CHAPTER ONE

Unitarian Social Gospel and the Foundations of Hindu Modernism

ON September 28, 1833, a funeral sermon was delivered for a Bengali by a prominent British Unitarian in the port city of Bristol on the west coast of England. Rammohun Roy had died a day earlier while visiting the Carpenter estate in Stapleton Grove. The Reverend Lant Carpenter, who had known of Rammohun and his work for fifteen years, spoke with great depth of feeling about the career of the "enlightened Brahmin from the British capital of Hindustan" who was "undoubtedly a Unitarian." "My heart is with the Unitarians," the Bengali had told Carpenter often.[1]

The Unitarianism that in Carpenter's mind linked Rammohun to his British counterparts represented a new and radical approach to religion, society, and ethics. It was a pioneering faith that emerged out of the changing conditions of the nineteenth-century world. It challenged many of the religious presuppositions of the traditional societies of Eurasian civilizations. Though Unitarianism was never a mass movement, the implications of its protest had far-reaching effects among the modernizing intelligentsia in India. Three simple though radical ideas for the time (1815 to 1835) provided the link between the enlightened few in Calcutta and the enlightened few in England and the United States.

The first was liberal religion, or the substitution of a rational faith for the prevailing popular religions of the world, which, they thought, increasingly curtailed the freedom of human beings by enslaving them to mechanical rituals, irrational myths, meaningless superstitions, and other-worldly beliefs and values. The second was the idea of social reform, or emancipation in which all known penalized classes and groupings such as workers, peasants, and women were to be elevated through education and the extension of civil rights to participate fully in the benefits of modern civilization. Finally, there was the idea of universal theistic progress, or the notion that the perfectability of mankind could be achieved by joining social reform to rational religion.

"Though dead," said Lant Carpenter of Rammohun Roy, "he yet speaketh and the voice will be heard impressively from the tomb." That voice, which still can be "heard by his intelligent Hindoo friends," will continue to express the Unitarian credo:

> It may excite them to renewed and increased effort to carry on the work of intellectual and moral improvement among their countrymen: to diffuse the pure light of religion which his writings contain, among those who are yet debased and superstitious; to give the advantages of a wise education to the young and uninformed to rise themselves and teach others to rise, above the narrow prejudices of caste and sex; and thereby weaken that thraldom which so much intercepts the progress of truth and virtue; and elevate by knowledge . . . those who may thus be the friends and companions of the present generation and whose early instruction and training will so much promote the welfare of the next.[2]

One tragic aspect of Rammohun's death was that it precluded a meeting with American Unitarians whom he admired, and with whom he had hoped to establish closer ties for coordinated Unitarian programs on an international scale. One, William Ellery Channing, whom a Unitarian later called the "Rammohun Roy of America,"[3] was, since the revolt of 1815, a leading spokesman of liberal Unitarianism in the United States. According to Lucy Aiken, who corresponded with Channing from England, and who had met Rammohun at various social gatherings in London, Rammohun had spoken to her on September 6, 1831, "of ending his days in America." "I have just seen the excellent Rammohan Ray," she wrote, "and he speaks of visiting your country . . . and to know you would be one of his first objects." After Rammohun's death (October 23, 1833), she recorded sadly to Channing that "Ray has been frustrated of one of his cherished hopes, that of seeing you face to face, either in this or the other hemisphere."[4]

The second American Unitarian with whom Rammohun evidently had long years of correspondence was Joseph Tuckerman.[5] Indeed, the reason why Rammohun came to Stapleton Grove as the house guest of Lant Carpenter was to discuss preliminary matters in anticipation of Tuckerman's visit to England in 1833, when the Unitarian representatives of three cultures were to meet and discuss a common program of social action.

The ideology of liberal Unitarianism was slowly emerging from the parallel experiences of like-minded individuals in Boston, Bris-

tol, and Calcutta. Channing, who was Rammohun's equal as an inventive and versatile genius, did not begin his revolt against the established church until 1815, when he was thirty-five years old.[6] The main target within orthodoxy for the Harvard-trained Unitarian liberals such as Channing, Emerson, and Parker was Calvinist religion and ethics, with its stress on man's damnation and God's vengeance through the eternal fires of hell, as well as the notion of the predestined election of a privileged few. In orthodox Christianity generally, Channing and others repudiated all forms of religious revelation, the doctrine of Trinity, and those aspects of popular religious behavior that prohibited the human being from achieving that "sense of unity with God" experienced only by those dedicated "to a life of reason."[7]

Most probably, however, the most radical departure in the thought of Channing and other Unitarians was not on the level of theology and religion. Though it is true that the abandonment of revelation for intuition led Unitarians into the mystical realms of monism and transcendentalism, when modified by reason and a constructive social philosophy this led not to other-worldliness but to intellectual emancipation. In fact, the general Unitarian outlook was itself a reflection of a new social conscience and consciousness.

According to one biographer, Channing was "not content to preach an arid religion from the moral isolation of the pulpit, but sought to realize his Christian ideals in the market place of daily living."[8] In an important sermon entitled "Religion, a Social Principle," he referred to "progressive religion," which purifies men's minds by stressing "good done to others." "Religion was no private affair, between man and his maker," he said, "nor was it a secret to be locked up in our hearts." Rather, religion is to be "communicated, shared, strengthened by sympathy and enjoyed in common with all."[9]

The underlying assumption of the new social gospel of Unitarianism is contained in a simple sentence by Channing, which was radical for the time he lived in: "every human being has a right to all the means of improvement which society can afford." Like most Unitarians, Channing was a staunch abolitionist, and believed that "never will man be honored till every chain is broken."[10] He expressed a strong sympathy with those oppressed by colonialism,[11] and in 1840 he viewed his own work in establishing night schools for workers as the start of a "social revolution." As he put it, "I see in it a repeal of the sentence of degradation passed by ages on the mass of mankind. I see in it the dawn of a new era, in which it will

be understood that the first object of society is to give incitements and means of progress to all its members.[12]

Joseph Tuckerman, with the same Bostonian upbringing and Harvard degree as Channing, was equally affected by the misery of the poor and underprivileged. In 1826 he left a well-to-do congregation to whom he ministered in order to work and live among the urban poor of Boston. Soon a chapel was constructed for his use, which was not only a religious center but a social welfare center designed to find ways and means of alleviating the agonies of poverty.[13]

In 1839 a tract of Tuckerman's was published describing his philosophy of religion as a social gospel, and his method for coping with the problem of the poor. As was common with pre-Marxist reformers, he attributed poverty to intemperate habits, and rebuked those who profited from the small pay of poor workingmen—earnings that were diverted from family savings to gin mills. He was dismayed with the callous indifference of nominal Christians who "ignored the masses in the city" and made no allowance for the fact that these people would increase in proportion to the increase of urban areas. After describing the grim life of the poor, he advocated a program of moral training and attending to physical wants "as a means of inculcating the desire for self-improvement."[14]

When Tuckerman came to England, in 1833, he immediately lectured in the new industrial cities of the Industrial Revolution, where he found cesspools of humanity living in conditions that defied description. Lant Carpenter's daughter, Mary, was so taken with Tuckerman's humanitarian spirit and practical efforts to help the poor that she turned to social work as a career. When in 1835 Tuckerman returned to America, he left behind him in Bristol a Society for Visiting the Homes of the Poor of the Congregation. The Carpenters could now gain entrance into the families of the poverty-stricken to render assistance to them directly. Mary Carpenter was its secretary for twenty years.[15]

Lant Carpenter had himself come to the same conclusions as had the Americans about the need for religious leaders to help the poor. In 1817 he had first come to Bristol to take over the congregation at Lewin's Mead, a notorious slum neighborhood in the port city. There, like Tuckerman in Boston, this well-educated elitist could so modify his sermons as to be appreciated by the common man, and he was certainly the first minister at the Unitarian chapel to attract a mass following. Again like his American counterparts, he stressed education and moral training for the purpose of self-

strengthening. Until his death in 1840, the same year Tuckerman died, Carpenter remained consistently liberal both socially and politically. Carpenter joined the antislavery agitation in 1824; he worked to alleviate the deplorable conditions in British prisons, and in 1831 he joined the great struggle for the passage of the Reform Bill.[16]

Equally interesting are Carpenter's theological expositions on the new Unitarianism, which not unlikely influenced Rammohun Roy in Calcutta. In a discourse published as early as 1810, which Carpenter entitled *On the Importance and Dissemination of the Doctrine of the Proper Unity of God*, there is a brief but illuminating summary of the pillars of modern Unitarianism as it later came to be known after its formal inauguration in England and America in 1825. There was, for example, an eloquent defense of what may be termed the pivot of Unitarianism, or the belief in God without second, which is so reminiscent of Rammohun Roy in his own writings. There was the stress on Christ as the ethical teacher, which again recalls Rammohun's approach in his *Precepts of Jesus* written a decade later. There was Carpenter's defense of the Unitarian doctrine of atonement, which not only denied all the mystery and metaphysics surrounding the crucifixion, as well as the Calvinist view of sin and damnation, but also reestablished the image of a merciful God full of justice and compassion for mankind.[17]

Besides rational theology and the social gospel, there appeared a third integral part of liberal Unitarian ideology, which not only set off Unitarians from the more orthodox Christians in their own culture, but contributed greatly to bridging the differences between themselves and the more enlightened portion of contemporary Calcutta society. That same liberal religious and social spirit which Unitarians attributed to their imitation of the true ethical Christ, they gradually extended tolerantly to peoples of all cultures. If most religious institutions of the time were moving away from the universal humanism and rationalism of the eighteenth century toward the romanticism and nationalist self-glorification of the nineteenth, Unitarians maintained an outgoing cosmopolitanism, which ultimately became the most significant pillar of the Unitarian faith.

On June 8, 1826, Joseph Tuckerman, in response to an appeal from Rammohun's Calcutta Unitarian Committee, printed and circulated a public letter addressed to American Unitarians asking for their support in missionary enterprises. Rammohun Roy, the Unitarian "spokesman of the East," began Tuckerman, has "solicited

our assistance in establishing there in Calcutta a perpetual Unitarian mission." Tuckerman then went on to say that: "Native gentlemen in India have contributed largely to the cause of establishing Christian worship upon Unitarian principles, in their country; and they with their English associates, are earnestly requesting the aid of Unitarians in England and America for the accomplishment of their object."[18]

Especially noteworthy about Tuckerman's letter was his commentary on the principles of missionary enterprise, which he appears to have shared with another sympathetic American Unitarian named Henry Ware (the same Henry Ware who had corresponded with Rammohun from as early as 1821).[19] On the surface, Tuckerman's conviction that the Christian gospel was superior to anything indigenous in Asia for the purpose of effecting religious and social reform may seem to differ little from the attitude of the orthodox Christian missionary. But a closer examination of Tuckerman's position reveals that what he meant by Christianity was not the institutional trappings that followed Christ's death, but simply Christ's acknowledged teachings, which could be readily adapted anywhere. Rather than equate Christianity with Western civilization, he demonstrated how the benevolence of Christianity "modified and improved civil government and public morals [in the West]" itself.

Moreover, Tuckerman rejected the most common beliefs by orthodox missionaries that all non-Christians were heathens consigned for all time to damnation. Tuckerman could not accuse "God of partiality in conferring the benefit of revelation upon so small a portion of the human race." To him, it was a shockingly false idea "that the actual knowledge of revelation is necessary to salvation." His conclusion was that Christianity ought not to come to India to save souls, but to improve the human condition and society: "from what it has done, bad as Christianity is, we can demonstrate its adoption to the condition and to the wants of all men, and its tendency to an indefinite improvement of the human mind and character."[20]

Channing's *Remarks on Creeds, Intolerance, and Exclusion* is equally revealing in the context of a developing Unitarian universal humanism. Christianity, he argued, was a spirit rather than a fixed creed, dogma, institution, or theological system. "Christian truth is infinite," he wrote, "it is a spirit . . . of boundless love and cannot be reduced to a system." Thus, the spirit of Christ's teachings can transcend human diversity or "the immense variety of opinion and

sentiment in the world."[21] His conclusion directly applicable to Unitarian missionary principles is contained elsewhere, but is meaningful only when set against his liberal interpretation of the Christian spirit, which to him was not an integral part of any cultural system but was free, tolerant, and adaptable.[22]

Precisely how and when Unitarianism reached Calcutta—if indeed it reached there at all by diffusion in its earliest stage—it is impossible to say. It may be argued that Bengali Unitarianism was a movement parallel to the Unitarian movements in the West, but some caution must be exercised in this judgment for the reason that the conditions which gave rise to it in Bengal were not akin historically to those of England and America. Nor when viewed as a functional equivalent can it be said that the ideological developments in Bengal and the West served the same purpose. An alien ideology, whether Marxism today in Bengal, or Unitarianism over a century ago, should be seen essentially in terms of historical and cultural relevance. It should be analyzed in the manner it stimulates change or in the manner it is adapted by the receiving culture for its own purposes.

A hasty generalization might also be drawn from the remarkable coincidence of events in the early history of modern Unitarianism both in the East and in the West. We have already seen how Channing, Tuckerman, and Carpenter led their revolt against orthodoxy from approximately 1815, and that their revolt became formally accepted with the establishment of the Unitarian Association in 1825. In Bengal, Rammohun Roy began his leadership in the Hindu reformation in 1815, after he settled permanently in Calcutta. His revolt against the orthodox Hinduism of his day occurred between 1815 and 1820. By 1822 he had helped form a Calcutta Unitarian Committee and by 1825/26, his scattered writings in their cumulative effect already contained a kind of syllabus for activists dedicated to Hindu reform.[23]

No doubt, there is a connecting link between Calcutta and the West which helps to explain the simultaneous happening of overtly similar acts. Certainly the progressive part of the world of the time was on the eve of momentous economic, social, and political revolutions; and certainly, as far as the religious community was concerned, Unitarians were among the most articulate early advocates of the varieties of social emancipation that would ultimately result from the revolution.

But between India and the West there was a great elementary difference with reference to these momentous changes. No Indus-

trial Revolution, no universal suffrage, no universal compulsory education swept through India in the nineteenth century, as it swept through England and the United States. Thus, the "Bengali Unitarian" operating from the British capital of India could only participate intellectually in the modernization that was radically altering European cultures in the last century. So long as the fundamental material aspects of modernization were arrested in their own country, the corresponding reformation of Hinduism was bound to be limited because only a comparative handful could be educated as moderns. It was also bound to be exotic, not in a cultural sense but socio-economically, because the technological environment remained primitive.

This leads to a second vital area of difference between Bengali Unitarians and their Western counterparts. The very presence of alien rule in India created a rather delicate psycho-cultural relationship between the native intelligentsia and the British officials. There were two basic cultural attitudes of concerned British officials to Bengalis and their society: the Orientalist and the Westernizer. The well-meaning Orientalist type tended to be sympathetic to Indian traditions, and went so far as to engage himself in academic research geared to rediscovering the Hindu past or to systematizing available knowledge of Indian civilization. As a social reformer he started many projects designed to update Indian traditions and institutions by fusing them with modern values from the contemporary West. He fashioned himself as a syncretistic modernizer of the Hindu traditions. The well-meaning Westernizer, on the other hand, who tended to downgrade Indian traditions as dead and useless, urged instead complete assimilation to Western cultural traditions, which were in his mind increasingly equated with modernization.

This conflict of modernizing alternatives between Westernizers and Orientalists, known in history as the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy, is of considerable significance in our present context because it provides a frame of reference for the development of Bengali intellectuals, including Unitarians such as Rammohun Roy. Rammohun, who learned English well and was close to a number of Europeans in Calcutta, was greatly influenced by the cultural attitudes of foreigners to whom he related, and whom he used as windows to the West. As I have shown elsewhere, Rammohun lived during the Orientalist period of policy formulation, and it was Orientalist scholarship that provided him with the building blocks necessary for his ideological reconstruction of Hindu society and faith.

In comparison to Western Unitarianism, therefore, the Bengali variety was a far more complex phenomenon, in that the problems faced by a Rammohun Roy were always magnified by the perspective of cross-cultural contact. Unlike Channing in America or Carpenter in England, who sought to convince their countrymen to liberalize their religion and care for the underprivileged among them, Rammohun was continually challenged by the question Europeans in India invariably raised: do you improve the lot of Hindus from within the system or must you undermine it by assimilation to a foreign system? As for the specific content of religious Unitarianism, for example, Rammohun was confronted by the central question as to whether India should follow Christ (however denuded of later excrescences), or whether India should follow some Christ-like figure in her own tradition who seemingly represented the same principles.

Thus, it should come as no surprise that Rammohun's ideological development and career as a Hindu reformer reveals many twists and turns, contradictions and inconsistencies. But on balance, I would argue that his preoccupation with an authentic Hindu tradition or golden age which he sharply set off against a dark age of popularized religion and social abuses stamped him as a figure in the camp of the Orientalist modernizers.[24]

As a leading pioneer of the reformation, his non-Westernizing sympathies were equally apparent in the way he adapted Christian Unitarianism to Indian circumstances. To be sure, Rammohun's *Precepts of Jesus* was so thoroughly Unitarian in a European sense, and so sophisticated in theological erudition and subtlety, that one could easily be misled about the author's identity. Indeed, one has only to compare the *Precepts* by Rammohun published in 1820 with a tract by Lant Carpenter that appeared at approximately the same time, entitled *An Examination of the Charges Made against Unitarians and Unitarianism*, to understand the remarkable ideological kinship between the Bengali intellectual and Western Unitarians.

M. M. Thomas, in his recent analysis of the debate between Rammohun and Marshman calls it "the first Christian intellectual encounter of a serious theological nature in modern India."[25] Thomas, who has written the best book to date on the impact of Christianity on the Indian renaissance, has unfortunately in this debate understressed the Unitarian-Trinitarian aspect and perhaps overstressed the nationalist polemic aspect whereby an Indian intellectual takes European Christianity to task. My own impression is that the *Precepts of Jesus* was largely an extension of the debate in the West between Unitarianism and orthodox Christianity. Ram-

mohun's primary concern was to maintain the unity of God against all the false ideas and techniques devised by man to adulterate the purity of monotheistic faith. Thus, he repudiated all myths, mysteries, miracles, and images, which made a mockery of the unity of the Godhead. Rammohun here resembled the familiar liberal and rationalist Unitarian upholding the historic, ethical Christ, while rejecting vicarious atonement, the Trinity, and other "fabricated fables."[26] Rammohun's view that justice and mercy were more acceptable to God than sacrifice was equally Unitarian in spirit, as was his scriptural reliance on the "Synoptic Gospels with the emphasis on Jesus' teachings rather than the Gospel of St. John with its meditation of Jesus."[27]

Joshua Marshman's argument was entirely a defense of orthodox Trinitarian Christianity, and the crux of his defense, as Thomas has ably shown, was "to criticize Rammohun for teaching doctrines opposed to those held by the mass of real Christians of any age."[28] The rational, critical approach to Scripture was, in terms of a wider appeal, actually a chief weakness not only in Rammohun but in Unitarians generally. The Unitarian attack on orthodoxy was, in fact, an attack on the religion of the masses, where the unity of God was most grossly humiliated and violated. Unitarianism provided Rammohun and his successors with a thinking man's reformation, and the attempt to transmit the new religion to the unintellectual, uncritical masses left the Bengali reformers in a great dilemma.

Shortly after the debate, Rammohun and a former Baptist named William Adam formed the Calcutta Unitarian Committee. By 1823, Adam, Rammohun, and Dwarkanath Tagore seem also to have established a Unitarian Press in north Calcutta.[29] In that same year, Rammohun, under the pseudonym of Ram Doss, conducted another debate in the local press with an orthodox Christian physician named Tytler. Remarks by Tytler make it evident that Rammohun was considered by Europeans to have become a Unitarian—a term of disrepute to the orthodox. But the debate was no mere theological conflict, as in the case of Marshman. Faced with narrow, bigoted attacks on Hinduism in particular and Asians in general by a member of the ruling foreign elite, Rammohun was forced into a defensively nationalist position. But because Rammohun was a modernizer and not a revivalist, he faced his opponent as an Orientalist would a Westernizer.

This is well elucidated in Rammohun's "Reply to Certain Queries Directed against the Vedanta," printed in the *Brahmmunical Maga-*

zine on November 15, 1823. Dr. Tytler had accused Rammohun of reading into the Vedanta the sublime message of Christ. Since only the Christian Scriptures were revealed, Rammohun's interpretation was a fraud. In reply, Rammohun, with his customary analytical approach, proceeded to prove that the message of the Vedanta not only contained the unity of God, but did so in a way superior to the Judeo-Christian Bible. Unlike the Bible, the Vedanta did not attempt to categorize the attributes of the Almighty—a gesture that Rammohun found both anthropomorphic and futile. That Rammohun was now using Unitarianism in an Indian way was evidenced by his attack on the Trinity. He argued that whereas Christianity required a blood sacrifice to expiate the sins of man, the Vedanta taught that the "only means of attaining victory over sin is sincere repentence and solemn meditation." In the following quotation, it is clear that the Bengali reformer had made a kind of cultural transference from the Synoptic Gospels to Sankaracharya: "The sin which mankind contracts against God by the practice of wickedness is believed by us to be expiated by these penances, and not as supposed by the Querist, by the blood of a son of man or son of God, who never participated in our transgressions."

Equally interesting was Rammohun's use of the comparative religious approach, which constituted another marked difference between himself and his Western Unitarian counterparts. Channing and Tuckerman maneuvered primarily in one religious tradition and aimed to reform it, whereas Rammohun was challenged by the need to reconcile at least two major faiths. In the process Rammohun was compelled to think comparatively, with the result that his vision sharpened in a refreshingly expansive manner, leaving a narrow sectarian view of the universe behind forever. He could, for example, in the same reply to Tytler, rebuff his opponent for attacking popular Hinduism by pointing to the comparable malpractices in popular Christianity: "A Hindoo would also be justified in taking a standard of Christianity the system of religion which almost universally prevailed in Europe previous to the fifteenth century . . . and which is still followed by the majority of Christians with all its idols, crucifixes, saints, miracles, pecuniary absolutions from sin, trinity, transubstantiation, relics, holy water, and other idolatrous machinery." Rammohun could argue that as the authentic Christian tradition was submerged and corrupted, so the authentic Hindu tradition was likewise submerged and corrupted. He willingly admitted that "our holy Vedanta and our ancient religion has been disregarded by the generality of moderns."[30] This ap-

proach, infused with a modernist outlook, placed the Hindu reformation movement on an Orientalist foundation. Indigenous traditions could be defended at the same time as they were modified according to progressive values in contemporary Western societies. Though the foundation was a precarious one, it saved the Hindu reformation repeatedly from the snare of militant nationalism.

It is in this context that we ought to assess the social aspect of the Hindu reformation. There is little doubt that Rammohun was as much inspired by the social gospel of Unitarianism as he was by its rational religion. But it is well to be reminded of the differences between historical circumstances in Bengal and in the West. We have already noted that Unitarians in England were among the first to point an accusing finger at nominal Christians for ignoring the plight of the proletariat in the new urban industrial centers. But in India in the early nineteenth century, there was no fundamental change in technology, no Industrial Revolution, no industrial urban centers, and no industrial proletariat. Moreover, foreign rule in India placed social reform in the context of cultural encounter. The question of social reform, therefore, was less the need to cope with the consequences of a changing social, economic, and political order as it was a question of British attitudes to Indian culture and Indian responses to those attitudes. Because of the profound influences of the Orientalist heritage, social reform entailed an internal revitalization aimed at bringing India up to the level of the other progressive nations of the world.

Thus, the inventive Rammohun Roy used the building blocks provided by Orientalist scholarship, and adapted Unitarian social reform to Bengali circumstances. In so doing, it is important to point out, he was no more traditionalist or revivalist than were Western Unitarians who referred back to the historic Christ of the ethical teachings to promote modernist ends. With a Puritan fervor quite possibly reinforced by his Islamic background, Rammohun attributed social evils in Hindu religion and society to the poisonous effect of "idolatrous notions" which, by the middle period of Indian history, had completely undermined the pure Upanishadic belief in the "unity of the Supreme Being as sole Ruler of the Universe."[31]

Of more interest, perhaps, in terms of social action is the way Rammohun altered the object of Unitarian compassion in the West to suit the special historical circumstances in Bengal. If Unitarians increasingly worked to alleviate the sufferings of the industrial proletariat, Rammohun chose the Bengali Hindu woman as his "pro-

letariat." With extremely important implications for his successors, he saw in her depressed condition the root cause of social immobility in India. The new social conscience and consciousness of Unitarianism was in Rammohun almost entirely directed to the miserable state of Hindu women. He found them uneducated and illiterate, deprived of property rights, married before puberty, imprisoned in purdah, and murdered at widowhood by a barbaric custom of immolation known as sati. One has only to read Rammohun's works on social reform to realize that most of it deals with one aspect or another of man's inhumanity to women in Bengal. The conclusion is that only by freeing women and by treating them as human beings could Indian society free itself from social stagnation.

By 1829, it appears that Rammohun had abandoned the Unitarian Committee and had helped to form a new kind of organization known as the Brahmo Sabha. The only relevant document that might have suggested what Rammohun intended to accomplish through the Sabha is the Trust Deed for the new "church," if one could call it that, signed by Rammohun and his friends on January 23, 1830.[32] Unfortunately, except for a few general universalist Unitarian principles contained in the document, it is impossible to say whether Rammohun hoped the Brahmo Sabha to be a domesticated form of the Unitarian church or a general meeting place for people of all faiths to congregate and pray. What makes it even more difficult to ascertain Rammohun's purpose is the fact that ten months after signing the deed, he left for England, never to return.

Between Rammohun's death in 1833 and the arrival in Calcutta of the American Unitarian missionary, C.H.A. Dall, in 1855, Western Unitarianism seems to have had no appreciable effect on the modernizing Bengali intelligentsia. In fact, until the 1840s the movement advanced little, ideologically or institutionally. Ram Chandra Vidyabagish was the intellectual leader or spiritual preceptor of the Brahmo Sabha during that decade.[33] Vidyabagish, however, extremely limited in his knowledge and appreciation of Western Unitarianism, could not continue the momentous work started by Rammohun, and for all practical purposes the Sabha became just another Hindu sect with a Vedantic bias.

In 1843, Debendranath Tagore changed the name of the Brahmo Sabha to Brahmo Samaj (society) and revitalized the movement considerably, but there is no evidence that he was motivated in doing so by Unitarian considerations. We do know that when

Charles Dall arrived in Calcutta to start his mission in November 1855, he immediately established contact with Debendranath and other Brahmos.[34] Apparently, Debendranath's "suspicion of foreigners" alienated Dall, who was not made to feel welcome at Brahmo meetings and functions, and Dall later accused Tagore of denying "free speech and discussion" at Brahmo meetings.[35]

On the other hand, Dall seems to have developed a long and enduring relationship with Debendranath's arch critic and rival, Keshub Chandra Sen. We can only speculate how much influence the Reverend Dall had on Keshub and his followers, who broke with the Adi (original) Brahmo Samaj in 1866 to form an association of their own. Dall had come to Calcutta believing that Rammohun Roy, author of the *Precepts of Jesus*, had been a Unitarian Christian like himself. Dall seemed convinced that Keshub's new Brahmo association would ultimately move in the same direction, and that Keshub was Rammohun's true successor. Not only had he come to look upon Keshub as his own son, but after years of "cheering him, instructing him and helping him," Keshub's theism in its last "distillation," was the "theism of Jesus."[36] Keshub so admired Dall that he welcomed the American missionary into the Brahmo Samaj as its only non-Indian member, allowed him to sign the Brahmo covenant, and gave him every opportunity to spread Unitarian literature and ideas among Brahmos in Bengal and elsewhere.[37] Through Dall's efforts, thousands of copies of the complete works of Channing, Emerson, and Parker were circulated among Brahmos.[38]

We can surmise that Dall influenced Keshub about the validity of the Unitarian social gospel as well, and his activism was also respected by the more radical wing of the Calcutta intelligentsia. He started schools for boys in Calcutta, supported female education and emancipation generally, and helped the urban poor in various ways.[39] In this context, of some consequence was the visit to Calcutta by Lant Carpenter's daughter, Mary, in 1866, to promote the Unitarian social gospel in India. She visited Vidyasagar and many of the younger Brahmo radicals. Her warmest admirer and friend was Monomohun Ghose, the "Bengali Unitarian," while her first visitor upon arriving in Calcutta was Keshub Sen, whom she viewed at the time as the truest follower of her father's friend, Rammohun Roy.[40]

Between 1866 and 1872, Keshub Sen was deeply enthusiastic about the Unitarian social gospel, which he observed first hand during a trip to Great Britain in 1870. He seemed convinced that

British reform efforts could be duplicated in India. Thus, under his direction the Indian Reform Association was established in November 1870 to promote "the social and moral reformation of the Natives of India." To accomplish this end, "it is proposed to avoid as far as possible mere theories and speculation," and to aim "chiefly at action."[41] Five sections of the association were set up: charity, temperance, women's improvement, mass education, and cheap literature.

For charity Keshub set up a social service committee that stood ready to help the distressed during times of natural catastrophe. Predating the Ramakrishna mission by at least two decades, Keshub sent volunteers to Behala in 1871 to help fight the crippling effects of a malaria epidemic.[42]

Keshub placed temperance high among his social reforms, and joined the Temperance Society in its effort to reduce the import of whiskey from England and to penalize its distributors in India; in the West, reformers now looked upon extreme alcohol consumption as a root cause of poverty. The magnitude of the problem, especially among the industrial proletariat, was immense. At the time Keshub visited London, it was reported that if

> London's 100,000 pubs were laid end to end, they would have stretched a full thirty miles. In East London alone, . . . every fifth shop was a gin shop; most kept special steps to help even tiny mites reach the counter. The pubs featured penny glasses of gin for children; too often child alcoholics needed the stomach pump. Children less than five years old knew the raging agonies of delirium tremens or died from cirrhosis of the liver . . . all the products of a £100 million a year trade.[43]

In Bengal it was the Western-educated who appear to have suffered most from excessive drinking habits and the subsequent physiological, psychological, and sociological effects. A general perusal of biographical sources conveys the impression that almost every Calcutta elite family had cases of young men who died directly from the disease, or who committed suicide as a result.[44] Peary Charan Sarkar, who started the Temperance Society in Calcutta, saw his own brother die of the disease. Keshub organized Bands of Hope among the young all over Bengal to prevent the habit from materializing among the college students who, from Rajnarian's time, imbibed liquor as a badge of Western civilization.

To improve the condition of women, Keshub sought to "promote the intellectual, moral, and social development by means of

girls' schools, adult schools, and moral schools; the publication of books and periodicals; and communicational meetings."[45] As shown previously, this was considered by Rammohun Roy the crucial area of reform.

It was in the fields of mass education and cheap literature that Keshub made his most radical departures as a social reformer. For the first time, a Bengali reformer acknowledged in a practical program that the peasants and workers must be reached for a full-scale improvement of Indian society. Whether, as some Indian Marxists have suggested, Keshub met Karl Marx in Europe is irrelevant, since the program he established was influenced more by the Salvation Army and Unitarians than by socialist groups. Nevertheless, Keshub was a pioneer in his attempt to shift, at least partially, the target of social reform in Bengal away from the underprivileged female to the underprivileged masses.

He set up an industrial arts school in Calcutta to teach laborers such crafts as tailoring, clock repair, printing, lithography, and engraving.[46] He established a night school, the first of its kind among Brahmo Samajes in South Asia. Perhaps most important in the long run was Keshub's achievement in awakening mass consciousness by printing a paper known as *Sulabh Samachar*, which was designed not for the bhadralok or scholars, but for "the people who do not have much time, but must labor day and night. We want to offer them news of their country, of the world, instruct them in morality, entertain them with stories, inform them of their history, inspire them with the tales of great men, and teach them about the differences between superstition and science."[47]

Salvation through class struggle was not the message of *Sulabh Samachar* for the working man. Rather, as with most liberal publications of the nineteenth century, hope for the poor lay in cultivation of moral discipline, self-reliance, and a good basic education. The function of the newspaper was clearly to convey current events, classroom knowledge, and moral instruction in simple, lucid Bengali prose to those who could afford a single pice per issue. And far more than any other paper of the period, it was immensely popular. After fourteen months of publication from its first appearance on November 15, 1870, it had sold 281,149 copies. Even as late as 1879, one year after the split of Keshub's Samaj, the *Sulabh Samachar* still sold 190,000 copies.[48]

On the spiritual side of Unitarianism, Dall's most important conquest in the Keshubite organization was Protap Chandra Majumdar. Majumdar and Dall were for years Brahmo missionaries to

non-Bengali Indian urban elites on the subcontinent. Dall, in fact, saw himself as duel emissary of the American Unitarian Church and of Keshub's Brahmo Samaj of India. In South India, Majumdar propagated the faith in Madras, while Dall lectured in Bangalore. Majumdar's career as a dedicated missionary may well have been inspired by Dall's example. Dall urged Brahmos to preach the new rational religion with "apostolic faith, self-denial and trust."[49] Dall's sermons and lectures, which aimed at wedding Christian Unitarianism with Indian Brahmoism, proved remarkably similar to Majumdar's own.[50] Though, for obvious reasons, Protap Chandra never referred to Christ in his mission tours, it was the image of the ethical Jesus, which Rammohun Roy had beautifully articulated and which Dall stressed in his lectures, that appealed to him more and more in his later years.[51] The critical issue on which Majumdar ultimately supported Dall as against most other Brahmos, including Keshub, was whether Christ was indeed the last word among universal reformers. Most Brahmos argued that he was one among equals, like Buddha, Confucius, and Mohammed, but Majumdar favored the idea that all reformers were most perfectly personified in Christ.

In 1874, Majumdar's passion for extended mission tours took him to England and America for the first time. Among Westerners, Protap Chandra spoke freely in support of Dall's Christian Unitarianism. No Brahmo up to his time, and certainly no Bengali before Vivekananda, spoke so often to so many different kinds of people and with such effectiveness as did Majumdar. Under trying travel conditions, and with short intervals of rest between talks, Majumdar later recalled, he gave seventy speeches in three months, in fifty Unitarian chapels to a total audience of forty thousand people.[52]

By 1882, Protap Chandra had dedicated a book to Rammohun Roy as a pioneer of Christian Unitarianism, "who lighted the holy lamp of eclectic theism."[53] The title was *Faith and Progress of the Brahmo Samaj*, and the book established strong parallels between Rammohun's spiritual universalism and Keshub's. Majumdar found no need of reconciling the ethical Christ of the Unitarians with eclectic theism, a position identical to Rammohun's. And like Rammohun, Majumdar believed that the challenge came not from Unitarians but from Trinitarian Christians.

In 1883, Protap Majumdar published the *Oriental Christ*, probably his most important book, and among Unitarians in America assuredly his most popular.[54] The idea that motivated him to compose the work is contained in his letters to Max Müller. Written at

the same time as the book, these letters demonstrate his sympathy to Keshub's task of building a church around a "science of comparative theology." He told Müller that "what you are doing as a philosopher and as a philologist we are trying to do as men of devotion and faith." Were not Brahmos waging the "same war against exclusiveness and bigotry"? In defense of the comparative method, he concluded that "the Fatherhood of God is a meaningless abstraction unless the unity of truth in all lands and nations is admitted. And the brotherhood of man is impossible if there is no recognition of the services which the great peoples of earth have rendered unto each other."[55]

There was at least one crucial difference, however, between Keshub's universal ideal as expressed in the New Dispensation and P. C. Majumdar's universal ideal as expressed in the *Oriental Christ*. Superficially, the *Oriental Christ* may be viewed as a nationalist polemic, much as Keshub's famous lecture of 1866 on "Christ, Asia, and Europe." On this level, the book is an effective attack on the Eurocentric notion of Jesus, which according to Majumdar has been taken "completely out of historical and cultural context." Like Rammohun Roy, Majumdar argued that Christ was an "Oriental," and it was his task to make the prophet's image conform as much to the "original" authentic atmosphere and circumstances as was possible. The result is to offer the objective reader the true Oriental Christ as opposed to the "erroneous European conception of Christ."

But a closer analysis of the book reveals it as an enriched conception of the Unitarian Christ, which was started early in the century by Rammohun Roy in his *Precepts of Jesus*. It is no accident that the image of Majumdar's Oriental Christ was similar to the image of the Unitarian Christ—both devoid of superstition, miracle, and mystery. Dall's influence is clear enough in Majumdar's Christian Unitarian conception of the prophet of Judea embodying the most perfect form of cosmopolitan religion. Unlike Keshub, Majumdar placed Christ above all other reformers because "His doctrines are the simple utterances about a fatherhood which embraces all the children of men, and a brotherhood which makes all the races of the world one great family."[56]

It is interesting that the Unitarian view of a century ago on Christ's role among the ethical and religious reformers, which Majumdar boldly affirmed, has recently been rediscovered and freshly appreciated by Indian Trinitarian Christians. M. M. Thomas, for one, has perceptively isolated this belief as constitut-

ing the real issue dividing Keshub Sen from Protap Majumdar during the period of inaugurating the New Dispensation Church. According to Thomas, Majumdar came finally to see prophets other than Christ as "isolated principles of God's nature" limited by the times and cultures they lived in. Thus, "Socrates is for the Greeks, Moses is for the Hebrews, Confucius for the Chinese, Krishna for the Hindus." But there is a need for a "central figure, a universal model, one who includes in himself, all these various embodiments of God's self-manifestations." Majumdar assigned to Christ this function: "He is the type of all Humanity. Humanity broken up before and after is bound up in him, so that he is the human centre and bond of union in the religious organizations of mankind."[57]

In September 1893, the American Unitarians sponsored a Parliament of Religions in Chicago. "For the first time in history," said one of their later reports, "the leading representatives of the great Historic Religions of the World were brought together." It was an important event, the conveners believed, "for it would promote and deepen the spirit of . . . brotherhood among the religious representatives of diverse faiths." It would help ascertain what religions "held and taught in common" and the "important distinctive truths taught by each religion."[58]

On the Advisory Council and Selection Committee of the Parliament of Religions was Protap Chandra Majumdar, whose trip to Chicago was his second visit to the United States. The Unitarians thought so well of Majumdar that after the Parliament closed, they invited him to deliver the prestigious Lowell lectures in Boston. They evidently saw in this elegantly dressed and highly Westernized Bengali Brahmo their own perfect counterpart in Hindu society.

Protap Chandra's own speech to the Parliament, "The World's Religious Debt to Asia," was an extremely able one emphasizing the need to understand and accept equally the varying spiritual impulses and higher moral purpose in all the major religions of all the great traditions throughout the world. No doubt appealing to the liberal theologians present at the august gathering was Majumdar's conviction that social progress must be fulfilled in the name of religion. "Nature is spiritual still," he said, "but man has become material; Asia calls upon the world to once more enthrone God in his creation."

It was an intellectual's lecture: formal in structure, precise in vocabulary, and deliberately elevated in tone and style to attract the cultivated mind. His easy comparative approach to "Asian religious

principles," which was totally antinationalist in sentiment, was characteristic of the universalist-inspired Brahmos. To be sure, he used expressions such as "the Asian Religion" and the "genius of Asiatic spirituality," while equating Asian spirituality with the model of the Hindu great tradition.[59] But in the absence of cultural defiance, aggressiveness, and apology, one can only conclude that his phraseology was intended more as terms to fit a conceptual scheme than as nationalist propaganda. Though it is difficult today to assess the overall impression made by Majumdar on the Americans at the meetings, we do have one comment by a prominent Unitarian, who said that Majumdar's was the best talk given at the Parliament. The reason was that he knew "all religious systems" and is the "prophet of the new dispensation of faith, hope, and love—the apostle of the Oriental Christ."[60]

It was Majumdar's notion of an Oriental Christ rather than his broad universalist leanings that explains his popularity among American Unitarians during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. This is evident in letters to the Bengali from American well-wishers.[61] In a letter of December 30, 1899, the Unitarian president of Harvard University, Samuel A. Eliot, officially offered to pay Majumdar's way to Boston (his fourth and final visit to the United States) to attend the seventy-fifth anniversary of the American Unitarian Association.[62]

On the night of December 5, 1893, Majumdar had given his last talk to Unitarians at the Arlington Street Church in Boston. Addressing the congregation as friends, he emotionally proposed taking them all back with him to Calcutta. "Your Emerson is there," he said, "your Theodore Parker is there and have done for the Brahmo Samaj greater good than you know." "And some of our great men are here too," he continued, "Rammohun Roy and Keshub Sen." On Keshub, he commented that: "If today, Keshub Chandra Sen had been living, he would have stood here before you a glorious figure, a transcendent spirit, a true child of God, a true benefactor of his race. It seems to me that the great men of your land and the illustrious departed of my land are here from the bosom of God, calling us all into greater friendship, into greater sympathy, into greater identity, than there ever has been yet."[63] However maudlin these sentiments may appear today, they were important in generating affection for Majumdar from Boston Unitarians, whose warm feeling won for the Bengali Brahmo a grant of $1,000 a year, which was paid to him annually until his death in May 1905.

Unitarian American friends occasionally visited Calcutta, as in December 1896, when Dr. John Henry Barrows, the prime mover behind the Parliament of Religions, came to India as a Unitarian representative to the Brahmo Samaj. Majumdar not only welcomed him but arranged at his Peace Cottage one of the largest receptions ever given by a Brahmo in Calcutta. This event rekindled memories of the now vacant Lilly Cottage next door, where two decades earlier Keshub had held receptions and soirees that he and Reverend Dall had attended regularly.

In 1900, Protap Chandra found himself in America for the third time. In his diary entry of May 23, he referred enthusiastically to the beginnings of a new era in the history of comparative religion. During that very day in Boston, there was founded the "International Council of Unitarian and other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers." Majumdar was invited to its first congress, held in Amsterdam in 1903, where he read a paper on "What Is Lacking in Liberal Religion?"[64]

During his last years in Calcutta, Majumdar openly expressed his predilections for Christianity, but he consistently refused to join any established Christian sect, carefully preserving his integrity as a Brahmo with a Unitarian conception of Christ's mission and character. In 1899, his friend Max Müller had urged him to declare himself a Christian because Brahmos like himself were so indebted spiritually to Jesus. Majumdar replied: "that we are disciples of Christ but we shall not call ourselves Christians because in so doing we shall add another petty sect to the innumerable petty sects into which Christians had divided themselves."[65]

Nevertheless, in the later years Majumdar and his coterie had become Christian in all but name. In 1901, Majumdar's Brahmos observed Good Friday. In 1903, in Bankipur, Bihar, Protap celebrated "Christmas Utsab," which featured two days of "services, sermons and readings on the personal experiences of Jesus." Majumdar's final public lecture was on the "Meaning and Message of Good Friday." It contained a defense of the celebration and another eloquent testimony to "Jesus Christ who was no mere prophet among prophets but was the universal man, the universal prophet."[66]

In 1873, it appeared to Trinitarian missionaries that Dall's influence on Keshub Sen was so profound that the Brahmo Samaj of India had become Unitarian in all but name. Members were exposed to Unitarian pamphlet literature, which was being translated into Bengali. At their Allahabad conference in 1873, missionaries

reported that Brahmos had decided in favor of Unitarianism. The Reverend Jardine revealed to his colleagues that Dall was an active member of the Brahmo Samaj and intimated that the Samaj had become a virtual branch of the American Unitarian Association by means of financial and moral support.[67] Curiously enough, Jardine left out of his report the fact that in February 1873, the Brahmos had accepted Dall's proposal to establish a theological school in Calcutta along Unitarian lines. Such a school would "improve the powers of logic and clear thinking," Dall had argued in a neutral vein, without reference to the issue of Christ's status among prophets.[68]

By 1875, however, the Christian missionaries were aware of a profound change in Keshub, whom the Reverend Dyson viewed as succumbing to an "exorbitant oriental imagination." According to him, Keshub had invented an "empty synthesis of religious thought that would fail because it failed to satisfy the deep and powerful cravings of the human heart."[69]

Most of the Christians believed that beneath the rational facade of Keshub's experiment was emotionalism, idolatry, and mysticism. Even worse to the missionaries was the apparent neglect of ethics in Keshub's recent religious development. In the 1878 intelligence report from Calcutta to the Church Mission Office in London, there is an interesting reference along these lines:

> In recent years a marked growth of devotional fervor, solitary contemplation, ascetic austerities, and sweetness of prayer is evident among the more advanced Brahmos. But unfortunately there is no corresponding elevation of moral character. [Amid] the development of the softer emotions, the sterner virtues seem to have been neglected, such as frankness, justice, forgiveness, veracity, justice and self-surrender. On the other hand, there has been an increase of mutual jealousy, pride, vanity and selfishness among even the best members.[70]

Keshub added fuel to the fire of his critics' wrath by defending his new path with customary brilliance, sophistication, and wit. In March 1877, for instance, his lecture at the Town Hall, Calcutta, which he entitled, "Philosophy and Madness in Religion," seemed to anger not merely Westerners (including Charles Dall) but Bengali Westernizers, as well. The most significant aspect of the lecture was the total absence of any faith in social improvement or the idea of progress. What Keshub argued throughout was contained in the following dichotomy between two prevailing forms of madness:

"The men of the world are mad for riches, outward refinement and the pleasures of the senses. For material wealth and natural prosperity, for selfish enjoyments and selfish honors they are running mad. In matter and self they are wholely immersed. The question naturally suggests itself—why should not men be equally mad for God?"[71]

In 1877, Keshub decided to break publically with Dall and to disavow Christian Unitarianism. In an editorial of the *Indian Mirror*, dated April 8, 1877, presumably written by Keshub's brother Krishna Behari Sen, Dall was attacked for misrepresenting himself as a Brahmo. "Mr. Dall is accustomed to call himself a Brahmo," wrote Krishna Behari, "when he has to deal with Brahmos," and a Christian missionary when "he is in the company of Christians." He is "always pleased to combine the two functions in his person." The editor then proceeded to give public notice of the split: "We have never been able to persuade Mr. Dall that he cannot be a Brahmo and a Christian at the same time, and that his views of Christ, Christianity, and the Christian Church, are very different from what the Brahmo Samaj holds. . . . All Brahmos in whatever Presidency, ought to know that Mr. Dall is a Unitarian Christian mis sionary, pure and simple, and we dispute his right to preach Christianity under the cover of the Brahmo name."[72] Evidently, it was Dall's earlier criticism of Keshub as a would-be modernizer turning his back on social reform that sparked the angry outburst by Krishna Behari Sen. On January 22 of that year, Keshub had delivered a public lecture on "The Disease and the Remedy," in which he placed great emphasis on "the terrible curse . . . and loathsome disease of sin that has it roots in the depths of man's being." We have been "only cutting off branches of the tree," said Keshub, "while the root of corruption lies intact below."[73]

In Dall's eyes, Keshub was backsliding into a form of Calvinism. He singled out the jargon of the lecture, which included expressions such as "natural depravity," "sinful human nature," and even "original sin." These were all false issues to the ardent theistic reformer, who had little sympathy with Keshub's diagnosis for the disease of sin afflicting mankind and the spiritual therapy recommended.[74] Keshub had advocated moral discipline, meditation, asceticism—all leading to the birth of a new type of spiritual man who presents himself "before the world as a child." This notion of Keshub's, which would evolve in years to come as an ingredient of the New Dispensation, aroused the wrath of Dall. Keshub's exact words enunciating the doctrine were: "He has become an altered

man. Behold this transformation of age into spiritual childhood. The deceit of the world, the pride of the age is dissolved into thin air, and innocence, joy and child-like simplicity come pouring into the heart of this infant from Heaven."[75]

Dall was convinced that Keshub had surrendered his modernism and was drifting back to a nonprogressive, asocial preoccupation with personal spiritual realization. He warned Keshub not to cut himself off from "the world's progress" and "be run down and run over." To be sure, the "past has good in it," but "mind you don't lose sight of the fact that the future has good in it." "Keshub Babu," continued Dall, "eloquently defended the conservative side of theistic life," but on the "worship of work and progress," he said nothing of "positive value." Is sin the only disease? There are other diseases that require different remedies, "as in the case of a mother in poverty with a large family of children taking for herself time and attention that belong to her family. My work for years as a minister to the poor clearly showed me that since a mother can have contemplation only on her pillow, with her little ones sleeping around her on her bosom, so we pray and think of the Lord only in society or while at work. Retirement for solitary contemplation is not her 'remedy.' "[76]

The full debate need not concern us here, since the only real issue was, from Dall's point of view, between the religion of individual salvation and the social gospel of Unitarianism. The rupture between them, therefore, went well beyond the issue of Christ as chief among prophets, to a recognition of fundamental differences that led to a parting of the ways. By 1877, to Dall, Keshub appeared to have put all his eggs in the basket of the sacred against the profane, of faith against reason, and of individual salvation above social improvement.

The spiritual leader of the revolt against Keshub Sen in 1878 was Sivanath Sastri, who possessed a remarkably gifted intellect. Sastri was a learned scholar and prolific writer of fiction and nonfiction. In the annals of nineteenth-century Brahmo history, there is not another more dedicated to fundamental Brahmo principles sustained over three generations than Sastri. He considered Brahmoism from Rammohun's time to his own a rational this-worldly faith, humanitarian in sympathy, and humanist in the way religious belief was reconciled with the belief in the idea of progress. In short, the Unitarian social gospel that Keshub abandoned in the 1870s Sastri continued to defend and develop as an essential ingredient of his own Brahmo ideology.

Sastri represented a generation of Brahmos profoundly influenced by British and American Unitarianism. But is was not so much the Jesus-centered Unitarian gospel, with its stress on the ethical and historic Christ that moved Sastri and his friends, as it was the social reformist programs of Unitarianism, which championed the oppressed and provided material means to alleviate their poverty and degradation. This is the line that separates Sastri and the Sadharans from both Rammohun Roy and his *Precepts of Jesus* and Protap Majumdar and his *Oriental Christ*, as well as from Keshub Sen himself, who never ceased to admire the exalted image of Christ as prophet.

During the 1870s, Sivanath moved from liberalism to radicalism in his social and political views. From the start, he affiliated himself with the progressive wing of the Keshubite movement, which included Durga Mohun Das, Ananda Mohun Bose, Monomohun Ghose, Shib Chandra Deb, Umesh Chandra Dutt, Sasipada Bannerji, and others. They were mostly Western-educated, some actually having lived and studied in England; they were all fairly well placed professionally in positions where contact with the British in the English language was common; and they had strong ties with foreign Unitarians (see Table 1).

Sastri's Brahmo career and identity were from the early 1870s conducted on two levels. Keshub gave young progressives such as Sastri a sense of identity through a new community and even a home, the Bharat Ashram, where Sivanath lived. But on a different, more intimate level, Sastri's true sense of belonging was invariably with the smaller group or faction of progressives. These Brahmo progressives were held together not by caste, or locality, or Hindu religious background, or even by being of the same generation. Their common denominator was the ideology of nineteenth-century liberal religion transmitted, oddly enough, through the works of Theodore Parker. It was the discovery of Parker by Brahmos—his collected works in Bengali translation in the 1860s—which provided them with a vital and powerful bond of common values and ideals. What was the image of Parker that so moved the progressive Brahmos? Theodore Parker had felt the sudden influence of Emerson in 1840, turned to socially activist Unitarianism in the 1840s, and became its most outspoken and dynamic leader.[77] It was his combination of a superb oratorical style and political reformism in the name of Jesus that endeared him to religious progressives the world over.

Not only Bengali Brahmos but Unitarian progressives in England felt inspired by Parker's tracts, sermons, and essays. There

TABLE 1

Principal Members of the Progressive Faction of the Brahmo Samaj Who Were Founders of the Sadharan Samaj

Name	*Birth, birthplace*	*Caste*	*Religious orientation*	*Profession, occupation*	*First exposure to Brahmoism or Unitarianism*
Svanath Sastri	1847, 24 Pargannas	Brahman	Sakto	Preceptor, Sanskrit professor	Liberal pundit. Family knew Tagore. Knew writings of Theodore Parker.
Sib. C. Deb	1811, Calcutta suburb	Kayastha	Sakto	Civil servant	Exposed to Parker's writings in 1850s. Influenced by A. K. Dutt.
Monomohun Ghose	1844, Vikrampur, Bangladesh	Kayastha	Unknown	Barrister	Met Keshub Sen at Krishnagar College; met Mary Carpenter in England.
Durga M. Das	Vikrampur, Bangladesh	Kayastha	Sakto	Barrister	To avert conversion to Christianity, brother recommends works of Parker.
Dwarkanath Ganguli	1844, Vikrampur, Bangladesh	Brahman	Sakto	Journalist, educator	First exposed to Brahmoism in Calcutta. Durga M. Das earliest *pati*.
Umesh C. Dutt	1840, 24 Pargannas	Kayastha	Unknown	Educator	At school, exposed to writings of Rajnarian Bose. Follower of Parker.
Ananda M. Bose	1847, Myminsingh, Bangladesh	Kayastha	Sakto	Barrister	Influenced by Bhagaban C. Bose, future father-in-law, while at Mym. High School. Unitarian exposure in England.
Nagendranath Chatterji	1843, Barisal, Bangladesh	Brahman	Sakto	Missionary	Father knew Deb. Tagore. Wrote biography of Theodore Parker in Bengali.

SOURCE: Compiled from biographical and autobiographical material in contemporary books tracts, newspapers, and periodicals.

was no other minister of any church in the world at that time as actively committed to the equality of all men, to women's rights, and to the idea of man's perfectability.[78] His candor amazed and angered the English when, in 1849 during a trip to Great Britain,

he criticized their government for "neglect of the common people's education." He openly attacked aristocratic privilege in British society, including the almost sacred notion of the "Gentleman as the type of the State." In Britain, unlike the United States, said he, "all effort is directed to producing the Gentleman whereas the people require education enough to become the servants of the Gentleman." In the following passage, one of hundreds like it, the voice of the righteously indignant reformer carried as far as Bengal: "The Parliament which voted £100,000 of the nation's money for the Queen's horses and hounds, had but £30,000 to spare for the education of her people. . . . You wonder at the Colleges and Collegiate churches of Oxford and Cambridge, at the magnificence of public edifices—the House of Parliament, the Bank, the palaces of royal and noble men, the splendor of the churches—but you ask, where are the school houses for the people?"[79]

In 1858 during a famous sermon against the wave of fundamental revivalism sweeping America, Parker blasted the movement for "being opposed to social reform." He had been to their prayer meetings, but where in their prayers had he heard a single reference to temperance, to education, to the emancipation of slaves, or to the elevation of women? Said he: "I do not hear a prayer for honesty, for industry, for brotherly love, any prayers against envy, malice, bigotry. . . . The Revival may spread all over the land. It will make church members—not good husbands, wives. . . . It will not oppose the rum trade, nor the trade in coolies, nor the trade in African or American slaves."[80]

One link in the chain of humanitarian concern from Parker in America to Sivanath Sastri in Bengal was the famed Englishwoman, Mary Carpenter. No Unitarian in England, male or female, defended Parker's social gospel with more ardor than she did. In a letter to Miss Carpenter in 1859 shortly before his death, Parker expressed profound admiration for Unitarian social improvement schemes in Bristol. He, she, and her father shared a common liberal Unitarian faith. "Many things are called Christianity," he wrote, "sometimes it means burning men alive; in half the U.S.A. it means kidnapping, enslaving men and women." But there was another kind of Christianity, Parker went on, "which your admirable father loved and thought and lived. . . . Piety, Morality, Love to God, Love to Man." He was proud of Mary Carpenter because she had carried on her father's work. "It is this which I honor and love in you," he wrote, "especially as it takes the form of humanity and loves the Unlovely." Both Parker and Carpenter shared

the belief that "the greatest heroism of our day spends itself in lanes and alleys, in the haunts of poverty and crime seeking to bless such as the institution of the age can only curse. If Jesus of Nazareth were to come back and be the Jesus of London, I think I know what work he would set about. He would be a new Revolution of Institutions, applying his universal justice to the causes of the ill. . . . You are doing this work—the work of humanity."[81]

Probably the earliest recorded evidence of Parker's influence in Bengal can be found in a letter written to the American Unitarian by the Brahmo Rakhal Das Haldar, dated October 6, 1856.[82] The letter suggests that the Brahmo defense of intuition against revealed scriptural sources, an important theological issue in the 1850s, was in part derived from Parker's influence. The letter also intimates that little if any direct communication had taken place between Bengali Brahmos and American Unitarians. Parker expressed surprise that Asians were so familiar with works by him and other American Unitarians, and he promised to arrange for more of his volumes to be sent to Calcutta.

In 1858, Keshub Sen used Parker and Emerson as the basis of his own sermons.[83] Sivanath Sastri has also written that Parker was a very important influence on the younger Keshub.[84] In his autobiography, the East Bengali Keshubite Banga Chandra Roy reported that by 1863 Parker was being read widely among the Western-educated Brahmos of Dacca,[85] who also read English Unitarians such as Cobbe and Martineau.

One of the more interesting cases of Parker's influence in East Bengal was that of Durga Mohun Das of Barisal. In the early 1860s, Das was a student at Presidency College, Calcutta, and under the influence of Professor E. B. Cowell he decided to convert to Trinitarian Christianity. His brother, a pleader, interceded before baptism, and sent Durga Mohun back to Barisal, urging him to read the complete works of Parker. The reading of Parker in 1864/65 not only turned Durga Mohun away from Christianity, but made him incline in favor of the Brahmo faith. Thus, when Bijoy Krishna came to Barisal in 1865 as Keshub's missionary to East Bengal, Das was already receptive to Brahmoism.[86]

Dwijidas Datta, a founder of the Sadharan Samaj and himself from Comilla, East Bengal, has written that by the mid-1860s, "the name of Theodore Parker was familiar to every Brahmo."[87] By the time Sivanath Sastri turned to Parker to resolve his feelings of remorse and guilt, Parker's works had evidently been translated into Bengali, and was circulating widely through town and country.

The very sermons by Parker that Sastri read had been translated by the Brahmo Girish Chandra Majumdar of Barisal in 1866. As these sermons dealt with social issues in a religious context, Bengalis were particularly receptive to them, as they were to Parker's equation of intimate love for God with love of all humanity.[88]

According to Sastri, so widespread was Parker's influence by the late 1860s that Debendranath Tagore feared a whole new generation would become "contaminated" by Parker's philosophy.[89] Bipin Chandra Pal has also placed emphasis on Parker's enormous impact on Brahmo progressives. What precisely was the nature of the impact? Pal wrote: "Sivanath Sastri and his generation imbibed the indomitable spirit of freedom, liberalism and the love of universal humanity from Theodore Parker. It was doubtful whether they were in the least inspired by Parker's theology."[90]

Thus, early in the 1870s a faction of social progressives had formed, within Keshub's larger Brahmo organization, a group held together ideologically by the Parker social gospel. In that year, Keshub favored the group, and when he returned from England he started the Indian Reform Association. There was little in his behavior to suggest that he would ultimately abandon the social gospel for comparative religion and the New Dispensation, turning then for support to the ascetic Brahmo faction. In the 1870s, Keshub's views coincided nicely with those of Sastri, Deb, Das, and other progressives.

In fact, just about the time Keshub announced formation of the Indian Reform Association, Sastri wrote an interesting tract articulating what he saw as the major principles of the Brahmo Samaj of India. He supported Keshub and the organization fully. His tract was a declaration of faith in the community of Brahmo brethren and sisters under Keshub's leadership, who were seeking to propagate the "progressive religion" of Brahmoism. Progressive religion was a cosmopolitan faith in the "whole human race," in the "growth and development of the human personality," and in social improvement through emancipation. The last item was, in light of subsequent events, most significant of all: "We look upon every form of denial of social and individual rights by individuals or classes, as impietous and reprehensible, and as such a proper field of increasing warfare for all true lovers of God."[91]

By 1872, however, the honeymoon between the progressives and Keshub seemed over. The one key issue that separated them, the most burning issue of the day, was female emancipation. Besides Parker, whose influence was less direct on this issue, the two British

Unitarian ladies—Mary Carpenter and Annette Akroyd—had a profound impact on Brahmo thinking in Calcutta.

Mary Carpenter, whom we have noted to have been a British follower of Theodore Parker, was born in 1807, the daughter of Rammohun Roy's Unitarian friend and associate, Lant Carpenter. Much of her mature life from 1831 on was spent as a leading social worker among the urban poor in England, as the economy industrialized. At first she helped the poverty-stricken people of Bristol, but later she extended her concern to the Oliver Twist variety of ragged youth among the industrial proletariat. As a champion of Parker's radical views on universal education, Carpenter was among the first social activists in Great Britian to provide reliable statistical information to Parliament on behalf of free compulsory education.[92]

One of Mary Carpenter's chief concerns was achieving equal rights for those of her own sex. In Victorian England, however advanced technologically and industrially, the majority of people still lived outside the pale of cultivated society as nonparticipants in modern civilization and as nonconsumers of its fruits and benefits. Numerically, most conspicious among the outsiders were the industrial proletariat and among these, women were least protected by the law or by political power. Lacking education or special training, and being barred from most respectable jobs before the invention of the typewriter, the Englishwoman without means in the job market had the choice of being exploited in factories, along with children, as part of the proletariat, or prostitution in order to survive. The Industrial Revolution in nineteenth-century England had not changed the traditionally callous disregard for women.

But on the more positive side, modernization also awakened an awareness of inhumanity among an increasing number of liberal-minded people in good families and in high positions. Their combined efforts and shocking disclosures led, for instance, to the first enactment of an Age of Consent Bill in 1885. The following facts, which the liberals brought to light to win support for the bill, demonstrate not only how deplorable the situation was but how pervasive the new humanitarian consciousness had become: "Girls over 13 lacked any legal protection whereas no policeman could enter a brothel to search for girls under 13. . . . Most of the girls were drugged . . . 8 million pounds a year traffic in selling young girls . . . ⅓ of the girls were seduced before 16. In London, there were 80,000 prostitutes. The right square mile round Charing Cross

harboured over 2,000 pimps. One in every 50 Englishwomen was a streetwalker . . . it cost 100 pounds to have a virgin seduced. . . ."[93]

Many of these women ended up in prison, where conditions were evidently so bad as to defy the imagination. Prison reform was in fact one of Mary Carpenter's concerns, and it was in the jails that she encountered the lower depths of female degradation and dedicated herself to rescuing and rehabilitating these women. Carpenter was also among the earliest reformers to bring documented evidence to parliament dramatizing the urgent need for prison improvement.[94] It is in this activist context that her trip to India in 1875 can be framed. She was simply extending her reformist activities on prisons and other humanitarian concerns to a wider area that included South Asia. The prisons she left behind her in England were bad enough, as was the fate of any Englishwoman unfortunate enough to be trapped behind those walls. Perhaps in India prisons were worse.

The disabilities of women were not limited to the poor. Even the well-known and well-respected Mary Carpenter was discriminated against professionally. In 1836, she wanted to give a paper at the British Scientific Association, which was to meet in her native city of Bristol on aspects of social welfare and sociology. The Association replied that they "did not permit ladies even to be present at the meetings of the sections." It was not until 1860 that she was permitted to give a paper at the yearly session.[95]

Unitarian ladies like Mary Carpenter and Frances P. Cobbe worked hard to improve the lot of women through education and legislation. It was the combined efforts of such women and the sympathy of liberal men that got parliament to pass a Married Women's Properties Act in 1858.[96] As educated persons, one of their primary objectives was to break the monopoly of men in institutions of higher learning that awarded degrees. Thus, it was no accident that the first modern college for women in England was the Bedford College of Manchester, conducted by Unitarians. Not until 1878 did Oxford establish a college for women, the first degree-awarding institution of its kind in the British Isles.[97] Indeed, the problem of extending equal rights to women was a world-wide phenomenon in the nineteenth century, and not restricted to traditional societies in Asia. During Mary Carpenter's first two trips to India, she met with Brahmos and urged them to help extend American and English efforts at women's emancipation to India.

Among her most devoted stalwarts in Bengal were the progressives in Keshub Sen's Brahmo organization, and among these, the most active was Keshub's former youthful enthusiast from Krishnagar, Monomohun Ghose. Ghose and Miss Carpenter had become warm friends in England from 1862 to 1866, where Ghose and Satyendranath Tagore had gone together to compete for the Indian Civil Service. Monomohun had failed, but later turned to law and became a successful barrister in Calcutta.

When Mary Carpenter visited Calcutta in 1869 with a definite scheme for promoting women's education, Ghose was among her most ardent supporters. She proposed the establishment of a Brahmo normal school to train women teachers for girls' schools, and she urged them to expand the usual domestic arts program by offering additional subjects that would stimulate the women's curiosity and develop their minds.[98] Keshub, with the backing of Ghose, Sastri, Deb, and others, did start a normal school for women as part of his Indian Reform Association, and most of the progressive Brahmos offered their services as teachers in the school.[99]

At that time, there was only one educational institution for young women in Calcutta—Bethune School—which Vidyasagar, Sastri's uncle Vidyabhusan, and other liberals had supported solidly for twenty years. Despite the conservative curriculum of the school, which taught women domestic arts and a modicum of liberal education to make them better wives, the institution never received wide public support. In 1868, Miss Piggot, the headmistress, was forced to resign because she had brought Christianity into the teaching program, thus exposing the girls to the dreaded alien faith.[100]

By 1870, especially among Brahmo men, the issue was sharply drawn between those who viewed female education as preparatory for the domestic bliss of the enlightened housewife, and those who wanted women educated on the same basis and to the same levels as men. Bengali reformers, Brahmo and otherwise, still held the notion first promulgated by Rammohun Roy that Hindu social reform in Bengal must start with the emancipation of women, because women played such a crucial role in shaping the character and thought of children. Yet nothing concrete had been done so far to accomplish that purpose.

At this point there entered the Calcutta scene a second British Unitarian lady, Annette Akroyd. Her father had been a liberal Unitarian industrialist from Birmingham who in 1849 supported

the establishment of Bedford College, which was among the earliest institutions providing higher learning for women.[101] Annette received her degree from Bedford in 1863, devoted herself to social work, and in 1865 she helped establish a school for women of the industrial proletariat. Like Mary Carpenter, she saw herself as a follower of Theodore Parker's program of social action as an integral part of Unitarian religion.

Sometime in the early 1860s, she met Monomohun Ghose, with whom she formed a deep friendship. Thus, by the time Keshub Sen visited England in 1870, Annette Akroyd had already formed a favorable impression of Brahmo social reform, which made her one of his most inspired listeners. She was especially receptive to one of Keshub's lectures in which he urged educated Englishwomen to come to India and help free Indian women from their chains of ignorance and superstition. She recalled later that his lecture of August 14 had an "electrifying effect on us Victorian ladies."

No doubt important to her state of mind at the time was the fact that her father had died in 1869, leaving her with a "blankness and dreariness inexpressible." She reconsidered life in England, which she thought a "boring life of moral classes, ragged school collections, balls, social engagements, visits, journeys to London and yearly trips to the seaside," and so she came forward to answer Keshub's appeal. Arriving in Calcutta on October 25, 1872, she was the house guest of Monomohun Ghose and his wife. Mrs. Ghose, incidentally, who had been an uneducated bride, spent the first several years of her married life as a student at Loreto School and College in Calcutta. Monomohun had insisted upon it after returning from England.

The Brahmo progressives welcomed Annette as an ally within the community in their effort to achieve more equality for Brahmo women. In this endeavor, Keshub proved far more conservative than the progressives anticipated, with the result that women's emancipation became the hot issue that divided the Brahmo organization. One of the first incidents took place in February 1872, when Durga Mohun Das insisted that ladies be permitted to sit with their families during services at the mandir. Because Keshub insisted that ladies sit behind screens, Das, Ghose, Sastri, and the other progressives accused him of enforcing purdah. Joined by another fiery young Brahmo enthusiast named Dwarkanath Ganguli, the progressives demanded an end to the purdah system. Keshub stood firm at first, arguing that women seated in the con-

gregation would distract the men from their spiritual purpose, but finally he relented and provided seats outside the screen for "advanced" families.[102]

The problem of what girls should learn in school was not solved so easily. Miss Akroyd played a leading part in this debate, sarcastically distinguishing Keshub, the rhetorician of women's liberation in England, from Keshub, the typical Hindu male keeping knowledge from the minds of women. Nowhere in the Indian Reform Association did Keshub allow women to study such male-monopolized subjects as geometry, logic, natural science, or history.[103] In fact, in the normal school, Keshub's executive committee and a majority of faculty were of the nonprogressive ascetic faction. Of the three-man executive committee, only one, Umesh Chandra Dutt, the secretary, was progressive. As for the faculty, Keshub carefully selected men who were non-Westernized and traditionally Hindu in educational background—men like Bijoy Krishna Goswami, Aghore Nath Gupta, and Gour Govinda Ray.[104]

Keshub tried to convince Miss Akroyd, Ghose, and Sastri that he was progressive, but at the same time wary of radical change. To be sure, they all wanted women to be emancipated, but it should be a gradual process and carried out chiefly by liberal Brahmo husbands. Keshub implored them to imagine the disastrous consequences of women so quickly released from the purdah-like situation in the Bengali household. "Go slow," he told the progressives, and give women the inner strength with which to protect themselves.

In 1872, however, Miss Akroyd decided to start a new school based on her own ideas and those of the progressives. Keshub was invited to join the committee, which he did at first, but then he withdrew his support, arguing the need to move gradually in the area of female emancipation. Miss Akroyd disagreed both publicly and privately. She had no patience with Keshub's gradualist methods which she openly labeled hypocritical. "I lost faith in Keshub Chandra Sen," said Miss Akroyd indignantly, "because of the contrast in him between preaching and personal practice." Lord Beveridge, her future husband and a civil servant in Bengal for many years, explained Keshub's dismal failure as a reformer in terms of a presumed defect in the Bengali character: "The besetting sin of the Bengalees is that they will think and talk, talk and think, but that they will not act . . . that is the very reason we are here for if Bengalees could act half as well as they talk, there would be no reason for us Westerners to rule over them. We must, therefore, take them as we find them and do our best for them."[105]

But Annette Akroyd remained furious with Keshub, whom she soon held to be hardly distinguishable from an orthodox Hindu, since both sought to keep their women steeped in ignorance and child-like innocence. Her description of Keshub Sen's wife, for example, which was hardly a flattering profile for the wife of India's most reputed social reformer, was a devastating public exposure of an unemancipated Hindu woman. Miss Akroyd was "shocked" when she finally met Sen's wife. She had expected to meet someone as well-educated and sophisticated as Monomohun Ghose's wife, but instead found "that the wife of the great apostle of women's emancipation in India was ignorant of England." But worse, she found her "covered by a barbaric display of jewels, playing with them like a foolish petted child in place of attempting rational conversation."

Keshub countered with two arguments: a continued defence of his "go slow" policy, and a warning about "denationalized" female education in Bengal. In April 1873, at a prize-awarding ceremony in his own normal school for women, Keshub warned "how delicate and difficult is the work of female emancipation and if sufficient care is not taken, the experiment might prove harmful and dangerous." He reiterated his own dismay with the bad effects of keeping women in "ignorance and seclusion," while at the same time justifying his gradualism not as conservatism but as good sense. "Before they share the privileges of society," he said, "they must have sufficient moral training and intellectual capacity." Keshub pointed to the grim image of "Indian males, even the educated classes who do not possess right notions about the other sex and do not know how to protect women in society."[106]

Keshub's second line of attack dealt with Annette Akroyd's Anglicized curriculum and her suggested personal habits for Bengali girls, which he attributed to her ignorance of Bengali culture. Whatever good she intended to accomplish in her school, the end result would be to denationalize Indian women. Miss Akroyd had proposed "the adoption of petticoats with the preservation of the remaining upper part of the dress." Thus she reasoned, "a compromise would be reached between indecency and denationalization—and both secured against."[107] Progressives like Monomohun Ghose had supported her, but Keshub treated her proposal with contempt. For Keshub, Miss Akroyd did not care in the least for indigenous customs nor for the "Bengali modes of thinking."[108] In his mind, all this bother about clothing only proved that Miss Akroyd confused female emancipation with Westernized habits and customs.

Miss Akroyd's school opened on September 18, 1873, as the Hindu Mahila Vidyalay (school for Hindu women), with Dwarkanath Ganguli as headmaster.[109] The move represented the first serious rupture between the progressives and Keshub, a decisive step toward ultimate schism. Two months before classes opened in the new school, Lord Beveridge had written to Annette that "I see you have broken with Keshub Chandra Sen. I expect he is too fluent a speaker to be a greater doer."[110]

Sivanath Sastri has implied in his *History of the Brahmo Samaj* that, with the establishment of the Vidyalaya, the progressive or "liberal" Brahmos formed themselves into a semi-autonomous group. These same Brahmos paid most of the school's expenses, although the greater portion of that came out of the pockets of three fairly well-to-do East Bengali liberals: Ananda Mohun Bose, Durga Mohun Das, and Dwarkanath Ganguli. In November 1874, the progressives formally constituted themselves the "Samadarshi (liberal) party" and started a journal of their own called by that name, with Sivanath Sastri as editor.[111]

The female emancipation issue so angered conservative Brahmos that by 1874 Keshub found himself forcing liberals out of his educational institutions or accepting letters of protest and resignation. Sastri himself resigned his teaching position at the girls' school to become headmaster of the South Suburban School in Bhawanipur. The same issue created bad feelings in the Brahmo living quarters (Bharat Ashram), which resulted in Keshub's decision to expel a liberal family.[112]

In April 1875, Miss Akroyd became Mrs. Beveridge, which meant that she had to give up the school. For diplomatic reasons, perhaps, her husband urged her to reconcile differences with Keshub Sen, whom he "believed to be a good man." He also warned his wife not to become "too much identified with the Anglicized Bengalees." In this category, Beveridge included Monomohun Ghose and his wife: "I have nothing to say against Mr. and Mrs. Ghose, who were kind to me, but I do not believe that they represent the best section of Young Bengal or that Bengal will eventually follow in the track they are going."[113]

The arrival of Mary Carpenter on her third and last visit to India not only saved Annette Akroyd's school, but prompted the adoption of a more ambitious scheme to train Indian women for higher education. With the active backing of the Samadarshi party of Brahmos, the first women's liberal arts college in India was established on June 1, 1876, the Banga Mahila Vidyalay (Bengali

women's college).[114] Two years later, on August 1, 1878, this institution was merged with Bethune to become Bethune College, and immediately it won the recognition and financial support of the government.

The year 1878 was indeed a bad year for Keshub. At the same time the government decided to back the liberals and Bethune College, they withdrew financial support from his own female normal school, which had continued to restrict its curriculum to the domestic arts.[115] This was also the year in which the liberals finally brought on the long-awaited schism in Brahmo ranks, leading to the formation of the Sadharan Samaj. Considering the fact that women's emancipation was the major issue of the 1870s, it should come as no surprise that the immediate cause for this schism was Keshub's marriage of his eldest daughter to the Hindu Maharaja of Cooch Behar.

Despite his growing unpopularity with liberal social reformers, Keshub continued to voice his opinion against "alien Unitarian" ideas about advanced education for Indian women. In opposition to the Bethune College merger, he charged that its objective was to "Europeanize the girls." Keshub wrote in an editorial of February 25, 1878, that a distinction should be made, but was not being made by the founders of Bethune College, between Anglicizing Indian women and emancipating them. At Bethune College, the women would learn "to wear European costumes and to adopt European habits in eating and drinking." "This may be progress in the estimation of a few go-ahead reformers," wrote Keshub, "but it is a progress of a very doubtful character." It certainly "has no value in the eyes of the true well-wishers of the country." Keshub concluded that "we have no desire to make Europeans of our ladies. . . . To denationalize them will be grievous misfortune to our country. . . . The Lt. Governor should consult the parents of the Hindu community. . . . To Europeanize ourselves in our external habits and manners is one thing, and to regenerate ourselves is another thing."[116]

The Sadharan Samajists replied to Keshub in their own newly formed journal, *Brahmo Public Opinion*. In an editorial of July 4, 1878, presumably written collectively, the opening observation was made that Keshub had joined the growing legion of Hindu revivalists and militants who had nothing but contempt for things Western. Keshub was identified with a "sort of mania at present raging among our countrymen on the question of nationality." Everything "European is looked upon with perfect horror." The real

issue was whether Indian women were to achieve freedom or not. In "ancient times our women enjoyed the highest liberality but lost that privilege with the Mohammedan conquest." The Sadharan Brahmos went on to argue that if India wanted again to raise the status of its women, it should follow the lead of Western nations. They denied aping Western customs. Keshub was wrong about the purpose of having their girls use English dress, for "all we have done at the *Vidyalay* is adopted a dress for the girls that combines the elegance of the national dress with the decency of the European."

This was an interesting editorial, not only in the reply to Keshub, but as a document expressing the practical difficulty of distinguishing "modernization" from "Westernization" in this kind of institutional operation. Even Keshub's charge about food or the means of taking food had to be rationalized by the Sadharan Brahmos in these terms. "No doubt that our girls dine on tables and use spoons and forks," the editorial went on, "but it is because they find it convenient and decent to do so." Then, as a counter blast against Keshub's own eating habits: "so do several of our own pseudo reformers when they go to the Great Eastern Hotel on the sly." Has that made them "Europeanized"? Finally, the vital concern about meat was brought up in the editorial, and defended not as a food that would denationalize the girls but as one that "makes them healthy and civilized members of society." The final passage is most significant for its plea against cultural sectarianism directed against Keshub Sen, the leading contemporary spokesman for eclecticism and universalism: "Why should we not take what we find good and socially and morally acceptable in the Western nations? We say it is blind perverse nationality which despises what is good and of steady merit in any other nationality. Truth is truth in all nationalities, religions and creeds."[117]

Keshub's opposition fell on the deaf ears of the government, which applauded the official opening of the Bethune College in 1879. The Sadharan progressives also petitioned the government to affiliate Bethune with Calcutta University so that the girls could be awarded B.A. degrees.[118] The first two recipients of that degree in 1882 were Miss Kadambini Bose, a Brahmo, and Miss Chandra Mukhi Bose, a Christian.[119] Interestingly enough, Oxford University first awarded bachelor's degrees to women in 1878/79, at about the same time that Bethune College became an accredited affiliate of Calcutta University. Thus, when the two Bengali women re-

ceived their degrees in 1882, they became the first women graduates in the entire British empire.[120]

The triumph of the Sadharan Brahmos over the Keshubites on the issue of women's emancipation clearly represents the impact of Unitarian social philosophy on Hindu society and culture. As the facts disclose, Unitarian impact was not merely intellectual or ideological. Through the advocacy and work of Carpenter and Akroyd, its impact was intrusively practical. In the immediate context of the Hindu reformation seen in historical perspective, however, the Sadharan victory represents the culmination of a century of struggle to realize Rammohun Roy's central belief that only by freeing women and by treating them as human beings could Indian society free itself from social stagnation. To be sure, the higher education of Indian women did not immediately revolutionize Hindu society, but it proved an important stage in the process of achieving the ultimate goal of equal rights. Certainly, the relatively emancipated professional Indian women of today owe a considerable debt of gratitude to the Brahmo pioneers of the nineteenth century.