

Conflict Within Conflict: A Critical Reading of Bankim's Anandamath

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Abstract

Although Divide and Rule is an ancient concept originated by the Romans, the British executed it flawlessly. Throughout history, the western hegemonic myth of supremacy has been used to facilitate the formation of national identities. Colonialism fostered the development of a new English-educated middle class in nineteenth-century India, which benefited from and worked with the British conquerors. This same class also led the resistance to colonization. Bankim is the representative of this class, and he views Muslims as adversaries. The researchers attempt to shed light on the growth of new Hinduism during the time of Bankim and his anti-Muslim propaganda by studying one of his most famous novel "Anandamath". Additionally, this article will take a critical look at the colonial divide and rule policies. Also, this article examines the policy of employing hegemony to exert control over individuals.

Key Words: Anandamath, Nationalism, Hegemony, Anti-Muslim, Propaganda, Patriotism.

Introduction

Colonialism introduced the concept of the "clash of civilizations" to India long before Samuel Huntington published his book on the subject. Europe's history has been a Christian history that has been engaged in demonizing Islam from the time of the Crusades through the 18th century and beyond, when European states were confronted with the enormous and glorious Ottoman Empire actually knocking on their doors. When the British arrived in India, they brought with them that prejudice, which they weaponized for political objectives, as did many orthodox Hindu nationalists beginning in the late nineteenth century.

One prevalent central idea that runs throughout Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's "Anandamath" is the struggle between classes or races that leads to the benefits of the oppressor.

The Hindu-Muslim conflict appears in “Anandamath”, as it allowed the British to oppress India for several centuries. In “Anandamath”, Bankim encourages anti-Muslim sentiment fueled by British imperialism. The creation of a mythological Hindu past by Bankim, which was afterwards referred to as the "rebirth of Hindu nationalism," might have intimidated the Muslim majority. A separate country was therefore requested by the Muslim populace, who were fearful of Hindu dominance. This was a critique of colonialist rhetoric via the lens of postcolonial reading.

Discussion

“Anandamath” is based on the battle between the Children/Santan's and Bengal's Muslim king, who controls but does not govern in collusion with the British. The novel's conclusion, in which English tyranny is projected as a divine dispensation, is inspired by the widespread belief in the author's contemporaneous culture that the British Raj was a necessary evil. It could also be interpreted as the judgement of 'the artist in chains,' a Bengali magistrate during the British Raj, for clear political reasons. Because a nation's self-definition must be built against another nation/non-nation, Muslims are shown as an anti-nation against which the Santan attempt to affirm their Vaishnav identity. The novelist's depiction of the cruel and decadent elements of Muslim authority may have been motivated by historical acts of moral turpitude during the Muslim reign. Furthermore, Bankim's portrayal of Muslims as evildoers was a safe choice given his novel's Hindu goal.

The novel “Anandamath” by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay is widely regarded as one of the most significant patriotic novels of the nineteenth century, serving as a catalyst for the national movement. Bankim's novel is both lauded and criticized for its dubious subject matter. “Anandamath” provides a narrative endeavor devoted to a prophetic vision described in the book's title: “Anandamath: The Abbey of Bliss.” Consolidating political and religious idioms, “Anandamath” serves not just as a notion suitable for ideological mobilization toward a desirable future, but also as a site and experience of actual reality ideal for amplifying reproduction in a desirable present.

Although “Anandamath” was published in the late nineteenth century, the events depicted in the novel occurred in the late eighteenth century. Hence, historical events such as the terrible famine of Bengal and the Sanyasi rebellion are featured in this book. Bankim acquired information from Gleig and Warren Hastings' autobiographies. However, Bankim stated in his own words that he was not interested in crafting a historical fiction. There is no doubt that, while the novel is set in a historical era, it is a political work, with the central premise being 'unfathomable patriotism.' “Anandamath” was inspired by Bengali nationalism and patriotism, which were previously uncommon in Indian literature.

British imperial policy's crowning achievement was the construction and maintenance of Hindu-Muslim animosity: the colonial strategy of "divide et impera" (division and rule) fomented religious antagonism in order to maintain imperial authority. Through overt British support, a systematic campaign of fomenting different awareness between the two communities was initiated. One of the weapons of this division policy was reforming. The British utilized the

concept of a "civilizing mission" to legitimize their imperial control of India and to implement limited reforms aimed at developing a skilled white-collar labor class that would support colonial authority loyally. Bankim Chandra, being a white collared employee, a deputy magistrate, he fulfilled his obligations towards his employer. As he himself recognized in one of his pieces published in *Banga Darshan*, the concept of nationhood was a direct product of his English-language schooling, which he attributed to the British. He attempted to educate the indigenous people under foreign occupation about the non-utilitarian ideological preaching of the holy 'Geeta', with the intention of using it as a political weapon to reawaken their patriotism and nationality. However, his goal or focal point of attention was the Hindu people. As a result, in "Anandamath", Bankim imagines the end of Muslim control and the commencement of English rule, respectively.

While this mode of thinking about the country is self-contradictory, it has sparked a discussion that can be defined as a natural aspect of the nineteenth century colonial period's intellectual dilemma. According to Pramathnath Bishi-

"On one hand, there is the guilt of enslavement; on the other hand, there is the conviction of the magnificence of English authority. On the one hand, the English rules' exploitation approach, On the other hand, the recollection of the Nawawi period's chaos; On the other hand, the awakening of Indian unity as a result of British administration.....On the one hand, there is a resurgence of interest in ancient Sanskrit literature and scriptures; on the other hand, there is a resurgence of interest in old Sanskrit literature and scriptures. On the other hand, awe for Western science and understanding, the nineteenth-century intellect was impacted by numerous disputes. "

Bankim, who was the pioneer of neo-Hinduism during British control, in his eyes, represented a chance for India's redemption, because, in his eyes, it was better than Muslim governance. This was the primary attribute of the nineteenth-century Hindu educated middle class. The majority of Indian philosophers became embroiled in the political quandary of establishing a nation state in place of colonial control. To a small number of Indian nationalists, the hope for the emergence of modern India is in the hands of the harmonious blending of western cultural ideals (such as materialism, science, and technology) with spiritual Indian ideas (such as spirituality, religion, and tradition). According to these ideas, as long as India does not modernize in this manner, it should remain linked to the West; there is no reason for it to pursue its own independence.

However, the most paradoxical aspect of this mindset has been that, in the name of spiritual inquiry, Indian thinkers have tended to gravitate toward ancient Hinduism. Bankim's "Anandamath" is the best illustration of the theory that the Renaissance litigant fostered racial divides or inequity by aligning with a certain religious sect. As a result, Muslims have no place in the novel's nationalist ideology, where English colonial rule prevails. Satyendra had spoken prior to bestowing wisdom on Mahendra, 'we do not want sovereignty; we only want to kill these Mussulmans, root and branch, because they have become the enemies of God.' (Part 2, Chapter iv). Furthermore, in this fictional setting, Bankim represented Muslims as weak and terrifying, self-centered rulers who would rather protect their own existence at the expense of the general

population. Whereas, the English were portrayed as valiant warriors who would never betray their convictions or leave the fight. As Hindus, it became their spiritual duty to 'chase away these tipsy, lengthy beards' even if it required enforcing actual violence.

Here, Islamophobia has been a significant concern. When it comes to colonial authority, Hindu indigenous people would rather surrender their territory to the colonists than keep it in the hands of Muslims. Though Captain Thomas and his men have attacked Santan's/Children on numerous occasions, killing them with enormous brutality, they are portrayed as India's last hope or savior of the oppressed. On the other hand, English oppression and hostility toward indigenous peoples are barely mentioned in this novel, and if they are, Bankim attempts to justify those actions by equating them to Muslim despotism. He even went so far as to suggest that the English judiciary is the epitome of justice and transparency.

If, however, the 'Orthodox religion' is founded, this English regulation will stop. At the novel's conclusion, there is an allusion to the fact that the novel's sole "gain of knowledge," i.e., the European age of enlightenment, is that India may achieve independence only through the adoption of rational thought.

Satyananda declares that while the Mussulman hegemony has been abolished, no Hindu empire has yet been founded. The English are now well-established in Calcutta. The sage responds that the Hindu kingdom has not yet been created and that his presence would be a waste of human life. As a result, he proposes to Satyananda a getaway with him.

Satyananda felt profoundly concerned upon hearing this. His response was: "My Master! If the Hindu kingdom is not established, then who will rule here? Will the Mussulmans again get the upper hand?" To which the sage's reply was: "No, the English will rule India now."

After this conversation, when Satyananda asked the sage why the Santan's had been assigned to this "heinous war", he was answered by the sage that the Santan rebellion had come only to put the British on the throne. He further implies that Satyananda would understand things himself after attaining knowledge.

During Bankim's lifetime, there were five editions of "Anandamath" before it was released in book form. Many people believe that the fifth edition of "Anandamath" was anti-Muslim because the novelist talked about English in such locations. However, Bankim Chandra, a royal official, later omitted the term "English" and substituted the word "Yavan" to evade the king's fury. Those attempting to establish secularism frequently employ this approach. However, in the original edition of "Banga Darshan," there are numerous portrayals of Muslims that may touch a sympathetic reader.

The villagers began chasing the Mussulmans wherever they met them. Some banded themselves together, went to the Muslim quarters, set fire to their cottages and looted their all. Many Mussulmans were killed, many shaved off their beards, smeared themselves with Ganges clay and began singing "Hari Hari." If asked they said, "I am a Hindu."

As a result, it is evident that Bankim Chandra presented the English with a thankful attitude in "Anandamath", showed enmity towards Muslims, and viewed Hindus with suspicion. Kazi Abdul Wadud asserts that Bankim Chandra's fault as a modern thinker is that he prioritizes Hindu tradition over his own unique thinking.

The following is said by Ahmed Sharif: " "Bankim first emerged in literature as an inquisitive individual, and then he vanished as an orthodox Hindu. Consequently, Bankim literature is the history and portrayal of the progression from human Bankim to Hindu Bankim, as recorded in the Bankim language."

Bankim's concern about the state should be discussed in this context, as should the nature of his concern. Whenever he began to think about the state, his gaze was drawn to the convoluted and crooked war in front of him. War, vengeance, and victory are at the heart of his state's ideology. Even in the novel, there is a passage when they discuss their desire to demolish the Muslim community's Holly Place mosque in order to build a Temple of Ram on the same site. It expresses a patriotism that Indian Muslims do not recognize as legitimate or acceptable. As a result, they could not worship the goddess, nor could they ignore anti-Muslim rhetoric. This state consciousness is, without a doubt, a manifestation of Hindu nationalism in its entirety.

Conclusion

As a fiction, Anandamath is flawed. It is even claimed to have signaled the beginning of "Bankim's deterioration as a novelist." The novel's power is usually greatest on the adolescent mind, and as one develops greater ideological and artistic sophistication, one becomes slightly embarrassed by the hold it previously had. Nevertheless, reading the novel more than a century after its release reveals that it is not only a crude work of Hindu propaganda. The complexity and ambiguity contained in its political substratum reveals more about the discrepancies involved in nineteenth century educated Indian society than any conscious social paperwork or simplistic historical account can reveal about the situations of educated Indians of the nineteenth century.

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