led to a schism in that body at the 1907 session. For the next decade most of the Extremist leaders were either in jail, in exile, or in retirement, but the continuance of terrorist activity—climaxing in an attempt on the viceroy's life in 1912—showed that their influence had not waned. The rescinding of the partition of Bengal in 1911, and the altered situation produced by the First World War, made it possible for the Moderates and the Extremists to patch up their quarrel in 1916. The death in 1920 of the Extremists' greatest leader, Tilak, marked the end of an era. In that same year the Congress fell under the sway of Gandhi's unique form of leadership.

Although the heyday of the Extremists was brief, their chief contribution to modern Indian thought—the creation of a Hindu nationalism combining religious with political ideas—paved the way for the decades of Gandhi's dominance, as well as for the emergence of the two major non-Congress parties that he would try, in vain, to reconcile—the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha.

Through the years of the rise of Extremism in Indian politics, there were a variety of responses to the heavy hand of imperialism in the cultural sphere. These responses included the questioning of many traditional cultural forms and the interrogation of religious authority by both Hindus and Muslims. Notable among the experimenters and questioners were Rabindranath Tagore and Muhammad Iqbal, two of South Asia's greatest writers in modern times—and two whose work may be fruitfully compared. Influenced by Bankim Chandra Chatterji's ambitious novels, Tagore wrote novels as well, but was even more creative and successful in a number of poetic forms, in songs, and in the short story. Tagore's critiques of authority in the social, religious, and cultural spheres are expressed throughout his vast oeuvre, and are merely touched upon here. Iqbal wrote poetry, essays, and religious critiques, stimulating new understandings of Islam and of the ideal shape of the South Asian Muslim community. Both men were religious reformers and literary experimenters (in their idiosyncratic ways) who pushed forward new possibilities for imaginative understanding of the traditions that they had inherited.

In a final section, we have presented selections from an art historian and two artists who were concerned with exploring new pathways in the creative arts during this period. They are Abanindranath Tagore, a relative of Rabindranath, the important art critic and historian Ananda Coomaraswamy, and the later painter Amrita Sher-Gil.

BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJI: NATIONALIST AUTHOR

Gokhale's saying, "What Bengal thinks today, all India thinks tomorrow," is nowhere more applicable than in the case of the Bengali writer Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838–1894). Although he took no part in politics, Bankim first employed the triple

appeal of language, history, and religion that enabled Hindu nationalism to win widespread support in the opening decade of the twentieth century. His historical novels in Bengali persuaded many readers that their glorious past should inspire them to achieve an equally glorious future, and demonstrated the power of the pen as an instrument for stirring up patriotic emotions in times when overt political action was impossible.

Born near Calcutta, Bankim was the son of a Brahman landlord who was a local deputy collector of revenue. A brilliant student who studied Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Bengali, and English, he passed through the Anglicized educational system with distinction and was in 1858 one of two in Calcutta University's first graduating class. He was immediately offered a position as deputy magistrate in the Bengal administrative service, and for all but one year held this rank until his retirement in 1891—a situation that provides clear evidence of the lack of opportunity for advancement for Indians in government service. Fortunately he found an outlet for his natural talent in another direction. Throughout his career as an official, he used his spare time to write humorous sketches, stories, and novels that captured the imagination of literate Bengal. Bankim employed a new prose style that combined the virtues of Sanskritized Bengali and the vigor of the common speech and that, for the first time since the introduction of English education, made it respectable for Bengalis to write in their own mother tongue. The plots in his twelve novels are interesting and realistic, featuring love triangles; vivacious, articulate women; and examples of the destructive potential of passion. The backdrops to the main action are actual historical contexts designed to arouse Hindu pride in the past. In Bengal Bankim is considered the "father of the novel."

Nationalism in all parts of the world has often been associated with attachment to a common language and its accompanying literary heritage. Bankim could thus be credited with quickening a Bengali, as distinct from an all-Indian, nationalism. But this distinction was rendered largely superfluous after 1905, when the agitation against the partition of Bengal took on a nationwide character and his poem "Bande Mātaram" ("Hail to the Mother"), which first appeared in his novel *Ānandamath*, became the anthem of the nationalist movement.

Ānandamath, or *The Abbey of Bliss*, his most famous (if not, from a literary point of view, his finest) novel, was serialized in a magazine in 1880 and published in 1882. A recent armed rebellion against the British in a district of Maharashtra in 1879 may have been part of the inspiration for Bankim's idea of a group of self-sacrificing, disciplined *sannyāsī*s (renouncers) who band together, eschewing family life for a time, to overthrow the reigning order. Bankim chose for his novel, however, a Bengali context, the aftermath of the famine in the early 1770s, and the "king" whom the *sannyāsī* rebels attempt to remove is the titular ruler, the Muslim nawab, not the British, who by contrast are viewed as necessary catalysts to political and social change. Later scholarship has shown that he toned down his criticism of the British in preparing the final version of the novel, and reframed the villains as Muslims. The renouncers are worshipers of martial Hindu deities—the Krishna of the *Mahābhārata* (Bankim decried the effeminate eroticism of the lover Krishna) and the Mother Goddess, whose Children (*santān*) they claim to be. For Bankim, "the Mother" of "Bande Mātaram"

referred at the same time to the land of Bengal and to the Hindu Goddess. From this fusion of the hitherto separate objects of patriotic and religious devotion sprang the central energy of modern Hindu nationalism.

In spite of all the strength of dedication and mass appeal it generated, Hindu nationalism acted as a regressive force both in hindering social reform and in exacerbating the latent hostility between Hindus and Muslims. Bankim's novels faithfully reflect these two shortcomings, for with rare exceptions they picture well-meaning reformers as fools and Muslims as knaves. Furthermore, because of its equation of the land with the Hindu Goddess, *Ānandamath*'s "Bande Mātaram" has always provoked suspicious, if not downright hostile, reactions from Muslims. In 1930 the Congress tried to prune the song of any offending "idolatrous" language, but in 1938 Jinnah made as a prerequisite for his agreement to work with Congress the dropping of the song as the slogan of the nationalist movement. Even in 1947 it was not revived, since Nehru chose the less religiously colored "Jana Gana Mana" of Rabindranath Tagore as the national anthem of independent India.

Bankim's attitude toward the British is less easy to tease out from a reading of the novel. In his own life he was chained to his clerical job out of fiscal need, but he resented the humiliating treatment he endured at the hands of his employers, as well as the pressure he felt to mould his literary creativity according to British political taste. Even the first published edition of the novel, in 1882, is kinder to the British than the earlier serialized edition. Realizing that there was much to gain from the British presence in India, such as education, public works, and the justice system, he concluded his novel with a resigned acceptance of British rule: India would be free when it experienced a moral regeneration. The stability of English rule, plus a growing pride in the Hindu past, were the twin keys to such a cultural revival, and through his novels he sought above all to contribute to this pride.

HAIL TO THE MOTHER

In the following excerpts from *Ānandamath*, Bhabananda, one of the *sannyāsīs*, reveals to a new disciple named Mahendra (who has recently, he thinks, lost his wife and daughter) the group's mission and the mystique that sustains it. After introducing Mahendra to "Bande Mātaram" in chapter 10, in chapter 11 Bhabananda brings him to Satyananda, the leader of the Children, who shows him the three forms of the Motherland: the Mother-as-she-was, Jagaddhātrī; the Mother-as-she-is, the emaciated Kālī; and the Mother-as-she-will-be, Durgā, surrounded by her four children, Lakshmī, Sarasvatī, Kārtikeya, and Ganesha. The only way to replace Kālī with Durgā is for her Children to maintain their vows of self-discipline and to work to vanquish foreign invaders. In the final chapter of *Ānandamath* (present in the first edition and unchanged thereafter), after the *sannyāsīs* have routed both the Muslims and the British, a supernatural figure explains to their leader Satyananda that the British have been forced to rule in India so that Hinduism, or what is translated as below the Eternal Code (*sanātan dharma*), might regain its pristine power.

PART I, CHAPTER 10

The two walked silently across the plain in that moonlit night. Mahendra was silent, anguished, unbending, somewhat intrigued. Suddenly Bhabananda seemed to become a different person. No longer was he the grave, calm renouncer, the skilled, valiant figure of the battlefield, the man who had cut off the head of a commanding officer! No longer the man who had just rebuked Mahendra so haughtily. It was as if seeing the radiance of plain and forest, mountain and river of a peaceful, moonlit world had invigorated his mind in a special way, like the ocean gladdened by the rising moon. He was now light-hearted, talkative, friendly, keen to make a conversation. He tried often to get Mahendra to talk, but Mahendra remained silent. Then, with no other recourse, Bhabananda began to sing softly to himself:

> I revere the Mother! The Mother
> Rich in waters, rich in fruit,
> Cooled by the southern airs,
> Verdant with the harvest fair.

Mahendra was a little astonished when he heard this song, and was at a loss to understand. Who was this mother, "rich in waters, rich in fruit, cooled by the southern airs, verdant with the harvest fair"?

"Who is this mother?" he asked Bhabananda.

Without answering Bhabananda began to sing:

> The Mother—with nights that thrill in the light of the moon,
> Radiant with foliage and flowers in bloom,
> Smiling sweetly, speaking gently,
> Giving joy and gifts in plenty.

Mahendra cried, "But that's our land, not a mother!"

Bhabananda replied, "We recognize no other mother. 'One's mother and birthland are greater than heaven itself.' But we say that our birthland is our mother. We've no mothers, fathers, brothers, friends, no wives, children, houses, or homes. All we have is she who is rich in waters, rich in fruit, cooled with the southern airs, verdant with the harvest fair."

"Then sing on," said Mahendra, understanding at last.

And Bhabananda sang once more:

> I revere the Mother! The Mother
> Rich in waters, rich in fruit . . .
> Giving joy and gifts in plenty.
> Powerless? How so, Mother?

With the strength of voices fell,
Seventy millions in their swell!
And with sharpened swords
By twice as many hands upheld!
To the Mother I bow low,
To her who wields so great a force,
To her who saves,
And drives away the hostile hordes!
You our wisdom, you our law,
You our heart, you our core,
In our bodies the living force is thine!
Mother, you're our strength of arm,
And in our hearts the loving balm,
Yours the form we shape in every shrine!
For you are Durga, bearer of the tenfold power,
And wealth's Goddess, dallying on the lotusflower,
You are Speech, to you I bow,
To us wisdom you endow.
I bow to the Goddess Fair
Rich in waters, rich in fruit,
To the Mother
Spotless—and beyond compare!
I revere the Mother! the Mother
Darkly green and also true,
Richly dressed, of joyous face,
This ever-plenteous land of grace.

Mahendra saw that the bandit wept as he sang. "Who are you people?" he asked bewildered.

Bhabananda replied, "We are the Children."

"What does that mean? Whose children?" asked Mahendra.

"The Mother's Children."

Mahendra said, "Fine, do children honour their mother by robbing and plundering? What kind of mother-love is this?"

Bhabananda replied, "We don't rob and plunder."

"But you just plundered those carts!"

"Was that robbery and plunder? Whose money did we plunder?"

"The king's, of course!"

"The king's!" said Bhabananda. "Does he have a right to the money he takes?"

"It is the king's share."

"A king who doesn't look after this kingdom is no king," said Bhabananda.

"I can see sepoys blowing you all to bits some day at the cannon's mouth!"

"Don't worry, I've seen plenty of those scoundrels about, I saw some today too!"

"You didn't see well enough. One day you'll really see," said Mahendra.

"Perhaps," aid Bhabananda. "You can only die once."

"Yes, but why court death?"

Bhabananda answered, "Mahendra Simha, I thought you might be a real man, but I see now that you're like the rest of them—a devourer only of fine things. Look, the snake crawls about flat on the ground, the lowliest creature around, but step on it and even the snake rears its hood! Aren't you even a little fed up with the way things are? Look at all the other places—Magadha, Mithila, Kashi, Kanci, Delhi, Kashmir—where else is in such a mess? Where else do people have to eat grass for lack of food? Or thorns, or anthills, or creepers from the forest? Where else do they eat dogs and jackals and dead bodies? Where else can't folk have peace of mind even when they've locked away their money, or installed the *shalogram*[2] at home, or kept their wife and daughter indoors, or when their womenfolk are expecting? Here they cut open the womb and tear out the child! Everywhere else there's a pact with the king for protection, but does our Muslim king protect us? We've lost our religious way of life, our caste status, our self-respect, our family connections—and now we're about to lose our lives! If we don't get rid of those bearded degenerates will anything be left of our Hindu identity?"

Mahendra said, "How will you get rid of them?"

"By destroying them," Bhabananda replied.

"On your own? Just with a slap?"

The bandit sang:

> Powerless? How so, Mother?
> With the strength of voices fell,
> Seventy millions in their swell!
> And with sharpened swords
> By twice as many hands upheld!

Mahendra said, "But I see that you're alone!"

"How can you say that? You've just seen two hundred men!"

"Are they all Children too?"

"Every one of them."

"How many more are there?"

"Thousands right now, and in time there'll be more."

Mahendra said, "Let's say there'll be ten to twenty thousand of you. Will you be able to end Muslim rule with that?"

"How many men did the English have at Plassey?" rejoined Bhabananda.

"You're comparing the Bengalis to the English??"

"Why not?" answered Bhabananda. "There's a limit to physical strength. Do you think a stronger person can make a bullet fly farther?"

"The why is there such a difference between the English and the Muslims?" asked Mahendra.

"Listen," said Bhabananda, "an Englishman won't flee even to save his life, whereas the Muslim will run off when he begins to sweat; he'll slope off in search of a cool drink! Again, the English hang on, they'll finish what they've begun. But the Muslims play fast and loose. The sepoys risk their lives for money, even then they don't get paid. And finally, it's a question of courage. . . . When they see a single cannonball a whole tribe of Muslims will flee, whereas a tribe of cannonballs can't make a single Englishman run!"

"Do your people have all these fine qualities?" asked Mahendra.

"No," said Bhabananda. "But qualities don't fall off trees; you've got to practice them."

"And are you doing that?"

"Can't you see we're renouncers?" said Bhabananda. "We've renounced in order to practice. When the job's done, when our practice is completed, we'll go back to running households. We too have wives and daughters."

Mahendra said, "Have you been able to give all that up? To cut off worldly concerns?"

Bhabananda answered, "No *santan* should lie, so I won't make empty boasts. Who can cut off worldly concerns? Those who say they've done so either have never had such concerns or are making am empty boast. We don't cut off worldly concerns, we keep a vow. Will you be a *santan*?"

Mahendra replied, "Unless I hear about my wife and child, I can't answer that."

"Very well, then come and meet your wife and daughter."

They continued on their way, and Bhabananda began to sing *Bande Mataram* again. Mahendra, who had a good voice and some knowledge and love of music, sang with him. As he sang, he noticed that tears came to his eyes.

Mahendra said, "So long as I don't have to leave my wife and child, you can initiate me into this vow."

Bhabananda said, "Whoever takes this vow must abandon wife and child. If you take the vow you can't see your wife and daughter. They'll be looked after properly, but you're forbidden to see them till your vow is fulfilled."

"Then I won't take the vow," said Mahendra.

PART I, CHAPTER 11

Night had turned to dawn, and that deserted forest, dark and silent for so long, was now flooded with light and rejoiced in the sound of bird-song. And in that joyful dawn, in the joyous forest, in the monastery of the sacred brotherhood, Satyananda Thakur sat on a deer-skin performing his early morning worship with Jibananda at his side. Just then Bhabananda arrived with Mahendra. The