of this control helped to build a habit which could then be extended to other more important aspects of life, including self-control. The spirit of internationalism in the magazines and a desire to connect children to the larger outside world remained a constant endeavour. The editors of *Amaar Desh* note that its founders wanted to start a magazine in Bengali which would introduce young boys and girls to various global cultures and ideas in a captivating manner to bring them at par with children in other countries.⁶⁹

The above discussion compels us to revisit and problematize the rigid binary of the public and private that Partha Chatterjee has theorized.⁷⁰ Chatterjee was the first to highlight the dichotomy of social space into the uncolonized, spiritual and superior inner world of the home (*ghar*) versus the colonized, material outer world (*bahir*) which was contaminated through western contact. Therefore, he argued, it became imperative for the nationalist project to preserve the purity of the uncolonized, spiritual space of the home in the process subjecting the Bengali *bhadramahila* to a new patriarchy. Although Chatterjee's arguments were formulated in the context of the nationalist resolution of the "women's question" in India, they are important for my project to situate the children's magazines in relation to the larger world outside the "home." Here I am using the word "home" in two senses. First, I

⁶⁹ *Amaar Desh*, 4, no. 1 (1923): 200.

⁷⁰ See Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments*, 6-7.

use “home” to mean an abode or a place of dwelling. The second usage of the term is provincial and extends to the region of Bengal as “home.” As I have shown in the above pages, the narratives of nationalism in the magazines were deeply inflected by the colonial, the national, the global and the public. Through such discussions Bengal (the “home” as the provincial) was connected to the nation and the global (i.e. the “outside”). In this discourse the regional specificities of Bengal were self-consciously mapped on to the larger context of the nation-- India. By doing so provincial/Bengali nationalism was tied to and became a part of larger Indian nationalism(s). Secondly, it made the home/private (as the location for the creation of the “new child” and the space where most children would read the magazines) also the political. I argue that the boundaries between the home/private and the outer world/public were porous. Domestic spaces, traditionally imagined as exclusively private, become intertwined with public politics especially when the children’s magazines became one of the carriers of nationalist ideas (mediated by the editor) into the inner spaces of the home. Moreover, although the magazines targeted the home as the child’s world, their creation was also shaped through discussions in the public. This was achieved, for instance, through social networks and (in the specific case of *Mauchak*) through editor Sudhir Chandra Sarkar’s literary *addas* as I discussed above. The domestic space was thus inevitably a public space as well.

Nationalism, as it emerged in the magazine pages, was not a given constant but a category shifting in its meaning and at times ambivalent in the manner it unfolded. As we proceed from the late nineteenth century towards the 1920s, the

shifts in the narrative of nationalism are also visible. For instance in some articles published in the 1880s on one hand we find resonances of the economic critique of colonialism, we can at times also find a reflection of an acceptance of the benevolence of British rule. For instance, in an article published in *Sakha* in 1884 children were told that the British rule was temporary and would last until Indians were well trained in democratic governance. The author assures that there was more to British rule than just being all about looting. Why else would the British have introduced measures that benefitted the people of India? In an explanation that echoes what Lee-Warner would articulate some years later in his textbook *The Citizen of India*, the reader is recounted the examples of this benevolence--the introduction of the railways and the postal system.

Till the time the people of India become deserving enough to protect the country, the British would continue to rule us for our welfare. When-- like the English-- we cultivate physical might, mental strength, become competent and responsible; when we become valorous enough to be unafraid of sacrificing our lives for the nation, follow the path of truth undeterred;...and when Hindus, Muslims, Christians and all religious groups learn to coexist as one people, the English would return back to England.⁷¹

In the above quote the position of the English rulers is supreme. As role models, they are deemed to be in possession of qualities that the Indian needs to aspire to but has still not acquired satisfactorily-- “physical might, mental strength, become competent and responsible” and most importantly the ability of self-governance. In a true James Mill characterization, the English are placed higher in the

⁷¹ *Sakha*, 1884: 4.

civilizational ladder by virtue of which they can lead (a role that the editor of *Sakha* has accepted them to play). Such ambivalence can be explained by the fact that the author perhaps reflected the Moderate ideology of the early years of the Indian National Congress and that the demand for complete independence would come only decades later in 1929. Enmeshed in the author's faith was the internalization of the myth of racial superiority and divine intervention for we are told that races which were "higher" and more progressive had been entrusted by God to uplift people of inferior or "low" races.⁷²

Such characterizations/narratives expose, what Partha Chatterjee calls, the "contradictory elements in nationalist discourse."⁷³ He notes that nationalist texts produced a discourse in which, even as they challenged the colonial claim to political domination, they also accepted the very intellectual premises on which colonial domination was based. The inherent contradiction in nationalism lay in the fact that it reasoned within a framework of knowledge whose representational structure corresponded to the very structure of power nationalist thought it sought to repudiate.⁷⁴ In this context nationalist thought accepted and adopted an essentialist conception based on a dichotomy between the "East" and "West," ideas of "progress," "rationality," and science. Nationalism was caught up in a thematic relationship with colonialism. While it critiqued the problematic of nationalism it never did so for the thematic of nationalism. However, this does not mean that the

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 30.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 38.

relation between nationalist discourse and forms of modern western thought was not a simple relation of derivation because nationalist thought was deliberately selective and did not adopt western thought in their entirety. ⁷⁵ Chatterjee notes that even when nationalism was derived from western thought it was transformed to something new to be deployed for anti-colonial purposes. The “moment of departure,” in early nationalist consciousness was marked by the awareness and acceptance of the inherent differences between the “East” and the “West” where the “West” was seen to have superior culture but only partially (primarily in the realm of technology-- modern industries and science) while the “East” is spiritually superior.⁷⁶ In the *Sakha* article quoted above we find an expression of this “moment of departure” where the colonialist became the role model to be emulated. The shift away from this line of thought is visible in Bepin Chandra Pal’s article in *Sakha* discussed earlier. In the article Pal too accepts that colonial rule did bring benefits to India, however he questions the perceptions of the benevolence of the Raj by stating that as the Indians gradually become aware of the true nature of the British rule they had increasingly started making demands for self-governance in the process questioning the legitimacy of colonial rule.

Though the leitmotif of nationalism ran through the volumes of the magazines, at times the tension between the implementation of a nationalist lifestyle and the realities of everyday sustenance became very visible. The editors of *Amaar Desh* emphasized the need for children to be proficient in various academic

⁷⁵ Ibid., 41-42.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 50-51.

disciplines, essential for successfully passing the fiercely competitive Indian Civil Service Exams (ICS). Since the average age of the targeted reader was 13-14 years and one could appear for the ICS exams in 1920 only before the age of 21, there was very little time to waste. The point of reference and competition for the Indian child was the British child who was always the strong contender for the ICS post. European children are also posed tantalizingly both as a threat as well as models to draw inspiration from. The young readers were told that children in Europe were trained to take up job responsibilities at a very young age: that they not only start earning their pocket money early on but also provide financial support to their families.⁷⁷ Thus, surprisingly enough the idea covertly promoted is that knowledge acquired needs to be utilized to gain entry into those very structures of the state that the nationalist agenda sought to boycott.

The Child's Voice

The new democratic impulses of an envisioned independent India found reflection in the "letters to the editor" column of these periodicals where one can discern an active interjection by children to determine the magazine contents and sometimes demand a space for their self expression. One key way in which editors bridged the age hierarchy was to address the young readers as "my little friends" thereby assigning them a status with some degree of importance. Although the traditional paternalist approach continued to be voiced by the editors, at the same

⁷⁷ *Amar Desh*, 1, no.1 (1920).

time they had to provide enough leeway to the targeted young readers to express their opinions: “*Amaar Desh*...is being published especially for you... Write to us informing what you enjoy, what you would like us to carry in this magazine. Since this magazine belongs to you, it will function according to your wishes.”⁷⁸

Children too took advantage of the opening up of a new space for self expression. Very importantly, this opened up the space for girls to participate publicly in the national space by sending their entries to essay writing, short story writing and puzzle solving competitions periodically organized by the magazines. For instance, the winners of a particular essay competition on holiday travel included two girl readers: Sushmita Debi who wrote an essay on her travel to Rangoon “*Rangoon Bhraman*” and Karunakana Gupta’s essay “*Grishmer Chut?*” (Summer Vacation) which indicates not only a healthy female readership but also that in an age where female literacy was very low, girl readers do not come across as hesitant participants in creative writing. Girls not only sent their written entries but also competed with young boy readers and won essay writing and riddle solving competitions. Thus in the pages of the magazines one gets to see *bhadralok* girls who were beneficiaries of the efforts of the social reform movement of the nineteenth century that promoted female education. In this context I would also argue that while for young girls the scope for direct participation in nationalist activism outside the home was still restricted in the early twentieth century (unlike schoolboys who were more visible in political agitations in the public realm as I will discuss in detail in Chapter Five), it

⁷⁸ *Amaar Desh*, 1, no. 1 (1920): 7.

was through their reading and writing that girls could participate in the larger nationalist movement.

Children made demands of what they wanted to read. Their demands not only reflect how they had been successfully persuaded by adults to articulate their roles as nationalist beings but also how children at times could dictate editors' policies regarding what should be published. A survey of the letters written to the editor from the 1920s reveals that several children wrote to the editors demanding them to publish more information about the freedom struggle and nationalist leaders. A young reader, Buddhadeb Basu, from Noakhali wrote, "*Mauchak* publishes a variety of stories and essays however the real issues, i.e. news about the country is missing. The importance of learning about loving one's country is so essential that I do not need to add anything new to that fact."⁷⁹ For this child, his future role as a citizen of India had already been chalked out in his mind. He goes on to write, "When India gains self-rule, it is us the young boys and girls of today who will maintain the country's pride. It is on us that the future [of the nation] lies."⁸⁰ Referring to this letter in the following issue a girl reader, Gauri Debi from Patna, wrote supporting the demand for including more information about the country since she too longed to learn more about India. She suggested that more pages should be added to *Mauchak* so that these new themes could be included along with the existing subjects.⁸¹ This cross referencing to each other's letters in its own peculiar way aided the formation of an imagined community of young readers expressing solidarity

⁷⁹ *Mauchak*, 2, no. 3 (1921): 516.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Mauchak*, 3, no. 1 (1922): 36.

towards a common cause. In response to the continuous stream of such letters, *Mauchak* introduced a new section titled *Desher Katha* (News from the Nation) that carried exclusively news about the latest political and nationalist developments happening all over India. Similarly in the early 1920s several girl readers wrote letters to the *Mauchak* office complaining that the magazine had never published any article specifically on exercises for girls. To accommodate their requests *Mauchak* not only apologized but also published a series of essays on exercises for girls in the subsequent issues from 1927.⁸² I will revisit this point in more details in the next section.

In an essay writing competition titled “What do I aspire to do when I grow up,” a young girl reader Amiyabala Debi wrote that she wanted to be a “good girl,” respect elders and be obedient. In the subsequent issue, her ideas came under severe criticism from a male reader, Annadashankar Ray, who having passed the Indian Civil Service (ICS) exams was undergoing training. Ray condemned the feminized child for being like a “mechanical doll” too eager to be a “second edition” of her mother when she grew up. He wrote, “To be a true human being one should be guided by one’s own mind, not by what ten other people dictate you to do even if they are your elders.”⁸³ While Ray’s interjection was atypical since he was an adult responding in a children’s magazine, yet it is crucial to bring up his reference since his views would have been read by younger readers (and possibly other adults too). Secondly, being an ICS probationer he was the very role model that many middle-class children aspired

⁸² *Mauchak*, 7, no. 3 (1927): 448.

⁸³ *Mauchak*, 8: 12 (1927): 555.

to be when they grew up. Ray's ideas were sophisticated for the children of his time. Predicated on modernity and individualism his was a highly non-traditional stand in terms of expectations from a child of either gender. What made his position truly unique was in his encouraging a female child to question the conventional adult dictum of femininity. Ray's ideas were also antithetical to the ideals of domesticity that were promulgated by most contemporary Bengali children's magazines- a point I shall discuss shortly. In her essay Amiyabala had also suggested that she wanted to collect donations from abroad to spend on social welfare schemes in India. Ray condemned the idea of social restructuring in India with the aid of foreign donations since it was akin to putting up the nation's self respect for sale. This was also an idea that went against the *swadeshi* spirit of self-reliance. He pointed out that at a global level India was taunted and shamed due to its dependence on missionary charity. Therefore instead of being dependent on external aid, Indians-- particularly students-- should learn to be hard working and self reliant.⁸⁴

Body, Nation and Anxieties of Masculinity

In this section I seek to explore how the male body was evoked in the nationalist imagination, to borrow from Canning, as a signifier and metaphor of the nation. Most academic scholarship on colonialism and nationalism has focused on the female body. In the colonial imagination the colonized land has often been imagined within the sexual metaphor of a virgin female body alluring the male colonist for

⁸⁴ Ibid.

exploration. The most vivid of such representation is perhaps the famous painting of Amerigo Vespucci's discovery of America where America is shown as a naked woman inviting the male colonist gaze. The body of the native woman as a metaphor of the colonized land posed a sexual threat and distraction. The female native body also provided a penetrative point of entry into indigenous culture, local customs, colonial law and debates over what constituted "tradition," morality and religion.⁸⁵ On the other hand scholars have shown how the female body was deployed as an allegory of the nation and mapped on the visual depictions of India as a woman/goddess.⁸⁶ While the interplay between the female and the nation/colonized land is well explored, how can we extend the scholarship to interrogate how the *male body* figured in nationalist discourses and imagination?⁸⁷

In Chapter Three I discussed how Bengali nationalists laid premium on a disciplinary reform of the body to challenge colonial stereotypes of Bengali effeminacy and produce a healthy and remasculinized identity. I also noted that the focus on the corporeal body resulted in a surge of interest in sports and physical culture around the turn of the twentieth century in Bengal. In these discussions as the intimate relationship between masculinity and the nation was highlighted, the need to

⁸⁵ For instance see Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions: The Debate on *Sati* in Colonial India," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), 88-126.

⁸⁶ For instance see Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Ramaswamy, "Maps, Mother/goddesses and Martyrdom in Modern India," *Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no.3 (2008): 1-35; Ramaswamy, "Visualizing India's Geo-body: Globes, Maps and Bodyscapes," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 36, nos. 1-2 (2002): 157-195; Ramaswamy, "Body Language: The Somatics of Nationalism in Tamil India," *Gender and History*, 10, no.1 (1998): 78-109.

⁸⁷ Among scholars who discuss the intersection between the male body and nationalism see Joseph Alter, "Celibacy, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Gender into Nationalism in North India," *Modern South Asian Studies*, 53, no. 1 (1994): 45-66. In academic discussions on the native male body, Gandhi has drawn significant attention. See particularly Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

regain physical prowess became a highly visible concern in the earliest Bengali children's magazines.

One of the earliest magazines to focus on physical culture and the body was in 1885 in *Balak*. The magazine was established by the Tagore family who were prominently involved with the Hindu Mela where inculcating and displaying Bengali physical prowess was high on the agenda. Discussions emphasizing physical culture became particularly dominant in the 1920s. Most children's magazines of this period published a series of articles emphasizing the benefits and relevance of physical culture and maintaining good health, Bengali bodybuilders and sports such as boxing, cricket and football. Most articles began by lamenting the demise of the tradition of physical culture prevalent in the Bengal of yesteryears and the loss of her "brave sons":

There was a time when we had a tradition of physical culture in our country which today is limited to only a few geographical pockets. Today there are so many forces working against this tradition that a mere mention of physical exercises generates panic. There was a time in Bengal when almost every household could boast of a powerful male, but that seems like a dream today. ⁸⁸

The big question was "Where are those brave Bengali men?" *Mauchak* pointed out that physical culture was increasingly seen as a rowdy, lower class pastime something which the upper class Bengali wanted to steer clear of. As a result Bengalis were considered as sub-humans by foreigners (particularly the British) and faced insult everywhere outside the home. What made it worse was that the Bengali male suffered

⁸⁸ *Amaar Desh*, 2 (1921): 433.

these abuses without posing a challenge. This description made the connection between Bengali effeminacy and the resultant colonized state very stark. Joseph Alter's observation about the body as the nation and the nation as the body can be seen at play in these discussions.⁸⁹ Physical culture in this context involved recruiting the young to forge a community in service towards the nation.

Both *Mauchak* and *Amaar Desh* carried several articles on Bengali bodybuilders to emphasize the possibilities of building a virile male body. The idea of a strong nation was premised on the conviction that its security and resilience would be safeguarded by strong and healthy male citizens-- not only militaristically in the battleground but equally importantly in the public sphere too. The native body thus became a political space where the discourse on nation building was shaped. The most popular discussions surrounded famous Bengali bodybuilders of the period, in particular wrestler Bheem Bhavani, who became the embodiment of Indian nationalism.

Bengali students are the hope and faith of Bengal's future. If along with education they also engage with physical exercises, the ill-repute of the [physical] powerlessness of Bengalis will be erased very soon and the life of the Bengali community will be newly created. The malaria ridden, emaciated form of the Bengali will be transformed to a more human figure... May a Bheem Bhavani, Basantkumar and Ramamurthy be born in each Bengali household.⁹⁰

The Bengali child was made a target for this discourse since the pressures of academic life within the colonial school and university system were often held

⁸⁹ Joseph Alter, "Body, Text, Nation," 21.

⁹⁰ *Amaar Desh*, 6, no.7 (1926): 250.

responsible for contributing to a loss of health (and by extension manliness). This was a constant anxiety expressed in letters by young children as well as in personal memoirs where school memories were revived. Nagendranath Sen Gupta, a young student revolutionary during the *Swadeshi* agitation, wrote in his autobiography:

The education imparted by our rulers [the British] made us mere imitators and *robbed us of initiative and manliness*. History had been falsely presented to our children so that when they grow up they did not possess a correct perspective. We were brought up in insufficient knowledge of our own culture, literature and contributions to arts and science. It was imperative that the system of education should be changed. Nothing could be done to the system which was part of the Government; therefore, the only course was to set up a parallel system which would cater for the patriotic youths and guide their future.⁹¹

Sen Gupta's fears were not entirely without a basis. The Calcutta University Commission Report of 1916, based on a health survey of one thousand school boys in Calcutta, showed that a Bengali boy of 16 years of age was physically inferior in every respect to a British boy or an American girl of the same age.⁹² The British education system with its extreme focus on appearing for and passing examinations was seen as debilitating to the health of Indian students. A child's formal education career would begin at the age of six and continue till his early twenties during which period the grind of examinations hardly left him with any time for physical exercises. Similar anxieties also became the catalysts for the magazines to take up the task of ensuring that children did not neglect exercises. Children were reminded that apart from formal education if they made physical exercises a part of their daily routine, the

⁹¹ Sen Gupta, *Repentant Revolutionary*, 46 (emphasis mine).

⁹² *Calcutta University Commission Report*, Vol. XII (1916): 135-139.

“disgrace” of the physical powerlessness of Bengalis could be erased very soon and the emaciated form of the Bengali would be transformed to a more human figure. The magazines published articles that included fantastic descriptions of the power of these body builders. With the development of printing technology and photography, visual images of Bengali wrestlers performing super-human acts were often published to generate an impressive effect on the young readers’ minds. These visual images were significant to publicly demonstrate the result of a carefully cultivated health culture. The visual display of a man with big muscles who is powerful enough to balance an elephant on his chest, lift heavy weights, bring moving cars to a halt, break an iron chain or who had conquered the perils of illnesses, would have been much more effective in inspiring the young to emulate him compared to lectures and books on the preservation of health or on the need for exercises.

In almost every popular children’s magazine, the Bengali wrestler Bheem Bhavani was projected as an ideal for young boys to follow. Most common stories of Bheem Bhavani narrate how he, as one who metamorphosised from being an emaciated, disease ridden body to be an example of the virile, masculine and physically strong body that every [male] Bengali could potentially be.⁹³ Bheem Bhavani’s personal journey of this bodily transformation resonated with a similar journey that the nation needed to undertake to shed the shroud of economic and political powerlessness and achieve *swaraj*. His corporeal metamorphosis did not begin until the day he was mercilessly thrashed by a bully of about the same age as

⁹³ The author informs that Bheem Bhavani was a sickly, irritable child suffering from malaria and occasional fever who had neither a healthy body nor mental peace.

him. The resultant self-loathing and exceeding peer disgrace that ensued turned him towards a period of introspection and finally at the doorsteps of Khetu Guha's *akbara* in Calcutta where several renowned contemporary Indian body builders had been trained. Bheem Bhavani's boyhood body thus became an "embodiment" of the effeminate land of Bengal which had a promise of regeneration and the capability to supersede in physical prowess the strength of the oppressive bully, the colonial state. It was also a story that most Bengali boys and young men could relate with too.

Here it will be useful to discuss the visual representations of Bheem Bhavani himself in the magazines. In all photographs he assumes an assertive posture before the camera with an explicit display of confidence, defiance and pride. He is mostly shown standing with his legs apart and arms folded across the chest to emphasize his bulging arm muscles. Most of his shots were taken from the low angle where the camera is placed below the eye level looking upward, almost replicating the gaze of a child looking up with awe at a gigantic man. The low angle shots expose his full body for public visual consumption. The camera angle seems to have been deliberately chosen to accentuate his towering height, in the process making his body appear bigger and stronger. Through these images Bheem Bhavani was projected as the visual embodiment of the merits of physical education for the Bengali male body. This was a body publicly celebrated for the possibilities that masculine health and strength held. It was also evident that he achieved expertise in his art through dedicated and rigorous training thereby serving as an example of discipline and order for young children to emulate.

Thus Bheem Bhavani's body became, as Kathleen Canning has argued, the "site for inscription/reinscription", of "encounter and interpretation" and "agency and resistance."⁹⁴ By focusing on Bheem Bhavani, the magazines highlighted the power inscribed on and proliferated through his body not only through the modes of discipline and self-regulation but also through the rejection of the normative colonial stereotyping of Bengali effeminess. If the body is the strategic target of systems and codification, supervision and constraints, it is also because the body and its capacities exert an uncontrollable and unpredictable threat to the systematic mode of social organization. Thus the body provides a "basic political resource" in the struggles between the dominant and less powerful groups.⁹⁵ The body while being a site of knowledge and power therefore also becomes a site of resistance. To the innumerable young readers, Bheem Bhavani was seen as this resistance. The discussion on bodybuilding also became a means through which children were introduced to the *Swadeshi Mela* where many of the Bengali wrestlers participated. It was in the *Swadeshi Mela* that Bheem Bhavani was given the epithet of "Bheem"-- the mythological character from the *Mahabharata* known for his physical strength.

The focus on body building and Bengali body builders was a manifestation of resistance at multiple levels. First, the growing trend of physical culture in Bengal, particularly from the early twentieth century, emanated as a component of the *Swadeshi* and anti-partition of Bengal movement. As part of boycotting everything

⁹⁴ Kathleen Canning, "The Body as Method? Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History." *Gender & History* 11(1999): 499-513.

⁹⁵ Stephanie Camp, "The Pleasures of Resistance: Enslaved Women and Body Politics in the plantation South, 1830-1861," *Journal of Southern History* 67, no.3 (2002): 538.

foreign, indigenous forms of martial culture and sports were promoted of which bodybuilding and wrestling formed an important aspect. The intimate engagement of children's magazines with physical culture has to be understood against this political backdrop. Secondly, the magazines' emphasis on regenerating the body right from childhood can be seen as a method of interrogating and rejecting the Macaulayan stereotype of Bengali effeminacy. Finally, the magazines became yet another site which challenged the conscious policy of the British colonial state to demilitarize Indian society followed systematically since the Revolt of 1857. As I noted in Chapter Three, scholars such as Rosalind O'Hanlon have illustrated how this trend of demilitarization led to the decay of local cultures of indigenous martial arts and sports. O'Hanlon has shown that even prior to 1857 the East India Company struggled to successfully accomplish the demilitarization of Indian rural societies, for instance, by criminalizing the geographical movement of Shaivite and Vaishnavite warrior monks and banning their participation in the militia or war.⁹⁶ The Arms Act of 1878-- which banned the manufacture, sale or possession of any arms and ammunition by Indians without a license-- was another unpopular means by which the British sought to demilitarize Indian society. Thus by emphasizing on bodybuilders *Mauchak* and *Amaar Desh* not only defied British attempts at demilitarizing Indian society but also embarked on a political project of the remasculinization of the youth. It is equally significant to note that body building had been traditionally considered as a skill befitting the lower classes and castes. By

⁹⁶ Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Military Sports and the History of the Martial Body in India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50, no.4 (2007): 492.

promoting it among the educated Bengali middle classes the magazines bestowed body building with a great degree of prestige and social acceptance.

A popular thematic genre in both *Amaar Desh* and *Mauchak* included stories of the “colored” man defeating a racially superior European/American challenger: Bheem Bhavani’s victory over American bodybuilder Ben Fasmer in Shanghai; Basantkumar Bandhyopadhyay’s success at the London Wembley Exhibition; black wrestler Jack Johnson defeating his white challenger Tommy Burns.⁹⁷ Through these stories the child reader was constantly reminded of how for the Bengali wrestler winning the match against a white opponent was a matter of racial avenging. Almost all stories highlighted how Bheem Bhavani was sensitive since his childhood regarding the offensive epithets given to Bengalis—coward, effeminate and weak—and how he wanted to erase these racial slurs by taking on European challengers and defeating them.⁹⁸

We need to understand the projection of the male body and issues of masculinity in relation to how the female body and femininity were treated under in discussions of physical culture and bodily regeneration aimed at the girl child.⁹⁹ While the discussion on body building was primarily aimed at boys, for girls the focus was entirely different. As I noted earlier, in the early 1920s several girl readers wrote letters to the editor of *Mauchak* complaining that the magazine had never published

⁹⁷ *Amaar Desh*, 2, no. 2 (1921): 71.

⁹⁸ *Mauchak*, 2, no. 3 (1921): 124-125 and *Mauchak* 2, no. 9 (1921): 381.

⁹⁹ I owe this point to Toby Ditz who argues that we need to understand masculinity by taking women and femininity into consideration. This is because masculinity(ies) is constructed in relation to the analytical category of “women.” Toby L. Ditz, “The New Men's History and the Peculiar Absence of Gendered Power: Some Remedies from Early American Gender History,” *Gender & History* 16 (2004): 1-35.

any article specifically on exercises for girls. To accommodate their requests *Mauchak* not only apologized but also published a series of essays on exercises for girls in the subsequent volumes.¹⁰⁰ Although the editors of *Mauchak* emphasised that every child in Bengal --both boys and girls-- should exercise regularly, they distinguished the gender divide very clearly, highlighting which activities were suitable for each sex. This distinction drew upon and reinforced popular notions of how a female body should look like. For instance, severe muscular training was considered bad for girls. The magazine remained trapped within the popularly held view of the contemporary period that since women did not do the kind of physically strenuous hard work that men did, girls need not perform heavy exercises. In one article in this series, the author wrote, “Although we emphasize on physical culture for girls, they must not perform exercises meant for boys. You must also remember that exercising will not enhance a girl’s beauty: for instance, if your nose is small or skin dark, you cannot develop a sharp nose or fair skin.”¹⁰¹

Thus exercises for girls did not propose to achieve the kind of bodily transformations that it sought to achieve for boys. The above quote reflects social anxieties associated with the loss of female beauty. For instance, it was observed that most Bengali girls appeared sickly, emaciated and undernourished. Bow-leg was a common physiological disorder among girls. Exercising could prevent such bodily distortions.¹⁰² Descriptive parameters were laid out regarding how various body parts

¹⁰⁰ *Mauchak*, 3 (1922): 448.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Mauchak*, 4 (1923): 168.

of young girls should look like: girls should have arms which look healthy, firm and symmetrical to their height. Their arms should have strong muscles but one should be careful to not over-exercise and develop big biceps like a body-builder. The elbow bone should not protrude out. Legs had to be shapely with a proportionate ratio between the thighs and the calf. The spine should be poised and upright. This was particularly so since long hours of studying at the school desk often resulted in a curved spine.¹⁰³ Thus for girls since the social premium still lay on physical attractiveness, anything which did not contribute towards enhancing it or posed the threat of disfiguration was best avoided. Physical attractiveness of the male body was admirable too. After all visual images of Bheem Bhavani's well-toned muscular body were attractive to a people whose predominant self-perception was the Macaulayan stereotype of effeminacy and a debilitated body. However, while physical remolding of the male body through physical culture was celebrated and desired, a similar project for the female had to be undertaken with caution and within the parameters of maintaining the ideals of femininity.

While most of the exemplars of bodily strength in the magazines were men, a Rajput circus artist Tarabai became the only example of female physical prowess. We know little about Tarabai apart from an article on her in *Mauchak* in 1920. Using Tarabai as an example, *Mauchak* displayed how women's bodies were capable of performing acts of great physical strength. Fantastical and awe inspiring narratives aided by photographic proof depict the feats Tarabai could perform. Interestingly

¹⁰³ *Mauchak*, 4 (1923): 168.

these feats were similar in nature to those performed by the likes of Bheem Bhavani-- balancing hundreds of kilograms of heavy stone slabs on her chest, lifting heavy weights with the braids of her hair, displacing cars with a push of her head-- thus celebrating a female body who had to match in strength with her male counterpart to prove her physical power. In Tarabai's display of great bodily strength, she not only transgressed normative feminine attributes but also pitched her femininity at par with a force and strength of masculine proportions. Although Tarabai attracted public applause owing to the sensationalism, danger and thrill factor of her performances, her relevance to the *bhadralok* child reader could not have been much beyond an aberrant female body transgressing into the realm of the spectacular. While it is true that she was poised as an example of national pride where *Mauchak* celebrated her as a brave "Indian woman," she was not necessarily the role model that educated *bhadralok* families wanted their own daughters to grow up to become. First, as a circus artist she belonged to a lower economic stratum of society. Second, while Tarabai in her own ways transgressed gender roles and performances, when it came to *bhadralok* girls, gender expectations were very clear. Thus although Tarabai transgressed normative gender boundaries, she could not relinquish her feminine roles. Readers of *Mauchak* were told stories about Tarabai's kindness and motherly affection. After retiring from the circus she got married and her involvement in the public sphere was to mostly philanthropic-- starting an orphanage, a shelter for destitute widows and active engagement with charity.

Moreover, juxtaposed alongside the photographs of Tarabai were images of girls in the domestic arena to socialize them in traditional women's roles such as praying, childcare and maintaining the ritual purity of brahmanical patriarchy through stories behind *bratas* or religious fasts. Most *bratas* involved penance seeking a happy marriage, comfortable life at the in-laws' home and good health of children. One such *brata* involved seeking ten boons which included becoming a good wife like Sita, a good cook like Draupadi and beget children with long lives like Shasthi.¹⁰⁴ Jasodhara Bagchi argues that the resurgence of *bratas* in the early twentieth century was a *swadeshi* phenomenon and a means to glorify indigenous cultural practices.¹⁰⁵ The primacy given to *bratas* arose from the belief that they were the simple and basic principles on which rural life was structured and therefore needed to be preserved. A loss of these practices meant that the antiquity of the nation would be lost too.¹⁰⁶ The social and cultural functionality of *bratas* lay in the fact that they molded female bodies, as Bagchi has shown, into practices of devotion (both towards the family and religion) as well as towards the control of senses.¹⁰⁷ Through a focus on *bratas* the magazines ascribed women to be the guardians of the spiritual and "traditional." Here I would like to recall the point I made earlier in this chapter regarding how in the vision of the new nation both girls and boys were invited but the specific roles assigned to them was gendered. Physical culture for boys was encouraged because the

¹⁰⁴ Poromesh Acharya, "Indigenous Education and Brahmanical Hegemony in Bengal," in *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*, ed. Nigel Crook (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 11.

¹⁰⁵ Jasodhara Bagchi, "Socialising the Girl Child in Colonial Bengal," *Economic and Political Weekly* 28, no. 41 (1993): 2216.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

nation needed brave sons to protect and liberate it. The health of the girl child was important too but it was primarily geared towards serving the nation through skillfully playing domestic roles or to return back home after a life under public gaze (like Tarabai). The aim was not necessarily to recast little girls or question gender relations but to encourage them to evolve into healthy, disciplined and orderly women who could successfully straddle the demands of both the home and the nation by embodying the intertwined virtues of domesticity and patriotism. In this context nationalism, as it defined gender relations, was not loaded much favorably towards the girl child.

Science and the Nation

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century there was a growing concern regarding the lack of scientific education and training among Bengalis.¹⁰⁸ This anxiety put a focus on introducing scientific concepts to children in a friendly, amusing and understandable language. At a time when science did not feature prominently as part of school curriculums, Bengali children's literature took the lead in promoting scientific learning among children. The focus on introducing science to children was largely due to its association with rationality, modernity, progress, morality, nationalism and building the future self-reliant nation. As early as 1878, Keshub Chandra Sen brought out the first Bengali children's magazine *Balakebandhu* (Friends

¹⁰⁸ Bani Basu, *Bangla Sishu Sahitya Granthpanji* (Calcutta: Navana Printing Works Private Limited, 1965).

of Boys) to promote scientific and general knowledge among children.¹⁰⁹ Among other late nineteenth century children's magazines *Sakha* carried a section on science in its *Thakurdadar Galpa* (Stories by the Grandfather) series. In 1885 *Balak* published a collection of plays called "Heyali" which discussed a range of topics of which science and geography featured significantly.¹¹⁰

Another prominent contributor was Jagadananda Roy who wrote several essays and books on science for children. Roy's association with the Tagores was intimate, having taught Rabindranath mathematics during the latter's childhood. Years later Tagore would write that the best part of his education was being tutored by Jagadananda Roy in science.¹¹¹ In 1901 when Rabindranath started the Brahmacharya Vidyalaya¹¹² in Shantiniketan for children, he invited Roy to teach Mathematics and Science who went on to teach at the school for 32 long years, till 1932.¹¹³ Jagadananda's first essay *Kritim Resham* (Artificial Silk) was published in the *Swarana Kumari Debi*¹¹⁴ edited magazine *Bharati* in 1894. His articles on science were published in several leading contemporary Bengali journals including *Sakha o Sathi*, *Prabasi*, *Bangadarshan* and *Tattwabodhini Patrika*. Of particular interest is his story titled *Shukra Bhraman* which dealt with outer-space travel to Venus and descriptions of alien ape-like creatures that inhabited the planet. Though the story was published in 1879, some scholars such as Debjani Sengupta argue that, it was actually written twenty

¹⁰⁹ Khagendranath Mitra, *Shatabdir Shishu-Sahitya* (Calcutta: Pashchimbanga Bangla Academy, 1958), 15.

¹¹⁰ Swapna Banerjee, "Children's Literature in Nineteenth Century India: Some Reflections and Thoughts," *Histoires d'enfant histories d'enfance juin*, 36 (2007): 347.

¹¹¹ Shyamal Chakrabarty ed. *Chotoder Shera Vigyan Rachna Sankalan: Jagadananda Roy*, (Calcutta: Dey's Publication, 2004).

¹¹² Later to be renamed Shantiniketan.

¹¹³ Shyamal Chakrabarty ed. *Chotoder Shera Vigyan Rachna Sankalan*.

¹¹⁴ Of the Tagore household at Jorashako.

years prior to its publication and decades before H. G Well's famous work *Wars of the World*-- a tale on aliens from Mars-- was published.¹¹⁵ Roy's first book, *Prakriti Parichay* (Introduction to Nature, 1911) familiarized children to the scientific principles that guided the functioning of the various elements of nature. He subsequently wrote a series of short books and essays on the sun and the solar system, properties of light, reflection and refraction and how these determine human vision; sound and how is an echo formed; evaporation and condensation and how these result in the formation of clouds and rain; various forms of electricity; static electricity and the scientific principles behind lightening; magnets etc. He wrote essays on botany including those on photosynthesis, structure and functioning of parts of plants such as the root, stem and leaves and interesting facts on insectivorous plants. His spectrum of essays also included themes related to zoology and ornithology on everyday subjects such as characteristic bird behavior of the house sparrow and the crow; the physiology of the housefly, the dragonfly, the bee and animals such as the frog.

Jagadananda's narrative was more in the form of story-telling, avoiding the abstruse language of scientific terms. This was significant in his time and age since the question of translatability of scientific terms into vernaculars was one of the factors that prevented the popularization of scientific study in India. The terminology of most scientific subjects did not exist in Indian vernaculars while a simple transliteration of European terms or a direct translation to words derived from

¹¹⁵ Debjani Sengupta, "Sadhanbabu's Friends: Science Fiction in Bengal from 1882-1961" *Sarai Reader: Shaping Technologies* (Delhi, 2003), 77.

Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic was unintelligible. As several Education Committees appointed to examine school textbooks in Indian schools noted, there was no accepted scientific terminology in the vernacular languages. This made it difficult to figure out how to represent the idea conveyed by a scientific term because translation to Indian vernaculars often resulted in a loss of epistemological meaning.¹¹⁶ Roy's language was de-Sanskritized and themes ranged from subjects related to the everyday life of children to the unknown outer space.

Sandesh, started by Upendrakishore Raychaudhuri in 1913 in Calcutta, too was markedly unique in relation to contemporary children's magazines due to its strong emphasis on and engagement with science. The magazine presented the ever complex principles of science to children through the medium of brilliant illustrations. The emphasis was to encourage children to inculcate an inquisitive spirit towards natural science and think rationally. Upendrakishore himself was a technical innovator. He was a pioneer who first introduced the half-tone block printing technique in India when he started his printing press called U. Ray in 1895. Though he never travelled to the West and was mostly self-taught, he published as many as eleven theoretical research papers on the scientific principles of the process camera in the *Penrose's Pictorial Annual*-- a highly reputed journal in the printing world-- between 1897 and 1912.¹¹⁷ *Sandesh* published several articles on science that provided information on the human body such as the various organs and their major functions, the nervous

¹¹⁶ Report on the Committee appointed to examine the textbooks in use in Indian schools with appendices. (Calcutta: Home Secretariat Press, 1878), 73.

¹¹⁷ Siddhartha Ghosh, "Abol Tabol: The Making of a Book," in *Print Areas: Book History in India*, ed. Abhijit Gupta and Swapan Chakravorty ed. (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 244.

system, the skeletal and muscular system including cells and tissues, working of human metabolism, the digestive, circulatory and respiratory systems and so on. These articles included diagrams of the human body system indentifying major organs and the various bones in the human skeleton.

After Upendrakishore's death, his son Sukumar Ray took over charge of *Sandesh* and carried on the publication of science and technology related informative pieces. This tradition of making science interesting and engaging for children continued with Upendrakishore's grandson, the famous filmmaker and writer Satyajit Ray's creation of the eccentric but widely popular inventor and scientist Prof. Shonku-- modeled on Arthur Conan Doyle's Professor Challenger-- who first made an appearance in 1965 in the pages of *Sandesh*.

The publication of scientific articles for children during this period is very significant considering that the teaching of science as a discipline in India was emphasised upon mostly at the college level. Science did not form a significant part of the curriculum in most schools. Schools in Bengal that were run by the government or received any kind of state grants came under the jurisdiction of the Calcutta University. The model of the Calcutta University was based on the University of London. As Deepak Kumar has pointed out, the curriculum in Oxbridge was notable for its exclusion of scientific knowledge and its emphasis on literary studies.¹¹⁸ This led to a system of education that encouraged the acquisition of literary as opposed to scientific knowledge. In the early twentieth century a literary

¹¹⁸ Deepak Kumar, *Science and the Raj: A Study of British India*. New York: Oxford University Press, (2006), 116.

person was seen as respectable and cosmopolitan in the *bhadralok* circles. Kumar argues that the Oxbridge model was transplanted in Bengal as early as in 1858 when the Syndicate of the Calcutta University opposed the introduction of science subjects such as geology in the curriculum. In a few colleges such as the Presidency College the government did manage to introduce courses on geology and natural philosophy but in non-governmental settings there were no resources to appoint qualified science teachers, establish laboratories and therefore introduce science courses.¹¹⁹ Curiously, in 1868 when the Asiatic Society of Bengal petitioned the Viceroy to introduce a clause that no one should be allowed to pass the Matriculation examination conducted by the Calcutta University unless he proved his competence in the elementary knowledge of natural history and physics, the government refused and instead advocated that students should pay foremost attention to learning English than anything else.¹²⁰

The emphasis on inculcating scientific knowledge among the young in children's literature was therefore a novel step in its contemporary times. As Gyan Prakash has argued, science was "pivotal in the imagination and institution of India, a defining part of its history as a British colony and its emergence as an independent nation."¹²¹ He has shown that the beginnings of science's cultural authority in India lay in the British colonial civilizing mission. Scientific and empirical knowledge production methodologies guided the production of colonial surveys, censuses,

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 117.

¹²¹ Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 3.

encyclopedias, histories and other studies on India. This empirical scientific knowledge helped the British to establish modern infrastructures, a unified territory and economic linkages for colonial rule in India. The utility of science as a modern knowledge system became prominent since it privileged universal reason over religious superstitions, native myths and transcended prejudices, traits that were often associated with Oriental religious systems. Prakash notes that because of its modernizing capacities, science emerged as a means to enlighten the superstitious natives, secularize their world views and rationalize native society with the power of reason.¹²²

The intertwining of science with modernity and national progress was therefore a trait that appealed to Indian nationalists the most. The emphasis on science formed a part of the *Swadeshi* educational endeavors. Curzon was anxious about the political implications of the growth of the native intelligentsia and sought to enforce strict official control and restrictions on higher education. For the nationalists therefore the alternative way out was to endorse a system which underscored the significance of technical and scientific education.¹²³ The encouragement of science and technology was also connected with the larger aim of industrial development of India, particularly since one of the critiques of British colonial rule was the deindustrialization of the Indian economy. Therefore since 1887 the Congress passed resolutions to promote technical education in India and during

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 150.

the *Swadeshi* period most leaders agreed upon the need for technical education in the country.¹²⁴

The nationalist fascination with science is significant considering the fact that they themselves were a product of non-scientific education training. Much of this fascination was a manifestation of the nationalist belief, as Partha Chatterjee has shown, that the technological greatness of the “west” was one of the attributes that launched Europe on the path of progress and made it culturally powerful.¹²⁵

Modernity was key to the foundation of an independent India. Rationality, reason and science were the three basic criteria on which modernity could be built upon. Besides, the results of scientific “progress” in the form of the Industrial Revolution and its associated technological transformations had gained popularity among the educated by the late nineteenth century. Moreover, as Pratik Chakrabarti has argued, based on the Baconian and Comtean ideas of scientific morality, science was also perceived as a strong moral force.¹²⁶ Science was the path towards true moral enlightenment since it enabled man’s control over his mind and surroundings.¹²⁷ This goal of self-correction was significant in light of popular colonial stereotypes such as Oriental despotism, or representations of Indians as racially immoral, sexually licentious, corrupt and indolent. The emphasis on morality-- or rather its lack among natives-- echoes the kinds of anxieties that promoted the national project of physical regeneration that I have discussed in this dissertation earlier.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 151.

¹²⁵ Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, 50.

¹²⁶ Pratik Chakrabarti, *Western Science in Modern India: Metropolitan Methods, Colonial Practices* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 153.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

The trend of promulgating scientific knowledge among children was part of the larger concurrent endeavors in Bengal to popularize and encourage indigenous scientific training and research among Indians. These objectives guided the foundations of one of the foremost nationalist research institution in Calcutta, the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (hereafter IACS), founded by Mahendra Lal Sircar in 1876. As Pratik Chakrabarti has shown Sircar's chief goal in establishing the IACS was to popularize and "create a culture of science" among Indians.¹²⁸ Sircar's life was committed to encourage Indians "to engage in fundamental research in science, to explore the inner logic of science, question and develop their own hypotheses and arguments, and thereby establish themselves as citizens of a modern scientific nation."¹²⁹

More importantly for the purposes of my study, it is important to highlight yet another mindset that guided the nationalist stress on scientific knowledge. In the late nineteenth century science was the means to break free from the mold of an infantile, immature colonial subject to become an adult man.¹³⁰ It was precisely for this reason that the "man-making" aims of the IACS were made clear right at the outset. Sircar believed that India did not have "scientific men" at all and the creation of "scientific men" through a thorough scientific training was the prime mission of the IACS. Since scientific training had not spread widely under the initiative of the government, it was important for Indians to be self-sufficient and master the elementary principles of science unaided because as Sircar noted, "if the Government were to do

¹²⁸ Ibid., 150.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

everything for us, we shall never do anything for ourselves. We must be weaned from this sort of dependence upon others, just as a baby is weaned from the mother's breast."¹³¹ This weaning was then another step towards a manhood characterized by rational, progressive and modern thinking. It was against this cultural and intellectual background that most Bengali children's magazines operated. It is no surprise then that science emerged as a new theme of discussion in many Bengali children's magazines around the turn of the twentieth century and inculcating the spirit of scientific inquiry among children at an early age became an essential step towards training for citizenship and a modern independent India.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on non-institutionalized loci of knowledge production within a colonized set-up by highlighting the role of the Bengali children's magazines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a form of a nationalist pedagogy-- or an informal schooling-- that made the Indian child the subject of democratic citizenship projects. Children's magazines addressed young readers in a way that assigned great significance to their childhood and youth. The vision of childhood as projected in the magazines, made children crucial in the larger scheme of reclaiming freedom and the lost land of India. Here both boys and girls were invited and persuaded to take up the responsibility of realizing the idea of India and train themselves to take up the role of a future democratic citizen. However, the roles

¹³¹ Ibid.

ascribed to them were gendered. In this context, there was a clear premium on masculinity whether through a celebration of the virile male body of Bheem Bhavani or through an emphasis on science learning through recreation (which as an influence of Baconian principles) was seen as a “manly” discipline. The magazines also reflect how the discipline and growing trend of physical fitness had its own cultural agenda to decolonize the male body and remasculinize its perceived effete character. At the same time the promotion of scientific ideas served to deinfantilize the native and build a strong, “modern” and manly independent nation which would be an equal partner in the theatre of powerful nation-states. The girl child on the other hand had to create a space for her literary expression and creativity, given the limited opportunity assigned to her, by participating and winning writing competitions and making demands to the magazine editors. We also encounter the rather fascinating albeit atypical voice of Annadashankar Ray, who represented an alternative, individualistic thought process that encouraged young girls to follow their minds. However, such voices were few. We find the magazines successfully blending the two important virtues of domesticity and nationalism when charting out roles for the girl readers. In the emergent nation where the success of the “new” family depended on the role of the woman as the homemaker, caregiver and the foremost educator of her children, the education of girls had to be emphasised.

Much of the children’s literature from the late nineteenth century was shaped by the *smadeshi* spirit which laid a renewed focus on the indigenous and the national. The magazines aimed at politicizing childhood and were instrumental in introducing

children to complex concepts such as *swadeshi*, *swaraj* and economic nationalism. By opening up the space for children's participation in the nationalist project through writing letters to the editors and various writing competitions, the magazines attempted to play a significant role in creating the idea of a nationalized imagined community. Though by and large consumed in urban centers and small towns, Bengali children's literature also engaged with the rural and the folk in the imagination of this national community. Often prescriptive in nature, they reflected the nationalist anxieties generated by the colonial critique of Indian society and in the process exposed the problems associated with realizing the idea of *swaraj* or self rule.

The strand of nationalism visible in the magazines is one that was constituted by the vision of the nation as perceived by the editors. For the authors and editors, most writing for children became an expression of their own nationalist tendencies much of which borrowed from and promoted the dominant strand of Congress nationalism. By doing so the act of writing also became an act of agency and power, especially when in the process powerful colonial categories were challenged. Nationalism as it emerged in the magazines was not a fixed category but one with shifting meanings. The version of nationalism that is projected to the child is sanitized. Here, although the shifts in the articulation of nationalist imaginations are portrayed through a wide spectrum of leaders from the Moderates to the Extremists, the editors are careful to brush aside frictions within opposing political ideologies. As a result, a Bepin Chandra Pal could be discussed in the same laudatory tone as his political opponent Surendranath Banerjea or Gandhi who replaces him in the 1920s

as the next big political force in Indian politics. Although the vision of the nation is refracted through a Bengali identity, this vision extends to the national and the global too. While forging a national spirit, the magazines also tried to weave in transnational connections through narratives of Japanese nationalism and colored athletes defeating established white champions thereby busting myths of racial hierarchy. Children were exposed to a strand of nationalism where there was no conflict between Bengali pride (for instance the idea of sanctifying the prisons of Bengal through challenging colonial authority and thereby bringing pride to the Bengalis or the projection of Bheem Bhavani as an icon of Bengali pride and masculinity) and examples drawn from other parts of India (such as Nehru and Tarabai).

The nationalist vision of what constitutes childhood was shaped in the public sphere, often through critical social engagement and within close networks built by the intelligentsia. The narratives that emerged were one shaped by the social and intellectual world of the men and women who wrote them. At the same time, the magazines also break the strict dichotomy of the inner-outer by showing how the domestic space is both porous and inevitably a public space as well. The home, which was the primary space for the consumption of children magazines, was also the site of reform and nationalist activity from the late nineteenth century. Thus, as I have shown in this chapter, the domestic space, traditionally imagined as exclusively private, become intertwined with the public politics of nationalism.

CHAPTER FIVE

Participation of Students and Teachers in Anti-Colonial Political Agitations

Continuing with the theme of the contested nature of colonial education, in this chapter, I will address the contentious reception of British colonial education in India by examining students' participation in anti-colonial political agitations. As I noted in Chapter One, the late nineteenth century witnessed a new phase in Indian nationalism which was marked by a growing politicization of native children. As early as the 1880s the native vernacular press in Bengal had begun reporting that the dissemination of political ideas was not only limited to the middleclass *bhadralok addas* but had also crept out to school and college campuses. One of the earliest reports on the issue was by *Som Prakash* which observed in 1877 that, "Even the common school boys were heard discussing the issues of circumvention of human rights. *This is a sign of progress.*"¹ I argue that from the 1890s nationalist politics had started to become an issue of primary concern among certain sections of Indian students. As we enter the twentieth century the politicized child becomes much more visible. In Chapter Four I discussed the politicization of the child, primarily in the realm of ideas within the home, through the medium of the Bengali children's magazines. In this

¹ RNP Bengal, 1877, 194. (Emphasis mine)

chapter I will examine contestation in terms of the participation of native students in political agitations against the colonial state in the public realm where schools (and colleges) became the location of dissent.

I will investigate two key moments of students' agitations as case studies in this chapter. The first involves the controversy surrounding "seditious" answers scripts written by schoolboys in the matriculation exams in the Bombay Presidency in 1900. Investigations by the Education Department there revealed that these "alarmingly seditious" answer scripts were being produced by the students in the matriculation level at two prominent educational institutions, the New English School (estb. 1880) and the Fergusson College (estb. 1885) in Poona. An examination into these "seditious" answer scripts unleashed an all-India discussion within the government circle in retrospection of the decade of the 1890s. This was primarily because the last decade of the nineteenth century was marked by an increasing political radicalization among students primarily in the provinces of Bengal and Bombay, although from time to time there were reports of similar incidents in other parts of India as well.

During the process of these discussions the government realized that the political mobilization of students had begun alarmingly in the past decade when prominent Congress leaders particularly Dadabhai Naoroji and Tilak had come to wield immense influence on the students. This influence reflected in the hundreds of answer scripts that examiners read in 1900 for the Matriculation Exams for that year. What must have added to the government's alarm was the fact that just a few years

back, in 1897, Tilak had been tried by the government under charges of sedition.²

Although (much to a historian's frustration) these answers scripts have not been archived, to the best of my knowledge, it is possible that some of these answer scripts echoed ideas that could be traced back to Tilak's "seditious" writings.

In light of the growing trend of student's political activism, the official discussion at the turn of the century revolved around how the government could gain its control over school and college education to stem "sedition." From the perspective of the colonial state, the burgeoning threat of students' politicization became more potent not only due to the aggressive nature of the political contestation but also because it involved the engagement of the school teacher as the promoter of disloyalty among students and a participant in anti-colonial activism.³ Though this controversy emerged in Bombay, the official discussion on how to curb this new political menace involved the participation of education experts and law enforcement authorities from all over India and the new measures enforced as a result were extended to other provinces as well. The second case study involves the participation of students in the anti-Partition and *Swadeshi* movement in Bengal which saw a more direct involvement of students in anti-state activities. Here I focus on the Broja Mohan Institute in Barisal (estb. 1884) which became one of the major centers for early students' politics, publication of "seditious" political pamphlets and the

² Tilak was tried in 1897 for his "seditious" and anti-colonial writings in the *Kesari*, a Marathi newspaper he edited.

³ The relevance of the incident of seditious answer scripts and the new measures undertaken by the British colonial state to extend its control over education has been discussed in detail in Chapter One.

Swadeshi movement in Bengal.⁴ As in the case of Poona, in Barisal as well Aswini Kumar Dutt, who owned the Brojo Mohan Institute and taught there contributed greatly in the political mobilization of the students both affiliated to the institute and in other schools as well.

While neither of the two case studies can be labeled as a “student movement” per se, their historical significance lies in the fact that first, they indicate a new phase of Indian nationalism when schools and colleges became the focus of contestation and anti-colonial agitations. In terms of affiliation, both the New English School and the Fergusson College were private educational institutions affiliated to the Bombay University and did not receive any funding from the state. Their revenues came only from school fees.⁵ The Brojo Mohan Institute was privately owned by Aswini Kumar but was affiliated to the Calcutta University which received funds from the colonial government.⁶ Thus it is striking that the opposition to the colonial state was emanating from institutions that were privately owned and (in the case of New English School and the Fergusson College) unaided by the government. It is also important to note that all three institutions were openly nationalist in their outlook where their engagement with the nation was primarily through the medium of education. The idea is best reflected in the words of Gokhale who, commenting on

⁴ The Brojo Mohan School at Barisal was founded by Aswini Kumar Dutta’s father in 1884. In 1898 Aswini Kumar established a college which in conjunction to the school came to be known as the Brojo Mohan Institute.

⁵ Shripad Rama Sharma, *Fergusson College through Sixty Years* (Bombay: Karnatak Printing Press, 1945), 5.

⁶ Despite the *swadeshi* call to boycott all government institutions, the Brojo Mohan Institute never disaffiliated itself from the Calcutta University which was the main body that conducted the Intermediate and Matriculation level Exams. Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908* (Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1973), 169.

the founding principles of the Fergusson College, declared that the aim of the institute was “to instill into young minds a due sense of proportion and of responsibility and a correct realization of the true needs of the country.”⁷ The Fergusson College was built as an educational institution that would promote “nation-building education.”⁸ By “nation building education” the founders meant an “education of the people, *for* the people and *by* the people” and an education of the entire nation “to achieve *national ends*.”⁹ The founders of the college believed that the existing system of government education, an outcome of the Education Despatch of 1854, was defective in that it did not provide an education required by the people of a self-governing nation. It had failed to visualize education for leadership, industrial regeneration of India and for “*the defense of the Motherland*.”¹⁰ The institutions under survey thus did not produce students who were a Macaulayan version of English educated natives, “Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect,” but ones who became the agents of contestation to the British colonial state.¹¹

Secondly, the engagement of the students with nationalism marked a shift from Moderate to Extremist politics. While the nationalist movement from the 1880s

⁷ Sharma, *Fergusson College Through Sixty Years*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4. (Emphasis in original)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3. (Emphasis in original)

¹¹ At this point I would like to highlight that responses of students to the nationalist movement was multiple. Not all students in the above mentioned institutes would have been participants or even supporters of anti-British political activities. It is possible that many were unsympathetic to or even disinterested in nationalist ideas while some may have served as informers to the colonial state. During the *Swadeshi* years (and later years when students’ politics grew stronger) the British government planted its informers in students’ messes and hostels, usually from among the student community itself, who would provide information regarding students suspected of “seditious” and anti-colonial activities.

was led by “political elders” or the Moderate wing of the Congress, the rise of Extremist leaders such as Tilak and Bepin Chandra Pal from the 1890s, brought out schoolboys and the youth into the political front for the first time in both the Bombay Presidency and Bengal.¹² The participation of students in nationalist politics also marks a shift from the Moderate phase where politics was primarily the reserve of the educated elites. The political methods used by the Moderates centered on the use of the constitutional methods of petitions, speeches and publishing in newspapers. Since their primary objective was to convince public opinion in England about the grievances against the functioning of the British government in India, most of their campaign was in English.¹³ The involvement of students into politics made the school (and college) campus the location and disseminating center of nationalism as I will explore in this chapter. This was different from the earlier phase of anti-colonial movements where dissensions to colonial rule were played out in military barracks and the battlefield (for instance during the Revolt of 1857) or in the parliament (as part of Moderate politics). The significance of the political mobilization of students can be gauged by the alarm with which they were reported both in official correspondences (often confidentially and over transcontinental telegraphs between India and London indicating the sensitive nature of the discussions) and in Indian newspapers (both nationalist and those with a pro-government stand).

¹² It is important to point out that neither Tilak nor Pal’s influence was limited to their own provinces. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, Pal is credited to have been instrumental in spreading *Swadeshi* ideas in the Madras Presidency. For more on this point see V. Sankaran Nair, *Swadeshi Movement: The Beginnings of Student Unrest in South India* (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1985).

¹³ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 252.

Third, in the context of Bengal, students' anti-colonial activism characterizes an important shift in terms of the native outlook towards British education. While the 1830s and 1840s were marked by an almost blind fascination for English education among the emergent Bengali middle-class, as evident from the writings of the Young Bengal group, by the end of the nineteenth century one can notice a growing disenchantment with colonial education that was deemed to have resulted in the growing denationalization of the youth and had achieved little beyond producing clerks and lawyers.¹⁴ Finally, this period is also marked by a growing influence of contemporary international revolutionary movements. This highlights the fact that although the *swadeshi* principle centered on the indigenous and the national, the global was also an inherent element of its intellectual makeup. Thus while Naoroji and R. C. Dutt shaped the fundamentals of the drain and economic critique of British colonial rule, students were also influenced by international revolutionaries. Sumit Sarkar notes that the numerous biographies that Jogendranath Vidyabhusan wrote of Mazzini, Giribaldi and other foreign patriotic leaders were as influential in shaping minds as was Bankim's *Anandamath*.¹⁵ Local *swadeshi* leaders such as Prabhatkumum Raychaudhuri and Apurbakumar Ghosh gave lectures on socialism to young students. The international intellectual influences ranged from the Irish nationalist literature to the Russian anarchist leader Peter Kropotkin whose ideas were promoted by Sister Nivedita.¹⁶ Years later in her reminiscence of the *Swadeshi* movement Annie Besant

¹⁴ Aparna Basu, "National Education in Bengal," in *The Contested Terrain: Perspectives on Education in India*, ed. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1998), 16.

¹⁵ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 484.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

noted (in her Presidential Address at the annual Indian National Congress session in Calcutta, 1917) that when the youth broke away from the old school methods of political redressal through constitutional methods and adopted conspiracy, assassination and dacoity, they were emulating methods adopted in similar revolts by Young Italy stirred by Mazzini and by Young Russia in the days of Stepniak and Kropotkin.¹⁷ Some students also used appearing for the Indian Civil Services in London as a cover and opportunity to get military training instead in England.¹⁸

Rise of Students' Political Agitations

The rise of students' political agitations at the turn of the twentieth century has to be understood against the contemporary political background. The last decade of the nineteenth century was a period marked by the introduction of several unpopular colonial policies. Measures such as the passage of the Arms Act (1878) and the Vernacular Press Act (1878), state expenditure on the Second Afghan War, and the Indian Council Act of 1892 drew a lot of resentment and discontentment among educated and urban Indians and vocalized most critically in the native press. The period also saw the emergence of a new breed of young leaders within the Congress such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal who found the policies of conciliation and making political demands through constitutional means adopted by the Moderates futile and ineffective. They believed in a brand of nationalism more militant in form, to be achieved through revolutionary means and a

¹⁷ Annie Besant, *Speeches and Writings of Annie Besant*, (Madras: G. A. Natesan, 1921), 298.

¹⁸ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 469.

continuous struggle. This trend of “extremist” or militant nationalism extended its influence over schools and students as well in many parts of colonial India.

An examination of government and press reports in the last decade of the nineteenth indicates a rising trend of disaffection among the youth towards the government in various parts of India.¹⁹ Correspondences and reports of the Home Education Department from this period reveal an official anxiety that the educational facilities provided by the state were being misapplied for the diffusion of, what the government considered, “wild political speculation” and “propagating hostility” against the established political order. In the Education Department reports this trend in Bengal was traced back to the Lieutenant Governorship of Sir Rivers Thompson (1882-1885) when antagonism between the students and the government officials had started to grow.²⁰ Native press reports from Bengal in the 1890s constantly discuss the “growing dislike” for educated natives within the government circles.

The discussion on students’ participation in anti-colonial political activism was important enough to draw observations from law enforcement authorities due to fears of the influence spilling out to young students in other parts of the country as well. In many of these incidents the use of the physical space of the school

¹⁹ For a study of students’ political activism in the Madras Presidency see V. Sankaran Nair, *Role of Students in Freedom Movement with a Special Reference to Madras Presidency* (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1990) and V. Sankaran Nair, *Swadeshi Movement: The Beginnings of Student Unrest in South India* (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1985).

²⁰ Home Department, Education, June 1901, 33- 59 (A), 131.

While not much is mentioned regarding the nature of Rivers Thompson’s interaction with the students or the form of the antagonism from both sides, the report does mention that apparently he was so annoyed that he wanted “the spread of English education in the country [of India] should be closed [sic] if possible” indicating that a souring of relations.

compound to disseminate nationalist ideas became the cause of alarm for the colonial state. Such instances were the very reasons that prompted the colonial government to implement changes in school curriculums and extend a vice-like grip over schooling in India from the late nineteenth century which I discussed in Chapter Two. In 1901 J.B. Fuller, the Commissioner of Jabalpur district in the Central Provinces, expressed his concern over the growing popularity of Congress leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Tilak and others. He warned that pictures of these leaders adorned the walls of several primary schools under his supervision indicated that the influence and power of these political figures was no longer limited to a specific geography of India but had extended to smaller towns and districts.²¹ Fuller's report suggests that the schools in reference had supporters of both the ideological wings of the Congress leadership despite the strong differences over their methods for political redressal. By 1901 when Fuller made his observation, Tilak had already established himself as a powerful anti-colonial force in mobilizing students in the Bombay Presidency. Moreover, in 1897 he was tried in court for his "seditious" speeches and articles in *Kesari*, the Marathi newspaper published by him. Against this background, finding pictures of Tilak in government school classrooms in Jabalpur could not have been seen favorably by a representative of the colonial state. Fuller's anxiety might have been compounded by the fact that on a personal visit to the Marina Beach in Madras in 1901, he overheard a young student give a "seditious" speech to a group of fellow students, shouting the slogan, "I say the British Government is a tyrant of

²¹ Ibid.

oppression, I say, down with the Government!” In response the rest of the students welcomed the call by shouting, “Damn the British Government!”²² That isolated incidents such as the above mentioned received considerable government attention and formed a significant part of the correspondence between education officers indicates the relevance that the government had begun to accord to the emerging trend of students’ political participation against the state.

The threat was, to a great extent, linked to the increasing influence of the Congress leaders and secret societies on Indian students. With the influence of the secret societies intensifying, it appears that young school and college students were strongly getting drawn towards their “seditious” literature and extremist tendencies. Sumit Sarkar notes that a combination of factors such as exclusion from military service, racial slur of effeminacy and cases of assault and intimidation by the British had disaffected the youth in Bengal.²³ Moreover, as I noted earlier the Moderate politics of conciliation and seeking political redressal through constitutional methods was increasingly seen to be futile and ineffective by the Extremist leaders. As a result secret societies with their emphasis on physical regeneration, service to the nation and reinstating national pride through militant revolutionary methods attracted several students into their fold. Often these societies issued pamphlets to spread their messages. Among the many such pamphlets that came under the scrutiny of the government in Bengal was one titled *Terrible Child’s Play*, from the early 1890s, which began by giving a call to assassinate the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Charles

²² Ibid.

²³ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 469.

Elliot.²⁴ It began with the words, “Shoot! Kill! Murder! – Killing Sir Charles Elliot no crime!” “Shoot the traitor Charles Elliot.” The pamphlet condemned Elliot’s role as an education officer in the Calcutta University and warned that the ploy of winning over students to his side through conciliatory politics over tea parties would be futile. The author urged the readers to spurn Elliot’s invitations and instead “use dynamite and [gun] powder” since only that could achieve “what a thousand memorials and Congresses can never do.”²⁵ Based on the report of the local Bengali newspaper, the *Sanjivani*, we know that this pamphlet was distributed in large numbers and many of its copies would have been read by young students as well.

The influence of the Congress was not limited within India alone but also extended to Britain especially since some of the Moderate leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji and W. C. Bonnerjee were politically active in London.²⁶ Naoroji in particular spent his time between Indian and Britain and was elected in the British House of Commons in 1882. Lee-Warner observed that the Congress had become “very active” in its efforts to interest young Indian students in political discussions and public meetings in London. He found that the pamphlet “India”²⁷ was distributed to students and arrangements were made to assist them to find quarters on arrival in London so that they could be enrolled on the Indian National Congress list as early as possible. Warner warned that the young Indian was “greedily annexed” by the

²⁴ Charles Elliot was the Lieutenant- Governor of Bengal from 1891-96.

²⁵ *Sanjivani*, November 5th 1892, RNP Bengal, July-December 1892, 1059.

²⁶ Shompa Lahiri notes that apart from the Congress, in Britain, other Indian student associations such as the Oxford Indian Majlis, the Cambridge Majlis, and the India House too were instrumental in spreading political and revolutionary ideas among students. See Shompa Lahiri, *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity 1880-1930* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 177.

²⁷ Not much detail is available regarding this pamphlet regarding when and where it was published or its contents.

“Dadabhai party” in London and participated in meetings marked by the use of “violence of language.”²⁸ The Congress threat became more potent because of two reasons. First, many of the students went to England to write the Indian Civil Service (ICS) exams and were potential future bureaucrats who would return to India to work for the colonial state. Therefore trusting and retaining their loyalties was a major concern. This concern is not surprising considering that the main founders of the Congress including Surendranath Banerjea, W. C. Bonnerjee, Pheroza Shah Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji, met in England as students preparing for the Bar or for the ICS exams. They were absorbed in nationalist politics under the influence of Dadabhai Naoroji during their student days in England. Second, the British colonial government always feared that the Congress would begin to exercise a similar influence on students back home in India, as contemporary historical evidences show it indeed did. This alarm becomes evident in Fuller’s letter that I discussed earlier in this chapter. In reference to the Marina Beach incident in 1901, he attributed the “folly” of the youth to the “falsehoods and misrepresentations of history” that were being disseminated by pamphlets such as *Bleeding India to Death* and *The Spoilation of India* by Dadabhai Naoroji, in the process promoting the drain of wealth theory. According to Warner the problem lay in the fact that since native students were rarely taught the “real facts of history,” they gave credence to the distorted views expressed in such pamphlets and by the native press.²⁹ Warner himself perhaps sought to address this issue by writing a version of what he considered to be a “true” Indian

²⁸ Home Department, Public, October 1898, 262-282 (A), 15.

²⁹ Home Department, Education, June 1901, 33-59 (A), 131.

history in his school textbook for children, *The Citizen of India*, that I discussed in Chapter Two.

“Seditious” Textbooks in Bombay Schools

In 1900, Lee-Warner observed that in the recent Bombay matriculation exams, certain answer papers had taken an alarmingly seditious tone. Official enquiries traced these to Fergusson College, which had earned the reputation of being a hub for emanating nationalist ideas among students in the Bombay Presidency.³⁰ Further investigations revealed that some other educational institutes, especially the New English School and the Deccan Education Society, had increasingly become centers of anti-state political education for students.³¹ The Deccan Education Society was a consortium of schools and colleges founded on the premise that the degraded condition of India could be eliminated only with the right kind of education. What added to the anxiety of the government was that prominent Congress leaders such as Gokhale and Tilak were linked to these institutions. Gokhale was associated with the New English School and the Deccan Educational Society since their inception in 1880 and 1884 respectively. Tilak was one of the founders of the New English School and was also associated with both the Fergusson College and the Deccan Educational Society. Tilak in particular was seen as a threat within government circles because he was openly in disfavor of Gokhale’s more moderate approach to politics, was an

³⁰ Home Department, Education, February 1900 2-3 (Deposit), 5.

³¹ The New English School was started by V. K. Chiplunkar, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and M. B. Namjoshi in Pune in 1880 with the aim of promoting and providing affordable education to Indian children. The Deccan Education Society was formed in 1884 as an umbrella organization to which contemporary education institutions such as the New English School and Fergusson College (established in 1885) were affiliated.

adherent of extremist ideology and had garnered a popular following among the youth. Tilak was also active in mobilizing the youth to inculcate the cult of physical fitness by organizing *latbi* clubs and *akharas* for young students in the province.

Upon government scrutiny the issue of the “seditious” answer script opened the discussion into the emerging trend of students’ politicization by extremist leaders in the decade of 1890. An examination on the issue revealed that much of the “seditious” ideas that the students imbibed came from the textbooks they were reading and through the influence of their teachers. Much of the contemporary official discussion therefore spilled into the reinterpretation of Indian history and the “language of violence” that characterized some of the textbooks taught in government, aided and non-aided schools. The colonial educational officials soon realised that students enrolled in institutions affiliated to the Deccan Educational Society were pedagogically introduced to an alternative, nationalist viewpoint through a number of vernacular textbooks and other books written for children. Many of these works questioned the legitimacy of the British rule thereby challenging the very foundational premises of the curriculum taught in most government and aided schools. The books discarded British figures such as Robert Clive and Warren Hastings projected in government prescribed curriculum as heroic, instead replacing them with indigenous heroes such as Shivaji and Nana Padhnavis as the new role models to be celebrated. Many of these children’s books, especially the *Pushpavatika*,

Balbodh, *Hitopadesh* and *Tales from Maratha History* were seen as “apologies for disloyalties” by the Bombay Education Department.³²

The issue became more contentious when the colonial authorities realized that many of these textbooks were written by government school teachers and state educational officers. Moreover, the books were readily available for purchase by students at most government textbook depots. For instance, at a time when Shivaji was increasingly projected as an emblem of Marathi nationalism and deployed as an anti-British rallying factor, the *Pushpavatika* was sold at the Government Central Book Depot in Bombay. It was distributed as a prize in aided schools despite being caught in a controversy for its poem eulogizing the Maratha ruler. In most education records similarly, serious objections were raised about another book *Balbodh* (Advice to Children) regarding passages that criticized British rule for the economic ruin of India, for establishing a corrupt judiciary where Englishmen could escape trail of heinous crimes such as murder by the virtue of their race, and for “defiling Indian religions and insulting women.”³³ The book stigmatized Indians who “tolerated all this” and called upon them to rise up and seek justice. The gendered language, challenging the reader’s masculine prowess is unmistakable: “You eunuchs! How do you brook this? Get that redressed...say where are those *Mavalas*...who promptly

³² Home Department, Education, July 1898 (A), 19-31.

³³ Home Department Education, May 1898, 345- 378 (A), 39. *Balbodh* was written by an Assistant Educational Inspector in Bombay. Whether it was taught in schools as a textbook is not clear because contemporary sources provide conflicting evidence. However, the vitriolic tone in which it was debated upon in government circles and especially during the Tilak trials of 1897 indicates its significance and also popularity as a book for children in Bombay and thereby relevant for our discussion.

shed their blood on the spot where my perspiration fell?”³⁴ The fact that textbooks of such contentious nature had not only escaped the purview of the Education Department but were ironically given as prizes acted as a wakeup call for the colonial state to increase surveillance over the production of knowledge specifically directed at children and the youth.³⁵

It was also observed that some teachers associated with these schools were themselves involved in the national movement and accused of setting up a strong “seditious” tone among their students. For instance, two assistant masters of the New English School particularly came under official scrutiny for their role as the editors of the *Sudharak* newspaper known for promoting “violent” anti-government ideas and strongly criticizing its anti-plague measures of 1897. Among the prominent school teachers who were targeted by the state was Professor Bhanu (also the Superintendent of the New English School and an ad hoc professor at Fergusson College in the late 1890s) whose vernacular textbook, *Tales from Maratha History*, was listed as a controversial textbook by the Bombay Education Department for promulgating several objectionable passages on the government and glorifying the strength and might of Shivaji’s rule. Bhanu was also prosecuted for the speech he delivered during the Shivaji festival on 12th June 1897, a point to which I shall return shortly. The government realized that in Indian society the influence of teachers over the local population was “immense.” Thus the indiscreet expression of political opinion by teachers, which would have been considered immaterial in England, could

³⁴ Ibid., 39–40. *Mavalas* were warriors in Shivaji’s infantry.

³⁵ For more on this point, see Chapter One.

steer towards an undesirable direction to the impressionable minds of the Indian students.³⁶ It also observed that “seditious” vernacular textbooks became more potent when they were taught by teachers like Bhanu who were themselves politically active against the state and prominently participated in cultural events as the Ganapati and Shivaji festivals that had become important sites for the development and diffusion of nationalist ideas, mostly extremist in outlook.

The objections to both *Pushpavatika* and *Tales from Maratha History* stemmed from their eulogizing of Shivaji. The revoking of Shivaji’s legacy in the late nineteenth century happens in 1885 with a movement for repairing his tomb at Raigad.³⁷ The idea of the Shivaji festival was started by Tilak in *Kesari* in 1895 to foster a spirit of cooperation among the people. He observed that the cult of political festivals had almost stopped under the British rule. He felt it was necessary to revive the past glories of the local history of the Marathi people to create political impressions and promote nationalism.³⁸ The festival thus deployed Shivaji as a historical, political and cultural idiom for mobilizing nationalist sentiments in the Bombay Presidency. The celebration of the Shivaji melas in the 1890s was structured in a manner that encouraged participation by children. A typical mela, apart from the usual elements of entertainment, started with the singing of odes in praise of Shivaji by a choir of schoolboys, followed by speeches and *kirtans* at nights. To foster the spirit of physical fitness, gymnastics and sporting events for children were also organized.

Contemporary newspaper accounts on the Shivaji festival report that students of the

³⁶ Home Education, July 1898 (A), 19-31.

³⁷ A. G. Noorani, *Indian Political Trials, 1775-1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 115.

³⁸ Home Department Education, May 1898, 345-378 (A), 37.

New English School, the Nutana Marathi Vidyalaya, the Fergusson College and the Deccan Educational Society actively participated in these festivals in large numbers.³⁹ By the end of the 1890s the annual Shivaji festival and Ganapati mela became the stage to excite disaffection towards British rule.⁴⁰ In a new nationalist lexicon derived from regional patriotic symbols, Shivaji was projected as an icon for freedom and the new role model for the youth replacing figures such as Clive and Hastings taught in government school textbooks. Shivaji was eulogized as a true patriot who won the freedom of his kingdom from the Mughal might and drove them out to establish Maratha supremacy. The *Kesari* called upon all Hindus to pray to God to create a modern day Shivaji who would establish native rule and drive out foreign rulers.⁴¹

The aspect of the Shivaji and Ganapati festivals that disturbed colonial authorities most was primarily the “seditious” speeches delivered by government schoolteachers to an audience numbering in hundreds, in which schoolboys and college students formed a significant proportion. One particular speech that became very controversial and was discussed within official circles was Professor Bhanu’s delivered during the Shivaji festival in June 1897:

Every Hindu, every Maratha, to whatever party he may belong, must rejoice at this [Shivaji festival]. We all are striving to regain [our] lost independence, and this terrible load is to be uplifted by us all in combination...Our mutual dissensions impede our progress greatly. If any one be crushing down the country from above, cut him off; but do not put impediments in the way of others. Let bygones be bygones; let us forget them and forgive one another for them. Have we not enough of that strife which would have the same value in the estimation of

³⁹ Article in the *Kesari* dated June 15th 1897, RNP Bombay 1897, 479.

⁴⁰ Article in the *Native Opinion* dated September 19th 1900, RNP Bombay 1900, 1137.

⁴¹ Home Department Education, May 1898, 345-378 (A), 38.

great men as a fight among rats and cats? [O]ccasions like the present festival, which (tend to) unite the whole country must be welcome. ⁴²

The government found the content of Bhanu's speech alarming and interpreted it as one which aimed to instigate its audience to dissolve their differences and unite to overthrow the British Raj. The official discussions surrounding this speech indicate that their primary cause for alarm was the language of violence deployed against the state. Moreover, since the targeted audience included young children and students government officials feared that they might be swayed by such political calls. The government especially found the usage of the phrase "cut him off" in his speech alarming and interpreted it to mean "boycotting" the state in every possible manner. The second opinion regarding this passage was that since the episode of Afzal Khan's assassination by Shivaji⁴³ preceded this statement, the only interpretation could be that those who were oppressing the people of India as rulers should meet the same fate as Afzal Khan did in Shivaji's hands. What added to official alarm was that the next speaker of the day, Professor Jinsiwale⁴⁴ who was

⁴² Home Department Education, May 1898, 345- 378 (A), 65.

⁴³ John F. Richards notes that Afzal Khan was one of the best commanders of Bijapur Sultan Ali Adil Shah's army. In 1657 Afzal Khan was sent with a troop of 10,000 to defeat Shivaji. The Bijapur troops ravaged Shivaji's territories and after a series of dubious negotiations Afzal Khan persuaded Shivaji for a personal meeting to negotiate a settlement with the Sultan. They met at a site near Pratapgarrh fort. As the two embraced, Afzal Khan tried to strangle Shivaji using his large physical frame. But Shivaji attacked back by using his concealed iron "tiger claws" and disemboweled the Bijapur commander. At his signal the Maratha troops surrounded the site and slaughtered a confused Bijapur army. With his move Shivaji ended his subordination to the Bijapur Sultanate. Richards argues that being a Maratha chief unattached to the Mughal Empire Shivaji was now fully exposed to the threat of attacks by Aurangzeb's army. See John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire, Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 208.

⁴⁴ Shridhar Ganesh Jinsiwale, a scholar of Sanskrit, was a Fellow at the Deccan College between 1873 and 1876. During his tenure at Deccan College he taught Tilak for a while and thus began a student teacher relation that would last till Jinsiwale's death in 1903. He was appointed the Professor of Sanskrit at the Wilson College in Bombay. Jinsiwale was known to be a great orator, public speaker and debater on social issues. He was particularly known for his erudite speeches which at times ran for over two hours. Although he did not publish his contemporaries note that what scholars achieved through their writings Jinsiwale

Tilak's teacher at Deccan College between 1873 and 1876, pursued the emphasis on a rebellious tone further. Calling for all groups of Indians to unite, Jinsiwale asked:

If no one blames Napoleon for committing two thousand murders in Europe, and if Caesar is considered merciful, though he needlessly committed slaughters in Gaul (France) many a time, why should so virulent an attack be made on Shri Shivaji Maharaja for killing one or two persons?⁴⁵

He went on to add:

The people who took part in the French Revolution denied that they committed murders, and maintained that they were only removing *thorns from their path*. Why should not the same principle be applied to Maharashtra? Being inflamed with partisanship, it is not good that we should keep aside our true opinions.⁴⁶

The official records on these two speeches indicate that the state's anxiety stemmed from two main issues: first, the call to unite against the British authorities. Both Bhanu and Jinsiwale argued that Indians needed to unite and act together as they would have during the reign of Shivaji. Secondly what made these speeches alarming for the government was the justification of the use of violence (“removing thorns from their path”) against the British colonial state by drawing references from European historical events such as the French Revolution and Napoleon that involved aggression, bloodshed and the overthrow of established political authority. Both Bhanu and Jinsiwale urged their audiences to reject the view propounded by

achieved through his oratory skills. He was known for his conservative views and opposed the Age of Consent Bill, a stand for which he drew a lot of flak from many of his students and contemporaries. For more on Jinsiwale see Madhav Deshpande, “Pandit and Professor: Transformations in the 19th Century Maharashtra,” in *The Pandit: Traditional Scholarship in India*, ed. Axel Michaels (Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2001), 129-130.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid. (Emphasis mine)

British historians that Shivaji had “murdered” Afzal Khan. Jinsiwale questioned the legitimacy of the praise English historians bestowed upon Clive and Hastings, whose own lives were in fact “full of ugly deeds.”⁴⁷ Tilak, who refused to accept British textbook theories that tarnished the image of Shivaji who was now projected as a local hero, further strengthened the opinions of Bhanu and Jinsiwale. Speaking after Jinsiwale’s speech Tilak argued that no blame could be attached to Shivaji because his murdering of Afzal Khan was for the good of the country:

Did Shivaji commit a sin in killing Afzal Khan, or [sic] how? The answer to this question can be found in the Mahabharata itself. Shrimat Krishna’s advice in the *Gita* is to kill even our teachers and our kinsmen. No blame attaches to any person if he is doing deeds without being attached by a desire to reap the fruits of his deeds.⁴⁸

The context of both Bhanu and Jinsiwale’s speeches was the reference in certain government textbooks of Shivaji being a murderer who had killed Afzal Khan. There was a huge furore in the Bombay Presidency over such views that were seen to undermine Shivaji’s valor as a local regional hero. It is interesting to note that both Bhanu and Jinsiwale chose the occasion of Shivaji festival to attack a view propounded in the government school curriculum thereby bringing the debates of the classroom out into the public platform. The government inferred that the reference to Shivaji’s murdering of Afzal Khan, which ran as a leitmotif in the speeches of all the three leaders, was more than a mere reference to a historical event. It felt that these messages had an important influence on to the political situation of the day and

⁴⁷ Article in the *Kesari* dated June 15th 1897 on the Shivaji festival held in that year. RNP Bombay, 1897, 479.

⁴⁸ Home Department Education, May 1898, 345-378 (A), 65. Tilak’s speech, originally given at the Shivaji festival in June 1897, was later published in the *Kesari* on June 15th 1897.

that they were intended to suggest the audience that they would be perfectly justified in acting violently towards the British rulers in a manner that emulated Shivaji's treatment of Afzal Khan.

Students and the *Swadeshi* Movement in Bengal

The early twentieth century in Bengal is replete with instances of students' involvement in anti-British political activism. Most of these incidents peaked during the *Swadeshi* movement that followed Viceroy Curzon's decision to partition Bengal on October 16th 1905. Most of the incidents implicating students involved attacks on British colonial officials and European traders and at times coercing people to boycott the use and sale of foreign products as a manifestation of a more aggressive adherence to the *swadeshi* principle of economic boycott. Some of the most controversial incidents occurred in 1905 itself within a few months of the proclamation of the partition. Among these include the infamous assault on the Joint Magistrate of Howrah, Mr. Prentice, when he was passing through a procession of about 500 students on Sept 2nd 1905. In a letter dated December 1st 1905, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal R. W. Carlyle informed H. H. Risley, the then Secretary to the Government of India, that students' agitation had taken a much "stronger form" compared to an earlier incident that year when the Assistant Superintendent of Police had been assaulted by schoolboys at Backerganj. Carlyle noted that the Backerganj incident was followed by a series of "much violent"

assaults on government officials in Khulna, Pabna, Faridpur, Rangpur and Mymensingh.⁴⁹

A second case involving schoolboys that gained such notoriety that it had to be discussed through telegraphic exchanges between the Viceroy of India and the India Office in London was that of the Chanchal Siddheswari Higher English School in Maldah.⁵⁰ The Chanchal Siddheswari case involved the rustication of four students of the school on charges of anti-state agitation. This incident is noteworthy because it involved an unaided school which was funded by the founder's estate and yet saw a direct intervention of colonial authorities.⁵¹ According to the official version of the incident, on 14th November 1905 the schoolboys of the Chanchal Siddheswari Higher English School had put in a request for a half day holiday to promote *swadeshi* doctrines in the local markets. On being refused permission by the school authorities, about 110 boys absented themselves from school the next day. Many of the protesting students prevented other students from attending the school. Four days later, on November 18th 1905, a few schoolboys assaulted an assistant master who opposed their *swadeshi* principles and activities. The Headmaster reported the incident to the Secretary and expelled the four accused students. The colonial authorities immediately swung into action and the names of all the four expelled boys were published in the Education Gazette to prevent their admission into other schools.

⁴⁹ Home Public June 1905, 169-186 (A).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The Chanchal Siddheswari Higher English School was established in 1888 by Raja Sarat Chandra Roy Choudhury Bahadur in memory of his mother Rani Siddheswari Devi Chaudhurani.

⁵¹ *West Bengal District Gazetteers*, Vol. 3 (Calcutta: State Editor, West Bengal District Gazetteer, 1967), 207.

The colonial archives are silent about what eventually happened to the expelled boys but considering the existing regulations of the period one can deduce that the publication of their names in the Education Gazette would have closed all doors for them to get admission in any other school not only in Maldah but also in Bengal or India. Moreover the expulsion would have meant that the blacklisted students were not longer eligible for scholarships and employment opportunities under the colonial state.

The intensity of punishment meted out to “seditious” students was not limited to expulsion alone but also involved punitive legal action and court cases. One such famous incident occurred in February 1906, when as many as 345 students were convicted under charges of sedition by various courts in Bengal. Eventually, a total of 336 students were punished. Of these as many as 323 students (263 from Rangpur and 60 from Dacca) refused to return back to their respective schools despite having given the chance to rejoin their institutions by the authorities.⁵² Under the existing school transfer rules for Bengal, a boy leaving one school could not be admitted to another without a transfer certificate. Such certificates were not given to any of the 323 boys who refused to return. As a result they were barred from re-admission to other schools entitled to send boys up for University Examinations. As in the case of the Chanchal Siddheswari Higher School expulsion case, these students too could not

⁵² Home Public June 1905, 169-186 (A).

enter government service because the lowest qualification to be eligible for employment was the University Matriculation Examination.⁵³

By mid 1906 the issue of prosecuting students in Bengal and Assam in connection with the *Swadeshi* movement became alarming enough to be raised in the House of Commons in the British Parliament.⁵⁴ P. C Lyon (the Chief Secretary to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam) in a confidential correspondence dated 21st February 1906 to the Secretary to the Government of India notes that “everywhere” in Bengal schools were being used as centers for the agitation. Students and children formed the bulk of the audience at anti-partition meetings.⁵⁵ The leaders seeing the prospect of success in the *swadeshi* movement began to organize parties of students to preach the *swadeshi* doctrine to the local population, patrol streets and persuade purchasers not to buy European goods, boycott the sale and import of foreign manufactured products and in more extreme cases conduct political dacoities and assassinations of British officers and their Indian sympathizers. More aggressive forms of the boycott occurred when students got into scuffles with local purchasers over the selling of European goods. The influence of the economic critique of colonialism in the students’ minds was unmistakably visible when in many bazaars a popular symbol of youth culture, English and American cigarettes, were brought up and burnt and students took to smoking the more rustic country “biri.”⁵⁶ Many of the

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ IOR/L/PJ/6/768.

⁵⁵ Home Public June 1905, 169-186 (A).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Howard Cox who has examined the economic history of the growth of the Indian Cigarette Industry between 1900 and 1919 argues that British and American cigarettes were one of the major products that

anti-partition processions that paraded through the streets of mufassil towns were organized by schoolboys. In the important urban centers of Serajganj, Mymensingh, Barisal, Comilla and several other towns and cities young boys were organized under leaders to picket shops and prevent the sale of European goods. One can notice a clear gender-divide here where in most cases the rebellious students were schoolboys of the high school and Matriculation level or college-goers with the involvement of very few girls in active agitation. The few instances where female students came under the radar of colonial surveillance included the case of two girls from the Victoria School in Sirajganj who were appointed captains of the volunteer corps in the town.⁵⁷ In the case of Victoria School, the girls came under surveillance for preaching *swadeshi* in those localities within Sirajganj which were the hub of mercantile operations by the dominant Marwari traders. In this enterprise they were

were hit adversely in Bengal by the *Swadeshi* and boycott movement. The first production of machine-made cigarettes in the mid-1890s revolutionized the traditional tobacco industry in the late nineteenth century. At the turn of the twentieth century cigarettes were a new product, promoted and popularized through sophisticated marketing, to emerge as one of the largest industries in Britain led by W.D. and H.D. Wills. Being machine-made cigarettes could be manufactured in bulk and were thereby cheap. The industry also held the potential for large markets and profits and in this context India held promise. The two companies which monopolized tobacco trade in India in 1905 were the Imperial Tobacco Company, the largest company in Britain of the period, and the American Tobacco Company which was the second largest American corporation at this time. While early imports of machine-made cigarettes in India primarily targeted the European population, mainly the military, in the early twentieth century cigarette smoking became popular among the native Bengali middle classes. Between 1902 and 1908 the British American Tobacco Company opened its branches in Calcutta, Bombay, Rangoon, Madras, Karachi and Delhi to capture a wide market. However, the industry was badly hit during the *Swadeshi* movement and by 1906 cigarette imports declined considerably. The decline was felt sharply by the end of the first decade of the new century. For instance, while in 1908-09 the average monthly cigarette imports of India was 249,640 lbs, between March and September 1910 imports declined to 70,080 lbs. Similarly, “unmanufactured” (or raw) tobacco imports in India fell from 101,053 lbs in 1908/09 to 14,933 lbs in Mar-Sept 1910. For a detailed economic history of the growth of the Indian cigarette industry between 1900 and 1919 see Howard Cox, “International Business, the State and Industrialization in India: Early Growth in the Indian Cigarette Industry,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 27 (1990): 289-312. As part of the *Swadeshi* impetus several indigenous companies were started of which cigarette manufacturing was one as well. Sumit Sarkar notes that by 1907 three *Swadeshi* cigarette companies were started in Calcutta by the Globe Cigarette Co., the East India Cigarette Co., and the Bengal Cigarette Manufacturing Co. while the Rangpur Tobacco Co. was started in Rangpur in the same year. Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 129.

⁵⁷ IOR/L/PJ/6/763.

assisted by schoolboys from the neighboring Banwarilal High School, many of whom too came under the political surveillance of the local law enforcing authorities.

Confidential official reports indicate the extending influence of public sentiments into the domestic space. For instance in his report to the government, the Sadar Inspector of Howrah noted that in several instances gifts of *bideshi* (foreign) cloth had been rejected during the holidays by school boys and families with young students. His own nephews who resided with him tried to destroy some Manchester cloth he had purchased as presents for his relatives.⁵⁸ Calcutta emerged as the headquarters of the *swadeshi* propaganda. Bar libraries, schools and colleges looked upto leaders in Calcutta for continued advice and communication. Calcutta's emergence as the epicenter of the *Swadeshi* movement is evident from Lyon's report who noted that "disobedient students" were guided in their political activism by daily telegrams from the city.⁵⁹ The influence of the Calcutta based nationalist newspapers, which were by and large against the partition, was also much more profound when compared to local newspapers. Boys were encouraged to leave schools and colleges affiliated to the Calcutta University and instead enroll in nationalist educational institutes started as part of the National University.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ IOL/L/PJ/6/788.

Such instances are reminiscent of the anecdotes that Surendranath Banerjea also recounts in his autobiography that I discussed in Chapter One.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ The *Swadeshi* movement was not just confined to the methods of political agitations and the economic critique of colonialism but also included a scheme for national education. One of the first promoters of the idea was Rabindranath Tagore who in 1893 expressed his concern over English education. Tagore felt that English medium instruction was foreign to India and prevented the assimilation of progressive western values. Education in English meant that its benefits were confined to a small elite minority. By 1904 Tagore's solution to these problems of English education was to use a more imaginative form of education which would be popular and use both traditional folk media (such as the *mela* and *jatra*) as well as modern audio-visual methods such as magic-lantern talks. Another significant charge against English education was

***Swadeshi* and the Broja Mohan Institute in Barisal**

In this section I will focus on one of the chief centers of the *Swadeshi* movement, the Broja Mohan Institute in Barisal which was managed by Aswini Kumar Dutta, a prominent figure in the *Swadeshi* movement in Bengal. By the admission of the colonial state itself, Aswini Kumar's mass following in Barisal and adjoining towns and villages was unparalleled during this period. By 1907 the school tutored around 650 boys and had a staff of eleven teachers.⁶¹ The Superintendent of Police of Barisal in an official note informs that the Broja Mohan Institute had become the nucleus from which *swadeshi* agitation was engineered and fostered in the town and its hinterlands.⁶² *Swadeshi* processions, of which schoolboys formed a large proportion, started from or terminated in the school's compound. The institute frequently opened its premises to the public to conduct *swadeshi* meetings. Many of the teaching staff at the Broja Mohan Institute, in particular Surendra Nath Mitter, Tarini Kumar Sen, Rajani Kanta Guha (the Principal), and Dhirendra Nath Chaudhuri were active *swadeshi* orators. Durga Mohan Sen-- an ex-student and a teacher in the school-- was the printer, publisher and editor of the *Barisal Hitaish* which became a medium through which *swadeshi* ideas and Aswini Kumar's political activism could be popularized among a large audience. Due to the militant nature of

that it had failed to nurture creative thinking or research, that it tended to denationalize students and its secular tenets were uprooting Indians from their own religion. All these factors were seen to have resulted in the creation of western educated Indians who simply ended up being unquestioning imitators of the west. Therefore education on "national lines and under national control" became one of the major agendas of the *Swadeshi* movement. As I noted earlier in this chapter similar opinions were instrumental in the foundation of the Fergusson College too in Poona in 1885. As part of the call for national education in Bengal several schools and colleges were started.

⁶¹ Home Education 1908, 144-148 (A).

⁶² Ibid.

the journal Durga Mohan was the first editor of any mufassil journal to be persecuted for sedition under the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act.⁶³ Proceedings against Durga Mohan started in 1907 leading to a one year rigorous imprisonment.⁶⁴ The faculty at the Institute was known to have encouraged students to boycott British products. Students were recommended to preach *swadeshi* in their villages during vacation in school. They were encouraged to sever all connections with the British rule and openly resist all forms of government authority.

However, the locus of *swadeshi* agitation in the Brojo Mohan Institute and Barisal was Aswini Kumar Dutt. His contribution to the *Swadeshi* movement was to build a strong following for nationalism in Bengal through low-key but sustained humanitarian work.⁶⁵ Though primarily based in Barisal, he emerged as a leading nationalist figure in Bengal to politically mobilize students into the *swadeshi* agitation. His major contribution was to organize the students of the Brojo Mohan School into several volunteer bands. Bepin Chandra Pal himself pointed to the example of the students' volunteer associations in Barisal as an example to be followed for politically mobilizing students in other parts of the country.⁶⁶ Aswini Kumar founded the *Swadesh Bandhab Samiti* in August 1906 to coordinate the activities of the village branches and enforce social boycott. As the Magistrate of Bakarganj notes, the young student volunteers of the *Swadesh Bandhab Samiti* were identified by their yellow

⁶³ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 263.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

turbans with cross-belts of dark cloth with “*Bande Mataram*” inscribed on it.⁶⁷ The Samiti controlled about two hundred schools and within a short span of two years in 1908 it had 159 branches which had spread to Barisal, Bakarganj and the north eastern part of Bengal.⁶⁸ In the winter of 1908 Aswini Kumar was deported and the Samiti was outlawed by the government.⁶⁹

The main objectives of the *Swadesh Bandhab Samiti* was to settle village disputes by arbitration and take action if any act of illegality or injustice was committed by a government servant. It provided facilities for the physical development of young men and boys by organizing *lathi* play and other arts of self defense. A well known lathi fighter, Iasin Sirdar from Shehangal, was specially engaged to teach the students of the Broja Mohan Institution how to use *lathis*.⁷⁰ Here again, as in the case of Prof. Marwaza who taught Pulin Das and other members of the *Anushilan Samiti lathi* playing, we see a Muslim *lathi* expert teach indigenous martial arts to *Swadeshi* protestors. The practice of *lathi* play mushroomed in Calcutta and the mufassil towns too, particularly under Bepin Chandra Pal’s invocation to resort to active resistance by indigenous self defense mechanisms that any one could learn: “we should now return *lathis* with *lathis*.”⁷¹ The Magistrate of Dacca realized that the state had to

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Home Political, October 1907, 19 (Deposit).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ In a letter dated 17th June 1907, the Magistrate of Bakarganj provided the Commissioner of the Dacca Division further details, “In the beginning of the year, two bundles of 40 *lathis* were brought from Batajore for the use of the students. These *lathis* were male bamboos, 4 cubits long.” In another confidential letter, dated 10th November 1907, it is brought to the notice of the Chief Secretary to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam that the students can be found practicing *lathi* in the school compound of a “notorious and virulent agitator.” The exhibition of *lathi* and self defense skills formed a part of meetings. Home Education 1908, 144-148 (A) A major hub of *lathi* learning was raided in Bakarganj in June 1906 and weapons confiscated. Home Public, July 124 (A), 1906 (Confidential).

⁷¹ Pal’s speech at a public gathering in Calcutta, Home Public, July 124 (A), 1906 (Confidential).

police and suppress a rising trade in cheap bamboo *lathis* from the district in neighbouring Behar via river steamers. These *lathis* were readily available for purchase and sold at a low price of 3 annas a piece to make them affordable for the maximum number of people. Enquiries made from the steamer companies showed that the *lathis* are brought from Kamarganj in the Bhagalpur district of Bengal. Fearing misuse and potential violence, the Bengal Government imposed measures to put a stop to the traffic, which had caused serious disturbances on board the steamers.⁷²

To popularize the mass base of the *Swadeshi* movement and bridge the gap between the educated and the masses Aswini Kumar and other leaders in the *Swadeshi Bandhab Samiti* gave political speeches in Bengali. The Samiti used folk and regional cultural idioms such as the mela (fair), songs and *jatra* (a form of Bengali folk theater) to make the ideas of *Swadeshi* accessible to village audiences. Among the noted literary figures who composed songs under Aswini Kumar's request was Mofizuddin Bayati of Barisal, a folk poet who composed *swadeshi* songs in the local village dialect.⁷³ The poet Hemchandra Kabiratna Kabyabisarad composed folk narratives where *Swadeshi* ideas were combined with traditional stories from the epics or religious texts to make them entertaining as well as instructive for the masses.⁷⁴ Similarly Mukunda Das, a former student of the Brojo Mohan Institute, composed *jatra* plays replete with *swadeshi* themes and songs which ridiculed the government and caricatured its officials. As the *jatra* toured through the districts of Faridpur and Backergunj it reached out to a large audience across all classes. Since the Regulation of Meetings

⁷² Home Political September 1907, 44 (A) (Confidential) Fortnightly report on the Partition agitation.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 290.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 301.

Ordinance of May 1907 put restrictions on political meetings, the *jatra* became a substitute method for spreading *swadeshi* ideas to people. By 1907 government officials saw the *jatra* as a vehicle for spreading “seditious” ideas which the District Magistrate of Bakargunj found “very difficult to deal with” and staunch.⁷⁵ As a result Mukunda Das, who wrote many of the *jatra* plays that were performed as part of the Swadesh Bandhab Samiti, was charged for sedition under the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act in 1907.⁷⁶

By 1907 the Extremist ideology of the Congress gained much popularity, particularly Bepin Chandra Pal whose influence had visibly increased among the student population. The warning tone of the confidential official correspondences increases and by November of 1907 reports clearly indicate that the conduct of schoolboys and the youth had become far more “unfavourable” as compared to reports from previous years. The issue of the “seditious” pamphlets came up again. In a letter the Chief Secretary warned the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam that pamphlets glorifying Bepin Chandra Pal were distributed among students when the Broja Mohan Institute closed for holidays. The “thoroughness of the seditious education” was further exposed when one student from the institute was discovered to have submitted a “violently seditious” article to the *Barisal Hitaishi* for publication and other students were found distributing “seditious” pamphlets in public streets.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ibid., 302.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 387.

⁷⁷ The article in question was written by one Ananta Kumar Sen, a student of 2nd year at the Broja Mohan Institute, on anniversary of the boycott. It read:

“*This is the rising day of the Bengalees against the royal might.
The evil doer Curzon*”

The issue of students from the Brojo Mohan Institute publishing or disseminating “seditious” pamphlets was not an isolated case. The political threat from “seditious pamphlets” had come under the purview of the government earlier in 1905 too when pamphlets addressed to the “Pleaders of the Bar Library” and young students were found to be in extensive circulation particularly in school and college compounds. Contemporary official correspondences reveal the colonial anxiety over the fostering of this “very dangerous form of political discussion.”⁷⁸

The two most notorious pamphlets of the period were *Sonar Bangla* (Golden Bengal) and *Raja Ke* (Who is our Ruler?)⁷⁹ Although ostensibly anonymous, both were suspected to be the work of Bepin Chandra Pal, who was also the editor of the newspaper *New India*. These pamphlets were feared to have been printed at the *Sanjibani* press and issued by the *Brata Samiti*. *Raja Ke* was an overt critique of the exploitative economic policies of the British colonialism. The (anonymous) author began by declaring the colonial rulers to be “thieves” who had ruined the traditional arts and industries of India, impoverished weavers and artisans, imported and inundated Indian *hats* and *bazaars* with bundles of British manufactured products and imposed heavy taxation thereby daily impoverishing thousands of raiyats and zamindars. He questioned the very legitimacy of British colonial rule by asking: “Are

Feringhee [Foreigners], *today we cut off all connection with you, The Bengalees are now assembled under the “Bande Mataram” banner, hoisted in the battlefield of “drive-out” and “boycott.”*

Home Education 1908, 144-148 (A).). (Emphasis in original)

⁷⁸ Correspondence between R. W Carlyle and H. H Risley on 1st December 1905. Home Public June 1905, 169-186 (A).

⁷⁹ The pamphlets were written in Bengali. Being characterized as “seditious,” however, meant that they were translated into English and published in contemporary official records. For my research I had access only to these official translations.

those our rulers who plunder the produce of our fields and throw us into the jaws of famine, plague and malaria?...We have no ruler. Had there been one, why should we be in such distress?"⁸⁰ By dismissing the authority of the British government the author opened up the space for dissent and the possibility of replacement by indigenous governance: "We will govern our own country."⁸¹ Unlike in colonial schools when the pre-colonial era was invoked to project the superiority of British colonial rule in India, in the pamphlet the author inverted this rhetoric on its head by projecting Mughal rule as a period of prosperity and general well-being of the populace. So while British rule was "heartless, cruel, deceitful, untruthful and irreligious," the period of Mughal rule was marked by "paternal and filial feelings."⁸² In these discussions one finds resonances with the literature on *Swadeshi* discussed in the Bengali children's magazines where revoking of the past was primarily aimed at creating a sense of inter-religious cohesiveness.

The striking aspect of the pamphlet was its call for communal brotherhood among Hindus and Muslims: "Hindu brethren, swear in the name of your Kali, Durga, Mahadev, and Srikrishna, and Musalman brethren, swear in the name of Alla, and proclaim in every village that-- We Hindus and Musalmans will serve the country unitedly."⁸³ The author argued that great harm to inter-religious harmony has been inflicted by religious leaders-- priests, *maulvis* and *granthis*-- by their polemics under the instigation of the government. The target of attack in these pamphlets was very

⁸⁰ IOR/L/PJ/6/763.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

explicitly the British colonial state. The Partition of Bengal is often associated with the divisive nature of communal relations between Hindus and Muslims. This pamphlet indicates that the aspect of communal angle was more complex and that there were elements in the *Swadeshi* agitation that aimed at forging a united religious front against colonial rule. While this call for unification did perturb the state, the fiber of violence that interwove the vocabulary of the text was a bigger cause of trouble. Calling both Hindu and Muslim “brethrens” to shed blood ungrudgingly to protect the nation, the author threatened, “If any priest or maulavi appointed by Government comes to a village on the pretence of preaching religion, but in reality create discords, he shall lose his head.” It is not surprising therefore to imagine the anxiety of the colonial state to have a pamphlet such as this circulating freely in school and college campuses at an already volatile period evoked by the partition.

The “seditious” pamphlets issue alarmed the colonial state also because it posed a threat to the production of “good citizens.” Lyon feared that schoolboys and the youth being inexperienced would be unable to distinguish between the “legitimate” and “illegitimate” demands made by the nationalist leadership and develop a bias against the government which was incompatible with loyal citizenship.⁸⁴ Such seditious subjects could not be expected to serve the colonial state loyally. The issue occupied an important aspect of discussion during the crafting of the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act in 1907. Though the pamphlets had an ephemeral existence when compared to newspapers, they were seen as more

⁸⁴ Ibid.

dangerous. This was primarily because being mostly anonymous it was difficult to find out who the authors of the pamphlets were or where they were being published from. The Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act concluded that the possession of pamphlets indicated the intent to distribute or circulate them in the process attempting to gag the voices of dissent. Therefore the possession of anonymous pamphlets-- irrespective of whether the content was seditious or not-- was considered a criminal offence.⁸⁵ Members of the drafting committee of the Act argued that it should have a clause to deal with “seditious” newspapers and other literature printed outside India which had gradually assumed a growing readership in various Indian cities and towns. In a resolution passed by the Government of India on 3rd June 1907 the government decided to take sustained action under penal law and resort to all measures necessary to repress the dissemination of sedition and the promotion of ill-will against the state and between classes. The resolution further empowered Local Governments to institute prosecutions in consultation with their legal advisors in all cases where the law was considered to have been willfully infringed.⁸⁶

The official correspondences on the Broja Mohan Institute includes an extensive daily history sheet of acts of sedition in which students of the institute were involved in the year 1907, indicating the kind of attention the Institute attracted in the eyes of government agencies, particularly the Police Department, the Magistrate of Bakarganj and the Education Department. The most common charges of sedition surrounded the practice of *lathi* playing within the compounds of the Broja Mohan

⁸⁵ IOR/L/PJ/6/836.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Institute where teachers personally trained their students in the local martial art. These meetings also involved the preaching of *swadeshi* ideas and promoting the idea of boycotting imported foreign goods. There are daily accounts of students from the Institute travelling to other villages and districts to deliver lectures on *swadeshi* and urging local customers and shopkeepers to join the boycott movement. We also get fascinating statements that allude to the efforts made to seek external assistance from countries such as Japan, which had emerged as a symbol of Asian nationalism and modernity particularly after its defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905.⁸⁷ For instance, official reports reveal that on July 19th 1907 the Broja Mohan Institute was closed to mark the death of Kali Prasanna Kabyabisarad, editor of the *Hitabadi*, who died on his way back from Japan, where he went as a *swadeshi* ambassador to arrange for the assistance of Japanese troops in the event of an Indian rising.⁸⁸ Such incidents suggest that the Institute had multiple layers of engagement with nationalist forces, particularly the vernacular press, not only within Bengal but also at an international level. Similarly in the last week of September 1907 several instances of students' seditious activities, where the highest law enforcement authority, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), was involved were brought to the government's notice. On September 22nd, two inspectors of the CID purchased a pamphlet that was being sold by three students of the 7th class at the Institute. Boys from other

⁸⁷ For a discussion on the political symbolism of Japan in the nationalist movement in Bengal see Chapter Four.

⁸⁸ The official reports reveal little about the details of Kali Prasanna's visit to Japan. The fact that he died on his return journey to India might have contributed to much of the lack of information. Owing to the conspiratorial nature of his visit presumably Kali Prasanna himself might have kept the details of the visit closed and secret.

schools were also found selling the pamphlet in different parts of the town. The pamphlet came under scrutiny since it contained songs that were full of insinuations about the horrors and poverty that colonialism brought about in India. Official correspondence particularly highlighted statements such as “The English fill their boxes and we pay the taxes” to be most objectionable and concluded that the pamphlet was evidently designed to create dissatisfaction with the present government.⁸⁹

Official accounts also indicate that Aswini Kumar’s house had become the hub of *swadeshi* activism by both students and teachers indicating the porosity within the supposedly rigid boundaries between the public and the domestic nationalist spaces. On September 23rd 1907 as the news of Aurobindo Ghosh’s acquittal in the *Bande Mataram* sedition case⁹⁰ spread, students from the Broja Mohan Institute gathered at his residence in large numbers to rejoice and celebrate. Students from the

⁸⁹ IOR/L/PJ/6/836.

⁹⁰ Since vernacular newspapers were one of the most potent means through which *Swadeshi* ideas were disseminated to the general public, in the early nineteenth century the government cracked down heavily on them and their editors, proprietors and printers on charges of “sedition.” In July 1907 the police raided the offices of the Bengali newspaper *Bande Mataram* and seized several documents and account books. While the newspaper had no declared editor the police arrested Aurobindo Ghosh whom they believed to be the editor. The documents that they confiscated were not of much help since all entries showing that Aurobindo was the editor had been “erased by the knife” and the rest did not provide concrete evidence to prove that *Bande Mataram* was “seditious.” If the erasing of entries by the knife was indeed true clearly somebody had removed evidences that could incriminate Aurobindo. The official frustration was best articulated in the pro-British newspaper *The Statesman* which complained that although *Bande Mataram*, the newspaper, “reeked with sedition patently visible in every line” it was written so skillfully that no legal action could be taken. The government therefore decided to persecute Aurobindo on two non-editorial features-- first, a letter to the editor and second, reprints of official translations of “seditious” articles previously published in *Jugantar* (to which Aurobindo was associated). The staff at *Bande Mataram* made arrangements for Aurobindo’s defense and instructed its witnesses to provide evidence in court that was all false. When the courts summoned Bepin Chandra Pal to testify if Aurobindo was indeed the editor of *Bande Mataram* he refused to take the oath or answer any questions. Pal was charged for contempt of court and sentenced to six months of imprisonment. Failing to find much incriminating evidence against Aurobindo he had to be declared not guilty.

This summary is drawn from Peter Heehs, *The Bomb in Bengal: The Rise of Revolutionary Terrorism in India 1900-1910* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 100-101.

institute went around the town on bicycles circulating the news of Aurobindo's acquittal. They posted notices on lamp posts and walls announcing his acquittal printed by the *Barisal Hitaishi*. By October 1st 1907 another incident of a student of the school, Surendra Nath Sen, selling "seditious" pamphlets came under official notice. Though not much information is found in the official accounts, we know that the pamphlet was titled "*Sakti Sanjibani*" ["How to nourish strength"] perhaps alluding to the discourses surrounding physical culture which emerged as an essential component of the nationalist discourse in contemporary Bengal. On the same day in the evening, Leakat Hossein and Abdul Ghafur, who were arrested on charges of sedition were released on bail. A crowd of 300 agitators many of whom were students welcomed them outside jail gates and escorted them to Aswini Kumar Dutta's house where they were greeted by a huge number of students from the Broja Mohan boarding house.⁹¹ Aswini Kumar was also suspected of organizing secret meetings in which other *swadeshi* leaders such as Leakat Hossein participated. The official records have an extensive day-to-day detailed list of similar events for the remaining months of 1907 mostly of students boycotting or picketing foreign goods and of Aswini Kumar traveling to villages and making boycott speeches.

The execution of eighteen year old Khudiram Bose, the youngest revolutionary in Bengal, in 1908 held special significance to students at Brojo Mohan Institute. He had planned to assassinate a controversial British Magistrate, D. H. Kingsford, notorious for his repressive policies to suppress secret societies that

⁹¹ IOR/L/PJ/6/836.

included the public flogging of those suspected of nationalist activism.⁹² Khudiram threw a bomb at a carriage he thought was carrying the judge, however, mistakenly two Englishwomen were killed. He was captured and after a long trial was hanged. Khudiram was the embodiment of romantic revolutionary terrorism who emerged as a legendary youth hero even before his death. Scores of inspirational poems and songs praising his heroism were composed and popularly sung all over Bengal.⁹³ On August 11th 1908, the day Khudiram was hanged, notices expressing grief at his execution were pasted by the students of the Brojo Mohan Institute all over the town. In his honor, most students attended the Institute barefoot as a mark of mourning, and some fasted the whole day. The teachers of the institute did not teach and some attended school barefooted.

As similar “seditious” incidents by students became more prominent, the Calcutta University launched an inspection where the records of the topics discussed in meetings of the Broja Mohan Student’s Club were scrutinized and sent to the Registrar. While it was not mandatory for the students of the lower classes to maintain the records of their meetings, as a measure of extending state surveillance it was compulsory for the boys of the second and third classes to do so. The topics discussed by the 2nd class students included a vast range of theme including the importance of attending class meetings to issues that formed an important aspect of the nationalist discourse such as discipline, health, duty and personalities such as

⁹² Lawrence Lifschultz, “Abu Taher’s Last Testament, Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 12, no. 33/34 (1977), 1303.

⁹³ Lifschultz notes that the public outpouring of grief and solidarity during Khudiram’s funeral was so overwhelming that a ban was imposed by the local colonial authorities on further public funerals of revolutionaries.

Vidyasagar and Shivaji. Students of class 3 and 4 discussed themes such as the history of the Broja Mohan Institute, education, duties of a student, utility of the study of biographies, self control, self culture and physical exercises, student life and character. Although it is hard to know the exact nature and content of discussion, it is evident that the themes of conversation were aligned with the Extremist nationalist discourse with its strong emphasis on the cultivation of the body and lives of individuals who embodied the spirit of nationalism and challenges to the impositions on their territorial freedom.

The new element of students' participation in the nationalist movement was, however, not entirely free of controversy and differing opinions within the Congress leadership. The main objection arose between the Moderates and the Extremists in terms of what the role of the youth ought to be in the nationalist movement, and the form that agitation against the Partition of Bengal should take. Extremist leaders such as Bepin Chandra Pal argued that the boycott of British goods should be popularized in other provinces apart from Bengal in order to facilitate the demand for self-governance. The Moderates on the other hand wanted the boycott program to be limited only within the immediate context of the partition in Bengal. Key Moderates such as Surendranath Banerjea spearheaded the anti-partition movement, particularly through his newspaper *The Bengalee*. Surendranath also emerged as the main leader of the students. A confidential report on the *Swadeshi* movement for the month of September 1906 reveals his growing popularity. For instance, in September about two thirds of the 500 people gathered for Surendranath's speech at Hooghly were

students.⁹⁴ Apart from politicizing the youth he urged them to appeal to the Hindus and Muslims to join together and gather round the national banner and boost the *Swadeshi* and boycott movement.⁹⁵ Like his contemporaries Surendranath too did not envisage a revolutionary role for women but instead appealed to mothers to send their young sons for the service of the nation. Despite Surendranath's key role, by and large the Moderate Congress leadership was hesitant about the involvement of students in the *Swadeshi* movement, particularly in the educational boycott of examinations, schools and colleges thereby causing the first major wedge between the moderate and extremist leadership. Major colleges in Calcutta of the period, such as Ripon and City⁹⁶ controlled by prominent nationalist leaders Surendranath Banerjea and Ananda Mohan Bose respectively, did not get affiliated to the National Council of Education. The editorial in the Extremist newspaper, *Bande Mataram*, largely attributed this to the vested interests of men like Surendranath Banerjea.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ IOL/L/PJ/6/788.

⁹⁵ In 1906 two banners that had the tricolor with the words "Vande Mataram" written were used in the nationalist movement. The first, designed by Sister Nivedita's students, was a scarlet and yellow flag with Vande Mataram written in Bengali on either side of a thunderbolt sign. The second was a flag, designed by two Bengali men: Sachindra Prasad Bose and Sukumar Mitra, with green, ochre/yellow and red banner with the words "Vande Mataram" inscribed in Devanagari in the central panel. This flag was displayed at a Congress meeting in 1906. The flag also had the sun and moon as symbols to signify Hindu Muslim unity. There were 8 lotuses on the top of flag which ran along the horizontal signifying the 8 provinces of colonial India. For more on this see Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 251.

Considering Surendranath Banerjea's emphasis on Hindu Muslim unity and the context of the reference to the banner it likely that the "national banner" mentioned above was the one used in the Congress meeting in 1906.

⁹⁶ Ripon College was established by Surendranath Banerjea in 1882. Ananda Mohan Bose started the City School in Calcutta in 1880 which was later expanded to form the City College in 1884. He also promoted the Banga Mahila Vidyalaya for girls which was subsequently combined with the Bethune College. Ananda Mohan was a close ally and colleague of Surendranath Banerjea. Along with Banerjea he was one of the founders of the Indian Association in 1876 and was elected the President of the Madras session of the Indian National Congress in 1898.

⁹⁷ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 46.

A vocal commentator on the issue of students' political mobilization, in relation to the *Swadeshi* movement, was Annie Besant. She came to India in 1893 after an active career as a political activist in England. By the turn of the twentieth century Besant emerged as a renowned public personality not only due to her ideas of theosophy but also as an educationalist. In 1898 she started the Central Hindu College in Benaras for the purpose of teaching Hinduism to Hindu boys along with a sound secular education. The school would later expand to form the Benaras Hindu University in 1916. She also established the Central Hindu Girls School in Benaras in 1904 to promote the education for girls. During the *swadeshi* agitations and particularly after the Surat split of the Congress between the Moderate and Extremist factions, her activities became more politicized. She saw Theosophy with its emphasis on the spiritual unity of all religions as an ideal path for Indians to follow.⁹⁸ In terms of ideological affiliations Besant's own position was more in favor of the Moderate stand as opposed to the Extremists'. While supporting the concept of *swadeshi*, she felt that schoolboys were inexperienced and unaccustomed to the wisdom needed to judge for themselves what would be of a long term benefit for them. Moreover, she felt that being dismissed from school or college or being refused a leaving certificate meant that both their education and future livelihood were destroyed. This, she saw as a "danger in India's awakening."⁹⁹ In her opinion, national politics required the

⁹⁸ Joanne Mortimer, "Annie Besant and India 1913-1917," *Journal of Contemporary History* 18, no. 1 (1983): 62.

⁹⁹ Besant's letter to the editor of *The Friend of India and Statesman*, November 9th 1905. On this point she had a supporter in Tagore who worried that the boycott of government schools and colleges would mean a problem of unemployment. This was because most the employment in fields related to humanities and pure science was primarily in the government or private European job sector. The

experience and training of a matured leader--it was not the place for schoolboys. For her, the role of the school was envisaged as an educationist institution and not a political one. Tied to her reasoning was the fear of the loss of discipline in the school due to political activism: "Outside the College, you obey your fathers: inside the College the rules of the place...What is to become of our education work if one day a telegram is to come from Calcutta, another day from Lahore, from Bombay, from Madras, ordering our students to demonstrate against or for some party measure? All discipline would vanish, and our institution would become a whirlpool of undigested politics."¹⁰⁰ She particularly disapproved the use of schoolboys to carry out a crusade against English products.¹⁰¹

Besant could only foresee a student's role confined to discussion and debates over political, social and economic questions to train forming a rational opinion before launching into active politics.¹⁰² The appeal to disenroll from government schools and colleges, she felt, was counterproductive till the time there was enough indigenous nationalist schools which could absorb new students. Besant's stand reflects the ambiguity that marked the nationalist critique of British colonial education. While English education remained a "contested terrain" during the *Swadeshi* movement, the fact that a government school and college degree was the path towards economic advancement through government jobs for most educated

swadeshi industries, still in their infancy, could not generate adequate employment opportunities to absorb all students who gave up government education. For more on this point see Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 169-170.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Indians meant that the space for contestation remained ambiguous. This contradiction is more evident when one considers Besant's views in an article published in the Dawn Society's magazine in 1906 where she argued that educated Indians should take up the issue of education in their own hands especially since the University Act of 1904 had made higher education very expensive and thus beyond the reach of poorer students.¹⁰³ For Besant the issue ran deeper to a point where she starts to sound problematic in that she feared that the closure of options for education in government and aided schools would result in students compelled to join missionary schools where the "roots of devotion" were dug up and "trampled down with sarcasm." In an age when nationalism and spiritualism were often enmeshed, Besant feared that such education created a "hybrid"-a nonbeliever in all religions who was not only a "bad Hindu" but also a "non Christian." Such de-spiritualizing of the Indian meant denationalizing him too.¹⁰⁴ Like some others, notably Tagore¹⁰⁵, Besant too highlighted her discomfort with the aspect of coercion and violence that accompanied the *Swadeshi* movement: "I regard the temporary boycott of British goods, *if carried out without intimidation of any kind*, as a legitimate protest against the inconsiderate action of Lord Curzon, and as a constitutional way of drawing the attention of the British people to the wrong inflicted in their name."¹⁰⁶ Commenting on the trend of forceful destruction of foreign goods she argued that

¹⁰³ Basu, "National Education in Bengal," 58.

¹⁰⁴ Besant's letter to the editor of *The Friend of India and Statesman*, November 9th 1905.

¹⁰⁵ Tagore's resentment to the violent and coercive aspect of the *Swadeshi* movement has been captured in his novel, *Ghare Baire* (The Home and the World).

¹⁰⁶ Besant's letter to the editor of *The Friend of India and Statesman*, November 9th 1905. (Emphasis in original)

every person should be allowed to follow his judgment and be convinced through an appeal to the opponent's intellect and argument instead of being forced to follow another person's instructions.

Despite such reservations from the Moderate camp, the Extremist leadership continued to encourage student participation and Bepin Chandra Pal, who saw himself as Surendranath's political successor, emerged as the chief public spokesman of the Bengal extremists. However, he lacked organizational skills required of a leader but nevertheless managed to gain a foothold into student politics.¹⁰⁷ Pal organized multiple series of meetings in various theatres and town halls across Calcutta in August 1905 to boycott government services and education. His single speech at the Star Theater on August 3rd alone drew 200 students who respond to his call to sign a pledge to abstain from any kind of government service.¹⁰⁸ The rift is evident when the *Bengalee*, which was owned by Surendranath Banerjea, did not report on these meetings despite its immense success.¹⁰⁹ The ultimate toll of the Moderate-Extremist rift would be the split in the Congress at its Surat session in 1907.

Government Backlash

As incidents of students' political activism increased across the provinces they became targets of state control. Soon in Calcutta, the hotbed of student nationalism, "every student was looked upon as a potential revolutionary and suspect."¹¹⁰ On 10th

¹⁰⁷ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 70.

¹⁰⁸ *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, August 4th, August 29th 1905.

¹⁰⁹ Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal*, 66.

¹¹⁰ S. K. Bose, *Netaji's Collected Works*, Vol. 1 (Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, 1980), 195.

October 1905, R. W Carlyle (Officiating Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal) relayed a confidential circular (government circular No. 1679) to all magistrates and collectors in Bengal regarding the deployment of schoolboys and students in political activism. The Carlyle Circular underlined that the government found the trend subversive to discipline and highly ruinous to the interest of the boys themselves. The Circular highlighted that it was “impossible” for the government to tolerate such behaviour particularly in institutions which it either financially assisted or countenanced. Educational authorities were ordered that all attempts made by students attending any school or college in their district to participate in any public action of a political nature or in connection with boycotting, picketing and other activities associated with the *Swadeshi* movement must at once be taken cognizance of. The heads of schools and colleges were required to take every possible measure to prevent political activism by schoolboys attending their institution else face the withdrawal of grant-in-aid and privileges of competing for scholarships. This also meant that the University would disaffiliate their institutions. The circular was published in all contemporary leading newspapers including *The Statesman*, *The Bengalee* and *Ananda Bazar Patrika* to send out the message loud and clear. Both Surendranath Banerjea and Bipin Chandra Pal denounced the circular and urged students to not bow down under its pressure.

Within one month however, fifteen schools in the Faridpur district in Eastern Bengal were implicated for violating the Carlyle Circular. Enquiries by the Education Department led to the conclusion that teachers in eleven of these schools had either

incited or plotted political demonstrations by the students of their schools. In response to this measure, Babu Kali Prasanna Das Gupta, the Head Master of the Madaripur High English School, along with the representative teachers from the Madaripur, Tulasar, Gurudas, Lonsing, Bajitpur R.E, Gopalpur A. R Victoria, Khalia Rajaram, Bijhari, Kartikpur, Palong, Chikandi, and Panditsar High English Schools held a Teacher's Conference at Madaripur and passed a resolution on November 5th 1905. The members of the conference concluded that the members of the teachers' association did not consider their students' supporting the *Swadeshi* movement inappropriate in any way nor did they find their involvement in the movement as political agitators improper. They claimed that their respective schools had been careful in punishing instances of lawlessness on the part of the students but under present circumstances found the Carlyle Circular "unnecessary" and "in all conscience very difficult" to act upon. School authorities and guardians of all students were informed that the teachers would not abide by the terms of the Circular, and if pressured, would resign from their posts. After the resolution was passed, Kali Prasanna pledged to dedicate the proceeds from the sale of his books for the *Swadeshi* cause. He specified that for the first three years this money should be spent to help and provide loans to teachers who were compelled to resign or were penalized owing to their participation in the *Swadeshi* movement. After the third year the proceeds should go to the National Fund and the National University.

The resolution invited the attention of H. E Stapleton, the Officiating Inspector of Schools (Dacca) to Madaripur, who called upon Kali Prasanna to

disassociate himself from the *Swadeshi* movement. When Kali Prasanna refused, the government grant-in-aid to the Madaripur High English School was withdrawn. The right of the school of holding scholarships was also withdrawn. The Inspector of Schools ensured that the implicated teachers from the Madaripur High English School had to resign. In most of the remaining fourteen schools either the Headmaster or the teachers resigned (for instance in Lonsing, Gopalpur) or were ordered to do so (in Khalia, Chikandi, Kartikpur, Bijhari) and scholarship rights were withdrawn (in Khalia, Chikandi, Bajitpur, Palong, Tulasar, Panditsar). H. H Risley, the Secretary to the Government of India, in a letter dated November 2nd 1906 established the superiority of the Government of India over the Calcutta University by reasserting that the state fully endorsed the steps taken in Faridpur. He also maintained that the Government of India would no longer surrender those powers to the University that only the state alone could properly exercise. In addition to this measure, Bampfylde Fuller (Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905-06) passed a decree stating that if the government found any educational institution at the focus of political agitations or engaging in activities that it considered politically controversial, the students from that institution would be debarred from government service. He held that students brought up under influences which were hostile to the state could not be expected to serve it loyally.¹¹¹ This indirectly meant the closure of the school since no parent would send their

¹¹¹ IOR/L/PJ/6/768.

children to an institution which was debarred from government service- the best and most prestigious employment open to educated Indians during this period.

Rules were also passed regarding the political conduct of students. Schoolboys were decreed to “not attend any public meeting, good or bad.”¹¹² While it was easier to implement and enforce this rule for residents in government hostels, it was hard to monitor day scholars because although during school hours they could be put under surveillance by school authorities, acts of disobedience during post-school sessions were hard to detect unless reported. Schoolboys could attend only those non-political meetings which the Manager of the school, while exercising his discretion and responsibility, felt desirable for students to attend. School and college boys were allowed to attend public meetings only with a prior permission from the Principal despite the fact that the government admitted that it was impossible for any Principal to fully predict the character of a meeting in advance. Principals were given specific instructions to “generally assume” that all meetings held under the auspices of the Non-Cooperation movement were objectionable.¹¹³

The debate over political activism and students soon shifted to a scathing critique of the Indian family laced in a language of cultural stereotypes and colonial paternalism. W. W Hornell, the Director of Public Instruction in Bengal, noted that anyone who had closely witnessed Bengali family life would notice the curious personality of an average Bengali boy who was susceptible to external influences but at the same time was “hopelessly irresponsible.” While the Bengali boy was not an

¹¹² IOR/R/20/A/8036.

¹¹³ Ibid.

“innocent babe”--particularly in relation to his knowledge “especially in sexual matters”--his upbringing apparently did not train him enough to realise the effects of his actions.¹¹⁴ Therefore, it was the duty of the government to protect and shepherd him from the evil influences of the political agitator. Also intrinsic in this analysis were typical assumptions of general Bengali male effeminacy-- where the male child was seen to have been petted at home only to grow up as an easily malleable “childish” adult lacking judgment to make decisions for his own good. Hornell wrote, “With the Bengalee all is different. In his home he is adored and petted by everyone, especially the women of the house, whom he is probably taught to despise. When he goes to school there are no difficulties to overcome. If another boy smacks his head, or his master pulls his ear, his father writes to the headmaster demanding “Justice”... If through his own idleness the boy fails to get promotion at the end of the term, the father, instead of taking it out of the boy, writes at enormous length to the authorities of the school explaining that the boy has really earned promotion...The idea of a boy being fit to face responsibilities at the age of 16 or 17 is never seriously entertained by his parents. The purport of this long digression is to emphasise the extreme importance,- the Bengalee boy being what he is, -of safeguarding him from the political agitator.”¹¹⁵ Such scathing positions echo the dominant British opinion on the inadequacies of the Indian family life, shaped by Protestant critics and articulated by the likes of Monier-Williams in 1887 who argued that the debilitating effects of the

¹¹⁴ Home Education June 1907 76-79 (A) Confidential.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 11

home was a source of moral decay of the Indian child.¹¹⁶ Added to this was the belief that “every” Bengali is “the victim of undigested political maxims.” Once persuaded to believe that the Government was trying to coerce him into thinking on its lines, the vagueness of his ideas would deter him from his bungled worldview. Hornell advised that if the Government could persuade the Bengali that he may hold any political views he liked, provided that they were not immediately subversive of order and that his son’s education was aimed at protecting him from the “ill-advising fervour of political zealots,” he could be brought to “cheerful compliance.”¹¹⁷

Meanwhile at an all-India level too, the Government of India declared that the aim of education in schools and colleges should be the training of students in the value of self respect which found expression in “*submission to authority, use of temperate language and deference to the judgment of those older than themselves.*”¹¹⁸ To combat the lack of student deference to state authority, the government felt the need of bringing up the Indian youth “in accordance with the European ideals of what is right, expedient, becoming, fitting, lovely and noble.”¹¹⁹ The discipline in English schools and colleges at home was therefore decided to be the standard, especially because indigenous education furnished no traditions which could be referred to. To improve discipline in schools and increase stricter vigilance over students several direct means of controlling were recommended. One of these measures was encouraging the establishment of boarding schools and hostels which could become centers where “a

¹¹⁶ Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 17.

¹¹⁷ Home Education June 1907 76-79 (A) Confidential, 11

¹¹⁸ Home Department Education, File no. cclxy,1900, 11-12. (Emphasis mine).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

high standard of morality and discipline” could be enforced under the watchful care of local and educational authorities.¹²⁰ It was felt that under this system where the heads of institutions, teachers and students resided in the same campus, longer hours of interaction could be fostered between students and the faculty thereby allowing stricter surveillance over students. The boarding school could also keep students away from the supposed debilitating effects of the home on the child. The other method of surveillance was the monitorial system whereby boys from the higher classes of a school were selected to be monitors for the purpose of maintaining “proper discipline during and *as far as possible out of school hours* for reporting breaches of rules, and generally for maintaining a high standard of conduct manners.”¹²¹ The advantage of the monitorial system was that it diffused the influence of the schoolmasters particularly that of the head master, through a wider circle than could have been otherwise reached:

Through the monitorial system *the personal influence of the masters is brought to bear immediately* upon a limited number of more advanced students whom they can know intimately, and who, in their turn communicate the impressions they have received to a large number of younger boys. With the monitors, on the other hand, the trust reposed in them tends to foster in them a sense of responsibility, brings them to look upon the reputation and prosperity of the school as in some case committed to their keeping, and prepares them for the larger duties of actual life.¹²²

Schools had to now maintain “Conduct Registers” which would catalogue the Headmaster’s opinions on the character and behavior of students. Prizes were allotted for good conduct to make these objects of eager competition. Under this

¹²⁰ Ibid., 16.

¹²¹ Ibid., 17.

¹²² Ibid. (Emphasis mine)

system, disorderly conduct during the closing years of school career would result in the penalty of no future prospects of obtaining official employment after leaving the school.¹²³ Enforcing “good conduct” meant implementing stricter forms of punishment and forfeiting scholarships in cases of willful transgression of school rules. Under these new guidelines punishment for the breach of discipline had to fall on the offender directly. This meant a deprivation of privileges, “*a judicious use of the rod in the case of young pupils*” and finally expulsion in cases of “aggravated and persistent misconduct” which were deemed more suitable forms of punishment than mere fines.¹²⁴ Effective moral training, which Indian students apparently lacked, formed another integral aspect of eliciting “good conduct.” The emphasis on moral training meant introducing more moral textbooks which would “lighten the moral darkness of this country.”¹²⁵ Moral training was to include among other themes, aspects like submission to authority, orderly conduct, prompt obedience and “imitation.”¹²⁶ The government highlighted that since they were dealing with young children, the notion of “right” and “wrong” should be presented as an *authoritative statement that they must accept*.¹²⁷ It was also recommended that the courses in English literature, History and Moral Science should be framed such that they directly furthered the growth of a “noble, truthful, generous, courageous and self-sacrificing

¹²³ Ibid., 16.

¹²⁴ Home Department Education, June 1901, 33-59 (A), 67.

¹²⁵ H. B. Griggs, the Director of Public Instructions Madras, made this statement.

| Home Department Education, File no. cclxv, 1900, 30.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 187.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 37.

character.”¹²⁸ The character of moral training was kept strictly religiously neutral so that it would not be seen as an extension of Christian proselytization. This emphasis on the “moral” further established the notion of the British Empire as a moral enterprise while underlining the “moral deficiency” of the subject people. Controlling an individual’s spiritual identity thus became a potent means of achieving the wider colonization of emotions, mind and body.¹²⁹ Another means of governing the mind including curbing the flow of information and knowledge through libraries and debating societies. Denzil Ibbetson, the Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces, recommended:

I would rigidly exclude all newspapers from the reading rooms and libraries of schools and colleges over which the Government exercises any control. And I would discourage debating societies, *except under the most careful and competent supervision*, even at the cost of some loss in other respects. *In no case should the discussion of political subjects be permitted.* The Indian youth is extraordinarily precocious; he suffers from acute megalomania; and he can well afford to defer his acquaintance with politics until he has left college.¹³⁰

Similarly, G. D. Oswell, the Principal of Rajkumar College in Raipur, strongly suggested that the proceedings of the debating societies should be conducted under the supervision of some senior member of the staff to check license of expression and to exercise a general control over the subjects discussed. He also suggested that

¹²⁸ Ibid., 21.

¹²⁹ J. A. Mangan, *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialization in British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 4.

¹³⁰ Home Department Education, June 1901, 33-59 (A), 124.

all staff members who initiate the introduction of any political subjects in students' debates should be strictly punished.¹³¹

Considering the important role school teachers played in introducing their students to political activism, the government found it necessary to make provisions for training teachers to be loyal to the colonial state. This included starting more normal schools and engaging teachers from England for a period of five to seven years to introduce and establish a tone and system of discipline. It was categorically stated that politics or the role of a politician was unsuitable for professionals who instructed the youth. All teachers schools affiliated to the Education Department were required to sign a declaration of loyalty to the government to remind them of the necessity of fidelity to British rule. To underline the severity of violating the declaration, a list of punishable offences resulting in the dismissal from service was charted out.¹³²

Meanwhile, the debate on the political activism of Indian students spilled over to a discussion of Indian students studying abroad particularly in England. The memorandum of the Committee of the East India Association in 1907 expressed their concern regarding the "unhealthy influences" that Indian students in England were exposed to that stemmed from feelings of discontent with the colonial government and resulted in activities which were "disastrous to themselves and to the

¹³¹ Ibid., 140.

¹³² This list included offences like writing or "causing to have written" articles calculated to create ill-feeling against the Government or its officials.

Home Department Education, June 1901, 33-59 (A), 90.

country.”¹³³ The government’s anxiety lay in the fact that such students were being imbued with a spirit of bitterness against British rule who on their return back home would become influential centers of disaffection and impressed a negative impact on public opinion. The memorandum alerted the authorities to the presence of networks of young Indian students in London who indoctrinated new batches of students by discussions of the abuses of British rule. It was therefore felt utmost necessary to produce a counter force that would dilute this influence and sway young Indian students to a more English social life “among the upper middle classes.” To achieve this, on their arrival in England all young Indian students had to become members of English clubs for at least six months to be acquainted with British culture after which the membership could be extended for an affordable membership fee of 5-10 shillings a year. The memorandum ended with the warning that the “India Office should realize the great political importance of imbuing their [the students’] minds with loyal feelings arising out of a more comprehensive understanding of the work and aims of the British Government, than they now pick up.”¹³⁴

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the contested nature of colonial education at the turn of the twentieth century by focusing on Bengal and the Bombay Presidency which were the earliest locations of student’ political mobilization in India. Although

¹³³ IOR/L/PJ/6/808.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

the participation of students into nationalist politics during this period cannot be characterized as a students' movement this move in Indian politics is historically significant because it indicates a gradual opening up of political space (hitherto limited to western educated elites). The chapter discussed contestations to colonial education and governance primarily at two levels. The first level of contestation was in the realm of ideas and thoughts. These took the shape of vernacular school textbooks written by native school teachers and taught in privately owned schools established with the aim of promoting "nation building education." Unlike British colonial school textbooks which were written specifically to creating loyal British subjects (such as Lee-Warner's *The Citizen of India*), the vernacular textbooks challenged the very premise of colonial governance by becoming vehicles to spread nationalist ideas which the colonial government saw as "seditious." By interpreting Indian history on their own terms the vernacular textbooks sought to resurrect national and self pride. They did so by an outright rejection of historical figures, such as Clive and Hastings, whom the British colonial state wanted to project as "heroes" and replacing them the indigenous icon of Shivaji as an emblem of regional and national pride. This contestation which started at the realm of ideas translated into a political threat when hundreds of students start to replicate these thoughts in their examination answer scripts causing an alarm within government circles over "sedition" that had now spread to students. The second level of contestation is thus an enmeshing of ideas and action. Here the school becomes the location for the

emanation and dissemination of anti-colonial ideas and political activism. At both these levels, teachers played an important role in politically mobilizing their students.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined the mutually constitutive processes of the political socialization of the Indian child through the colonial school and nationalist contestations within the realm of knowledge production and its dissemination. The focus has been on the colonial school, and within the latter institution, more particularly on the curriculum as a means of bureaucratic control and creating consent for imperial rule in the minds of native children. I have sought to highlight the role of the school as a potential site for imperial subject formation.

The late nineteenth century emerges as an important period in the history of Indian colonial education. One can observe a clear shift during the period from one of minimum state participation in education to a tightening of government control and intervention that climaxed during the Curzonian period. The fallout was a series of repressive policies which allowed more circumspection regarding school textbook selection and regularizing of state control and surveillance. The study reveals that bureaucratic control over school textbooks was intensified by the formation of the Simla textbook committee in 1877 which ensured that the local governments and the state, which were well represented, exercised a powerful voice in curriculum selection

and implementation. The new regulations of the Committee also paved the way for more streamlined textbook selection process where the Director of Public Instruction had the sole authority to prescribe textbooks for schools and colleges. To ensure firmer control, it was decreed that books not included in the list could not be introduced in any government aided school without the permission of the circle inspector. Similarly unaided schools, in which the government could not exercise direct control, were made to conform to the state-prescribed syllabus by a rule which excluded candidates from these institutions to appear in any public examination or compete for any government scholarship if textbooks disapproved by the state were used in the schools in question.

The task of recasting knowledge was based on its censorship. A list of books of “aggressive character” was drawn and it was strongly reiterated that utmost care should be taken to avoid their usage in schools. This suggests that the necessity or utility of a particular form of knowledge varied at different moments of time. A book which was once thought safe enough to be introduced in the curriculum could become undesirable, “aggressive” or “seditious” in character at a subsequent time. Here another key aspect of colonial education can be deduced. In the determination of what constituted “legitimate knowledge,” the existing ensemble of political, economic and administrative imperatives of the nineteenth century had an equally important role to play along with other factors-- psychological (creating consent through the use of textbooks), pedagogical (Viswanathan’s contention of India being a laboratory where pedagogical experimentation would be first conducted before

being implemented in English schools in the metropole), or racial (education as a “civilizing mission”). Thus we find that the school textbook stereotypes of Bengali effeminacy and English masculinity were governed largely by the specific colonial context of the nineteenth century, when after the Revolt of 1857, the British attitude towards western educated Indians was guided more by distrust and their characterization as effeminate men. Similarly, as Tanika Sarkar points out, the degeneration of the body of the elite Hindu male became a symbol of the negative impact of colonial rule on the indigenous Indian society as a whole. Similarly, the criticism and subsequent categorization of Burke’s works as aggressive in nature in the late nineteenth century have to be understood in its specific historical context.

A major contention of this dissertation is that the imperial school textbook had a functional value in the imperial context. It played a crucial role in the production of Indians as “loyal” and “useful” subjects through political socialization which involved the process of deliberate inculcation of political knowledge, values and practices that promoted the dominance of colonial ideology. The process also aimed at initiating the colonial child to those forms of behavior, cultural consciousness, social order and values that would be acceptable to the colonial rule and pose minimum threat to it.

The history of India as projected in these textbooks was such which would legitimize and rationalize imperial rule. A comparative frame of reference dominated most of the narratives both within the textbooks and in official records-- Mary Carpenter’s comparison between shabby students in indigenous schools versus the

disciplined, neat and clothed students in a government run school; moral debauchery of Indian rulers versus the moral uprightness of British officers; the “despotic” and “cruel” rule of Siraj-ud-Daula versus the benevolence of British governance; effeminacy of Bengalis versus the masculine might of the British; the valor of Clive versus the personal cowardice of Dupleix as so on. The textbooks were clearly responsive to the needs of the Empire. Imperial rule was rationalized when the failure of indigenous governance was highlighted (for instance the constant reference to the “misgovernance” of Oudh); or statements such as “[colonial] intervention was forced upon us” were made by appropriating history to authenticate such claims.

Similarly, the purpose of school textbooks such as the *Citizen of India* was more hegemonic than merely an attempt to educate colonial children about their duties and rights-- which were more elusive than real. The motive behind educating young students about their duties could be seen as a means to fuse individuals into coherent groups and foster cooperation among discordant standpoints. Political socialization of a young child was aimed at ousting any political disorder and ideas of “sedition” that challenged state authority and maintain order and the long term confident survival of the Raj. As part of political socialization the colonial child could be integrated within the colonial setup as a “good member” or even a “citizen,”¹ albeit without any of the democratic rights that are associated with citizenship. Political socialization encouraged the dissemination of values of reverence, obedience, loyalty

¹ For instance, Lee-Warner uses the term “citizen” and not “subject” in his book *The Citizen of India*. I do not subscribe to the usage of the term “citizen” in the colonial context and argue that “imperial subject” would be a more apt term.

towards the state and discipline that a loyal colonial subject should embody. This was sought to be achieved both through moral training and physical education in schools. This dissertation has discussed various measures that disciplined bodies in addition to molding minds. Here the focus was primarily on the “seditious” schoolboy who had to be regulated through surveillance over hostels, the monitorial system, conduct registers and corporeal punishment. What differentiates colonial disciplining of this sort from positive forms of disciplining is that the former was based upon fear and implemented by repression. Even in school textbooks, the study has indicated instances of subtle threats and warnings which were a means of ensuring that order and discipline were maintained.

An important conclusion of this dissertation is that colonial education betrayed the egalitarian spirit of Enlightenment humanism which marked the agenda of imparting education in Europe. Similarly, both on the basis of the role that physical education played in the Indian colonial school and Gustav Lenz’s study of English public schools, it can be concluded that curricular goals for Britain and India drastically differed. Whereas English public schools aimed at developing an independent and firm character, team spirit, courage and masculine attributes of the (male) British child, the native child was exposed to a pedagogy which intended to subvert the imbibing of subversive political ideas.

An important tension that emerges from the discussions in this project is related to the issue of generating consent/hegemony and contestation. This dissertation is situated in dialogue with Bernard Cohn’s conceptualization of the

functioning of the colonial state in terms of the deployment of “cultural technologies of rule” of which, I argue, colonial education was a crucial component.² Such a position opens up a space for understanding the colonial state in India not simply as an agent of brute force and domination (hegemony *without* domination, an argument famously propounded by Ranajit Guha³) but a more nuanced position which acknowledges the need and relevance for the colonial state to generate consent among natives to achieve the aims of establishing effective and confident rule.

While acknowledging the role that colonial education played in creating consent among natives from a young age the dissertation also highlighted that hegemony can never be complete and total. To say that hegemony was total would be to deny the existence of native agency. The gap between intent and result in the context of the functioning of the colonial state was never bridged. To highlight this discordance the dissertation focused on the aspect of colonial education from the late nineteenth century as a contested terrain. In this context it must also be acknowledged that the categories of “consent” and “contestation” are not binaries, i.e., the failure to generate consent does not mean its absence. In other words, if colonial education failed to establish *complete* hegemony or consent among educated natives it cannot be necessarily extended to mean that there was complete domination or an absence of hegemony. Doing so would mean overlooking the crucial competing historical processes within which the colonial state functioned.

² Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987).

³ Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

There were various native perceptions and understandings of colonial education. The intimate engagement of the Bengali *bhadralok* with Macaulay's theorization of the Bengali male body as "effeminate" discussed in my dissertation is reflective of how an idea first promoted through a textbook was no longer a mere idea trapped in the pages of the textbook. Rather, it was an idea that had crept out of the pages of a book and internalized by the reader. This, drawing from Ashis Nandy, becomes a classic case of the "enemy" becoming "intimate"-- of an idea permeating the mind.⁴

While acknowledging the native reception of colonial education in terms of acceptance and internalization, the dissertation sought to go beyond these perceptions. It focused on the issue of contestation, a category that needs more academic exploration to allow a better understanding of both colonial education and colonization in India. In my dissertation I explored how in an attempt to break out of the colonial model of knowledge production, alternative forms of education were devised. For instance, in Bombay Professors Bhanu and Tilak took up the task of writing alternative forms of textbooks. Contestation also took the form of creating alternative pedagogies of the Bengali children's magazines which brought ideas of nationalism directly into the home. What emerged was the counter production of the child as the citizen of a future independent India through the production of these vernacular textbooks and magazines. Thus we find that the two processes of subject formation-- the imperial subject produced by the colonial state on one hand and the

⁴ Ashis Nandy, *Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

child as citizen on the other-- as mutually constitutive. In both these political processes the child was at the center stage.

Contestation also took the form of challenging colonial stereotypes, often perpetuated through the school curriculum, such as Macaulay's depiction of Bengali effeminacy by remolding the male body and reviving lost indigenous martial traditions such as *latbi*, sword play and wrestling. The growing participation of students in political activism both under Tilak's leadership and as part of the Anti-Partition and *Swadeshi* movement was another form of contestation. This shows that colonial education was not an isolated practice but became a larger forum for discussion social, cultural and political issues within the larger context of the nation.

In this discussion it is important to talk about the reception of English education in Indian society. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya argues that colonial education was marked by ambivalence since both contestation and appreciation were integral aspects to it.⁵ Freire explains that an exceptional aspect of colonial mentality was the contempt that the native felt towards the colonial ruler mixed with an attraction towards him.⁶ Being mostly kept outside the positions of power and authority within a colonial setup and for upward socio-economic mobility, natives had to "reform" to resemble the "civilized" being that colonial education had propped up as an ideal to imbibe and follow. This was particularly true for the *bhadralok* middle class who were

⁵ Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *The Contested Terrain: Perspectives on Education in India* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1998), 2.

⁶ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1972), 38.

among the first to avail of modern western education. English education as a conduit to the European world of ideas also accounted for this admiration.⁷

The significance of colonial education as a contested site is often overlooked in favor of arguments which draw a direct correlation between English education and the growth of Indian nationalism. This latter view was chiefly promoted by scholars such as Bruce McCulley who argues that it is difficult to envisage Indian nationalism as an exotic phenomenon without the existence of British colonialism. He believes that English education provided Indians with the tools for questioning colonial authority and subsequently subverting it.⁸ But as Gauri Viswanathan points out, McCulley fails to answer just how colonial education worked towards this end. Extending McCulley's position, David Kopf observes that national consciousness emerged in the nineteenth century among Bengali elites through the introduction of institutions and ideas developed in the west. He argues that British Orientalism set the ball of Indian modernization rolling. Without British mediation Indians would have never been acquainted with their own culture or realized that national growth on indigenous foundations was possible. In both McCulley and Kopf one finds resonances of Strachey's argument that the British could not have colonized India because there was *no* "India" before the arrival of the British. This is a classical example of the "gift" of colonialism where the existence of India itself is owed to British benevolence.

⁷ Bhattacharya, *The Contested Terrain*, 2.

⁸ Bruce McCulley, *English Education and the Origins of Nationalism* (Gloucester: P. Smith, 1966).

Moreover, unlike what McCulley and Kopf would like us to believe and as this dissertation has shown, on the contrary the colonial state implemented all manner of political measures possible to thwart the promotion of nationalist ideas through its curriculum. In fact ideas that promoted nationalist sentiments were labeled as “seditious” literature. Bodies of young children were sought to be restrained into disciplined behavior through physical education as part of the school curriculum. It is also important to note here that in British public schools games such as cricket and rugby were given emphasis since they were believed to promote cooperation and team spirit among children, qualities essential for service in the Empire. On the other hand in the Indian colonial schools the focus was more on individual games such as gymnastics and swimming or in those where inter-personal communication among the participants was not crucial such as drills. During the course of this study we also saw that with the rise of nationalism the role of the colonial state was mostly conditioned by a strategy of repression through both direct and indirect measures of control. Moreover, it has been accepted by scholars such as Asish Nandy, J. A. Mangan and John Mackenzie that the psychological uprooting and cultural disruption caused by colonialism was tremendous. Colonial education has been responsible for disseminating notions of native inferiority. Macaulay’s stereotype of the effeminate Bengali man is a case in point. The internalization of such colonial ideas created a sense of self-depreciation and the need to re-mold oneself to fit the criteria of what was seen as “civilized” in colonial understanding. Keeping these factors in mind it is

hard to accept that the *intention* of the colonial state was support a strand of knowledge which would pose a challenge to its own stability and survival in India.

The role of the English language in the nationalist movement and its outcome needs to be problematized. While it is generally accepted that English became a link language and facilitated communication between nationalist leaders from linguistically varied provinces of the country, it must also be noted that the success of the nationalist movement lay in the political mobilization of the masses. This mobilization could not have been possible just through English but the vernacular languages. This was because English as a language was elite, its access and knowledge restricted to a small percentage of the entire population. For nationalism to be successful in overthrowing colonial rule it had to cease being an elite movement, as during the Moderate phase of the Indian National Congress, and percolate down to the masses. For this the vernacular languages were more effective and practical than English. In this discussion it will be useful to recall Susie Tharu's argument that English education created a vast chasm between the western educated urban class and the rural masses, a trend which survives till date in the Indian context. She notes that the sense of alienation caused by English education went deeper and operated at two other levels-- first, it involved an alienation from indigenous forms of knowledge and second, an alienation from vernacular languages since English was the medium of teaching.⁹ As we saw in this dissertation the Extremist leaders realized this drawback in the early phase of nationalist politics. As a result during the *Swadeshi* movement in

⁹ Susie Tharu, "Government, Binding and Unbinding: Alienation and the Subject of Literature," in *Subject to Change: Teaching Literature in the Nineties*, ed. Susie Tharu (London: Sangam Books, 1998), 7-8.

Bengal and in Bombay we see the deployment of the vernacular languages and use of regional cultural, social idioms (such as the Shivaji and Ganapati *melas, jatra*, folk tales in *Thakumar Jhuli*) and historical icons (such as Shivaji) to make nationalist ideas accessible to a larger audience.

On the issue of the origins of the nationalism in India and the role played by colonial education, it will be instructive to bring C. A. Bayly in the discussion. Bayly challenges the view that Indian nationalism was in every respect a recent phenomenon and one directly derived from or subordinated to modern European forms. He notes that “old patriotism” or the precursors of Indian nationalism constituting a set of distinctive doctrines, ideologies and patterns of communication had assumed a more defined form since the seventeenth century as the Mughal Empire declined and regional Indian kingdoms filled in the political vacuum. According to Bayly Indian patriotisms and political discourses regarding right government already existed in the early days of the British rule when British nationality itself was still being forged in the British Isles and colonies.¹⁰ Successive generations of Indian commentators understood and contested sentiments of attachment to land and local customs in the political realm which acted as active forces in the construction of later nationalisms, both regional and all-Indian. Although modern Indian nationalism was shaped by and within the context of western institutions and international capitalism and was evidently different from earlier forms of regional and community patriotism, it did have some features

¹⁰ C. A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.

common with old patriotisms. What modernity did was to transform and redirect these emergent identities rather than invent them altogether.¹¹

Bayly highlights that the patriotic identities that existed before the late nineteenth century were not simply the preserve of dynasties and warriors. It would be overlooking the larger picture to think that ordinary people were relegated to feudal passivity and mobilized along class lines. He elaborates his position by bringing to focus certain words of antiquity that exist in most Indian languages and are conceptually similar to western patriotism or love for one's land. For instance, Marathi and Hindi words such as *swadeshbhimman*, *desbbhakti* and *swadeshhitkari* date back to the early nineteenth century and pre-date the emergence of modern Indian nationalism by several generations. Similarly, he notes that the word *desb* (land) was lauded in early popular ballads while the words *swarajya* and *watan* were invested with pride in belonging to a particular territory long before *swaraj* and *wataniyat* were used as terms for independence and patriotism in the nationalist lexicon.¹²

The relationship between colonial education and Indian nationalism is more complicated than McCulley and Kopf would like us to believe. Moreover it is difficult to assume that a colonial government would promote cultural and economic unities which could challenge their authority and control. The British colonial state was fully aware of the potential dangers that western education could create. As I noted in the

¹¹ Ibid., 2-3.

¹² Ibid., 3-4.

Bayly provides similar examples from other regions as well including central India (e.g. the word *bhumidae* which referred to commitment to and defense of one's territories went beyond a commonplace understanding of loyalty drawn only along feudal lines), in the Jat territories (e.g. the sense of territorial patriotism where warriors fought against the Mughals and others perceived as intruders to protect their territorial space or *Jatwara*) and in Mysore under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan.

dissertation, the anxiety of the state is evident from the earliest period of colonial rule when in 1838 Charles Trevelyan warned that imparting knowledge to the natives was tantamount to giving them power, “of which they will make the first use against ourselves.”¹³ A few decades later in 1873 this concern was still palpable as evidenced from John Murdoch’s writings. Murdoch began his influential book *Hints on Government Education in India* by highlighting the intimate correlation between knowledge and power. He noted that education within the British Empire was fraught with momentous consequences since it could be used for both “evil as well as good,” and unless controlled by moral principles might become a curse rather than a blessing.

Education is a double-edged phenomenon and ideas can have multiple possibilities. Often intended purposes result in unintended consequences. Education is often utilized by the receiver, given a new meaning and applied for one’s emancipation and strength. If the native under colonial rule had been able to achieve this, it was not because colonial education directed them to a path of independence but rather because they themselves chose that path.

¹³ Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India*, 187.

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