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Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee: The Prophet of Representative Democracy in India

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Abstract

The intellectual as well as cultural root of the remarkable resilience and the relative success of democracy in India lie in the formation of a liberal democratic intellectual tradition which was articulated in the nineteenth century in the socio-political context of emerging cognitive mind, broadly known as Renaissance or Post-enlightenment. Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, the first Indian Standing Counsel and the first President of Indian National Congress was one of those activist thinkers who rendered tremendous service to the liberal democratic ambience through his advocacy in favour of representative government. In other words, he was one of the earliest spokesmen of representative form of government in India.

Keywords: Democracy, Representative Government, Nineteenth Century, Renaissance, Activist-thinker

The intellectual as well as cultural root of the remarkable resilience and the relative success of democracy in India lie in the formation of a liberal democratic intellectual tradition which was articulated in the nineteenth century in the socio-political context of emerging cognitive mind, broadly known as Renaissance or Post-enlightenment. Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, the first Indian Standing Counsel and the first President of Indian National Congress was one of those activist thinkers who rendered tremendous service to the liberal democratic ambience through his advocacy in favour of representative government. In other words, he was one of the earliest spokesman of representative form of government in India.

By the last quarter of nineteenth century, as an inevitable consequence of the advent of national democratic school a keen political consciousness imbued with a nationalistic reverential feeling of 'Indian-ness' blew in the air with more profound demand of legitimate share in the governance by the Indians. In addition to the demand of hitherto political movements in the second half of nineteenth century a clear demand for representative and responsible government was put forward by the contemporary political modernizers, among whom the most prominent name was Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, (1844-1906), the first President of the Indian National Congress. The forth Indian barrister¹ of the Calcutta High Court Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee son of Girish Chandra Bonnerjee was born at

Kidderpore on 29th December, 1844. He took his education at the Oriental Seminary and the Hindu School, and later received the 'Rustomji Jamsetji Jeejeebhai Scholarship'² and he sailed for England to study law. Returning to Calcutta he joined the Bar of Calcutta High Court in November, 1868 and his eminent service to his profession made him the first Indian Standing Counsel to the Government of India. In 1884 he, on the recommendation of the then Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University, was selected as a member of the Senate of the university and later became the chairman of law faculty. In those days, on the basis of the 'Lord Cross Reforms' the Calcutta University used to enjoy the right to send a representative to the Bengal Legislative Assembly and contesting Raibahadur Rajkumar Sarbadhikari he became the first elected representative of Calcutta University and worked together with another renowned Bengali Ramesh Chandra Dutt during 1894 -1895 in the Bengal Legislative Assembly (Ray, 2010: 29-30). Woomesh Chandra became the first President of Indian National Congress in 1885 and subsequently he practiced in the Judicial Committee of the: Privy Council in England from June 1902 to 1906 (Sinha, 1968: 320). The illustrious activities of Woomesh Chandra came to an end at the age of sixty-two at Croydon in England on 21 July 1906.

The scarcity of existing literature on the role of Woomesh Chandra in the political affairs of late nineteenth century has always been a primary problem as he was undeservedly ignored in the main stream literature of that period. Among the handful of existing biographical works on Woomesh Chandra the earliest was *W.C. Bonnerjee: His Life, Letters and Speeches* (1923) authored by one of his correspondents and cousins Krishnalal Bandyopadhyay, which has explored his socio-political activities to a great extent. In 1944 two eminent biographical works on Woomesh Chandra were published by Sadhona Bonnerjee, the granddaughter of Woomesh Chandra and by Manmathanath Ghosh, the grandson of Girish Chander Ghosh who, according to a letter of Woomesh Chandra treated him as his own child (Roy, 2010). While the first book, *The life of W. C. Bonnerjee* (1944) written by Sadhona Bonnerjee has given a detailed account of the multifarious life of Woomesh Chandra the second one, *W.C. Bonnerjee: The First and Eighth President of Indian National Congress* (1944) has kindled up the important role of Woomesh Chandra in the Congress movement as well as emerging national movement in India. The book, *W.C. Bonnerjee: In the Horizon of life* (2010) is another important work written by Sukhendu Sekhar Roy. Apart from these works Ramgopal Sanyal's monumental work *A General Biography of Bengal Celebrities* (1976) is another book which has explored the life and role of Woomesh Chandra to a good extent. The basic problem associated with these literatures is that most of the work have focused chiefly on the role Woomesh Chandra as a barrister and as the counsel of Bengal Legislative Council, but the remarkable role of Woomesh Chandra in the broader field of political arena, more specifically in the creation of liberal democratic consciousness in contemporary society has remained unexplored.

Advocacy for Responsible and Representative Government: The most remarkable contribution of Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee to the advent of liberal democratic consciousness was his advocacy in favour of popular, responsible and representative

government in India. Being highly moved by his contemporary John Stuart Mill, the most prominent nineteenth century British liberal thinker, he regarded representative and responsible government as the only way through which people of India could 'emerge from darkness to light' (Bonnerjee, 1944: 60-61). Specially, in a time when the 'Mill-Stephen Controversy' over ideology of the British Raj to their colonies was high in the air, Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee ardently argued in favour of responsible and popular government based on liberal ideals in India. The controversy started with the brutal colonial policy of the then Jamaican Governor Edward Eyre towards a small group of rebels, the slave cultivators of Mordant Bay of West Indies, who rose in protest against their desperate economic condition in 1865 just after few years of almost similar unrest movements in India, i.e. Sepoy Mutiny and Indigo revolt in late 1850's. The way it was ruthlessly suppressed by Edward Eyre was vehemently criticized by John Stuart Mill who denounced his colonial policy as 'the abandonment of the rule of Law for that of arbitrary power'. But it was James Stephen³ the most out spoken exponent of 'authoritarian liberalism' openly, in his *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (1873) supported Eyre's policy since he maintained that "force was not an evil but a necessary element in the creation of a civilized social order" (Metcalf, 1994: 57). Like Bentham and unlike Mill he firmly believed that the British were the representative of a belligerent civilization whose 'rule over India' found its justification in the superiority of the conquering race and every progress that had been made in India had been forced upon it as a direct result of British power (e.g. prohibition of the practice of suttee and infanticide) (Stokes, 1959: 303). However, Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee and other contemporary liberal modernizers like Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan and Sisir Kumar Ghosh, while arguing for more representation of the Indians in all decision making institutions from legislative council to local administrative institutions, the two opposite policies of British Government became more explicit in their policies towards white-colonies and black-colonies-during 1860's. Such contrasting policy by the 'liberal' British rulers, it may be argued, led the Indian reformers disenchanted to them from that of the first half of the century. This opposite stand of the British Empire has been explored by Metcalf (1994: 54) who pointed:

"The process had begun in the 1840s with the publication of Durham report, which awarded responsible government to Britain's Canadian colonies. By 1867 Canada had been confederated and responsible government extended to Australia, Newzeland and the cape. Such a process of encouragement to colonial self-government was of course implicit in the liberal ideas.... By contrast, whether in Jamaica or India it was the empire of Rome which had imposed upon it the 'duty and task' and high privilege of extending the rule of law.... around the globe".

In almost same time 1867 (25th July) Woomesh Chandra delivered a remarkable speech on representative and responsible government and emphatically argued in favour of introducing such system of governance of India. Despite being an admirer of the liberal enlightened British ruler he never hesitated to denounce it in any occasion where they showed any form arbitration towards India. Through the speech he firmly argued – "My

opinion is that there ought to be a representative assembly and a senate sitting in India, with a power of veto to the Governor General as exists in America, with perhaps an absolute power of veto to the Crown” (Journal of East India Association, 1868: 176)

In Britain, he tried to create to strong public opinion in favour of representative and responsible government by vehemently criticizing the unrepresentative character of the duly passed ‘Council Act of 1861’. Through almost all the leading associations whether it was town hall in London or the London Indian Society, Woomesh Chandra whenever asked to participate in any meeting or debate tried to uphold the political and administrative grievances of India to the British people. At a meeting of London Indian Society he strongly argued for the introduction of representative and responsible government in India. In that meeting (25th July, 1865) he eloquently argued:

A popular government alone could help the Indian Community to emerge from darkness to light; and to pave the way for the advent of this popular government, it was desirable that Indians were entrusted with great responsibility in the administration as well as in the Council of India”. (Quoted in Sinha, 1968: 320)

Being a pragmatic political activist he honestly confessed that the mode of education of his countrymen was not only defective but also far from the level of those Western societies where parliamentary democracy based of liberal norms prevails. Nonetheless, he argued that the common people can easily accept and cope-up with the responsible and representative government in India. In the Journal of East India Association he claimed:

“To understand the people, you must go to them direct; you will then find that they possess remarkable degree of intelligence..... I do not mean to deny that their education is very defective. In fact, they might be said to possess no education at all, if we measure education by a European standard. But compared to their richer countrymen, they are, there can be no doubt, thoroughly capable of appreciating Representative Government, they are not a whit less educated than the lowest householders compared to the educated classes in this country.” (Journal of East Indian Association, 1867: 176)

W.C. Bonnerjee’s ardent desire for the positive reform of the existing bureaucratic form of Government in India, which was appeared in the late 1860’s when he was a student in England, long before he took leading role in the Congress movement during the late nineteenth century, was remarkable. Specially in a time when the contemporary modernizers in India like Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan and Sisir Kumar Ghosh through their rigorous political activities,⁴ were trying to shape the demand of more and more share in the governance by the Indians, Woomesh Chandra tried the same through the columns of the journal of East India Association. Needless to say, his strong arguments along with other political activities were gradually shaping an enlightened public opinion in England. In the Same meeting Woomesh Chandra firmly argued in favour of establishing popular government based on universal franchise. He argued:

“..... Unless the government be popular, can a political community, not duly constructed emerge from darkness to light? From the ignorance of political science which is the principle cause of misrule, to the knowledge of political science which were the best security against it, I see no reason whatever why the people of India are not capable of understanding and exercising the functions which naturally in here in Subjects possessing a representative Government.” (Journal of EIA, 1876: 178)

Thus Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, in his illustrious political activities ascribed most importance over representative and responsible government where it is the governed, the common people who use to possess the central position. Later, in course of his speech in the second session of Indian National Congress held at the Town Hall in Calcutta on 28th December, 1886 he strongly argued to have a representative form of government in India. During 1888 while he was in England in a meeting of London Agency at the Town Hall, Northampton sharing the panel of speakers along with Mr. Bradlaugh, M.P. and Dadabhai Naoroji, he tried to create a powerful public opinion by condemning the retrograde, unrepresentative and irresponsible character of the Legislative Council in India. He, in the course of his speech pointed out:

“My task is to lay before you the grievances of that country in order that you may consider them, and see for yourselves whether there are no means by which you redress them. Now the first grievance that we labour under is that there is no responsible government in India at all....” (*Indian Mirror*, 13th September, 1888).

Again during the early twentieth century when he was in England practicing in the Privy Council he delivered a speech at the Westbourne Park claiming Indian representation in the ‘executive Council’ in India, so that the native grievances could be remedied in a proper manner (Ray,2010: 62).

Such introspection about the enormous significance of the responsible government has revealed his rational democratic mind where it was the governed that always occupy the central position in his political thought. Being an staunch admirer of Western liberal and democratic ideas Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee ascribed most importance on the responsible government based on proportional representation of the governed whose voice could be placed in a democratic manner in the decision making process, unless what, according to him ‘a political community could never be emerge from darkness to light.’(Sanyal, 1976:41)

Associational Life of Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee: Pioneering Anti-absolutist Liberal Movement: The rising civil-societal movement, both in India as well as England was one of the most remarkable factors in the process of building a nationalistic, democratic and anti-absolutist movement. Though there were a handful of civil societal organizations⁵ emerged in the first half of nineteenth century, it was only in the second half of the century when nature, role and emphasis of the newly emerged civil societal associations and political associations, viz British Indian Association (1951), Indian League (1875), Indian

Association (1876), the National Conference (1883), Indian National Congress (1885) have been shifted from collaboration to criticism; from the centers of Bengali *zamindar* elites to the centers of mass participation in public issues against the various ill-conceived measures⁶ of the East India Company (till 1858) as well as of the British Government (in post 1858 era). In other words, these civil and political associations emerged during 1870s and 1880s with headquarters in Calcutta took most significant role in creating a more sustained anti-absolutist spirit of opposition to the British in the second half of nineteenth century (Seal, 1968 : 206). Needless to say, Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee took significant role in the promotion of such spirit through various associations in India as well as in England.

Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee's first associational activity can be traced back to his student-hood in London where he, with other Indian students worked hard to establish "The Indian society" in London in 1867 in order to bring the socio-political and administrative questions of India under the scanner of the enlightened British public opinion. In course of time Dadabhai Naoroji and he himself became the President and the secretary of that organization respectively (Ray, 2010: 20). In 1884 Woomesh Chandra on the recommendation of Justice Peggot, the honorable Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University, was selected as a member of the Senate of the University and the chairman of the Law Faculty.⁷ His contribution to these institutions was remarkable which brought him the opportunity to be elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly.⁸ During 1888, while Woomesh Chandra was in England he met Messrs Digby and Dadabhai Naoroji, and with both of their assistance he started the London Agency and took the responsibility to raise fund in India for the support (Sanyal, 1976: 41). During this short period of only eight months he extensively went to different centers of intelligence and socio-political associations in order to create a strong public opinion in England for the overall development of India.

Among his numerous public speeches delivered in different associations the speech delivered in a meeting at the Town Hall in Northampton was remarkable as it, for his great oratory skill drew the attention of almost all the leading English daily in England. The most significant ingredient of his speeches was that he never hesitated to raise questions against the arbitrary measures of the government and vehemently denounced almost all the lacunas connected to the governance in India. In that meeting of Northampton he, after the speeches of Mr. Bradlaugh, the distinguished member of the House of Commons and Dadabhai Naoroji vehemently criticized the irresponsible and unrepresentative charter of the government in India (Sinha, 1968: 321). Pointing this grievance to the house he claimed:

"The Government of India is in the hands of one of her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of state, called the Secretary of States for India, who is assisted by a Council, but would you believe it that this gentleman, the Secretary of State and his Council are sometimes ignorant of things which private members of Parliament are in full possession of?..... When any question asked in the House of Commons of the

Under Secretary the answer invariable is – “the secretary of state has no official knowledge of the matter” (*Indian Mirror*, September 13, 1888)

Besides such criticism against the shortcoming of the British governance in India, Woomesh Chandra elaborately pointed out the nature of ill-governance prevailed in the Country. “In India”, he argued, “the supreme rule is in the hands of the Viceroy and his Council. They act from the information which they receive from the District Officials..... and it is the officials who are entrusted with the charge of this districts who have the weal or Woe of the country in their hands, and when you appeal against any action of theirs (the District Officers) to the Viceroy, you do not get any reply for months, and as a matter of fact the only reply vouchsafed is that the Viceroy sees no reason to interfere” (Quoted in Sanyal, 1976: 42). Thus, condemning the nature of governance and the role of District Officers he urged the Viceroys to seek any form of information from the people directly in order to gift the country the blessing of good governance. Ascribing most importance on the common people he regretted that “the Officials, instead of seeking any information from the governed used to seek it from those native persons of their choice, who are not responsible to anybody, and they may give such answers as may chime in with the views known to be held by the District Officer, and instead of getting good advice from responsible persons, the District Officers generally gets advice that leads him to take action not in accordance with the will of the Country.” (*Indian Mirror* Sept. 13, 1888)

Thus, criticizing the system of governance tooth and nail, he tried to create a strong public opinion in England so that intended administrative reformations could be introduced in India. All he intended was to have people-oriented governance where the feelings of the people could be reflected through governmental policies, which it may be argued, led him condemn the unpopular character of the Secretary of the State and his Council in the following manner:

“The Secretary of the State for India monopolized all power, yet he, together with his Council, was completely ignorant to the true state of things in India. For his knowledge of Indian affairs he was dependent on information from the Viceroy whose own source of information was nothing better than the European District Officers, who never judge any problem from the Indian view point.” (Quoted in Sinha, 1968:321)

His great zeal for the introduction of representative institutions in India was reflected through all the organization he was associated with. Regarding the unrepresentative character of the Viceroy’s Council as “responsible for the sorry state of things in India” he firmly argued: “What we want and have a right to get is that our countrymen should have the opportunity of really representing to the Government the views of the people of this country. What we want is that there should be a responsible Government in India.”⁹

Such an advocacy for the sake of having an opportunity to raise voice at the decision making institutions, it may be claimed, unveils his deep love to the liberal democratic ideals. This is why he regarded the prevailing of representative institutions as the basic

precondition for the “happiness and well-being of the people in any civilized country” (*Indian Mirror*, 13 Sept. 1888). Apart from these associational activities, both as an intellectual leader as well as an activist his political views were vividly reflected by his close association with Indian National Congress, which took a significant role in the building of national reverential feeling as well as liberal democratic ambience in India during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

The National Congress and Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee: The Advent of Liberal Constitutional Movement: In any history connected to the liberal constitutional movement in modern India, perhaps the most significant incident was the establishment of Indian National Congress¹⁰ in the late 1885 as a remarkable embodiment of the combined action and energies of the newly educated intelligentsia to ameliorate the political and Social problems of India, with which the name of Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee is directly associated as its first and eighth President and a life-member. The Credit of organizing the National Congress belongs to Alan Octavian Hume who, according to Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee conceived the idea in 1884 that it would be great advantage to the Country if the leading Indian politicians could be brought together once a year to discuss social matters. Hume did not desire that the political matters should form part of their discussion because the contemporary political bodies of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras might suffer in importance if Indian politicians from different parts of the Country come together and discuss politics. Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee also claimed that it was Lord Dufferin (the successor of Lord Ripon), who came to know about the Hume’s plan at Simla, suggested the latter to include politics also as its part of discussion and convinced him that “it would perform functions similar to those of Her Majesty’s opposition in England¹¹ (Bonnerjee, 1944: 68-69). However, the historical inaugural meeting at Bombay were attended by seventy two invited members among whom there were only three¹² out of Six invitees from Bengal namely – Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, Narendranath Sen, the then editor of *Indian Mirror* and Girizabhusan Mukherjee, the editor of the *Naba Bibhakar* (Banerjee, 1998: 92-95) were present and it was, perhaps the most remarkable event in Woomesh Chandra’s life that he was elected, quite unanimously, the first President¹³ of the National Congress which according to Hume would work as “the Safety Valve” (Grover, 1963: 132, Chandra, 2009: 209) for the Indians for canalizing the leading and progressive Indian public opinion along constitutional lines. Here again, at the auspicious moment of the inauguration of this National Congress Woomesh Chandra in the brief Presidential address clearly emphasized on the importance of forming and expanding local government in provinces on the basis of representation, which was echoed invariably from almost all the platforms of civil and political association he was connected with.

It is important to note that from the very incipient phase the National Congress tried to build a constitutional movement based on liberal democratic ideas. Among the nine resolutions passed at the first session of Indian National Congress the most significant in terms of its liberal and constitutional aspect was the third one which intended “the reform and expansion of the supreme and existing local Legislative Councils by the admission of a

considerable proportion of elected members”, which was given supreme priority by the President Woomesh Chandra in his speech at the inaugural session at Bombay. He also advocated that India should be given self-rule like the Canadian type and detailing the primary objectives of the Indian National Congress he from liberal democratic point of view argued that “the basis of the Government should be widened and that the people should have their proper and legitimate share in it.” (Bandopadhyay, 1923: 72)

In the second Session of the National Congress held at the Town Hall in Calcutta (on and from 28th December, 1886) Woomesh Chandra, in course of his Speech gave most importance to particularly two issues, viz. criticized the prevalent jury system and proposed to form standing Committee in each province, so that the leaders could maintained unhindered contact among themselves (Sanyal, 1976: 48).

One of the most important ideals of modern liberal democracy is the ideal of liberal tolerance and secularism. It was Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee who took tremendous role in promoting such ideals during the third session of National Congress in 1887 held at Madras. By the time the Muslim society was a bit suspicious over the true motive of the foundation of National Congress, which was rightly anticipated by Woomesh Chandra. Therefore he proposed the name of Badruddin Tyabji, one of his old friends as the President of the Congress and tried to promote the liberal secular motive of the Congress through his renowned speech at the session. He argued:

“I am very sorry, indeed, to say it, but there is no disguising the fact, that in Bengal, in some quarters, amongst our Mahommedan friends, some misapprehension as to the scope and objects of our National Congress still exists, and it is absolutely necessary that misapprehension should be removed, and that we should in fact, as we are in thought, one community and one country owing allegiance to one sovereign. The misapprehension under which those Mahommedan gentlemen, some of them at least labour, who do not cordially sympathized with us, is due, I believe, to an apprehension that the question of “Representative Government”, which was presented to the Congress of the year 1885, which was again press by the congress of the year 1886,.....will practically prove to be conducive to the interest of the Mahommedan population of his country” (Quoted in Ray, 2010: 49-50).

All he ardently desired was the equal representation of all creeds and sects of India and tried to create a liberal and secular consciousness through the biggest national platform, i.e. Indian National Congress. His liberal introspection could easily anticipate a fatal outcome of such misapprehension among the Muslim community and therefore, he earnestly tried to promote a liberal and secular ambience in the third session of the National Congress. In the same address he pointed out:

“There is nothing in the objects and scope of this National Congress, which can, directly or indirectly be in any way inimical to the interest of our Mahommedan fellow countrymen, or of any other section of the community. We want a representative Government in its truest and best sense.... And I am speaking, on

behalf of every community in the country, so that the whole of India may be perfectly represented to the governing authorities—so that their grievances may be remedied. (quoted in Ray, 2010 : 51)

Thus, session by session¹⁴ Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee through his illustrious political activities took remarkable role in creating a liberal democratic political consciousness in the late nineteenth century. In the fourth session of Congress held at Allahabad on 29th December 1888 he ascribed enormous importance on the appointment of a Parliamentary Committee consisting of representative belonging to both England and India. (Majumdar, 1974: 64-65, Ray, 2010: 51-52) In the eighth session of National Congress held at Allahabad in 1892, Woomesh Chandra was re-elected as President, which was remarkable in terms of the initiation of liberal constitutional movement as he directly and vehemently criticized the prevalent Jury system of the country as well as denounced the undemocratic character of the Legislative Council and local bodies. In course of his Presidential speech he, addressing the prevailing system as ‘modus operandi’, argued:

“The Secretary of state thinks that a particular measure ought to be passed and that it may be taken that he honestly believes that the measure would be for the benefit of the country. He invites two or three Indian gentlemen of eminence, with whom he is acquainted to see him. He speaks to them in private, and gets their views, which unfortunately, in the case of these gentlemen, generally coincide with the views he himself holds (Laughter). The measure is passed. There is a great cry of indignation in the country. The answer of the Government is— ‘Oh, but we have consulted the leaders of your society! and it is with their help this measure has been passed.’” (Presidential Speech of W.C. Bonnerjee, 8th session of National Congress, 1892)

All he wanted was that the views, aspirations and grievances of the people should be represented in a proper manner. He firmly believed that it was the Officials (and not the viceroy or the Governor General) upon whom the ‘weal and Woe’ is depended because they, while administering the justice come in contact with the people directly. Arguing for governed – oriented responsible system he did not hesitate to condemn –

“I repeat that those who placed over us, our Viceroy, Governors, Lieutenant Governors and others of better degree are more or less equated by the desire to do us good, both for their own sake as well as for the people of our country; but the system under which they work is a vicious one, and the result is no good is really done.” (Quoted in Ray. 2010:101)

He never bothered to raise questions against the omnipotent British Government which, it is praiseworthy to note took remarkable role in the promotion of liberal democratic political consciousness in the late nineteenth century. In the same manner he criticized tooth and nail the existing judicial system which it must be noted, have been criticized throughout the whole nineteenth century by different liberal modernizers like Rammohun Roy, Ramgopal Ghose and Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan in different form and different occasions.

Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee, it may be claimed, took significant role in promoting the liberal democratic political ambience in the last quarter of the nineteenth century through his vigorous political activities— championing the principle of governed-oriented responsible administration; having legitimate share of the people in the governance through the principle of representative government; advocacy for Indianization of judicial system by expanding it through jury system; advocating for freedom of speech and press and so on. He was closely associated with the Congress movement which, Surendranath Banerjea, in his *A Nation in making* acknowledged as: “In his (Woomesh Chandra) time it would be no exaggeration to say he was the leader of the Congress movement in Bengal. He was not an agitator in the ordinary sense.... But his words stink in the nostrils of some of our official. His association with the movement gave it a dignity” (Banerjea, 1998: 161)

Notes:

1. The first three Indian barristers of Calcutta High Court were Gyanendra Mohan Tagore, Manomohun Ghosh and Michael Madhusudhan Dutta. (see, Roy, 2010: 27-28)
2. ‘Rustomji Jamsetji Jejeebhai Scholarship’ was a Scholarship of three lacs donated by Mr. Rustomji to the Government for three Indian students to enable them to study Law in England. It was Girish Chandra Ghosh the turbulent editor to ‘*Bengalee*’, who inspired Woomesh to apply for the scholarship as it was decided to offer to three native students from Calcutta, Bombay and Madras each from one place. (See Ghosh, Manomathnath (1911), *The Life of Girish Chandra Ghosh*: 109-110.)
3. James Fitzjames Stephen was the legal member of Viceroy’s Council who strongly believed the Benthamite philosophy and ultimately the Hobbsian. Unlike J. S. Mill he believed in the ‘Greatest happiness of the greatest people’ principle. (for detail, see Metcalf, 1994: 56-60)
4. In contemporary Bengal, both Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan and Sisir Kumar Ghosh took remarkable role in creating a liberal public opinion in favour of introducing representative and responsible government through their liberal journalism and associational activities in the various civil societal political organizations viz. British Indian Association (1851) and Indian League (1875) which have been explored in the previous chapter to a good extent.
5. In the first half of nineteenth century as Partha Chatterjee in his “the Black Hole of Empire” (2013) claimed some important civil societal associations emerged in Calcutta and two remarkable political associations, namely ‘Landholders Association’ (1837) and ‘Bengal British Indian Association’ (1843) were established. (See Chatterjee, 2013, Majumdar, 1965).
6. Some of those issues which, breaking the illusion made a clear feeling of estrangement were the ‘Black Act Controversy’ on the issue of racial discrimination, Press Censorship Act etc. (See Shastri, 2007: 120-30)

7. By then he also became the first Indian who was appointed to the Standing Council where he worked for four terms.
8. In those days, according to Lord Cros's reform the Calcutta University enjoyed the privilege to send a representative to the Bengal Legislative Assembly. In the election he contested Raibahadur Rajkumar Sarbadhikari. While Woomesh Chandra's name was proposed it was Maharaja Narendra Krishna Dev Bahadur who supported Rajkumar Sarbadhikari. However, it was Woomesh Chandra Bonnerjee who became the first Indian representative elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly and worked together with Ramesh Chandra Dutt, the nominated member in the Legislative Assembly. (See Roy, 2010: 29-30).
9. In course of his presidential speech delivered at the 8th session of the Indian National Congress, 1892 he firmly advocated in favour of introducing representative and responsible government in India (Roy, 1892: 97).
10. It was originally named as 'Indian National Union' and was dubbed the new name Indian National Congress at the inaugural session on Monday, 28 December 1885 in the Hall of the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College and Boarding House in Bombay. (For details see Ray N.R, 1985: 1)
11. Dr. Biman Behari Majumdar did not accept W. C. Bonnerjee's claim that Lord Dufferin came to know the plan of establishing National Congress from Hume at Simla and convinced him to incorporate political issues also along with Social problems. (For detailed account of Majumdar's arguments , see Majumdar, 1965: 186-87)
12. Surendranath Banerjea and other contemporary renowned political figures were absent in the inaugural session of the National Congress as the second National Conference was being held at Calcutta at the same time. (see Banerjea, 1998: 92)
13. W. C. Bonnerjee's name was proposed by Hume and Seconded by S. Subrahmaniam Iyer and T. K. Talang. The proposal read, "Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, Standing Counsel Bengal is invited to assume the office of the President of the Congress."
14. Woomesh Chandra, though never missed any session of the Indian National Congress could not attend the sixth session due to the premature demise of his third son Saral Krishna Keats. (For details, see Bonnerjee, S., 1944: 68-72)

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