

# A Historical Example of Nation Building By Anandamath Study

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**Abstract** This paper is premised on the idea of the initiation of the formation of national allegory in the Third world country (India) at the peak hour of colonialism through an imagined collectivity along with its continual slippage into the liminality of cultural modernity in Anandamath. Beginning with Franz Fanon's views of the literature of the colonised, the researchers want to focus on how Bankim redefined the colonised subject and interrogate western hegemonic myths of supremacy, facilitating the formulation of national identities. Keeping in mind, Timmothy Brennan's Third-World literature, this article goes on to argue that how nation is formed through the epistemic structure of the narrative of history. For illustration, it takes up issues of Benedict Anderson's formulation of certain 'modular' forms of nationalism and in the novel Bankim artistically manipulates culture and history. The final section concludes Anandamath's emerging as a new anti-colonial subject in response to British imperialism and the stormy effect (Bandematram) of it in colonial India. The researchers, here, also cast some rays upon the politics involved in the three different translations of the same novel which is clearly suggestive of the 'worldliness' of the novel.

**Keywords:** Anandamath, Hindu Dharma, Third-world-literature, Culture, Episteme, History,

**Introduction** Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's academic antecedents-history, sociology, literature and language-illuminate his fictional as well as non-fictional works. In all his novels these researchers find academic as well as literary revolution in socio political context of Bengal. His attention to specific subjects such as Hindu Dharma, history of India and 'colonia' (settlement) forms an integral part of his novels. In this essay researcher would try to analyse how Chatterjee addresses the issues related to the formation of nation and its narrative in his famous novel Anandamath and in this regard how the three different translations of this novel (The Abbey of Bliss) show their interest in terms of internal national politics. Though the aims and objectives of these translations are almost same, but the manners of their presentations are essentially different. The anti-imperial struggle was in a very different mode in India than in other colonized nations of that time. After the first war of independence, that is, the unsuccessful 'sepoy' mutiny of 1857, Bankim felt a need of proper cultural nationalism which would be a bricolage of patriotism, nativism and Hinduism. Bankim was a highly educated person of contemporary India. He was not only the first graduate from Calcutta University, but also a highest rank civil service officer (Deputy Magistrate) of contemporary dependent India. He wanted to form a sense of nation which was latent very deeply in Hindu mind. Bankim's spirit of nationalism in Anandamath was directed at both the nation and the individual. The Sannyasi rebellion in his novel created an arousal in Indian colonized nation as well as the Sanatan Dharma (the vows of Brotherhood) made a sublime call to all the native individuals of mother India. In colonized India, the first use of Hinduism as a means of forging a

cultural and national identity was done by Bankimchandra long before Mahatma Gandhi and Bal Gangadharapur Tilak. Undoubtedly this Hindu consciousness was highly effective in anticolonial struggle as a strong sense of cultural and national identity had been evolved from it. Simultaneously it ran the risk of xenophobia, fervent nativism and tribalism. French postcolonial philosopher Frantz Fanon is mention-worthy in this regard. In his famous work *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon talks about the framing of national culture in a colonized state. In its first stage,

**Methodology of the Study** This research Paper employs a qualitative, analytical, and interdisciplinary approach, integrating historical, national, and policy analysis frameworks to interpret Bankimchandra cultural nationalism thought and its implications. The methodology includes the following components:

## Objectives of the study

To analyze Bankimchandra. Hinduism thoughts and reforms from an academic and policy perspective.

To assess the long-term impacts of his from English rule, English education.

To evaluate the global relevance of cultural and national identity

**Policy Impact Assessment** Bankimchandra 's historical Bengali novels are pivotal in understanding the evolution of nationalism in Indian literature. Let's delve into the themes and motifs you mentioned: Motherland as Divine:

- Bankimchandra personifies India as a nurturing mother figure, imbued with divine qualities, fostering a sense of reverence and duty towards the nation.
- He utilizes religious symbolism, drawing from Hindu mythology, to evoke nationalistic fervor and establish a spiritual connection between the people and the land. Heroic Resistance:
- The novels glorify historical and mythological heroes who embody valor, sacrifice, and patriotism, serving as inspirational figures for readers.
- Bankimchandra vividly portrays armed resistance against foreign rule, highlighting the bravery and determination of individuals and communities in fighting against oppression. Cultural Revivalism:
- Bankimchandra promotes the revival of Hindu culture and values, portraying them as integral to India's identity and resilience.
- He critiques social and religious practices that hinder unity, advocating for reforms that foster inclusivity and cohesion among diverse communities

The colonized intellectuals are under the deep impression of the colonizer's culture and style and they try their best to emulate and assimilate colonizer's culture and in that process they abandon their own culture. The native intellectual thus attempts to become as white as his master. "This is the phase of full assimilation where we find Parnassians, Symbolists and Surrealists among the colonized writers" But Bankim never ever

did it. He might be under the influence of English episteme as he himself admitted in his ‘Initiation-letter of Bangadarshan’ (in Bengali ‘Bangadarshaner Patra Suchana’) : We have no abhorrence of the English and their language. It can be said that among all the benefits the Indians get from English rule, English education is undoubtedly the best. We should use English language as more as possible for, it is the goldmine. For the betterment of our society, some social work must be done in the royal language. We have so many things to convince them. Those must be spoken in English. There are so many subjects which are not only meant for the Bengalis, instead every Indians should be the listener to it. How could all Indians understand it, if it is not spoken in English? If all the Indian States and tribes do not begin to speak, opine and work unitedly as one unit, there will be no development in Bharatbarsh. This union in opinion, instructions and enterprise can be possible only in English language, because Sanskrit has already extinguished. The Bengalis, Maharastrians, Tamils and Punjabis- can all be united in the academic field of English language. The knot of Indian unity would be tied by this rope. So English should be accepted so far as it would be beneficial to us. But it would be disaster if one tries to be an English, by imitating them. The Bengali can never ever become an English. Pure silver is always better than forged brass From this, the necessity and notion of an Indian nation evolve. This impending disaster of imitation and assimilation is revealed in Fanon’s second stage. On accordance with Fanon, the native intellectuals now realize that it is improbable to become truly white, or white enough for their imperial master to accept them as their equal. But Bankim knew it from the earlier and that is why, he is stressed on the revival of ancient Hindu and Indian culture. Whatever, to Fanon, the colonized pedagogue now begins to analyze and celebrate his own culture, he also romanticizes his traditions and his glorious past. “Old childhood memories will surface, old legends be reinterpreted on the basis of a borrowed aesthetic, and a concept of the world discovered under other skies. Sometimes this precombat literature is steeped in humor and allegory, at other times in anguish, malaise, death and even nausea” (Fanon P159). For his high-hope of nation-building, Bankim should not confine himself within his literature only. His versatile genius had entered into the world of history, archeology, social science, philosophy, politics and science also. The English colonizers enlightened by the western modern education pretend that the narrative of the history of undivided India had no epistemic structure.

**Review of Literature** ANANDMATH by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894) was an Indian novelist, poet. He was one of the first Calcutta University graduates and was well-versed in law, having earned a degree from Presidency College in 1869. He worked for the British government as a deputy magistrate. His dedication to the craft of book writing stemmed from the discussions taking place around him, where, the fictional narrative was criticised for lacking realism and human interest The pattern that Bankim Chandra started with books like Rajani, Durgesh Nandini, KapalKundala, and Krishna Kanta’s Will greatly inspired the subsequent Bengali literature. He added a touch of informality and familiarity while trimming verbosity and breaking up the arid monotony of Bengali language. His creations nourished the diverse imagination of an emerging India. His 1882 novel ‘Anandmath’ is regarded as one of the most significant books in the history of Bengali as well as Indian literature. The novel became so popular that it was translated into several different languages. The ‘Abbey of Bliss’ by Nares Chandra Sen-Gupta was the first English translation of the same. Anandamath, a quasi-historical tale, opens with a graphic account of peasants starving during the devastating Bengal famine of 1770, which occurred during the time of Company’s control in India and the Sannyasi rebellion, serves as the backdrop for the plot. The Hindu

missionary movement and the militant movement in Bengal in the first decade of the twentieth century both benefited greatly from its huge impetus for diverse religious, patriotic, and national activities.

The story begins with an introduction to a couple named Mahendra and Kalyani who were trapped in the famine-stricken village of Padachin without access to food or water. In order to satiate their hunger and survive, they try relocate to a nearby city. But they get separated as they travel due to various obstacles but eventually get back together at sanyasi Satyandanda's Ashram in Anandamath. By providing Mahendra with insights into how our country was before the British arrived, and how the Muslims have threatened the existence of a Hindu kingdom, Satyandanda stirs up feelings of nationalism in him at the Ashram. The religious and cultural revivals became intertwined. Some believed that only the revival of Hindu culture could bring about India's renewal.

Partha Chatterjee states that Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was one of the first methodical expounders of nationalism's tenets in India. He was well-read in European literature, especially in nineteenth-century sociology and political economics, and both positivism and utilitarianism had a significant impact on him. He explains India's exploitation in terms of cultural justification. When Bankim discusses the subjugation of India, he incorporates several conquests, starting with the first Muslim invasions and ending with the installation of British authority, into his idea of the cultural inability of the Indian people to confront the reality of power. According to Bankim, the fundamental cultural characteristic that stands out as the main cause of India's subjugation is the Hindus attitude toward power.

Tanika Sarkar discusses how Bankim have played a significant role in the formation of both a nationalist imagination and a Hindu revivalist rhetoric. His famous patriotic song, "Vande Mataram," became the most forceful patriotic cry at the height of mass nationalist struggles in the 20th century as well as the Hindu rallying cry in times of Hindu Muslim conflict. His view of Mother India as a Goddess and of women as sacred and venerable is expressed in the song and the phrase "I bow to thee, Mother" served as inspiration for freedom warriors in the 20th century. The three distinct images of the caring mother of the past, the dispossessed mother of the present, and the triumphant mother of the future that are developed in much greater detail inside the novel are all condensed into one seamless melodic movement in the song. The song initiated a new trend toward the deification and fetishization of the nation. Other resonances in the book, which put a lot of work into creating a sequential zed imagery of the deified Motherland, heightened that sensation even further. It started to influence militant, at times terroristic, anti-British action during the Swadeshi movement against the 1905 British Partition of Bengal.

Womanhood in "Anandamath" becomes a symbol of resistance and their involvement in the rebellion is sporadic and extraordinary. Bankim repeatedly presented women who had broken conventional notions of femininity in order to join the resistance. However, although women in the novel were not portrayed as weak characters, yet it focuses on them as an object of desire and considered as a distraction for their male counterparts. Additionally, Shanti later

known as Naveenand who was shown as a very strong-willed young woman, more than serving the motherland, was rather following her husband footsteps

Anandmath's grandeur as a literary work is unquestionable, yet, the exact character of the Sanyasi Rebellion is contested. In the rebellion (1770-77), the Muslim Fakirs and Hindu sanyasis together plays an important role. But the role of Muslim fakirs, who oversaw bands of famished people engaged in robbing, is not mentioned by Bankim. In the novel, who the Motherland is fighting is unclear. Initially, it starts with showcasing the Muslims as the real enemy but then proceeds to show the sanyasis fighting against the British to bring justice to their motherland. After the victory against General Edward armies when the Great man arrives to take Satyanand to the Himalayas, the latter protests. He urges that even though the Muslim rule has ended and their mission accomplished, the British power is still strong in the Himalayas. To this the Great Man replies, "Who is the enemy? Now there are no enemies. British are our friends. Then again, right now nobody has the strength to fight against the British." It's interesting to note that Anandmath not only advocated for the extermination of Muslims but also praised the British rulers' exploitation of India. The empowerment of Hindus appears to have to take place inside a broad colonial framework since the British have something to teach the Hindus. Perhaps the true message of the novel has gotten lost due to repeated translation and it also depends on who published it and what is their political position. So, before reading the book with absolute certainty, it is important to look at the social context in which it was set along with the social background of the author as it shapes the author's perspective and provides unique structure to its politics.

That is why, contemporary Indian scholars (especially Bengali) like Akshay Kumar Dutta, Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya, Ramtanu Lahiri and Bankimchandra made their Academic sojourn to create 'our language', 'our culture', 'our literature', 'our history' and 'our country'. Hinduism had played a crucial role in this regard to tie the whole population in a single rope. Here researchers can find the similarity with Benedict Anderson's notion of nation in his phenomenal book *Imagined Communities*: In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community-and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. Though it is very much Eurocentric concept and basically focuses on Christianity-prevailed Europe, yet to some extent it is relevant in Indian context too. An East-Indian Bengali farmer villager names his son in the name of a famous Indian temple (God Shiva)–'Somnath' which is located in the completely Western part of India – Gujrat. One can find these types of Hindu nomenclature in the Northern and Southern part of India also. So here the Hindu Communities can be identified not by their genuineness/ falsity, but actually by the way in which they imagine themselves. Similarly North Indian villagers always know that they are connected to the South Indian people whom they have never seen. These types of connections or knots were ones imagined particularly – as indefinitely stretchable nets of relationships and fraternity. Before writing his famous historical novel *Anandamath*, Bankim had observed that the people of India were simultaneously culturally colonized as he found that they were de-nationalized so quickly by English manners and customs, English styles and English wines. In Indian elementary and higher education, the imperialist



British ruler made the English language the first language and thus Bengali, Hindi and other Indian languages were officially neglected to relegation.

Bankim's heart winced when he saw that the colonizer's narrative structure had weighed so heavily on his co-citizen's mind that in fact created a Doxa (a postmodern term coined by Linda Hutcheon in her Politics of Postmodernism) in contemporary Indian society. He saw that the Indian who could speak and write English was more praised by his own people than the man who used exquisite Bengali, Marathi or Hindustani. He found many half-educated Indians hectically bursting with the bandwagon of British culture. So he saw this alien tongue as a powerful weapon for the colonizers to destruct the Indian culture. So for the new awakening of a great nation, in this prophetic novel of Rishi Bankim, religion (Hinduism) played a dynamic part. After the legitimacy of the divinely ordained hierarchical monarchy had been ended in the era of Renaissance and Revolution, sovereignty was attempted to be confessed upon the nation. But it was applicable to the Eurocentric free nation.

What would happen to a colonized country like India? Here Dharma (Hinduism) became a thread. Here Dharma became a solvent. To Indians it still meant 'maitry'. It was used by Rishi Bankim as a weapon of brotherly connection with others. If one reads Bankim's famous essay 'Krishnacharitra', one can easily understand that Bankim used Dharma to create togetherness, not separation. So the blame of militant Hinduism – the Leftist Postcolonial thinkers like Partha Chatterjee, Sudipta kaviraj and Dipesh Chakravorty attributed upon Bankim's ideology is actually worthless. Bankim was to some extent like a latter-day Rammohan Roy. Bankim's militancy was actually the unselfish militancy as taught by Shri Krishna in The Bhagavad Gita and that was actually leading the nation to resurgence and independence. While Rammohan Roy wanted to get back beyond corrupt, dissipated and self-indulgent Hinduism, to the Vedantic cosmic philosophy, Bankim had had a sublime attempt to reform the contemporary Hinduism. In the Indian context, nation is somehow a different concept. Indian hegemony of nationalism is both historically determined as well as mythological and imaginative. We can compare it both to the modern nation-state and also to something more ancient and nebulous – 'the natio' which means a regional community, habitation, condition of belonging. Bankim cannot be categorized as those nationalist Eurocentric writers whose ideology always tried to create a hegemony by placing their own country in an 'immemorial past' where its arbitrariness cannot be interrogated. These researchers have found a similarity with the concepts of British cultural historian - Raymond Williams who very clearly differentiated these senses: 'Nation' as a term is radically connected with 'native'. We are born into relationships which are typically settled in a place. This form of primary and 'placeable' bonding is of quite fundamental human and natural importance. Yet the jump from that to anything like the modern nation-state is entirely artificial. This artificiality is completely absent in Bankim's Sannyasis who worshipped their motherland not only with their blood but also by wrenching their souls. Thus Bankim's indomitable nationalism actually was soaked into his adorable spiritualism where these researchers find Jivananda's militant responsibility to his country being somehow untied, diluted by the tender, merciful and loving nature of his wife Shanti – who, simultaneously on the other hand very much devoted to her motherland also. This hard-natured Sannyasi Vabananda, Satyananda and Mahendra are actually full of love and devotion in their hearts not only to their Goddess but also to their fellow men and women. In this novel.

Anandamath Kalyani faintly told his husband, bowing at his feet: Who can countermand the will of God? Kalyani said faintly, but with sweetness and affection. 'I have His command to depart; and I cannot stay here on earth even if I want to do it with all my heart. Had I not swallowed poison, some other agency would certainly have killed me. By choosing death this way, and in your presence, I had done well. And it is your duty to fulfil the conditions of your vow with the utmost fidelity. Faithfully with all your body, mind and soul, you must now serve Mother India. Fight for India's freedom with all the forces at your command. This is your path of duty – your dharma. Solely through this path salvation awaits you. And in fullness of time, and by virtue of your noble and unselfish deeds, we shall meet again in that kingdom of Light, and live there together till eternity.' So here the researchers to some extent agrees with Partha Chatterjee who confines Anderson's theory of an imagined nation in the epistemic structure of European historiography. In this historical fiction of Chatterjee imbued with the spirit of nationalism, patriotism and spiritualism, the moods of shoka (sorrow), krodha (anger), bhaya (fear), jugupsa (disgust) and protisodha (revenge) prevailed. Here the researchers have a very transparent reference of Sannyasi rebellion of 1760. According to the historians, during the Sannyasi rebellion, the British still could not have proper control over India. Till then East India Company was the trade licensee under the decadent Mughal emperor of India. The monks who rebelled against the British were Dashnami,

Naga Sannyasis, who remained almost naked and dwelled in the akharas-monasteries that doubled as armories and also training centers. According to the historian Jamini Ghosh, it was not worthy to be called the first freedom struggle of India. Yet it deserves to be called as the first protest against the Britisher's policy of trading and tax-collection. History has a special charm of its own but that portion of History which is connected with merely chronicling the rise and fall of emperors, the bravery of great generals and conquerors, the doings of shrewd and able politicians and statements or even birth, death and activities of kings and potentates has never had any charm for the novelist like B.C. Chatterjee. Perhaps "never" would be too categorical. What should be noted is that the romance of history or the saga of human bravery, sacrifice, selflessness and patriotism had always exercised a great charm on novelist but had never been considered there to be the only materials to be used in novels. The historical novel is not history. It is primarily a work of art which uses history sometimes as its background. As a matter of fact, history and historical events and incidents and characters provide the novelist with the background against which he places his novel.

History is also concerned with the doings of man in high places. Men who shape the destiny of nations figure prominently in the pages of history. World-shakers and fighters are also essentially human. They fall in love, they have their duties and have many other things and it is not only the glory of history to record this but is equally important to a novelist who is also concerned with depicting man as he travels the path of life in various directions. In judging a historical novel therefore these researchers should be careful not to expect too much of a chronicle or even strict validity of facts but rather a historical novel would tell a story in which historical personages will feature and in which the history of a particular age or a particular country or of a particular nation will provide a kind of shaping and general background. Aristotle considered literature superior to history. As history, according to him, dealt only with the singular and literature (to him poetry) dealt with the universal. Similarly Bankimchandra's Sannyasis are not only rebellion, instead they are fabulous man, and rather they can be compared to the elevated characters in The Mahabharata—where Lord

Krishna appears as a human being among princes, kings, warriors, evil courtiers, heroes and noblemen. So Anandamath is a legend of the movement for independence against East India Company's extortionate rule of the 18th century. While discussing the novel, if the theme song 'Bandemataram' is not mentioned, it would be a sin. This song inspires to work for one's country and one's kind. Sri Aurobindo, in his famous essay 'Rishi Bankim Chandra' aptly wrote about the song: It was thirty two years ago that Bankim wrote his great song and few listened; but in a sudden movement of awakening from long delusions the people of Bengal looked round for the truth and in a fated moment somebody sang bandemataram. The mantram had been given and in a single day whole people had been converted to the religion of patriotism.

The Mother had revealed herself. Again looking back to Fanon's third stage, one can find the native intellectual becomes truly anti-colonial. He now turns into a 'galvanizer of the people'. With their pen, they fought against the colonial domination. So 'combat literature, revolutionary literature' and national literature emerges. This phase is accompanied by a careful analysis of their own culture. With the hope of a new future, we find in this final stage-Bankim's unalterable opposition to English cultural imposition upon India. Swami Satyananda was an epitome of it. After hearing from the mysterious physician, when Satyananda had realized that though the Muslim domination in India had been done away with, yet English rule in his motherland was not over so soon, his reaction in the novel was noteworthy: Tears flowed from both of Satyananda's eyes. Turning towards the image of Mother India placed on high, he began saying in tear-choked voice with joined palms, "Alas Mother! I have failed to rescue you, you will again fall into the clutches of the Mlechhas (Non Aryans). Do condone the failing of your child. Alas Mother! Why did I not die in the battle-field today?" Thus the researchers find the formation of a nation in its initial stage in Bankim's novel. But the three English translations of it also played very equivalent role in it. The first translation in 1909 by Shri Aurobindo and Barindra Ghosh had made a huge impact over Indian mind specially against the division of Bengal. Rishi Aurobindo, being a militant revolutionary, in his early life, felt the necessity of Hindu revival. That was why, in his translation, we find the non-Hindus (specially Mussalmans) as Mlechhas (a Bengali word used in a derogatory sense). Three decades after Ghosh's translation in 1941 when Indian freedom struggle was reaching at its zenith, the second translation was brought out by Basanta Koomar Roy. He realized that, 'Chatterjee's dream of a new nationalism for India did not die with him'. He perceived the necessity of the participation of India's all Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains and Parsees into its national freedom movement. For this purpose, he intentionally omitted those sections of the novel where one could find the opposition against the extortion by Muslims. In the last translation in 2005 by Julios Lipner, the researchers find a secular attempt of it. In it these researchers conclude that in this world everything is biased, nothing is secular. We all are prejudiced by our education and ideology.

**Conclusion.** Everything is predetermined unconsciously. So the different translations of the novel are suggestive of Edward Said's 'worldliness'. So finally in the main Bengali text and in all its translations, one can perceive the politics of the formation of a nation. In spite of all the inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each one can find Indian nation is being conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Only for this fraternity, crores of Indians could not only kill but also could die willingly. So literature have had a great impact upon nation and its narrative. Timothy Brennan rightly remarks : On the one hand, the political tasks of modern nationalism directed the course of literature, leading through the romantic concept of 'folk



character’ and ‘national language’ to the (largely illusory) divisions of literature into distinct ‘national literatures’. On the other hand, and just as fundamentally, literature participated in the formations through the creation of ‘national print media’ – the newspaper and the novel. ... As a composite but clearly bordered work of art that was crucial in defining the nation as an imagined community. To conclude, these researchers must focus an unilluminated side of Bankim – he was a devout admirer of the great heritage of western civilization. He viewed the culture of the east and that of the west as mutually complementary and he tried his best to enrich the oriental culture with western flavor. His own remarks in his essay is very apt to wind up, “The day European science and mechanical skill unite their forces with India’s philosophical idealism, then totally will man become a God.”

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