

Special Paper

Amales Tripathi: His Researches in Quest for Knowledge*Chandan Basu**

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The long twentieth century was greatly significant for Bengal as it was for the Bengalis. Its impact was felt in all spheres of Bengal's life, political, social and cultural. During this period, a fundamental transformation took place in the fields of literature and art which unfortunately even till date have not been properly assessed. This may be because the process of assessment or evaluation can never be completed as it is a continuous cumulative process which does not stop at any given point of time. However, it seems that most of the Bengalis are quite aware of this remarkable transition in these fields but what most of the people are not aware of are the pursuits/researches in the field of academics by scholars in quest of knowledge. In this particular area, mention must be made of studies on literary criticism, analysis of art, interpretation of films, debates and discourses on Philosophy- Sociology – History – Linguistics. Such have not only contributed much to enrich humanity it has also contributed in the development of a progressive and liberal intellectual trend in the twentieth century Bengal which can be regarded as Bengal's "pathway to progress." As a natural legacy this trend was inherited by the twenty -first century Bengal and Bengalis and as heirs it became the responsibility of the Bengalis to carry forward this inheritance.

This short essay attempts to highlight this intellectual tradition of the Bengalis engaged in the pursuit of historical studies/researches. At the onset, it is better to acknowledge the fact that the modern approach to the study of history has come to us from Europe via the English rule, filtered through the prism of colonisation. A disappointed Bankim Chandra had once pointed out that we are not interested in our past, in our history but the knowledge of the past, he believed is important as it is an essential foundation for nation –building Rabindranath¹, too had objected to the manner in which history of India was taught to the students – it seemed like a nightmare to him. In fact, this had made him think of an alternative way of writing history of India. His idea of a history of India was to be the history of the common people.² The Bengali Historians' engagement with history and its study evolved as consequences of various debates arguments discourses and deliberations³ undertaken during the 20th century and though it was in fact only a fragment of all ongoing intellectual exercises in the then Bengal, it was greatly significant. Among the historians of the 20th century who contributed immensely in the field of the study of the past, the name of Professor Amales Tripathi is most prominent. The objective of this essay is neither to make a complete compilation of his researches and scholarly works nor to make a critical analysis of the same but simply to highlight the theme of his scholarly works, to decipher the logic behind his arguments and counter- arguments which had situated him in a position of uniqueness. The two themes which frequently recurred in his writings are 'nation-building' (idea initially upheld by Bankim) and peoples' history (writing of an alternative history as proposed by Rabindranath) will be the guiding spirit of this paper.

Amales Tripathi was born in 1921 in Debhog in undivided Midnapur (presently eastern Midnapur district). He was an extremely brilliant student. He stood first in the Entrance Examination. Professor Tripathi studied in Presidency College, Columbia University and London University respectively. Later he taught at the Presidency College and the University of Calcutta. He was the recipient of the two most prestigious scholarships – Fulbright and Rockefeller. In 1956 Professor Tripathi published his first work *Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency, 1793-1833*. This was the outcome of his research on the economic history of colonial Bengal. Gradually he shifted from the purely economic domain of history to a wider domain of political, socio-cultural history. He engaged himself in the analysis of historical development in these two fields. His book *Extremist Challenge, India between 1890 and 1910* was published in 1967. Subsequently its Bengali translation entitled *Bharater Muktisangrame Charampanthi Parbo* was published by Ananda Publisher in the year 1987. It was translated by Nirmal Dutta. *Vidyasagar: The Traditional Moderniser* was published in 1974. The roles of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in the making of modern India was the content of yet another Tripathi's book *Oitihashiker Dristite Sri Ramakrishna O Swami Vivekananda* (1999). *Swadhinita Sangrame Bharater Jatiya Congress, 1885-1947* (1990) was originally written in Bengali but an English translation is now available under the title *Indian National Congress and the Freedom Movement 1885-1947*. It is the history of India from the foundation of Indian National Congress to independence in 1947 and the subsequent partition of India. *Italy r Nabojagoran, Banglar Sanskriti* was published in 1994 and in *Itihas O Oitihashik* which was published in 1960 Professor Tripathi had examined in minute details the complex process of the evolution of historiography and the contribution of the historiographers. A review of this vast range of research works undertaken by Dr. Tripathi introduces us to some essential points which are helpful in understanding the insight of Professor Tripathi in the discipline of history.

Amales Tripathi was honoured with awards like Ananda Puroshkar, Jadunath Sarkar Gold Medal and Rabindra Puroshkar.⁴

Amales Tripathi's career in research started in the 50s of the last Century. It was a time when economic history was the most popular area of research in history. Almost all of Amales Tripathi's colleagues, his contemporaries like, Tapan Ray Chaudhuri, Ashin Dasgupta, Nilmoni Mukhopadhyay, Sushil Chaudhuri, Binay Bhushan Chaudhuri etc. were deeply involved, in researches on various aspects of pre- colonial and colonial economy of India Professor Tripathi, however, made a noticeable departure from this tradition of scholarship. In this context a question is often raised -why did he do so? Why did he not keep himself confine in the arena of economic history only? The prime reason behind his shift of academic interest was his desire for acquisition of an in-depth understanding of the process of nation-building as well as an understanding of the history of the masses against a wider backdrop of politics, society and culture of Bengal and India. Once, in an interview, Amales Tripathi had admitted that he was profoundly influenced by the ideology of the Annales School.⁵ He did not believe in the reductionist approach. In his opinion interpreting the past from the economic perspective only was inadequate in long –term interpretation of history or interpreting what is known as “Long-history.” On the contrary, according to him, a method of comparative analysis of socio-cultural conditions of countries taken within a specific frame of time and space helps to get closer to historical ‘truth’. In conformity with this belief, Professor Tripathi had always tried to combine politics, economics and the cultural aspects. It should be borne in mind that he wrote institutionalised history even when he wrote the history of an institution (Eg. the history of the Indian Congress).⁶ He analysed the history of the institution from the perspective of the people's / mass movement. In the reconstruction of the past there is no place for emotion or sentimentality, was his firm conviction. History is based on facts but his advice to the young researchers was that each and every bit of evidence or fact should be verified correctly and a critical comparison of evidences or facts should be made to understand their relevance. He also made it clear that the element of subjectivity will always remain in writings of historians will but the objective condition (both in terms of ideology and the

existing material condition of which historians are a part) also is largely reflected in their writings. The element of subjectivity in history creates differences in the perceptions of historians of events and facts of the past. The perception changes with the change of time with the coming of every new generation. Here it is interesting to note that the attitude of Professor Tripathi towards his works was one of extreme detachment.

A fragmented approach to understand humankind does not make any sense – was Professor Tripathi's opinion. He expressed it in the preface of the Bengali edition of *The Extremist Challenge*.⁷ (The implication of this statement is that a holistic approach is needed to understand human being. Economic, political, social and cultural aspects of human society studied separately, independent from one another can never give a complete understanding of human society). The main objective of this researched work was to look at the history of India from a totally different and a new point of view. In this work Tripathi used various sources to trace the process of nation building in India locating various gaps in the process. Moreover, he considered incorporation of religion as an integral element in our national consciousness could adversely affect the nation formation process in the long run. This issue was discussed in details in his *The Extremist Challenge*. Two books *The Extremist Challenge* and *Swadhinata Sangrame Bharater Jatiya Congress 1885-1947* were outcomes of exhaustive research and should be studied together to get an insight on matters like the making of the Indian nation, nationalism, British colonial policies and communalism. Professor was critical of theories and ideological standpoints of two contemporary schools of historiography namely, the Cambridge School⁸ and the Subaltern School⁹. The historians of the Cambridge School considered power politics or struggle for power to be the central theme of history. Idealism, to them was nothing but an illusion, a utopia. Nationalism was an empty construct with no solid foundation. Indian Nationalism was no exception. Under the colonial rule Indians were divided into two distinct groups. One group was in collaboration with the ruling elite. The relationship between them was that of 'Patron and Client'. It was this group of 'collaborators' who were the main pillars of the 'foundation –expansion-stability' of the colonial regime. The Cambridge School of historians in their explanation further added that as it was not possible for the colonial masters to bring into the fold of confidence the entire masses of the Indian population, those who could not be accommodated in the group of beneficiaries became anti-British and subsequently turned into Indian nationalists. They were not inspired by any lofty ideals of patriotism. Indian nationalism did not emerge out of idealism but out of selfish greed of some groups of people who desired to capture power. Viewed from this paradigm of the Cambridge historians, the history of 19th- 20th century of India was nothing more than a stage where personalities, communities and divergent social groups fought to capture power. Though the platform of the Indian National Congress was shaky and unstable yet people from different communities, groups and classes without definite ideologies combated one another on this stage. The combats were political in nature, fought in order to bargain for more benefits and more power. In short, the Cambridge School standpoint totally rejected the element of idealism in Indian nationalism instead it saw in it a pattern of collaboration-resistance dichotomy in the relationship between the ruler and the ruled which was reflected both in colonial imperialism and Indian nationalism.

Since the 1980s a school of historiography made its appearance and gradually rose to prominence. The members of this group engaged themselves in the reconstruction of history from below, analysing and writing histories of the subalterns or people belonging to the lower orders in the society (social groups excluded from position of hegemony). The ideology of this School was to identify the subalterns as the motive force in the process of historical development, as the makers of history. The group known as the Subaltern Studies Group or Collective evolved under the influence of the philosophy of the Italian intellectual Antonio Gramsci and Western Post-Modernist thought. The members of the Collective were critical of conventional methods of history writing because of their elitist biasness. They pointed out that the methodology of conventional history writing was incapacitated to interpret history of either the elitist hegemony or the resistances of the subalterns. According to the

historians of the Subaltern School, the 'consciousness' and the 'initiatives' of subalterns could neither to be found in the meta-narratives of Imperialism vs. Nationalism nor in the histories of the class struggles. This stand of the school thus reduced the idea of 'anti-colonial nationalism' to the position of superfluity. On the other hand, the 'consciousness/subjectivity' inherent in the subalterns motivated them to firmly uphold their identity by resisting (encroachment of) both the national (indigenous) and the colonial (foreign, imperialist) elites. All historical documents, records written and preserved by the elite never reflected or contained the voices of the people, they recorded revolts and resistances of the subalterns from the elitist point of view, in the elitist language in the official documents, police records and court proceedings. An "inverse reading" of these papers, in the opinion of the members of the Subaltern Collective who believed in the initiative of the masses, could provide an insight into their subjectivity/consciousness, their movements of resistance and also into their emotions which prepared them to rise up in protests. In short, according to the Subalternists the history of 19th- 20th century India must not be viewed as a history of struggle between imperialism and nationalism nor as a history of class conflict because the mentality of members of the working class still remained as it had been under the pre-capitalist order, backward, therefore under the circumstances, the Marxist concept of class struggle was unfit for application in the Indian condition. In fact, neither of these narratives, historians of the Subaltern School believed had the potential to make an in-depth, correct interpretation of India's past. The history of India was a history of attempted expansion of elitist hegemony and a series of resistance movements against this by the common people. Sometimes the protests were loud, sometimes silent. Since the subalterns could not write their histories, their rebellious consciousness must be discerned within the elitist documents, which narrated the elitist paradigm of suppression. Therefore the historians of the Collective in their search to locate the rebellious subjectivity/consciousness of the subalterns had to make a careful and intensive examination of the official documents. However, in this context, the subalternists warned that the replication of the past is impossible because the sources on the basis of which history is reconstructed are actually the expressions of the "value-system" of the persons who recorded them. Thus, the events (information or facts) which we study in history are actually "not real events" but events recreated by those or rather by the subjective awareness of those who record them and as the generation of the record keepers change the value system of the record keepers also change. To cut a long story short, at the time when Professor Tripathi was engaged in researches on issues like national consciousness and nationalism in India, and congress and mass nationalism, the Cambridge School and the Subaltern Study Collective were the two most dominant schools of historiography. But, interestingly, Amales Tripathi's perception of history and history writing remained positioned as counterintuitive to the perception of history and history writing of the historians of these two most influential schools. It is against this background that Amales Tripathi's researches in history and writings of history should be assessed and his pursuit of knowledge understood.

The term nation-building implies a political connotation. Amales Tripathi was of the opinion that the construct of political entity (nation-building) must be based on cultural identity. The creation of a nation is never possible unless until there is a cultural identity. The process of formation of a cultural identity had started in the 19th century Bengal. This cultural identity of Bengal or rather of India which evolved in the 19th century was not in any way a blind imitation of the occidental culture. It was unique in the sense it was an amalgamation of tradition and modernity. The Indian intelligentsia did not indiscriminately accept western modernity. They believed in modernity blended with traditional values. Professor Tripathi saw the blending of tradition and modernity taking place by a process of "acceptance and rejection" and considered it as the main content and a primary pre-requisite in the making of a nation, the emergence and evolution of the ideology of nationalism and the awakening of the masses in India.¹⁰ In fact, Professor Tripathi regarded the making of the Indian nation, emergence and evolution of a nationalist ideology and nationalism as a long drawn historical process. On one side of it there was opposition against colonial rule while on the other there was a constant exploration for

the discovery of the roots of heritage/tradition. Indian nationalism was like a flow made up of several streams. Ideologies of Moderates, Extremists, Gandhites, revolutionaries, Marxists had contribution to the formation of Indian nationalism therefore historically they all constituted the Indian nationalism. It is therefore impossible to fit Indian nationalism into a definite and uniform framework. From 1920 till the 40s the Indian National Congress (Gandhi was then at the helm of the Congress) tried in various ways to collaborate these diverse groups with the intention to achieve independence of India. Amal Tripathi also drew attention to the differences of opinions within the Congress in many of his writings. In this context, it should be kept in mind that while the scholars of the Cambridge School saw these differences of opinions in the light of power politics, profiteering and in the narrowness of selfish personal politics, Professor Tripathi examined it in the light of nationalist ideology and mass politics. On the other hand, where the historians of the Subaltern Collective had emphasised the initiative and unadulterated rebellious spontaneity (of the masses) and rejected the organised form of mass movement as elitist politics, the response of Professor Tripathi was to point out the fact that the division of the nationalist movement into two distinct spheres (elite and subaltern) was artificial and inconsistent. The weakest point in the theory of history projected by the Subaltern School was its attempt to deconstruct texts with the sole objective to locate subjectivity / consciousness in the people in isolation without connecting it to any events. As events were considered unimportant, events were hardly present in the history of the 'Subalternists'. The method followed by Professor Tripathi, on the contrary, was different. He organised events in chronological orders, made a comparative study of their historical values, examined the relationship between events and ideology, between subjectivity and objective condition and then finally analysed the cause & effect connection.¹¹ This approach to the study of history pushed it beyond the paradigm of understanding the past in fragments and reconstructed it in its totality. In the discourses of the Subaltern School historiographers the fragment was projected as the basic unit. They considered each fragment possessing its own individual subjectivity, each historically unrelated to the other and argued that fragments even if are interconnected do not logically end in creating an interwoven (united) meaningful wider historical pattern. Amal Tripathi though did not deny the importance of the study of a fragment in the course of historical development but what he objected to was the study of a particular fragmented historical experience in isolation. He did not believe that these fragments were unconnected with one another and that if interwoven they would not result in the reconstruction of a meaningful history. In fact, he always focussed on the relentless efforts of Indian nationalism to bring together the divergent forces in order to foster unity. It was not always that this effort succeeded at times the British colonial diplomacy and the strange community (religion) - class- caste equation within the nationalist struggle attempted to weaken it. Amal Tripathi did not fail to notice this inherent inconsistency. He was convinced this did not in any way reduce the long-drawn struggle of the Indians against imperialism to be redundant or insignificant.¹²

Professor Tripathi, zealously conducted his research on the anti-colonial struggle of Indian National Congress. He was tremendously alert in locating and collecting facts from all possible sources. He based his work not only on the study of archival materials (official documents) but went beyond these conventional sources to collect facts and data from the cultural arena, fields of art and literature. Professor Tripathi admitted in the introduction of his book – (If one goes) “through the list of references / bibliography (then one will understand that) I have incorporated as many facts as possible”. (*Swadhinata Sangrame Bharater Jatiyo Congress, 1885-1947, Introduction*, p.11). Professor Tripathi unlike the historians of the Subaltern Collective did not dare to draw inferences /conclusions on the basis of one source because he did not consider this approach to be a correct approach. He looked into two sources while writing the history of Indian National Congress one was statistical and the other was private papers like memoirs, correspondences, letters etc. of contemporary political personalities. Statistical data provided an overall understanding of the economic condition while an examination of private papers revealed the psyche or the mentality of the leadership which could not be detected

from any of the official documents. Private papers divulged feelings /emotion of leaders at personal levels, provided with an insight into their hopes- desires- disappointments, interrelation tensions, future plans. They also disclosed the temperament of the leadership. However, though Professor Tripathi tapped innumerable sources to gather information or locate facts he never let himself get tangled up in facts only or move astray from his actual purpose, that is to say he never lost his way in the jungle of facts or to use a more relevant expression he never “missed the forest for the trees”. Professor Tripathi, to put it precisely, had the unique capability of accomplishing the rare, incorporating the fragment within the totality. He could do this successfully because he was not guided by any pre-condition. His concern as a historian was to pursue his scholarship with honesty. He worked neither to oblige others nor to recreate a fictional past based on imagination. He was aware of the reality that “time is cruel,” it spares no one. Interpretations of the past by historians once dominant lose their significance with the progress of him. He could apprehend future critiques of his work as he was aware of the reality that new interpretations always did subvert old interpretations. This is the order of the day. According to Professor Tripathi there is no absolute truth in history, truth in history is relative.¹³ History is not like Physics or Chemistry. History is about human beings who possess emotion and the capacity to think and it is this “animate” element in history that makes it dynamic. Each generation reconstructs the past the way it sees. The spirit of each age is reflected in the writing of historians of that age. The strict impersonal perception of Professor Tripathi to some extent explains his objectivity and unbiased approach which is probably the reason for the absence of conflicts between segments and totality in his works. This feature created in the writings of Professor Tripathi the potential to cross beyond the time line of his age.

He was influenced by the ideology of the Annales School of historiography, Amales Tripathi had admitted in one of his interviews. It is true he was intellectually inspired by the Annales School concept of ‘Total History’. Like other members of the School, he too perceived history in its totality and this belief was so deeply entrenched in him that it was profoundly reflected in all his writings. However, in this context it must be mentioned that he was not totally engulfed by the influence of the Annales School, he was not, at least not in his method of analysis. It may be that he followed the school’s methodology in his search of a wide range of facts/sources because this approach seemed correct to him. His theoretical stand was different from that of the Annales School historians.¹⁴ The Annales School historians brought under examination phenomena and their underlying causes over long stretches of time like changes occurring in the oceans, climate and ecology and even in the cultural values deeply ingrained in the human minds where the pace of transformation took place at a much slower level. Placed within this broader context of change men appeared almost insignificant, inert and helpless, captivated in the framework of time. Short term political changes fail to transform values entrenched firmly in the human consciousness. The wheel of time rotates but cultural beliefs remain unchanged for a much longer period of time. These ideas of the Annales school historiography were nowhere evident in the writings of Amales Tripathi. In the first place he never wrote long term history. The maximum period of time he covered in his works was about a hundred years at the most. Secondly, he categorically emphasised a fundamental transition in the lives of the Indians in the 19th century (a span of only hundred years) which bears evidence to the fact that unlike the Annales school belief Professor Tripathi did not consider human beings to be either helpless or inert. They were both conscious and active forces with the initiative to bring about transformation.

Thirdly, the feature of Annales school historiography which divided time according to changes occurring in the area of politics (categorised as short- term change), socio-economic (mid-term), and cultural (long –term) are absent in the writings of Professor Tripathi. In his works politics, economics and culture is interconnected. They exert influence on one another and possess dynamic consciousness. Fourthly, the writings of Professor Tripathi, in contrast to the writings of the Annales school historians follow a path which leads to an ultimate goal in which both the individual and the community make conscious efforts to reach fulfilment. Considering these angles and analysing these points

of differences it is difficult to situate Professor Amales Tripathi within the ideological framework of the Annales School.

In his centenary year an evaluation of historian Amales Tripathi has become relevant. But the question arises how do we evaluate a historian of Professor Tripathi's stature? It needs to be mentioned here that Professor Tripathi was influenced by two more schools of thought. (It is implicit in his writings) One was the thought of the British Marxist historians (Hobsbawm, E.P. Thompson, Christopher Hill etc.). British Marxist historians saw history as universal, united and homogeneous entity on one side while on the other they saw conflicts of all sorts within it--- this element of conflict, of dialectics, of an inherent constant clash was in their opinion the motive force of history. Their underlying belief was that man never gets everything he aspires for nevertheless that does not lessen the significance of his aspiration. This concept of the British Marxist historians is not difficult to trace in the writings of Professor Tripathi. Secondly, he was deeply influenced by Rabindranath's ideas on life, society and aesthetics. All his life he remained an ardent admirer of Rabindranath's versatility, his multifaceted talent¹⁵. This centenarian historian imbibed a strong aesthetic sense from Rabindranath which is much evident in his writings. Like the great poet Professor Tripathi, it seemed could not restrain the exuberance he derived from life, from his surroundings despite their incompleteness and limitations. This is perhaps the reason why people develop a liking for the reading of Amales Tripathi's works. His works possess high quality literary value. They are more than works on history, they are works of literature. In this context it is pertinent to mention that while most of the academicians prefer to write in English because publications in English have a wider circulation, Professor Tripathi who could have done this easily did not do so. His unbending love for his mother tongue, Bengali, combined with his sense of responsibility towards the nation inspired him to write in Bengali. Language which binds a people together, he believed is the mainstay of a nation and as the process of nation building is a continuous process, simultaneous development of language is essential because it is a means to express the solidarity of a nation. Study of history in Bengali is a contemporary phenomenon. It has been deliberately undertaken as an integral part of nation making. Professor Tripathi was a pioneer in this endeavour. On his hundredth year we offer our respectful homage to this veteran historian.

** (An earlier version of this paper was published in a Bengali periodical by Professor Chandan Basu. The paper has been translated by Debarati Banerjee, Associate Professor, Department of History, NSOU, for NJSS. 2021 was the birth centenary year of Professor Amales Tripathi. This paper is dedicated to the memory of Professor Amales Tripathi, an eminent Bengali historian by the faculty of School of Social Sciences, Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata)*

Endnotes and References:

- 1 In the essay *Banglar Itihas* 1281 B.S. Bankimchandra regretted that Bengal has no history, whereas even the bird hunting expeditions of the Sahibs' get recorded as history. *Bankimchandra Rachanabali*, Vol. 4, Paschim Bangla Academy, Kolkata, 2015, P.132. He further elucidated his statement in another essay, *Banglar itihas sambandhe Kayekti Katha*, that history of Bengal is much needed otherwise Bengalis would have no identity. Ibid. P. 143. In the same essay Bankim also wrote that Bengal has no proper history, in the name of history whatever exists is not history but novels of some sort and a few biographies of heathen foreigners who were nothing more but oppressors. Bengalis need a history or else they have no future. "Who will write? You will, I will, all of us will write. Whoever calls himself a Bengali will write." P.145
- 2 Rabindranath started his essay *Bharatbarsher Itihas* (Bhadra 1309)in the following manner- the history

of India which we read, learn by heart for exams is like a nightmare one sees at the darkest hour of the night. *Bharatbarsha, Rabindrarachanabali, Vol. 14*, Paschim Banga, Bangla Academy, Kolkata. 2016. P.564

He wrote in *Purbo O Paschim* (compilation of essays under Samaj, 1315 B.S. that history of India should not concern itself whether it is the Hindus or the Muslims or someone else trying to establish them in position of supremacy. This cannot be the ultimate goal of history writing. History of mankind in India should evolve as a history of establishment of righteousness and fulfilment which would give it a kind of universal acceptability. The purpose of writing history of India is to realise this aim. *Samaj, Rabindrarachanabali, Vol. 15*, Paschim Banga Bangla Academy, Kolkata. 2016, PP. 600-1. Rabindranath expressed his views on history very clearly in B.S. 1318, when he said, “.....to diffuse the one or the self among many is not in the tradition of India instead she perceives and internalises the diversity into one or the self. This has been the search of India. *Parichay, Rabindrarachanabali, Vol. 17*, Paschim Banga Bangla Academy, Kolkata. 2017, P. 592

- 3 Among the pioneer historians of the 20th century were Jadunath Sarkar (1870), Rama Prasad Chanda (1873-1942), Rames Chandra Majumdar (1888-1980), Hem Chandra Ray Chaudhuri(1892-1957) Kalikaranjan Kanungo (1895-1972), Sushobhanchandra Sarkar (1900-1982), Nihar Ranjan Ray (1903-1981), Kalikinkar Dutta (1905- 1982), Dinesh Chandra Sircar (1907- 1985), Amales Tripathi (1921-1998), Tapan RayChaudhuri (1926- 2014), Ashin Dasgupta (1932- 1998), Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (1938-2019) and many others, who by application of modern theories in the analysis of history situated the discipline within the wider purview of the ongoing pursuit of knowledge in the 20th century. Naturally, during this long period approaches to the study of history have undergone a lot of changes. New perceptions have emerged, new facts have been unveiled, existing facts have been interpreted in new light. Rise and fall, of dynasties, war and peace, treaties-alliances- friendships-enmities placed in chronological order followed by interpretations were the initial concerns of historians but in course of this orientation was changed. The study of economic- social and cultural history have taken prominence over political and diplomatic history. Now, the common people or the masses have been accepted as the movers or motive forces of history by almost all the contemporary historians of Bengal.
- 4 For more details see *Swadhinatar Mukh* by Amales Tripathi, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata.1998. Two interviews of Professor Tripathi *Mahakaler Putul* and *Itihas ki shesh hoye gecche?* are important to understand his works, his researches and his deep insight of knowledge.
- 5 Annales School of historiography originated in France in the 30s of the 20th Century. Marc Bloch (1886-1944) and Lucien Paul Febvre (1878- 1956) initiated a unique method to interpret the past. In the post second world war period it was further developed by Fernand Braudel (1902-1985). The impact of this school became global. Apart from these three some other prominent members of the school were Pierre Goubert (1915-2012), Georges Duby (1919-1996), Pierre Chaunu (1923- 2009), Emmanuel Le Roy Ladourie (1929-) etc. Historians of this school believed in long term interpretation of history (longue dure'e) and in the construction of 'Total History.' Instead of analysing different aspects like political, social and cultural divided into smaller compartments the historians of Annales School embraced a method of analysing all aspects combined together to understand history in its totality. Moreover, they held the conviction that studies conducted within shorter time-frames only bring into light political changes but such changes in society like transformation in culture or changes in mentality or consciousness which take a longer time to happen cannot be detected within these short time spans under review. Therefore it is essential for historians to tap as many sources as possible, dig out all data/information available from whatever sources (keeping in mind that such sources/data/information are permissible for use in the reconstruction of the past) for researches in history from the perspective of longue dure'e. (For more details see Peter Burke- *The French Historical Revolution : Annales School, 1929- 1989*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1990)
- 6 *Swadhinata Sangrame Bharater Jatiyo Congress, 1885-1947*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 1397 B.S., reflects the scholarship of Prof. Tripathi which he acquired during his life long quest for knowledge. The theme of the book evolves around a detailed description and interpretation of the struggle against imperialism and the role of the Indian National Congress in this struggle is the content of this book.

Prof. Tripathi gave an in-depth explanation of the process how the organisation of the Congress became transformed into a platform of a mass based nationalist agitation. Despite its inadequacies and limitations the Indian National Congress was able to project itself as the prime representative of the anti-imperialist emotion and struggle of the common people. Had it been only a history of the organisation the aspect of mass agitation would not been a part of the book. The book do not merely describes the history of Indian National Congress, it also traces the course of the mass nationalist agitation within the history of the Congress.

- 7 A translation of The Extremist Challenge entitled *Bharater Mukti Sangrame Charompanthi Parbo* was published by Ananda Publishers in the year 1987. The book was translated by Prof. Nirmal Dutta.
- 8 Anil Seal is a leading historian of the Cambridge School of Historiography. (*The emergence of the Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later 19th Century*, Cambridge, 1968) Other historians of the School are Christopher Bayly (*The Local Roots of Indian Politics: Allahabad 1880-1920*, Oxford, 1975), Christopher John Baker (*The Politics of South India: 1920- 1937*, Cambridge, 1976), Gordon Johnson (*Provincial politics and Indian Nationalism: Bombay and the Indian National Congress 1880-1915*, Cambridge, 1973), Francis Robinson (*Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923*, Cambridge 1974) etc. A must read is *Locality Province and Nation: Essays on Indian Politics, 1870-1940*, CUP, Cambridge, 1973, a collaborative work by John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson and Anil Seal. Interested readers may also look up Howard Spodek, *Pluralist Politics in British India: the Cambridge Cluster of Historians* in *Modern India*, in *The American Historical Review*, Jun., 1979, Vol. 84, No.3,) PP. 688-707
- 9 The Subaltern School of Historiography which has a global recognition was initiated by Indian scholars in the 80s of the 20th Century. The founding father of this School was historian Ranajit Guha. In course of time this school evolved as a school of distinctive historiography. Historians and scholars from different countries enlisted themselves as contributors to the volumes of the Subaltern Studies Collective. Persons interested to learn more about the history of the subalterns should begin with the reading of the introduction in the first volume of the Subaltern studies Collection. *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgencies in Colonial India*, OUP, New Delhi 1983, tops the list of must reads. A study of the subsequent volumes of Subaltern Studies (a total of 12 volumes were published between 1982 and 2005) introduces the readers with the evolution, contribution and limitations of this school. Readers who prefer Bengali to English may consult the following books- Ranajit Guha (*Nimnobarner Itihas, Rachanasangraha*, Vol.1, *Itihas-Samaj- Rajniti*, Ananda Publishers, 2019), Gautam Bhadra, and Partha Chattopadhyay eds. (*Nimnobarner Itihas*, Ananda Publishers, 2010), Partha Chattopadhyay (Krishak Bidroha O Rashtra Biplab in Dipankar Chakraborty and Ratan Khasnobis eds. *Anik, Panchish Bachhor, Prabandha Sankalan*, Anik, Kolkata, 1989) Gautam Bhadra (Iman O Nishan, Banglar Krishak Chaitanyr Ek Adhyay: 1880-1850, Subarnarekha, Kolkata, 1994) etc. Apart from Ranajit Guha scholars who have enriched this School by their contributions are- Partha Chattopadhyay, Gautam Bhadra, Shaheed Amin, Gyan Pande, David Hardiman, David Arnold, Dipesh Chakraborty etc. Literature criticising Subaltern School historiography include – Sumit Sarkar (*The Decline of the Subaltern in the Subaltern Studies: Writing Social History*, OUP. 1997), David Ludden ed. (*Reading Subaltern Studies : Critical History: Contested Meaning and the Globalisation of South Asia*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2002), Vivek Chibber (*The Post-Colonial Theory and the Spectre of Capital*, Verso, London, 2013)
- 10 Amales Tripathi commented, “It should be remembered that an amalgamation of tradition with modernity had always remained the most significant tendency in the evolution of Bengali culture.” Amales Tripathi (*Italir Renaissance, Banglar Sanskriti*, Ananda Publishers, 1994)
- 11 Amales Tripathi (*Swadhinata Sangrame Bharater Jatiyo Congress : 1885-1947*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, B.S. 1937. The theory of fragment in history is strongly upheld by Partha Chatterjee in *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post- Colonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993.
- 12 In the words of Amales Tripath, “A historian is never concerned with the Eternal or Absolute Truth.” (Reference- Mahakaler Putul, in *Swadhinatar Mukh*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata. 1998. P. 220.

- 13 Amal Tripathi made the comment, "Read Braudel. They have once again engaged themselves in the study of Economics, Sociology, Anthropology and Psychology. However, (reconstruction of) Total History is impossible. There is no ultimate, so no one can predict it. The mirror of an age will only be able capture the reflection of fragmented truth, nothing more." Ibid. (*Najartan Amader*)
- 14 See Introduction of *Swadhinata SangrameBharater Jatiyo Congress:1885-1947*, Ananda Publishers. Kolkata. B.S. 1397.
- 15 On this issue the comment of Prof. Tripathi is commendable, "Rabindranath is the best example of a perfect blend of tradition with modernity. In his perception of the universe, in his day to day life..... in his divergent pursuits, in the height of his achievements, he remains unparalleled.....in his writing of poems, stories, novels, letters and diaries, paintings and above all in his composition of songs. A representation of Goethe, Mozart, Maupassant and Tolstoy in one body.....This was Rabindranath. Only a spiritually enlightened soul like his could perceive unity, bliss and peace in conflicts of all kinds. He realised God not only in Knowledge and action, his God was omnipresent in all forms, flavours and joys of life." *Italir Renaissance, Bangalir Sanskriti*, Ananda Publishers, Kolkata. 1994. P. 83.