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Periodicals and Nation-Building: The Public Sphere, Modernity, and Modernism in *Modern Review* and *Visva Bharati Quarterly*

ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes selections from *Modern Review* and *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, to study the complex act of nation-building taking place in India during the first half of the twentieth century. Through these periodicals, it discusses three interconnected occurrences that contributed to the envisioning of new India: firstly, the construction of a politically aware public sphere through nationalistic sentiments and anti-imperial internationalism; secondly, India's localization of modernity as oscillating between the colonial subjects' reactionary modernity and the colonially administered modernity of domination; and thirdly, the emergence of a modernism that was more immersed in restructuring social and political systems of power than being restricted to formal and aesthetic novelty. Thus, drawing on writings published in *Modern Review* and *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, the paper assesses the degree to which the two periodicals realized the identity of new India.

Keywords: *Modern Review*, *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, colonialism, public sphere, modernity, modernism.

INTRODUCTION

The circulation of public opinion becomes significant to the realization of any public sphere. In his study of the emergence of the European public sphere through public opinion, Habermas draws particular attention to how it contributed towards bringing the state closer to society's needs (31). Similarly, the years before India's independence become crucial in studying the formation of the public sphere in the country and its role in the freedom struggle. Print became an important medium for the circulation and discussion of issues, as is evident from the wide range of periodicals and magazines which were operating during the first half of the twentieth century in India. Between the year 1901 and India's gaining of independence, the total number of print newspapers and periodicals in circulation increased by roughly four times (Steinberg 145). Two periodicals circulating in the Bengal region during these years become important—*Modern Review* and *Visva Bharati Quarterly*. This essay studies the two periodicals in order to understand how they deployed an emergent modernity to strengthen the Indian public sphere. The proposed relationship between modernity and the public sphere is grounded in the nationalist construction of India. Nation-building, both as a sentiment and an act, was crucial to the foundation of new India's identity. It is the combination of the two vectors of modernity, the public sphere and nation-building, that reveals the significance of these periodicals.

The first reason why these two particular periodicals may be considered in this regard over others is because they promoted a new kind of internationalism which deliberately rejected imperial involvement (Manjapra 349). Their international contributors were mostly of non-British origins and belonged to countries which were competitors in the race to claim the global seat of power. Second, these periodicals did not show preferences towards any specific political party or ideology. Third, they also did not serve as mouthpieces for any society or association, unlike other prominent examples such as *Dawn* run by the Dawn Society, *Art and Letters* run by the Royal India and Pakistan Society, or *Indian Magazine and Review* run by National Indian Association. This allowed for the inclusion of a broader range of opinions. Fourth, these periodicals joined the colonial print culture during a later phase when the pool of a literate and bilingual readership had already developed in India. These factors confirm the interconnectedness of modernity, the public sphere, and nation-building in these periodicals. Nation-building formed the bedrock of editorial and publishing activities carried out by the two periodicals. The selection of reviews, invitation to contributors, funding and pricing of these periodicals, were all independent of imperial

ties which brought forth a sense of belonging and hope towards the new nation under construction. Modernity emerging through these periodicals could be understood as a response to imperial domination, which refused to accept Western notions of development as the true modernizing spirit. Instead, this form of modernity looked back into the existing systems and social structures, and subsequently revised them. The public sphere that could be seen emerging was one constituted by Indians who were experts in various fields, and their target readership was limited to an Indian population well-versed in the English language. The public sphere, owing to internationalism, was also extended to readers and writers from different countries who wished to voice their opinions as part of the larger anti-colonial movement.

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PERIODICALS AND THE CREATION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The history of colonial print culture dates back to the publication of Hicky's *Bengal Gazette* in 1780 which published commercial advertisements to the extent of including trade advertisements regarding slaves (Ray and Gupta 246). Within a brief span of time, other periodicals in English as well as in Indian languages began circulating but a majority of them were owned by British colonizers. There were a total of 1146 newspapers and periodicals in circulation in the year 1901 (Paxton 143), a number which had grown to over 4712 by the year 1948 (Steinberg 145). The surge in numbers could be due to multiple factors, of which two seem highly probable: first, the need to create a people's collective that took interest in matters concerning politics and administration in colonial India; and, second, the urgency to internationalize the domestic affairs of India under the British Raj in order to expose the empire's growing ineptitude in managing the colony.

Both *Modern Review* and *Visva Bharati Quarterly* operated from Bengal. *Modern Review*'s first edition was printed in 1907 by Ramananda Chatterjee as its editor who held the position until his death in 1943. Thereafter, the mantle of editorship was taken over by Kedar Nath Chatterjee. The first volume of *Modern Review* was published in Allahabad by the Indian Press (Sabin 38). However, in 1908 following a row with the government, Chatterjee was asked to either terminate the periodical's publication or leave Allahabad (40). Consequently, the periodical's office moved to Kolkata where it remained until its final publication in 1995. Its inception in 1907 was not a coincidental follow-up to the Bengal partition of 1905. Lord Curzon's decision to divide Bengal stemmed from the strategy of curbing seditious activities in the politically-charged

region. The partition decision invited anger and widespread protests from colonial subjects who registered their resentment by giving a call for locally (*swadeshi* in Hindi) produced goods and a simultaneous rejection of British products. The Swadeshi movement was significant because it was the first mass movement of twentieth-century colonial India.

Modern Review strengthened this call for swadeshi since its publication process was not dependent on any British aid. During the first fifteen years the issues of *Modern Review* were published at other Indian presses but fully realizing the vitality of independence and also the threat of sedition to journalistic endeavors in a colony, Chatterjee soon bought his own press (K. Chatterjee 45). Chatterjee's connections with intellectual circles of those times, added to the popularity of *Modern Review*. Besides, he also invited dignitaries like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhash Chandra Bose, to contribute articles.

Chatterjee worked closely with Rabindranath Tagore, the first Asian to receive the Nobel in 1913 and the founder of Visva Bharati University. The friendship between the two may be traced back to the initial years of *Prabasi* which Chatterjee started in 1901. Tagore frequently contributed articles to it and then to *Modern Review*. The two were ardent believers in swadeshi, which was also a factor that contributed to the deep friendship between them. Chatterjee, in his multiple accounts of Tagore, had written about living with Tagore in Shantiniketan, and his six-month long trip to Europe with him.

Tagore founded Visva Bharati University in 1921 and soon after in 1923 started its flagship periodical, *Visva Bharati Quarterly*. Integral to the founding of the university and the periodical was Tagore's endorsement of universalism over a restricted cultivation of revolutionary nationalism to achieve independence. Nationalism was one of the rare topics on which Tagore and Chatterjee differed. While Chatterjee was an anti-colonialist and nationalist whose journalism aimed at India's political deliverance from British Raj, Tagore believed it was important to achieve freedom of mind in order to be truly free.¹ He was critical of nationalism because he viewed it only as an enabler of political freedom, which in no way guaranteed

¹ Tagore in his collection of essays on nationalism argues that political ends should not be met at the expense of moral freedom (*Nationalism* 147). He writes that treating political freedom as the utmost form of liberation corrupts the mind, and he takes the examples of other countries to substantiate how they succumbed to such temptations and consequently came under the clutches of exploitative economic systems (153). One could argue that Tagore's view on nationalism is neither concerned with the binary of modernity-tradition, nor is in alignment with the creation of a unified homogeneous whole. Yet, it is concerned with the question of the true identity of India, which he believed to be revolving around the agrarian, rural set-ups that shaped the society into a harmonious community.

the freedom of mind (Tagore, *Nationalism* 145). To spread this message and also in hope of raising funds to set up Visva Bharati University, he delivered lectures in Burma, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, and the United States (Hay 452).

These lectures were based on universal humanism which he sought to promote through the spiritual civilizational confluence between East and West. It may also be added here that his views on universal humanism were influenced by his close association with Brahmo Samaj, of which he became the leader in 1911² (Kopf 299). Owing to his association with the movement, he was critical of material, developmental and organizational gain. These ideas, which also formed the basis of the reform movement in Bengal, were reflected in the university and in the periodical founded by Tagore. *Visva Bharati Quarterly* was edited by P. C. Mahalanobis and K. R. Kripalani in the first few years of its founding. While Mahalanobis, a well-known statistician served as its editor from 1923–31, Kripalani held the position when publication resumed in 1935 after a four year discontinuation. *Visva Bharati Quarterly* still operates as one of the most esteemed periodicals of the university, though its production has remained erratic since the mid-twentieth century.

Many articles that appeared in the two periodicals were contributed by leaders involved in the freedom struggle, but a significant number of articles were also written by educators, researchers, writers, and artists. The internationalism of *Modern Review* and the universal humanism of *Visva Bharati Quarterly* not only encouraged authors from other non-hegemonic nations to contribute their articles, but also created a larger shared bond by publishing articles on issues and ills prevailing in those countries. These articles led to the formation of a public sphere which engaged with the broadening of the scope of decolonization while simultaneously focusing on the creation of an informed national identity. Samarpita Mitra in *Periodicals, Readers and the Making of a Modern Literary Culture* discusses the creation of the public sphere in the light of the production and circulation of periodicals (28). Relying on Habermas's discussion of the public sphere's emergence in Europe, Mitra argues that Indian modernity was peculiarly characterized since it was representative of the middle class

² In his book, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind*, Kopf discusses how the setting up of the Brahmo Samaj by Raja Rammohun Roy in 1823 with the close aide of Devendranath Tagore (Rabindranath Tagore's grandfather) laid the stepping stones for modern religious thought in India with its nuanced ways of implementing socio-religious reforms by keeping the spirit of political consciousness alive (144). Rabindranath Tagore was a third-generation believer of Brahmoism, who according to Kopf always maintained the compatibility between his "Hindu identity and socio-political universalism" (307).

in Bengal. Here, she notes that the class character constituting the public sphere in Bengal was not limited to the question of production alone. It was equally dependent on creating a bilingual reading intelligentsia that was as much interested in public affairs as in the discovery of self. The activity of reading, Mitra further argues, bolstered constant negotiation between the outer public and the inner self (9). Articles published in these periodicals were reflective of this negotiation as occurring through the medium of print journalism.

This may be further illustrated by borrowing from Gramsci's concept of "integral journalism" which, he remarks, "seeks not only to satisfy all the needs of its public, but also to create and develop these needs, to arouse its public and progressively enlarge it" (408). Even an article discussing political matters carefully balanced the self of the individual against the larger public sphere. For instance, lessons were drawn from the inter-regional political tension prevailing in Europe due to WWI and WWII, and the unsustainable alliances formed consequently. A notable example is that of a scholar based out of the United States, Eleanor Hough's "Confidence Between Communities" in which she discusses collective trust as a building block for nations on the path to liberation (Hough 189). Hough also wrote her thesis on the Indian economy and the cooperative movement, publishing it under the title *The Co-operative Movement in India* in 1932. The foreword was written by Hiralal Kaji, an academic then affiliated with and teaching at the University of Bombay. Similarly, in "Social Illiteracy" Alex Aronson, a German Jewish refugee who taught at Visva Bharati, highlights the mounting problem of the evolution of uneducated illiterates into educated illiterates (285). He wrote multiple opinion pieces, on inclusion as one of the basic tenets of a nation under construction. Both Hough and Aronson are examples of academics who took interest in Indian politics and often wrote about the importance of a powerful public sphere in India at that juncture of time.

During the 1910s and 1920s, there was a considerable inclusion of articles on the public sphere from varied perspectives. The editor, Chatterjee, himself twice wrote on the topic under the *Notes* section of the periodical. His authored notes, "The Force of Public Opinion in Ancient India" (R. Chatterjee, *Modern Review* 1921 257) and "Degeneration of English Public Life" (R. Chatterjee, *Modern Review* 1926 225), strike a chord with another article written by Tagore, published in *Modern Review* in 1924 (Tagore, *Modern Review* 1924 2). The two notes by Chatterjee discuss the importance of upholding righteousness in public sphere, without allowing exceptions for any privileged party or politician. Tagore, who had by now launched *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, may be seen writing in "The Problem" about the relevance of reason and true relations

amongst the wider public if true freedom is to be achieved. A note from the same volume as Tagore's 1924 publication titled "The Purity of Public Opinion" opens with reference to French writer Hilaire Belloc and debates the separation between political affairs and religion in the public sphere (Tagore, *Modern Review* 1924 642).

In 1935 K. R. Kripalani, *Visva Bharati Quarterly's* editor, published an article, "The Intellectual," in which he argued that an intellectual should be able to relate their studies to their "everyday faith, thought, feeling, and activity" (Kripalani 102). His article is a testament to the notion that an intellectual always belongs to the society and therefore their works are also similarly guided by its requirements. These multiple examples cited above on the topic of the public sphere bring forth a distinctive feature that united progressive nation-building with conscious internationalism, while also being mindful of protecting the idea of self from vanishing in the prolonged creation of the public sphere. In creating the public sphere during the first half of the twentieth century, *Modern Review* and *Visva Bharati Quarterly* brought together a radically new mode of internationalism and an inclusive form of nation-building. This was a new kind of experimental initiative undertaken by these periodicals, one anchored in modernity.

BETWEEN MODERNITY AND MODERNISM

Modernity in an Indian context has been understood in two related but contradictory forms. The first is as a response of colonial subjects towards colonization. As previously discussed, an example of this kind would be the various regional reform movements in India that aimed at updating and recontextualizing religious traditions. The founding of the Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj and the popularization of the practice of Adhikari Bheda were all part of modern reforms in late nineteenth century India.³

The second form of modernity is one that is administered by the colonizers into the colony. In this regard, Dipesh Chakrabarty's and

³ Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj were established in 1828 and 1875, respectively. Both believed in the idea of monotheism and a more personalized form of transcendental worshipping of divine by the individual. These newer discussions around religious beliefs discarded the superficial acts of image-based worshipping and holding elaborate customs. Adhikari Bheda was a practice that gained popularity during the revivalism of Hindutva (as discussed by Sumit Sarkar in "Identity and Difference: Caste in the Formation of the Ideologies of Nationalism and Hindutva"), especially with Swami Vivekananda coming to prominence. Adhikari Bheda created incentivization for everybody in the caste system by guaranteeing them differential rights to practice rituals. This differentiation was based on hierarchy of the caste system, and individuals belonging to any caste level in the system were prohibited from practicing rituals entitled to individuals in other caste levels.

Partha Chatterjee's views regarding colonial modernity may be helpful. While Chakrabarty argues that excessive use of bodies in capacity of their corporeal function to create a public life in India constituted colonial modernity (Chakrabarty 55), Chatterjee investigates how this modernity also made use of intellect to maintain colonial domination (P. Chatterjee 29). Both of these forms of modernity, reactionary as well as colonially administered, have been carefully linked by Sudipta Kaviraj in *The Invention of Private Life*. Here he argues that modernity in India may be understood as the transformation of a society which was earlier governed by religious order to one governed by the state (Kaviraj 25). According to Kaviraj, this transformation is driven by the quest of seeking transparency and clarification. Along with the change of order, Kaviraj writes, modernity also simultaneously attempts the reform of social and economic structures (9).

This drive to implement transparency of governance at each step, and to prevent an irresponsible state from gaining public support, founded the modernity of *Modern Review* and *Visva Bharati Quarterly*. Another important observation from Kaviraj's work is his analysis of the changes that alter ideals such as ethics and morality when this transformation of order takes place. He demystifies the superficial presumption that the onset of modernity compromises ethics and morality since it rejects old traditions and ways of living (30). It may be added at this point that modernity is not necessarily a break with the past and old traditions. To borrow from Kaviraj, modernity is a peculiar phenomenon because it does not replace one institution or model with another (9). Instead, those structures remain, and through constant self-transformation continue to be updated.

If the examples of articles cited previously from the two periodicals are revisited, one shared feature would be their eventual return to the question of morality and ethics, irrespective of the fact that the central topic being discussed falls into the category of politics and current affairs. Apart from articles on politics, if one reads those written directly on questions of morality, ethics, or other similar concepts, the unwavering importance of these ideals is evident. For instance, Surendranath Tagore's "Judgement" published in *Visva Bharati Quarterly*'s 1925 edition criticizes the unevaluated assimilation of any western ideal in the garb of embracing modernity. Here the author clearly argues that modernity is not of a singular kind which works towards creating a unified nation and organizing its population militarily. Modernity also includes developing a tendency towards truth and love, without compromising the core moral values that define humanity (S. Tagore 207).

In "Indian Culture and External Influence," Aurobindo Ghose, an important philosopher of colonial India, writes in favour of claiming the concept of modernity vis-à-vis the assertion of true Asiatic and Indian spirit.

This assertion, according to Ghose, can only be accomplished if Indians truly acknowledge their flaws and strive towards improvement without relying on the hollow narratives of the glorious erstwhile Indian civilization (513). Yet another attempt at contextualizing modernity in India is carried out by Charles Freer Andrews (who was affectionately given the title “Deenbandhu” by M. K. Gandhi for his contributions to the Indian freedom struggle) in “The Body of Humanity” which was reprinted multiple times in both the periodicals. Here Andrews, similar to Tagore, criticizes Western modernity and its newfound interest in nationalism. However, he credits nationalism with empowering the masses with individual freedom (Andrews 324).

The repeated discussion on individual freedom in both the periodicals may be better approached through the question of the construction of self which appeared closely entwined with the awareness and creation of the public sphere, as discussed in the previous section. The growing acceptance of the space and freedom of an individual as part of Indian modernity was also reflected in discussions on art and aesthetics. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar’s *Alternative Modernities*, in which he proposes that cultural modernity in India could be found geared towards “cultivation and care of the self” may be considered to verify this (Gaonkar 2). He further stresses that a considerable significance during the exploration of self was given to “spontaneous expression” and “authentic experience.” This particularity of expression and experience in any zone or time of modernity qualifies as modernism. Susan Stanford Friedman in “Periodizing Modernism” makes use of Gaonkar’s definition to re-establish how modernism may be understood as a cultural expression of modernity instead of merely being viewed as a set of experimental aesthetic forms (432). In other words, her article proposes a definitional framework of modernism which is dependent on the corresponding modernity of any region, and at any time.

Using such a framework introduces flexibility and inclusion into the predominantly Euro-/American approach towards modernism which is otherwise found to be limited to elite literary circles. This was true in relation to both modernity and modernism emerging in the first half of the twentieth century in India. An article written by Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, a Ceylonese historian and philosopher of Indian art, titled “Art and Ethics” refers to the freedom of experiencing and expressing art without the impending fear of it being categorized as immoral. He explains this through the example of the censorship of nude art-works, and elaborates that if any scope of immorality resides, it is not in the piece of art but in how the subject of art is treated (Coomaraswamy 330). Coomaraswamy’s article is significant in relation to the discussion of modernity in India, which, as revealed in the previous paragraphs, is not divorced from questions of ethics or morality.

Another article by a Japanese art critic and scholar, Okakura Kakuzō,⁴ appears in *Visva Bharati Quarterly* under the title “A Japanese View of Modern Art.” Here Kakuzō is critical of the Western popularization of modern art as “art for art’s sake” (327). He argues that such a perception of art disconnects the artist from the society, thereby destabilizing the relationship not merely between art and the artist but also between art and society. On the question of the disjuncture caused between art and the artist due to the perception of art for its own sake, an article appeared in *Modern Review* under the heading, “Aesthetics vs Ethics.” It argued that the belief that the truest pursuit of art necessitates a compromise with ethics is flawed (R. Chatterjee, *Modern Review* 1917 71). The article initially appeared in another Indian periodical, *Arya*, and was reprinted in the 1917 issue of *Modern Review*.

These articles on the artistic expression of modernity in the East and particularly in India, make a strong case for art that is political and is not divorced from its immediate environment. These published articles contribute to a reinterpretation of modernism, which is grounded in resistance against Western colonization.

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RESISTANCE THROUGH MODERNISM AND WORLDING

Modernism as promoted by these periodicals was in correspondence with the modernity to which the two periodicals contributed. This happened through the act of nation-building vis-à-vis the creation of the public sphere. Borrowing from Supriya Chaudhuri, it may be proposed that the modernism experienced in India was not “time-lagged” (Chaudhuri, “Modernisms in India” 943). Chaudhuri’s refutation of “time-lagged” modernism in India is a response to Homi Bhabha’s argument which seeks to establish that modernism emerged later in India as compared to other countries in the West. Contrary to this, Chaudhuri argues that it began in the initial decades of the twentieth century and was rooted in India’s social, historical, and political circumstances which converged at the tip of aspirations towards a national identity (943). Along similar lines, Geeta Kapur in *When Was Modernism* also argues that modernism’s entry in India was made possible by modernity which was intricately

⁴ Kakuzō’s article becomes quite significant due to his collaborations with Tagore. He was introduced to Tagore by Sister Nivedita, who wrote the Introduction to Kakuzō’s most popular work, *Ideals of the East*, in which he projects support in favour of the China-India-Japan triad formation. On Tagore’s invitation, Kakuzō even spent a few days at Shantiniketan.

connected with the task of nation-building. To Kapur, this is significant since it distinguishes Indian modernism from that which emerged in the West (Bhabha 297). Thus, Indian modernism with its origins in Indian modernity was conditioned by the country's social and political context. The entwining of Indian modernism and modernity with nation-building is evident in articles published in *Modern Review* and *Visva Bharati Quarterly*. These articles may be divided into two categories—articles on modernism as a movement, and articles on the stylistics adopted by modernist writers.

Articles on modernism that appeared in the two periodicals were not typically based on the observations of modernist techniques alone, but were exhaustively read with a focus on its implications and application to India's ongoing crisis. For instance, in "Modernism: An Oriental Interpretation" the author articulates modernism as a release of life from subjugation and as an "expression of life's own truth in its own ways" (Gupta, *Modern Review* 1938 1188). The "subjugation" which is being resisted and the orientalism that is being underlined, situate the article against the backdrop of anti-colonial struggle. This struggle was not directed to merely achieve physical or administrative freedom but also, at a much more spiritual level, freedom of mind. In another article, "Aspects of Modernism," the same author, Nolini Gupta, an Indian poet and philosopher, describes modernism as an immanent force that does not dwell on the depth of the matter but on the wide array and richness of the same. His justification of this claim is of extreme significance to Chaudhuri's and Kapur's proposition of the co-existence of modernism and nationalism in India. He states how the internationalism of those times had created a rebound movement towards intra-nationalism or regionalism, or what we may also refer to as nationalism (Gupta, *Modern Review* 1934 322).

Literary critic Amiya Chakravarty's "The Earlier Phase of Modernist Verse" is quite similar to Gupta's "Aspects of Modernism" in terms of argumentation. That which Gupta observed in modernism as horizontality and immanence, Chakravarty understands as grounded in its exhibition of a "chromatic effect" (*Modern Review* 1938 584) over clarity. In another article by him titled, "The Growth of Modern Analytical Poetry," he draws a connection between modernists and thinkers of the analytical tradition in which he praises the modernists for their rejection of futurism and the unsocial characteristics of their works (Chakravarty, *Visva Bharati Quarterly* 1937 231). In "The Modern Poetry," while discussing contemporary modern Bengali literature, Chakravarty delves into a discussion of cynicism in modern poetry which is often mistaken for social conscience (Chakravarty, *Modern Review* 1941 581). Here, he puts emphasis on the aesthetic aspect

of modernism which he perceives as a set of cultural values and uncouples it from the prejudiced high-brow scepticism.

The harmonious relation between an individual and their society has been lauded by many critics in the two periodicals. In “Modernist Poetry” Nolini Gupta discusses the need to strike the correct balance between aesthetic and political realms in modernism, and posits that it may only be achieved when the writer becomes aware of their place in the society and the responsibility they have towards it. It is only then that they create “out of the fullness of the inner experience” (Gupta, *Visva Bharati Quarterly* 1941 44). The emphasis on inner experience is not isolated from its occurrence in a temporal location. This problematizes the celebrated breaking of tradition as declaring the onset of modernism, which even Eliot underscores in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” through the medium of “historical sense” (4). In “Tradition and Modern Poetic Thought” Sunil Sarkar argues in favour of a more holistic perception of tradition: that which transcends the limited scope of historicity. He writes that traditions which guide modernity are “patterns of thought and feeling (which) are recognizable behind all human civilizations, cultures, and cults; patterns that are permanent and universal . . . tradition of the human race as a whole” (Sarkar 346).

The collective idea that may be derived from these few articles on modernism as published by the two periodicals, brings forth a careful calibration of modernism in the Indian social, cultural, and political urgency to arrive at a national identity. It may be suggested that these articles play a significant role in the construction of new India. Modernism becomes the medium through which the idea of new India is posited both performatively and pedagogically: the former because these pieces have been contributed by authors who are quite subject to the process of narration of the nation; the latter because through their writing they also simultaneously demonstrate the object of pedagogy to the target readership. The performative and the pedagogical together generate consciousness amongst the readership (Bhabha 297). These articles fulfil what contemporary modernist studies offer as suggestions for a more inclusive and varied form of modernism. Andreas Huyssen, in “Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World,” suggests that modernist studies must abandon the high-low distinction. It must revamp and reintroduce the aesthetic component by contextualizing it better. It must reconsider the complex cultural hierarchies over blanket superficial dichotomies of East/West and North/South (Huyssen 204). The articles by Gupta, Chakravarty and Sunil Sarkar discussed above demonstrate a similar realignment of modernism, but nearly half a century prior to contemporary modernist studies.

The second category of articles about modernist stylistics were either mainly situated against the backdrop of war-time literature or were criticisms of the canonical writers of Western modernism. On the futility and changes brought about by wars, Samuel Chao's "China's Wartime Literature and Literary Trend" discusses three observations: first, an inevitable surge in nationalist sentiments; second, more literary works being translated into Mandarin; and third, an overall tone of melancholy in literature (20). In 1948 Wallace Fowle, the American writer and professor, wrote a seventeen page article titled "The French Literary Mind" as part of a project launched by UNESCO, wherein he captured the essence of French writers and their works. He posits that the everyday pessimism with its origins in peace that French society has lost but needs to regain is what constitutes the pride of the French writers (82).

Another important article titled "Modern (Post-War) Hindi Poetry" was written by S. H. Vatsyayan, popularly known by his pen name Agyeya. His article discusses the vitality of political consciousness which he could observe surfacing in modern Hindi poetry. However, he writes that this political consciousness is yet to be harmoniously fused with modern literary techniques (237). Agyeya's contribution is significant to Indian modernism since he is hailed as one of the precursors of high modernism in Hindi through his most celebrated edited anthology *Taar Saptak*. The three above-cited examples of articles on modernism as well as a few others published by the two periodicals establish that modernism as an aesthetic expression is not always necessarily an anti-bourgeois response to modernity introduced by industrialism. It may be helpful here to refer to Raymond Williams's *Politics of Modernism* in which he illustrates how, in expanding its market, modernism lost its singular definition of authority that defined it as a movement of formal and aesthetic novelty (34). In conjunction with Williams's analysis, it may be observed how modernism has journeyed from one continent to another, and also from industrial capitalism to colonization. There remains no singular way of defining modernism. The more it travels, the more its dependency on the modernity of that region or time becomes specific, and consequently the streak of rebellion that characterizes it also changes.

In *Culture and Imperialism* Edward W. Said accuses the dominant Western analyses of modernism of either downplaying or completely rejecting the contribution of resistance and decolonization in shaping it (243). These periodicals, in a way, may be viewed as responding to such prolonged neglect. As has been discussed in this paper, their newly outlined feature of internationalism was selective, mainly anti-imperial. Other than that, there was a deliberate attempt not to deeply engage with works of high modernism from West, and yet to mention those works. Francesca

Orsini and Laetitia Zecchini, in a two-volume special issue of the *Journal of World Literature* titled “The Locations of (World) Literature,” engage with the overall periodical culture in 20th-century colonial India. They understand this technique of name-dropping and acquaintance-generating with works of modernism from outside India as “worlding.”

This worlding, which may be understood as passive-aggressive, since it constitutes neither a complete rejection nor a complete acceptance of Western notions of modernism, was another technique that was used by these periodicals to familiarize Indian readers with the plurality of work that was available. In the long run it also brought some clarity regarding how India differed from or subscribed to such work. According to Zecchini, this practice may be understood as “world-as-bricolage” (Zecchini 104) or “world-as-assemblage” (104) wherein one is attempting to not directly challenge or revolt merely for the sake of it but is simply staging their presence. Despite choosing to not engage deeply with the written literature, this practice very much accounts for East-West literary transactions because “the world and one’s place in it is being constantly remade” (104). In the same issue, Orsini studies different kinds of articles published in *Modern Review* and observes how the periodical “did not invest specifically in world literature, its general thrust was to decenter colonial English and open to the wider world. Name dropping, brief mentions, and short notes all created familiarity without direct contact” (66).

In this context, one may analyze the articles written on the three great modernist writers of the West—Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and W. B. Yeats. For instance, in a two-page article “The Poetry of Ezra Pound,” the author accuses Pound’s writing style of distancing him from the audience and finally reaching a stage where his works become “bafflingly obscure” (Miranda 367). Similarly, in “Enter Mr. Eliot” Amiya Chakravarty makes a near collage of multiple excerpts from Eliot’s poetry to praise the symbolism used by the writer. However, he is clear about Eliot’s technique of rejecting historicity to create a parallel continuum of time, of which Chakravarty is quite critical (Chakravarty, *Visva Bharati Quarterly* 1938 17). Another article “T. S. Eliot” written by Purushottama Lal, founder of the Writers Workshop publishing house, credits Eliot for his extensive mastery with symbolisms but does not include much on how Eliot’s works may be made more familiar in the Indian context (329). Distinctive from Eliot and Pound, articles on Yeats appearing in these two periodicals were much more engaging and better contextualized. One of the possible reasons could be the colonial connection between Ireland and India which made the two countries contemporaries in their respective independence struggles. In “W. B. Yeats and the Irish Moment” (Newson 18) and in

“The Letters of Yeats” (Bose 239), Yeats’s political awareness and his use of modernism to expose imperial atrocities in Ireland made him more relatable as a modernist writer than Eliot or Pound.

In contrast to the literary criticism of Western modernist writers, the engagement with emergent Indian modernism was more vibrant in the Indian periodical culture. Two important examples of this from the Bengal region would be of the *Parichay* and *Kallol* literary groups. Literary publications by *Kallol* and *Parichay* writers belonged to high modernism which had its own drawbacks. For instance, it became too involved with aesthetic forms and focused more on drawing connections with global modernisms, reducing the political consciousness of those writings. In “Modernist Literary Communities in 1930s Calcutta” Supriya Chaudhuri undertakes a comparative study of *Kallol* and *Parichay*, wherein she observes the privileged roots of *Parichay*, comparing them to the Bloomsbury group and positing the problems of retaining such high forms of modernism in the absence of the social histories with which they could have been associated (12). The very point which Orsini and Zecchini discuss about the two periodicals, in terms of superficially dropping names and literary titles, added to the mass appeal of *Modern Review* and *Visva Bharati Quarterly*.

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CONCLUSION

Modern Review and *Visva Bharati Quarterly* provided a collective forum for the bilingual intelligentsia of Bengal to construct a politically and socially aware India. The radical, anti-imperial internationalism of *Modern Review* and the universal humanism of *Visva Bharati Quarterly* respectively, made these periodicals distinctive from the many others circulating in the Bengal region during this period. The realization of these two specific features respectively may be verified through three interconnected occurrences. Firstly, there was the experimental creation of a public sphere that struck a balance between progressive and inclusive forms of nation-building on the one hand, and a conscious, anti-imperial internationalism on the other. Another interesting aspect of this public sphere formation in Bengal was that the idea of a collective public was not formed at the expense of the disavowal of the self.

Secondly, these periodicals eased the arrival of an honest understanding of modernity and its practice. The question of modernity has mostly found itself anchored in the colonizer/colonized binary. To not be co-opted by either of the dominant approaches towards modernity was a task that both the periodicals accomplished successfully. They did not

promote religious restructuring as modernity, nor did they mimic Western notions of developmental modernity. Taking a balanced approach, the two periodicals attempted a re-evaluation of social and political structures of power by advocating clarity and transparency in matters that concerned the wider public. As promoted by the two periodicals, Indian modernity was embarking on new ideas through the assessment of old systems and structures but its insistence on the ideals of ethics and morality remained as strong as ever.

Thirdly, the periodicals successfully illustrated the usage of modernism as a cultural expression of modernity. This did not merely involve a discussion of literary and aesthetic techniques, or raise philosophical questions relating to the essence of life. Instead, its centrality lay in politicizing modernism, otherwise primarily understood as novelty of aesthetics and form. Another important aspect of modernism practiced by the two periodicals was through the technique of worlding, wherein the authors created a superficial level of familiarity with the international modernist canon in order to promote plurality.

These three elements combined make *Modern Review* and *Visva Bharati Quarterly* two most powerful public mouthpieces in the region of Bengal during the first half of the twentieth century. The responsible editorship and journalistic roles performed by those involved with the two periodicals exemplify the power of dialogue and discussion. These periodicals were not only limited to contributing to the identity of the new India but were equally significant in introducing this new India to the wider world outside.

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