ESSAY

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM

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CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 01

In the current issue of Bharati a story entitled Lajjabati has been published. This composition may be said to embody the very ideal of the short story. One or two luminous portraits of Bengali women confined within the inner apartments have been drawn, yet without imposing upon them any fanciful posture—they stand precisely as they naturally arise. There is no excess, no affectation, no hair-raising extravagance of language, and yet, by the time the reader has finished, a tear gathers in the eye with the utmost ease. "Bilap" (Lament) is a prose essay. But it possesses neither the restraint of prose nor the cadence of verse. Such unruly, baseless essays are nowadays to be found in abundance in the Bengali language; but we see no necessity whatsoever for writing of this kind.

—Litterateur. As the echo follows the sound, so behind every faction there trail a number of followers who, though not truly of the party, wish nevertheless to be carried along with the leader by aping his airs and postures. Such persons everywhere become objects of ridicule. In the same way, those who linger as shadows about the assembly of the learned, making a pretence of literature, have been given by the author the name of "Litterateurs," and thereby mildly satirised. But unfortunately, no such assembly exists in Bengal, nor any faint imitation of one. The description the author has employed cannot properly be applied to any particular faction in this country. Reading the piece, one is led to suspect that the author must have had some literary dispute with someone, and have heard from his opponent some such blunt retort as, "What would you know of such matters!" And out of that very resentment, he has painted a hostile caricature of his adversary and had it printed forthwith. However sharp and however extraordinarily witty this composition may be by the author's own reckoning, it is not fit to be given to print. Such writing is neither true nor beautiful, and we can see that it does good to no one.

—Planchette. The venerable and revered teacher of the Adi Brahmo Samaj, Shrijukta Hemchandra Vidyaratna, has published under this title an essay well worth particular attention. The two English poems produced through the planchette by Vidyaratna Mahashay in collaboration with a boy are exceedingly astonishing. The latter poem especially is not one that could be expected from any Bengali.

—We offer thanks to the authoress of "The Woman of Today and Yesterday." How many writers are capable of composing with such simple, lucid, cogent, and vividly pictorial prose? The remarks the authoress has made concerning the changes of the age are exceedingly substantial. Consider the man who now rides the tram; those who once could not even afford sandals of coarse leather now wear English shoes and stockings. What astonishing changes have taken place in the daily life of men—how many have paused to compare them with what went before? Yet the moment the least sign of the change proper to this age appears among our womenfolk, the devotee of this new spirit, the student of this new school, the newly attired modern woman, is mocked by the "progressive," lampooned in farces, and some, remembering Sita and Damayanti, openly shed tears in public. They hope that the masculine half of society may be tanned crimson in the fire of enlightenment while the other half preserves its ancient, tender innocence. One venture cannot yield separate fruits; one crop cannot obey separate laws. Therefore, be it for good or ill, it is woman's ancient duty to follow in the wake of man—and amid a thousand novelties of the present age, that ancient law pronounced by Manu strives still to remain unbroken. What the authoress has written on the subject of present-day hospitality contains much matter for reflection.

Bharati, 15th Volume, Ashwin and Kartik [1298]

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 02

"Chaitanya's Life and Chaitanya's Faith"—this essay has for a long time now been appearing in Nabya-Bharat. On the subject of Chaitanya's life and doctrine, the author leaves not a single word unsaid. But it would have been better had he, alongside this, distinguished the true from the false by means of historical scrutiny. Be that as it may, we must thank the author for his labour and for the vastness of his research, and at the same time tell the editor that so extensive a work is not fit for publication in a periodical. "The Marriage Customs of the Santals" is a particularly diverting essay. "The Great Pilgrimage" is the author's account of his travels in Norway. The descriptive portion is far too abbreviated, and the author's emotion is excessive and overwrought. Shrijukta Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, in his essay "The Shaka Era," has critically examined the history of the establishment of that era. It is commonly believed that this era was instituted by Vikramaditya. The author demonstrates that at one time the Shaka people of Central Asia (called in English the Scythians) established a kingdom in India and instituted this era. The author has unearthed numerous proofs from ancient texts. The composition is exceedingly lucid. Generally, antiquarian essays in Bengali periodicals become so entangled in a mesh of argumentation that they prove wholly forbidding and daunting to the ordinary reader; but this piece cannot be charged with that fault—remarkably, from beginning to end it remains coherent, concise, and intelligible.

We quote a passage or two from the essay "Self-Respect." On the subject of the use of foreign goods, the author writes: "You think yourself blessed to wear the cloth that comforts you, to feel delight at the sound of the harmonium you play, to be startled and amazed by the railway train and the telegraph you behold, to attain heavenly bliss riding upon the phaeton you own; whether or not you have any true connection with the one whose ship's cannon you regard as a divine achievement, still his slave you must become... My conviction regarding English artistry is unshaken: that half his dominion over this country has come from the railway and

the steamer; for the common people constantly behold these things and find them wondrous, and thereby lose their own strength, courage, and self-respect."

Nabya-Bharat, Ashwin and Kartik [1298]

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 03

In this number a short novel entitled "The Vase of Flowers," translated from the French, has appeared. Though this tale, composed by the celebrated author Prosper Mérimée, is beautiful, it is not fit for translation into Bengali. The events narrated and the characters portrayed are far too European—this alone will greatly hinder Bengali readers' enjoyment of it. Indeed, owing to the disparity of social custom, the central incident itself may seem entirely absurd to us. Moreover, the linguistic charm of the original can never be preserved in translation, and so the composition loses even that modest dignity it might otherwise possess.

In the essay "The Educated Woman," Srimati Krishnabhabini has displayed considerable erudition. But in our judgment it is futile to cite as examples of women's capacity for earning, the incomes of American female doctors, female attorneys, and English female authors. To dazzle us with grand sums of money is merely to lead us astray with false enticements. George Eliot received a hundred thousand rupees for the sale of her first book. Had she received nothing at all, her glory would not have been diminished thereby. Instances are known where many male authors have sold their world-renowned works for the merest pittance. Secondly, it is not woman's proper function to enter the field of man's labour in order to earn money. If, unhappily, some woman is compelled by circumstance to take up self-support, then she ought not to be blamed or hindered for it, we grant—

"But if the family is to be preserved, the ordinary woman must become a wife and a mother. That in every land and in every age woman has been deprived of an education equal to man's must surely have some natural cause. Man's first education is not received in schools but in the outer world, in the field of action. Being necessarily engaged in bearing children and rearing them, woman has been, always and everywhere, deprived in large measure of that education. Besides this, in order to fit her for the duties of motherhood, her very physical nature has come

to differ from man's. That this difference is the root natural cause of the present disparity in the condition of the sexes admits of no doubt. Be that as it may, the state of civilised society has now, in large measure, assumed a new shape. First, whereas mankind once had, of necessity, to struggle against nature in order to gain knowledge, now the greater part of it may be had at school without peril or effort. Secondly, ceaseless warfare and strife having been checked, a natural harmony is gradually coming to prevail between man and woman. But one mark of civilisation is this: the ever-increasing division of duties. As a bud unfolds into blossom, each of its parts becomes distinct from the others. As civilisation advances, woman's duties too will increase and multiply, setting her ever further apart from man. Many creatures are freed from the duty of motherhood by the mere act of giving birth. But the human mother cannot for long relinquish the burden of her child. In the savage state, the mother's duty towards her offspring is comparatively slight and short-lived. The more civilisation advances, the more human completeness comes into flower, the graver becomes the task of 'making a human being.' What once could be accomplished without any education at all now requires particular instruction. Therefore, the more mankind advances, the more the mother's duty becomes at once more honourable and more demanding of learning. And she who has become a mother, who has gained in special measure affection, devotion in service, and the mother's own wisdom—can she, the moment her children come of age, lay all this aside in a box and rest content? Can she attain fulfilment without the constant exercise of those very faculties, those tender inclinations? For this reason she herself naturally assumes the office of mother towards her husband and household—this is the natural course of her life. And her daughter too inherits that same maternal quality, and even one without children of her own does not lack for offspring, by virtue of the goodness of her heart. Nature herself, having endowed woman with particular duties and corresponding instincts, has made her a keeper of the home—it is not the universal selfishness and oppression of man. Hence, given outward labour, she would be neither happy nor successful in it. The transaction of debts and credit, of buying and selling, is a ruthless business. Those who seek success in such dealings show no quarter to anyone. To overreach one another by every possible means, in order to preserve one's own interest—that is business. For this reason, tenderness of heart is, in most such spheres, an object of ridicule, and rarely endures for long. She who is born by nature's ordinance to be the mother of the household receives her education not to sell, but to distribute.

Therefore it is best not even to raise the question of the commerce that has begun in America; its consequences have not yet been tested. Yet this must be said a thousand times over: education is necessary to raise a human being into true humanity. And that is no mere smattering, but proper, thorough education. Of course, to turn a man into a mere clerk requires no great learning—it suffices that he complete his suckling and be sent off to school; much the same holds for training a shopkeeper. But we commonly suppose that there is no great advantage in becoming truly human, that it profits nothing at compound interest, that the whole fulfilment of life lies in somehow gaining entry into an office; and therefore we conclude there is no need to educate our girls—let them nurse infants and cook and never mind—we shall call these tasks 'spiritual' and console them thus, and instead of health, learning, happiness, and honour, we shall confer upon them the title of goddess, and thereby purchase them cheaply and keep them so."

Kartik [1298]. In the literature of the month of Kartik, "The Alchemy of the Hindu Race" is a particularly noteworthy essay. In it, descriptions of many ancient chemical apparatuses have been published. In this number several pages of Vidyasagar Mahashay's autobiography have appeared. In it there is not the least trace of rhetorical excess or ostentation. It is a matter of the deepest regret that the revered author was unable to complete the whole work. Had this book been finished, it would have been a school of instruction for Bengalis. First, an unaffected ideal of true greatness would have lived on forever in Bengali literature; secondly, the Bengali could have learned how one ought to write of oneself. Generally, when Bengali writers attempt to write anything in the first person, they make a desperate effort to display the utmost sentimentality—stirring up, at every turn, cries of "alas, alas" and floods of tears. In whatever portion of the "Autobiography" has appeared, a restrained sensibility and an unadorned truthfulness shine forth. How simple, sincere, and unaffected is the devotion the author has shown towards womankind! What a difference from those who nowadays, ascribing to women a spiritual divinity, indulge merely in verbal cleverness!

Sahitya, Second Volume, Ashwin [1298]

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 04

In the essay "The Movement and Reform of the Hindu Religion," the author first sets forth the history of the new movements within the educated society of Hindu religion in Bengal, and then shows that in our present circumstances the complete revival of ancient Hindu practice is impossible. As illustration, he states: "The use of any article originating in a foreign land is forbidden to Hindus. Yet English potatoes, cabbages, and Kabuli fruits are now in considerable use." "Soda, lemonade, ice, and the like are openly current in Hindu society. All these are plainly water touched by the hands of the Yavana and the Mlechchha." He states that the scriptures forbid the eating of onions, yet from the Brahmin down to the lowest castes in the south, all eat them. "One who is touched by a Yavana must bathe; yet, apart from Bengal, the Hindus of the rest of India sit together with Musalmans and take betel-leaf with them." "After the sacred thread ceremony, we are supposed to reside no fewer than twelve years in the house of our preceptor, observing celibacy, studying the scriptures, and receiving instruction from the guru; and only with the guru's leave are we to return home. But who, in this present age, follows such a course?" "A Brahmin is enjoined to perform the threefold daily worship; but how, in the present age, can those who hold employment manage the midday devotion?" The author states that those who are most eager to discipline lax Hindus are themselves seen to violate Hindu custom. As illustration, he shows that from the Bangabasi press various scriptural texts are being published, whereby scriptural sayings—Vedic texts included—are becoming accessible to women, Shudras, and, indeed, to Yavanas and Mlechchhas alike. Moreover, even the Vedic evening prayers are being published and expounded in periodicals conducted by such persons. The author then cites numerous scriptural texts to show what characteristics belonged to the Brahmin in ancient times, and how greatly these have altered in the present age. There is much in this essay to instruct and to provoke thought. Only one point strikes us as novel: that Bankim Babu should, on the pretext of Srikrishnaprasanna Sen and Shashadhar Tarkachudamani, have become a partisan of Hindu religion—this is a claim not worthy of a moment's consideration.

"Rishi Chitra" is a poem. The author is Shrijukta Madhusudan Rao. From the name, one takes the poet to be a Marathi. But such poetic power in the Bengali tongue has never before been achieved by any outsider. In the poet's composition, a dew-washed, sacred, fresh dawn-light of ancient India glows with utmost clarity, brilliance, and grandeur. In this poem we have tasted a new relish and found deep satisfaction. In most of what Bengali writers write concerning ancient India, one finds no true flavour of antiquity; but in "Rishi Chitra" there sounds a note of the grave, ancient dhrupad.

In Nabya-Bharat, an instalment of Shrijukta Rameshchandra Dutt's "The Ancient History of the Hindu Aryans" has appeared. We were astonished to see how much labour Ramesh Babu has expended, for the learned men of our country generally construct the ancient Hindu society sitting comfortably at home. What that society was or was not, what was Hindu and what was not, seems to have been inscribed upon their brains by the Creator himself in the birth-chamber; it has no other history. Following the historical method, this ancient social portrait that Ramesh Babu is producing is not likely to accord with the workings of the brains of our congenitally learned Bengali pundits. Each of them, according to his own fancy, has gathered two or four verses to his liking and does not allow the science of history anywhere near them. Suppose one of them declares of a certain verse that the sage meant "night" where we see "day." The Bengali pundit will at once settle the matter: "Come now, close your eyes and see whether it is day or night." At once twenty thousand disciples will close their eyes and shake their heads, saying, "Oh, how wonderful! What glory in the sage's word! What wisdom in the guru's teaching! We see not the least trace of daylight." Whoever is unfortunate enough to keep his eyes open, if he cannot be made to shut them, will be barred by the washerman and the barber, and one or two supremely learned men will not fail to throw dust in his eyes by inventing some fantastical doctrine out of nothing. The sorrowful truth is that this self-fashioned India of the Bengali—true or false—is not of a very high order. A single village of Bengal has been mixed with a great deal of "spiritual" fog to construct a vast India; and there, too, a handful of lifeless, spineless men, following the nose-rope held in the hand of Fate, walk on slowly,

meek and pious; society, in the sense of caste-cliques and factions; religion, in the sense of the sacrifice of free thought upon every subject; duty, in the sense of mere ritual observance and feeding Brahmins; learning, in the sense of memorising the Puranas; and intelligence, in the sense of the power, by the sorcery of grammar, to turn "no" into "yes" today and "yes" into "no" tomorrow as need requires. A little reflection will show that Bengali society is by no means as advanced or as vigorous as ancient Hindu society was, and therefore the fashioning of a true image of ancient India by the mere imagination of the Bengali is impossible—there is no other way than to adopt the proper method and follow history faithfully. A peasant once said: "If I were Rani Rashmoni, I would keep a jar of sugar on my right and a jar of sugar on my left, and eat a fistful now from the right and now from the left." It goes without saying that Rani Rashmoni's abundance of sugar did not bring her that much satisfaction. Ramesh Babu too has found proof that in ancient India the all-pervading dominance of Brahminism and asceticism did not exist; that the terrible rigidity that death possesses was not present in the social order of that time as a breath-choking oppression; that even within the caste system there existed a living freedom. But he who has settled it that sugar alone is the supreme food cannot be made to understand the variety of Rani Rashmoni's table.

Unfortunately, a certain opinion has long been propagated, that Hindu society has never changed. We take pride in the belief that our society attained such perfection that in a thousand years not one particle of it could be altered. Nowhere in the world has anything ever stood still; it moves either towards reform or towards decay; the moment growth ceases, decline begins—this is the law of life. In the whole world, only Hindu society, it seems, has stood still. That is precisely the chief argument advanced for the superiority of Hindu society: that this society does not obey the common law of the world, that this sage-fashioned society is exempt from creation, unlike the world fashioned by Vishvamitra. But these very people speak with two mouths at once. At one moment they say Hindu society is unshaken and immutable; the next moment they lament, wringing their throats, over fallen India and its present corruption. But does not "fallen India" itself imply the decay of ancient India? If that Hindu religion, that Hindu society, remains wholly intact, then whence have we, its newer generation, come?

The piece "The European Continent" is not satisfactory. A jumble of notes and English, Bengali, and French (with erroneous spelling) mixed together renders the whole affair exceedingly untidy and disjointed. In the Bengali writing there is a great deal of English mixed in—this fault is seen in other essays in this periodical too, and its necessity is not always apparent. In the essay "The Death of the Bangabasi," the author has fussed and fretted far too much; had he written with more restraint, the piece would have gained in strength. When excessive heat of feeling is applied in writing, it often becomes as insubstantial as vapour.

Sadhana, Agrahayan, 1298. Nabya-Bharat, Agrahayan, 1298

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 05

In the present number of Sahitya, the essay on "Food" by Shrijukta Chandranath Basu Mahashay has appeared; a detailed review of it will be published separately. In "Natural Selection," Chandrashekhar Babu has expressed in brief and simple language a portion of Darwin's theory. "Liberation" is a short story, somewhat in the manner of allegory. But we could not fully accept its teaching. That liberation should dwell outside the world, upon the peak of the Himalayas, does not seem fitting. Liberation means freedom of the soul, but freedom does not mean emptiness. The wider one's domain, the more the soul's field expands. The means of that expansion of domain is love. Liberation does not lie in the destruction of the objects of love, but in their expansion. In worldly selfishness we try to gather all happiness and wealth for ourselves alone—but unless happiness is shared among many, it cannot spread; and thus the miser is deprived of love's greater joy. When universal happiness is excluded from self-happiness, self-happiness shrinks to something very small. In the same way, in spiritual selfishness, we wish to take our own soul alone and, transgressing the infinite universe, climb up and sit solitary upon the peak of liberation. But the liberation of love is not of that kind—he who has not renounced the universe, the universe too does not renounce him. The day one can make the whole into one's own and oneself into the whole's, that day alone is liberation. But before that there are countless steps, none of which may be neglected. Between the freedom of possession and the freedom of dispossession there lies a difference as vast as that between earth and sky.

—Basing himself on the travel account of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang, Rajanikanta Gupta Mahashay is publishing, under the title "Ancient India," a picture of India in the seventh century A.D. If, instead of weaving webs of controversy over names and dates, he depicts one picture after another of ancient times, it will be of genuine benefit to readers. If Gupta Mahashay can recover from contemporary literature and other evidence the social condition and mode of life of India in its

various periods, and set them before readers as living pictures, then a great want in our literature will be supplied.

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 06

The revered Shrijukta Rameshchandra Dutt Mahashay, in this number's essay "The Ancient History of the Hindu Aryans," has described the social and domestic life of the ancient Hindus. Without raising, at every turn, a tumultuous storm of controversy, and without smothering and obscuring the main subject on every side, spider-web fashion, with English and Bengali notes, he is bringing forth ancient history before the reader in a clear, connected picture—for this we express our gratitude to the author. Undigested food is felt to be more burdensome than digested food; for that reason, Ramesh Babu's historical essay will not strike many readers as being particularly weighty; they will think that it does not display sufficient "research"; that it reads all too easily. We have seen abundance elsewhere of perverse erudition and historical gymnastic virtuosity. Amid the dust of controversy, the ancient world grows ever more obscure; that Ramesh Babu, keeping his own erudition in the background, has made the subject under discussion itself luminous, gives us great joy. It is as though we had left behind a dark forest-path overgrown with creepers and suddenly found ourselves upon the open highway.

Sadhana, Poush, 1298. Nabya-Bharat, Poush, 1298

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 07

Since last month, a novel entitled Ray Mahashay has been appearing in Sahitya. Until the story is finished, no judgment can be given. Thus far it may be said that the language is clear and graceful, and the description of the village zamindari's estate-office is drawn with the utmost fidelity. The honourable Srimati Krishnabhabini Das, in her essay "The Unlettered and Impoverished Woman," has proved that womankind, "in every land and every condition, is adorned with the same tender love, decked with the same forbearance, and clothed in the same steadfastness"; and states, "Had there been no misuse in this world of that tenderness, that forbearance, that steadfastness, there would today be no need whatsoever for controversy over woman's superiority." We still see no such need. What is true is true of itself; it is not made true by the aid of argument. Inferiority can never overpower and hold down superiority. Superiority will therefore establish itself of its own accord. Even if someone verbally denies it, no harm is done thereby, for in practice its worth must be acknowledged. But nowadays certain women writers labour so strenuously at this task of proving it that one begins to suspect they themselves harbour some doubt on the matter. It seems to me there is a fine superiority in performing one's duty without excessive self-consciousness of one's own class's superiority, simply and without vanity; and today women seem bent upon straying from that very superiority. There is another point too: those women who are conscious of their own superiority should remember that it is hard to say what would become of them, gradually, were they to abandon the path of duty they have followed from age to age, by which they have attained this very superiority today. Woman is superior precisely as woman; it does not follow that by meddling in man's work she will become more excellent—rather, the opposite may occur; and it would not be surprising if thereby the harmony of tenderness, forbearance, and steadfastness in her character were destroyed.—In the present number, the editor of Sahitya has published a review of Sadhana and thereby done us particular honour.

Sahitya, Poush, 1298

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 08

Under this name a new monthly journal has begun publication. In the present number, Shrijukta Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar has published an essay entitled "What Age Is This?" The piece is particularly amusing. The author shows, from the Manusamhita, the Mahabharata, and the Harivamsha, that the Satya Yuga lasted four thousand years, the Treta Yuga three thousand, the Dvapara Yuga two thousand, and the Kali Yuga one thousand years, the four ages together comprising twelve thousand years. According to the prevailing calendar, 4,992 years of the Kali Yuga have already elapsed. Therefore, by Manu's reckoning, the Kali Yuga ended fully 1,900 years before the birth of Christ. What age, then, is this? Kullukabhatta and Medhatithi have attempted to resolve this. They say that these years of the ages are divine years. Seeing that the Bible's account of the six days of creation did not accord with science, many Christians in Europe likewise imagined such "divine days." But the author clearly refutes this notion of the divine year. To the question he has raised, he offers no answer—indeed, an answer is difficult to give. But we observe that suddenly the signs of the Satya Yuga are appearing today—nowhere else, perhaps, but certainly in Bengal. On the eastern edge of India the fog of the Kali Yuga is gradually lifting, and in a single night new sprouts of spirituality, like needles, are springing up everywhere, ready to bar the path of the debt-ridden sinners of the departing Kali Yuga. There can be no doubt, then, that a new Satya Yuga is dawning on the eastern horizon of holy India.

Sahitya o Bigyan, Kartik, 1298

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 09

"...merging." In this essay the revered Chandranath Babu has indicated that the yearning and striving to be dissolved in the Supreme Brahman is the very essence of Hindu-ness. And at the close of the essay he laments that, through contact with Europe, our nationality has fallen into peril, and that it is therefore the bounden duty of all of us to protect it with all our might. On this we have a few words to say. The aspiration to dissolve in Brahman is the very opposite of the preservation of nationality. For in that aspiration, where is the bond of family, where the bond of society, where the bond of nation? If, then, the striving to annihilate nationality itself be called the Hindu's nationality, then it cannot be denied that this is precisely what modern education aims to destroy. If the world is held to be illusion and the workings of the mind to be delusion, then the pursuit of science, of learning, of beauty, must all be admitted to be fruitless and even harmful. So long as I am able to see and feel anything other than myself, I remain bound in illusion; when there is no other besides myself, nothing at all—and therefore when even "I" no longer exists (for the sense of "I" arises only by comparison with another)—then the end of striving is reached, the destruction of illusion and delusion complete. If such an all-annihilating nationality has, unhappily, descended upon the shoulders of the Hindu, then it is the bounden duty of all of us to root it out with all our might. That this boundless renunciatory philosophy has permeated the very core of our Hindu society is indeed true; and its fruit has been that we have lost hold of both banks at once. Not one of us has been able to become the very "That art Thou" of Brahman, and yet our humanity has become utterly lifeless. We neither die, nor are we fully alive. The rock of philosophy has not been able entirely to crush the love-instinct implanted by nature, and yet it has, so far as possible, sapped its strength and vigour of action. Fortunately, such vast nihilism cannot, like a plague, wholly and completely engulf an entire great people. And so, though renunciation is much talked of in our country, yet despite it all, a hidden attachment to man, to the world, to beauty flows on in an unceasing undercurrent, keeping humanity as vital and fruitful as it can, deep within our hearts. It was because that current of love could not, even under such vast oppression, be overcome, that when Chaitanya came

and struck up the melody of divine love, the "vast" heart of the "vast" Hindu had its hard rock cleft, and a stream of love burst forth in a flood of joy. And must that vast rock again be worn away, grain by grain, and rolled to the mouth of the world's eternal fountain of life, in order to preserve the "vast" nationality of the "vast" Hindu? But O ye vast company of renunciants, this stream is not within the power of your philosophy to arrest—though it may be checked and dammed for a time to some degree, one day again, with fourfold strength, it will burst all barriers, and flooding the scripture-parched, desolate, vast desert of renunciation with the tide of life, will render it tender, verdant, and beautiful.

We have one more thing to say. Nowadays, when we set about extolling the virtues of our own race, we try to elevate ourselves by belittling other races. One method of this is to compare the exalted ideal that exists only in our scriptures, not among the people at large, with the ordinary, commonly practised life of other countries. It grieves us that this same unjust illiberality appears in Chandranath Babu's writing too. He wishes to claim that Hindus are devoted solely to the attainment of union with Brahman, while Europeans are wholly absorbed and pampered by mere self-gratification. On one hand he quotes the story of Prahlad from the Vishnu Purana; on the other he speaks of the Europeans thus: "If they get one morsel less of food when hungry, one draught less of water when thirsty, if they lack one blanket in the cold, one drop of sugar short in their tea-cup, if they cannot get a brush after bathing, if they are short by a single pin in the arrangement of their hair, they weep and rage and shriek and raise a great commotion."

If Chandranath Babu will but examine the matter with a calm mind, he will find that in our own country too there is a great gulf between ideal and practice. If it is our ideal to become one with the formless Brahman, then in actual conduct we display many contrary tendencies. With so many gods, so many goddesses, so many images of wood, so many of stone, so many legends, so many fancies, in what country has the lofty ideal of Brahman been so completely overlaid! Do not the men and women of our country daily pray before clay images for wealth, sons, and other worldly comforts and possessions? Do they not, in order to win a false lawsuit, tempt the goddess with the bribe of a vow? To destroy an innocent

adversary, do they not entreat the deity, in hymns of praise, to take their own side? Do they not perform propitiatory rites for their own health and burnt offerings for the destruction of a rival? Have they not, through anger, hatred, violence, falsehood, and manifold blemishes of conduct, tarnished the very character of their own gods? Where else is there such a contrast between the stainless Brahman of scripture and the distorted fancies of the temple!

Therefore the proper standard of comparison is not this, but a comparison between the ideal of our own country and the ideal of Europe.

The ideal of European civilisation is not self-happiness but universal happiness. The perfection of human potential is the very object of its striving. To spread knowledge and love, "sweetness and light," among the whole of mankind is its aim. Its poets sing that very song; its great men and women sacrifice their lives, in land after land, for that very purpose. And yet, at the same time, among the common people, self-seeking desire is by no means small; they are not always averse to coveting another's wealth, snatching another's bread, and shattering another's happiness. And on one hand these very people are not reluctant to preach religion alone in fierce, savage exile, or to pursue knowledge amid the cruel cold of the ice-bound, impassable North Pole; on the other, they become genuinely restless if they cannot get a brush after bathing or if a single pin is missing from their coiffure. Man is such a mixed, such a strange and imperfect creature.

Let us leave readers with one final word. The very ideal quality of European civilisation we have described above, Bankim Babu, in his Dharmatattva, has declared to be the ideal of our own Hindu religion as well—namely, the full flowering of human potential. In Chandranath Babu's view, the ideal of Hindu religion is the complete annihilation of human potential. He states that the root doctrine of Hindu religion is dissolution. Now, whether Hindus are to live according to Bankim Babu's view, or to die according to Chandranath Babu's, that is a dilemma that may well arise. We have settled our own opinion on this matter. We

are partisans of life, and we trust that, however "vast" this matter of dissolution may be, there is still much delay in store for it.

In Sadhana [Agrahayan 1298] we published a review of the essay "The Educated Woman"; a response to it has now appeared in the present number. The authoress states that we misunderstood the essence of her essay. There was some reason for the misunderstanding. She had written of American female attorneys, female orators, and other assertive women in such a manner that one might easily suppose she wished chiefly to hold up these money-earning women as the very model of the educated woman. If that was not her intention, then we find no disagreement with her. Only, she has not yet abandoned the charge that "man's selfishness or oppression" lies at the root of woman's seclusion and lack of education. Let the authoress reflect that the word "root" implies a great deal. If we Bengalis were to say that the selfishness of the Englishman is the "root" of Bengal's national subjection, that would be merely the unreflecting lament of a feeble nature. The Englishman could never have imposed his selfish designs upon us had we not been weak to begin with. Therefore weakness, not selfishness, ought to be taken as the root. The root of every kind of subjection is weakness. The authoress might say that, in this civilised nineteenth century, physical weakness ought not to be accounted weakness at all. But intellectual cultivation and the acquisition of knowledge too depend upon strength. If two persons possess equal intelligence, and one of them possesses greater bodily strength, then the stronger will overcome the other even in a contest of wits, for there is such an intimate connection between body and mind. If, however, it be proved that woman's intellectual faculty far exceeds man's, then the matter stands otherwise. Be that as it may, man ought not to be made guilty on account of nature's partiality, for man's burden of sin is heavy enough already. Wherever there is power, there is generally, in some degree, oppression too. That power should be exercised with perfect restraint cannot be expected of humanity at large; for that reason, the sum of man's offences against woman has piled up mountain-high; and to add to that another "original sin," a root sin laid upon man's shoulders, is utterly unjust. That is not man's fault but nature's. Before woman, men stand eternally guilty of a thousand offences of love, for which she punishes us with sweet reproach—such "laws" are practised in every household; indeed, the code of such penalties has even been published in Bengali

literature. But what is this strange new accusation that women are now bringing against men, and with what dry and merciless severity they are rebuking us! For such tearless, arid chastisement we were never at any time prepared; it strikes us as altogether against the rules.—Woman's beauty is superior to man's (and not merely physical beauty). Unhappily, the recognition of beauty attains its full flowering only after long delay in human society. But neglected beauty too knows how to wait with love-filled patience; blind strength boasts before it, yet it envies not strength; grieving, it does not wish to overcome strength by becoming stronger than strength, but wins, beautiful, by the slowest and gentlest of victories. As the infant Christ became immortal through death, so beauty, precisely by being oppressed, becomes victorious. There is no need for impatience; woman's honour will of itself increase in the course of time—for that, women need not gird up their loins; rather, they must become even more beautiful. In Ravana's house Sita was dishonoured—there, only brute force prevailed; there, Sita was a captive. In Rama's house Sita was honoured—there, strength was wedded to righteousness; there, Sita was free. Under the unfailing influence of patience-tempered, love-tender beauty, humanity will continue to unfold, and as that humanity unfolds, when true manliness matures and ripens, it is this very large-hearted manliness that will rescue beauty from the hand of neglect; for this, women need not fight.

We cannot refrain from noting here a couple of Bengali expressions in the essay under review that struck our ear as decidedly un-Bengali—the honourable authoress will forgive us. "Exercised power of judgement," "mental cultivation"—these phrases are not Bengali. In one place it reads: "Since the graver duty devolving upon the household rests on it, therefore, along with a like-feeling heart, a cultivated mind too is absolutely necessary." We could not determine what English phrase "like-feeling heart" was meant to translate, and were therefore unable to fix its meaning; "cultivated mind" I can guess the English of, but for the Bengali language this expression is altogether too heavy a morsel.

In the essay entitled "Soma," the author is prepared to prove that the Vedic soma-juice was not used only in the sense of wine. What "soma" truly meant will, the

author promises, be discussed in a future issue of Sahitya. We wait with eager curiosity.

In the story "Ray Mahashay," a cruel picture of Bengal's zamindari administration is emerging. Reading the composition of this powerful writer, the whole seems exceedingly true to life; we hope that some of it is exaggeration.

Sadhana, Magh, 1298. Sahitya, Magh, 1298

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 10

"Is Light Darkness?" Utter darkness. And in writing of this sort there is no possibility whatsoever of that darkness being dispelled. How the national life of India might be reconstituted—that is the subject of the author's discussion. In the end he concludes: "There is no religion like the Hindu religion, no such wish-fulfilling tree will ever grow again—whatever the power of one's meditation and contemplation, in that very manner one may pursue one's practice; where else is such a religion to be found? If ever anyone can unite this fragmented India once more, if ever anyone can raise India up and place upon her body a crown of gold, it will be that eternal Hindu religion." The author seems to think the whole matter has now been made perfectly clear, and that from this day forward his readers will simply bask in the shade of the wish-fulfilling tree while placing a "crown of gold" upon India's "body"—but that is not quite so. What is Hindu religion? When did it not exist in India? And when did it ever depart from India? From whence, then, must it be brought back, and what "incarnation" will bring it? Where is the bond of unity within so multiform a religion, in which each may practise according to his own particular capacity? And, since the primeval Vedic age, at what period has India ever possessed national unity under the influence of this Hindu religion?

"The Funeral Rites of the Santals" is a curious piece. In the essay "National Unity," it is hard to tell at once whether the author is jesting or imparting wisdom; thus far it may be said that neither purpose has been achieved.

"Shopkeeping." In Bengali literature, this sort of tearful, nasal, sentimental effusion is becoming ever more insufferable. It is difficult to understand why such prose pieces find a place in any periodical of high standing.

Sadhana, Falgun, 1298. Nabya-Bharat, Magh, 1298

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 11

"Soma." In this excellent essay the author cites numerous examples from the Vedas to prove that in the Vedas "soma" signifies love of God. Whether "soma" figuratively signified divine love, or whether that was its literal meaning—on this the author does not appear, so far as we recall, to have offered any discussion. Comparisons of the joy of wine-drinking to the joy of divine love may be found elsewhere too; Hafiz's poetry furnishes an example. In certain songs of Ramprasad too, wine has been used in a spiritual sense, yet this does not prove that the Tantrics partake only of spiritual wine. Be that as it may, our doubts are not yet entirely dispelled.

"Food." The revered author states: "Our most learned and discerning scripture-makers made food a part of religion." We have long heard sentiments of this kind, but we cannot altogether grasp their full import. Many take pride in the fact that all our dietary customs are subsumed under religion—but what, here, is meant by "religion"? If religion be defined as the sense of duty—that whatever is good for man is his duty, and this is what religion teaches—then we ask, in what country is

that unknown? Who does not admit that it is man's duty to keep his body healthy, that whatever conduces to his welfare is his proper practice? If it be said that here religion means the dispensation of reward and punishment in the next world—that is, that performing a particular act in a particular manner on a particular day will secure heaven, and failing to do so will send fourteen generations to hell—then that cannot be accepted as true religion. Some most learned and discerning scripture-maker once wrote that bathing in the Ganges on the thirteenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Madhu (Chaitra) "redeems three crores of one's ancestral line"; granted, that bathing in a river's water on that thirteenth day promotes bodily health—but wherein lies the element of glory in this?

Is it merely in that bait of reward? It is only by means of that false lure that this rule of hygiene, or of some spiritual principle, has been stitched together with religion. Otherwise, does any people anywhere fail to know that observing the rules of health is good, and that whatever is good is one's duty? If it be said that sitting facing east while eating aids digestion and, along with it, promotes mental cheerfulness, and that therefore eating facing east is enjoined by religion—one might dispute the proof, but no one could object to the underlying principle. But if it be said that failing to eat facing east renders one impure and causes one, along with three crores of one's ancestors, to fall into hell, and that this is religion, and therefore to be observed—then we cannot take pride in such a claim. Whatever depends upon proof of truth or falsehood, whatever subject admits, with the advance of knowledge, of a change of opinion, how can that be classed under religious law? That the preservation of health is man's duty, and is therefore religion—this fundamental principle can never change; but the belief that eating a particular substance in a particular manner is religion, and not doing so is irreligion, is the source of graver mischief.

Human ethics has two parts: one self-evident, the other established by reasoning. Modern civilised nations have separated these two parts, classing the one under religious-ethical law, and the other under social and political categories. On the one hand this fixed force, and on the other the independence of the fluctuating force, together constitute the fundamental law of social life. Everyone knows that without

the force of attraction the universe would dissipate into vapour and merge into the infinite, and without the force of repulsion the entire universe of matter would collapse into a single point. Likewise, without the bond of unshakeable moral law, society would disintegrate and lose its very form as a society; and without the fluctuating force of custom, society would become rigid and inert as stone. If it be true that in modern Hindu society there is no freedom of reasoning in any matter of food and drink whatsoever, that everything is bound by one unshakeable religious law, then that is no matter of our glory or our welfare. Chandranath Babu himself, elsewhere, admits as much in effect. He says: "If eating any of the substances forbidden by Hindu scripture does not injure one's mental nature, then eating that substance will neither destroy your Hindu-ness nor bring disgrace upon your Hindu name." That is to say, these matters do not fall under fixed religious law; their propriety depends on proof and on experience.

But by this single admission, Chandranath Babu strikes at the very root of present-day Hindu society. If I say that eating beef does no injury to my mental nature, if I show as proof that the beef-eating Yajnavalkya possessed a mental nature far superior to that of many a pumpkin-eating orthodox Brahmin, will Hindu society then pardon me? If some Brahmin sits at table with the revered Chandranath Babu and eats with him, and proves that his spiritual nature has suffered not the slightest deterioration thereby, will disgrace then fail to attach to his Hindu name? If it will not, if this is Hindu religion, if within Hindu religion, while preserving the fundamental moral law, freedom is granted in matters of custom—then all this while we have been arguing in vain.

"Kashmir." Such topical discussion is rarely seen in Bengali papers. The reason is that a competent author is hard to find. Mere blind translation or rebuttal of English papers does not always yield the truth. What Nagendra Babu has written on the present upheaval in Kashmir is no mere echo of any newspaper—he writes as though he were present upon the very field of action. The essay under review deserves particular commendation.

Sahitya, Falgun, 1298

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 12

—"The Calendar Confusion." The essay is good and necessary, but not within the grasp of the general reader. "Life and Poetry."—The author states that there exists an intimate connection between a poet's life and his poetry. To say that fruit is connected to the tree is likewise a truism; to say that the poet's nature is connected to the nature of his poetry is equally a truism. But the author offers one novel piece of information—he claims that in contemporary Bengali poets there is no harmony between life and poetry. It is hard to say where the author unearthed the biographies of our Bengali poets. Even in the humblest human life there is so much mystery, so much that is hidden, requiring such effort, such skill, such sympathy to bring to light. That the author, sitting comfortably at home, should scornfully draw a single stroke of his mighty pen across the lives of our Bengali poets is not becoming of a man of his stature. For, in his essay, he has offered lofty moral instruction indeed; and therefore, if there is truly an inevitable connection between a piece of writing and its author's life, we may reasonably expect from him too a great example of righteous conduct. Be that as it may, one thing should be remembered: granted that today's poets may practise deceit in their poetry, those who criticise and instruct poets must themselves furnish proof of the unaffected sincerity they profess. The plain truth is, whether one writes poetry or writes criticism, in every subject there is a right and a wrong to it; and not understanding this, many a writer produces false poetry, while many a critic proves incapable of extracting true beauty and truth from poetry.

"Sukhavati." The celebrated traveller Shrijukta Sarat Chandra Das Mahashay has written this essay on Sukhavati, the Buddhist paradise. Whereas the Hindu and Muslim paradises hold out the temptation of sensual enjoyment, the Buddhist paradise offers no such thing. In the Buddhist heaven, all beings, having forsaken hatred and enmity, are devoted to one another's benefit and happiness. "Their fundamental doctrine is this: that whatever happiness exists in the world can be attained only by desiring the good of others. Selfish contemplation produces only

an unbroken stream of sorrow; even the wish-fulfilling trees, it is said, naturally tremble at the moment of bestowing their fruit, and even the boundless ocean of milk trembled when churned by the nectar-seeking gods; but the Bodhisattvas dwelling in Sukhavati are able to stand unshaken, giving away their bodies a hundred, even a thousand times, for the sake of others. At such times their bodies are said to swell with joy." We read this essay with particular delight.

In the Sahitya of the month of Chaitra, Shrijukta Rajanikanta Gupta Mahashay, in his essay "Ancient India," has given an account of the "Festival of the Field of Contentment" held during the reign of the Buddhist king Shiladitya in the seventh century A.D.; reading it, we have found great satisfaction. During Shiladitya's reign this festival was duly celebrated five times...

The confluence of the Ganges and the Yamuna, the most sacred Prayag, is the site of this great festival. Over an area of some five or six miles around this place the festivities were held. From ancient times this ground has been known as the "Field of Contentment." Some four thousand square feet of this field were enclosed by rose bushes. Within the enclosed area, in great buildings, were heaped stores of gold and silver, of cotton and silk in manifold costly garments, and other precious goods. Near this enclosed space, feeding-halls stood in rows like the shops of a market. In each of these buildings nearly a thousand people could be fed at once. Long before the festival, public proclamation was made summoning Brahmins, monks, the homeless, the poor or orphaned, those without kin or friends, and the destitute, to come to sacred Prayag at the appointed time to receive gifts. King Shiladitya, along with his ministers and tributary kings, would remain present at this place. Prince Dhruvabhatu of Vallabhi and the prince of Assam were foremost among these tributary kings. These tributary kings and the army of King Shiladitya would surround the Field of Contentment on all four sides. The numerous visitors accompanying Dhruvabhatu's army would pitch their own tents.

The festival's proceedings began with boundless pomp. Though Shiladitya was a patron of Buddhism, he did not disparage the Hindu religion; he would invite both

Brahmins and monks with equal honour, and would show respect equally to the image of the Buddha and to Hindu deities. On the first day, the image of the Buddha was installed in the sacred temple. On this day the most valuable goods were distributed, and the most delicious food given to guests and visitors. On the second day the image of Vishnu, and on the third day that of Shiva, adorned the temple. Half the quantity of goods distributed on the first day was given out on each of these days. From the fourth day, general almsgiving began.

For twenty days Brahmins and monks, for ten days worshippers of Hindu deities, and for ten days naked ascetics, received gifts. Besides this, for thirty days, wealth was given to the poor, the homeless, the orphaned, and those without kin. In all, the festival's proceedings continued for seventy-five days. On the last day, King Shiladitya, having cast off his costly raiment, his gem-studded gold ornaments, his most brilliant pearl necklaces—every ornament—assumed the garb of a bark-clad Buddhist monk. These most precious ornaments too were given away to the poor. Clad in bark, King Shiladitya, with joined palms, would say in a grave voice: "Today all my anxiety over the preservation of my wealth is at an end. Today, in this Field of Contentment, having given away all, I am at peace. In hope of the merit desired by mankind, I shall in future too keep all my wealth set aside for such giving." Thus, at sacred Prayag, the festival of the Field of Contentment would come to its close. The king would give away with open hands almost everything. Only elephants, horses, and weapons would remain, reserved for the defence of the realm and the suppression of rebellion.

Sadhana, Chaitra, 1298. Nabya-Bharat, Chaitra, 1298

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 13

"The Old and the New." The author's contention is that the new comes and the old departs—but alas, in the present essay there is no trace of that universal law of change to be found. Sentence follows sentence, yet the old matter is not dispelled nor is any new matter added. Certain psychologists say that thought without words is impossible; how far that may be true I cannot say, but it is evident that we can utter a flow of words without thinking in the least. In many cases, words multiply themselves with the swiftness of worms, without waiting for thought. Once a stock phrase chances to slip from the pen—"beside the new, the old cannot stay"—it is followed at once by: "when a new leaf sprouts on the tree, the old leaf falls away." Its offspring: "seeing the new flower bloom, the old flower withers and drops." Its offspring: "seeing the new sun rise, the moon flees." Its offspring: "seeing new spring arrive, winter vanishes." Its offspring: "at the coming of a new friend, the old friend, in shame, bows his head and departs." (Fortunately for mankind, such gratuitous excessive bashfulness in old friends is not commonly observed.) Its offspring: "seeing the new year arrive, why should the old year remain?" And finally: "Behold, as '99 rises, '98 sinks into the womb of time." Only now do we discover the occasion—the new year has come, and therefore a certain quantity of seasonally appropriate phrase-making has become obligatory, and, following custom, the unfortunate reader must submit with bowed head to edifying remarks upon the passage of time. Thus the editor sets about illustrating, by example, that most novel and abstruse doctrine called "waxing and waning," and readers too, perforce playing the innocent child, attempt to understand: "I have spoken of waxing and waning—let me put it a little better. The little child keeps growing bigger! What feeling, what learning, what beauty, what splendour, what intelligence, what genius gradually unfolds! It goes on growing. What it was yesterday, it is not today. When, growing and growing, it arrives at old age, then again everything in it begins to wane. Beauty sinks, wit dulls, memory fades. Teeth loosen, skin slackens, black hair turns grey; it grows ever older, and older still. At last, unable to stand any longer beside youth, yielding up all its possessions to the young, it bows its head in shame and kisses death. The new comes, the old

departs."—That the little child gradually grows bigger, and that its intelligence increases too, this the editor has plainly understood and plainly explained—but does not this same law hold for his readers as well? If they have grown quite big enough by now, has their intelligence too not developed accordingly? Reading on and on in this vein, one comes at last to marvel at the author's extraordinary power of self-restraint. That the author can go on stringing together so much matter ceases, after a while, to seem particularly astonishing; but that even he must eventually come to a halt somewhere produces both wonder and heartfelt gratitude. It must be said, with regret, that spinning out sentences unchecked, and, whenever the opportunity offers, opening the old sack of moral platitudes, has become an all-too-familiar habit of the Brahmo writers.

—"Death by Litigation." How lawsuits, litigation, malaria, and the like, spreading like a plague through our country, are bringing about a kind of universal ruin, will become vividly clear upon reading this well-written essay. Every disease flourishes with especial virulence in the field most congenial to it—for that reason the dread scourge of litigation is seen raging with particular fury in the household of the shrewd-witted Bengali. The author recommends arbitration in place of litigation. But whose ears will this advice reach? In how many lawsuits in this country do both parties genuinely desire a just settlement? In most cases, if not both parties, then certainly one, wishes to cheat the other—in such circumstances, where else would one find so convenient a place as the courtroom? A lawsuit is, after all, a kind of legalised gambling, where victory and defeat depend largely upon chance and no small measure of cunning. Who can restrain, by mere counsel, those who, in the ruinous excitement of that game, stake everything down to their very last possession? They know full well that "even the gods know not the outcome of a lawsuit, let alone men"—but that very uncertainty is for them the chief attraction.—In the essay "The Wondrous Achievement of the Salvation Army," some slight indication is given of the extraordinary energy, intelligence, and compassion with which the members of General Booth's organisation are engaged in the work of rescuing the fallen. If, upon reading this, nothing else is achieved, at least our—we Bengalis'—excessive vanity of self-regard may be somewhat diminished for a moment; and even that would count as a supreme gain.

Sadhana, Baishakh, 1299. Nabya-Bharat, Baishakh, 1299

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 14

"An Address to Prabhabati." Upon reading this essay, composed by the late Vidyasagar Mahashay, the heart cannot but be moved and softened with compassion. Vidyasagar Mahashay loved Prabhabati, the daughter of Rajkrishna Bandyopadhyay Mahashay, with the tenderness he might have shown his own child. Deeply grieved by her untimely death, he composed this essay in order to keep her memory forever awake. We quote a portion of it here—the author addresses Prabhabati thus: "I am sitting on the outer veranda; you are standing at the window of the lower room within the house, conversing with me. At that moment Shashi (Rajkrishnababu's eldest son), by way of jest, said, 'He will not love you any longer.' At once, shaking your head, you kept saying to me again and again, 'You will love me, you will love me.' On other days I would at once dispel your fear by declaring that I would indeed love you. But that day, at the urging of everyone present, I kept repeating, again and again, that I would love you no more; and you, each time, kept saying, 'No, you will love me.' At last, having composed my face into an expression of firm resolve, when I said, in tones of the sweetest inflection and with the utmost tenderness, 'If you will not love me, I shall love you'—and fell silent—every person who witnessed that scene found his heart filled with a joy such as he had never before experienced."

The essay "The Antiquity and Superiority of the Marathi Language" merits particular attention. We were unable to derive satisfaction from reading the story "The New House"—that the widowed daughter of the garden's malee should

contrive so wondrous a stratagem to bind Prabhu Mahendranath Babu to herself in the bonds of marriage strikes us as utterly fantastical.

Sahitya, Baishakh, 1299

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 15

"Laya" (Dissolution). Our views on this essay we have already expressed in the previous number. "The Private Tutor."—A short story built upon an exchange of letters. We are pleased with the story's conclusion. We had constantly feared that in the end there would occur either one or two suicides, or a social rupture, or some manner of overwrought excess of sentiment. But far from it—the author has ended the tale in such a way that whether the romance between hero and heroine was baseless or well-founded remains, for the reader, a delightful puzzle. The sentiment Bijoy expresses in his final letter is generally what one would expect of a modern young Bengali—on one side the pull of the heart, on the other the pull of the belly, the latter attraction being somewhat the stronger; his mind inclines a little toward carrying on a love-affair in the manner of a novel, and yet it is not so genuine or so firm a thing that it could provoke, on its account, any very great upheaval. It is merely a fancy; but to tie the knot of matrimony and settle into an office is, for the Bengali, no mere fancy—that indeed is the paramount event of his life. Bijoy's state of mind is, on the whole, a rather mixed affair, neither wholly one thing nor the other, of no very particular sort—as is generally the case; and yet, deep within, he still cherishes the belief that he is not merely a clerk of the wool-market but the hero of a novel—though that belief is mistaken. "Vedic Soma: Third Discourse."—On the meaning of Soma as divine love in the Vedas, the author Mahashay has furnished one or two more novel illustrations—we have read them with satisfaction.

Sadhana, Jaishtha, 1299. Sahitya, Jaishtha, 1299

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 16

"The Present Condition of Kashmir." The writing has turned out excellent. Essays of this sort in Bengali are generally filled to overflowing with exaggeration and empty lamentation—the chief reason being that we do not get the plain facts, nor indeed do we wish for them—we suppose that if we merely give vent to a quantity of hollow feeling, decked out with much ornament, that constitutes writing of a very high order. We are incapable of setting down some connected narrative clearly and simply; we drag our own emotions in, whether the occasion calls for it or not, and unless we make that emotion do a good deal of writhing or shed a quantity of tears, nothing satisfies us. It is as though we sought out every possible pretext merely to prove how very tender-hearted we are; and thereby we forfeit the opportunity of stating the plain truth properly, imagining that time spent expressing our own feelings is time well spent. To display sympathy, to intone lamentations, to feign astonishment, shock, and stupefaction, requires no particular exertion, calls for no investigation or reflection, and allows the writing to expand indefinitely. Nagendra Babu's essay instils genuine anxiety concerning the present condition of Kashmir, and concerning the still more troubling prospect that awaits it. "The Sea Voyage and the Janmabhumi Journal"—the essay is lucid, simple, and fearless.

Sahitya, Ashadh, 1299

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 17

"An Essay on the Slaying of Meghnad."—Long ago, in the first year of Bharati (Shravan-Kartik, Poush, Falgun, 1284), a lengthy critique of the poem Meghnadbadh was published; in this essay the author now offers his rebuttal. Had he known that the reviewer for Bharati was, at that time, a boy of some fifteen years, he would surely have felt the detailed rebuttal of that long-forgotten review to be excessive. —Drawing upon Mr. Risley's newly published work, Sreerodchandra Babu has compiled an essay entitled "The Rise and Spread of Brahminism," from which one gains some slight intimation of how the aboriginal tribes of India have, little by little, gained entry into the Brahminical fold; the essay being exceedingly brief, we could not derive from it as much satisfaction as we should have wished.— "Worship of the Formed and the Formless." The arguments advanced here are so simple that the question suddenly arises whether such matters truly need to be explained, in particular, to anyone at all. The sorrowful truth is that they do need explaining. And sadder still is the fact that even those who privately understand all this go on devising all manner of artificial and specious arguments; and thus these very simple truths have become necessary, in certain quarters, merely to shatter deliberate error and, in others, merely to silence certain mouths. — "Death by Starvation." That the Bengali race's humanity remains incomplete for lack, from childhood onward, of sufficiently nourishing food, is a point on which we are in full agreement with the author. When the body remains ill-nourished, the very foundation of our character is left immature and unformed. We are in complete accord with the author's opinion; only in one or two places in his composition have we been given pause. In one place it reads: "They are better patriots in word than in deed—'better patriots.'" We cannot fathom the compelling necessity for attaching that English phrase. In the conclusion of the essay, the prose suddenly and without notice turns into a kind of broken verse, whose purport is difficult to grasp. For this reason, this otherwise unpretentious and dignified essay assumes, in its final moments, a strange and startling shape—much as when a decorously dressed gentleman, in the midst of polite company, suddenly assumes

the airs of an actor. Had the concluding portion been detached and composed as a separate, independent poem, such an incongruous effect would not have resulted.

Sadhana, Shravan, 1299. Nabya-Bharat, Jaishtha, Ashadh, 1299

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 18

"The Somayaga of Madhuchchanda."—This most instructive essay takes up the discussion of the soma-sacrifice mentioned in the Vedas; the author states that among the Vedic sages there existed a secret doctrine called "Madhu-vidya" (the Doctrine of Honey/Sweetness). To those wise men who were privy to the mystery of that doctrine, "madhu," that is, "soma," signified the knowledge of Brahman and the bliss of Brahman. The author states: "At the very beginning of the Rig Veda there are several hymns of a sage named Madhuchchanda; by studying these hymns from beginning to end, the reader will be able to understand what manner of thing Madhuchchanda's somayaga truly was." In the present number, the discussion turns to the identity of the sage Madhuchchanda himself. Curiosity remains as to what the somayaga actually was. In the essay "The Trouble with Titles," the author expresses, with considerable vehemence, a grievance of the mind. Those whose self-respect is sufficient unto itself, who desire no honours from the government, who indeed refuse them—such self-respecting persons are everywhere rare in this world. But are those who generally take pride in receiving governmental titles truly deserving of so severe an assault? Are there not, among them, many men of genuine and substantial worth in this country? If a title happens, in some particular instance, to be bestowed upon an unworthy recipient, that is the fault of the government—but those who receive a title as a mark of governmental esteem and find satisfaction in it cannot fairly be blamed. Not merely with kings—one finds throughout the history of the world that public regard, too, often passes over the deserving to settle upon the undeserving; yet one cannot on that account call public regard itself an utterly contemptible thing. Honour and esteem are, and ever have been, dear to mankind; this human frailty may perhaps provoke, on occasion, a faint smile, but this present censure seems to us somewhat excessive. In particular, the objection the author raises—that Bankim Babu accepted the title of Rai Bahadur from the hand of the Government—seems to us wholly unwarranted. For it was not because the Government regarded Bankim Babu as a distinguished author of the land that it granted him the title—he was a longstanding servant of the Government—and if the Government, being satisfied

with his merit and his devotion to duty, chose to confer upon him a fitting mark of honour, it would undoubtedly have been most unseemly and unjust of him to spurn it. What Bankim Babu has done for his country, the people of the land have rewarded with a very lofty seat indeed; what he has done for his king belongs to an entirely different order of action, its reward belonging to an entirely different category—it has no particular connection with the heart; it is all governed by prescribed rule—and therefore to take offence at it is a mistaken impulse. The author's comparison of Bankim Babu with Carlyle and Tennyson, on the matter of accepting titles, does not quite hold. Be that as it may, the essay is undoubtedly a good one. In the story "The Friend," the tender, cool rains of western Bengal cast forth a beauty steeped in music.— "Ideal Criticism." I suppose no critic was ever so fortunate as to have discharged his proper duty and departed this earth unscathed. Having taken up this unwelcome office ourselves, we harbour no vain hope of being easily let off. And so, at the covert satirical arrows which the author of "Ideal Criticism" has aimed at us, we feel not the slightest surprise or distress. What grieves us is that we cannot commend the author's skill. We would offer him, as friends, this advice: had he refrained from his fruitless attempt at wit and turned his hand instead to some other subject, he might perhaps have met with better success. The essay "Kalidasa and Shakespeare" shows considerable thoughtfulness; we await its continuation. What we have to say concerning our own "self-fashioned" doctrine of dissolution we have already sent in writing to Sahitya. Here we would only briefly note one point. We had asked how a small attachment might grow into a great attachment, but we could not understand how a great attachment could ever pass into no attachment at all. Chandranath Babu, in reply, has written that it is not at all strange that a small attachment, on becoming transformed into a great attachment of an entirely different or even opposite nature—such as patriotism—should, in the process, become transformed into no attachment whatsoever. That one force may be transformed into a different force is no proof that force itself is thereby destroyed—such a line of reasoning we had not anticipated. We observe that our discussion is gradually degenerating into mere wrangling, and it would perhaps be no bad thing were this discussion to attain its own dissolution here and now.

Sahitya, Shravan, 1299

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 19

Sahitya Parishad Patrika. First Volume, Second Number. Edited by Sreerajanikanta Gupta. Annual subscription three rupees.

This quarterly journal is now being published by the Sahitya Parishad Society. From this journal we look for essays of a kind that will assist the history of Bengali literature, the antiquarian study of the Bengali language, grammar, philology, and lexicography. It ought also to concern itself with the recovery and reading of ancient manuscripts of our country and the elucidation of the meaning of obsolete archaic words; and it ought further to turn its attention to the collection of Bengali folklore, proverbs, the songs of popularly renowned poet-balladeers such as Haru Thakur and Ram Basu, and nursery rhymes. Having examined the present number, we have found some ground for hope. The "Kṛttibas" written up by Sreeyukta Hirendranath Dutta and the "Scientific Terminology" written by Sreeyukta Ramendrasundar Trivedi are entirely worthy of the Parishad's journal and deserving of general esteem. But we say with regret that, in the editor's own essay on the late Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, only those very portions quoted directly from Bhudev Babu's own book are readable, while all the remainder is filled with irrelevant and unnecessary verbiage. Begging the author's pardon, we quote a portion of the essay:

"When Milton entered upon his life's work, the whole of England was convulsed by a dreadful revolution. Then was waged a terrible struggle between liberty and licence. This struggle did not conclude in a single day; nowhere did the current of this struggle remain checked, nor did any single community hold itself aloof from this struggle. From this struggle the English nation won such liberty that the wilderness of America came to be adorned with cities. On the other side, Greece rose up to shatter the chains of two thousand years' subjection. In this long-drawn

contest, from one end of Europe to the other, so fierce a conflagration arose that its flaming sparks, kindling in the heart of every oppressed and downtrodden soul, endowed them with the strength to resist prolonged oppression and tyranny."

Readers may suppose that Bhudev Mukhopadhyay has, by some means, gathered a portion of that conflagration spanning one end of Europe to the other, and set it ablaze in the language and imagination of this Bengali author; but the author tells us—that is not so. "The revolution that arose in Bhudev's own society during his lifetime did not, like the revolution of Milton's age, manifest so terrible an aspect throughout; it did not cause streams of human blood to flow; no ruler's head fell before the eyes of the populace, nor did the common people, roused for liberty, sacrifice themselves in some dreadful undertaking."

Such an elaborate and laughable comparison, followed by its point-by-point demolition, has, so far as we know, found no place even in the broadest farce of any country. The author might well have quoted, from beginning to end, the entire account of the Kurukshetra war from the Mahabharata, and concluded at last by observing that although in Bhudev's lifetime "the steadfastness of old ideas was, to some degree, disturbed by the outward tumult of new ones," although "at that time English notions and English education had taken firm root," and although "by the artifice of science India seemed to have become the threshold of England"—yet the slaying of Ghatotkacha did not take place.

Precisely because we bear a heartfelt affection for the Sahitya Parishad Society, and precisely because we look to it for so much, its exhibiting such an extraordinary display of childishness before the public causes us the deepest shame and distress.

Sadhana, Bhadra-Ashwin, 1299

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 20

"The Red Regiment," a historical essay, is the composition of Sreeyukta Akshaykumar Maitreya. Given the subject and the author's name, readers will have no doubt that the essay is, in every part, worth reading. But we have one observation to make. The essay is long, and has run to two or three continuations already. In our judgment, the serial publication of what amounts to a book is not the proper purpose of a periodical. A periodical ought, through varied, self-contained essays and the discussion of topics of the moment, to keep the reader's mind alert and engaged on many fronts at once. To pursue, to its final conclusion, some vast subject with all its ramifying branches is not, by its very nature, the periodical's proper task. For a great subject demands sustained and undivided attention; its unity and completeness in itself is its chief glory, and it is improper to fragment it and set it down piecemeal amid a miscellany of other and various subjects. Even a work of true distinction, treated in this fashion, gradually falls further and further behind the notice of readers amid the swiftly moving crowd of its more lightweight fellow-pieces, and comes, in some measure, to be regarded with indifference. That works by capable authors should be liable to so unfortunate a fate strikes us as a matter for genuine regret. Be that as it may, a certain boundary ought to be observed between the substantial book and the periodical article. "Science, or the Wish of Nature"—we are no partisans of prose of this sort. There is in it the effort of sentiment and the trappings of thoughtfulness, but the substance itself is wanting. "The Blemish upon Jupiter" is simple, graceful, and amusing. What manner of catastrophe might befall the earth through collision with a comet, the celebrated astronomer Flammarion has vividly described in his French novel entitled The Destruction of the World. How Jupiter, the largest planet of the solar system, seized the comet by its very locks and drew it into his own inner chambers, Apurba Babu describes in the essay under review; whether our helpless earth could contain a maddened comet with equal safety remains doubtful. "Chulkata Mishmi," an illustrated essay, is highly readable. The novel "Sribilas's Ill Fortune" has turned out to be concise, true to nature, and well composed. We have read with satisfaction the illustrated brief biography, published here, of the

celebrated Maharashtrian scholar Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar. To cultivate acquaintance with the great souls of the various regions of India is, for many reasons, a most salutary thing.

Sadhana, Poush, 1301. Pradip, Baishakh, 1300

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 21

When we sought, in the foregoing pages, to withhold from Akshay Babu's "Red Regiment" the right to appear serially in a periodical, we could by no means have accorded that same licence to his "Agnosticism," published with such enthusiasm. The subject is difficult, and its arguments mutually interdependent; to publish it thus fragmented, piece by piece, only increases the essay's difficulty while diminishing the coherent force of its reasoning. This instalment brings the piece to its conclusion; we now look forward to according it a fitting reception when it appears in book form. Sreeyukta Rajanikanta Chakravarti has here given an account of a two-hundred-year-old Vaishnava poem called "Sri Krishna Lilamrita." Sreeyukta Shashadhar Roy, in his essay "Varna" (Caste/Colour), discusses the causes of the origin of variation in the human skin. Readers will feel, and the author himself has admitted, that the theory advanced in the essay still awaits examination and proof. The story "The Ghostly Note" is skilfully executed. Small in scope, indeed very small, and rather too heavily laden with moral instruction; but the subject being exceedingly threadbare, in the absence of any particular artistic distinction in the telling, the effort proves fruitless. In the short essay entitled "The Blemish of the Advocate," the author has, in a satirical vein, practised the art of pleading; and in the end he seeks to convey the point that into the neat, straight-edged chambers of moral doctrine which moralists construct with their own hands, the manifold variety of human character cannot be made to fit, and that when one tries by force to drive it in, the result turns out contrary to what was intended.

Utsaha, Falgun-Chaitra, 1304

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 22

Reading the essay "What Do I Seek, What Do I Find?" we found ourselves growing anxious on the editor's behalf. Faults and frailties belong to us all, and in this earthly world we manage, somehow, to remain content with our flawed kinsmen and friends. But on the sixteenth anniversary of Nabya-Bharat's founding, the editor Mahashay declares: "For fifteen years I have sought nothing but the ideal." The unwitting reader might suppose he had merely been seeking subscribers and contributors for his monthly journal. But the author says: "Service to literature is, for me, but a manner of speaking, a mere pretext; I have been seeking men, testing men, examining only the inner heart. And upon examination I have found that no such man has ever come before me—one who, in the course of serving others, has forgotten his own interest; who, with unclouded mind, has been able to sacrifice all for the sake of his country—one who is unwavering in character, radiant in the purity of virtue, free from envy and malice and the torment of coveting another's happiness, one who is the very picture of perfection." Having thus taken upon himself the wholly unnecessary burden of testing and assaying unbidden strangers, our examiner Mahashay suffers such anguish that, mounting his own theatrical pulpit, he cries out to all: "I beg, clasping your feet, casting aside all shame and disgust, stand before me as the very embodiment of the ideal!" One is moved, seeing his distress; but "shame and disgust" are not so easily cast aside. Indeed, even he himself has not been able to abandon them entirely. In striving, in the present essay, to stand forth as the very ideal, he too has, here and there, retained the cloak of a modesty proper to the utmost saintliness; he too has said: "I am fallen, sullied, corroded by sin—I am steeped in the vainest of vain things—despised, tainted. To be forsaken, cast out, reviled, best becomes my lot." The ordinary hyperboles of modesty are never taken by anyone as literal truth—nor, presumably, did the editor Mahashay fear that they would be. And if such a fear existed, the author has amply guarded against it. He writes: "In hope that, forgetting self-interest, I might find selflessness; forgetting baseness, greatness; forgetting bestiality, spiritual radiance; forgetting the tumult of passion, self-restraint—at your call, O wretch that I am, casting a crown of voluntary poverty

upon my head, I fled, pouring ashes over the tender affection of my kin, and came running!" History affords, at most, two or three such instances; and, like those rare geniuses of the ideal born but once in an age, our editor Mahashay too is a wretch, who comes running, having poured ashes over tender affection. But he cannot have forgotten this—that the poverty he cast upon his head is a "crown"; and, shaking that very crown, he comes today to collect royal tribute from us. The more heated he grows as he proceeds, the more his sense of shame dissolves—he denounces everyone, saying: "Was it for pleasure that I lit the fire of despair and sat down to be consumed to ashes! One whose bond of parental affection has been severed—how poverty-stricken he is in love—how could you, slave of slaves to worldly splendour, ever comprehend it? I am a beggar for love, yet I have spurned and cast aside even love itself, drawn by the allurement of divinity." We could none of us understand the editor Mahashay—for we are slaves of slaves to worldly splendour, and his own majestic head bears the crown of poverty; but if, from time to time, in so loud a voice, he insists on explaining himself thus, then, failing to understand, we shall be quite without recourse. He has written of just how far, "drawn by the allurement of divinity," he has left us behind: "Forgetting the ideal, I do not desire a love or a unity that is tangled, crooked, sullied, impure. Had I been a beggar even for that love, I would not have forgotten the affection of those bound to me by ties of blood. I would not have torn asunder the thread of their affection and wandered, like a beggar, far and far away, in exile upon exile, in solitude upon solitude, through the kingdom of utter loneliness!" But let no one suppose that this has been the actual state of the editor of Nabya-Bharat during these fifteen years since he assumed his editorship! Yet in his youth the author did not fail to give hints of such promising signs. "From childhood, for want of an ideal, I have torn myself away from the affectionate embrace of how many! To whomsoever I have gone, the moment I have discovered in them a lack of the ideal, I have fled and run away. For that, how resentful they are of me today! For that, how full of wrath!!" How different from us! When we used to play truant from school, our own editor Mahashay, at that very age, was fleeing "the want of an ideal." Our schoolmaster was angry with us—but with him, it was every idealess wretch in the whole world who grew wrathful! Reflect a little, and you will see that this same boy has now grown up, and today writes: "I sought truth, I found falsehood; I sought virtue, I found sin; I sought heaven, I found hell; I sought sincerity, I found outward show; I sought divinity, I found bestiality; I sought purity, I found worldliness; I sought

immortality, I found mortality. What bitter experience!!" We beg the great man to be calm, to be patient, to govern his language, to forgive the world, to be merciful to his readers, and to withdraw the artificial thunderbolt of his New Year's theatrical performance! Let the truth he sought remain his own glory, and let the falsehood he found be borne by all the rest of mankind; let the unbearable virtue he sought and turned away from settle upon him alone, and let the sin he found instead be inscribed, an ineffaceable brand, upon the brow of the common herd; being himself of heavenly nature, he sought heaven indeed, but that he found hell instead is perhaps no fault of his own; being himself guileless, he sought sincerity indeed—but as for the outward show—what more can be said! Yet, given the sort of ideal he has become in this present essay, however earnestly one might beg and implore at his feet, not everyone could hope to become quite like him—for "shame and disgust" are exceedingly hard to cast off altogether!

On this occasion we have one further plea to make to the editor. Although his overflowing heart runs to far greater lengths than that of ordinary men, still, there is no advantage whatsoever in doubling, here and there, his marks of astonishment or emphasis (!). One might call this a typographical defect of his writing. If one multiplies such marks without limit, no boundary can ever be set to them. Consider—if the overflowing heart of some future editor of a Nabya-tara-Bharat should, through some unlucky chance, prove twice as overflowing as our editor's, he might then write "What bitter experience" and follow it with four exclamation marks!!!!—and if this fashion continues to spread, the tyranny of typographical gesture will gradually come to outweigh that of language itself. The editor Mahashay may rest assured that his language alone suffices, that his rhetorical flourish is by no means slight; and if, on top of that, he further compounds this typographical excess, it becomes rather too much for the ordinary reader to bear.

Bharati, Jaishtha, 1305. Nabya-Bharat, Baishakh, 1305

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 23

The poem "Nabadwip" is composed by Sreeyukta Dwijendralal Ray. The poem is, on the one hand, simple and full of wit, and on the other, grave and steeped in devotional feeling; such a rare combination of the two, within a single work, is as difficult to achieve as it is captivating to the heart. In it, the poet's effortless mastery of language, metre, and rhyme is proved again and again, at every turn. The short essay entitled "Today's Boys," written by Srimati Krishnabhabini Das, deserves to be read with particular respect and attention. That the character and education of students are steadily declining in quality admits of no doubt; in the authoress's view, one cause of this is that the imparting of education has, in our day, degenerated into mere shopkeeping, and that, in order to keep hold of their students, school authorities have been compelled to relax discipline of every kind. Besides this, it is our own belief that, owing to the pressure of examinations, the sheer bulk of prescribed texts, the proliferation of "key" books, and the competition of private schools, rote learning has been increasing with ever greater and more overwhelming force; the very means by which the hearts of boys ought naturally to be awakened, through the absorption of ever-fresh and vital ideas from their textbooks, and drawn toward lofty ideals, now seem to be obstructed; now it is mere words, and the meanings of words—all the arid dust of learning—that smothers their minds entirely. In the essay "The Story of Wales," the author shows that the Welsh language is wholly distinct from English, and that the inhabitants of that land are deeply attached to their own country. But we would observe that, notwithstanding this, had the Welsh not, under compulsion of circumstance, embraced the English language and literature and become one with the English, they could never, breaking free of the hand of narrow provincialism, have attained the greatness of a true nation. If the Oriya, Assamese, and Bihari peoples of our own country could, by setting aside minor obstacles, unite with the Bengalis through the bond of language and literature, then the rising fortunes of the Bengali people would grow far more promising. Reading the illustrated biography of "Sir Syed Ahmed Khan," we may derive the model of a genuinely great life. It has

become a matter of particular necessity that a college be established in Bengal, complete with a students' hostel, of the kind he established at Aligarh.

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 24

Sreeyukta Akshaykumar Maitreya's essay "The Punyaha" (the Day of Auspicious Beginnings) has turned out to be brief, charming, and amusing. Akshay Babu has held up a small lamp over one invisible, forgotten corner of the Muslim kingship of that bygone age, and has, for a moment, drawn the reader's imaginative faculty into eager curiosity about the mysteries of that period's history. The essay "Jagat Seth" is well written and substantial. Not long ago, antiquarian essays in Bengali periodicals were, as a rule, arid, entangled in controversy, and knotted up in a thicket of notes; but through the good offices of writers such as Akshay Babu and Nikhil Babu, that condition has been remedied, and the parched tree of Bengali history has begun to put forth leaves and blossoms. "That Country" is a poem composed by Sreeyukta Gobindachandra Das. We feel some diffidence in criticising poetry, but in this instance we cannot forbear from saying that were this poem of eight stanzas reduced to four stanzas, the harmony and completeness of its lyric quality would become perfect and whole—its paired second stanzas are superfluous, and by their excessive elaboration they diminish the intensity of feeling. We give below a brief selection from this sweet poem:

In that land there is no spring, no gentle southern breeze.

In that land the lotus-pool remains, and so the blossoms open on the branch,

The cuckoo bursts into song, should she but speak a word.

In that land there is no spring, no gentle southern breeze.

In that land there is no rains, no gathering of clouds.

The lotus-pool remains in that land, with tresses dark as night,

Where love plays like a rainbow, lovely in its radiance.

In that land there is no rains, no gathering of clouds.

In that land there is no autumn, no fear of winter's cold.

The lotus-pool smiles in that land, moonlight upon the blue sky,

There floats the full-blown lotus, in the water the blue lily sways.

In that land there is no autumn, no fear of winter's cold.

In that land there is no day, no night that ever falls.

The lotus-pool remains in that land, sun and moon beside her,

Beneath the veil they smile together, both as one.

In that land there is no day, no night that ever falls.

With what Hemendraprasad Babu has said in his essay "The Rights of Woman" we are in complete agreement; but the arguments and marshalling of proof needed to overcome those who disagree with him could scarcely be accommodated within so brief a compass as this essay. In the story "Hem's Disqualification," a subtle satire, blended with pathos, is directed at those distraught mourners of widow remarriage. The author has, in brief, hinted at a certain hidden falsity that lies concealed within unrestrained effusions of feeling.

Utsaha, Baishakh, 1305

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 25

Most of the prose and verse essays in this new issue are continuations from the previous number. In the poem published in the final issue, entitled "To the Beloved," an unprecedented and extraordinary novelty was to be observed; we had always known this piece to be an old composition of Bankim Babu's—but beneath the poem, in Nirmalya, the name of Ramanimohan Basu now appears in print; that much, at least, is new—shamelessly new!

Nirmalya, Jaishtha, 1305

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 26

In this number, the essay "Sahrat-e-Aam," written by Sreeyukta Gopalchandra Shastri, is particularly worthy of curiosity. During the period of Muslim rule in India there existed something akin to a Public Works Department—the author has gathered proof of this from ancient texts. The Persian name of that department was "Sahrat-e-Aam," meaning "the convenience of the public." Its duties were divided thus: "First, the agricultural works of the common people and the provision of water. Second, the administration of the postal service. Third, the swift transmission or announcement of news, good or ill. Fourth, the publication of newspapers. Fifth, the department of public works, that is, engineering." The discussion in this essay of the contemporary press and postal arrangements is a matter of curious interest. Regarding the system by which pure water was conveyed from a great distance through a network of pipes, the author writes: "The difference between the water-works of today and the water-machinery of that time lies in this: that the use of the engine was unknown to the Muslims of that age, and yet, much as with the Englishman's waterworks, an unfailing, continuous supply of pure water was available day and night without effort, and therefore no water-tax was exacted from the common people... To give drinking water to the thirsty and then to demand payment for it was, in the eyes of oriental sovereigns, contrary to religion and to custom. The rulers of native states such as Jaipur do not levy any tax upon their subjects in exchange for supplying them with water." Under English administration, water comes, as it were, mechanically; and, in step with it, taxes too are collected as though by machine. That the good governance and sound administration of English rule should strike us as something mechanical, and that it often fails to move either our imagination or our heart, is because in the conduct of English governmental affairs one nowhere sees a spontaneous display of truly royal munificence. Sovereignty appears rather like some vast emporium: the merchants' "monopoly" goods, called government service, must be purchased by an unwilling populace. Indeed, even the poorest subject, seeking justice at the palace gate, must count out his coins at the counter. It may well be that, in those days, the judge did not scruple to take bribes—but that was no claim of the

sovereign's, that was merely the pilferage of an official. In those days the highway, the wayfarers' rest-house, the great tank, were received by the subjects with gratitude as gifts of the king. Now, though we pay road-tax and public rates by count, few of us ever see its direct fruits. Formerly, on the king's own birthday, the king himself distributed largesse and astonished the populace with his bounty; now, on any auspicious royal occasion, it is the subjects themselves who must furnish the subscription. To make the visit of some Lieutenant-Governor or Deputy Commissioner or other royal representative to their district memorable in his eyes, it is the subjects themselves who must exert themselves, and it is upon that very achievement of theirs that the ruler then inscribes his own name. When I used to see the plague-suspects' quarantine barracks at the Kanpur junction, this thought would recur to me again and again: that had some ancient oriental monarch, in the manner of Ashoka or of Akbar, deemed such confinement necessary for the good of the public, his arrangements for it would surely never have proved so wretched, so utterly comfortless. At the very least, the food and drink of the innocent detainees would have been provided at the royal expense; here, well-salaried doctors and the like enjoy every comfort, while those unfortunate souls, cast out for the good of the realm—guests, as it were, deserving of courteous hospitality, who through no fault of their own have been forcibly detained in a foreign land, perhaps cut off from companions who might otherwise have provided for their journey—are left to sustain themselves, at their own cost and by their own devices, amid such distress; this, at least in the eyes of the ordinary subject of the East, seems by no means becoming of true sovereignty. The king's solicitude for the welfare of his people would assume a truly gracious and beautiful form, rather than one of dread and terror, were diligence and generosity to be displayed within these very quarantine barracks and plague-hospitals. No one is persuaded that adequate care and nursing await, within, the sort of establishment whose outward aspect speaks so plainly of wretchedness and neglect; and when, in a moment of crisis, we see plainly how very little we are valued, in every respect, by those in authority, our terror only increases, and it becomes correspondingly difficult to offer any comfort to the frightened populace. Mere proclamations of reassurance accomplish little; it is only those visible, direct acts of royal solicitude, taking on a form of fearless generosity, that spontaneously draw our imaginative faculty toward the ruler's benevolent intent, that truly bear fruit. Whatever is good in intention and good in outcome, unless it is also made outwardly and visibly

beautiful in form, its beneficence remains incomplete—indeed, often it produces an effect quite the opposite of what was intended. Be that as it may, we owe Shastri Mahashay our thanks for this thought-provoking essay. Sreeyukta Akshaykumar Baral, having caught the spirit of the English poet Hood's poem "A Parental Ode to My Son," has composed, in its likeness, a poem entitled "Affection," which has turned out beautifully—it retains the humour and tenderness of the original, and yet the narrowness proper to mere translation has been dispelled, allowing the poet's own individual powers to shine through. Doctor Jogendranath Mitra's essay "Plague, or the Great Pestilence" is well written and timely. Sreeyukta Abdul Karim's "A Brief Account of the Caliphs" has already been published in book form—its serial republication in Nabya-Bharat is mere repetition.

Bharati, Ashadh, 1305. Nabya-Bharat, Jaishtha and Ashadh, 1305

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 27

The discussion of history in Bengali literature today has come to surpass every other branch of literature—the three issues of Sahitya under review bear ample witness to this. In the Magh issue, three essays—"Raja Todar Mal," "Rani Bhavani," and "Baikuntha in the History of Bengal"—occupy the foremost place. "Rani Bhavani" is a historical work that has for some time been appearing in serial form in literature. In the essay on "Baikuntha," the author, Sri Kaliprasanna Bandyopadhyay, has attempted to refute all the unjust historical accusations levelled against Nawab Murshid Quli Khan. The learned author has demonstrated that even upon the final judgment history has rendered concerning the Nawabi era, an appeal may yet be lodged. We find ourselves growing increasingly uncertain whether the things we memorized with such labour in childhood must now, in our maturity, be unlearned all over again through their refutations! Those fortunate enough to have forgotten these things upon leaving the examination hall are the truly blessed. In the Falgun and Chaitra issues, three historical essays—"Rani Bhavani," "The Antiquities of Magadha," and "Shriharsha, Author of the Ratnavali"—have received by far the greatest space and importance. In determining which Shriharsha is renowned as the author of the Ratnavali, the author, Sri Satishchandra Ray, has displayed considerable diligence in his research. In "Cooperative Literature," the author has offered certain counsels regarding criticism from which the community of writers stands to gain immensely. We reproduce them here: "In our country, service to literature is purely a matter of hobby; hence those who serve literature are also extraordinarily thin-skinned. If anyone, in reviewing our writings, points out any fault whatsoever instead of offering unmixed praise, it becomes unbearable to us. In response, rather than meeting the critic's arguments with counter-arguments, we simply rain abuse upon him. Should none among our own kin and friends, dependents and followers, take up the task of abusing the critic, we ourselves write articles in our own monthly journals, or convene meetings, and abuse the critic—thereby giving proof of the smallness of our ideals, the meanness of our purpose, and the baseness of our hearts—and in doing so, feel abundant satisfaction. And then our 'literary'

flatterers do not fail to call even this conduct of ours noble conduct, thereby blinding us further against any dawning of self-realization." We have never encountered such trenchant language, such an outburst of feeling. But it was not necessary for the author to apply so harsh a rod to himself, for this thin-skinnedness belongs not to him alone but to nearly every writer. And what he has said of writers, out of an excess of self-reproach, may equally be said of critics. Not all writing is faultless, nor is all criticism infallible. But just as not all flesh is fit food for carnivorous creatures, so too is the criticism of the critic not current coin in the literary world. On the utility of criticism there can be no difference of opinion among any. But unfortunately, for want of maturity, experience, and proper training among our critics, criticism in our country very often merely announces the onset of an arrogant rivalry—and how are we to know beyond doubt that it does not thereby give "proof of the smallness of ideals, the meanness of purpose, and the baseness of heart"? Any writer possessed of even the slightest substance will have both a party for and a party against him—the opposing party calls his supporters flatterers, and his supporting party calls his opponents detractors. Nor has the author of the essay under review hesitated to call one particular party "toadies" and "flatterers." In most cases, it is precisely those who wish not to propagate truth but to vent malice who label the sympathetic "flatterers" and the antagonistic "detractors." But when a writer sets out to expound, for the general benefit of the public, some exceedingly old and commonplace truth, having no intention of attacking any particular individual, then such malice-laden hyperbole sounds altogether out of place.

Sahitya, last year's [1304] Magh, Falgun, and Chaitra issues received together

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 28

"Bankimchandra and the Muslim Community." The author has grown so incensed at Bankim Babu's critics that at one point in the essay he writes: "Even he (Bankim Babu) could not remain safe from the calumny of slanderers or the impertinence of fools!" Such a harsh generalization is unnecessary, indeed unjust. For slanderers and fools express calumny and impertinence about many people, not Bankim Babu alone—this is nothing new, nor anything to marvel at. Yet if the author means to imply that whoever has criticized Bankim Babu is thereby a fool and a slanderer, then he himself becomes liable to the same charge. We have not seen what criticism of Bishabriksha appeared in the pamphlet titled "Literature and Society"; but if the meaning the author has extracted from it in the essay under review is not unwarranted, then that critic has, at the very least, shown no evidence of intelligence. But no one has the right to display contempt merely because of a difference of opinion with the author of Mir Kasim. In devotion to Bankim Babu, we cannot concede any inferiority to the author of the essay under review—yet for that very reason we do not consider it right to show disrespect toward the author of Mir Kasim, Sri Akshaykumar Maitra. For by virtue of his own abilities, he too has risen to command the respect of the well-wishers of Bengali literature. But on the present point, we have no sympathy with Akshay Babu on another count. Just as strata deposited layer upon layer over ages reveal many disruptions when one looks at the Himalayan range, no geologist, though he may thereby diminish the Himalaya, can strip it of its divinity in Kalidasa's eyes. If history has been disrupted in Bankim Babu's novels, that constitutes no diminishment of Bankim Babu. One may lodge complaint that the novel has distorted history—much as one might be angry that rice-derived liquor has not turned back into rice. There may well be unity among the ingredients, but one must first grasp firmly the truth that rice is not liquor and liquor is not rice, before undertaking any judgment of the substance. Akshay Babu might ask: if history is not to be honoured, what need is there to write historical novels at all? The answer is this: through contact with history, the novel gains a peculiar flavour; it is for that flavour of history that the novelist covets it, and he has no regard whatsoever for its truth. If someone, not content with merely

that particular fragrance and savour of history within the novel, sets out to extract entire, unbroken history from it, then he is searching a curry for whole cumin, whole turmeric, whole mustard seed. One who can season a dish while leaving the spice whole is one kind of cook, and I have no quarrel either with one who grinds and blends to bring forth flavour, for flavour alone is the object here, the spice merely incidental. But history is such a beloved possession to Akshay Babu that even the faintest trespass of imagination upon history is intolerable to him—Nabin Babu has felt this in his Sirajuddaula. In the garden of the historical muse, the restless goddess of poetry plucks flowers and, according to her whimsical fancy, puts them to strange and marvellous uses; the watchman Akshay Babu cannot abide this in any wise—but the Empress herself has given her own express command. Let the garden remain under the watchman's charge—but if one handmaiden, going from another handmaiden's bower, plucks a branch of blossom and twig, whether for worship or for adornment, and carries it away, why must he demand an accounting from her and make such a great commotion over it? No harm comes to history thereby, while poetry gains some enhancement of its glory. If in a particular instance beauty is not achieved, then one may fault the poetry for a loss of beauty—but not for a loss of truth.

Purnima, Shravan, 1305(?)

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 29

Sri Chandranath Basu's essay "Bandhuvatsal Bankimchandra" ["Bankimchandra, Beloved of His Friends"] has become especially estimable for its sincere warmth of heart and simplicity. Falling into the hands of an ordinary writer, this theme would easily have swollen into a frothy display of empty effusions of the heart. In the essay "Samar" ["Battle"], Sri Nikhilnath Ray discusses the role played by European commanders in military organization during the Nawabi era. If the editor of Bharati offers thanks to the author of the essay "A Few Words Regarding Criticism of Chaitali," then we beg the readers' indulgence for this preamble. No writer can nurse the vain hope that his poetry will please every reader alike; but he whose sincere reverence moves him to grasp its essence, and who freely expresses the joy of that appreciation—his enthusiasm works upon the poet's garden of verse like the southern breeze of spring. In the story "Rin-Parishodh" ["Repayment of Debt"], despite the charm of its language, a certain contrivance in the depiction of events and the construction of character keeps it from appearing to the reader as convincing as truth. That subtle, veiled, gentle humour found in most of Pravatkumar's poems is present too in the poem "Ananta Shajya" ["Eternal Bed"].

Pradip, Ashadh, 1305

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 30

This is a monthly journal devoted to education, edited by Sri Rajeshwar Gupta.

We wish this journal prosperity. Discussion in Europe regarding the improvement of educational method continues to grow. Various systems and books are being disseminated concerning how education may be made simple, agreeable, lasting, and rational. Because a Bengali must acquire his education through the medium of English, the labour of education has become a heavy burden wearing down our bodies and minds—hence discussion of newly discovered, simpler, and superior paths of education ought to bear particular fruit in our country. Yet we do not dare hope that our country's indifferent teachers will so readily abandon their long-established and lamentable paths. Be that as it may, we look to Anjali for a thorough and detailed discussion of the particular subjects taught in our schools—namely history, geography, arithmetic, geometry, Sanskrit, English, grammar, natural science, and the like—and for a proper critique each year of the prescribed textbooks and examination questions.

Anjali, Jyaishtha [1305], 2nd issue

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 31

Sri Ramendrasundar Trivedi's essay "Pratityasamutpada" is full of thought. The title and the subject are unfamiliar to us. The author states that Lord Shakyamuni Siddhartha, "at the time of attaining Buddhahood beneath the Bodhi tree, discovered the twelve links that form the root cause of all life's suffering. This doctrine of causation is called Pratityasamutpada. The names of the twelve links, in order, are these: ignorance, mental formations, consciousness, name-and-form, the six sense-bases, contact, sensation, craving, attachment, becoming, birth, and old age and death." Various interpretations exist of this doctrine of causation, and the learned Trivedi has added one more to their number. But his interpretation, having proceeded some distance on firm ground, has lost itself as though in quicksand, and has not reached its conclusion. If the first part of Trivedi's interpretation is grounded in history—that is, if it derives not from independent reasoning but is nourished by various Buddhist scriptures and literary traditions—then it is true that Buddhist philosophy is essentially in agreement with modern philosophy grounded in Western science. But without abundant historical proof, no final word can be pronounced on this matter. Hence, along the path upon which the learned Trivedi has directed his thought, further research too must be dispatched. The essay "Eknishtha Vivaha" ["Monogamous Marriage"] is concise, informative, and eminently readable. "Maharaja Ramakrishna" is the first chapter of an essay that promises much to its readers. The author, Sri Akshaykumar Maitra, writes: "When the English acquired the Diwani grant, the zamindars everywhere stood glorified in the dignity of office and in the power of governance. In the time of Maharaja Ramakrishna and his contemporary zamindars, that dignity of office has vanished like dust blown from a garment. By what artifice the zamindars of that age became the puppets, afflicted with titles and maladies, of this age—Maharaja Ramakrishna's life story is capable, to some degree, of unveiling that mystery."

Bharati, Shravan, 1305. Sahitya, Baishakh, 1305

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 32

The essay "Jibajyoti Nirbachan" ["The Selection of Life's Illumination"] is simple yet profound and thought-provoking. Having proven with what difficulty the selection of species proceeds, the author, Sri Jogeshchandra Ray, climbing that stairway, has arrived at the very frontier of the theory of expression. In this issue, I read with pleasure the first portion of Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar's illustrated biography.

Pradip, Shravan, 1305

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 33

I could not restrain my temptation to quote the discussion, in the essay "Banik Bandhu" ["The Merchant's Friend"], of the etymology of the words panya (merchandise) and banik (merchant). "The word banij has been derived from the Sanskrit root pana. Why the grammarians formed it from pana rather than bana is a matter shrouded in mystery. In ancient times, the Romans called the Phoenicians Punic. The Punics, in an era prior to grammar itself, conducted trade and commerce in India. The people of India called the Punics Panik. To account for Panik, the root pana was invented. In later times (the age of lexicons), the root pana left behind its trace panya, and as the greatness of the Panics faded, the very name panik took its leave from the Sanskrit lexicon. Long after the Panics—the Venetians, or banij, came to India. By then the era of the grammarian-sages had passed. Sanskrit had acquired its laws and rules; Sanskrit had become a caged bird—hence those who came later, having no other recourse, purified the newly arrived foreign words by passing them through the hand of derivation, and thus adopted them. The word banij too was thus purified and became the adopted heir of the root pana. These Venetians, or banij, being an object of the greatest affection, came to be given the endearing title banik-bandhu."

Anjali, Ashadh [1305]

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 34

In the Jyaishtha issue of Sahitya, the debate that Sri Kaliprasanna Bandyopadhyay has raised in the essay "Mohanlal," rebutting Akshay Babu and Nikhil Babu, lies beyond our capacity to judge. The essay has become particularly estimable for the charming clarity of its language, the gathering of proofs, and several new facts of special interest to the Bengali reader. "The Calcutta Gazette of Old" is a delightfully readable and amusing essay. In the Ashadh issue, Nikhil Babu's "The Mystery of Meeran's Fate" is as suspenseful as a mystery novel.

Sahitya Parishad Patrika, edited by Sri Nagendranath Basu.

Since coming into the hands of its present editor, this journal has attained an unexpected degree of distinction. Now not a single issue of it can be carelessly allowed to slip by unread—each issue is building up a precious treasury of Bengali literature. The learned editor has been able properly to discern his weighty duty, and he possesses also the strength to fulfil it.

Bharati, Bhadra, 1305. Sahitya, Jyaishtha and Ashadh [1305] issues received together

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 35

"The Anonymous Letter" is a comic little story, well-crafted. Last year, on the occasion of the total eclipse of the sun, scholars gathered at various places throughout India, both from home and abroad. Colonel Hills of Cambridge and Mr. Newell established camps at Pulgaon Station for observing the eclipse. The Government of India sent officers from Dehradun for their assistance. The author of the essay "Solar Eclipse at Pulgaon" was one among them. Reading this essay's account of how the scientific observation of the solar eclipse was accomplished, step by careful step, with such laboriously acquired skill and such clockwork precision and caution, brought us joy. In the essay "Shall We Send the Boy to England?" the author, Sri Nagendranath Gupta, has broached, in his characteristically pleasant style, a discussion timely to the moment. On this matter, our belief is this: the greater the number of those returning from England grows, the more their haughty vanity and arrogant sense of independence regarding external dress and manner will diminish. Whatever excess occurs at the first flush finds, in time, its own correction. Hindu society too is gradually relaxing its own inappropriate and artificial rigidity, and it seems that they too are holding to their ancestral society with a somewhat more humble bearing than before. Besides this, I believe the ideal of vigorous and simple nationalism found in provinces such as Bombay, on the occasion of the Congress, is serving as a splendid example for us. In this issue, Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar's well-composed biography has concluded, and the illustrated life-story of the late Dinabandhu Mitra has begun. Through the propagation of the biographies of our country's great figures, Pradip continues to gain in luminance.

Pradip, Bhadra, 1305

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 36

The essay "The Structure of the Universe" is deeply grave in tone. "Jagat Sheth" is a historical essay composed by Nikhil Babu. We take heart in seeing, in these essays, the history of Bengal being progressively gathered and compiled. "Raja Ramananda Ray" is the life story of a Vaishnava saint renowned in his own name; that it is being published in small fragments owing to the limited capacity of Utsaha is the sole fault of this essay. "In the Bowels of the Earth" is a scientific essay worthy of careful reading. In the Ashadh issue of Utsaha, the essay "Hastings's Apprenticeship" contains, within a brief compass, much matter of weight. At the very moment when Hastings was but a fresh sprout upon the field of England's new empire, the shadow of the mighty and prosperous Nandakumar loomed over him, overwhelming him. Afterward, when Hastings's own day of ascendancy arrived, did he entirely forget that episode?

Utsaha, Jyaishtha and Ashadh, 1305

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 37

We hope that Anjali will publish somewhat more detailed essays on educational method; otherwise, teachers will not be able to derive much benefit from such brief pieces. Nowadays so many books and journals on educational method are being published in English that no end can be found to writing on new means of facilitating education. The essays "Correction of Faults in Pronunciation," "Writing and Reading of Geographical Names," and "Reconsideration" have not been sufficiently extensive—they have largely skimmed over commonplace matter. In this issue of Anjali, the essay "The Silver-Gold Dispute" has turned out lucid and timely. Discussion of the currency crisis is stirring today both at home and abroad, and yet even the rudiments of the matter remain unknown to many in our country.

Anjali, Shravan, 1305

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 38

The present issue has become particularly engrossing through its varied arrangement of subjects. The new collection of Chandidas's verses being published in this journal is exceedingly valuable. In particular, the glimpse afforded, in several of the verses, of Chandidas's life history is especially amusing. The editor is deserving of our gratitude for not having corrected the spelling of the original manuscript. Whatever printed editions of ancient texts are being published nowadays have had their editors assume the office of the notorious iconoclast Kalapahar—they have conceived Sanskrit spelling as the standard for Bengali spelling, and have ruthlessly destroyed correct Bengali spelling in the process. This has caused particular inconvenience to those inquiring into linguistics. The Bengali of contemporary literature, having been largely conceived by scholars well-versed in Sanskrit, has strayed so far from its natural course—even in the very construction of Bengali sentences—that it is no longer possible to bring it back to its proper path. But those who, guided by the standard of modern Bengali, undertake to "correct" ancient manuscripts do the gravest harm.

At the opening of the essay "The Poetess Madhavi," the author, Sri Achyutacharan Chowdhury, writes: "Up to now, in ancient Bengali literature, we have found the fragrance of poetic flowers from only a single female poet, and she is the goddess Madhavi." Madhavi was a native of Orissa. The standard of Bengali verse composition found by her, as revealed in the essay, is astonishing. Her language is in no way inferior to that of the male Vaishnava poets. That in ancient times the land of Orissa acquired such command over the Bengali language, and that modern Orissa is now voluntarily relinquishing that command, is a matter of sorrow for Bengal and of misfortune for Orissa as well.

"The Copperplate Grant of Gaudadhipa Mahipaladeva" has, with the assistance of Sri Nandakrishna Basu, Magistrate of Dinajpur, been published for the first time in

the present journal. "From the water-encampment called Bilasapura, having bathed on the occasion of the equinox, the supreme devotee, the supreme sovereign, the great king of kings Mahipaladeva, grandson of Bhattaputra Hrishikesha, son of Madhusudana, of the Parashara gotra (belonging to the pravara of Shakti, Vashishtha, and Parashara), affiliated to the Vajasaneyi branch of the Yajurveda, resident of the village of Chabati, has bestowed the present copperplate grant upon Bhattaputra Krishnadityasharma." Of the giver, and of the village that has been granted by copperplate, the journal offers discussion; but of him to whom the grant was given, there is no discussion whatsoever. Were his account to be recovered from genealogical records, it would greatly assist in the determination of historical chronology.

The essay "The Wind-Messenger of Dhoyi the Poet" has turned out especially charming. Many have noticed the mention of the poet Dhoyi's name in the verses of the Gitagovinda. After long research, his composition Pavanaduta has recently been discovered. The account and occasional translations that the great scholar Pandit Haraprasad Shastri has published concerning it have turned out exceedingly delightful.

In the essay "Thakurdas of the Panchali," the author, Sri Byomkesh Mustafi, has uncovered a portion of the history of Bengali panchali literature.

Bharati, Ashwin, 1305. Sahitya Parishad Patrika, 5th volume, 3rd issue, 1305

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY CRITICISM 39

Pradip. Ashwin and Kartik [1305]

Having read this double issue of Pradip, we find ourselves particularly satisfied. Almost every prose essay in it has proven worthy of admiration. In Bengali periodicals, an essay like the learned Shibnath Shastri's "Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar" appears but rarely. It must be acknowledged as a reproach to the learned Shastri that, despite possessing abundant richness of thought, he has been miserly toward Bengali literature.

The essay "Hamir" has become gripping through the quality of its subject matter.

"The Halftone Picture" is a composition by Sri Upendrakishore Raychowdhury. Many perhaps do not know that Upendra Babu's own discovered method regarding halftone printing has gained fame in the artistic circles of England; out of natural modesty, Upendra Babu has, nowhere in his essay, given even the slightest hint of this fact. He was the first among Bengalis to learn halftone printing through his own effort, and within a short time succeeded in perfecting it. Given the unfavourable climate of India and the total absence of any assistance or counsel, it is difficult for one lacking practical experience even to imagine how much perseverance and mental capacity were required to master this new art and bring it to perfection. It is not so much from Upendra Babu's essay as from the beautiful illustrations of his composition published in Pradip that one gains his true measure.

In the short story titled "The Value of a Diamond," the author, Sri Nagendranath Gupta's natural genius, has come into full bloom. The story shines like a fragment of diamond through the beauty of its language, the skill of its narrative, the effortless artistry of its characterization, and the qualities of brevity and coherent

brilliance. As one reads the story, an air redolent of a Hindustani household of the Nawab's family seems to envelop the reader's very heart.

"Chemical Terminology" is a composition by the renowned scientist Prafulla Chandra Ray. Prafulla Babu is a partisan of the propagation of pure Bengali chemical terminology. On this matter he cites the example of Germany. Where English scientific works have adopted Latin-derived terminology, the Germans have, in that same place, employed terminology derived from their own native tongue.

Prafulla Babu cites yet another example. The peerless scholar Mendeleev is a pioneer of new paths in chemical theory. He is Russian. "Some time ago, this world-renowned chemist and his colleagues, filled with love of their homeland, resolved firmly that no scientific essay or treatise would be composed in any foreign tongue. Western chemists were thrown into great difficulty. Consequently many were compelled to learn the Russian language. Two English friends of the author of this essay, an authority established in chemical science, achieved success only after arduous labour in reading Mendeleev in the original tongue. We ask: has the unfortunate Bengali language committed so great a crime that it must be deprived of the compilation of chemical terminology?" We no longer feel any hesitation in openly declaring that the Bengali language too shall attain glory equal to that of Russian; among the few Bengalis who are presently leading us toward this lofty hope, Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ray is one.

In the essay "The Benefactor Kalikumar," the author has fully proven that the life-history of the late Kalikumar Dutta is by no means deserving of oblivion. We hope to see the complete biography of this great soul in book form. The time has come when our country's present economic condition and new education are disrupting the bonds of the joint family; the great life-story of Kalikumar Dutta will keep before the future Bengali reader a shining ideal of the old Bengali society. In this same issue of Pradip, the learned Shibnath Shastri has published a short essay on his friend and Brahmo Samaj colleague Anandamohan Basu. He writes: "In Anandamohan's life, Eastern love and devotion and Western industriousness were

combined in a manner quite extraordinary, and it is this above all that has made him, to us, an exemplar in so many respects."

In the short essay titled "The Late Umeshchandra Batabyal," Sri Rajanikanta Chakravarti has aroused our curiosity regarding this great soul. Umeshchandra entered Bengali literature at an advanced age and, within a short span, secured for himself a foremost place. Just as his writing was fluent, lucid, and mature, so too did it reveal the writer's own originality, fearlessness, and firm, unaffected conviction. It was not merely in the quality of his composition that he was admirable; Rajanikanta Babu writes: "In conduct he was without blemish. No manner of superstition could touch his heart. He had no reverence for idolatry. It was upon his lips that the worship of Brahman as taught in the Upanishads was true Hindu religion. What manner of nectarous fruit is borne when the highest order of Sanskrit learning is joined with the highest order of English education—this was manifest in his life. He had no manner of ostentation. I went to his residence at Ramnagar, and sitting upon a single woolen mat, engaged in various conversation. Whenever I went, I returned having learnt something. From the path of discipline he would not deviate by so much as a hair's breadth."

Lastly, we wish for Pradip, along with its continued progress, a lasting endurance. Pradip [the "lamp"] is burning so abundant a quantity of oil that we fear it may one day meet an untimely extinction. It is our belief that Pradip could attain permanence through the glory of its essays alone, without printing so many illustrations or incurring such expense.

Bharati, Agrahayan, 1305.