

nothing. But Ramdoss had other hopes. Since she was so interested in Indian women he hoped her to take an interest in Hindu men. So he offered himself to be taken for better or worse'. The cartoonist hoped that he would succeed, for Miss Carpenter would then be confined once and for all to a zenana instead of meddling in other people's business. At the same time, *The Indian Charivari's* racial ego was sensitive to native criticisms of Europeans. When the Bengali journal, *Saptahik Paridarshan*, denounced European women as immodest in response to Annette Akroyd's work for female education in India, *The Indian Charivari* recommended that the magazine (its editor?) be horsewhipped.⁶⁴

In the final analysis, the cutting edge of cartoons in *The Indian Charivari* was racial malice. Caricature thrives on consensus, on a shared culture: us versus them. The joke is shared and so is the hostility. Of two kinds of European caricature, lampoons of public figures or parodies of national characteristics, where the recognition of the individual is not involved, the cartoonist seizes upon stereotypes, or 'condensed' images of class, gender or race. The most memorable cartoons abbreviate, compress and fuse their material in order to make striking visual statement. The arresting quality of *The Indian Charivari* lay precisely in witty caricatures of the Bengali character. Many of its cartoons were clever, funny and a few were even brilliant. But the English magazine did not invent these stereotypes; it simply exploited the existing ones of the educated Bengali. These were so widely diffused among the English that their purported universality, was expected to be enjoyed even by their victims. When some Indians failed to see the joke and withdrew their subscription, the magazine complained that 'an excessive thinness of skin is apt to be accompanied by excessive thickness of head'.⁶⁵

The overtly racist cartoons, inspired by Darwinism, such as 'The English Lion and the Bengali Ape', were not so original. Although Africans were the prime candidates for the category of ape, it was successfully deployed against other groups such as the Irish. They were the English cartoonist's favourite Darwinian 'missing link', though 'The British Lion and the Irish Monkey' appeared in *Punch* in 1848, long before *On the Origin of Species* (1859). As the threat from the Sinn Fein intensified in the 1880s, Tenniel mirrored English public feeling in drawing the Irish as apes. *The Indian Charivari* cartoon may well reflect the fact that the Bengalis, vociferous like the Irish, were seen as a threat to Pax Britannica. It 'is next to impossible for a native of Bengal to look pleased because he always looks black', complained *The Indian Charivari*.⁶⁶ Race is also the topic of the cartoon of the dusky wife reeking of ghee and garlic, which marks the end of the age of the *Delhi Sketch Book*, yielding place to *Curry and Rice*. *The Indian Charivari* perorated on the horrors of marrying natives for the benefit of its women readers: to some Englishwomen, the Indian Princes might appear as a romantic catch, but once married, they would reveal their true uncouth and 'male chauvinist nature'.⁶⁷

However, unlike the 'simian' Irish, the Bengali baboo was more a buffoon with touching cultural pretension. In *Baboo Jabberjee B.A.* (Fig. 92), published in *Punch* (1895), F. Anstey unfolded the drolleries of a westernised Bengali. Jabberjee was 'head over heels in love with Art, and the possessor of two magnificent coloured lithographs, representing a steeplechase in the act of jumping a trench, and a water-nymph in the very *decollete* undress of "puris naturalibus"'. Although Anstey had never met a real baboo, he used the 'baboo-language' with its malapropisms, confusion of English and Bengali syntaxes and bombastic phrases, to comical effect. In 1874 *The Indian Chariuari* had created the quintessential baboo in Bhugvatti Bose M.A., whose purported 'letters' appeared in the magazine; these cleverly exploited the Bengali habit of translating a Bengali idiom literally into English. For example, when Bhugvatti mentioned someone taking 'lessons near me', what he actually meant was 'taking lessons with me'.⁶⁸

The resentment against educated Hindus, especially the bhadralok, was deep-seated. The welfare of the Indian peasantry fitted in well with Raj paternalism, while the bhadralok formed a competitive and disaffected intelligentsia. Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858 promised equal treatment to all subjects which spurred the Bengali elite to compete for higher positions in the imperial bureaucracy. Surendranath Banerjea was one of the first Indians to challenge the English monopoly of the Indian Civil Service. Having entered the ICS in the teeth of Anglo-Indian opposition, Banerjea was soon dismissed on a flimsy charge. When he was forced to resign in 1874, *The Indian Chariuari* joined in insinuations about his honesty and competence. 'The Baboo Ballads', published in the same year, wove its theme around the ambitions of educated Bengalis of competing for the ICS examination. Jabberjee in *Punch* demanded that not only the ICS but also the Poet Laureateship be thrown open to Indians.

The Indian Chariuari took pot shots at nationalist papers that attacked the British monopoly of the ICS. It systematically impugned the character of the bhadralok, their lack of integrity and crass incompetence. The bhadralok, values were at serious odds with the English public school ethos of manliness and sportsmanship (Fig. 93). Macaulay offered his verdict, 'The physical organisation of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy. He lives in a constant vapour bath. His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid'.⁷⁰ Kipling's Bengali District Officer was not only incompetent but a coward to boot. Only British guardianship, and not educated baboodom, was capable of holding the warlike communities in India at bay. The Viceroy Lytton spoke his mind on this:

The Baboos, whom we have educated to write semi-seditious articles in the Native Press... really represent nothing but the social anomaly of their own position ... For most forms of administrative employment [they appear] to me quite unfit . .



"It was here," I said, reverently, "that the Swan of Avon was hatched !

92 *Baboo Jabberje BA*
Punch, 1895

magazine proposed sending a live baboo as an exhibit. A 'talking machine' that mixed conceit with sedition, he took pleasure in vilifying his rulers to whom he owed his existence. The Bengali confused cheek with allowable independence. Unless-corrected early, it led to intolerable results in the fully developed patriot: 'because they can talk broke English, they [think] they are as good as if not a great deal better than Englishmen'.⁷⁵ A hostile verse captures the lilt and accent of English spoken by Bengalis:

Bapre! this time you have made too beautiful picture of me.
 Charivari Bahadur, isquatting on branch of the tree;
 Very fine creature; don't know where you are finding its match;
 Beautiful tongue to iscreech, splendid nails to iscratch!
 Patriot calls himself, and newspaper business make,
 Telling that all Bengal was made for zamindar's sake,
 First got caught by Sarkar, then wrote in. Native Press,
 Plenty *gali* [abuse] of Shaheb, and meet with great success,
 Setting up lots newspapers, *Patrikas*, *Patriots*, *Duts*,
 Daily write Baboos are Angels, Anglo-saxons are brutes.
 Always told that poor Bengalees cruel oppressed,
 This Way making Cockney *shaheblogue* much distressed;
 Told that I too patriotic, don't want to pay any tax,
 Poor native country ruined, plundered of lakhs and lakhs;
 Why not giving to Baboo all good posts and good pay?
 Give whole Bengal to Editor-Baboos, and then go away!
 Too much education you give? Then more fool you -
 Cannot expect the gratitude from parrot-monkey Baboo.
 Therefore I sit on branch and show to Sarkar Bahadur 'ill-will',
 And make the talk to deny it, and all the same show it is still;
 Write too much eloquent article, hatred of *Shaheblogue* preach,
 The patriot-Baboo business - to make the iscratch and iscreech.⁷⁶

Nothing made the comic magazine more livid than the relentless complaints of the highly articulate Indian newspapers, *Hindoo Patriot* **and** *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, wittily christened the 'Hindoo, Howler **and** 'Scurrilous Bazar Patrika'. *The Indian Charivari* felt especially proprietorial about *Punch*:

There is perhaps no objection to the Hindoo Patriot publishing weak pieces of buffoonery if it finds it pays it to do so, but it has no right to desecrate an honoured name heading them 'Punchiana' - at least as long as it considers it the correct thing to embellish pages with indecent *post mortems* fished out of other papers for the gratification of that refined Baboodom of which it is fitting representative.⁷⁷

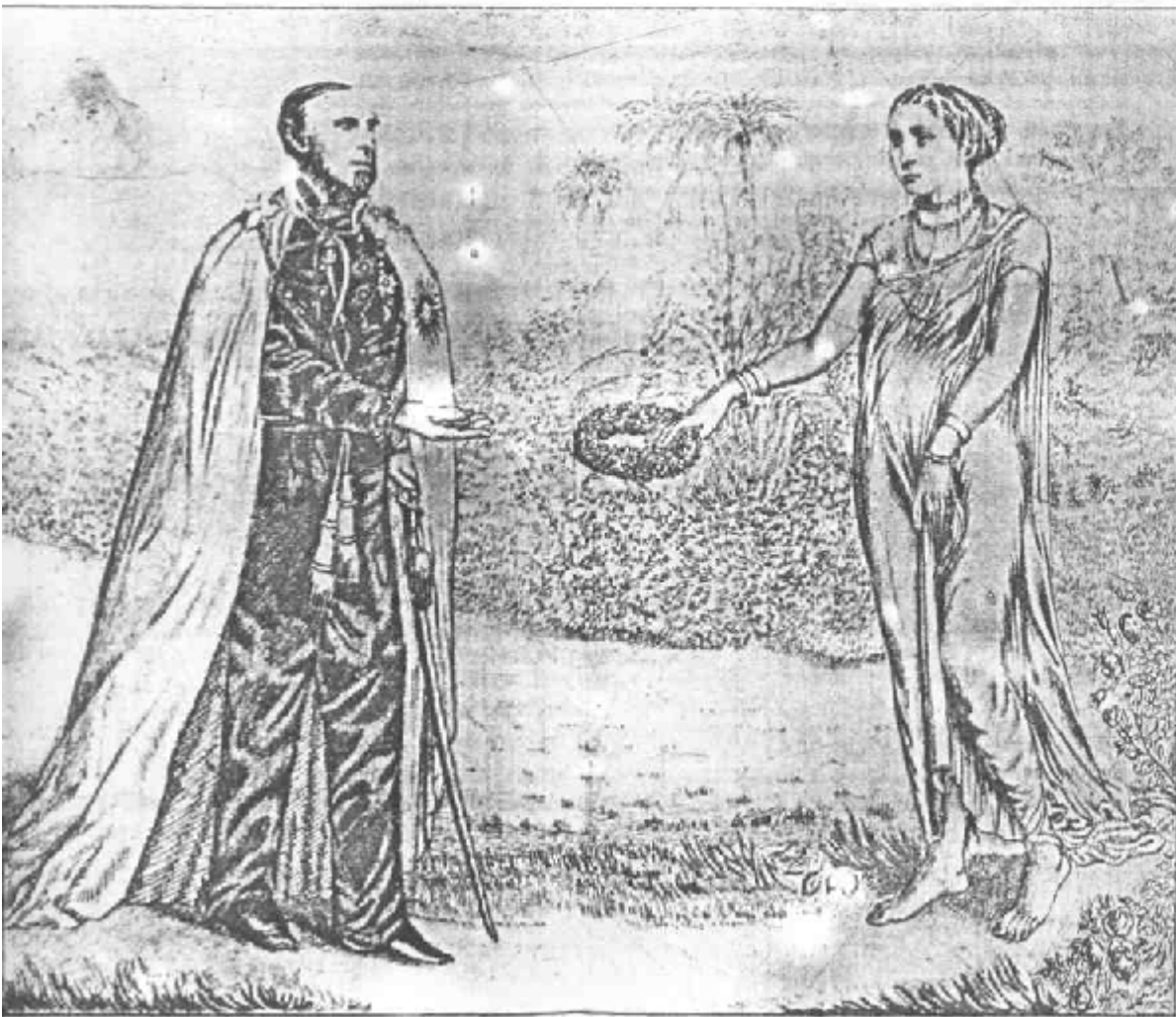
Mookerjee's Magazine (1872) engaged precisely in such post mortems: *The Times* (London) and the Anglo-Indian presses, were highly incensed by its campaign against Lytton's Dramatic Performances Bill (1876), aimed at curbing inflammatory material. The paper had also backed Rajendralala

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Mitra against Albrecht Weber, when the Indian challenged the Orientalist's claim that the *Ramayana* had derived its inspiration from Homer. *Mookerjee's Magazine* was one of the earliest Indian-owned magazines to contain lithographic cartoons, such as 'India Presenting a Coronet to Lord Northbrook on the Abolition of the Income Tax' (Fig. 94), 'A Modern Avatar' and 'A Phantasmagoria'. But these elaborate political allegories by D. D. Dhar did not match the verve of the editorials.⁷⁸

Mookerjee's Magazine soon perished. When glancing at these 'serio-comic' papers we cannot fail to notice that cartoons do not always make us laugh they, as often with *Punch*, simply offer political comments, topical allusions that meant a lot to contemporaries have long ceased to matter. Hence it is difficult to tell how influential they were.⁷⁹ Unlike

94 *India Presenting a Coronet*
The 10 Lord Northbrook, *Mookerjee's Magazine*, II, 1873



most of the comic magazines, *Hindi Punch* (1878-1930), enjoyed a long life. In response to demand, every year a selection of its cartoons was reprinted in an album. Founded as *Parsi Punch* by N. D. Apyakhtiyar, it was taken over at his death by Barjorjee Naorosji. He renamed it *Hindi Punch* and gave it his unique stamp. In 1905 the *Manchester Guardian* found it to be as familiar as Tenniel and yet strange, its humour forceful though moderate. If 'these cartoons appeal to the average Hindu', wrote the paper in compliment, 'he must be credited with a sense of humour and quite average intelligence. It is possible that if such an annual were distributed among MPs the India budget might find an unwontedly full and decently interested House'. The *Melbourne Punch* welcomed the 'queerest publication' and 'Panchoba' — a cross between Punch and a Hindu deity.⁸⁰

'Panchoba' and 'Hind', which stood for India in *Hindi Punch*, were often used in conjunction with public figures to comment on current political situations. In 1898 India was depicted as a holy cow in 'Patience on a Monument'. In addition to Punch-inspired drawings, the paper also cleverly adapted popular prints such as those of Ravi Varma. To take an example here, Lord Curzon is SarasvatI, the Hindu goddess of learning, in a parody of his address to the education conference at Simla (Fig. 95). As also Fig. 96 shows, Curzon had the distinction of being deified by Hindi

95 Left *On the Heights of Simla, Hindi Punch, 1905.* Curzon's inflated self-image is caricatured as Sarasvati, the Hindu goddess of learning. The iconography is that of Ravi Varma (sec p. 217) whose popular prints inspired a number of cartoons in the magazine

96 *Propitiating Shri Ganesha, Curzon the victim of another cartoon which shows him as the elephant-headed god of good fortune who needs to be propitiated (from H. A. Talcherkar, Lord Curzon in Indian Caricature, Bombay 1902)*



Punch. In the West, the use of visual metaphors for making a political point was a cartoonist's stock in trade.

Before World War I, *Hindi Punch* seldom covered world events, with the rare exception of Japan's defeat of Russia in 1905, when it shared its elation at the Asian victory with other Indian nationalists. The paper showed a unity of style and purpose throughout its existence, faithfully covering the annual resolutions of the Congress and its evolution into a political force. The first fifteen years of the Congress (1885-1900) were dominated by Moderate nationalists who were loyal to the empire, a sentiment shared by the magazine. Their main demands were for greater consultative powers within the Raj and wider opportunities in the ICS. In other words, at this stage they had neither the means nor the desire to overthrow the imperium but sought to make it more sensitive to public opinion. Above all, they wished to demonstrate their worthiness for democracy by espousing institutional politics. To reassure the government of its moderate intentions, a copy of the magazine was sent to the India Office. Naoroji received its guarded approval with the comment " that the paper was necessarily one-sided.

The very first cartoons (1887-9) gingerly broached India's right to political representation, informing Queen Victoria of the birth of the Congress and of Indian public opinion. On Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, professions of loyalty were made at the twelfth session of the Congress. *Hindi Punch* marked the occasion with the cartoon, 'Before Her Ever-Affectionate Mother', in line with Victoria's maternal image throughout the empire. A major platform of the early Congress was to appeal directly to the fairness of the British public and force concessions by lobbying in London. Dadabhai Naoroji took up residence in the city. In 1888, standing on a Liberal ticket in Finsbury Central, he became the first Indian Member of Parliament. Lord Salisbury, leader of the Conservative Party, opposed Naoroji's nomination, confident that British voters would not return a black man; to him, the Irish, the Orientals and the Hottentots were inferior species. In his reply, Gladstone characterised the Marquis as 'blacker' than the Indian. *Hindi Punch*, too, felt offended by the slur, promptly issuing the cartoon, 'Save Us from Pollution'. In 1889, 'A Wholesome Diet' (Fig. 97) depicted a cow being milked by a young woman. Britannia wondered if the milk (Indian nationalism) was wholesome. The milkmaid reassured her: yes, it would agree with her constitution.⁸³

At the end of the century, Moderates were challenged by Extremists in the Congress over social reforms. The controversy took precedence in the magazine. Unlike the Moderates, Tilak (1864-1920) and the Extremists saw the British as disrupting perennial Hindu values. Such sentiment coincided with burgeoning Hindu national identity. Reforms stirred up deep passions. 'The Patent Incubator' complained of the slow results of the Social Conference, the adjunct to the Congress sessions. *Punch's* Indian

'cousin', Panchoba, encouraged both the Congress and the Social Conference, in keeping with the magazine's liberal sympathies. In 1891 these conflicts came to a head over the age of consent issue. Moderates under Gokhale (1866—1915) wished to raise the marriagable age of Hindu 'girls from ten to twelve; the Extremists, who were for the status quo, lined up behind Tilak. A cartoon showed him with a sandal-paste mark on his forehead to ward off the evil eye, an ironic(?) reference to his role within the Congress. *Hindi Punch* however disapproved of the in-fighting itself, scolding the two factions as 'Bellicose Goats'. Among other early sketches, Ripon the Liberal Viceroy appeared as an angelic *putto*, while the mounting army expenditure which allegedly fell on Indian peasants was likened to a pelican devouring fishes. The comic magazine never lost its admiration for the social reformers: in 1900 the judge and reformer, Ranade (1841—1901), was a clever coppersmith in his efforts to weld ancient and modern India together; in 1904, Phirozeshah Mehta (1845—1915), the Moderate Congress President, was shown bearing 'The Lion's Burden'. Naorosji also praised the social reforms of the Gaekwad of Baroda.⁸⁴

The rift within the Congress became irrevocable after Curzon's Partition of Bengal in 1905. *Hindi Punch*, drawn into the crisis, printed 'The Great Partitioner of India'. In keeping with its liberal sympathies, the paper blamed caste as the 'partitioner' rather than Curzon's unpopular measure.⁸⁵ The Viceroy's address to the Calcutta University immediately



97 A Wholesome Diet, *Hindi Punch*, 1889. An early cartoon reassuring the Raj of the peaceful intentions of the Congress

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before the Partition had rekindled the unrest that had been smouldering since his measures against the University and the Calcutta Corporation:

I say that the highest ideal of truth is to a large extent a western conception ... Undoubtedly truth took a high place in the moral codes of the West before it had been similarly honoured in the East, where craftiness and diplomatic wile have always been held in much repute . . ."

Hindi Punch joined in the uproar following the speech, producing several cartoons against the calumny. Introducing truth to India, it said in a cartoon dated March 1905, was like carrying coals to Newcastle, for now the Viceroy had become thoroughly unpopular with the intelligentsia, many of whom were behind Kitchener in the famous Curzon-Kitchener controversy. *Hindi Punch* was no exception.⁸⁷

The worsening political situation did not diminish the moderate magazine's loyalty to the Raj. It treated gently the reception given to the visiting Prince and Princess of Wales by the ladies of Bombay. In another sketch, 'Reading the Horoscope', India personified predicts the political future before the visiting royalty. *Hindi Punch*, as in 'The Ear-Opener', continued to believe in the need to 'reach the ears and touch the hearts of the great English people', as opposed to Raj officials. A village barber takes the wax out of John Bull's ears, which would let him hear the Indian demands better.⁸⁸

As the nationalist movement entered a phase of widespread unrest and terrorism, *Hindi Punch* fell out of step with mainstream politics. It lived on beyond Mahatma Gandhi's *satyagraha* movement in the 1920s, but the mass upheaval did not inspire any powerful cartoons. The mirror of another era, *Hindi Punch* had outlived its usefulness.

Cartoon traditions in the vernacular

The *Oudh Punch*, in Urdu, was a pioneer comic magazine of north India. " In 1881, when Archibald Constable published a selection of its cartoons, he reassured himself that the profusion of comic magazines in India dispelled the myth that orientals were devoid of humour. Muhammad Sajjad Husain of Lucknow, who preferred independence to a desk, job, brought out the magazine in 1877. By 1881 its sales figures had reached the 500 mark. Many of the lithographic cartoons were copied from *Punch*, *Fun* and other English magazines. But the most interesting ones were clever modifications of the English cartoons as well as original drawings. Its regular cartoonist, Ganga Sahai (pen-name Shauq, A Hindu 1st) designed the cover in imitation of *Punch*. He contributed as a draughts man at the Exhibition of Industrial Art in Lucknow (1881).

The Oudh Punch focused not only on politics but also on special problems and dealt even-handedly with Hindu-Muslim riots over cow

slaughter. It used literary allusions as in the West; a clever one, namely, Rama bending Siva's bow to win Sita's hand, parodied Lord Lytton's Afghan expedition of 1878-80. 'Rebellion Had Bad Luck (1881)', paraphrasing Tenniel's cartoon in *Punch* (16.12.1865), drew an analogy between British treatment of Indian and Irish nationalists (Figs 98, 99). The cartoon, which alluded to an incident at the engineering college in Bengal, portrayed *the* Director of Public Instruction of Bengal as John Bull; he had sent down the student leaders after a political demonstration at the college.⁹¹

Of cartoons that make human follies an object of amusement, few were more striking than the ones from Bengal, the earliest of which appeared during the Bengal Renaissance. Satirical papers existed in Bengal prior to the 1870s, but illustrated ones appeared close on the heels of *The Indian Charivari* (1873). Though Bengali artists learned from it, they were closer in spirit to Gillray and Cruikshank than to *Punch*. If they happened to choose the same victims as *The Indian Charivari*, the western-educated Bengalis, "their purpose was very uferent.

Bengali cartoonists embarked on a savage and yet playful game of self-mockery. Wit and innuendo, used in caricature to expose pretension, are symptoms of heightened individualism. Caricature, a prime device for parodying contemporary manners, gave this lively, self-absorbed milieu a new weapon to turn on itself.² The cartoons inherited an earlier tradition of literary parodies; they were the pictorial equivalents of *Naba Babu Bilas*, *Naba Bibi Bilas*, Kali Prasanna Sinha's "brilliant *Hutafn PENCH& Naksha* and similar satirical works. This self-critical undertow existed throughout the Bengal Renaissance: the 'alter ego' of the westernised bhadralok. Significantly, criticisms of modern ideas emanated not from traditional groups, but from within the urban elite itself. Social satires and cartoons exposed the ambiguities of the love—hatred relationship that characterised bhadralok society — an exclusive and yet divided group, divided because traditional signs of status were no longer sacrosanct. And yet the insults and the ridicule heaped upon bhadralok values by the satirist were a token of his commitment to his literate culture. When the Bengali cartoonist pilloried his country-men he was in fact taking them into his confidence. His victims were invariably his most appreciative audience.⁹³

Harbola Bhand (1874), one of the first comic magazines, exposed furtive drinking among the westernised. Their conscience, insinuated the cartoon, was salved by pretending that the brandy bought from the chemist had medicinal value.⁹⁴ The short-lived publication made way for the famous *Basantak*, inspired by *Punch*. An obscenely fat Brahmin - *Punch* transmogrified no less - leers out of its cover, while the scenes around are of the utter depravity to which Calcutta had sunk: 'bibendum' baboodom and courting English couples. This scurrilous, irreverent paper, edited by Prannath Datta (1840-88), lasted two years. From a leading Calcutta

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family, Prannath preferred to work under Rajendralala Mitra than to join the colonial bureaucracy.

The title *Basantak* means a clown (*Vidusak*) in Sanskrit. The Bengali word *basanta* also has the dual meaning of the season of spring and the dread infection, smallpox. Prannath put out his *zamadar* (sweeper) as the owner of the journal. Tins was less to seek protection against his victims in anonymity than to play a further trick on his readers. He left enough clues in the paper to enable his readers to spot the real author. *Basantak* targeted



دائرہ کورسہ شہتہ تعلیمہ ہنگال
فس کم جہان پاک

98 *Rebellion Had Bad Luck*,
Oudh Punch, 1881. This
protest against government
intervention in education is
highlighted by the adaptation
of a *Punch* cartoon on the
Irish (see Fig. 99)

THE POWER OF THE PRINTED IMAGE

colonial officials and their Indian allies, presenting public men in the guise of mythological figures. The humour rested on allusions to the divine lovers, Radha and Krishna. for instance: the love of high British officials for their BengaU allies, *Basantak* implied, displayed similar intensity. There was a coarse immediacy in his nephew Girindrakumar's drawing that Suited Prannath's savage invective. Hard-hitting satires included crushing of the Indian handloom by Manchester textiles, the corruption of Calcutta's civic administration and the mismanagement of official famine



99 John Tenniel: *Rebellion Had Bad Luck*, *Punch*. 1865

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relief. In '23rd special dispatch from the Famine districts' (Fig, 100) English officials force-feed overfed candidates, while the rest

of the population starves. The caption reads; 'Beggar: Your honours. I really can't manage any more. Their Honours: We are afraid that won't do, someone must finish so much rice'.⁹⁶

100 *The 23rd special dispatch*
Basantak

Basantak became embroiled in political factionalism around 1875, as



part of emergent nationalist politics. In the last century, the bhadrak population of Calcutta was divided into the leading families (*abhijat*) and ordinary householders (*grihasta*). The Calcutta Corporation was run by a government-appointed chairman who also happened to be the Police Commissioner. In 1863 the system was slightly Indianised with the nomination of Indian aristocrats as Justices of the Peace. With the growth of public opinion in the 1870s, the 'householders' consisting of small landholders, clerks, schoolteachers and journalists began to tire of their political impotence. Their chance to challenge the zamindars came with the elevation of Temple to the Lieutenant-Governorship of Bengal."

In 1875, keen on the spread of western institutions, Temple was prepared to defuse Bengali demands with limited political rights. The *grihasta* were offered a share in local government; as an elected body, they would more willingly pay taxes, urgently needed for modern amenities in Calcutta. The 'householders' warmly welcomed Temple's proposal, since they now had a chance to replace the conservative lobby with radical elements. The Europeans in Calcutta, too, wished to replace the control of the landed magnates with an elected body. Unexpectedly, they allied with the 'householders', as *The Indian Charivari* joined hands with *Basantak*. *The Indian Charivari* depicted two prominent English members of the Municipal Corporation, Roberts and Hogg, as a Muslim and a Brahmin. They relaxed with a hookah, while their supporter Wilson, the editor of a local newspaper, fanned them, and the pro-zamindar Kristo Das Pal served them with betel.

The battle lines were clearly drawn. *Basantak* claimed to defend the interests of the ordinary citizen of Calcutta against the officials, the landed magnates and their mouthpiece, the *Hindoo Patriot*, edited by Kristo Das Pal. A defender of the *grihasta*, it waged relentless war against the modernisation projects of the Corporation, since improvements, such as covered drains, tramways, a modern market and other amenities, were to come out of the ratepayer's pocket. Dissatisfied with the 'man its, the street' when the laying of covered drains caused discomfort to the pedestrians one of them is shown using his umbrella to shelter himself against the mud splashed by a passing carriage. In one cartoon, Sir Stewart Hogg, Chairman of the Corporation and Police Commissioner, is a trickster who makes millions vanish in the name of improvement. In another, he is the Boar-incarnation of Visnu (Fig. 101). In this satirical version of the Hindu pantheon, the tusks of the deity holds up various boons: tramways, drainage, a modern public market; while one of his arms wields the rod of authority, the police. He tramples underfoot Calcutta citizens as he receives worship from a sycophantic Bengali Justice of the Peace. The synonyms, 'boar' and 'hog' (Hogg), did not escape the readers.

The Bengali Justice of the Peace here was a zamindar. Their spokesman in the Governor's Council, Kristo Das Pal, fought the extension of franchise to the 'householders'. As politics became more complex, the

zamindars chose Pal to represent them. Of humble origin, Pal was a brilliant speaker and journalist, who edited the *Hindoo Patriot* from 1861. He rose to be a Justice of the Peace and Commissioner of the Calcutta Municipality, eventually joining the exclusive Governor's Council. On his death at forty-one, a statue in his honour was erected with public subscription. Pal's opposition to the *grihastas* drew out *Basantak's* sharp claws, which branded him as a government 'collaborator' - Temple's pet hound, no less (Fig. 102). Interestingly, political enmity did not tarnish personal amity. Pal is said to have asked Datta in jest, 'Do you always empty your inkpot when drawing me?'



101 *Varaha Avatar, Basantak*

Basantak reserved its most lethal barbs for the westernised, in satires reminiscent of Kalighat. In 'Native Preparations for Jaymangal Singh's Ball' (Fig. 103), two pairs of *bania* (merchant) men practise the waltz, while a veiled woman looks on, bemused. Datta's targets included Vidyasagar's 'Society for the Prevention of Obscenity' (Fig. 104), purporting to celebrate the change that had come about. In conventional iconography, the naked goddess Kali with dishevelled hair stands on the god Siva. Here she wears a blouse and a modest, pleated, full-length skirt in deference to the reformer. She also carries a lady's handbag. Her supine victim sports a pair of tweed trousers with braces. The cartoonist nukes fun of both the campaign for modest female attire and the prevailing fashion in Victorian clothes. But Datta admircu Vidyasagar. His *The Bull and the Frog* mocks the foremost novelist Bankim Chatterjee's presumed



102 *Temple's Pet Hound*,
Basantak

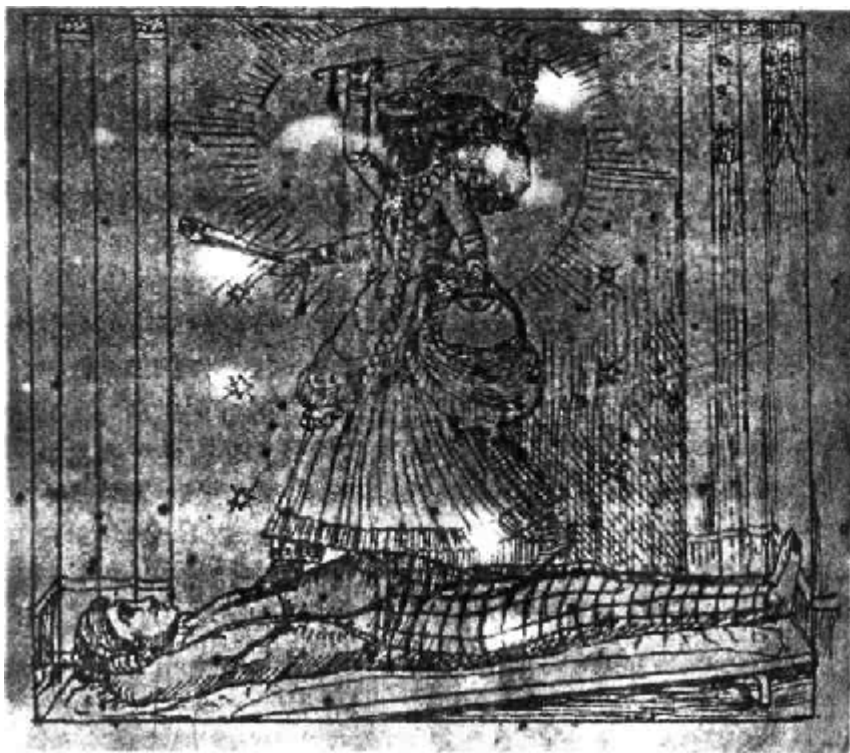
challenge to the great reformer. Filled with hubris, Bankim bullfrog tries to inflate to the size of Vidyasagar, the majestic bull, with the danger of bursting. Nor did *Basantak* spare the bhadrakok indulgence in Western food and drink, a focus of satire since Iswar Gupta, the noted poet (1812-59). It parodied the Christmas celebration of the *babus*, which was an excuse for overeating forbidden foods, for getting drunk on sherry and champagne, and for debauchery. Conservative *Basantak* never forgave Jagadananda Mukherjee, who had allowed the Prince of Wales to be received by the woman of his family. The most popular Bengali cartoons were social. The magazines *Prabasi* and *Bharati* had occasional cartoons, but in *Manasi O Marmabani*, *Bharat Barsha* and *Masik Basumati* they featured regularly. The stock Bengali characters - hypocritical zamindar, henpecked husband, pompous professor, obsequious clerk, illiterate Brahmin - were the cartoonists' favourites. Characteristic behaviours and typical situations, such as the plump, head-clerk returning from the bazaar with his favourite fish or the thin schoolmaster with stick-like arms and legs were well

103 *Native Preparations*
Jaymangal Singh's Ball
Basantak



ubiquitous umbrella was not only a protection against the fierce Bengal sun but also the all-purpose Weapon of the Bengali hero.⁴⁰³ The painter Abanindranath Tagore tried his hand at caricatures of favourite Bengali characters at various times in his career (Fig. 105). They were lively, though never attaining the brilliance of his brother Gaganendranath's cartoons (see p. 174-5).

From 1917, Jatin Sen featured regularly in *Manasi O Marmabani* and *Bharat Barsha*, and occasionally in *Prabasi*. Sen's observation of Bengali physiognomic types, blending individual idiosyncrasies with national peculiarities!, was Unmatched for the period. The works of Jaladhar Sen, Charuchandra Roy, Apurba Krishna Ghosh, Benoy Ghosh and Chanchal Bandopadhyaya seem coarse by comparison. A student at the art school, Sen turned to cartoons, graphic art and cinema hoardings after failing to make headway in oriental art (see ch. 8). A chance meeting with a literary genius, Rajsekhar Bose, led to Sen's prize-winning graphic work and posters for Bose's chemical firm. Sen joined Bose's literary circle, while his cartoons inspired Bose's brilliant satirical works, *Gaddlika* (1924) (Fig. 106), *Kajjali* (1927) and *Hanumaner Swapna* (1937). These remain the most inventive parodies of Bengali life, with their keen eye for the ridiculous in social behaviour. What Sukumar Ray did for children Bose did for adults. In the



104 *Society for the Perpetuation of Obscenity*, Basantak. K51T, who in conventional iconography (see Fig. XII) is naked, is draped here in deference to the new morality

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Bengali mind, Sen's witty sketches became inextricably linked with Bose's

Not only Sen but other cartoonists too loved to dwell on the affectations of the young - their exotic coiffure, outlandish sartorial fashions, and partiality to gold-rimmed pince-nez and pther spectacles a *la*



105 Abanindranath Tagore:
A Comic Character (inspired by
plays produced at the Tagore
home)

mode. The cartoonists juxtaposed two types of Bengali youth: the rugged, salt-of-the-earth, masculine young man and the languid, *Fin-de siècle*, Oscar Wilde type. The second read poetry, spent his time on personal grooming, and fainted at the sight of any anti-aesthetic unpleasantness. The classic stories of these types are Rajsekhar Bose's 'Ratarati' (Over night) and 'Kachi Samsad' (The league of youth). The loss of manliness in the colonial era weighed heavily on the Bengali mind, just as it regarded the emancipate woman with unmitigated horror. Nowhere were the cartoonists more brilliant than in their portrayals of dominating, domineering women. This ambivalence of bhadralok society is first seen in the art of Kalighat, with its images of viragoes (wife or mistress?) trampling masochistic *babus*. Woman as a burden or a disruptive force was a refrain of cartoons - the old man as a slave to his young wife, the graduate hampered by an illiterate spouse with whom he cannot make intellectual conversation.¹⁰⁶

The movement for improving Hindu women's condition garnered force in the nineteenth century, *San* was abolished, but there remained other disabilities, such as a low level of education and infant marriage. The



106 Jatin Sen: illustration to Rajsekhar Bose's *Gaddalika*

first women in Bengal to be emancipated, and many of them were Brahmos, became the butt of the cartoonist's pen, such as in *Basantak*. One cartoon that shows a well-dressed woman inside a peep-show box, has this explanation: 'Come along and view at last a Hindu woman whose veil has been lifted'. Two sahibs gaze at her, one of them reaching inside his pocket for money. The implication is clear: a woman who can show her face to a stranger without shame can also sell her body*,"⁰⁷

Women's emancipation was an obsession with Bengali cartoonists, who played on men's subliminal fears. Once women were educated, they would neglect hearth and husband for the glamour of the outside world. The nationalist, who supported women's education, expected her not to demand equal rights with men but to be an inspiring mother. A widespread anxiety informed a society where reforms had only scratched the surface, where child marriage and dowry were still part of everyday life. Rabindranath observed, 'one group of people deny that there is any need for women's education, because men suffer many disadvantages when women receive education. An educated wife is no longer devoted to her husband, she forgets her duties and spends her time reading and in similar activities'. Early on in *Basantak* the consequences of marrying an educated woman are made chillingly clear. The wife relaxes in an armchair with a novel while the poor husband tries to light the coal oven in the kitchen. As smoke enters the room, the wife, engrossed in the book, says in irritation: 'Can't you close the kitchen door while lighting the fire?' (Fig. 107).

Jatin Sen and Benoy Ghosh portrayed liberated woman in various guises, appealing to men's fear of emasculation. In 'Women's Revolt*', a young lady is dressed in men's clothes. In another cartoon (1924), the wife is going for a spin with her gentleman friend (Fig. 108). Unlike the 'unemancipated' husband, she and her friend are fashionable. She wears dark glasses; he sports a monocle and drives a latest model convertible. She, instructs her husband to give the baby a bottle. Since he is not , endowed by nature to breastfeed, the husband laments, he has no choice but to give it a bottle. The prickliest area was employment: highly placed women as judges, police superintendents and office executives would encroach into the men's world with impunity, symbolised by puny clerks working under powerful women bosses. The cigar-smoking lady represents the final collapse of man's domain

The erosion of social values under the impact of the West remained the favourite topic of Bengali caricature. In this no one matched the unsentimental eye of Gaganendranath Tagore. His brilliant sketches, lithographed by a Muslim artisan, appeared from 1917 onwards in three volumes, *Birup Bajra* (Play of Opposites), *Adbhut Lok* (Realm of the Absurd) and *Naba Hullod* (Reform screams). As Nirad Chaudhuri argues, 'the only expression in art ever given to Hindu liberalism, [was]... a set of lithographs after drawings by Gaganendranath Tagore .. v The cartoons

THE POWER OF THE PRINTED IMAGE

would not suffer by comparison with those of Daumier. Gaganendranath produced some sharply observed political cartoons, but by far his most original ones were social satires. If he continued with the economy of Kalighat, his ferocity also bore an uncanny resemblance to German Expressionism, the cartoonists of *Simpleissimus*, Bruno Paul and Rudolf Wilke (Figs XI; no, 11, 112). The German comic paper was founded in 1896 with a distinct style - strong line, grotesque figures and faces, and flat areas of grey or beige. It is likely that the combination of bold lines and large flat surfaces in the *Simplicissimus* and in Gaganendranath ultimately went back to Japanese prints. The Bengali artist's admiration for Japanese art is known from other contexts.

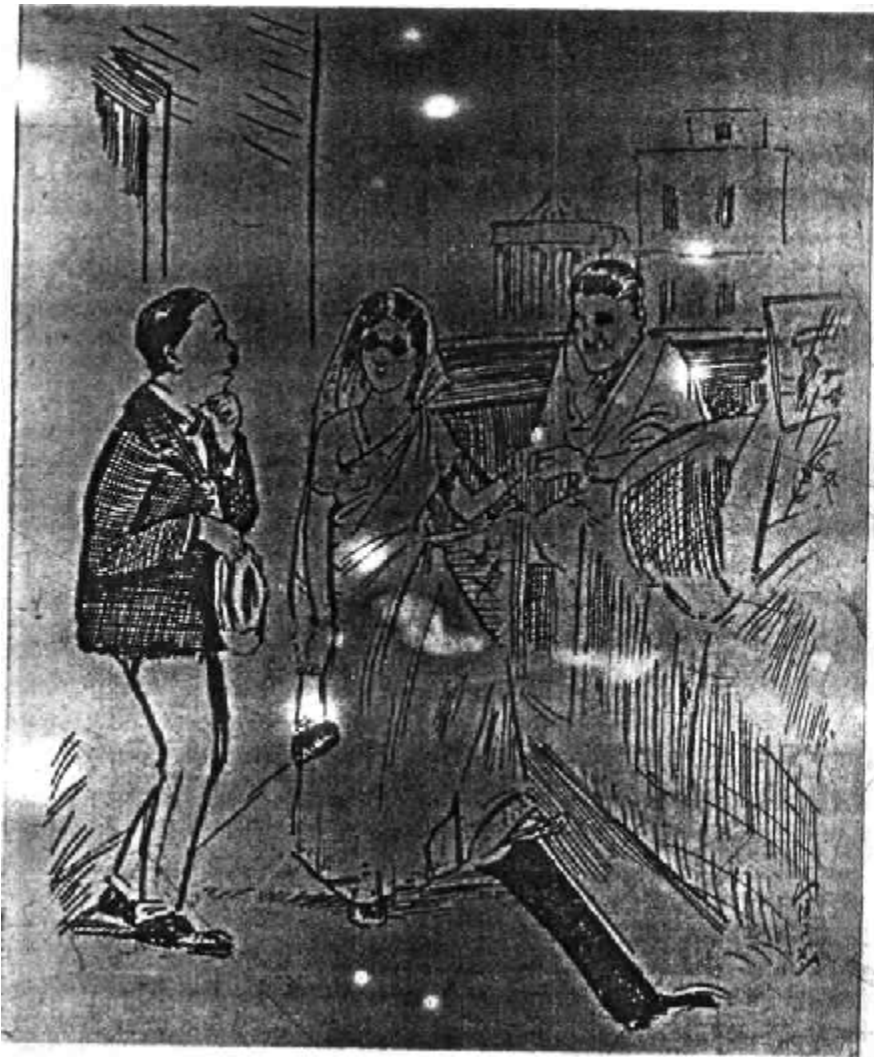
The brunt of Gagan's satire was borne by the westernised, whom he mocked for trying to be more English than the English. His cartoons with their bloated figures have a savage intensity, dwelling on what he saw as the hypocrisy, cant and double standards in Bengali society: the Brahmin paying lip service to the Vedas whilst taking graft for keeping whores (Fig. XI); Bengalis masquerading as black sahibs; the suffering wife



107 Wife: Can't you close the door who lighting the fire?,
Basantak

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waiting for the *babu* who visits the *demi-monde* (Fig. 112), Gaganendranath's lithographs were the culmination of the tradition of self-parody in Bengal. They pleased the English press no end. *The Englishman* wrote gleefully on the 'merciless satire not altogether undeserved; on some of the modern tendencies of the artist's countrymen'.¹³ What they failed to appreciate was that with these cartoons the artist was engaging in a long-standing game, a game that continued the unresolved internal debate among Bengalis on cultural identity. Gaganendranath stood last in the line of such critics of the *bhadralok* society.



108 Benoy Ghosh:
*Consequences of Folly, Manasi o
Marmabani*, 1331 (1924)

SALON ARTISTS, MECHANICAL
REPRODUCTION AND PEOPLE'S ART

The main thrust of the previous chapters has been to show the rise of colonial artists and patrons, widely seen as a triumphant vindication of Raj education policy. So what about the ordinary people who had hitherto been served by traditional artisans? At first glance they appear to



মোকা জ্বালা গন্ধটি "সেবেলে" জিবেলো গালা
বন্দী। চুইট ধরিয়েছেন ।

109 Jatin Sen: *A Cigar-Smoking
Lady, Manasi O Marmabani*, 1326
(1919)

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have been left out of the equation, as elite and popular art took different paths. Yet, in a curious twist of historical circumstance, the divide between the two was bridged by the elite artists when they took over printmaking from artisans. These mass prints had a profound impact on society, an art form that became universally accessible regardless of wealth and class.

While cheap prints circulated in India from the last century, late in the century technically advanced German prints began flooding the Indian market. Some of the earliest ones were produced by south German firms specialising in Roman Catholic subjects. If one type of German oleograph provided for the devout in India, another catered for the prurient. Nor were local presses slow to learn. Lithographic presses mushroomed in Maharashtra, with prints ranging from crude engravings to polychrome compositions. The lion's share was exacted by the Poona Chitrasala Press from 1888, if not as early as 1885 (Fig. 113); the steam press pioneered oleographs in India.

If originally Bat-tab ('the Grub Street' of Calcutta) had made a large dent in the Kalighat monopoly of religious pictures in Bengal, art school

- 110 Gaganendranath Tagore:
A Modern Patriot,
hand-coloured lithograph. A
caricature of westernised
babus. The style with its use
of lines and large flat areas is
slightly reminiscent of
Beerbohm's cartoons but its
savagery is that of Bruno Paul
in the *Simplicissimus*, Fig. i 11



- 111 *Right* Bruno Paul:
cartoon from the
Simplicissimus



graduates soon secured a virtual monopoly in them. An official report of 1888 states that 'cheaper coloured [lithographs] of Gods and Goddesses turned out by the ex-students of the Calcutta School of Art' spelt the end of Kalighat. The early rivals of Kalighat included Nrityalal Datta and Charuchandra Roy who specialised in metal-plate prints, and Kristo Hurry Doss, the illustrator to J. M. Tagbre's lavish volume, *Six Principal Ragas*. But the Calcutta Art Studio overshadowed the rest in popularity.



112 Gaganendranath Tagore: *A Wayside Distraction*, hand-coloured lithograph. While his faithful wife waits at home, the babu is distracted by other women (a play on the Sanskrit sloka: Pathi Nan Vivarjita or str strange . women encountered on the way should be avoided for obvious reasons)

THE AGE OF OPTIMISM

The multi-purpose Studio, set up around 1878, was Annada Bagchi's most successful financial venture. Since the nineteenth century, claimed his biographer, it had supplied pictures for decorating Bengali homes. The success of the Studio owed to two of the partners, Nabakumar Biswas and Annada Bagchi, whose designs were superior to those of previous engravers. The publicity received at the exhibition of 1883 boosted their confidence. Locke reported that they could ' "hold their



113 Poona Chitrashala
Press:
Narasinha, lithograph of a
Hindu deity in a
conventional pose

own in their own lines against all comers" and the architectural lithographs of the last mentioned student [were] excellent . The studio thrived between 1878-1920 mainly as a lithographic press and continues today as a printing concern (Figs XII, 127, 128). The popularity of its religious chromo-lithographs encouraged Y ropean entrepreneurs to enter the market. The Studio made Bamapada Bandopadhaya aware of the market in popular prints. His works printed in Austria and Germany sold in Calcutta (Fig. 114)



114 Bamapada
Bandopadhaya: *Sakuntala*,
lithograph (printed in
Germany)

THE AGE OF OPTIMISM

Bagchi soon left the Studio, as his teaching commitments increased and a clash of interests between the partners surfaced. When the Studio was auctioned off in 1882, Nabakumar Biswas bought it up. During his regime the Studio not only undertook lithographs on a large scale, but added oil and photographic portraits to its repertory, once again blurring the distinction between elite and popular art. A convenient outlet for the prints was the shop owned by Nabakumar's brother Prasanna in the Tiretta Bazaar. The hand-tinted lithographs, which fetched a rupee or two, managed to hold their own against competition until they were superseded by Ravi Varma's oleographs in the 1890s.¹²⁰

The Studio iconography was traditional but the Classical postures of Hindu deities, especially goddesses, who sported disconcertingly muscular limbs, were inspired by the an school casts of Apollo, Artemis and Aphrodite, and above all by Renaissance paintings. The Studio swiftly won the hearts of urban Bengal, but failed to please discerning critics. Balendranath Tagore, for instance, preferred Ravi Varma to what was increasingly seen as the garish colour schema of the Studio.¹²¹ The Studio sold prints on the Bengali theatre and brought out monochrome portraits of eminent Bengalis, popular among the *bhadralok*. It printed political topics, such as the intriguing lithograph, *Begging India back from Britain*. But its most striking political icon was originally religious. *Kali* (1879) (Fig. XII) was later used to market a 'nationalist brand of cigarettes', the print of the dread goddess wreaking vengeance was scoured for a hidden political message by the government. The print was adapted by Mahara-stran revolutionaries as a nationalist icon. *Kali* was widely plagiarised. The Bhau Bui Company of London released another version printed-in Germany; *Kali* provided the 'logo' for safety matches.

The last three chapters dealt with the different facets of westernisation that helped create the taste for naturalism in colonial India. They centred on the high point of academic art, between the closing decade of the last and the early years of this century. This was when the ground rules of academic naturalism were set and patterns of patronage established. In this selective overview, many artists' lives remain unsung. But that does not mean that they did not share the new values and ambitions. The main feature of this period was the rise of the self-conscious artist, whose high social standing and professional kudos were linked to modern networks, institutions and means of communication. And yet, even though the gentleman artist mainly catered to the elite, his concern with mechanical reproduction forced him to enter the competition for the hearts-of the people. The colonial artist who was brilliantly successful in both elite and popular spheres was Ravi Varma. I have gone beyond his period in Order to set his achievements against the general phenomenon of colonial art. We now retrace our steps to examine this remarkable painter.