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Shibnath Sastri in India's national Struggle - A study

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Abstract
Shibnath Sastri (1847–1919) played a unique and multifaceted role in India's national struggle and the Bengal Renaissance during the nineteenth century. While primarily recognized as a social reformer, educationist, and one of the founders of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, his nationalist consciousness and political contributions were profoundly far-reaching. Although Sastri was not directly involved in armed or active politics, he succeeded in awakening patriotism among the youth through his writings and ideals. In 1876, in collaboration with Ananda Mohan Bose and Surendranath Banerjee, he played a pivotal role in establishing the 'Indian Association'—one of the primary political platforms of the pre-Congress era. He was a staunch critic of the repressive policies of the British government and frequently used his pen to advocate for the rights of Indians and to foster political awareness. He founded the 'Chhatra Samaj' (Student Society) with the aim of molding the youth into ideal citizens and instilling in them a sense of responsibility toward their motherland. Sastri believed that true political freedom was unattainable without liberation from social superstitions and religious idolatry, alongside the provision of universal education. Consequently, he strengthened the social foundations of the national movement through his efforts in promoting women's education, campaigning against alcohol consumption, and advocating for the welfare of laborers.

Keywords: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, Compact Group, Masterly Inactivity, utilitarianism, Nagar Kirtan

Introduction

In the history of India's national struggle, Pandit Sivanath Sastri (1847–1919) stands out as a unique, visionary, and timeless figure—a key architect working behind the scenes. Although this luminary of the 19th-century Bengal Renaissance was not directly involved in armed revolution or mainstream parliamentary politics, his contribution to the emergence of Indian nationalist consciousness, the promotion of patriotism, and the organization of a progressive youth movement was profound and foundational. He was more than just a social reformer or an educator; he was a visionary political thinker who understood that true political freedom could never be attained without social emancipation and the cultivation of strong moral character. When the 'Indian Association'—the first national political organization in India—was established in 1876 through the initiative of Surendranath Banerjee and Ananda Mohan Bose, Sivanath Sastri joined as a key organizer and a member of its executive committee. This served as the first organized platform for Indians to secure their political rights and foster an all-India nationalism, ultimately paving the way for the founding of the Indian National Congress. In 1877, Sivanath Sastri brought together a group of young Brahmos to form a clandestine, idealistic society known as 'The Compact Group' (Ghananibishtha). The core tenets of this organization were absolute self-sacrifice and a spirit of self-reliance rooted in opposition to British rule. Young men such as Bipin Chandra Pal, Sundari Mohan Das, and Ananda Chandra Mitra were inspired by him to take a solemn vow: they would never serve the British government (by taking up government jobs), they would strive for self-sufficiency, undergo training in the use of arms, and dedicate their lives to the cause of the nation's independence. In 1879 [10], he established the 'Students Society' to raise awareness among the youth regarding the political and social challenges facing the country. This was the first well-organized, democratic student movement in Bengal, which taught the student community of that era to raise their voices against injustice. Challenging both the superstitions prevalent in traditional Hindu society and the conservatism within the original Brahmo Samaj, he went on to establish the 'Sadharan Brahmo Samaj' in 1878 [6]. He firmly believed that political independence for India would be meaningless without the eradication of the caste system, the promotion of women's education, and the establishment of social equality. His movement for social emancipation laid a robust foundation for Indian nationalism. Through his incisive writings—as an editor and contributor to publications such as 'Somaprakash', 'Samadarshi', 'Tattvakaumudi', and the English-language 'Indian Messenger'—he exposed the exploitative nature of British imperialism. His literary works and essays instilled a sense of self-respect and a profound love for the motherland among the subjugated Indian populace. In essence, Shibnath Shastri's mission was to awaken the nation from within. He did not merely oppose British rule; rather, by fostering values of morality, education, self-sacrifice, and a progressive, superstition-free mindset, he cultivated a spirited generation of youth—a force that would later provide significant momentum to India's comprehensive struggle for independence. The primary objective of this essay is to evaluate the multifaceted and enduring contributions of this great visionary, who served as a driving force behind India's national movement.

Methodology

This paper is qualitative study.This study used historical methodology to collect the information on Regarding Rammohun Roy's thoughts on nation and state,and his protest against injustice.Historical methodology is the process by which the researcher gathers evidence and

formulates ideas about the past research documents and studies related to Rammohun Roy's struggle for Nation.The method of forming a fundamental concept by reading various books and analyzing information is known as historical methodology.More specifically,it can be termed 'qualitative content analysis' or 'historical synthesis,' as this approach involves consolidating data from multiple sources to construct a new framework by evaluating context, causes,and effects.Historical documents, books, journals, articles and publications related to this subject area were studied to develop this research paper.In this way, historical data has demonstrated how Rammohun engaged in Nation-building, political thought,and protest against injustice.

Contemporary Political Situation: When the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was established on May 15, 1878 [6], India was undergoing a profound transformation in its political life. In 1876, the 'Indian Association' (Bharat Sabha) was founded to serve as a political platform for the educated middle class of Bengal. During this period, the viceroyalty of Lord Lytton (1876–1880) marked a new direction in British domestic and foreign policy. Domestically, Lytton's policy aimed to root out the political aspirations of the Indian people. In the realm of foreign affairs, he abandoned the policy of "masterly inactivity" and adopted an aggressive stance. This became particularly evident in the British approach toward the tribes of the North-West Frontier—most notably the Afghans. The inevitable consequence was the Second Anglo-Afghan War, a conflict waged at the expense of Indian resources and sacrifices.

From Shivnath's Birth to His Arrival in Calcutta: Against this backdrop, the Brahmo Samaj observed the emergence of two significant trends in India: "a growing spirit of nationalism and a profound reverence for past traditions, both of which deeply inspired the minds of the rising generation." The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj gave voice to these aspirations. Its undisputed leader was Shivnath Shastri (1847–1919), who was born on January 31, 1847, into an impoverished and conservative family of Brahmin scholars in Majilpur, South 24 Parganas. His childhood was marked by severe trials and hardships. His father, Harananda Bhattacharya, was a man of volatile temper, yet possessed a strong sense of self-respect and high moral principles. His mother, Golokmani Devi, was a woman of deep piety. Shivnath was born at the home of his maternal uncle—the residence of the scholar Dwarkanath Vidyabhushan—in Changripota (present-day Subhasgram), in the South 24 Parganas district. Pandit Vidyabhushan was a renowned Sanskrit scholar who served as a professor of the subject at Sanskrit College during the tenure of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar as its principal. Vidyasagar would frequently visit their home, where they engaged in discussions on various contemporary issues. These conversations exerted a profound influence on the development of Shibnath's character and the course of his future life. Initially educated at a village 'pathshala' (traditional school), Shibnath was later sent to the Model Vernacular School established in Majilpur during the administration of Lord Hardinge. In 1856, his father brought him to Kolkata and enrolled him in Sanskrit College. Here, Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar played a significant role in shaping the trajectory of Shibnath's future. Towards the end of 1856, under the supervision of Vidyasagar, the first widow remarriage took place at the residence of Rajkrishna Bandyopadhyay on Sukia Street in Kolkata. This event marked a watershed moment in the reform movement in Bengal. Shibnath was present at the ceremony, and it served as a powerful inspiration for him to take an active part in social reform in Bengal.

Attraction to and Affiliation with the Brahmo Faith: In this manner, Shibnath's inclination toward the Brahmo faith grew, as did his sense of affinity for it. Shastri informs us that around 1859, an individual named Shibkrishna Dutta first propagated the Brahmo faith in Majilpur. His father, Brajanath Dutta, was a broad-minded man and a regular subscriber to the 'Tattwabodhini Patrika'. Inspired by Shibkrishna Dutta, Umeshchandra Dutta, Kalinath Dutta, Haranath Basu, and Ramnath Ghosh openly embraced the Brahmo faith and began observing Brahmo rituals, despite the highly conservative environment of the village. This marked the inception of a Brahmo movement in the area. The young men of the village who embraced the Brahmo faith faced severe persecution at the hands of their conservative parents and guardians. Yet, despite physical abuse and mental torment, these young Brahmos stood their ground with great courage. In 1859, with the assistance of Dr. Priyanath Raychaudhuri of Majilpur, the Brahmos established a girls' school in the village. Shibnath's mother sent her two daughters to this school. In 1862, Shibnath began living in Bhabanipur, where a Brahmo 'mandir' (place of worship) was located. He regularly attended the lectures delivered there by Brahmo leaders. It was here that a lecture by Keshub Chandra Sen, titled "The Destiny of Human Life," left a profound impact on him. Furthermore, Maharshi Debendranath Tagore and the late Ayodhyanath Pakrashi would often deliver instructive talks at a local school, which Shibnath would also attend. It was through these experiences that he felt drawn toward the Brahmo Samaj.

In 1865 or 1866, he was compelled to marry for a second time, against his own wishes. He was deeply distressed by this injustice, particularly because his first wife—who was left completely helpless—was the one who suffered the most. During this period of intense mental anguish, Umeshchandra Dutta placed into his hands a copy of 'Ten Sermons and Prayers' by Theodore Parker. This book brought great solace to his troubled mind and inspired in him a firm resolve to attend the prayer meetings of the Bhowanipore Brahmo Samaj. Between 1865 and 1869, religion completely preoccupied his thoughts. He developed a profound interest in reading the biographies of great figures. Several notable works played a significant role in shaping Shibnath's religious life—among them, Beeton's 'Biographical Dictionary', the writings of Theodore Parker, Arthur Helps' 'Essays Written in the Intervals of Business' and 'Friends in Council', as well as the teachings of Debendranath Tagore. Until 1867, Shibnath held deep reverence for the Adi Brahmo Samaj, led by Debendranath Tagore. In early 1868, during the 'Maghotsav' (the annual festival of the Brahmo Samaj), Keshub Chandra Sen introduced 'Nagar-kirtan'—a religious procession accompanied by 'khol' (drums) and 'kartal' (cymbals). Coming from a 'Shakta' family, Shibnath harbored a strong aversion toward the 'kirtan' tradition of the Vaishnavas. However, he learned from several gentlemen that the 'Nagar-kirtan' organized by Keshub Chandra Sen had

achieved a success far beyond what he had imagined. They handed him a slip of paper containing the following lines:

তোরা আইরে ভাই,
এতো দিনে দুঃখের নিশি হলো অবসান
নগরে উঠিল ব্রাহ্ম নাম
নর-নারী সাধারণের সমান অধিকার
যার আছে ভক্তি পাবে মুক্তি
নাহি জাতি বিচার।

That evening, Keshub Chandra Sen delivered a lecture titled "The Regenerating Faith." It deeply inspired and motivated Sivanath. He wrote: "If a religious faith cannot bring about a new life, it does not deserve to be called a faith at all—this realization opened up a whole new world for me in terms of spiritual life, and I became inextricably bound to the progressive faction." The inevitable outcome was that, on August 22, 1869, Sivanath Sastri formally and publicly joined the Brahmo Samaj under the leadership of Keshub Chandra Sen.

The Core Principle of Social Programs: Shibnath Shastri was drawn more to the practical aspects of religion than to its theoretical dimensions. To him, every sphere of life appeared as an integral part of religious pursuit. He maintained that "no human duty, however trivial, lies outside the scope of a religious life." He believed that the practical objective of the monotheistic Brahmo Samaj was "to combat the anti-social superstitions prevalent within the dominant religions of this country, and in their place, establish monotheism as a social religion." Consequently, he argued that fulfilling this noble mission of the Brahmo Samaj required the implementation of programs beneficial to humanity. He observed that India was undergoing profound economic and industrial transformation; the nation's wealth was being drained away on a massive scale; and the persistent cycle of famine, poverty, misery, and the moral and social degradation of the populace offered an active social reformer—or a benefactor of humanity—ample scope to exercise his capabilities. Thus, undertaking such work became the primary objective of the Brahmo Samaj. However, this was not merely a form of utilitarianism. In Shibnath's philosophy, monotheism is fundamentally a spiritual religion—a religion of conscience—where considerations of personal gain or loss have no place.

It is essential to reject what is wrong, for failing to do so hinders the establishment of a pure and untainted connection with the Supreme Being. For him, all reforms—whether within the family or society at large—originate from this very source; in this sense, everything is, at its core, spiritual. For Shibnath, the central message of the monotheistic Brahmo Samaj is the message of freedom—a freedom that is both individual and national. Every human soul possesses the liberty to seek and know the Supreme Being; therefore, "no infallible or ultimate authority can dictate the rules for the development of one's spiritual life." It is from this premise that the monotheistic movement introduces the concept of 'autonomy'—both in individual and social life. Shibnath wrote, "If our society is to be governed at all, it must be governed by its own members, not by any external authority."

Awakening the Dormant Consciousness of the Nation: Shibnath Sastri observed the emergence of a new sense of nationalism in India with great keenness. He believed that the confluence of the East and the West had given rise to a new way of life and brought forth certain new forces—some of which had long remained dormant within the nation, while others had been entirely absent from the national psyche. Under the influence of this new consciousness, long-standing customs and institutions began to crumble rapidly, a process of disintegration that was visible everywhere. The Brahmo Samaj strove to nurture this new consciousness, fostering a sense of freedom that gradually dismantled the accumulated weight of ancient customs and traditions. Consequently, one of the primary duties of the Samaj was to instill spirituality in the minds of the people—a prerequisite for guiding this newfound freedom toward a positive and successful outcome. In the context of this 'new India,' Sastri outlined several essential conditions for national life: 1) transforming the national mindset through the universal spread of education; 2) creating ample opportunities for employment and the pursuit of goals; 3) national expansion; 4) ensuring freedom of speech and conscience, while safeguarding the nation against internal civil unrest and external aggression; and 5) cultivating moral virtues among the people. He maintained, however, that political liberation could not be achieved without social emancipation and personal integrity.

According to Bipin Chandra Pal, around the middle of 1876, a group of young Brahmos, led by Shibnath Sastri, established a socio-political association. The ideals of this association synthesized the religious and social vision of the Brahmo Samaj with the political ideology of Surendranath Banerjee. Its political dimension was subordinated to its moral and spiritual objectives. The founding members included Kalishankar Shukul, Anandachandra Mitra, Sarat Chandra Roy, Tarakishore Chowdhury, Dr. Sundarimohan Das, and Bipin Chandra Pal. Shortly thereafter, Gagan Chandra Hom and Umaprasad Roy also joined the group. The pledge taken by the members of the association was drafted by Shibnath Sastri himself. Its first point committed the members to "waging an intense and uncompromising struggle against the practices of idol worship and the hegemony of the caste system prevalent in Hindu society." This was, in essence, a declaration rooted in individual conscience. Bipin Chandra Pal observed that "this struggle was necessary to pursue the modern ideals of equality, fraternity, and liberty." The second point of the pledge was entirely political: "Self-rule (swayattashasan) is the only form of political governance ordained by God." Self-rule implies governance of the people, by the people, and for the welfare of the people. Since the British government did not conform to this model, it was not in accordance with God's will; consequently, it lacked the moral authority to demand the allegiance of the people. Bipin Chandra Pal aptly remarked, "This was, in effect, a declaration of rebellion." The third point of the pledge addressed the means and methods for achieving self-rule. Its program included education—with a particular emphasis on women's education—the promotion of widow remarriage, the abolition of the 'purdah' (seclusion) system, and physical training. Fourth, the members pledged to learn horse-riding and marksmanship, and to provide military training to the public. Fifth, they vowed that men would not marry before the age of twenty-one, and women not before the age of

sixteen; furthermore, they pledged not to assist or participate in any marriage where the bride was under sixteen or the groom under twenty-one.

In this manner, under the leadership of Shibnath Sastri, the Brahmo Samaj aligned itself with the active politics of the country, setting the goal of establishing democratic self-rule in India. Thus, the spiritual and moral ideals of the Brahmo Samaj became inextricably linked with the national ideal of self-rule. To achieve this political objective, Shibnath Sastri felt a compelling need to establish a dedicated organization. Initially, he envisioned forming an association specifically for the educated middle class of Bengal. As the ultimate culmination of this line of thought, the Indian Association was established on July 26, 1876 [9]. It is worth noting that, during this period, an internal conflict was stirring the entire Brahmo Samaj. To challenge the autocratic control of Keshub Chunder Sen over the affairs of the Brahmo Samaj, Sivanath Sastri and his followers formed a group known as the "Samadarshi Gosthi" (a liberal faction). They published a monthly journal titled "Samadarshi"—meaning "liberal"—to critique the actions of Keshub Chunder Sen and his followers. Both the Samadarshi Gosthi and the Indian Association operated out of the same office, located in a rented house at 93 College Street, Calcutta. The executive committee of the Indian Association comprised the following members of the Brahmo Samaj: Nagendranath Chatterjee, Sivanath Sastri, Dwarkanath Ganguly, Umesh Chandra Datta, Kalinath Datta, Nabagopal Mitra, Rajnarayan Basu, and Ananda Mohan Basu. In this committee, Ananda Mohan Basu served as the Secretary, Surendranath Banerjee as the Assistant Secretary, and Sivanath Sastri as the Treasurer.

Agitation over Civil Service Examination Policies: Meanwhile, India was stirred by a movement concerning the Civil Service. On February 24, 1876, the then Secretary of State for India, the Marquis of Salisbury, issued an order reducing the maximum age limit for the Indian Civil Service (ICS) from 21 to 19 years. This order sparked intense outrage in India, as the reduction in the age limit deprived many ambitious young men of the opportunity to appear for the competitive Civil Service examinations. The Indian Association launched a protest movement against this decision, organizing public meetings across various parts of the country to build public opinion against the Secretary of State's order. Mr. Lal Mohan Ghosh was sent to England to submit a memorial regarding the Civil Service to the British Parliament. His mission in England proved highly successful. In May 1879 [10], the Governor-General directed the Secretary of State for India to implement a 'Statutory Civil Service,' in accordance with an Act passed in 1870. Although this allowed for the examinations to be held simultaneously in England and India, it failed to bring about any significant changes to the core terms and conditions of the Indian Civil Service. For a long time, Brahmo leaders had been sharply criticizing the inequalities and injustices inherent in the rules and policies governing the Indian Civil Service as they applied to Indian students. Nabagopal Mitra, of the Adi Brahmo Samaj, drew the government's attention to this issue; he urged the administration to appoint Indians to responsible positions within the Civil Service and to conduct competitive examinations simultaneously in both England and India. Regarding the difficulties Indian students faced in traveling to England to take examinations, he remarked, "It is impossible for any parent to spare seven or eight thousand rupees from their income—merely to provide their child with a chance to enter this service, for an examination where success is highly uncertain. The primary effect of these conditions is to effectively close the door to competition for the 'natives,' and to safeguard the Indian Civil Service against the entry of 'niggers' (a racist slur used against Black or native people)." The 'Statutory Civil Service,' which came into effect in May 1879 [10], formally adopted the policy of appointing Indians to the service. The prohibitively expensive Afghan War, the growing poverty of the general population, and the mounting government debt compelled the British administration to consider cost-cutting measures. Consequently, the British government was forced to recruit Indians—who could be paid lower salaries—into the Civil Service.

Leaders of the Brahmo Samaj were not satisfied with this limited concession granted to Indians. They questioned the status and rank accorded to Indians within this service, asking, "While it has been acknowledged that appointing 'natives' to such positions is necessary, what is the 'modus operandi'—how exactly will this be implemented?" The Statutory Civil Service did not grant Indians access to the 'Covenanted Civil Service' (the higher, covenanted tier). Instead, they were inducted into the 'Uncovenanted Service' (the lower, non-covenanted tier) at significantly lower salaries. Leaders of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj viewed these terms of employment as deeply humiliating for Indians. They expressed the view: "We do not believe that (lower pay) can serve as compensation for avoiding competitive examinations. Regardless of whether the salary is high or low, equality in all respects is essential for the sake of the service's inherent dignity and efficiency." Furthermore, they demanded that the government raise the upper age limit for the Civil Service from 19 to 25 years. The Brahmo Samaj was a staunch critic of the 'principle of nomination' introduced in the Statutory Civil Service in 1879 [10]. They argued that the criteria for the Covenanted Civil Service—established by the Queen's Proclamation and the Act of 1870, which defined 'education, ability, and integrity of character' as the sole qualifications—were being "cast to the winds, replaced by nomination—or, in plain terms, by nepotism and jobbery." Regarding the probationary period, they proposed that candidates should spend two years in England, engaging in rigorous study, observing court proceedings, passing demanding examinations, and receiving a modest allowance every six months. Until these long-standing grievances of Indians regarding the Civil Service were addressed, the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj called for a broader movement: "Let India raise a collective voice for the abolition of these rules and persist in this agitation until the demand is met. There is no substitute for a steadfast, firm, and determined movement to achieve victory. Until this goal is attained, entry into the Civil Service will remain a heavy burden and a source of deep concern for the people."

Movement Against the Vernacular Press Act: The Vernacular Press Act, introduced by Lord Lytton in 1878 [6], sparked intense agitation across India. Known as "The Gagging Act," this legislation empowered a magistrate—with the prior approval of the provincial government—to demand security deposits or written bonds from printers and publishers. This was intended to prevent them from printing

or publishing any material that might incite discontent against the government or foster animosity among the various ethnic or social groups in India. Notably, this Act did not apply to the English-language press. Under the able leadership of Sivanath Sastri, the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj launched a fierce campaign against the Act through their own publication, 'The Brahmo Public Opinion'. They argued that the law had "gagged the vernacular press" and dealt a severe blow to the progress and good governance of the native population in India. They rightly pointed out that seditious or inflammatory writings were already punishable under the existing Penal Code, rendering the introduction of this new law entirely unjustified. Calling for a movement against the Act, they stated: "We believe that people from all walks of life will join this protest, and that the scale of the movement will be commensurate with the gravity of the issue and the severity of the situation." The Brahmo Samaj highlighted several detrimental consequences of the Act: 1) The valuable educational process facilitated through the editing and publication of books and journals would no longer be possible. 2) Grievances or issues experienced by one segment of society could no longer be communicated to the rest; in other words, the development of social or political life—extending beyond the private sphere—would come to a standstill. Consequently, we would be deprived of a vital avenue for seeking redress. In other words, we would be deprived of the opportunity to express a collective public opinion—a consensus among the governed—regarding the conduct and policy-making of the government or its officials. To address these adverse consequences and challenges, the Brahmo Samaj put forward the following proposals: 1. "The formation of an organization for editors of periodicals and newspapers, to be called the 'Native Press Conference'—or simply the 'Press Conference.' It would consist of the following members: (a) editors of all newspapers published in vernacular (indigenous) languages; (b) Indian editors of newspapers published in English; and (c) any other individual admitted by the unanimous consent of the existing members." 2. "Members shall have the right to vote indirectly or through proxies." 3. "The primary functions of this Conference shall be: (a) to issue warnings to, or seek accountability from, any editor associated with this organization (the Native Press Conference) should any objectionable content appear in their publication; and (b) to periodically highlight and acknowledge the contributions and services rendered by the press to the state and society." 4. "Objectionable content shall be defined as: (a) anything deemed reprehensible or harmful under the law or in the context of good governance; and (b) anything detrimental to the public interest at large." Thus, under the leadership of Sivanath Sastri, the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj championed the cause of press freedom and succeeded in mobilizing a strong public consensus against Lord Lytton's Vernacular Press Act. This movement was effectively pursued in both India and England; consequently, when Mr. Gladstone became the Prime Minister of England in 1880, this "repressive law"—often referred to as the "Gagging Act"—was repealed.

A Call to Revitalize the Nation: Shibnath Sastri acknowledged that he drew his nationalist inspiration from Babu Raj Narain Bose. He made his first public appearance in 1868 at the 'National Mela' (National Fair), where he recited a poem titled 'Bijoy'—a heroic account of a Bengali prince who, in ancient times, conquered Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka). Shibnath's patriotism was all-encompassing; as an 'Acharya' (minister) of the Brahmo Samaj, he introduced a specific prayer into the weekly collective worship—distinct from Keshub Chandra Sen's universal prayers for the well-being of all humanity—focusing instead on the progress and liberation of his own country and its people. Bepin Chandra Pal aptly observed that "the Brahmo Samaj played a pioneering role in contributing to the inspiring hymnology that fueled the nationalism and freedom movement in modern India." Beyond his roles as a religious and national leader, he was also a poet, novelist, essayist, and a successful journalist. He composed several patriotic songs that were widely sung during that era. Given the state of affairs in India at the time, he issued a call to revitalize—or rescue—his countrymen, a nation then in decline. In this vein, he wrote—

তব পদে লই শরণ, প্রার্থনা করো গ্রহণ।
আর্যদের প্রিয় ভূমি সাধের ভারত ভূমি
অবসন্ন আছে, অচেতন হে;
একবার দয়া করি, তোল কর ধরি,
দুর্দশা- আঁধার তার করহ মোচন।

His work 'Pushpamala' (A Garland of Flowers), along with poems such as 'Utsarga' (Offerings), 'Prakrita Sahas' (Real Courage), and 'Bahu Dur Noy' (Not Very Far Away), bears witness to his profound and genuine sense of patriotism. He called upon the youth of India to break the chains of servitude and fight for freedom. In his poem 'Utsarga', he articulated, with great emphasis, the aspiration for the emergence of a new India from the nation's state of decline. He wrote:

ঘোর কোলাহলে ওই সবে বলে
আর ঘুমাইও না ভারত জননী !
তবু পুলকিত; ভূত ভবিষ্যৎ
হৃদয়ে উদিত আজ যুগপৎ ।
দেখে বর্তমান সকলেই ম্লান,
কিন্তু আমি দেখি নতুন জগৎ।
বর্তমান পারে দেখি দুই ধারে
অপরূপ দৃশ্য! দেখি শত শত
ভারতের প্রজা, ভারত সন্তান
ওই উচ্চরবে করিতেছি গান।

In his poem 'Real Courage', he calls upon everyone to sacrifice their lives at the altar of freedom. His poem 'Not Very Far Away' serves as a profound appeal to alleviate the suffering of Mother India—transcending barriers of caste, religion, and nationality—and bears a striking resemblance to our national anthem, "Jana Gana Mana". He wrote—

গভীর রজনী ! ডুবেছে ধরণী,
জাগো রে জাগো রে সাধের লেখনী !
প্রাণপ্রিয় ভাই ভারত সন্তান
জাগোরে সকলে ! শোন, করি গান।
ভারতের গতি ভারত - নিয়তি
ভেবে আজ কেন উথলিল প্রাণ ?
দুঃখের কাহিনী তাই করি গান ।

His social novels—such as 'Mejo Bou', 'Jugantar', 'Nayantara', and 'Bidhabar Chhele'—served as the inspiration for the name of the 'Jugantar Dal'. Furthermore, through his editorial work for various periodicals, including 'The Brahmo Public Opinion' and 'Tattvakaumudi', he helped instill a sense of nationalist consciousness among the people.

Morality in the Rejuvenation of a Nation: As a missionary for the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, Sivanath Sastri's activities between May 1878 [6] and 1888—spanning both India and England—were marked by remarkable success. With the aim of providing intellectual and spiritual training to members of the Brahmo community, he established the 'Sadhan Ashram'—a sanctuary for Brahmo workers—on February 1, 1892. While Sivanath was primarily engaged in the missionary work of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, a significant transformation was unfolding in the political landscape of Bengal. The National Congress was founded in 1885 [4]. Sivanath's associates—Anandamohan Bose, Dwarkanath Ganguly, Nagendranath Chatterjee, and Bipin Chandra Pal—were all pioneers of the National Congress in Bengal. H. C. F. Zacharias aptly observed that "nearly all the leading politicians of Bengal itself emerged from the Brahmo milieu."

The attitude of the Brahmos toward the National Congress was highly significant. In their view, "moral liberation often serves as a prerequisite for political liberation." They believed that "if the people of India aspire to build a unified nation that earns the sympathy of other nations, then our leaders must pursue social reform with the same zeal and competence that they apply to the success of the Congress." They further held that political alliances alone are not enduring. Although the Congress began with a political objective, its ultimate success would depend on fostering the moral rejuvenation of the Indian people. According to them, the moral standing and stability of a nation are determined by the consciousness that guides its individuals. Therefore, it was incumbent upon the leaders of the contemporary political movement to dedicate themselves to elevating the national character and convictions of their fellow countrymen. Logically, they believed that political freedom alone—even in its fullest measure—would not suffice to elevate Indians into a great nation, either in moral stature or in numerical strength. They held the view that any form of representative government requires the populace to possess certain moral qualifications to function effectively and without detriment. Consequently, the representatives of the people, they argued, must be individuals of high moral character and genuine patriotism. Shivnath's Brahmo Samaj did not attach much significance to the resolutions passed or the memoranda submitted by the Indian National Congress. They believed that, given the current bureaucratic and semi-autocratic nature of the government, such resolutions and petitions would prove futile or ineffective in bringing about any substantive or meaningful change to the country's administration. Therefore, they proposed the necessity of organizing a 'Social Conference'—dedicated to the advancement of social reform—alongside the annual session of the Indian National Congress. This proposal took concrete shape when, in 1888 [1], a draft plan for a social conference was adopted at a meeting in Madras, attended by many of the Congress delegates. A central committee, comprising representatives from all the Presidencies, was subsequently formed to organize this social reform conference in conjunction with the upcoming annual session of the Indian National Congress in Allahabad. This represented an indirect success for the Brahmo Samaj.

Conclusion

At the dawn of the twentieth century, we do not see Sivanath Sastri participating significantly in active politics. His activities were primarily confined to the promotional work of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. Although he had withdrawn from the practical or direct politics of that era, his ideals remained vibrant among his followers—individuals such as Ananda Mohan Basu, Bipin Chandra Pal, and many others. In this context, the observation made by Bipin Chandra Pal is highly significant: "While Surendranath was building political organizations among the young intellectuals of Calcutta, Sivanath Sastri was envisioning a group or community of socio-religious and political activists—individuals who would dedicate themselves entirely to the service of the nation, with the ultimate goal of achieving complete human liberation from all forms of theological, priestly, social, economic, and political constraints." In summary, Sivanath Sastri's role was akin to that of a master architect working behind the scenes of the main political stage; through the cultivation of self-reliance, patriotism, and moral character, he succeeded in shaping a spirited and progressive generation of youth for India's freedom struggle.

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