SOCIAL ETHICS
IN
MODERN HINDUISM

THE RELIGIOUS QUEST OF INDIA

SOCIAL ETHICS IN MODERN HINDUISM

BY

ROLAND W. SCOTT

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TO

CAROL AND THE BOYS

PREFACE

The rise and development of modern Indian society have confronted Hindu religion and culture with some critical problems. These are found where the individual's religious concern for salvation meets his new moral awareness of social responsibility. The influences of these two human interests have had significant effects upon the Hindu view of life. The close relation of religion and society in traditional thought and practice has been profoundly disturbed in modern times, making necessary a new adjustment of the spiritual resources of Hinduism to different forms and conceptions of human life. As a result, an ethical situation has been created with important religious and social consequences.

The modern Hindu has sought to solve human problems by applying himself directly to them, and thus giving less heed to the patterns of traditional belief and practice. There has been an awakening to new responsibility for those groups and sections of society for whom previously there was no concern. Although the designation "modern Hinduism" is associated with a definite period of history, it is not simply an historical description. Those Hindus are included in it who have consciously attempted to adapt themselves to the changing conditions of modern times, while they continue certain forms of allegiance to the religious and social culture of India's past. This attitude separates religion from its alliance with some traditional ideas and practices, and seeks to achieve a fresh integration of religious values with modern political, economic, and social institutions.

The age-old Hindu morality, based on the hierarchical order of the caste system, required strict observance of customary patterns of behaviour with their appropriate religious sanctions. This largely obscured the underlying principles, and behaviour became mainly a matter of habit allowing very few opportunities for individual action which opposed the established ways of thinking and acting. The modern challenge to this order of life has led some Hindus to seek an ethic conducive to general human welfare without distinctions of caste or sex. It has produced a moral view of life which has become a means to immediate social benefits. But the achievements have been often limited by the tendency of many modern leaders also to follow traditional ways.

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature and development of Hindu ethical thought from the early nineteenth century to the beginning of India's national independence. Chapter one is an analysis of the religious situation in a changing society, in which the social function of religion is seen to be that of approving the values of ancient culture which harmonize with those accepted in modern society. There is a description in chapter two of the

manner in which the leaders of the nineteenth century religious movements undertook the task of reforming Hinduism according to their new ideals. Chapters three to five deal with the ethical implications of the major political and economic developments, especially those that culminated in the formation of the nation and its achievement of independence. Two major problems which arose as the result of democratic standards of life being brought into Hindu society are studied in chapters six and seven. There the incompatibility of caste with the growth of modern democratic society, and the emancipation of women from their disabilities are shown with the religious interpretations of these movements. The conclusions in the last chapter deal with the new view of life which has arisen out of the whole religious and social situation, and the extent to which Hindu religion has been affected by it.

There are teachers and other friends who have helped me in ways that could not be specified here. While expressing a deep sense of gratitude to them generally, I wish to mention a few to whom I owe a great deal. The guidance and suggestions of Professor G. W. Briggs and Dr. P. D. Devanandan given on many occasions during the preparation of this dissertation, which was submitted to Columbia University in 1948, became increasingly valuable in the course of its development. Dr. Devanandan, in addition to much friendly criticism and advice in New York City, has now continued his interest by having the work published by the Young Men's Christian Association in India. The Rev. J. K. Mathews and the Division of Foreign Missions, of which he is a Secretary, made it possible for me to have the time for research and writing, and now have materially aided in the publication. My warm appreciation must also be expressed for the patient typing of the manuscript by Mrs. J. K. Mathews and Miss Yvonne Munro. With all such pleasant recognition of the help others have given me, I must add that the deficiencies which remain are mine alone.

ROLAND W. SCOTT

Nagpur,
April 14, 1952

CHAPTER I

MORAL VALUES IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

CHAPTER ONE

MORAL VALUES IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

1. The Individual and a Changing Society

In modern times Hinduism has found new expression through those of its adherents who have sought to relate a changing social experience to the sources of their religious and cultural life. Although determined to maintain their religious identity throughout a revolutionary transition, these Hindus have adopted ideas and practices with radical implications for the religious basis of their life and society. The movement has not resulted in a disruption of the traditional religious thought and cultus, but the social relations and attitudes of the individual have gradually altered, and this has affected also the outer structure of the religion. The task has been largely a moral one, in which the ideals that have guided the modern Hindu and the values that have emerged in his struggle to change his society are descriptive both of his present experience and of the shape of things to come.

A dynamic relationship of the Hindu individual with his environment has been possible by a changed conception of the significance of human life and by adopting the modern means for realizing it in society. Major influences have been exerted through the development of religious, social, political, and economic institutions, calling for vital responses from the individual and offering immediate benefits to him. He has come to realize that he can work with his environment to secure changes in those conditions that by tradition had been believed to be beyond any immediate human alteration. The forces that make and shape his society have come within his control, and do not any longer require or imply his resignation to an inscrutable fate.[1] Rather they challenge him to a growing conception of the necessity and possibility of social reconstruction. Modern India is alert with

[1] See Kewal Motwani's objectives for social reconstruction in *Science and Society in India*, pp. 74 ff.

movements that have stirred its dormant strength to new life. Religious and social Hinduism has been decisively affected by these vital forces. The struggle of man with man and with his surroundings, said Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, is "of the physical, intellectual and moral plane out of which new things take shape and fresh ideas are born."[2]

Still Hindu society has been described in recent times as "inert" and in its slumbers.[3] This is the traditional structure which has not yet responded to the dynamic activities of its modern representatives and the influences external to Hinduism. For many centuries this society has rigidly influenced the thought and activity of the individual person in patterns of social and religious tradition that are based on a moral determinism of heredity and environment. Impressive sanctions have been employed to secure conformity with its accepted modes of behaviour. Within the limits of such social existence little opportunity has been available for the individual to effect any immediate change in his status or to improve very materially the conditions on which his welfare depends. Desirable social changes have been possible only by the operation of religious and moral forces beyond immediate human comprehension or control, and functioning in a highly stratified social organization. The individual must hope for another birth and a different life to secure those goods essential to human happiness, while for the present he is subject to an inscrutable destiny, the thought of which thwarts his efforts to improve himself and his environment. If society has dealt with him according to laws and attitudes that are less favourable than those to which individuals in other groups have been accustomed, he has understood this as a present justice to be patiently accepted in the belief that the social system with its religious rationale is right and good whether or not he can understand it.

The Hindu in modern times has found that a fundamental condition of a dynamic society is a free individual able to determine his relationship to the social structure and, consequently, at liberty to criticize effectively its constitution and nature. The religious and social leaders of neo-Hinduism, by breaking away

[2] *The Discovery of India*, p. 573.
[3] N. A. Sarma in *Woman and Society*, p. 7.

from the traditional patterns of conduct which they generally called "custom", indicated how clearly they sensed this new freedom of the individual.[4] They saw themselves born not to conform to custom but to contest its religiously sanctioned claims when it was found to be detrimental to what they believed human life ought to be. The stirring appeals of such men as Mahadev Ranade, Swami Vivekananda and Mohandas K. Gandhi to a latent freedom in every man show how profoundly this new knowledge of the individual's dynamic relationship with his environment came to be realized. Fresh insights into the desires, motives and reasons that direct men in society made very clear the fact that above all the individual must exercise the liberty, not only of criticizing social and religious institutions, but of maintaining an objective freedom in relation to them. "Remember that institutions are only means to ends," Lala Lajpat Rai reminded his countrymen. "They are for us and not we for them. . . Institutions cannot instil life, cannot be a source of inspiration, unless led by men of life and spirit."[5]

First it was those who imbibed the effects of the new education and who had opportunity for wider contacts and knowledge than were allowed by the compact society of the village community, that broke loose from habitual modes of thought and activity. The aggressive culture of the West moved into India bringing with it causes for new hopes and fresh anxieties. Desires were aroused, ideas formulated and values determined in the milieu of conflicting cultures. Hindus studied and lived in a world in which ideals of nationality, democracy, freedom, equality and the dignity of every person became more common. They began to ask, observed Dr. Helmuth von Glasenapp, why these were not valuable for their own society as well as for the West.[6] Eager for education, business and travel they mixed with different classes, ate with other castes, and crossed the ocean though threatened with the loss of caste for doing so. Their freshly aroused needs and aspirations found expression in a different kind of personality—independent, self-reliant and energetic. But they stood, relatively a small group, on the

[4] See *The English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy*, p. 224; and P. C. Mozoomdar, *Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen.*

[5] *India's Will to Freedom*, p. 57. [6] *Der Hinduismus*, p. 418.

margins of the old society, critical of it, but, with a few exceptions, never breaking completely away from it.

Throughout the nineteenth century the masses still remained much as they had been: resigned to *karma*, caste and climate. This attitude prevailed as well in relation to the new economic and political systems introduced from the West. The masses were untouched by the new education, travel and the immediate hope of any adequate provision for the primary necessities of life. Whatever the causes leading to the economic destitution of so many of India's people in the nineteenth century, they were victims of these conditions without the knowledge of, or the means for, relief. By following habit they held to the old institutions. The leaders, who had accepted for themselves new moral values and standards, first tried to induce reforms in religion and society intended to meet specific needs as well as to improve general human welfare. Favourable response was meagre, and, more frequently than not, reaction was sharply antagonistic. In fact, the reformers were told that the very people whom they were trying to help were not interested in any supposed improvement. To such protests Mahadev Ranade, for instance, gave spirited reply, "Perhaps the worst effect of injustice is that it depresses the downtrodden victims to such an extent that they lick the hand of the oppressor."[1] Society as a whole was not greatly changed through the reformers' appeals to a better way of life. If sympathy was expressed for the socially and religiously oppressed, it did not lead to any wide action. The reformers in effecting a few changes were challenged by other educated Hindus with having alienated themselves from essential modes of Hindu thought and practice. While the traditional patterns remained intact, new ideas were being established in the minds of the few whose courage permitted them to suggest changes alarming to others who continued to believe in the inalterable value of the old institutions. The acceptance of modern social conceptions, and the assertion of individual freedom and equality, a significant achievement in itself, laid the basis in the nineteenth century for the more profound movements that were to follow.

Modern social forces also could not fail to affect the masses

[1] *Religious and Social Reform*, pp. 104-5.

among whom were created those conceptions of human welfare which held some promise of immediate realization. Although still largely confined to their village communities, the poor and depressed classes could not fail to be affected by the opportunity of different economic activities, followed by political and judicial administration that established new principles of justice. An alien religion with universal sympathies of human brotherhood and an urge to serve the whole of society offered hope to the smothered discontents of the oppressed classes. The news of the outer world began to invade the self-contained existence of village life. It was a different world than the peasant saw nearby, one that was active and forceful, even hostile and vengeful in a war that reached to the villages of India for its recruits. Thus the masses gradually realized themselves as part of a far larger society in which men not only voiced their discontents but aggressively sought to achieve justice. The growing consciousness of nationhood brought a new social evaluation, no longer in terms of particularistic caste interests but of a far more inclusive community with frontiers widely transcending caste groups.

While the reformers, in an effort to secure the support of the privileged castes, confined themselves almost entirely to altruistic and humanitarian appeals, their persuasive efforts to achieve a transformation of social attitudes accomplished only limited results. An arousal of religious and social self-interest among caste Hindus was noticeably more effective. Twentieth century reform leaders, such as Mahatma Gandhi, put the matter in stark terms of realism. They declared that the untouchables' status and conditions of livelihood had to be improved by caste people and these oppressed classes allowed opportunities of self-development or Hinduism itself could not be saved. Popular movements began to arise following the lines of recent social developments. The economic masses became articulate, seeking for relief from poverty, an ideal that had been introduced as one of the potent instruments of the national struggle. Organization of the labouring classes and the agriculturists, while serving an immediate purpose for new political objectives, also laid a basis for action against the economic inequalities in both traditional caste and feudal landlord systems and modern capitalistic society. Relief from the disabilities suffer-

ed for so long by Hindu women and girls received little popular support or even recognition from men until women themselves joined the non-violent phase of the political movement, and began to work out their own individual and social salvation. With convictions and emotions organized around the need for self-preservation, food, shelter, equality of opportunity and individual as well as social liberty, Hindus began to undergo even more profound changes.

These various factors in the social situation illustrate very well the fact that the most compelling ethical interest has been to discover the nature of, and the means to, human welfare, and give the highest moral sanction to its achievement. The political unification of India under a single though foreign power helped to provide a universalistic character to all human concerns, so that welfare came to mean more and more the good of the entire population. It brought some ultimate claim of responsibility upon the nation's natural and human resources. There was a note of expediency in this recognition of human values, as will be seen, but beyond these less worthy considerations there was faith in a moral law which applies without distinction to all people. If the concern for human welfare introduced a utilitarian moral motive into social change, in a sense this was counteracted by the religious motive with its absolutist claims.[8] At least both were evident in the socio-moral complex. The broad and urgent concern for the well-being of the whole people led to a new standard of service which was a pre-requisite to the modern moral view. For, said Mahatma Gandhi with this universalism in mind, "so long as we think otherwise, we cannot call ourselves moral men."[9]

2. Cultural and Religious Vitality

The conflict of Hindu and Western cultures led to a search for elements of fundamental soundness and vitality in Indian life and thought. The initial reaction to Hinduism in the early nineteenth century introduced such insecurity as could be overcome only by an assertion of the values inherent in ancient Hindu culture. This

[8] See S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. 58 ff.
[9] *Ethical Religion*, p. 57.

succeeded in keeping Hindus from being sundered from the sources of their existence while acknowledging, at the same time, the valid impact of new ideals of individual and social life. The effect was to lead to a revival of Hinduism under modern forms, such as in the religious movements of the last century with their strong socio-ethical tendencies. It also led to a penetrating examination of the ancient religion to discover its relevance for the modern age into which India was rapidly advancing. A great deal of constructive work of interpretation was done by those figures who dominated the field from Raja Rammohan Roy to the political and social leaders of the twentieth century. Until recent times this cultural interpretation was almost entirely religious in context and content. But religious vitality was achieved very largely through the new social evaluation of Hinduism in which the goals were formulated in terms of social welfare and human benefit.[10]

Almost invariably religious interpretation followed the line of distinguishing between the enduring elements of religious life and experience, largely individual in character, and those institutions which were rejected by a growing social criticism. Whatever may have been the rationale for such interpretation, the reality of religion was sought in those elements of human activity which were undefiled by social injustice, inequality and lack of individual freedom. Social institutions, it was said, may have to be discarded, or altered, but not so the fundamental insights of religion. The effort to dissociate religion from undesirable social institutions met with difficulty and only partial success. For it was clear that the integration of religion with traditional forms of social conduct was so complete that to separate them did not leave religion free from its responsibility for institutional developments. In their efforts to save religion from the ravages of sudden change, modern Hindus tended to ignore the fact that religion must be held in some way accountable for social maladies with which it has been long associated, and has failed to criticize effectively. A particular religion may evaluate itself in terms of its "spiritual" sources, and in this the Hindu did what every interpreter of religion does who

[10] See Radhakrishnan's comment on Rammohan Roy, who attempted to preserve cultural and religious continuity and yet assimilate social values derived from the West. *Modern India and the West* (Ed. O'Malley), p. 344.

seeks to regain its original vitality. Thus a Hindu cultural optimism developed, largely substantiated by the movement for national independence to which it also contributed. This optimism was expressed in expansive and universalistic terms, planting Hindu religion in new soils for fruitful development.

The reformation of the religious position was contingent upon a growing social criticism that required Hinduism to find and develop a more adequate social basis. Thus, the caste system was condemned as unjust and "fantastic", particularly in its sub-caste or out-caste structure.[11] Modern moral necessities and opportunities brought Hindus to feel the need of a new social consciousness, and to realize what Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan called "the undemocratic character of the institutions associated with Hindu religion."[12] They traced the weakness of India to the "lack of social sense and imagination." While religious and cultural renewal was sought from early Indo-Aryan sources, a new form of vitality was found within the structure of modern society. So, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, when evaluating the intense individualism of early Indian culture as a remarkable achievement, stated that it nevertheless led the people "to attach little importance to the social aspect of man's duty to society."[13] There had been, he continued, no conception of society as a whole, and no attempt made to bring the individual to feel a social solidarity.

The modern interpreters of Hinduism emphasized the changed moral view which completely transformed the religious situation. They stated that Hinduism in this process had become an ethical religion with a social gospel.[14] The socio-ethical motivation became explicit in the re-interpretation of the old social principles by means of modern psychological and social concepts, and political and economic necessities. Thus the basis of the caste system was transmuted into a four-fold class order whose justification was found in values inherent in four different types of human personality corresponding to the exigencies of a modern social order. Although an implicit religious and cultural motive led to such a

[11] Thus Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. III, p. 132; vol. V, pp. 19, 235.
[12] *Modern India and the West* (Ed. O'Malley), p. 350.
[13] *Discovery*, p. 85.
[14] S. Radhakrishnan, in *Modern India*, p. 353.

rationale, economic, political and social considerations were adduced in support of what was called the "natural hierarchy" of the Hindu social system.[15] It was notably pragmatic and not transcendental and religious support that was sought for this view, so that the concepts of *karma* and *samsara* were reduced to a minor position.

The vitality of religion, then, was found largely in terms of "spiritual values" which were traced to sources of religious and social experience in ancient India, and were said to be a part of the unchanging essence of Hinduism.[16] "Our values do not change; but the ways and means of expressing them do."[17] Thus, this view ran, the enduring qualities of religion were to be found in its values which were to be, and could be, expressed in modern society. This was illustrated, for example, in the reply of Gandhiji to the objection that his early programme of non-co-operation "could be resorted to only by unworldly men" since it belonged to *sannyas*, or the ideal of world-renunciation.[18] Gandhi refused to accept the validity of this criticism of the religious values in his political movement, insisting instead that non-co-operation by its very nature was "even open to children of understanding and can be safely practised by the masses." The efforts at application of the individualistic ideals of an early age to the exigencies of modern social life produced in great measure that vitality which broke religious and cultural Hinduism loose from its traditional social moorings. It can be observed that what appeared to modern man as of value in primitive times was essentially that which appealed to him as valuable in his own experience.

It was the moral character of this religious and social development that impressed the observer. "One thing took deep root in me," wrote Gandhi of his early experience, "the conviction that morality is the basis of things, and that truth is the substance of morality."[19] The good of the people and the welfare of humanity at large became the goal, whether of the religious man who thought

[15] See Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, pp. 355 ff. Also A. Coomaraswamy, *The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society*.
[16] Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society*, pp. 16, 102 ff., 115, 220 ff.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 102.
[18] *Young India 1919-1922*, pp. 222-3. See Radhakrishnan, *Religion*, pp. 233 ff.
[19] *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, vol. I, p. 87.

of some ideal of life beyond social experience, or of the man who felt no strong religious impulse and found greater satisfaction in a collective struggle for the human good of this world. This secularist tendency must be noted, although an ethic without strong religious presuppositions and associations was not apparent until fairly recent times. The diminishing religious basis of Hindu social life was noted in 1912 by the Editor of *The Indian Social Reformer,* when he wrote, "The fact is that the authority of the shastras is recognized only in word nowadays. People do what suits their interest or their pleasure or comfort without troubling about the shastras, and it is not correct to say that the operative principle of Hindu social life today is to be found in the shastras."[20] This practical eudæmonism did not provide the ethical thought of modern Hinduism, but a more serious challenge to the religious basis of the moral life came from the scientist, political leader or economist who found no direct necessity of reference to religion in working toward the good society of his visions. But even so, the scientist who could think of social reconstruction with the means science and technology had placed at man's disposal had regretfully to pay a tribute to the passing of religion which "has come to take a subordinate position in our lives and plays no very significant role" in them.[21]

The religious vision remained, and its interpreters were gratefully recognized. For them society, with all its possibilities of improvement, was not the ultimate end of human life. As Radhakrishnan said, social life "is a movement in our destiny, not the terminus. Its state is always one of tension, and movement."[22] Beyond lay the ultimate beatitude, *moksa,* with present moral achievement as its prerequisite but not its determining characteristic.

3. The New Ethical Thought

A great deal of thought was given to the need of comprehending the meaning and purpose of a changing society and of drawing its diversified forms of political, economic and social organization into some moral harmony with distinctively Hindu ideas. To provide

[20] October 13, 1912, p. 73.
[21] K. Motwani, *op. cit.,* p. 73.
[22] *Religion,* p. 108. See also *Prabuddha Bharata,* August 1943, p. 345.

material for this reconstruction, a search for some fundamental values in the long course of Hindu development was essential. Active consideration of traditional practices and customs produced a change in the character of Hindu thought. The process of criticism, evaluation and interpretation revealed by contrast the nature of the traditional moral laws of Hinduism. As interpreted, those laws were the result of the social and religious process; and religion, being closely integrated with the social system, offered little moral judgment that transcended the immediate and particular character of social ideas and practices. The difference between the traditional moral code and the modern ethic was revealed in an independent attitude that judged the value of the old laws and norms, and offered critical guidance for current conditions. Thus, in commenting on Manu's statement, "For woman there can be no freedom," Mahatma Gandhi said, "It only shows that probably at the time when it was promulgated, women were kept in a state of subjection."[23]

The origins of this modern ethical thought were revealed in the tension which was set up between the individual and his society. Society found its self-criticism and reform in the moral individual who could no longer be content in acquiescence in stubborn social practices, and in contemplation as the supreme act of the religious life. This aroused moral purpose was activist, for otherwise it could not have been consistent with the new ideals. It was difficult to distinguish between the intellectual and practical aspects of ethics, because modern thought became a dynamic process in which the break with the traditional attitude of acquiescence was especially marked. This gave a necessarily pragmatic character to the modern view, while it also clearly influenced religious interpretations of the meaning and value of human life. Hindus were able, therefore, to deny the validity of the criticism that their religious view of life tended to passivity and world-negation.[24] Such denials, however, were made on the presuppositions of the modern ethic, and rested upon positive affirmations of the value of the reflective life for social responsibility.

[23] *The Harijan*, October 12, 1934.
[24] See Radhakrishnan's reply to A. Schweitzer, *Eastern Religions*, pp. 106 ff.

The transition from a morality of custom to critical moral reflection and activity was the marked characteristic of the new view. The change was impressive. Some years ago Govind Das described the customary life of the Hindu as, "Not only everything that we believe today, everything that we practise today, can be and is assigned to some pigeon-hole of *dharma,* but all that we shall think tomorrow and act tomorrow has pigeon-holes ready for them."[25] The modern concept of *dharma* became inward, personal and voluntaristic. "What we need is not creed but *dharma,*" Lala Lajpat Rai stated the matter. "Creed does not help us, at least not much, to find our souls. Our souls we can find only by looking inward and adjusting our outward circumstances to them. No one can lead a life of *dharma* unless his outward and inward beings are in harmony . . . Religion does not consist of contemplation only, but contemplation and action."[26] The Hindu might choose what his *dharma* was to be, and with those who set the patterns for the new social conduct this was a serious intellectual and moral concern. From Rammohan Roy's selection of "the moral precepts of Jesus" to Mahatma Gandhi's experiments with Truth, this was clearly evident. The unexamined life became unpopular, and moral reflection leading to social transformation represented a fundamental change in the Hindu view. While this distinction between the two forms of morality is largely intellectual, it represents different phases observable in contemporary Hinduism. Mahadev G. Ranade described the change as "from the restraints of family and caste customs to the self-imposed restraints of the free will of the individual."[27]

The new moral individuality could not be confined to reflection. Action had to follow. Here the restraints of the traditional way of life made themselves forcibly felt. Early reactions were more severe than those of recent times, but moral and religious reformers were always under great pressure not to change the accustomed patterns of Hindu life, whatever opinions they might hold about them. Thus, Rammohan Roy found that his agitation for the abolition of *sati,* or the burning of widows, and "other pernicious

[25] *Hinduism,* p. 80.
[26] *India's Will to Freedom,* p. 77.
[27] *Reform,* p. 109.

practices" was used by the Brahmins to estrange his father and family from him.[28] And Keshab Chander Sen in his early career once appealed to the police for protection from interference by his own family when he proposed to take his wife to visit the home of Devendranath Tagore, with whom he had religious and social affinities.[29] The compact unity of religion and society provided a formidable deterrent to efforts of internal reform. "India's problem of problems," declared Sri Madan Gopal in 1943, was "the fixed attitude."[30] He continued: "Indian society gives to its members the completest liberty of mind . . . When, however, you try to put your ideas into action, things will be entirely different. . . . The fixed scale of values, the fixed way of life set down by 'our great infallible forefathers' must be accepted without question or protest. Faith in their infallibility, and not reason, is expected to be our sole guide through the labyrinth of life." At the point of actual change the antithesis of the traditional morality and the modern ethic was most apparent. The emotional and social tensions that were set up within Hinduism became less severe in more recent years as the force of national and world developments, as well as the gradual spread of new ideals, were exerted on the side of the moral individual. Nevertheless, he continued to need courage for the test of strength with a conservative society. As Gandhi once wrote, "True morality consists not in following the beaten track, but in finding out the true path for ourselves, and in fearlessly following it."[31]

The externalism and formalism of the religious cultus were also revealed in this search for fresh meaning and sources of Hindu conduct. The daily religion of the orthodox Hindu, Jawaharlal Nehru remarked, is more concerned with his food and with whom to eat than with spiritual values.[32] Swami Vivekananda once graphically described popular religion in similar terms: "Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking pot."[33] But against this conventional religious behaviour was the new inward-

[28] *English Works*, p. 224.
[29] Mozoomdar, *Keshub Chunder Sen*, pp. 138-41.
[30] "India's Problem of Problems, The Fixed Attitude," *The Aryan Path*, December 1943, pp. 539 ff.
[31] *Ethical Religion*, p. 36.
[32] *Discovery*, p. 531.
[33] Qt. by Nehru, *ibid.*, p. 339. See Radhakrishnan, *Religion*, p. 117.

ness of the religious ideal and the values that arose from man's search for God and his relations with his fellow man. The religious problem this presented to the new moral individual was to discover the validity of religious experience such as characterized the creative epochs of Hindu development. Professor S. Radhakrishnan insisted on "the necessity of man's intimate transcendent experiences," and of "the renewal of the heart, the transformation of values, the surrender of the spirit to the claims of the eternal" if social progress was to be assured.[34] As Dr. Kewal Motwani put it, "Adherence to formalistic aspects of religion has held India in thrall of ignorance and superstition."[35] So that now there must be a "quickening of the spiritual impulses of the common man" and "India's youth will need to be trained in getting spiritual experience first-hand."

4. Ancient and Modern Culture

Certain values in modern society have arisen in a complex situation in which the challenge of Hindu thought and life by Western culture has been a leading factor. Hinduism has been consciously integrated with the new social ideals and standards, and thus has given them an indigenous value. This was especially the social aspect of the nineteenth century religious movements and the influences that were started by them. The necessity of a religious evaluation arose primarily out of the tensions between the new society and the old religion. Only secondarily was there a studied concern to recover the principles governing ancient society. Thus religious thought and experience, in order to keep abreast of the times, had to comprehend and use the social values which modern culture offered. It was a test of resources, past and present, in which the revival of ancient culture, especially emphasizing its religious content, figured very largely. Professor Radhakrishnan gave expression to this process in saying that the influence of the West on Hindu thought was not considerable, but that it had been decisive on social practices in the awakening of a social conscience.[36] But he also noted that, beginning with Rammohan Roy and leading

[34] *Religion*, p. 227.
[35] *Op. cit.*, p. 81.
[36] *Modern India* (Ed. O'Malley), p. 350.

up to the present, there had been a thoughtful assimilation of "new social values derived from the West."[37] The primacy of this moral challenge in the social sphere was also noted by Mr. K. Natarajan in saying that there had been a releasing of India's dormant moral strength to do battle against the wrongs that had accumulated in her social system.[38]

The problem that confronted religious thinkers was how the new social values could be spiritualized, or how they could be made a part of vital and free religious thought and life. The course of events plainly shows—as will be evident in the later analysis of political, economic and social developments—that Hindu religion assimilated the modern values into its own system, to meet its own ends, and became vitalized in so doing. There are three areas of development which may be traced in determining how this was accomplished. Although these were distinct in nature, the various patterns into which the diverse elements were interwoven became almost as numerous as the principal figures who engaged in the enterprise. We may distinguish (*a*) the ancient and modern cultural complex, (*b*) the influence of national growth by which religion identified itself with political, economic and social concerns, and (*c*) the orientation of the religious view of life to the values of the new society.

There is no necessity here of assessing the values or perils of Western culture in India, since we are concerned with the social and moral situation that developed within Hinduism. Except in an opaque kind of nationalism, there was a general recognition of the socio-moral benefits derived from contacts with the West. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer freely stated this at a time when national feelings were running high. Every Indian, he affirmed, felt that he had received from Great Britain his ideals of liberty and political enfranchisement.[39] The modern ideal of individual and democratic freedom was a new social concept. Mr. K. Natarajan put a similar observation against the background of Hindu religious aims when a few years ago he stated that he knew of few or no

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 344.
[38] *Indian Social Reformer*, October 9, 1937, p. 85. See D. S. Sarma, *Renaissance*, p. 68; and H. von Glasenapp, *Von Buddha zu Gandhi*, p. 24.
[39] In Foreword to A. Besant, *India: A Nation*.

words for secular freedom in the Indian languages. "The freedom which the Hindus yearn after is *moksa* or freedom from rebirth."[40] Not only was the concept of freedom introduced in other than a religious form, but the personal value of the individual with innate rights of equality in society was suggested and strengthened in social consciousness by the introduction of modern democratic and judicial institutions, by education and by the conception of human personality as expressed primarily in the Christian religion. The service of society without distinction of individuals or classes, widely practiced by the Christian Missions, provided also an effective pattern which was impressed upon Indian society. All of this implied an awakened moral capacity in the Hindu, as in others, which meant a realization of new opportunities and the ability to meet them in a way not previously possible. Whatever difference may have been suggested between East and West in this creation of new socio-moral ideas, there was no difference in moral capacity revealed. In fact, the universality of moral values was one of the most significant facts which resulted from these cultural penetrations and influences.[41]

However, the perils which could be perceived as a result of this process of acculturation raised Hindu warnings and tendencies of resistance to the alien influences. With a fair caution Rabindranath Tagore expressed appreciation of the values arising out of the confluence of Indian and Western forms of life, but warned that the beneficial "spirit of the West" should not be confused with the perils of the nationalism which he saw raising its sinister head in India.[42] Shallow adoption of Western customs was also dangerous for the true progress of modern Indian society. Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit warned her Indian sisters to beware of those admirers of the West among them who were content to lead "a life consisting of a round of social visits, paying undue attention to clothes, parties, and the acquiring of a superficial culture."[43]

[40] *Social Reformer*, October 9, 1937, p. 84.
[41] Mr. Kodanda Rao in his denial of contrast between East and West argues for this common moral capacity. Thus, "Civilization is a common heritage; each individual is heir to all knowledge. Each individual can take as much as he has opportunities for." *East Versus West, A Denial of Contrast*, p. 247.
[42] *Nationalism*, pp. 13 ff.
[43] *Our Cause* (Ed. Shyam K. Nehru), p. 38.

The resurgence of a consciousness of India's ancient culture was a sure result of the various forms of resistance to Western culture. In particular this took on the character of a religious movement in which ancient culture bore the appearance of unalloyed spirituality as contrasted with the secularistic and materialistic cultural product from the West.[44] A new religious norm for conduct was raised in this antithesis. Aurobindo Ghose put it like this, "The national mind turned a new eye on its past culture, reawoke to its sense and import, but also at the same time saw it in relation to modern knowledge and ideas."[45] Hindus put the question to themselves in noticeably modern phraseology and social conceptions, but with an equally apparent reference to the ancient sources of their cultural and religious life. They asked "whether the future progress of humanity is to be governed by the modern economic and materialistic mind of the West or by a nobler pragmatism guided, uplifted and enlightened by spiritual culture and knowledge." Such criticism discerned "the apparent failure of the West to dominate its scientific discoveries and to evolve a form of society in which material progress and spiritual freedom march comfortably together."[46]

In all this there was an optimism which strengthened its fibres on the appreciable success of the nationalist movement, but it failed often to turn upon itself a criticism that should have shown that the contrast between East and West was composed of two elements. There was the critical, realistic appraisal of Western cultural failures; and, on the other side, an idealistic vision of spiritual and social successes in ancient India. This led in some cases to extravagant claims. Such as, "The Hindu religion is a confident assertion of supreme manhood—an assertion full of dignity and independence. It towers high above other faiths, inasmuch as its teachings are elevating and energizing as no other great faith."[47] Since such assertions were based on modern interpreta-

[44] See Aurobindo Ghose, *The Renaissance of India*, pp. 29, 64 ff. The Editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata* found the ground for "the spiritual character of Indian culture" in "the Vedic revelations" and this "once for all". August 1949, pp. 299 ff. Radhakrishnan put the antithesis very sharply in "The Hypocrisy of Modern Civilization" in *The Social Welfare*, March 6, 1941, p. 10.

[45] Aurobindo Ghose, *The Renaissance of India*, p. 29.

[46] K. Motwani, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

[47] Har Bilas Sarda, *Hindu Superiority*, p. 389.

tions of ancient life, a question was legitimately raised whether the reading of these modern ideas into the old schemes of thought was entirely honest.[48]

No adequate answers were given to a very real problem in connection with the causes for the deterioration of ancient values in later Hindu society. Suggestions were offered, but none attempted to be complete. N. A. Sarma accounted for the fall of women's freedom and elementary privileges from their ancient standard by noting that "pseudo-puritanical obsession distorted social vision and rationalism was smothered."[49] A. S. Altekar in his work, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, made a serious effort to discern causes for the degeneration.[50] And with reference to "the chaotic order of caste," Aurobindo Ghose once stated that "the evolution from one type of society to another so opposed to it in its psychological motives and real institutions without any apparent change in formula is one of the most curious phenomena in the social history of mankind and still awaits intelligent study."[51]

Failure to deal adequately with this problem must not obscure the fact that the process of spiritualizing modern social values in terms of ancient culture was a major element in the new society enveloping Hinduism. This can only fully be understood by means of the two other developments which must now be described.

5. National Interests and Religion

The course of many social events was dictated by considerations of national interest, for it was the growth of a modern nation that produced the situation in which religion assimilated on a wide scale the values of the social consciousness. At the same time religious belief and fervour, and the identification of interests with the success of the national cause, provided a suitable occasion for Hinduism to come to fresh attention and new vigour. In order to do this, however, certain particularistic claims of traditional religion had to yield before the more compelling necessities of national development. A detailed study later will show how this worked itself out politically, economically and socially.

[48] P. Appasamy, *Legal Aspects of Social Reform*, p. 234.
[49] *Woman and Society*, pp. 77-8.
[50] Pp. 417 ff.
[51] *Ideals and Progress*, p. 36.

What values emerged in the national situation and how they were taken up into a distinctively religious form of life are well illustrated in a person like Sri Aurobindo Ghose. In the midst of his national activity with its revolutionary tendencies, he wrote, "The attempt at self-development by self-help is absolutely necessary for our national salvation, whether we can carry it peacefully to the end or not."[52] In 1907 he attributed to the pursuit of passive resistance results with moral qualities essential to self-government. "If by any possibility the nation can start its career of freedom with a fully developed unity and strength, it will certainly have a better chance of immediate greatness hereafter. Passive resistance affords the best possible training for these qualities."[53] Here the greatness of the nation was of main concern, and national freedom required certain qualities in order to be assured of success. The way of salvation led through more pacific methods of struggle, with unity and strength accompanying them. This was a decade before Mahatma Gandhi's genius for religious methods of activity began to make itself felt in India. Here was a national situation for Hinduism to assert itself increasingly with new force, and in fact this it did, partly in its religious, and partly in a more general cultural form.

The need for cohesion and unity became apparent in the inner tensions of family and caste society under the impact of alien standards and institutions. Caste maintained itself without serious difficulty until the twentieth century, in spite of the modifications produced in the small areas of influence created by the religious movements of the nineteenth century. When caste society under pressure asserted its particularistic demands, this was a threat to the clearly universalistic interests of the society of the whole people. Modern religion, in general, recognized the superior claims of national democratic society over those of caste, and again it was unity, synthesis and tolerance that were required. Religious communalism also presented a threat to national security, and finally divided India into two nations. But religious interests corresponded with their relative national positions, the majority community demanding unity and the minority insisting as strongly on division.

[52] *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, p. 8.
[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

Thus events fashioned a moral and social situation which, under India's distinctive conditions, invited a religious solution, or a solution with strong religious elements in it.

"Synthesis," said Dr. Kewal Motwani in 1945, "is India's manifest destiny."[54] National life suggested the value which Hinduism called its own genius. There were "numerous points of conflict, of cultural lags" which "put a great strain on our country."[55] But India's mission was to devise institutions that would ensure realization of "liberty, equality and fraternity." "India should reassert the unity of all life, without distinction of race, caste, creed, colour and sex, since unity is the heart of her message."

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and others met the necessities of their national society by affirming confidently that Hinduism would weather the storm. It will "survive the attacks of modern social movements, for it aims at human unity through the spirit."[56]

The need of replenishing national life with the resources of India's ancient heritage, however, did not make religion imperative for some. There were leaders who did not identify the ends of the nation with the means and the ends of religion. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru drew significant values for modern India out of his study of her long cultural development without coming to the inescapable solution which religion offered for some.[57] Also the socialist, Acharya Narendra Deva, in 1946 called for a "New Life Movement" with cultural resources, but with no explicit dependence upon the religious tradition.[58] More decisively still the Marxist, Comrade M. N. Roy, rejected as the pretensions of religion the "ideas, ideals, institutions and traditions, that are fondly cherished as the token of the supposed superiority of India's culture," as these "belong to the dark ages of humanity" and not to a scientific age.[59] He urged a correct evaluation of India's ancient philosophy that would discern "the germ of materialism imbedded in it," in order to help the nation "out of the vicious circle of decayed spiritualism

[54] *Op. cit.*, pp. 64, 80.
[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 74-79.
[56] *Modern India* (Ed. O'Malley), p. 349.
[57] See his *The Discovery of India.*
[58] *Socialism and the National Revolution,* pp. 95 ff., 169-70, 183.
[59] *Heresies of the 20th Century,* p. 65.

and indicate the way to real spiritual freedom offered by the materialist philosophy."[60] Thus a new factor was inserted in the already complex national situation, one which did not turn to unity and harmony in ways familiar to a revival of religion or culture.

The demand that Hinduism be ethically adequate for the modern age occasioned a reaffirmation of the distinctively individualistic qualities typical of an earlier period. Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee cited the following to show how Hinduism could provide a norm for society. "Sympathy with the happiness of others, compassion towards the suffering, rejoicing at the good of all sentient creatures. Indifference or neutrality towards the unrighteous. Tranquility of mind. Repression of the external senses. Endurance. Renunciation."[61] These supplied the kind of character he believed necessary to sustain a society, but it was a morality of the individual that was indicated, not that of essentially social relationships. What religious thought emphasized out of its past were the norms of individual life required by a healthy society. The primary religious effort in national growth, then, was to affirm the socio-moral values of modern culture as those also of Hinduism in its ancient as well as modern forms.

6. Religious Life in Society

By dissociating religion from the causes of social malady, modern Hindus followed the course dictated by a healthy social growth. The situation arose by which the religious life of Hinduism could now be experienced in an invigorating social atmosphere. It led to a new definition of the meaning of Hinduism, as when Professor Radhakrishnan called it a subtly unified mass of spiritual thought and realization, not relying on dogma or authority, but on transcendental experience. The aim of religion, as he defined it, was an intuition and direct apprehension of reality and an insight into truth.[62] Religion was thus drawn away from its status as a power-

[60] *Ibid.*, pp. 128-9.
[61] *The Sociological Review*, July 1929, p. 204.
[62] *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 21. Also see *The Legacy of India* (Ed. Garratt), p. 261.
D. S. Sarma describes this process of the dissociation of religion as follows: "However, the leaders of this Renaissance, for the first time perhaps in the history of Hinduism, have been able to view their religion apart from the mythological, ritualistic and sociological forms in which it

ful cohesive force in traditional society to the position of being a kind of "private affair", from which it had to seek a new unity with society if it were to exercize more than an individualistic influence. Under the new moral impulses the orientation of the religious life was in the direction of the modern social values which have been described.

The balance between the freshly defined religious position as individual experience and the clear necessities of life in society was not determined entirely in favour of modern society. Traditional forms of religious life and experience also manifested themselves even in the midst of complex social situations, assimilating some of the new values but turning away from direct social responsibility. This was the case with Sri Aurobindo Ghose while in jail for political activity.[63] He heard the call to offer a new interpretation of Hinduism to the whole world in the light of his political experience. He described it in these words, "It is to give this religion that India is rising. She does not rise as other countries do, for self or when she is strong, to trample on the weak. She is rising to shed the eternal light entrusted to her over the world."[64] But, while this type of experience familiar to Hinduism in those days eventually weighed the balance for Aurobindo against further active participation in society, the religious life of Gandhiji maintained his social responsiblity. This was described as an "emphasis on a positive experience of God, a life of service and sacrifice, and a definite denial of claims and labels."[65] Thus individual factors determined the direction and point of application of the religious life, but they were themselves conditioned decisively by the new social values. This was repeatedly illustrated by those who followed the line taken by Rammohan Roy when he insisted that, according to the Vedanta, "moral principles were indispensable in the mind's approximation to God," for, he further maintained, it was not sufficient simply to worship one's favourite deity.[66] Gandhi,

was embedded". *The Renaissance of Hinduism*, pp. 636 ff. That is one phase of the process ; the other represents the return of this individualized religion to modern society.

[63] *Sri Aurobindo Speeches*, p. 61 ff., *Renaissance*, pp. 28-9.

[64] *Speeches*, p. 67. When Bipin Chandra Pal also came out of jail it was with a message more religious than political. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-4.

[65] Radhakrishnan, *Modern India* (Ed. O'Malley), p. 348.

[66] *English Works*, pp. 14, 106.

in a different way but with similar intention, defined his religion as Truth and Righteousness, and made religion "identical with morality."[67]

How religion was conditioned by modern ethics and yet asserted certain of its own distinctive characteristics was amply shown in the numerous interpretations of the Bhagavadgita which appeared. The appeal of this Scripture consisted in the social inspiration it offered while bringing the supreme end of the religious life within reach of its modern readers, and harmonizing it with ethics and worldly life.[68] Disinterestedness in the service of society was the lesson it taught so many, and from the many facets of possible interpretation light shone upon men awakened to active social responsibility and seeking guidance in a world multiplying duties as well as demanding rights. The Gita helped in the new definition of the Hindu attitude toward the world of society, as the old pattern of renunciation and denial became increasingly unpopular. It wouldn't do where men and women had to strive for social welfare. The supreme end, *moksa*, became attainable under modern conditions for, as in Radhakrishnan's definition, it is "to be achieved here and now, on earth, through human relations."[69]

Traditional expressions of the religious life continued to assimilate the moral evaluation of society. This was evident, for example, in the conception of *jivan-mukta*, a person who realizes the Self and yet remains in society. Such a person could be said to have made spiritual attainment the basis for democratic social ideals.[70] He does not have to strive for morality, for by second nature he lives the good life and works solely for the welfare of others. As Sri Aurobindo described this individual, he has an equality of mind, "a fundamental oneness of attitude to all persons and all things and happenings because of the perception of all as the One."[71] Further, he is "guided by the truth of the divine

[67] *Ethical Religion*, p. 49.
[68] See B. G. Tilak, *Gita-Rahasya*, vol. I, pp. lxxiii, 1 ff.
[69] *Religion*, p. 104. See also R. Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, p. 69. K. Shridharani in his study of Gandhi says, "Salvation of the soul is a spiritual concept, and it is attained through the media of service to mankind." *The Mahatma and the World*, p. 162.
[70] Swami Nikhilananda, *The Essence of Hinduism*, p. 70. D. S. Sarma, *A Primer of Hinduism*, p. 138.
[71] *Ideals and Progress*, pp. 18 ff.

will and knowledge which is unlimited and not subject to incapacity or error." By thus emphasizing the claims of religious intuition in terms of moral experience, the gulf was bridged between the absolute end of salvation from the world and the relative means to achieve it.

There was an ideological side also of this endeavour to identify the values of the religious life with the moral values of society. Lala Lajpat Rai described one aspect of the problem when he asked, "How to get rid of the existing demoralisation, build up life and society on the true basis of *dharma* with substantial justice, social, political and economic to all, I do not yet know. Of one thing, however, I am certain, viz., that you cannot build up a society like that with competition as a foundation."[72] The traditional socio-religious concept underwent a change in accordance with the growth of modern culture. The problem confronting Hindu religious thinkers was considerable, as the changing status of women, for instance, clearly demonstrated. At the beginning of the twentieth century woman was described as "having no guide for conduct and habit of thought outside the Priest-made and Male-interpreted form of religion," and as being "fearful of accentuating the curse" of her *karma*.[73] But less than fifty years later the Hindu woman herself was thinking in terms of the dynamic and relativistic ideas of modern economics. An economic interpretation of history provided one means of believing in the eventual and inevitable transformation of woman's social and economic status.[74] Whatever religion might make of this fresh factor in its already complex situation, the psychological and social determination of traditional society was diminishing and a totally different interpretation of the purpose of human life had to be attempted.

Again, this movement of assimilation and reaffirmation of the values inherent in the traditional religious view can be seen in the transmutation of the concept of *karma*. It could and did mean a form of determinism militating against social growth and moral

[72] *India's Will to Freedom*, p. 81.
[73] Cornelia Sorabji in *Our Cause* (Ed. S. K. Nehru), p. 17.
[74] Shyam Kumari Nehru, *Our Cause*, pp. xii ff. Also Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, *ibid.*, p. 390; and Uma Nehru, *ibid.*, p. 415.

responsibility. Lala Lajpat Rai described the position when he said, "Then for *dharma* to justify the existing social structure on the basis of *karma*, and upholding the prevailing ideas as to property, inheritance, marriage, law and government is perpetuating the untruth."[75] With individual freedom and social mobility, *karma* was turned to justifying and assuring the ends of human welfare and achievement. It taught that the future was entirely in man's own hands and, within certain limits, he could alter his destiny in this present life.[76] Professor M. Hiriyanna with others held that the doctrine could in this way be "a perpetual incentive to right conduct."[77]

But with the recognition of the relative social elements in the moral life of the religious individual went an assertion of the absolute character of his moral values which was of great significance. The modern mind could speak of "canons of absolute goodness," the "absolute idea" and "a priori rules of social behaviour,"[78] although it could not be determined too clearly from the religious point of view what these were under concrete conditions of life in society. While the content of *dharma* varied according to individual nature and social relations, the concept itself was affirmed to be absolute.[79] It was called a "fundamental law" of human nature conditioning all activities.[80] This insistence upon the unconditioned nature of some ultimate moral law or principle left in no doubt the fact that moral distinctions and values were of more than temporary significance. They defined the nature of the unconditioned reality which, though it might not admit of distinction in some forms of religious experience, was itself of some indubitable moral substance in social experience. "Religion at its highest finds neither in Nature nor in Society," stated Radhakamal Mukerjee, "nor even when they are personified as Gods, but in Self, at once the ultimate arbiter and the very substance of values."[81] Thus an ethical nature was affirmed in the ultimate Self.

[75] *India's Will to Freedom*, p. 77.
[76] D. S. Sarma, *A Primer*, p. 65
[77] *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 79.
[78] Radhakrishnan, *Religion*, pp. 204-5; *Prabuddha Bharata*, December 1942, pp. 568-9.
[79] Radhakrishnan, *ibid.*, p. 114.
[80] Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, p. 221.
[81] *Op. cit.*, pp. 197 ff.

The necessity of moral and social evaluation in the religious sphere was likewise indicated by the metaphysical foundation supplied to the modern ethic. This was in the conception of the ultimate unity of all beings in the Self. The Upanishadic formula, *Tat tvam asi,* suggested a basis for a universal morality, although it did not appear that this had originally been proposed as an ethical truth.[82] The social character of the religious belief was expressed in a popular form by Radhakrishnan when he said it meant, "We must look upon others as ourselves."[83] The basis for this metaphysical affirmation was described in the religious dimension by the process of intuition and spiritual realization, and in the social dimension by the moral awareness of the significance of all human life and history. In this way Rabindranath Tagore believed that the union of the individual person with the Being dwelling within the heart of all humanity was possible by a human service reaching out to the entire world.[84]

The effects upon religion of the several movements and forces have to be studied in two important connections. There was first the constantly changing social experience of the modern Hindu which directly affected the expression of his religious life and altered the structure of the religion in relation to society. Modern political, economic and social institutions, by impressing their distinctive values upon religious thought and activity, were decisive influences in the development of a new religious view. This represented quite a different social position for religion than was possible in traditional society, and it also showed a changed attitude toward the value of active social participation in relation to the distinctive ends of religion. Where religious aims and aspirations could be openly identified with the national objectives, Hinduism was given the greatest opportunity for its moral reconstruction. It has to be learned in what respect and to what degree an actual ethical reconstruction of religion took place.

But beyond the external structure of religion, particularly in its

[82] See Radhakrishnan who notes that it was Dr. Paul Deussen that called attention to the ethical implication which might be drawn from the formula. *Eastern Religions,* p. 101. Also Vivekananda, *Works,* I, pp. 375 ff., 283.

[83] *Religion,* p. 108.

[84] *Religion of Man,* pp. 69, 186.

relations to society, there was its inner spirit that Hindus found to be of imperishable value. The insistence upon the vitality of religion, despite the doubtful moral character of some of its social aspects, calls attention to the nature of modern Hindu spirituality. Such was the revival of old cultural patterns under the stimulus of modern ideals, in which the unchanging source and character of the spiritual aspects of religion were affirmed. Another was the moralizing of religious experience by which the spiritual or ultimate ends of life were related to the immediate social ends. Here the question must be raised regarding the unchanging nature of the spiritual values which were held to be characteristic of Hinduism, the extent to which they could become associated with new social activity, and consequently how far they were influenced by this association.

To pursue this study effectively it is necessary to investigate the course of events in which the developments took place.

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL IDEALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

New Conditions for Hinduism

Religious Continuity through new Experience

Individual Morality

A Religious Basis for Morality

Social Action

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL IDEALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Nineteenth century Hinduism was stirred by new social forces which vitally affected religious thought and activity. An ethical concern for the changing Hindu social existence, produced by different conditions than had operated in traditional society, was a dominant characteristic of the religious movements that arose during the course of the century, and which developed a clear form of sectarianism. This was expressed most forcefully in the social ideals and standards which were formulated by the members of the several sects in relation to their respective religious conceptions and experiences, as well as to traditional forms of conduct. The actual demands of new social existence necessitated the development of religious thought and practice in consonance with the modern ethical motivation. Thus the sects arose out of the need for a religious expression of the fresh social impulses of the nineteenth century. They followed a pattern of moral and religious activity which utilized both ancient and modern elements. While each represented a distinctive movement originating in individual experience, all strongly reflected the influence of predominant ethical interests. An analysis of the thought and activities of the nineteenth century sectarian leaders shows the beginnings of a modern Hindu social and moral consciousness.[1]

1. New Conditions for Hinduism

A dual movement early characterized the Hindu response to those new conditions which offered opportunity for free individual and social development. At times there was an overt conflict between the traditional and the modern views, and at first there were educated men who reacted strongly against Hinduism, consi-

[1] No effort has been made to give biographical or historical accounts as adequate material is already available. Reference is made to the following: Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), Maharshi Devendranath Tagore (1817-1905), Keshab Chander Sen (1838-1884), Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1893), Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (1836-1886), Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902), Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901).

dering it the source of evils in society.[2] However, this open rejection of religion was met by a more powerful current of religious and social reform, represented principally by the sectarian movements, mainly called samajas, in which the criticism of popular ideas and practices was accompanied by a revival of interest in the ancient values of Indian culture. Along with this went a ready acceptance of certain elements alien to contemporary forms of Hinduism. In the sectarian movements there arose a clear tendency to meet the challenge presented by new economic, political, religious and social conditions to the static religious and social habits accompanying caste and other Hindu institutions. In this development religion was steadily dissociated from society by a conviction that it must be kept within proper limits in order that society might have a chance to grow.[3] At the same time this was largely an intellectual separation to permit the discovery of sources of religious vitality needed to meet the challenge of non-Hindu religions.

While the sectarian leaders did not take part in economic and political activity that challenged caste, they noted with satisfaction the forces at work which could not be adjusted to the existing social system. It was Raja Rammohan Roy who saw that the prejudices of caste were preventing Hindus from accepting occupations different from those they had inherited. He urged that new commercial opportunities be not refused. Many years later Swami Vivekananda stated that every man in India knew that he was "a slave of society," and that, while caste had at one time performed a useful function, it was now only "filling the atmosphere of India with its stench."[4] It was through modern commercial competition that Vivekananda looked for the destruction of caste evils, rather than by any direct religious action.

As no opportunities for responsible participation in government were open to Indians, a conflict in the political sphere was not evident at first; nevertheless, it was incipient in the growing aspirations of the nation, and developed into a problem of primary

[2] In the discussions of the Vidyalaya (Hindu College) vigorous attacks were made on Hinduism. See J. Cumming, *Political India*, p. 29.
[3] For instance, see Vivekananda. *Works*, V, p. 19.
[4] In 1893. *Works*, V, p. 19.

importance for Hinduism by the close of the century. The divisions and sub-divisions of caste, Rammohan Roy once observed, had deprived Hindus of all patriotic feeling.[5] The forces of unity, that created a growing consciousness of nationhood, were met by the hindrance of caste loyalties and prejudices. While some of the orthodox community admitted the evils of caste, they insisted that reform should be from within and by the caste groups separately. But the reformers discerned in this attitude a reactionary motive. Mahadev Ranade, who urged reformative action on the part of all the people, observed that this position had been taken by those who were trying to discourage political and social action.[6]

World opinion and the observation of Western religious and social institutions with different standards of justice and equality created another source of conflict which had to be resolved. The Indian leaders strove against the great odds of existing customs sanctioned by strong religious and social forces. They had seen something better, and deeply felt the need for changes which would improve conditions of general social welfare, in particular those of Hindu women and girls, and the outcastes. After the abolition of *sati*,[7] Rammohan Roy, whose agitation had helped to make this reform possible, gratefully observed that the character of the Indian people had been saved "from the contempt and pity with which it has been regarded, on account of this custom, by all civilized nations on the surface of the globe."[8] The observed contrast with foreign institutions led to organized efforts to improve the status of women and girls. Keshab Chander Sen, on returning from a visit to England, established in 1870 the Indian Reform Association for "social and moral" reformation of the Indian people. The programme of work included the production of inexpensive literature, and the promotion of "female improvement," education and temperance.[9]

Hinduism had to meet the challenge presented by the change

[5] *The English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy*, p. 929.
[6] *Religious and Social Reform*, p. 289.
[7] *Sati*—the immolation by burning of the wife with the dead body of her husband.
[8] *Works*, p. 372.
[9] Mozoomdar, *Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen*, p. 239.

of religion of both caste and outcaste people, particularly to Christianity. Devendranath Tagore became aroused over the conversion of Hindu men and women through the efforts of the Rev. Alexander Duff, a missionary responsible for the promotion of Christian education in Bengal.[10] Tagore remarked that Christians were founding schools "in every town and every village; whereas we have not got a single good school of our own where our children can be taught."[11] Consequently, he set about organizing a school, and by appealing to the Hindu public gained wide support for the project.

In spite of such efforts the conversion of Hindu outcastes to Christianity was viewed largely with indifference until the last decade of the century. By then, however, education and reconversion became explicit features of the work of the samajas, and such organizations as the Social Conference and the Depressed Classes Missionary Society.[12] While they questioned the depth of religious conviction which motivated the outcastes in leaving Hinduism, the Hindu leaders recognized that an entirely new social status had been made possible for them through the change of religion. By the end of the century the Arya Samaj in particular sought for the readmission of converts, and furthermore created a controversal situation by their efforts to gain what Ranade called, "the wholesale admission of some hitherto despised castes" to Hinduism.[13] At first the orthodox looked with contempt on this effort of the outcastes to be classed as Hindus, but later, as Lala Lajpat Rai observed, intelligent Hindus came to be shaken to their very depths by the prospect of losing the untouchables.[14]

But the apparent inadequacies of their traditional society only served to sharpen the religious determination of the reformers. They could cut through the accumulations of centuries to clear the way for their religion to pass from ancient to modern times. "I claim that no destruction of religion is necessary to improve the Hindu society," Swami Vivekananda said, "and that this state of

[10] See Alexander Duff, *India and India Missions.*
[11] *Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore,* pp. 98 ff.
[12] Rammohan Roy, *Works,* p. 880. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India,* pp. 372-5. The Depressed Classes Missionary Society was founded in Bombay in 1906.
[13] *Reform,* p. 291.
[14] *The Arya Samaj,* pp. 228-9.

society exists not on account of religion, but because religion has not been applied to society, as it should have been. This I am ready to prove from our old books, every word of it."[15] The enterprise was commonly shared by the new Hinduism which visualized an assimilation by the original religion of their interpretations of the values being fashioned in modern society.

2. Religious Continuity through New Experience

Primary in any consideration of the nineteenth century sects must be the fact that they were concerned to maintain their religious continuity with what they considered to be the original sources of Hinduism. They had no intention of being modern explorers of religion striking out on wholly new paths of development. However much they may have incorporated into their systems new elements from other religious traditions, the sectarian leaders maintained that they were inalienably Hindu. Even their eclectic methods were made subordinate to a fundamentally Hindu religious allegiance.

Raja Rammohan Roy, in spite of his attacks on "the superstitious puerilities" being practised by the medieval Hindu sects in contemporary times, disclaimed any intention of being a discoverer or innovator of religion.[16] "I have urged in every work that I have hitherto published," he stated, "that the doctrines of the unity of God are real Hinduism, as that religion was practised by our ancestors." His purpose was to go back to the pure sources of Hindu tradition in order to recover its early theory and practice for adaptation to modern conditions. This aim he assiduously pursued by his translation and publication of some of the Upanishads and the Vedanta of Vyasa.

Keshab Chander Sen, more than any of the other prominent reformers, went farther from this central Hindu allegiance. At least socially he was willing to make a more decisive break than his predecessors had done. In the agitation over the Brahmo Marriage Bill, Keshab and some other leaders of the "Brahmo Samaj of India" submitted a memorial to the Government stating that the

[15] *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee, II, p. 598.
[16] *Works*, pp. 73, 90.

term "Hindu" did not include the Brahmos.[17] While once he had shown a strong inclination toward Christianity, later in life Keshab wrote of his Church of the New Dispensation, "Cheer up, O Hindus, for the long-lost Father (God) from whom ye have for centuries strayed away is coming back to you."[18] When relating his Church to popular Hinduism, he exclaimed, "We have found out that every idol worshipped by the Hindu represents an attribute of God. . . The believer in the New Dispensation is required to worship God as the possessor of all these attributes."

Although Dayanand Saraswati, founder of the Arya Samaj, carried on a vigorous polemic against the existing Hindu religious and social system, his cry was "Back to the Vedas" in which he found what he believed to be the original Hindu conception of God and the universe. "I do not entertain the least idea of founding a new religion or sect," he is reported to have stated[19]. The *Satyarth Prakash* lays down the distinction upon which the Arya Samajists insisted. "You believe the customs prevalent for five or six generations to be the usage of antiquity, while we believe the Vedas and the established rules from the beginning of the creation up to the present to be the authority of antiquity."[20] But in its subsequent history the Arya Samaj showed that it was prepared to advance in social reform only to the degree in which it could do so without affecting its fundamental relationship with, and dependence upon, Hinduism.

Swami Vivekananda was unquestionably influenced by Western social ideals of equality and freedom. However, he insisted that Hindus be "Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts." If changes had to be made, sages would come to show the way, he assured fellow Hindus, but in this process the principles of "our religion could remain unchanged and intact."[21]

The same tendency to maintain their continuity with the traditional religion is clearly marked in other figures who dominated the

[17] Mozoomdar, *Keshub Chunder Sen*, p. 248.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 377. M. C. Parekh remarks that Keshab was drawn towards Christ, the crucified, more and more throughout his life. *The Brahma Samaj*, p. 189.
[19] Quoted by Lala Lajpat Rai, *Arya Samaj*, p. 81.
[20] Chap. IV, p. 136. English translation by Durga Prasad, Lahore, 1908.
[21] Quoted by Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 339; and by *Prabuddha Bharata*, August 1943, p. 343.

field of religious and social activity. For the theistic movement in Western India, Mahadev Ranade stated that in common with the Brahmo Samaj they could claim an ancestry as long as any of the still existing medieval sects of Hinduism. "We are representatives of an old race," he said, "as old as the Bhagavad Gita and the Bhagavad Purana." When Ranade pressed for social changes with a courage and vigour unsurpassed by any Hindu of the century, his qualification was that reform should not be attended by any desire of giving up old established institutions.[22]

The criticism which the sectarian leaders aimed most consistently at current religious practice was that it perverted the essential meaning and experience of Hinduism. They attacked or ignored the orthodox authorities in an effort to reach directly sources of personal understanding and inspiration. The leaders therefore instituted new forms of worship with simplified ritual, expressed in the language of the people rather than in Sanskrit, and with explicit moral values. They showed the way to a vital understanding of religion by a fresh intellectual and moral awareness of its meaning. The individual was now given opportunity for direct participation in religious services and activities through intellect, emotion and will. No longer need Hindus be dependent upon the Brahmin as priest and guardian of religious theory and practice. Thus, while the Brahmin was given something of his traditional position in the Brahmo Samaj, particularly in its early period, this arrangement was later challenged in the Samaj to the extent of leading to schism. Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda, for their part, criticized the priestly class with its theories and practices of mediation, appealing to a direct spiritual and intellectual apprehension in every person of the meaning of the ancient religion. It must be recognized, however, that with this loss of exclusiveness, in spite of theory to the contrary, there were few or no religious values offered to the depressed castes in any concrete form. Their condition of life remained unaltered by the fresh forces of enthusiasm and moral imagination arising among the privileged castes.

Religion was individualized through inspirations and intuitions which were valued as divine guidance and revelation. Customary

[22] *Reform*, pp. vi-vii.

institutional forms of expression were found unacceptable when they stood between this new experience and social ideals. Religion stimulated the imagination as appeals were made to sectarian leaders of former centuries, such as Chaitanya, Dnyandev and Tukaram, who became sources of intellectual and emotional satisfaction. Their methods were adopted, and their utterances used in devotional practice. In fact, so forceful did the influence of the nineteenth century leaders themselves become that their followers came to call them *rishi* also, as they were considered to belong to a great, unbroken succession of Hindu seers.[23] While in certain cases and in common with traditional practice divine significance was ascribed to the religious leader, the clear tendency of the whole sectarian movement was to emphasize the inherent value of human personality. A most interesting example of both features is found in the Dev Samaj and its leader, Shiv Narayan Agnihotri, where the development was from a theistic position to an atheistic ethical humanism for which the founder became a super-human being.[24]

3. Individual Morality

The emergence of an ethical individuality was particularly apparent in conflict with the morality of the traditional social order to which the individual had been required to give unquestioning obedience.[25] The threat of losing caste was a powerful deterrent which few had wished to contemplate, but in the nineteenth century infractions of caste law became increasingly common. In such matters as crossing the ocean to foreign lands the authority of caste was ignored and thwarted. Still there was no complete breaking with customary procedure in the case of any of the sectarian leaders. As much as religious and social practices were found to be ethically inadequate by the modern Hindu, they continued to some extent to be observed. Thus, Rammohan Roy stated that "the chief part of the theory and practice of Hinduism" was the adoption of "a peculiar mode of diet" from which there

[23] See M. B. Kolasker, compiler of Ranade's essays and addresses, *Reform*, pp. ii ff. Also "Maharshi" Devendranath Tagore.

[24] See Griswold, *Insights into Modern Hinduism*, pp. 93-110.

[25] This may be observed in other societies and cultures as well. Whereas the distinction is partly an intellectual one, it points to a significant stage of moral development. See Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*, pp. 66 ff.

could be no deviation without punishment by exclusion from the society of family and friends. He further claimed that violation of this article of faith was held to be more serious by Hindus than even atrocious crimes.[26] Yet Roy himself did not break away completely from the customs of diet, and in travelling to England he took his cook with him. Similar failure to act fully in accordance with their chosen moral views on dominant customs has to be noted in the case of two other strong advocates of social reform: Keshab Chander Sen and Mahadev G. Ranade. Sen yielded to traditional practice in the matter of his daughter's marriage, although it was contrary to his earlier pronounced views as well as to the provisions of the Brahmo Marriage Act which he had taken a leading part in securing.[27] And Ranade, an ardent advocate of widow remarriage, as a young widower himself yielded to his father's insistence and hasty arrangements for his marriage to an eleven year old girl because the older man greatly feared that his son would marry a widow.[28] This conservative course of action thwarted the reform of marriage practices with many of the members of the sects. So that in more recent times Mr. K. Natarajan observed concerning the leaders of the Prarthana Samaj that in the matter of marriage they did not depart from the customary procedure of their castes.[29]

Failure to carry out moral convictions is, of course, no uncommon matter. With the nineteenth century Hindu reformers what seems apparent is that custom was still respected and supported both by individual and social interest. Moreover, in view of the expressed intention to maintain a continuity of religion, it appears clear that the new individualized religion in such conflicts could support as well as oppose traditional forms of conduct. One additional observation should be made: no adequate community had yet been created by the reformers in which they could have the same security as they had enjoyed in traditional society. The sectarian movement did partially provide for such a society based on new moral ideals and standards, but this was inadequate

[26] *Works*, pp. 73-4.
[27] Mozoomdar, *Keshub Chunder Sen*, p. 248.
[28] *Himself, The Autobiography of a Hindu Lady*, Ramabai Ranade. Translated by K. Gates, pp. 10 ff.
[29] *Indian Social Reformer*, Sept. 18, 1937.

for all those social necessities which normally arose. In fact, religion did not provide any large degree of social liberation for the individual, although it offered support for new social attitudes when it became apparent that religious concern should be directed to freedom from social disability, rather than escape from social responsibility.

The individual in formulating his moral view relied on his freshly realized psychological faculties. He turned largely to reason in his conflict with custom. The rational method of investigation was followed most clearly in the fundamental problem of the interpretation of the Scriptures. While largely a religious matter, such an approach to the recorded sources of religion was closely related also to the moral problem which the individual faced. A scriptural basis was needed for new social relationships and ideals. Consequently, it was important that he be able to approach the Scriptures with an active intelligence using a technique of observation, comparison and selection. Rammohan Roy, in appealing to "the good sense" of his countrymen, asked whose advice appeared "the most disinterested and most rational?" Was it those who concealed the Scriptures and taught the people to believe without examination, and thus neglected entirely their reasoning faculties? Or was it the man who put the Scriptures before the people in a language they could read and understand, urging them to examine their meaning with a "proper and moderate use of reason?"[30] All the leaders adopted practically the same position, as with Vivekananda when he said, "Personally, I take as much of the Vedas as agrees with reason. Parts of the Vedas are apparently contradictory."[31] This clearly affected those religious beliefs and attitudes which were basic to morality, as when faith was defined by Ranade as practical and earnest reason.[32]

As a matter of fact, the rational method was not followed without reservation, there being another consideration which had to be kept in view, namely, the individual's peace of mind. So that Rammohan Roy, who appealed for a fresh intelligence in Hindu

[30] *Works*, p. 71.
[31] *Works*, V. p. 325. For Dayanand Saraswati, see *The Arya Samaj*, Rai, p. 70. Also *Autobiography of D. Tagore*, p. 104.
[32] *Reform*, pp. 260-1.

affairs, cautioned against the unrestricted use of reason. "We often find," he observed, that "it only served to generate a universal doubt, incompatible with principles on which our comfort and happiness mainly depend."[33] Thus, psychological considerations were advanced to meet the apparent inadequacy of reason in solving man's basic moral problems. Ranade, despite his reduction of faith to reason, found there were problems which the limited intellect of man could not resolve, such as the origin of the world and of man, the relation of God and the Universe, and of spirit and matter. Though these were insoluble intellectual problems for religion, he said, the theist could have strong moral convictions on them which would be adequate for "Life and Eternity."[34]

Ranade, especially, emphasized conscience. For him it was the "King" that should be respected above every human authority. Conscience was the "Divine Command" which was in every man, high or low. It had rights which were paramount over "mere political and social expediency," and were limited only by morality. There was for Ranade a moral authority supreme both over individual conscience and above the many theological and ethical systems. This had a universal aspect, as there were only one religion and one morality which were supreme over all.[35] Despite the supernatural authority of conscience, Ranade, as the other reformers, found its explicit dictates in the region of reflection upon man's moral inheritance and present needs.

New conceptions of freedom, equality, and justice were imbibed through Western education, and were to a certain extent the basic assumptions of the English law courts in India. Hindus observed Western social ideals and standards both in India and abroad, and felt the pressure exerted by the activity of Christian Missions. The leaders moved among the people and saw their condition with fresh insight and vision. As was Swami Vivekananda, they became burdened with the sight of widespread poverty and social discrimination.[36]

[33] *Works*, p. 37.
[34] *Reform*, pp. 260-1.
[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 175, 261, 278.
[36] R. Rolland, *Prophets of the New India*, p. 308. Vivekananda, *Works*, VII, p. 243. *Cultural Heritage of India*, II, p. 457.

In the face of the needs of their society the reformers believed that action could be taken, so they gave stirring calls to their countrymen to be strong and progressive. It was time to act, and, what was more important still, they had the individual freedom and power to follow conviction. "Give up these weakening mysticisms, and be strong," cried Vivekananda.[37] The will had to be trained, explained Ranade, and made subservient to a higher Will. Action ought to be taken against tyranny and social wretchedness. Moreover, the paralyzing fatalism of *karma*, which had secured the Hindu's surrender to his physical and social environment, had to be broken. It was the individual's right, Ranade insisted, to choose and fight for his new environment, thereby improving opportunities for his physical and mental welfare.[38]

The moral character of the sectarian movement was further emphasized in the social codes, which were intended to lay down new principles and standards of conduct, as well as in the fundamental religious beliefs supporting them. On entering an organization, the person seeking membership took solemn vows based on its constitution and creed. The creeds at first were simple enough; in fact, M. G. Ranade found the thought of many leaders of the Brahmo Samaj too simple for the needs of society and religion. They made their new life, he observed, only a matter of confessing faith in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.[39] Since more difficult intellectual and moral problems had to be faced than were evinced in such a brief confession, Ranade proceeded himself to meet them by giving a statement of thirty-nine articles of theistic belief.

Unrestrained individualism, however, was not encouraged. Fresh thinking about the problems of society called for social codes consistent with modern practice to replace the old patterns of conduct, for it was realized that the individual once freed from the restraints of traditional Hinduism must not be allowed to go unguided. The accumulating experience of the new social thought

[37] Rolland, *Prophets*, p. 395.
[38] Ranade, *Reform*, pp. 172, 176-7. Rai, *Arya Samaj*, p. 138. Mozoomdar, *Keshub Chunder Sen*, pp. 120-1.
[39] *Reform*, p. 251.

and activity provided materials which could be used to promote "consistency of conduct among the brotherhood."[40] They were in their time the prototype of social legislation that later became more common. In fact, the small societies were themselves the first evidence of an emerging Hindu society which has since grown far beyond the bounds of the original sects, and in which moral individuality has become quite a common factor. That they did not achieve a greater growth themselves might seem at first glance to be due only to a religious and social conservatism inhibiting progress. But it has to be recognized that for the newly emancipated individuals to have broken away completely from the old religion and society would have torn their roots from Hindu soil, and undoubtedly would have limited their social usefulness.

4. A Religious Basis for Morality

Essential to the social views of the nineteenth century leaders was the conviction that their personal religion provided a basis for a new social morality. Reflection on those ends toward which they wished society to move was a religious act. They were conscious that, in trying to break religion loose from its association with undesirable social practice, they must provide a metaphysical basis for the new ideals and values. Individually they differed in their formulation of the origin of ethics and the ultimate moral authority, but in general there were two conceptions, namely the theistic, and the Vedanta as interpreted by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

The theists were interested in keeping morality free from speculation as far as possible, and in maintaining it as a practical concern. In particular, Rammohan Roy insisted that moral doctrines be kept beyond the reach of "metaphysical perversion," and within the reach of the understanding of all people, learned and unlearned.[41] He opposed, on the one hand, the relation of the moral teachings of Jesus with Christian theology, and, on the other, the understanding of human relationships in terms of "Vedantic

[40] D. Tagore, *Autobiography*, pp. 172-3. K. C. Sen, *New Dispensation*, I, pp. 184 ff. Satyendranath Tagore in *Autobiography of D. Tagore*, p. 3. Also see P. D. Devanandan, "Trends of Thought in Contemporary Hinduism," *International Review of Missions*, 1939 pp. 465 ff.

[41] *Works*, pp. 117, 473, 484-5, 555.

themes." Neither was necessary, Roy contended, as the moral nature of things was so intelligible it needed no speculation to enforce it. Ranade's theistic view was much the same in its intention. There were, he admitted, some religious problems which were intellectually insoluble, but man's moral convictions could nevertheless be quite clear so that he could act when desirable and necessary.[42]

The same moral concern for society, in origin at least, produced the theistic opposition to idolatry which commenced with Rammohan Roy. He was deeply aware of the fact that people, in worshipping their many deities, were violating "every humane and social feeling." The numerous gods of Hinduism simply sanctioned acts of self-destruction and the immolation of relatives. Hence, in seeking for the original religion, his translations of the Scriptures were intended to teach both the worship of one God and respect for pure moral principles.[43]

The theists found the origin and authority for man's moral consciousness in the nature of the personal God. The "Moral Governor" of the universe is holy and just, making his will known to man. For Dayanand Saraswati, the holy Lord of Creation "awards all souls the fruits of their deeds in strict accordance with the requirements of absolute justice."[44] The holiness of the Supreme Spirit, according to Devendranath Tagore, is the means by which man's heart may be sanctified, and his righteousness is the path which man should follow.[45] God is Providence, said Ranade, but his activity does not conflict with man's voluntary and limited freedom. There was ground for perplexity and doubt in holding such a conception, he admitted, but that in no way should disturb the theist's conviction "that the special scheme of God's Providence is a moral government."[46]

Hence the theist's moral task was fairly clear. He was working in obedience to a supreme moral Authority who made people to live in society without those invidious distinctions of caste, rank or wealth which men had devised and habit had perpetuated. The

[43] *Works*, pp. 74, 483.
[44] Rai, *Arya Samaj*, p. 82.
[45] *Autobiography*, p. 285.
[46] *Reform*, pp. 265-6.
[42] *Reform*, pp. 260-1.

natural world also was evidence of the mercies of God, although it had to be confessed that the moral governance of human affairs and natural power did not always make a just balance. Evidence did not show that the divine moral sanctions operated fully and uniformly in the world of man's experience.[47]

The Vedanta as interpreted by Vivekananda provided a different basis for the moral life. The metaphysical truth which underlay all ethical codes, he contended, had been discovered by the Vedantic philosophers long ago.[48] According to this view each individual soul is a part of the infinite Universal Soul, and human relationships in the world have an ultimate reference to the same Being. Therefore, a man should not injure his neighbour, for in so doing he would simply be injuring himself. In order to be moral in conduct the individual needed to become spiritually aware of this ultimate unity. Furthermore, the relation of Vivekananda's Impersonal God to the world was differently conceived than by the theist with his personal Providence. For Vivekananda distinctions of good and evil were simply present appearances which were due to the relative point of view of the individual in this world. The Impersonal God was beyond good and evil; he admitted, however, that good was a nearer manifestation of It than evil.

Swami Vivekananda was in this respect a faithful disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, but he added to the master's teaching a social activism and responsibility unknown to the older man. The religious absorption of Ramakrishna gave no clear indication of the moral values which had come to be expected as a part of a reviving Hinduism. Aware though he was of the new forces that were stirring in modern religion, the direction of Ramakrishna's interest was even such as to question the validity of those moral principles which were becoming an accepted part of it. Swami Vireswarananda, in his *Life of Sri Ramakrishna,* relates how on one occasion the master lost the sense of moral distinctions. "Even a street girl reminded him of the Mother. Words grossly offensive to the ordinary man appeared to him as but a group of letters—

[47] Ranade, *ibid.*, pp. 265-6. Roy, *Works,* pp. 136, 484-5.

[48] *Works,* I, pp. 375 ff., 383. The same interpretation was given by Paul Deussen, and more recently by Franklin Edgerton, *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 62 (1942), p. 155.

and every letter, he believed in accordance with the verdict of the shastras, was a symbol of the Divine Mother."[49] Under the determined and expert guidance of Swami Vivekananda, modern social values were embodied in the Ramakrishna movement which maintained, at the same time, a clear reference to the type of religious experience so strongly exemplified in the master.

In the thought of all the reformers, not only was religion essential to a moral view of the world, but morality was necessary for the attainment of the religious or spiritual end of life. The theists encouraged the moral worship of God for which adherence to new principles of conduct was fundamental. Caste distinctions at the time and place of worship were less evident than elsewhere in human associations, but even in collective worship morality was conditioned by past belief and practice, and the new forms of worship represented only a limited advance beyond actual social behaviour.

In its social function theism inspired and encouraged men in their struggle to achieve just and humane conditions, but the conception of what those conditions ought to be was not derived directly from the new faith. Here intelligence and observation operated to formulate the good ends of society. Where the end of human life was conceived in terms of liberation from the world of change and circumstance, the moral problem arose in determining the value of a life of renunciation and meditation. The new ideal was coming to be responsibility for the world, and it claimed men's devotion as they found their true renunciation through some disinterested service. The Hindu individual related himself religiously to society by securing spiritual values in the service of man.[50] Ramakrishna was the least socially minded of all the religious figures dominating the nineteenth century scene, and he performed no social service himself. Yet he did not deny the value of the life engaged in responsibility for the welfare of people. When asked by a member of the Brahmo Samaj whether God could be realized without giving up the world, he is reported to have said, "Oh no! You do not have to give up everything. You are better off where you are." And after the death of

[49] P. 159.
[50] See *Autobiography of D. Tagore*, pp. 104, 145, 205 ff., 262.

Ramakrishna his disciples, who at first clung to the traditional ideal of world-renunciation, were turned by Vivekananda to combine it with the modern ideal of human service.[51] With the nineteenth century development of Hinduism, the moral function of religion in society was to maintain a standard of disinterestedness in the individual's pursuit of socially desirable ends.

5. Social Action

In modern Hindu sectarianism, opposition to established belief and practice was accompanied by considerable activity in the reconstruction of religion and society. The leaders discerned that new organizations needed to be formed to which men and women could voluntarily give their allegiance, and through which they might find the means for expression of a newly realized moral vitality. In part, the formation of the Samajas and the Ramakrishna Mission was intended to meet the need of the individual for free association and activity. For, while these groups were intended to be primarily religious in function, they became as well the direct means for the inauguration of numerous social service activities.[52] A close relationship was found to exist between individual religion, intelligent morality and social activity. Several features of this nineteenth century development may be observed: (*a*) It was the educated, privileged, and economically secure classes that began to act on behalf of the oppressed groups and castes, as well as in their own interest. (*b*) There was a concern for the welfare of the whole of society which, apart from the immediate benefits to the classes concerned, aided the growth of national impulses. The struggle for political emancipation was only beginning to be felt in its full meaning and force by the end of the century. (*c*) Social and religious reconstruction was pursued on the condition that it would not arouse deep unrest or violent antagonism.

[51] *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*, pp. 158-9. B. K. Sarkar in *Creative India*, p. 465, contends that Ramakrishna had the most dynamic social philosophy of the age, though he did not think in terms of social reform. D. S. Sarma, *Renaissance of Hinduism*, pp. 283-4.

[52] "It must be confessed that the emphasis which our religious leaders, especially those belonging to the Samaj movement and the Ramakrishna Mission, have laid on social service is due to the object-lessons provided by Christian missions." Sarma, *Renaissance*, p. 639.

The attainment of new ideals was considered possible by the gradual process of reform of the existing society. Revolutionary methods were generally abhorred by the reformers, though they were accused by Hindu conservative opinion of stirring up a revolution. The reform approach to social problems was directly related to the religious character of the sectarian movements. Within Hindu society there were small numbers of emancipated individuals who were seeking to remove the causes of injustice.[53] Thus, they placed education and enlightenment in the forefront of their programmes. Improvement was expected to result from an awakening of the sleeping consciences of the people, who now had some means at their disposal for removing bad conditions. M. G. Ranade held that those thoughts and ideas which determined the outward forms of Hindu life had to be changed before any real reformation could occur.[54] Appeal was variously made: to humane feelings, to a sense of justice, and to enlightened self-interest ; as when M. G. Ranade and G. K. Gokhale laid responsibility for the intolerable injustices suffered by outcastes on the conscience of caste Hindus.[55] But through all social change induced by reform the religious life of the people had to be kept intact.

Activity was also characterized by a concern for the general social welfare. The people as a whole needed service, and this too became an organized ideal, such as in the formation of the Servants of India Society, which sought to train "men prepared to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit."[56] The education of all classes now became a primary necessity, though the extent to which its privileges could be offered to the masses was limited by the voluntary and philanthropic nature of the task.

More revolutionary tendencies, which sometimes appeared, were directed toward attaining political power rather than the inner remaking of Hindu society. The repeated agitation for a "free press" during the nineteenth century is evidence of the impulse

[53] See *Cultural Heritage of India*, II, p. 457. *Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna*. Ranade, *Reform*, pp. 156 ff.
[54] Ranade, *Reform*, pp. 156 ff., 172.
[55] G. K. Gokhale, *Speeches of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, pp. 1054 ff.
[56] *Servants of India Society*, p. 4.

to criticize and change the government, as well as to secure exchange of free opinion on other questions. The revolt of 1857, while unsuccessful as an effort to seize political power by violence, showed the volcanic possibilities of Indian sentiment. The revolt had religious characteristics, but this was not directly a result of the new spirit stirring within Hinduism. Still, to the end of the century political thought and action were largely reformist, seeking for Indian responsibility in the government by gradual rather than radical change.

The new social and religious reconstruction needed to be accomplished without arousing deep unrest. This was a fixed principle with the reformers, who believed that no good would result should violent antagonism be stirred up. A possible exception was Keshab Chander Sen and his followers, who, during a period in the activity of that vigorous reformer, proceeded with little regard for reactions in conservative society. The principle of peaceful reformation was laid down by Rammohan Roy. When pressing so earnestly for the abolition of *sati*, Roy was doubtful as to the advisability of British official action against this quite widespread Hindu custom. However, he gave his approval to this the first and the most striking of all social reforms required by act or law of the government during British rule. He added his influence to the maintenance of this new moral standard for women in spite of the strongly organized expression of Hindu opinion which sought, even by appeal to the authorities in London, to have the act abolishing *sati* withdrawn.

Thus, while a conflict between the modern religious and social universalism and the still dominant traditional exclusion and discrimination was always possible, the sects refrained from social ruptures, or from allowing deep-seated religious passions to be aroused destructively against their cause. Men might be equal in the sight of God, and the sects made religious provision for some demonstration of this equality; but they perceived there were limits within which recognition might be safely secured in general social practice.[57] A certain freedom was realized in worship and in other

[57] See D. Tagore, *Autobiography*, p. 76. Mozoomdar, *Keshub Chunder Sen*, pp 160 ff. Ranade, *Reform*, pp. 198 ff.

forms of religious association, which represented a distinct advance beyond usual practice, but equality and freedom partially realized in religion were not interpreted as implying a complete application of these ideals to society.

With the reformers themselves two general views prevailed as to method and form of social reconstruction. An aggressive effort to bring about immediate social changes had a note of urgency in it that eagerly sought for relief by any measure that would possibly avoid strong social or religious opposition. The other view considered that social improvement was desirable only by gradual development. It looked to more distant, and not clearly explicit, ends which would have to be worked out in the course of the peoples' natural growth. The two positions corresponded to different religious analyses of the social situation.

The more aggressive reform view was that which largely prevailed in the Samajas who brought mild pressure on society for change, accompanied by secular and religious education which also gave it somewhat the character of the gradualist view. At times legislation was sought from the government in order to make social aims and possibilities more specific. But such legislation was not expected to be mandatory, rather it was to be permissive in order to allow those changes the reformers thought should be made in the course of time.[58] Moreover, enactments to prohibit certain social practices, which the British rulers believed to be positively inhumane or immoral, were the result of foreign political initiative.[59] What the reformers desired was permissive legislation that would protect those holding progressive social views from disability while they proceeded to put them into practice.

In general, since the several Samajas held that a religious change in the individual was necessary, they encouraged membership in their respective groups. The religious view of the moral life which supported the aggressive reform view came mainly from those holding the theistic position. Indeed, the theists put the moral issue into

[58] An example is the Act of 1856, legalizing the marriage of Hindu widows. At first it aroused bitter opposition.

[59] See "Earl Cornwallis to the Court of Directors, August 2, 1789," and Lord William Bentinck's statement, "The Suppression of Sati, 1829," in *Speeches on Indian Policy*, I, (Ed. Keith), pp. 155 ff., 208 ff.

plain view, and made sharp distinctions between what they considered to be right and wrong. Accordingly, salvation was largely a moral effort, and an achievement which man needed to work out in society. Where the moral struggle was viewed in direct relation to the purposive activity of the divine Being, the expectation of immediate social improvement was more apparent. Devendranath Tagore is an interesting illustration of this. Though a leader in the Brahmo Samaj, Tagore was primarily concerned with spiritual salvation, and the cultivation of the inner life of the individual. His social attitudes were cautious, and vacillating under the persuasions of others.[60] But even more striking is Keshab Chander Sen's transition from an aggressive social reform position to one of eclectic religious revivalism in which he became progressively more conservative in his social views. His theism during his later life became obscured in a mass of theory in which it is difficult to make much sense, and his moral vigour certainly declined.

Mahadev Ranade both maintained a strong theism and brought to the whole century some of its clearest moral thinking from the religious point of view. Though himself a member of a Samaj, Ranade did not join the leadership of the Brahmo and Arya Samajas in their insistence that social reconstruction should be preceded by religious sectarianism. Thus, in the Indian National Social Conference he answered invitations to support the work of the Samajas by saying that religious changes were not necessarily followed by social transformation. He insisted that, since the present state of Hindu society was not that of its most glorious epochs of the past, they might hope for a social reconstruction without stirring up religious hostility.[61] Ranade's position is indicative of the change of direction which social activity was taking in following the line of close association with traditional religion, while trying to reform society from within, rather than straining relations with traditionalism as was the case generally with the Samajas.

How the sects desired to maintain a bridge across the gap which they created between themselves and conventional religious practice

[60] *Autobiography*, pp. 104, 145, 205 ff.
[61] *Reform*, pp. 167 ff.

was illustrated in an observation concerning the Prarthana Samaj. Its members were said to have continued to observe the ceremonies of Hinduism, but destitute of all religious significance. "This much sacrifice they make to existing prejudices," it was explained.[62] Certainly such gestures of deference to traditionalism affected the more radical social ideals represented by the Samajas, as it represented, at the same time, an incipient secularism that was creeping into religious practice, if not into its theory.

The view that Hindu society could best be improved by gradual means, chiefly emphasizing broader religious enlightenment among the masses, was held by Swami Vivekananda. He criticized the reformers for their serious mistake in holding "religion accountable for the horrors of priestcraft and degeneration," and for trying to pull down the ancient Hindu religious structure.[63] He admitted that the deplorable condition of the poor masses needed ameliorative measures, and Hindu women should have social freedom; but these good ends could only be secured by an education of the right type, that is, by orienting the people to their ancient and glorious religious heritage. Vivekananda therefore proposed that Sanskrit education be made available for the masses in order that all might share in the rich resources of India's religious life. Given such education, India's women and her outcastes would by their own ability and in their own time solve their problems.[64] His social attitudes, moreover, reflected the influence of this religious view as he admitted to a growing appreciation of the "time-honored institutions" of Hinduism, each of which was the embodiment of the experience of centuries. This gradual process of reform, he contended, would bring about its own ends as the people came to determine what social standards were appropriate for themselves.

The position of Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Mission in the general movement for social reform was primarily determined by a conception of religious salvation, rather than by a moral view of society and the individual. The objective was a renewal of the

[62] *Indian Social Reformer*, vol. XX, p. 317; quoted by Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 79.
[63] *Works*, V, p. 19.
[64] *Works*, III, pp. 297, 132. Swami Madhavananda in *Prabuddha Bharata*, Sept. 1943, p. 393.

mind of man which would supply the initiative and vigour for the needs of social reconstruction. As such, the service of humanity was conceived in different terms than "mere social service," it was rather a service of the God who is immanent in society.[65] The primary necessity, therefore, was the preaching of the religious message.

In assessing the value of the two methods of social reconstruction, it is possible to do so from a certain historical perspective. The social ends formulated by the Samajas, while immediately in prospect and to some extent achieved, were limited by their own social conservatism. They were hindered as well by the firm opposition of Hindu traditionalism, such as in the case of the marriage of widows. Deviations from traditional practice were rare, so that thirty years after the Act of 1856, which legalized such marriages, it could be estimated that only three hundred had been celebrated.[66] However, Ranade, in commenting on the situation, noted there was a healthy change of public attitude toward the reform which contrasted with the earlier persecutions that had accompanied the marriage of widows. While the Samajas have lost influence in recent years, the principal reforms for which they sought have now received wider public acceptance, and have reached the stage of political action.[67]

The gradualist view of social reconstruction had a more distant, in fact, a vague end to be achieved. It emphasized the inner spiritual renewal of the individual who had to work out his social salvation without the strong influence of foreign ideals and standards of life not immediately suited to him.[68] But by maintaining the Hindu religious stages of life, corresponding to individual temperament, capacity and achievement, social inequality tended

[65] See the *Prabuddha Bharata* (which was established by Swami Vivekananda in 1895), July, 1943, p. 304. Also "Swami Vivekananda: the Man and his Message" by Swami Madhavananda, *ibid.*, Sept., 1943, pp. 389 ff.

[66] Ranade, *Reform*, pp. xxii, 90-1.

[67] See K. Natarajan, *Indian Social Reformer*, Sept. 18, 1937, p. 37. See article on Prarthana Samaj, by "V. S. S." in *ibid.*, Sept. 28, 1946, p. 28, who states: "The reforms advocated by the Samaj have practically come to stay."

[68] Thus Sri Ramakrishna: "Those of your young men who are quite learned in English and educated after the Western model, silently put up with the kicks of their masters!" *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna* (1948), p. 131.

to be confirmed rather than eliminated.[69] With the theists, however, in theory though less in practice, human equality and freedom were positively expressed as ideals that could be achieved. Both the aggressive reform and the gradualist views inspired an inclusive and universalistic conception of social service, and this was undoubtedly a signal achievement of the nineteenth century. The foundations for numerous social service organizations and activities of more recent times were solidly laid in the work of the sects.

[69] Sri Ramakrishna taught that caste distinctions were essential until the attainment of "perfection of knowledge." *Ibid.*, pp. 280 ff.

CHAPTER III

A POLITICAL ETHIC: RIGHTS AND DUTIES

CHAPTER THREE

A POLITICAL ETHIC: RIGHTS AND DUTIES

1. Rights and Duties in the National Struggle

The most important factor in the internal development of modern Indian society has been the national consciousness forcefully expressing itself in political activity. From a moral point of view politics created a real possibility, for it involved ideals of equality, liberty, justice, and universal opportunity to be realized through Indian control of national life and affairs. But at the end of the nineteenth century India was still dependent on a foreign Power. The educated leadership of the nation, tutored in ideas and experience of self-reliance, found itself thwarted through complete lack of political responsibility.

Religion, which was already deeply involved in matters of social significance, became further concerned with the specifically political aspects of society. Hindus as a community were in a strategic position to make a major contribution to political development, for their educated class was numerous, and they had, as well, economic and social influence. As a consequence, they were able to discover any moral benefits which could possibly be realized in the struggle for power. Hindu religion continued to undergo both revival and reform by becoming a means to the achievement of national ends, and by responding inwardly to those dynamic forces that were making the nation.

Indians had found expression for a new individual and collective freedom in their consciousness of civil liberties. One of these, the freedom of the press, became an issue early in the nineteenth century when the Government enforced restrictions on the very limited press that then existed. Strong objection was taken to this official act, which was interpreted as an infringement of those legitimate Indian rights that had been created under the conditions of British rule.[1] In this form first appeared the concept of human rights that was destined to have an increasing moral significance

[1] See Rammohan Roy, *Works*, p. 462.

in modern India. The idea of rights, while it has become important in all aspects of individual and social life, reached popular recognition mainly through its applications in political thought and activity. In a field of growing tension, the rights of the people were declared as a moral axiom which could not legitimately be contested. In 1905 Gopal Krishna Gokhale reminded the British that there were a million men in India who had come under the influence of Western education, and great harm was being done by keeping them completely from power.[2] In making such representations to the Government, Indian leaders justified themselves as acting simply on a natural right well known to the English people, who had themselves only secured a similar recognition after a long and historic struggle.[3]

Politically conscious Indians were simply applying to themselves the results of their knowledge of Western political and moral history. The doctrine of absolute rights in national life was such an application, being derived from the political experience of the West during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[4] This dependence was not only recognized, but was cited in order to give added weight to the Indian cause. Educated men "here and there began to question the validity and the moral right of one people to rule another," a contemporary has written. "They had read history, yes, European and English history in particular. . They knew all about Magna Charta. They read Milton and Burke. They knew by heart the fiery speeches of Garibaldi and Mazzini that had moved them deeply."[5]

The measure of political responsibility which Indians should have, and the content of the conceptions of "self-government," *swaraj*, "home-rule," "responsible government," and "independence" varied with time and the course of events. But throughout there was either an assumption or an assertion of the right of the people themselves to political power. It was assumed in moderate expressions, such as the resolution of the National Congress, meeting at Lucknow in 1916, when the King-Emperor was requested "to issue

[2] *Speeches*, p. 1078.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 1148.
[4] See B. Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, pp. 36, 509, 627, 705.
[5] Anup Singh, *Nehru, the Rising Star of India*, p. 31.

a Proclamation announcing that it is the aim and intention of the British policy to confer Self-Government on India at an early date."[6] Again and again the right of the people to make their own government was stated explicitly.[7] Such was the emphatic assertion that India was fit for "representative and responsible government," and that it was an exclusive right of the people to fashion it for themselves.[8]

The struggle for political authority sometimes had to be made subordinate to more fundamental rights. For, when the conflict with the Government resulted in restrictions upon the press and the voluntary association of the people, appeal was made to the primary rights of free speech and free association. "Civil disobedience" itself was interpreted as a right which the people might exercize in asserting other moral claims.[9]

The general British policy in India had been guided by the express ideal of good government, which they considered to be their sacred trust. A common British attitude in meeting Indian appeals and demands was to state that India was still unprepared for representative institutions, which however the British declared they were seeking to introduce gradually. Essentially, then, it was a question of merit: Indians were not ready and fit for self-government. So conceived by Great Britain, the issue was a moral one.[10] At the same time there were always Britons who were sympathetic with Indian aspirations, and who affirmed the legitimacy of the Indian cause in terms of rights. Early among them was William Ewart Gladstone who was popular in India for his approval of the national movement. He is quoted as saying, "The question who shall have supreme rule in India is, by the laws of right, an Indian question, and those laws of right are from day to day growing laws of fact."[11]

The British idea of government for India was originally formulated in a reaction to the chaotic commercial expansion and capricious

[6] P. Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, I, p. 128.
[7] See Lajpat Rai, *The Political Future of India*, p. 35.
[8] Tilak's Manifesto for the Congress-Democratic Party. Sitaramayya, *History of Congress*, I, p. 194.
[9] As M. K. Gandhi did. *Young India, 1919-1922*, pp. 942 ff., & 944 ff.
[10] Reginald Coupland, *New Republic*, Sept. 7, 1918. (Ref. in Lajpat Rai, *Political Future*, p. 16.)
[11] See Sitaramayya, *History of Congress*, I, p. 80.

individualism of the East India Company's policy during the eighteenth century.[12] The subsequent declaration of British political sovereignty took the form of a dual principle: while Great Britain was pursuing her own interests, she could and should, at the same time, secure the best interests of India.[13] But application of the principle was such that these "best interests of India" were achieved and retained by exclusive control of the policy and operation of the Indian Government. In actual practice, the exclusion of Indians from any real political responsibility was complete throughout the nineteenth century.

Indian reaction to this British political policy was put in unmistakably ethical terms. Their "rigorous exclusion from all power and all positions of trust and responsibility," declared Gokhale, had no historical comparison. It was leading to a racial deterioration which was "a cruel, an iniquitous wrong" that Britain was inflicting on India.[14] Moreover, the frequently made suggestion that India was not yet ready for democratic institutions was repudiated as false by studies of ancient Indian administration, as well as of the more recent functioning of the village panchayats.[15] Indians wished to prove they could conduct a representative body. The circular which convened the first meeting of the Indian National Union (later the Congress) stated that an indirect object was to give "an unanswerable reply to the assertion that Indian is still wholly unfit for any form of representative institutions."[16]

Nationalist Indians also disputed the sincerity and application of

[12] See "Warren Hastings to Lord Mansfield, 21 March, 1774," *Speeches on Indian Policy*, I (Ed. Keith), pp. 60 ff.

[13] See "Edmund Burke on the Impeachment of Warren Hastings, 15-19 February, 1788," *Speeches on Indian Policy*, I (Ed. Keith), pp. 114 ff.

"Earl Cornwallis to the Court of Directors, 2 August, 1789," *Speeches*, I, (Keith), pp. 155 ff.

Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment*, pp. 185 ff., 193-4.

Substance of the Speech of Lord Grenville on the Motion made by the Marquis Wellesley in the House of Lords, April 9, 1813. ". . . to which even forty years later men turned back for inspiration and guidance." *The Cambridge History of India*, VI, pp. 1-2.

"Petition of the East India Company for the Renewal of their Charter, Feb. 22, 1813," Hansard, *The Parliamentary Debates*, XXIV, pp. 659 ff.

Henry Whitehead, *Indian Problems in Religion, Education, and Politics*, p. 117.

[14] Gokhale, *Speeches*, p. 1080.

[15] Rai, *Political Future*, pp. 16 ff. Gokhale, *Speeches*, p. 1228.

[16] Sitaramayya, *History of Congress*, I, p. 16.

Great Britain's dual principle of government. They discerned behind the continuance of foreign rule a covert economic motive which prevented the country's normal development.[17] The solution of the economic problem. they contended, was dependent on the attainment of Indian political responsibility.[18] So India wanted "power to shape her fiscal policy in her own interests, independent of control from London."[19]

Nor were politically conscious Indians satisfied with British suggestions that they should first attain actual social equality with their foreign rulers before being granted political equality. Such a status in social relationships, it was replied, was not possible without first attaining equal political power, and this in turn involved the right of self-determination.[20] The fundamental good of India could not be achieved while there was a subordination in political life which amounted to inequality. Furthermore, the moral character of political demands was expressed by a declaration that immediate equality was the country's birth-right.[21] One common Indian interpretation was that "the aim of the British Government was not to organize Self-Government but to keep the peace."[22]

On looking at this conflict of claims from the point of view of justice, it resolved itself into a question as to which are fundamental, rights and obligations based on merit, or those based on liberty. Indian nationalists and British civil servants differed on the question of Indian fitness for self-government. But the difference was not so apparent in the matter of liberty, since at times there was agreement on the conception of the ultimate political goal. Thus, Lala Lajpat Rai stated that, at least in theory, there was "full agreement between the political goal set up by the Indian Nationalists of the Congress school" and that of Mr. Montagu's announcement in the House of Commons on August 20, 1917, when he spoke for His Majesty's Government with the complete accord of the

[17] See *Indian Affairs*, Sept. 18, 1947, Commercial Supplement.
[18] Gokhale, *Speeches*, p. 1116.
[19] Rai, *Political Future*, p. xx.
[20] See Whitehead, *Problems*, pp. 272-3.
[21] B. G. Tilak's position as stated by M. K. Gandhi, *Young India, 1919*; p. 791.
[22] C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer in *Foreword* to Besant, *India, A Nation*.

Government of India.[23] This particular degree of concord did not extend to the matter of merit, as subsequent events revealed. For, according to Mr. Montagu, the British Government and the Government of India, who had the responsibility for "the welfare and advancement of the Indian peoples," were to be the judges as to the time and measure of advance. In this they must be guided both by the co-operation they received and "by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in the Indian sense of responsibility."

The question of merit remained a serious consideration for British leaders, for in 1947, at the dawn of an independent Indian Government, misgivings were expressed ; but now it was the future position of a free India within the British Commonwealth that gave concern.[24] Since merit in this connection was partly determined by education, the responsibility for India's fitness for self-government could not entirely be her own. Some of the British recognized that one of the failures of their rule was the small percentage of the people who had the privilege of even a rudimentary education.[25]

W. D. Lamont has correctly called attention to the fact that "no association of individuals or peoples has ever been successful unless practical policy has been guided by the idea that 'fundamental rights,' based on the conception of liberty, take precedence over obligations and rights based on the conception of merit".[26] In the Indian situation, it appears that the ideal of merit was emphasized to the frequent neglect of the more fundamental ideal of liberty. Merit was indeed essential for the responsibilities of Government, but insistence upon it without equal recognition of the rights and duties involved in the idea of liberty defeated the stated purpose of the foreign authority.

Appeal to inalienable Indian rights was possible, particularly in view of the moral and religious views of the intelligent leaders of

[23] *Political Future*, pp. 8, 32.
[24] It remained a question after August 15, 1947. See *The Asiatic Review*, Oct. 1947, pp. 289 ff., speeches by Sir Percival Griffiths and Sir Stanley Reed.
[25] Sir Alfred Watson in *One Hundred Years After*, (Carey Centenary), p. 97.
[26] *The Principles of Moral Judgment*, p. 159.

Indian nationalism. The concept was adopted directly from the West, but it was appropriate to the Indian political situation with its characteristic Hindu aspects. An immutable moral order, that was generally believed to be beyond the immediate and changing events of the present, gave the character of incontestable truth to political rights. B. G. Tilak, who at one time appealed to *swaraj* as his birth-right, at another found "immutable" and "permanent" ethical laws in the "sole metaphysical foundation of the principle, there is only one Atman in all created things."[27] Mahatma Gandhi sought to persuade everybody that civil disobedience was his birth-right.[28] And he believed that there were moral laws which were "absolutely independent of our opinions and feelings." Such laws were eternal, and had their seat in man's soul.[29] As we have seen, the sectarian movements followed the conviction that moral principles were derived from the nature of God or the Ultimate Being. This religious basis for the moral consciousness was projected into political thought and action, giving a sense of invincible truthfulness to Indian desires and demands.

When we consider the kind of "inherent rights" which were asserted, it is possible to find them derived, at least immediately, from the intimate relations which politically conscious Indians maintained with one another.[30] With the awareness of becoming a nation, there was a corresponding consciousness that the welfare of that nation provided a moral cause. That is, moral authority inhered in the relationships of modern society whatever metaphysical reference there might be to an absolute law.[31] This is illustrated in a manifesto signed by a number of Hindus and Muslims, including M. K. Gandhi, Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and others. Here was stated the "inherent right of everyone to express his opinion without restraint" in the matter of the propriety of Indians being in Government service.[32] The nationalists began with the more general right of the nation to be free, then proceeded to the necessity of defending particular

[27] *Gita Rahasya*, I, p. 525.
[28] *Young India, 1919*, p. 943.
[29] *Ethical Religion*, pp. 44-5.
[30] See Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics* (1932), p. 237.
[31] Thus, Aurobindo Ghose, *Essays on the Gita*, p. 42.
[32] *Young India, 1919*, p. 895.

rights arising in the act of making it free in fact. Thus, writing on "The Immediate Issue," M. K. Gandhi stated on one occasion that *swaraj* must occupy a subordinate place while the nationalists first made good "the right of free speech and free association." These were elementary and had to be defended with their very lives.[33]

The political delineation of the moral situation gave a new dimension to that which had already been described during the development of the religious and social reform movements. Hinduism was not arrayed against itself in the familiar tension between the progressive and conservative elements; rather it was the Hindu acting as an Indian in the interests of the new national consciousness that provided an external area of tension, that is with a foreign political power. A basis for unity was offered by the steadily consolidated action aiming at representative government with ideals of equality and freedom. Here was the sole promise of freedom, and in claiming it for themselves Indians were acting according to accepted moral principles in the West which had tutored them in desires that could no longer be suppressed. This fact of growing unity, which drew into itself the best of Indian leadership, was underestimated by many in Great Britain, so that Edward Thompson spoke advisedly to his countrymen when years later he said, "It is nonsense to sneer at the Congress, and say that it represents merely a discontented handful. Few of modern India's outstanding names cannot at one time or another be found in its records."[34] How fundamental this unification around the political and national cause could be was shown by the insistence that the right of association was prior in importance even to the claims of *swaraj*.

2. Conflict of Duties

With the appeal to human rights, there was among Hindus a corresponding conception of duty in relation to the national cause. While educated men were generally agreed on the right of self-determination, there were outstanding differences of opinion as to where their immediate duty lay. The exact national claim on

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 943.
[34] *The Reconstruction of India*, p. 63.

individual thought and action had to be determined, and traditional as well as modern religion was a considerable factor in helping to do this.

Two distinctive views were formulated in the course of events at the turn of the century. First, duty was conceived in relation to the total situation involving both Great Britain and India. This was the position held by the group in the National Congress called the Moderates. It was both internationalist and nationalist in character, restraining violent and impatient nationalist impulses in the interest of amicable relations between India and Great Britain. The Moderates saw the imperative necessity of social reconstruction as a preparation for political reform. This liberal attitude in relation to politics and society was accompanied by a religious liberalism as well. Secondly, the section called the Extremists, or New Party, held performance of national duty more important than any other consideration. Social and religious reforms were subordinate to the necessity of organizing the whole nation around the primary purpose of securing political objectives as soon as possible. This extremist conservatism in religious and social matters was balanced by a political radicalism which demanded immediate action that condoned and was associated with instances of violence.

Hindu religious and cultural impulses were not lacking at any time in the national struggle, for they found expression in a pattern of modern activity into which were woven traditional means of mental and spiritual satisfaction. There were characteristic reactions to political activity which demonstrated the strong influences of religion in the midst of the immediate problems of society. A conflict of duties in a politically conscious society led several prominent figures to renounce their public activities by turning to a concentrated search for peace of mind as an individualistic religious solution of the national problem. That such individual decisions were made at a time when there had been violent attacks on British officials adds significance to their religious character.

The years leading up to 1919 form a convenient period for studying these developments. Politically and socially it was the time when the struggle between the Moderates and the New Party went

on in the National Congress. It was also the period before Mr. Gandhi's entrance into politics with his moral programme of *satyagraha*. Violent incidents were less frequent after the agitation aroused by the Partition of Bengal in 1905, but it was not until Gandhi's principle and methods of non-violence were officially accepted by the Congress that, from the moral point of view, there was any significantly new development.

3. The Duty of Mutual Trust

A major difference between the Moderates and the Extremists appeared in their respective attitudes towards the uneducated masses, who up to the time of the split in the Congress had been politically indifferent and inarticulate. Lala Lajpat Rai accused those who followed the Moderate line of lacking the intelligent support of the masses in their propaganda, and of being too lazy and too self-centred to run the risks involved in going to the masses for support.[35] The charge was not fair, but the policy of Gopal K. Gokhale and his associates was based on a view of the masses that saw their "ignorance, barbarism and degradation" as an insuperable barrier in the way of national aspirations.[36] Gokhale seems to have been appalled by the fact that on one side of his politically conscious countrymen there were arrayed racial forces of monopoly and power, while on the other side was a vast ignorant, apathetic and morally helpless mass.[37] It was, he recognized, exceedingly difficult to make this large segment of the population politically conscious, and to put life into it so that it would go along with the political movement. Consequently he believed that, while he could visualize the men and women of India becoming a great stream of moral and spiritual energy in the world, the peaceful evolution of their political life was bound to be slow.[38] The plain duty of those who thought in this way was to bring social and moral improvement to the people, preparing them to assume the responsibilities of political power.

[35] Rai, *Young India*, p. 216.
[36] *Speeches*, p. 1057.
[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 1063-4.
[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 403, 1229.

This attitude was in direct succession to the social view of the reformist section of the religious sectarian movement. M. G. Ranade, who was the prominent figure in the Indian Social Conference for so many years, rejected that conception of politics which considered that its duty was chiefly to make claims on the Government, and required no corresponding responsible action on the part of the people. He also opposed that view of social duty which confined the people to their own resources for reconstruction without outside help. This, he held, was a radical mistake; for it broke up the integrity of persons into separate spheres.[39] Political progress was dependent upon the elevation of the entire Indian public life, so that the people would deserve whatever political concessions might be offered by the British Government.

Consequently, the Moderate party tried to hold together political and social interests. They were duty-bound to keep the two spheres from being further separated, now that political action was becoming so important in the public interest. So they endeavoured to hold the meetings of the Social Conference immediately after the annual sessions of the National Congress, until that became no longer possible because of Extremist opposition. This Moderate procedure had its religious basis as well, for it attempted to achieve at least a minimal religious reform along with social improvement, thereby laying the foundation for a new political structure. At this point the Moderates disagreed with the Extremists represented by B. G. Tilak, who brought about a revival of traditional religious practices as a stimulus to the national movement.

The Moderates were no less impressed by their formidable task in approaching the British Government and people than they were in their relation to the Indian masses. Their sense of duty moved them to observe that Britain's relations with India were far from ideal. In fact, it was necessary to ask how far India's material and moral interests had been advanced by British administration. This was the main test which the foreign government had to face.[40] In 1905 the nationalists, both moderate and radical, protested against the reactionary policy of repression pursued by the

[39] Ranade, *Religious and Social Reform*, pp. 280 ff.
[40] Gokhale, *Speeches*, p. 1079.

administration of Lord Curzon. If India's people were politically helpless and inarticulate, declared Gokhale, the people of Britain for their part were lacking in "understanding of India and her problems." In London he pertinently observed that Englishmen neither at home nor in India were making "any sympathetic study of Indian culture and civilization." The consequence was that very few of them, even after a fairly long stay in India, had any real insight into Indian life.[41] Furthermore, the nature of political and economic relations existing between England and India greatly complicated matters and introduced a conflict of interests.[42]

Yet, in spite of these imposing obstacles, Gokhale insisted that there was an honourable bond of mutual trust between Great Britain and India. The rulers had promised equality of treatment, which Indians could hope would be "gradually attained." "We, on our side, have accepted the rule and have promised it our willing allegiance," he added. Certain advantages had already been derived from this relationship of mutual confidence, Gokhale affirmed in 1909, and more could be expected. "Self-interest and good faith, therefore, alike require us to harbour no sentiment inconsistent with a continuance of this rule, and our attitude towards it must be one of loyal acquiescence."[43] That the pledge made by Britain impressed Gokhale appears from some of his other statements, for he was naturally distressed that an English Judge had propounded "the preposterous doctrine" that the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 was not meant to be taken seriously. Were all these pledges, he enquired, to be burnt up like waste-paper?[44] Such a moral basis of political relations provided him with a clear line of duty. He had to work for what was practicable, as an ambassador who watches over the interests of his country to secure as much as he can.[45] So that a political relationship, that resulted from the conquest of a people without any idea of national or political freedom, by a superior power with superior patriotism

[41] *Ibid., p.* 1227 (in 1911).
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 1222.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 1151.
[44] See P. Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, I, pp. 89-90.
[45] Qt. by Rai, *Young India*, p. 217.

and capacity for government, was now placed on a basis of mutual pledges.[46]

The principle which animated the Moderates' attitude and guided their political action was based on the two considerations of self-interest and good faith. For not only should India live up to its word, they held, but it was in her own interest to do so. Accordingly, political results would justify an application of the principle of self-interest. But whether this actually would have been so will never be known; for the course of Indian political history did not follow such a well-defined and regular line. After 1919 there were times when the National Congress adopted this view as a policy, but other factors which entered the situation made the course of events quite irregular. We turn to one of them now.

4. Duty to the Nation First

The New Party, or Extremists, had a narrower range to its sense of duty. Primarily this was limited to the immediate interests of the nation in its struggle for freedom, so that it ignored any particular moral value in a policy of "good faith." So far as B. G. Tilak was concerned, such matters as religion and government were made subordinate to the primary claims of the nation. There was, however, an unmistakable religious sentiment in much that he did, and perhaps he felt a certain sense of destiny as he appealed to God to give India "a leader who would regenerate the country by his self-sacrifice, ardent devotion, disinterested action."[47] "Love of nation is one's first duty. Next comes religion and the Government. Our duty to the nation will be the first." This consuming loyalty to the nation impressed others as Tilak's deepest characteristic. Mr. Gandhi said of him that "he knew no religion but love of his country."[48] Patriotism was Tilak's passion, and the immediate achievement of *swaraj* his aim. He strongly believed that freedom might be attained without any long British tutelage in social and political matters, as it was

[46] Gokhale, *Speeches*, p. 1222.
[47] *Bal Gangadhar Tilak : His Writings and Speeches*, pp. 26-7.
[48] *Young India, 1919 ;* p. 788.

apparent to him that India at that time had the capacity of governing itself.[49]

The Extremists had a different conception of the importance and value of the masses from that which the Moderates held. For the former looked upon the uneducated people as a potential force in the achievement of their national objectives. The populace was not the problem which the Moderates thought it to be. This fundamental difference in attitude was derived directly from the particular sense of duty which the Extremists felt. Freedom for the nation could be achieved without first relieving the whole country of its appalling moral helplessness. The masses were morally potential ; they only needed to be aroused and engaged in the national struggle. There was an element of social democracy in this view so conscious of the popular will.[50] Mahatma Gandhi once remarked that B. G. Tilak believed in the rule of the majority "with an intensity that fairly frightened me."[51] Since the nation was made up of the people, and they could make its good their own, this was the end to be immediately sought and soon achieved.

Simultaneous with this surge of radical nationalism was the rise of a new popular form of religious and cultural Hinduism. Annie Besant gave credit to the nineteenth century revival of Hinduism for the birth of the national movement.[52] It is undoubtedly true that the religious sectarian movements, which were partly responsible for this revival, were a source of direct inspiration for the nationalist cause. The doctrine and practice of the Arya Samaj in particular had a strong nationalistic tendency.[53] It promoted a *sanghatan,* or union, of Hindus in defence of their religion. Dayanand Saraswati, when proclaiming India for the Indians, had considered the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj lacking in patriotism because of their imitation of foreigners.[54]

Duty to the nation was inspired also by the revival of the Vedanta in popular conception. "I have shown you," the

[49] Gandhi on Tilak's hope of early *swaraj,* see *ibid.,* p. 790.
[50] Tilak, in Sitaramayya, *History of Congress,* I, p. 194.
[51] *Young India, 1919;* p. 788.
[52] See her *India : A Nation,* p. 72.
[53] See H. von Glasenapp, *Religiose Reformbewegungen,* p. 34.
[54] See A. Besant, *India,* p. 79.

message came to Sri Aurobindo, "that I am everywhere and in all men and in all things, that I am in this movement and I am not only working in those who are striving for the country but I am working also in those who oppose them and stand in their path."[55] This neo-Vedanta was described by Mr. B. C. Pal as a search to realize old spiritual ideas by the "idealization and the spiritualization of the concrete contents and actual relations of life," and this involved a social, political, and economic reconstruction related to the spiritual life of the individual.[56] Tilak, who opposed the views and methods of the social reformers,[57] however believed that it was the "duty of the leaders" to remove the "moral and intellectual rust" which had accumulated on the principle of freedom which, according to the Vedanta, was identical with God as well as with the very life of the individual soul.[58] And this freedom was declared to be the "soul" of the Home Rule Movement.

Again, the sacred responsibility for achieving the freedom of the people was assumed by an appeal to the religious sentiments of the Hindu masses. Tilak organized the Shivaji and Ganpati festivals in order to create a popular love for the nation which would become "one's first duty,"[59] thus combining a religious conservatism with a radical political nationalism.[60] Hinduism, which was "based on the whole, the *sanatan* truth," was bound to triumph in the end, he contended, because in it was to be found, as in no other religion, the promise that God comes to man as many times as necessary.[61]

This single-minded devotion to national interests, and eager struggle for its freedom, was accompanied by a conscious reaction to any dependence upon the West. Modern science and knowledge ought to be assimilated by a strong moral and indigenous culture for the "purpose of freeing our country, getting it free forever and

[55] *Speeches, Sri Aurobindo,* p. 77.
[56] *The Spirit of Indian Nationalism,* p. 36. Qt. by Rai, *Young India,* pp. 191-3.
[57] He openly opposed the Age of Consent Bill of 1890 which was supported by Ranade and Gokhale. Zacharias, *Renascent India,* pp. 50 ff.
[58] *Speeches,* p. 354.
[59] *Ibid.,* pp. 26-7.
[60] See Aurobindo Ghose on Tilak in Tilak's *Gita Rahasya,* I, p. xx.
[61] *Speeches,* p. 16.

maintaining our freedom and individuality at any cost."[62] But, it was maintained, the social and economic systems of the West should not be adopted by India. There was a strong dislike of British bureaucracy, although it was often stated that this did not imply a hatred of individual Englishmen.[63] Nor was social reform encouraged by the Extremists, their sense of duty being confined to political objectives. They maintained a strong opposition to the close association of the Indian Social Conference and the National Congress.[64] Later, the Congress under Gandhi's leadership took into its political programme the question of the removal of untouchability, a concern of Moderates such as Ranade and Gokhale, but no matter of urgency with the Extremists.[65]

5. Renunciation of Political Life

For a few prominent persons, the conflict of duties and loyalties involved in the contention for power led to an open renunciation of politics. The claims of the immediate political movement ceased to be as strong as the influence of more comprehensive and universal principles. With Rabindranath Tagore this was a resort to broader human and social concerns conceived as fundamentally moral.[66] Aurobindo Ghose also renounced politics to devote himself to contemplation of the spiritual ends of life, which he considered as fundamental to all social life and activity.[67] Each man committed himself to securing his objective by an experience of inner realization, or consciousness of Being. Tagore, after a period of "solitary enjoyment of the infinite in meditation," was no longer satisfied with his retirement and returned to active life in society, feeling that his need was "spiritual self-realization in the life of Man through some disinterested service."[68] Aurobindo Ghose experienced a religious vision and heard a voice telling him

[62] Lajpat Rai, *India's Will to Freedom*, p. 154.
[63] See Gandhi on Tilak, *Young India, 1919*; p. 790.
[64] See B. R. Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables*, p. 13.
[65] See Gandhi on the Second Round Table Conference, Sitaramayya, *History of Congress*, I, p. 20.
[66] *Nationalism*, p. 132.
[67] For similar renunciations of political activity, while being suspected of violence, see *Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 86-7.
[68] R. Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, p. 165.

that the Hindu religion as identified with the national cause was now going to be spread among the nations. "I am raising up this nation," the message continued, "to send forth my word."[69] With this, Sri Aurobindo turned to a life of study and meditation.

Rabindranath Tagore was repelled by the character and methods of the nationalists. He believed that the National Congress at that time had no real programme, but just a "few grievances for redress by the authorities."[70] He found in it no true ideal and he could summon no enthusiasm for the methods being used. Tagore became convinced that what India needed was some constructive effort coming from within herself. When still later he expressed misgivings to Mahatma Gandhi about Non-co-operation, it was because he felt that this programme was not dignified enough for India ; to him it appeared a doctrine of despair, exclusiveness and negation.[71]

Tagore's criticism of nationalism was world-wide, as he found it menacing the future of all humanity. India had taken the delusive idea of the "Nation" from the West. The "Nation" he defined as the "organized self-interest of a whole people, where it is the least human and the least spiritual."[72] The history of man had come to a stage where moral man, the complete man, was being displaced by political and commercial man with a limited purpose. The ideal of freedom was still strong in Tagore's mind, but he was convinced that political freedom was not able to make man free without the mind first having been liberated from the greed for power. Exclusive concern with the organized power of the Nation turned man from the ultimate moral object to a mechanical one.[73] The effort to achieve a purely political form of freedom constantly curtailed liberty by the effort to make political power secure, and this very often was at the cost of liberty of conscience.[74]

The "heaven of freedom" to which Tagore wished his country to be led was distinct from a world divided by "narrow domestic

[69] *Speeches*, p. 76.
[70] Tagore, *Nationalism*, p. 134 ; D. S. Sarma, *Renaissance*, pp. 366 ff.
[71] Gandhi, *Young India 1919*, p. 609.
[72] *Nationalism*, pp. 26 ff.
[73] *Ibid.*, p. 132.
[74] *Religion*, pp. 196-7.

walls."[75] The real basis for Indian national life was to be found in liberation from "dead forms in social institutions" and from conservative social practices. He feared that the "social habit of mind" which had perpetuated tyrannical restrictions would persist in political organization and result in "engines of coercion" to crush rational differences.[76] Man's true freedom was moral, and India must show that it had the strength to suffer for truth. The nation ought to rid itself of those social customs and ideals which caused a lack of self-respect and a complete dependence upon others. This state of affairs had been produced "entirely by the domination in India of the caste system, and the blind and lazy habit of relying upon the authority of traditions that are incongruous anachronisms in the present age."[77] The caste system, Tagore maintained, had served its purpose in the past, being the outcome of a spirit of social toleration. Diversity of races and nature, it had been early recognized, could not be coerced into the narrow limits of convenience.[78] Caste had prevented competition and collisions of trade interest. But, as Tagore saw the failure of the system, India had laid all its emphasis on the law of heredity ignoring the law of mutation. Human nature was taken for what it seemed to be, and not for what it in truth might be in its infinite possibilities.[79] Tagore's criticism of the existing caste system was based on the premise of "a universal standard of justice" to which all men without distinction had a right to appeal.[80]

In considering the ideal relation of the individual to his society, Tagore seemed to go back to Japanese Bushido, to China and Persia before they were poisoned by the idea and spirit of the modern Nation, and to medieval Europe.[81] In a pre-scientific, pre-mechanical, pre-industrial society, where the simple and natural man disciplined himself in his own integrity, Tagore saw an ideal desperately needed by modern man. He longed for the simple life. The man of the Indian village, he declared, knows

[75] *Gitanjali*, pp. 27-8.
[76] *Nationalism*, p. 147.
[77] *Ibid.*, p. 135.
[78] *Ibid.*, pp. 137 ff.
[79] *Ibid.*, p. 140.
[80] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 46-7, 54.

what freedom is, a freedom "from the isolation of self, from the isolation of things, which imparts a fierce intensity to our sense of possession."[82] Such a man often knows that freedom is a positive realization of being. Tagore rejoiced to find a villager unspoiled by modern culture in whom there was some fundamental joy of existence. But he did not advocate a return to medievalism. This essential existence of man was now possible only by social co-operation and inter-dependence, and through a perfection of human relationships.[83] Meanwhile, in the depths of man's being, beyond his direct knowledge, there dwelt the Eternal Spirit of human unity.[84]

Aurobindo Ghose, at the turn of the century, was in the forefront of the movement for political freedom, being more radical than Bal Gangadhar Tilak with whom he was associated in the formation of the New Party.[85] He aimed at complete separation from Great Britain, while Tilak was willing to accept self-government within the British connection. Sri Aurobindo too had raised the status of nationalism to a religious cause, identifying it with the Hindu goal of life. "Nationalism," he asserted, "is a religion that comes from God. Nationalism cannot die, because it is God who is working in Bengal. God cannot be killed."[86] During this political stage, Aurobindo Ghose sought for a harmony of the old religious ideal of *sannyasa* and the new ideal of Mazzini's religious nationalism. *Swaraj* meant the fulfilment of national life. While belonging to the party of radical action, which was under official suspicion for being implicated in acts of violence, Ghose began to advocate passive resistance as the most suitable means for struggle against the Government, and because it developed the values and personal qualities which were essential to self government.[87]

From this position Ghose turned with a dramatic suddeness, climaxed by a religious vision and message. So complete was his

[82] *Nationalism*, p. 153; *Religion*, p. 186.
[83] *Religion*, p. 169.
[84] *Ibid.*, pp. 17-8.
[85] *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram*, pp. 8 ff.
See Besant, *India*, p. 157. Also *Foreword* of Besant, *ibid.* Zacharias, *Renascent India*, p. 147.
[86] Qt. by Zacharias, *Renascent India*, p. 149.
[87] *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, pp. 31-2.

renunciation that years later he was reported to have considered the proceedings of the most recent meeting of the National Congress uninteresting and uninspiring.[88] India could realize her destiny, he suggested, only through a general intellectual and spiritual awakening. He called politics mediocre, and affirmed his belief in the necessity of a life of meditation and concentration for silent self-education and release of spiritual energies.[89] This was a search for the liberation of Indian spirituality and thought on a different level than politics. From his seclusion Aurobindo's mind turned to the future, and India's place in the constantly changing modern world. It reached out for a national awakening of spirit which would, more successfully than in the past, "include in its scope the great problems of earthly life as well as those of the soul and its transmundane destinies." He believed an ally would be found in the spiritual seeking of the West, for the hope of the world lay in the light of Asia shining upon the West in new dynamic forms.[90]

While the political life which he renounced was concerned with freedom in the world, Sri Aurobindo's aim was to help the individual attain freedom from the perplexities and frustrations of the world.[91] But the real essence of his view of *sannyasa* was not an outward but an inward renunciation of works. Human efforts were the cause of self-perfection and liberation, for by them, and with steady practice of inner renunciation, liberation was easily accomplished.[92] Once liberation was attained, the individual's activity was then caused by the calm of self-mastery and self-possession. Aurobindo interpreted the Gita to teach not a human but a divine action ; it is not a book of ethics, but of the spiritual life.[93] The modern mind at its best was practical, ethical, social, and humanitarian ; and even the divine man living in the Brahmic consciousness will be all of these things in his action. Such a man should live up to the highest ideals of his age, but with knowledge

[88] To a correspondent of the *The Hindu*, qt. by L. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, pp. 205 ff.
[89] In an interview. R. Rolland, *Prophets of the New India*, p. 628.
[90] K. R Luckmidas (compiler). *Modern India Thinks*, pp. 9, 11.
[91] *The Aryan Path*, Oct. 1936, pp. 475-6.
[92] *The Message of the Gita*, p. 92.
[93] *Essays*, pp. 38 ff.

of what lies behind them, and not by following the merely outward rule. Aurobindo denied that the Gita teaches the disinterested performance of duty as the highest law of life. Rather, by following the divine life, man should abandon all forms of *dharma* with their inevitable clash of duties.

The social implications of this spiritual conception of freedom were revealed in Sri Aurobindo's consideration of the question of war and peace. He looked at it historically in the light of the message of the Bhagavad Gita.[94] At the time the Gita was composed war was even more necessary than it had since become; and human nature morally, socially, and spiritually, was not prepared to transcend this necessity. War under conditions which the Gita describes was restricted and regulated so as to serve the ethical and spiritual development of mankind. But this was not so in modern times when warfare no longer was limited to a class of warriors and a field of battle. We must look forward to a time when such violence of conflict will no longer be necessary ; though present efforts for peace give no promise of long duration. Such endeavours are based upon "intellectual notions, economic convenience, vital and sentimental shrinkings from the loss of life, discomfort and horror of war, effected by nothing better than political adjustments." A day must surely come, Sri Aurobindo said, when there will be a fundamental change in human nature, so that it will be ready for the reign of universal peace. Meanwhile, the nature and function of man as a fighter have to be accepted.

Aurobindo's analysis of man's social predicaments does not lead him to ethical ideals that can become the immediate ends for social change. Man's nature being what it is, no hope of any such possibility is allowed. Aurobindo insisted on the primary necessity of a spiritual change in human nature from which social ideals would naturally arise. When a perfection of individuals is attained, it will leaven the whole society, and become the basis of a new collective life.[95]

In the individual decisions of Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo Ghose, nationalism in its political, religious and cultural

[94] *Ibid.*, pp. 58 ff.
[95] See D. S. Sarma, *Renaissance*, pp. 332-3.

forms received a criticism which did not in fact greatly affect the main course of events. The direction of human life and interest was determined by the drive toward national unity and self-determination. To the extent that traditional Hinduism strengthened the movement, it also found an occasion for a revival of enthusiasm for its established forms. At this stage religious nationalism achieved no significant moral reform of the ancient cultus and society ; there resulted little more from this source than an emotional arousal which was beneficial for political purposes. With the modern Hindu, however, who looked to socio-ethical as well as political ends, the religious character of the movement developed along lines of moral aspiration for the reconstruction of society. But Tagore and Ghose each followed independent interests, in which previous political activity was transmuted into a realm of reflection but with certain social benefits. The nationalistic merging of the traditional and modern religious currents was likewise effected by Tagore and Ghose, who made their contribution to the main national stream by predominantly social activity in the case of the former, and spiritual exercises with the latter.

6. Values in Earlier Nationalism

The contention over where the responsibility for the government of India should rest turned inevitably to the necessity of a democratic society to meet the requirements of a political democracy. Such a society, the prevailing British view insisted, was essential to the formation of responsible political institutions. The challenge was accepted by Indian nationalist leaders in varying degrees, and with different moral interpretations. Adequate justification for the cause of liberty had in any case to turn to the Indian social and religious structure for support. Here it was realized that upon the politically untutored and dormant masses a great deal of India's political future depended. Their unpreparedness for modern forms of democratic responsibility, social and economic as well as political, threatened the unity of the nation, and hampered its progress. Later, when the masses were aroused to support the nationalist cause, British official attention turned also to the self-conscious interests of the "minorities," especially the separatist tendencies of

conservative Muslims. Thus the struggle deepened in its demands upon the moral consciousness of the new national society; and, while the specific points of pressure shifted, the general line of battle remained the same.

One form of nationalist answer to official opposition was to assert the moral issue in terms of rights. This offered the nationalists common moral ground with the British Government itself, for whose modern political development the rights of the people against their Ruler had been secured. Human rights provided the means for an Indian assertion of equality in a form which Great Britain required of India as essential to self-government. But these rights were in themselves only one aspect of the struggle for liberty, in fact only a minor part of the real contention for power. For liberty could only be secured by action which asserted other forms of power than the simple claim of the right to *swaraj*. The Moderates contented themselves with attempts to gain by persuasion an acceptance of their political rights; but, with Gokhale, abhorred the very thought of mass action that might get out of hand.[96] Their nationalism was only of a minimal kind. The Extremists went to the people for support and attempted to provide substitutes for existing official institutions, as with their "National Education."[97] They also undertook aggressive activity to hamper the government and wrest the control of the country from it.

Primarily, the several conceptions of duty determined the differences in the moral values of earlier nationalism. Indians were all one in contending that they knew better than the foreign rulers what was good for themselves and their countrymen. This made the large uneducated section of the populace the centre of gravity for the balance of power. The sense of duty to the masses was dictated by different considerations in each case. The Moderates considered that the ignorant masses had to be educated before they could be ready for political responsibility. Society needed a new vitality expressed in reform. This was the modern social idealism speaking to the old social reality. That is to say, the masses still had only an indefinite value for the social and political advance-

[96] *Op. cit.*, pp. 403, 1143 ff.
[97] See *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram*, p. 19.

ment of the country. Ultimately they would have a value in harmony with the modern standards of individual and social progress, because the Moderate was confident that there was a moral potentiality in all the people which only needed time and attention for suitable development and expression. The Extremists accepted no liability on behalf of the politically untutored people ; they prepared to seize existing means of power by a direct appeal to the masses which would shift the centre of gravity away from political hesitation to decision. The Extremists largely ignored the moral liabilities of traditional society, whether by postponement of social reform to the day of *swaraj,* or by underestimating the seriousness of the internal crisis of Hindu society while attempting to revive it. B. G. Tilak expressed concern over the rivalries induced by the caste system and Hindu-Muslim communalism,[98] but he was obviously seeking unity for the sake of political power, and not for the removal of the internal causes of these social and religious conditions. His Hindu revivalism could scarcely avoid strengthening the separatist cause of Muslim conservatives.[99] The growing urgency of the social and religious problems of untouchability and the status of Hindu women received scant regard from Tilak and his popular following.

The sharp disagreement between the Moderate and Extremist also revealed itself in their respective views as to the psychological means to be followed for securing national ends. The former relied on reason, persuasion and appeals, both with the British rulers and with their own countrymen. Entirely pacific and statutory means of activity were to be used, thus avoiding a mass arousal. The Extremist however added to his reason a highly emotional quality, exhibiting itself in popular celebrations and appeals to the glories of the past before the days of foreign life and rule. These inevitably affected the method of struggle. Gokhale on principle would have nothing of violence, but Tilak would not disavow it, and Aurobindo Ghose came to argue against it only on grounds of expediency.[100] This popular form of nationalism with

[98] As in his *Writings and Speeches.*
[99] See L. F. Rushbrook Williams in *Political India, 1832-1932* (Editor: Sir John Cumming), p. 48.
[100] See *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram,* pp. 8 ff.

its emotional drive would admit of no pure consideration of absolute non-violence. The means for achievement of nationalist ends had always to be decided on a basis different from absolute principles. Gandhiji years later acknowledged this, as we shall see, and affirmed from the standpoint of "pure expedience" that violence had been shown to be utterly futile. He was willing to contend that the nationalist "should gain all lawful ends much quicker" by following his non-violence.[101]

The growth of intensity in nationalism was accompanied by a lessening of international political and social interests, but identification of national ends with religious concerns provided a fillip to Hindu universalism. *Sanatan dharma,* in this nationalist political form, was designed for the whole world and not solely for Hindus.[102] A growth of self-dependence and pride in Indian history and culture led to more stringent criticism of the West. Gandhi's participation in this earlier stage of nationalism was well expressed in his *Hind Swaraj,* written early in the century and proscribed by the Government of India. Its sweeping indictment pronounced Western civilization a dangerous evil, and in contrast to it urged recognition of the pure values of Indian village institutions. An earlier internationalism, associated with the Brahmo and Prarthana Samajas, grew steadily less vital in the atmosphere humid with nationalist sentiment and conviction. "Perhaps the reason why the old internationalism faded," commented Dr. Nicol Macnicol, who knew the Samaj leaders, "was that it had little reality in actual duty and experience accompanying it".[103] The voice of Tagore, among the major figures on the national front, was raised against nationalism as a perversion of moral values. He repudiated the idolatry of the nation which taught a country to believe itself greater than humanity.[104] There was only one moral law for East and West, he believed, and nationalism everywhere blatantly ignored it.

The formation of the religious position in relation to these deve-

[101] *Young India 1919,* p. 149. See Lala Lajpat Rai on the revolutionary party, *The Political Future of India,* pp. 181 ff.
[102] See Aurobindo Ghose, *Speeches,* p. 76.
[103] "Religious Values of Contemporary Indian Nationalism," in *The Review of Religion,* vol. I, No. 1, p. 22.
[104] *Nationalism,* pp. 127, 45-6.

lopments revealed the value of nationalism for Hindusim in both its modern and traditional forms. The Moderates were the direct inheritors of the social and religious reform movements of the nineteenth century, and remained loyal to their tradition. Essentially, also, they followed the religious views of the social reform sects. Religion therefore embraced social values and moral distinctions, and was itself clearly influenced by them. The Extremists were not unaffected by the nineteenth century reform movements, but they gave their greatest allegiance to the revival of ancient religious and cultural Hinduism. With them the main current of nationalism turned in the direction of a renewal of Hindu traditional thought and cultus, so that religion was uncritically identified with society. Sri Aurobindo became convinced that "to magnify the religion means to magnify the country," and that "nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith."[105] The religious quality given to this fervour for liberty was unmistakable. L. L. Rai proclaimed that freedom would rise goddess-like from Indian Earth, and when it did they would worship it with flowers in their hands.[106] The movement was likened to a revival of the Vedanta, and nationalism with democracy was rooted in the ancient religious tradition.[107] *Swaraj* meant a new search for the soul of the nation, unified and free and no longer mastered by alien forces because of its internal divisions. The national application of Vedanta, by emphasizing the unity of the present with the past, followed the gradualist view of nineteenth century sectarianism, taking no specific stand on questions of the internal social reform of Hinduism. The familiar religious end of life assumed new importance ; it suggested the reality of a free national development without the immediate necessity of those moral achievements in Hindu society upon which the reformers had insisted. The blaze of religious enthusiasm did not generally serve to illuminate the need for a fundamental reconstruction of Hindu society in accord with the ideals of freedom and equality which were providing sources of dynamic national growth.

[105] *Speeches*, p. 80.
[106] *India's Will to Freedom*, pp. 98-9.
[107] See H. von Glasenapp, *Religiose Reformbewegungen in Heutigen Indien*, p. vi.

All the leaders up to 1919 were convinced of the importance of moral values. Ethical theory knew no partisanship. All found a moral law common to the whole of humanity and underlying their current activities. Rabindranath Tagore insisted that the moral nature of the world is a truth that does not rest simply on man's blind agreement to believe it.[108] Aurobindo Ghose affirmed there was an absolute moral law to which a person awakened by a change of inner view.[109] And Bal Gangadhar Tilak maintained the absolute nature of ethical principles.[110] It was, as we have seen, the application of the moral law to human affairs that revealed significant differences among the leaders. Their respective religious views of the meaning and value of human life in society helped to create these differences. This was shown in their interpretations of individual duty in relation to national life and society. The modern ethical religion of the progressive Moderates failed politically for the time being, but it left some social landmarks to which Hindus could later return. Although religion in the awareness of the national leaders expressed itself through an active sense of duty, this dutiful attitude lacked clear, discriminating social guidance, for it embraced both traditional and modern forms of thought and behaviour.

Hinduism was confronted with new demands through its identification with the growing national democracy; however, the internal tensions and external pressures had not yet developed enough to challenge seriously the lack of social and religious democracy in the Hindu system. Thus it still did not appear imperative that the demand for political power, which was made on the basis of the inherent right of the nation to govern itself, should be accompanied by a decisive development of social and religious democracy, granting freedom for self-development and equality of opportunity to the untouchables and to Hindu women. The efforts to revive religion did not clearly discern the incipient social tensions. Some Hindus did perceive the special issues raised for Hinduism by the nationalist demand for social equality, political freedom, and eco-

[108] *Nationalism*, pp. 45-6.
[109] *Essays* p. 42.
[110] *Gita Rahasya*, I, p. 524.

nomic self-determination in India's relations with Great Britain. It remained, however, for new political developments as well as external forces, such as the increasing conversion of untouchables to non-Hindu religions and the challenge of world opinion, to sharpen the issues so that they had to be met. The ambiguous character of this moral and religious development, therefore, pointed to the necessity of some clearer understanding and more positive reconstruction of Hinduism in both its social and religious structure.

CHAPTER IV

FREEDOM BY SATYAGRAHA

CHAPTER FOUR

FREEDOM BY SATYAGRAHA

1. Freedom from Within

M. K. Gandhi built upon the foundations that others had laid before him, not only in the character of the development of nationalist opinion and activities, but also in the nature of moral and religious interpretations accompanying them. He achieved, however, an original contribution in his distinctive alliance of ethical belief with social activity, and the forceful awareness of human values on a scale and to a degree unique in modern Indian history.

Gandhiji's moral convictions provided both a religious depth and a social breadth to his responsibilities. Morality for him was equivalent to religion, when it was understood as man's duty to man. Unselfish service of others was the moral law of the universe.[1] Everyone, he believed, was subject to the same law, and all were therefore required to work toward a common end—the welfare of the whole of mankind. This law required men of power and wealth in India to utilize their "goods" for the benefit of their less privileged fellow-men, as it also meant that a highly progressive nation, like Great Britain, ought to bring to its own level a less developed people which happened to be subject to its domination and rule.

With this moral conception, Gandhiji took upon himself the responsibility for India's political cause to a degree only understandable as his religious duty. "What we want to do should be done," he said, "not because we object to the English or that we want to retaliate, but because it is our duty to do so."[2] But he believed that the duty laid upon the nationalists was of a special kind: all idea of revenge and punishment was to be removed from the hearts of the people as they strove to be free. The ideal was to act on a higher plane than personal recrimination, and to proceed

[1] *Ethical Religion*, pp. 53 ff.
[2] *Hind Swaraj*, p. 95.

simply with a disinterestedness that was content to do one's duty with no thought of reward. It would be enough simply to have acted well. Non-co-operation with the Government therefore became a responsibility with moral implications for India's political, economic and social life that had to be worked out in a programme arising out of the conditions of an inwardly realized freedom. While insisting upon the universal significance of his technique for overcoming a superior physical power, he believed also that this was the most individually and socially constructive procedure, for it lifted the people out of their degradation and humiliation.[3] The balance of the religious and social factors in this effort enabled Gandhiji to maintain that for him political activity was religion.

Rather than by repeating slogans, and asking for increasing grants of political power—which characterized so much the political activity of his predecessors and contemporaries—Gandhiji insisted upon the moral necessity of the attainment of freedom through socially constructive work in a nation-wide programme. Hence he repeatedly urged the nation to engage in handspinning in its leisure time "as a duty rather than as a means of livelihood."[4]

Satyagraha, Gandhiji's original contribution to India's modern development, was his moral principle translated into constructive action. He defined it as holding on to truth. In this activity, violence was to be entirely excluded, "because," he affirmed, "man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth, and therefore, not competent to punish."[5] Gandhiji socialized non-violence by applying the religious and moral principle to political, economic and social conflicts, and thus provided an ethic for corporate action.[6] Its relevance for the national situation was shown in the conspicuous lack of those weapons with which men have generally fought their revolutions, a practical value which some of India's political leaders were not slow to appreciate. The ideal weapon for the *satyagrahi* consisted of a moral and religious fitness which could be acquired only by individual effort, and this was

[3] *Young India*, 1919-1922, p. 149.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 513 ff.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 222.
[6] See K. Shridharani, *War Without Violence*, pp. 248-9. D. S. Sarma, *Renaissance of Hinduism*, p. 579. Edward Thompson finds a Buddhist origin in *satyagraha*. *Ethical Ideals in India Today*, p. 13.

particularly significant in view of the immediate political situation. Since India, according to the insistence of Great Britain, had to be morally capable of governing herself, this discipline was especially appropriate for meeting the Government's challenge.

Moreover, as a political technique, *satyagraha* met two necessities of the preceding major conceptions of Indian politics. It answered the requirement of the Moderates that social reformation become the basis for political reconstruction, for Gandhiji maintained a constructive social programme aimed at national reorganization as an essential part of his plan.[7] In fact, with him political reform sometimes took a secondary place in any scheme of national reconstruction.[8] At the same time the insistence of the Extremists on the immediate necessity of political freedom, and the function of the masses in achieving it, found a place in the programme of *satyagraha*. But there was more than a synthesis of the preceding attitudes, for *satyagraha* gave opportunity to a far more extensive section of the whole nation to accept a new dynamic morality. Gandhiji achieved this partly through his own close identification with the masses in a manner not even attempted by any of his predecessors. He had great faith in their political possibilities. Of the Depressed Classes he wrote from Yerawada Central Prison to Sir Samuel Hore, "I should favour every one of their adults, male and female, being registered as voters irrespective of education or property qualifications even though the franchise test may be stricter for others."[9] The man himself, observed Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, "did not descend from the top ; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India."[10]

The Gandhian moral conception of politics shifted the conflict to a new area. It now became a religious war which on occasion called for the suspension of normal activities in order to concentrate with intensity of soul upon the inner as well as the outer achievement of *swaraj*. The stronghold of violence had to be attacked at its source; which, strangely enough, was not found

[7] Gandhi, *Constructive Programme, Its Meanings and Place*. See Sitaramayya, *History of Congress*, I, pp. 192-3.
[8] See his statement in Sitaramayya, *History of Congress*, I, p. 193.
[9] *The Indian Review*, Oct. 1932, pp. 696 ff.
[10] Nehru, *Discovery of India*, pp. 259-60.

with the British Government, but in the hearts of the Indian people themselves. Let a tyrant like General O'Dyer do his worst, exhorted Gandhiji, the people must be prepared to yield everything of their worldly goods, if necessary everything but their unconquerable souls.[11] Hence, "There should be no violence in thought, speech or deed." And when the climax of the strife in the early twenties passed without the achievement of the Swarajist goal, Gandhi was prepared with an explanation to meet the accusation that he had made the people supine by his non-violent programme. Reflect a little, he protested, and it will become apparent that we have not been non-violent in the real sense. Although the people had refrained from causing physical harm, violence was still in their breasts and this was the cause of their failure. Their inner thoughts ought to have been in strict harmony with their outer acts.[12] But the dialect of the spiritual and the social elements in *satyagraha* made of the act of self-purification, through which all must pass, more than a matter of heart-searching. It was a searching of society, of the individual's relation to the existing political authority, and of social institutions and practices. Purification meant a withdrawal of co-operation from the existing State.[13] It also meant a deliverance from disunity between Hindus and Muslims, and from the corroding poison of untouchability that was eating at the vitals of Hindu society.[14]

Gandhiji found the law of suffering inherent and operative in the act of self-purification.[15] Its beneficial function in all animate life illuminated for him India's struggle to rise out of her slavery. Indeed, the degree and quality of the suffering which the *satyagrahi* endured determined the moral growth he would achieve. "The purer the suffering," stated Gandhiji, "the greater is the progress." This doctrine had its practical consequence in the sense of adequacy with which the nationalists met their trials and reverses. On their own testimony, it gave them a consciousness of strength and of fitness for the non-violent strife.

[11] *Young India, 1919*, pp. 147, 232.
[12] *Young India, 1924-1926*, pp. 31-2.
[13] *Young India, 1919*, p. 227. See K. Shridharani, *War Without Violence*, pp. 12 ff.
[14] *Young India, 1919*, p. 871.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 230. See H. N. Brailsford, *Subject India*, p. 226.

The process of self-purification in itself produced the very end they so eagerly sought: freedom of the soul of India. So Lala Lajpat Rai proclaimed: "You will never require any measures by anybody to free you. Freedom must come from within."[16] In this the soul of the individual was identified with the soul of the nation. It was possible for the nationalist to affirm that the British Government could not in any case give India freedom, for freedom was found within, and with its true realization was a cessation of external bondage. It will be *swaraj*, Gandhiji once said, when we have learned to rule ourselves. When, in the optimism of the first phase of the non-violent movement, he thought of the ideal and saw how the people were widely responding to it, he was of the opinion that "the conditions were incredibly simple."[17] The goal that had been set for the early attainment of *swaraj* was not impossible; in fact, their recent experience had confirmed it. The country was ready for it. This thought was common with the nationalist leaders; but Gandhiji gave it a forceful application that produced the conviction that not only would *swaraj* come soon, but, indeed, it would be very soon—within one year.[18] "It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands."

Gandhiji was still confident when the year ended without the desired result having been achieved. At least this much had been accomplished, "India is substantially free today, she has found the way, she is asserting herself."[19] All that was required was to continue the constructive programme. Violence was still in the country, but the Congress could control it; that is, if only they tried wholeheartedly. Whatever the delay in attaining freedom, their own shortcomings were the cause.[20] Years later, in 1938, Gandhi looked back at this assurance of attaining *swaraj* within one year, saying that he was neither sorry for, nor ashamed of, having made such a declaration. In fact, he repeated it again in substance. For, once the fourfold constructive programme of the

[16] *India's Will to Freedom*, pp. 98-9.
[17] *Swaraj*, p. 53. *Young India, 1919*, pp. 869 ff.
[18] *Young India, 1919*, p. 878.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 682.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 958.

Congress was fully achieved, the nation could have *swaraj* for the asking.[21]

But what of the powerful Government which resisted these encroachments on its authority? The nationalists' purpose was to have the people absorbed in their own concerns and so self-dependent as to isolate the Government. They knew, said Rajendra Prasad, that their national distresses were of their own making.[22] Once they were united the Government could be brought to its knees. The English were in India, Gandhiji also held, because Indians through their own weakness had brought and kept them. Indian debility was the source of the strength of English civilization in India.[23] Consequently, they were to hate that civilization and refuse to maintain it, simply by achieving their own inner freedom. This logic led to the conclusion that true *swaraj* did not consist simply in an objective change of government to popular control, for that would produce only a form of freedom. The substance of freedom was subjective, for it was to be found in the very means for attaining it—"a real change of heart on the part of the people."[24] At that time the definition of this change was made in four terms: removal of untouchability as an error of Hinduism, heart friendship of Hindus and Muslims as "an eternal factor of national life," adoption of the *charka* as the "only universal means" of economic salvation, and finally, a commitment to non-violence as the only method for the attainment of freedom. Such was the substance of *swaraj*.

2. Social Renunciation

In repudiating many of the influences and effects of Western "civilization" in India, Gandhi followed the general current of nationalism. He gave to the movement of cultural revival the same quality of religious renunciation on a social scale that others had pursued, only he deepened it by the intensity of his social asceticism. The object was to recover the essential moral and religious life of the nation, which he believed was threatened by the

[21] *Cent Per Cent Swadeshi*, pp. 100-1.
[22] *Young India, 1919*, pp. lxiii-lx.
[23] *Swaraj*, p. 54.
[24] *Young India, 1919*, pp. 793-4.

influx of a complex and materialistic culture. A change of the nation's heart was necessary in order to break the hold of alien thought and life, and this was possible only by a deliberate effort on the part of the people to give up the comforts and conveniences of modern technical civilization. Gandhi saw the contrast most decidedly in terms of mass society in the cities, on the one hand, and the simpler life of primitive village India, on the other. So, while he too would have the nation renounce government-supported schools and courts, foreign titles and foreign manufactured goods,[25] it was not only to render the Government unnecessary to India's welfare, but to reverse the whole course of modern cultural interests in India and re-establish the village as the locus of harmonious and productive Indian society.

This renunciation appeared most strikingly in Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*, published early in the century, in which he laid an intellectual basis for his ascetic claims upon Indian nationalism, by requiring an almost total repudiation of Western "civilization."[26] This brief statement received not only British official disapproval, but its rigorous idealism raised questions with his own countrymen for years afterward.[27] In it Gandhi characterized Western "civilization" as inherently bad ; and, by contrast, true Indian village-centered culture as essentially good. He found a conflict being waged, not only in the field of India's physical and mental interests, but in its moral and religious life as well. He urged his people to renounce a way of life that sought "to increase bodily comforts," and, while it failed miserably in doing so, failed also to give due attention either to morality or religion. The struggle against this modern materialism had to be in the name and spirit of India's ancient culture, and this meant a renunciation of the so-called benefits of an industrial and competitive way of life.[28]

In its essence this call to renunciation on the part of the whole nation was guided by a sound moral insight that can best be seen in its application to the dehumanizing influence of large-scale indus-

[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 878-8.
[26] *Hind Swaraj*, or *Indian Home Rule*, Fourth Edition, 1921. See K. Shridharani, *Mahatma and the World*, p. 160.
[27] See J. Nehru, *Toward Freedom*, p. 314.
[28] *Hind Swaraj*, p. 79.

trial organization and mass urban society. In 1921 Gandhi commented further on his earlier and well-known view of machinery by saying that he still would not consider its disappearance a calamity.[29] But this repudiation of technical devices was motivated by the conviction that modern man was becoming like the machine he had invented and operated "I am aiming," he was quoted by Mahadev Desai as saying in 1936, "at reinstating man turned machine into his original estate."[30] In the same manner Gandhi found the prevailing system of education poorly adapted to the needs of the people who, through it, were led to aspire to a class existence in which manual activities were rejected as inferior to intellectual pursuits, and were disastrously separated from them. For this modern education, moreover, the ablest youth of the villages were drawn to urban centres where they were held by specious allurements and materialistic motives. Accordingly, Gandhi could claim in his *Hind Swaraj* that "the ancient school system is enough." When in later years he sponsored the Wardha scheme of Basic Education, clearer expression was given to the principle of his early attack on the educational system, for the Wardha plan sought to replace prevailing educational methods and values, change social attitudes and bring new opportunities for profitable employment to the masses. The structure of this critical thought remained essentially the same, though its rigorous demands were modified by the exigencies of national developments.

Gandhiji's friends in East and West became disturbed with the strict idealism of his demands upon contemporary Indian life. His early repudiation of hospitals and railways, for instance, never was well received. He was forced to modify this rigourism, for political reasons as well as practical considerations. In 1921 he stated that he was not aiming at India's full freedom in the sense of a destruction of railways and hospitals, the object then being only "the attainment of Parliamentary Swaraj in accordance with the wishes of the people." He concluded that the people were not prepared for this "higher simplicity and renunciation,"[31] and expressed the

[29] *Young India, 1919*, p. 517. J. Nehru, *Toward Freedom*, p. 314.
[30] *Cent Per Cent Swadeshi*, pp. 127, 131.
[31] *Swaraj*, p. viii.

hope that the Congress would forget some of the remarks attributed to him in connection with machinery. Later, the strict ideal was softened by a guarded acceptance of large scale industrialization.

It was a peaceable and free existence that Gandhiji sought for village India, where modern competition and economic standards of life had been introduced to what he believed was the detriment of the people. He longed to reduce the great disparity between the comforts of the ruling and commercial classes and the pinched existence of the vast majority of the people, an ideal well expressed by his own simple manner of life. This had considerable political significance for the time being, because it gave the nationalists an opportunity for a certain identification with the people at large.

This village-centred economic and social thought advocated the renewal of that community life which would be characterized by non-violence and harmony of human relations, rather than by the wars which have occurred with disastrous frequency in the history of the modern West. With Gandhi, violence epitomized the evils of human life. In calling upon India to renounce *en masse* the supposed benefits of Western culture, he sought to reorganize what he believed was a way of life in which violence would be rare, because unnecessary for the harmonious adjustment of human instincts and the operation of human institutions.[32] What he did not recognize sufficiently was that, while violence is intensified in some forms of society, it is characteristic of all societies and cultures, even though its manifestation in modern warfare is particularly destructive.

While in his *Hind Swaraj* Gandhiji unsparingly attacked Western civilization, he admitted to some unspecified defects in Indian life and society also, but expressed the belief that the people themselves were now equipped to deal with them. At this point he tacitly recognized the value of the contacts of India and the West, for he wrote, "We may utilize the new spirit that is born in us for purging ourselves of these evils."[33] The religious and moral values, which he steadfastly maintained, were not necessarily related to his view of conflict of cultures and the violent nature of human history,

[32] See Schuster and Wint, *India and Democracy*, p. 112.
[33] *Swaraj*, pp. 50-1.

although these values found dynamic expression in the methods he developed for carrying on the nationalist struggle to its successful end. Through the national situation these values found acceptance to a degree quite out of proportion to the nature of Gandhi's own adherence to them, as they were relative to the drive toward political independence and did not carry the same importance for many others in the struggle who found them only of temporary significance. But even for himself too, the application of the values embodied in *satyagraha* to the opportunities provided by the freedom-movement compelled a modification of them to make possible their acceptance by the masses.

3. Public Fasting

Gandhiji adopted fasting as an application of an essentially private religious practice to the solution of public problems. This was his means of establishing justice and harmony in accordance with standards reached by his own judgment. Although each fast had its specific social objective, in all of them there were the two important elements of penance and coercion which first of all carried appreciable consequences for Gandhiji himself. Both appeared, for instance, in connection with the fast after "the crime of Chauri Chaura" in which Congress "sympathisers, if not actually connected with it," had cruelly killed some police constables.[34] "All fasting and all penance must as far as possible be secret," Gandhiji declared. "But my fasting is both a penance and a punishment, and a punishment has to be public. It is penance for me and punishment for those whom I try to serve, for whom I love to live and would equally love to die."[35] The penitential element was not always explicit, though he made it so when on this occasion he stated, "I must undergo personal cleansing. I must become a fitter instrument able to register the slightest variation in the moral atmosphere about me."[36] Such penance and self-sacrifice came to be interpreted by some as an "atonement" in which Gandhiji was grappling with the sins of his fellow-men. The editor of the *Harijan*, commenting on the fast of 1934, stated

[34] *Young India, 1919*, p. 1000.
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 998-9.

that Gandhi's aim was to make "a vicarious atonement for the sin of some over-zealous volunteers."[37] The purpose also was to restore justice and harmony by punishing the wrong-doer, at least to the extent of securing an acknowledgement of his socially harmful activity; and to establish conditions of peaceful relations between the contending parties. The achievement of this purpose was assured by the law of suffering applied to himself, for he believed that "progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone by the sufferer."[38]

The existence of any coercion in the fasts was consistently disallowed by Gandhiji, as when, at the end of the one to gain democratic reforms in Rajkot State, he believed that "it had succeeded as no previous fast had done."[39] Later, however, he became convinced that there was a taint of *himsa,* or coercion, in it that marred its purity. This repudiation of all forms of coercion was quite consistent with Gandhiji's ideal of *ahimsa,* and was, in fact, required by the absolutist nature of his ethic. But an element of coercion was inherent in all his public fasting, and this was quite evident in the responses of those most immediately affected by it.[40] Primarily the suffering was borne by Gandhiji himself, though even here he did not attempt to circumvent the usual processes of justice. Thus, he publicly urged the perpetrators of the Chauri Chaura violence, whoever and wherever they might be, to surrender themselves to the civil authorities to be dealt with in the normal way. But the preponderance of suffering was voluntarily taken by Gandhi himself, placing the standard of justice on a different plane than the usual conception of punishment requires. When he wished to help some boys in his *ashram* realize their guilt, Gandhiji told them he had taken their punishment on himself by a fast in order that he might be able to enter their innermost thoughts, desires and impulses, and help them detect and eradicate any impurities there.[41] Self-engaged suffering was indeed a powerful factor in the

[37] July 13, 1934.
[38] *Young India, 1919,* p. 231. *Young India, 1924,* pp. 127-8.
[39] See E. S. Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi—An Interpretation,* p. 114.
[40] See K. Shridharani, *War Without Violence,* pp. 229 ff., who states that it is apparent that *satyagraha* "does contain the element of coercion." Also see Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society,* p. 235.
[41] *Young India, 1924,* pp. 127-8.

persuasion which not only his fasting but the whole *satyagraha* movement exercized. Since Gandhi found rational appeals alone insufficient, he believed reason had to be strengthened by suffering in order to open the eyes of the understanding.[42]

Examination of the emotional atmosphere which accumulated around the fasts only leads to the conclusion that there were elements both of powerful moral suasion in the man's sacrifice for his ideals, and of coercion in public reaction to the imperilling of his health and life. The moral value of this strong public emotion was entirely dependent upon an understanding of the principles involved, and there were times when sober reflection could not fail to distinguish an indisputable principle. Such was the case in the last fast of all, during January, 1948. The report of the medical staff on the fifth day of the fast pronounced Gandhiji's condition "definitely weaker," and ended with urgent pleas that his conditions for ending the fast be met.[43] Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, after a personal visit and subsequent conversation with Dr. B. C. Roy, the head physician, is reported to have told a large public gathering that, since Gandhi "was on the verge of a crisis, I shudder to think what may happen in the next thirty-six hours." This overpowering portent could be readily sensed, and support for meeting the conditions of the fast became widespread. The principles were sound and carried moral influence with all concerned, so that the religious leaders of Delhi, as a result of the fear of Gandhi's impending death, conducted a campaign of peace in the terrorized city. The widespread benefits achieved by this heroic act reached Pakistan also, with the Foreign Minister, Sir Mohammed Zafrullah Khan saying "that a new and tremendous wave of feeling and desire for friendship between the two Dominions was sweeping the subcontinent in response to the fast." And the *New York Times* editorialized hopefully, "There is a moral force in this troubled world, and, in East and West, by a common striving in strangely different patterns, it manifests itself."[44]

Not always was the moral issue so plainly indicated, nor was the

[42] See *The Epic of Travancore*, pp. 85 ff.
[43] An account in the *New York Times*, Jan. 18. 1948; and editorial in the *Times*, Jan. 19, 1948.
[44] Jan. 19, 1948.

assurance concerning the values at stake so clearly apprehended. In fact, there were representative people who felt the pressure of emotion without any strong moral conviction. What impressed them most was the intensity of feeling and the compulsion to act for the safety of Gandhiji's life. Mr. Jamnadas Mehta expressed a considerable public reaction when in 1932 he said, "The very notion of the Mahatma dying sends a thrill of horror into our hearts, coercing us into silence and surrender."[45] With other aims in mind, but with the same acknowledgement of Gandhiji's prevailing influence in the fast opposing the communal Award of 1932, Subhas Chandra Bose commented that it served to sidetrack the whole political movement at a very vital time.[46] Concerning the same occasion, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who like Gandhiji was championing the cause of the depressed classes, but with opposing objectives, declared that his hand was forced by the fast in what he considered a matter of principle.[47] And in 1947 the editor of the *Indian Social Reformer* put the matter similarly, "While sharing the general sense of relief at this deliverance, one cannot help feeling uneasy about fasting by a popular leader as a permanent or reliable means of preserving communal harmony."[48] That Gandhi did not carry permanent conviction in this very personal expression of his non-violent principle, as well as in the wider application of *satyagraha,* was partly due to his insistence that *ahimsa* was an universally effective social institution. This, if anything, made of it a coercive instrument. As the editor of the Ramakrishna Mission's *Prabuddha Bharata* commented, "We must not make a fetish of non-violence and with a proselytizing zeal enforce it on our fellow-beings. That will be the worst form of violence as it will undermine their personalities, which have to be developed through a process of education along the lines most suited to each."[49]

It is necessary to ask whether Gandhiji's public fasting

[45] At a meeting in Poona, Dec. 1, 1932. Qt. by H. C. E. Zacharias, *Renascent India.* See pp. 289 ff.
[46] *Indian Struggle, 1920-1934,* p. 281.
[47] See his *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables,* pp. 322 ff.
[48] Sept. 6, 1947, p. 1.
[49] March 1942, pp. 120 ff.

conformed to his ideal for *satyagraha* in general. One reason for his adherence to the non-violent method of social struggle was his conviction that no man could know the "absolute truth", and therefore was not "competent to punish."[50] It is difficult to see how Gandhiji's remarks concerning the reasons for undertaking his fasts can be reconciled with this principle, in particular the explicit purpose of causing punishment. Also his definition of *swaraj*, as "complete freedom of opinion and action without interference with another's right to equal freedom of opinion and action," could hardly conform to the emotional and mental coercion attending his public acts of self-sacrifice.

The fasting must be understood in the religious context of Gandhiji's own thought and life. It was an expression of his non-violent principle, mainly in political and social affairs, although important influences were also exerted upon the nation's religious situation. When the man said that the call to his fasts came from God, he uttered no conventional platitude.[51] "God has blessed me with the mission to place non-violence before the nation for adoption," he wrote in 1939,[52] and those who knew the religious foundation of his life could well recognize how sincerely this statement was meant.[53] In his fasting the religious motive found its most pointed expression and carried the greatest meaning with the public.[54] The common people saw in him a saint of modern times, closely identified with them in their basic needs and aspirations. The reality of the fasts does not permit the religious values Gandhi attached to his activity to be dismissed as irrelevant, nor as unessential to the purpose he had in view.[55] The religious practice, and not simply the religious mode of expression, formed an inalienable part of his mission to society.

[50] *Young India, 1919*, p. 222.
[51] See R. R. Diwakar, *Satyagraha*, p. 88.
[52] *Harijan*, Dec. 2, 1939.
[53] Note his reply to the question of E. S. Jones, "Isn't your fasting a species of coercion?" Gandhiji replied, "Yes, the same kind of coercion Jesus exercizes upon you from the Cross." *Op. cit.*, p. 110.
[54] See "Mahatma Gandhi's Challenge to Might," *Free Press Journal*, (Bombay), Sept. 13, 1932.
[55] This K. Shridharani does in effect, avoiding the essential place of the religious element in Gandhi's *satyagraha*. See his *War Without Violence*, pp. 248 ff.

4. Freedom and Order

In order to justify *satyagraha* fully as an instrument of responsible public authority, it still had to be related both to a free political situation and, more remotely, to national responsibility in the maintenance of a free international order.[56] Could the same non-violent principle be constructively utilized under independent political responsibility as well as in a programme of non-co-operative struggle? Up to 1947 it had involved direct opposition to a foreign government, but some more constructive and responsible procedure was required if non-violence was to be used to assure freedom and justice in a world of international tension and war. Gandhiji never worked out a programme for the latter situation,[57] although he believed it was possible for a nation generally to keep its honour through non-violence and meanwhile establish internal order and external harmony.

Nationalism under the sway of *satyagraha* continued the insistence that major political changes were necessary for the true development of India. Gandhiji followed the religious view of the national crisis by graphically describing the existing system as "satanic." It was, he argued, evil, violent and godless. He deplored the acts of Indian violence, which hindered the progress of *satyagraha,* as his opponents were ready to point out;[58] but more stringently he charged the Government with "wanton cruelty and inhumanity," as well as with being "hopelessly indifferent" to the welfare of the people.[59] The "Civil Service corporation" and its bureaucratic methods had brought India to a state of economic and political destitution.[60] But while thus condemning the system as "wholly bad," he introduced a new element of personal friendliness with the administrators themselves which stemmed from his religious life, for he did not intend to conclude that individuals in the Government, whether European or Indian, were necessarily evil persons; they were as a whole no better or worse

[56] Efforts were made to meet this need theoretically. See Radhakrishnan *Religion,* pp. 199 ff ; and Shridharani, *War Without Violence.*
[57] Shridharani, *ibid.,* p. 290.
[58] See V. Chirol, *India Old and New,* pp. 297-8.
[59] *Young India, 1919,* p. 220.
[60] *Ibid.,* p. 919.

than other human beings.[61] This attitude called for a new standard of relationships in the struggle.

In Gandhiji's view, the inwardness of *satyagraha* also established a direct relation between the character of the people and the kind of political order they actually had. Indians, he believed, had the government their innermost thoughts as well as their actions showed them fitted to deserve. Finding fault with the Government, he declared, was of no use: "We get what government we deserve. When we improve, the government is also bound to improve."[62] True freedom in political life was therefore directly related to an inner *swaraj* which the people were to realize for themselves when, throwing off their weakness and fear, they became strong and independent. Individual attitude was thus to be correlated with the national programme, which was intended to deliver the country from the necessity of dependence on the existing system, and to set up its own pure form of freedom and justice. The people could become free from this *maya* of foreign control, but "neither I nor anyone else can get *swaraj* for the nation," he wrote. "It will be got on the nation proving its own fitness."[63] The intimate relation between the individual and social aspects of the ideal was observable, for instance, in the emphasis that Gandhiji gave to the campaign to remove untouchability, where attitude and practice were to be combined in delivering Hinduism from its social "sin." This produced a connection between the ideal of freedom and the order of society necessary to provide and maintain it.

It is necessary to enquire on what conception of the State the assumption of the political effectiveness of *satyagraha* rested. The democracy based on individual rights, which the non-violent nationalists visualized, was given theoretical support from the Western political philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth conturies. For instance, Rousseau's dictum, "Man is born free and yet he is everywhere in chains," was quoted by a contributor to *Young India*, who proceeded to develop briefly a theory of the relation of the individual and the State.[64] It meant that the association of the

[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 660
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 1031.
[63] *Ibid.*
[64] *Ibid.*, pp. 221 ff.

individual with the State was a purely voluntary matter, and the State's sole justification for existence was its promotion of the welfare of the people. The State originally came into existence through the necessity that individuals have of protecting themselves from the evil that is always present in society. The individual must surrender some of his liberty in order to have the benefits which the creation of the State make possible. It followed that the conscientious right of the people to withdraw their support from the State arose at the point where it ceased to fulfill its duty to them. While government, this contributor concluded, was a matter of popular consent, and might be subject to revolution when it became tyrannical and repressive, the revolution must be non-violent because it was impossible to overcome evil with evil. In such manner the Gandhian social theory was moulded into the older political philosophies, though he himself attempted no such philosophy.

There was a danger in the assertion of the right of the individual to refuse co-operation with the State, even for conscientious reasons, and Gandhiji was aware of it. Under *swaraj*, he contended, every person could not be a law unto himself, and "scrutinize in golden scales every action of our future National Assembly."[65] In most matters individual judgment would have to be surrendered to the representatives of the people, care having been first exercized in their selection. Civil disobedience was a right of the people, but it was not apparent that Gandhiji would have insisted it was an absolute right. He recognized that *satyagraha* as an instrument of aggressive opposition had to be balanced with social cohesion and control in order to become the constructive policy of any government. But whether political order could be established and maintained with the same conception of non-violent freedom as operated in the nationalist struggle was a question that time did not allow him to answer.[66]

Gandhiji had a vision of the sweeping possibilities inherent in *satyagraha*. The suddenness and completeness of the transformation which he allowed himself to expect in the country indicated

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 660.

[66] Gandhi did use his familiar technique to restore order after August 15, 1947.

the apocalyptic character of "Ramraj," or the religious kingdom whose coming he prophesied. A harmonious adjustment of all discordant elements within society, he is reported as saying, was possible as a result of the moral, non-violent revolution taking place in national life.[67] It would bring about the end of caste, untouchability and such superstitions; differences between Hindus and Muslims would vanish; enmity against Europeans would cease; and friendly relations between the princes, capitalists and the mass of people would be established.[68] This bold outline of possibilities did not mean that Gandhiji was actually anarchistic and lacking in political wisdom, but it did indicate the vision which he often entertained of national development through non-violence. In asking the British to leave India during World War II, he acknowledged that immediate withdrawal would mean leaving the country in God's hands, "but in modern parlance to anarchy, and that anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for a time or to unrestrained dacoities."[69] Out of this chaos, however, he was confident a true India would rise.

Another problem appears when *satyagraha* is conceived as an ideal instrument for maintaining freedom, law and justice. With the spectre of tyranny and unlimited war hanging over the world, the advocates of non-violent non-co-operation saw their ideal threatened from a new source. Therefore, could it be applied to the realities of international politics, and in particular offered as a substitute for the well-established institution of war?[70] Gandhiji believed it could, both when he witnessed Czechoslovakia being overrun by the Nazis, and later when facing the prospect of a Japanese invasion of India. His advice to the Czechs was to yield initially to the aggressors rather than engage in war, and later to defy them non-violently by disobedience, even though it meant perishing in the attempt. Women and children, as well as unarmed men, might without any bitterness offer resistance to the Nazis. For both India and Czechoslovakia it was a case of a relatively weak nation being

[67] In the *Statesman* (Delhi, Calcutta), Feb. 20, 1945.
[68] *Ibid.*
[69] Gandhi, *My Appeal to the British*, p. 20.
[70] Shridharani visualized the possibilities of *satyagraha* as an alternative to war, when normal institutional procedures fail. *War Without Violence*, pp. 276 ff., 308-9.

attacked by a highly armed power, and this was a consideration in all his thinking concerning the possibilities of non-violence.[71] Gandhiji's own individual moral absolutism, however, did not require a similar application of his ethic on a universal scale, as, for instance, was shown in the case of the National Congress which, while choosing "the better way" of non-violence, had actually "diluted" it.[72] When exploring the question of India's participation in World War II, he did not dogmatically preclude the possibility of armed revolt against Britain. It might have followed logically from certain conditions that then prevailed, but for the fact that India was not "violently inclined" and Britain had disarmed the people, making them "too weak for armed revolt."

Gandhi himself was an "out-and-out believer in non-violence,"[73] but he left the way open for an honourable release from the requirements of the absolute principle. He stated his preference for violence to effeminate submission to wrong, and allowed that the doctrine admitted "of people who cannot or will not be non-violent holding and making effective use of arms."[74] This permitted only the conditional application of the principle to groups or on a large scale, which in the case of the Congress was a concession that Gandhiji had to allow. What he never was required to meet was the responsibility for maintaining an order of justice and freedom, once political independence was achieved according to the nationalist standards. To determine questions of courage and honour on a mass scale, as well as to determine the freedom of the individual citizen in relation to the self-governing State, raise numerous issues of an ambivalent nature not comprehended by the Gandhian development of *satyagraha* as an institution of resistance and struggle.

5. Human Nature and Social Change

(a) The Religious Basis

Gandhi believed that in the universal adoption of non-violence lay the future happiness of all mankind.[75] He rejected the

[71] *My Appeal to the British*, p. 21.
[72] *Harijan*, Dec. 2, 1939, p. 357.
[73] *Ibid.*
[74] Qt. by *The Times of India*, May 8, 1941.
[75] Qt. by Diwakar, *Satyagraha*, p. 55.

suggestion that this was merely utopian idealism, because experience had led him to believe that a society based on non-violence was not at all unobtainable.[76] His expectation of an immediate human transformation, once the conditions of non-violence were accepted, was due primarily to his intuitive and religious approach to human problems. It was a breath-taking hope that a profound revolution in the motives, attitudes and emotions of a whole mass of people might be accomplished in a short time, and without long preparatory discipline.

Gandhi's view of human nature provides the context within which to understand his optimism concerning the possibility of an effective change to non-violence in human life and society. He looked at this possibility from the standpoint of his interpretation of cultural development. The original state of man in ancient India, living by the soul-force of truth and love, was contrasted with that of man as he had since become immoral by alienation from the source of his true existence.[77] Modern man, he held, presented quite a different picture than this natural man of earlier times, for "history as we know it is a record of the wars of the world." Conditions of violence had been imposed in recent centuries on an original and naturally peaceful existence. If humanity were violent by nature it would long ago have become extinct. The very fact that mankind still existed on the earth demonstrated that the force of truth and love was basic to human welfare. Non-violence was therefore the natural moral law of the human species, as violence was evidently the law of the brute.[78] History was simply a record of violence, or the interruption of man's natural expression of his true soul-force. Gandhi supported this view with the observation that when people lived in harmony, no one noticed them; but once they took up arms to fight, or carried their disputes to the law courts, immediately the press published the fact to the world. Thus, while the natural man was truthful and loving, modern man was competitive and violent. Government and political institu-

[76] Qt. by Radhakrishnan, *Religion*, p. 230.
[77] *Swaraj*, pp. 67 ff.
[78] *Young India*, Aug. 11, 1920. This accords with his view that the really moral man leads a life of virtue, not because it will do him good, but because it is the law of his being. See *Ethical Religion*, p. 35.

tions were made necessary by historical conditions that were unnatural to man; when they compelled obedience to law they corrupted man and were therefore unfit to be adopted. A true civilization was based on a peaceful order of life, and had simply to point out the path of duty for people to observe it. The original state of man needed to be restored, and Gandhi proposed to do what he could to see that it was done.

Religious and natural law were identified in Gandhiji's conception of non-violence. This was the universal law of life, with effects observable in the natural order, and demonstrated especially in the world's great religions.[79] Gandhi maintained further that non-violence was an essential characteristic of Hinduism, and the central teaching of the Gita, but that it was not confined to that religion. Love and mutual regard in human relationships followed from observable natural phenomena: "Though there is repulsion enough in Nature, she lives by attraction. Mutual love enables Nature to persist." Consequently *satyagraha* was latent in every person and, given the proper conditions, it could be summoned as an expression of the religious nature of man.[80] This natural morality provided the ground for Gandhiji's firm faith in the easy attainment of non-violent conditions. Expression could be free and spontaneous. But this insistence that non-violence was natural to man must not obscure the fact that Gandhiji also believed that its true expression was dependent upon an attainment of religious knowledge.[81] Especially in later years he emphasized the conviction that a *satyagrahi* had to have a living faith in God in order to meet the tests which confronted him.

The unqualified religious nature of Gandhi's ethic and moral technique impressed other national leaders with his being a religious reformer intent on changing individuals. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru thus described him as primarily interested in religion, and not concerned with a transformation of society. "Gandhiji is always thinking in terms of personal salvation and of sin," wrote Nehru,

[79] *Young India*, Nov. 12, 1925.
[80] *Young India, 1924*, pp. 446 ff.
[81] *Harijan*, June 18, 1938; May 13, 1939; June 3, 1939. R. R. Diwakar stated, "Its basic assumption is the essential goodness of human nature." Diwakar found that it was based on the "intuitive or mystic realization of the oneness of all life." *Satyagraha*, p. 25.

"while most of us have society's welfare uppermost in our minds."[82] The human good which Gandhi attempted to secure, Nehru continued, was to be achieved by means of individual reform. As he looked at the national situation, Subhas Chandra Bose also criticized Gandhi's programme, but his objection was that the religious conception was not revolutionary enough; it was content simply with social reform.[83] The lack these national leaders detected in the Gandhian method and objectives pointed to the need for a more radical change of society than he envisaged; and the difference, as they discerned it, was due to Gandhiji's invariable course of pursuing religious and social reform simultaneously. His determination to act in society only in the terms and for the objectives of religion made important differences in outlook and achievement.

When traced to their ultimate source, the changes which Gandhiji expected to achieve were based on a transformation of the individual by essentially religious means.[84] Religion in this process was more greatly stimulated than by the sectarian movements or by the earlier nationalism, for Gandhi succeeded in bringing his social and religious values into a new and vital relation with nationalism which continued to grow in extent and intensity.

(b) An International View

During the second World War Dr. S. Radhakrishnan sought to work out some of the implications of Gandhian non-violence for the international order, which was at that time threatened by widespread tyranny.[85] For him this meant the positive task of maintaining justice among the nations, both great and small, and not simply opposing the rise and encroachments of tyrannical power. He accepted Gandhi's axiom that non-violent resistance is superior to armed resistance because it breaks the bondage of hatred, and does not create new evils in the effort to exterminate old ones. But in the present state of society, Radhakrishnan believed, a harmony of nation with nation by a universal utilization of *satyagraha* is impossible to attain, and wanton aggression must therefore be

[82] *Toward Freedom*, p. 316.
[83] *Indian Struggle*, p. 333.
[84] *Non-violence in Peace and War*, p. 2.
[85] *Religion*, pp. 199 ff.

checked by some superior international force. Thus, while there is the possibility of only relative applications of non-violent means to society, Radhakrishnan visualized a danger inherent in an accumulation of international power, even for the purpose of keeping justice and order. Some balance of the conditions essential to justice had to be produced by means of superior military and moral power sufficient to check aggression, but not great enough to threaten the very order it had been created to maintain. This power also had to be exercized by some authority which sought to further the rule of international law and the method of co-operation. He concluded that non-violence in world affairs might be attained "if we are prepared to work towards it by stages," that is, by a gradual transformation of social institutions.[86]

Radhakrishnan's more gradual approach to the Gandhian ideal was beset by certain incalculable factors which he indicated only in general terms, such as the "unwarranted use of force," and the obligation of citizens "to resist aggression by arms, if necessary and possible."[87] And the State, in fulfilling its duty of preventing the lawless use of force, "must not use more force than necessary."[88] He observed that, in the case of the League of Nations, national disinterestedness was "more difficult to attain than even the unselfishness of individuals."[89] The immediate problem thus resolved itself into the necessity of changing human nature so as to create wider sympathies and imagination, and to enable people to look upon the happiness and misery of others as upon their own. For this end also a social consciousness and sense of responsibility had to be created which transcended the interests of the political community. Non-violence as a serious social ideal with possibilities of wide and successful application rested upon a change in the nature of man, as it enabled him to rise above the level of violence to one of love and justice. Herein, Radhakrishnan believed, lay the relevance of religion to human society, as it offered the only possible means for a transformation of human nature.

The human crisis revealed by a world at war made very pertinent

[86] *Ibid.*
[87] *Ibid.*, pp. 201-2.
[88] *Ibid.*, p. 223.
[89] *Ibid.*, pp. 225 ff.

Radhakrishnan's insistence that there was a crisis in the spirit of man which only religion could meet. To reach the end of a transformed world society, he believed it necessary that human nature itself be changed through transcendental religious experiences. Social environment, though evil, is not immutable; hence the spiritual man with a vision of the deepest reality may overcome and change social habits and institutions. He can change them by direct means, using the ideals which are not of this world, and yet which can be discerned in the "meaningful pattern" of history.[90]

In seeking for this advance of society to an eventually unselfish and non-violent state, Radhakrishnan would have us recognize the nature of that evil which impedes social progress. Evil, he stated, is present "in human nature and institutions."[91] That is, it is embedded in social institutions, and in the individual to the extent that he is a part of society; but there is a stratum of man's nature that lies deeper than his participation in the empirical community.[92] It is in this deepest part of human nature that man can find a real spiritual unity, and from it he can realize those ideals which he should seek to embody in new institutions. Human nature can be changed, and, consequently, so can society. The perpetuation of an anarchic institution, such as war, is due to the fact that the individual acts as his society expects him to do. However, he must be educated to fight against evil things in the interest of "a more perfect society," and not to fit unresistingly into his environment.

In calculating the actual possibilities of a realization of a non-violent society, Radhakrishnan had serious reason to pause. He looked at the "pitiless laws of Nature" in the world, and the fact that an ordered cosmos has to be built on human passions.[93] The world seems to be opposed to perfection; chance, error and caprice appear to dominate human affairs; while absurdity and perversity reign supreme over the noble and the good. Such formidable obstacles, however, did not cause Radhakrishnan to be disheartened, for he still saw hope in the over-arching firmament of spirit

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[91] *Ibid.*, p. 212.
[92] Thus social evil is due ultimately to the finiteness of human life.
[93] *Ibid.*, p. 238.

that shines down radiantly on the darkness of this world. There remained for him a faith in the ultimate triumph of non-violence in the sense of "the withering away" of the coercive power of the State. This will occur when coercion is replaced by habit, discussion and argument ; and the systems of exploitation and insecurity give way to a system of liberty, law and peace.[94]

As with Gandhiji, so with Radhakrishnan, the ultimate power for the transformation of human nature and society lay solely with religion as experience of truth. But was this religious experience possible for all? Could the people be led to find and retain it for themselves even under the direct tutelage of a great leader? Whether the religious conditions necessary for the non-violent ideal were established sufficiently enough to enable it to become a practical means for gaining and maintaining justice can best be seen in the light of the attitudes which Gandhiji's leadership inspired in his associates during the years of their common political struggle.

6. Faith or Policy

In the divergence of views as to the nature and practice of the non-violent ideal, which arose between Gandhiji and most of his associates in the Congress, the religious character of the ethic very clearly appeared. In his view, not only were religious resources required for applying non-violence rigorously to society, but the ethic was itself governed by religious convictions which made it absolute.

During the first days of the *satyagraha* movement it became apparent that a distinction would have to be made between those who adopted non-violence as a temporary policy for the immediate situation, and those who did so because of religious principle. Some accepted it pragmatically, for what it could achieve for the national cause, but in doing so they partly comprehended Gandhiji's intention of making means correspond to ends. But others, foremost among them being Gandhiji himself, held it to be essentially an absolute religious principle. The frame of mind which he found in the Congress made it impossible for his technique to be introduced with this ultimate meaning ; it was, he said, "as

[94] *Ibid.*, pp. 223-3.

a policy" that he preached it from Congress platforms.[95] He too was prepared to be pragmatic so far as the political situation demanded, for he stated that the Congress might give *satyagraha* up later should it prove to be unsuccessful. This relative acceptance of the ideal from the beginning of the movement indicated the future problem of securing any strict adherence to non-violent methods in the normal operations of a free political society.

Gandhiji did not allow that the non-violent way could be pursued insincerely, even as a matter of policy. For such conditional acceptance also required honesty in thought and action. He insisted upon the moral character of the *satyagrahi,* even when the religious convictions with which he himself acted were not acceptable to others. This contribution was made possible by his bringing together the planes of political realism and religious idealism.

The manner in which the national leaders accepted non-violence reflected their attempt to meet the political situation in the most effective way, as well as to adjust the new ideal to other convictions they held. Lala Lajpat Rai, in seconding the resolution on non-violent non-co-operation at the Nagpur Congress of 1920, stated that, while he believed armed rebellion against a repressive, autocratic government was the inherent right of a people, India did not have the means nor the will for such rebellion at that time.[96] Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru later wrote that he himself had not given absolute allegiance to non-violence, nor had he accepted it forever. It did attract him increasingly, and he came to believe that "it was the right policy" for the nationalists.[97] Since a worthy end should have a worthy means leading to it, this was good ethical doctrine as well as practical politics.

The optimism which characterized the early days of the programme, following the Nagpur session of the Congress, was appreciably diminished by the failures of the people to meet the high moral standard of Gandhian conduct, and to resist the unrelenting opposition of the Government. Mr. C. R. Das, in his presidential address to the Congress in 1922, made a strong appeal for continued

[95] *Young India, 1919,* pp. 149, 282 ff.
[96] *Will to Freedom,* pp. 127-8.
[97] *Toward Freedom,* pp. 72-3.

confidence in the ideal.[98] The method, he believed, was "sure and certain." There was value in it for themselves, since only through their present movement could a government be secured for the nation which would in reality be a foundation for *swaraj*. But an important consideration practically dictated this policy, Das maintained in 1925, for otherwise how was it possible for a subject race by physical force to contend against the "highly organised governmental violence of the present day?"[99] In going through the speeches and writings of Congress leaders, attention is constantly drawn to this pragmatic point of view: an unarmed India was confronted by a powerfully organised government and therefore had to use the available means of struggle. This also was advanced as sufficient justification for the continued allegiance to *satyagraha*.

At the same time the ideal of non-violence, while necessarily adapted to practical considerations, lifted the view of the nationalists above the level of mere expediency. Gandhiji believed that "uncompromising truth and honesty" might be introduced into practical politics.[100] Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in the thick of the struggle, saw the significance of this ; Gandhi's influence, he said, raised many to higher levels of moral action, and politics ceased to be mere expediency and opportunism.[101]

Some Congressmen, at least after the first blush of non-violence had faded, were critical of Gandhi, being convinced that he had adopted the wrong procedure. But they were premature in asking, as did Subhas Chandra Bose, "Why has the Mahatma failed to liberate India?"[102] Bose himself believed that, while Gandhi understood the character of his own people, he did not understand that of his opponents, who could not be met effectively with gentleness and love. Some nationalists gave personal allegiance to Gandhi, but his optimism of a more complete and ultimate transformation of society on religious lines did not particularly appeal to them.[103]

[98] P. C. Ray, *The Life and Times of C. R. Das*, pp. 257 ff.
[99] *Ibid.*, p. 250.
[100] Sitaramayya, *History of Congress*, I, p. 193.
[101] *Discovery of India*, p. 453.
[102] *Op. cit.*, pp. 329-30.
[103] K. Shridharani says of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, "It was the results-here-and-now quality of non-violence which first attracted the Sardar, not its assurance for the hereafter." *My India, My America*, p. 453.

As for Gandhiji himself, non-violence continued to be a matter of fundamental religious faith. He was confronted in 1924 by considerable disillusionment, and a decline of interest in his principles and methods; nevertheless he told the Congress that the experiment had not failed, although it had not achieved the success they had hoped and desired.[104] When, in 1934, he announced his intention of "severing all physical connections with the Congress" one reason given was that after fourteen years of trial non-violence had remained a policy with most Congressmen.[105] He believed the country had made real progress toward its adoption, although still in an adulterated form. His "paramount duty," he said, was "to devise ways and means of showing demonstrably to the Government and the terrorists the efficacy of non-violence as a means of achieving the right thing, including freedom in every sense of the word." In 1940 he again affirmed that non-violence was his own special spiritual discipline and not that of the Congress in general.[106]

The religious idealism and inspiration implicit in Gandhiji's political experiment had great value. Certainly a new fearlessness and confidence were injected into the flagging spirits of the nationalists when he first appeared before the country as its potential leader. He was able to lift the movement out of frustration and depression at critical moments. Some at least caught the moral implications which Gandhiji had in mind, and this produced a sense of certainty in the worthwhileness of their cause and a new conviction of the possibility of achieving their goal. An optimistic and dynamic attitude toward their social and physical environment was instilled in the people. No longer need they submit to that environment for, if nothing more, they could at least resist it.[107] But something constructive also could be done to compensate for the policy of political non-co-operation, and Gandhiji by his programme put it within their means to start to work regardless of the Government's unfavourable attention. *Satyagraha* began to

[104] *Young India, 1924*, pp. 446-7.
[105] See his statement to the Press. Sitaramayya, *History of Congress*, I, p. 579.
[106] *Harijan*, July 21, 1940.
[107] J. Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 363.

be followed by many in India, and it influenced them toward seeking an end which they believed to be ultimately good. Thus his life and work served to make political and economic nationalism a proximate moral end, a stage in his journey toward a more inclusive and enduringly good society.[108]

Gandhiji's focal position showed one of the weaknesses of *satyagraha* to be its dependence upon the dictates of the man himself, a fact of which he was well aware. "I seem to be going in a direction," he said in 1934, "just the opposite of what many of the most intellectual Congressmen would gladly and enthusiastically take if they were not hampered by their unexampled loyalty to me."[109] Once when describing the tension between his "spirit" and "flesh," he said that he could attain freedom from the counteraction of these two forces "only by intelligent action in a detached manner."[110] To the extent that he brought such intelligent action to bear upon the problems of society he attained an unparalleled moral leadership in modern India ; but he sometimes baffled his friends by departing from rational procedures such as they could understand and follow. This was the case, for instance, when he determined finally to leave the Congress. As Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, historian of the Congress, wrote of that and similar events, all were helpless against "his unalterable decisions arrived at by the play of instinct and not reason, by the urge of the *zameer* or inner voice in him."[111] While the success of his adaptation of a religious ideal to political ends was partly dependent on the personal loyalty which Gandhi inspired in his associates, the ideal was absolute and brought him to recognize the difference between himself and those who accepted it only in relation to the immediate situation.

The distinction between the acceptance of non-violence as an unalterable principle and its pragmatic adoption for a particular situation raises an important ethical problem. Can an ideal order of society be achieved by following non-violence as the absolute law of nature and religion? The speculative answer rests finally

[108] See Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics* (1947), pp. 197 ff.
[109] Sitaramayya, *History of Congress*, I, p. 580.
[110] *Young India*, 1919, p. 661.
[111] Sitaramayya, *History of Congress*, I, p. 579.

with our conception of the nature of man and the world. Thus Radhakrishnan believed that by adopting the Gandhian principle of non-violence for a world order, war could be avoided.[112] But he distinguished between the few for whom the renunciation of armed force is an absolute principle, and the many that are prepared to act on it simply as a policy ; and he pointed also to the conflict between the Kingdom of God which knows no compromise and the "pitiless laws of nature."[113] The law of non-violence was grounded in human nature, for even in brutal persons, Radhakrishnan contended, there was a love of justice and a respect for goodness and truth which could be aroused by anyone who used the right means. Still, he found that an ordered cosmos had to be built on human passions; and the world seemed to be, not the natural home of perfection, but the kingdom of chance, error, and caprice.

This failure to comprehend rightly the nature of man and the world in relation to religion and ethics helped to produce the antithesis between religious faith and pragmatic policy in the political movement. A basis of co-operation for religion and political action was found and a powerful joint force was developed under Gandhi's leadership. He was able to hold together the antithetic elements by his commanding religious and moral personality, which gained the respect even of his opponents. The firm hold of Hinduism upon the life of India's educated classes, as well as on the uneducated masses, was shown in the tremendous effect of Gandhi's ideas and acts upon them. His nationalism produced a fusion of traditional Hinduism with a modern ethic, and this had the complete support of his religious view of Indian culture. It was from his interpretation of culture, with its strong reaction to modern civilization, that Gandhiji's faith concerning human nature, and therefore his belief in the possiibility of a wide use of non-violence, found support. It coloured his whole view of the future of an independent nation, for all that seemed to be needed in his view was freedom from the restraints and compulsions of a foreign power in order for the ideal Indian society to be developed. The

[112] *Religion*, pp. 340 ff.
[113] *Ibid.*, pp. 221-2.

Congress, by its refusal to subscribe fully to the religious basis of the ethic of non-violence, created an unresolved tension betwen its policy and Mahatma Gandhi's faith. By separating the ethic from the religious basis, in order to gain its temporary acceptance, Gandhi recognized, tacitly at least, that society might develop without his religious view. He thus allowed the claims of political nationalism to take precedence over the claims of his religion.

Gandhiji's individual religious and moral experience led him to expect that what was possible for him could be easily achieved by all. It meant that the moral means of individual conduct were applicable directly to society simply by their extension to other individuals. "And if an individual can do it, cannot whole groups of individuals?"[114] But, in effect, he did recognize that an ethic for the individual was necessarily different from one for society, especially when diverse human elements with mixed motives were involved in any social action. There were his faith and the policy of Congress to testify to the difference. The religious conditions of belief and practice upon which he insisted mainly explain that difference. Gandhiji showed the greatest possibility of concord between religious and political objectives, but at the same time—if his leadership and example mean anything at all—he revealed by his position in the Congress the actual incompatibility of the absolute ideal with the claims of a responsible society. The difficulty lay in his assumption that man's natural social responses were in the direction of peace and harmony. In this he was misled by his interpretation of ancient and modern cultures, which visualized the evils that beset mankind as due to what had come into being during historical times, and as being confirmed by a Western government that compelled obedience to its laws. He failed to recognize that in order to have social harmony a balance is required between individual freedom and the coercive forces of society compelling accord, if necessary, with its objectives ; and that any State that is responsible to all its citizens must have the means for maintaining both freedom and compulsion. By refusing to acknowledge the necessity of a measure of coercion, even

[1] Qt. by Radhakrishnan, *Religion*, p. 230.

in connection with his fasts, Gandhiji overlooked the responsibility which every society has assumed of compelling harmony with its good ends among those who do not rationally and willingly respond to them. The individual value of non-violence was clearly shown in the unparalleled example that the man himself gave by his adherence to it, but the real social value was misconstrued when it was thought that a large group of individuals could and would act readily together in the same way as he had done. Gandhi's achievement was the supreme moral event of modern Indian life, but it is possible to overestimate its permanent importance for human society by underestimating the difficulties and dangers in the way of its simple applications to the political order.

CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

CHAPTER FIVE

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

1. Need for a Moral View

The causes of India's modern economic problems, in particular the widespread plight of the masses, can be discovered only by an objective study of economic history prior to, as well as following, the extension and predominance of Western economic and political power. Nationalism concentrated on the modern aspects of the depletion of the economic resources and activities of the villages, but Indian opinion also maintained that present economic conditions are not entirely the consequence of the penetration of India by the West.[1] There can be little question, however, that the steady growth of Western commercial and industrial interests, as well as the land settlement system and fiscal policies pursued by the British Government, emphasized and increased the great disparity of wealth and poverty, privilege and subjection which have been so apparent in India.

Early in the nineteenth century Raja Rammohan Roy studied the economic status of the peasantry of Bengal, noting that this class was quite as indifferent to the British Government as it had been to the preceding Moghul rulers.[2] The peasants, devoid of any political or economic experience, remained subject to whatever powers there were, acquiescing in the new government's economic system as a matter of course. Specifically, Roy showed by reference to official statistics, that the material conditions of life had not actually improved over a period of years during which the British land settlement had been enforced in Bengal, although the system had been introduced both as a means to efficient administration and to the establishment of an ordered economy for the peasantry. There were two classes, however, which he noted were profiting by the predominance of Western commercialism: the merchants who were prospering by trade with the West; and the landlords, peacefully secure in possession of their estates and

[1] See P. P. Pillai, *Economic Conditions in India*, pp. 5 ff.
[2] *Works*, p. 300.

entirely dominant over their tenants. Roy observed that, as a consequence, those who thus benefitted materially from foreign rule were not only reconciled to the new Government, but actually viewed it as a blessing. That this judgement was not biased by an early nationalistic sentiment is shown by the opinion of Lord William Bentinck when he was considering how the security of British rule would be affected by abolition of *sati*.[3] He noted particularly that they could count on the support of "a vast body of rich landed proprietors deeply interested in the continuance of the British Dominion and having complete command over the mass of the people."

Rammohan Roy also described the nature and position of another class that did not look upon the modern changes in political, social and economic status with the same favour. There were those of "aspiring character" and members of ancient families who considered it derogatory to accept "the trifling situations which natives are allowed to hold under the British Government." They were decidedly unhappy about the existing situation which adversely affected their affairs and fortunes.

On all sides it is admitted that the whole structure of Indian village life has been greatly altered in modern times. With O'Malley it may be observed that "outsiders have been introduced who are alien to the old social constitution, and the competitive system takes the place of hereditary service."[4] The result has been no material improvement in the status of the villages ; on the contrary, confusion and distress have arisen, and the centre of economic gravity has gradually shifted to the areas of large industrial and commercial concentration, resulting in a growing detriment to the traditional rural economy. Some Indian opinion, independent and even critical of the nationalist movement, noted the extreme poverty of a large section of the population, and this in spite of modern improvements such as railways, co-operatives, irrigation and agricultural research.[5]

[3] *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy* (Editor: Keith), I, p. 215.
[4] *India's Social Heritage*, p. 114.
[5] Thus, N. Gangulee in *The Indian Peasant*, pp. 88-9. Foreign opinion generally gave more credit to the British Government for its improvements and developments. See D. H. Buchanan, *The Development of Capitalistic Enterprise in India* (1934), p. 454.

Moral considerations in the economic sphere must be seen against the background of the national struggle where criticism of British policy was particularly sharp. The nationalists maintained that the subjugation of India was due to a long process of military and economic exhaustion, which could only be described as inhuman. Thus, Lala Lajpat Rai characterized nineteenth century India with the severe appraisal: "People died by millions ; the country was drained of wealth ; fields were devastated and manufacturers ruined."[6] The promises contained in the Queen's Proclamation of 1858, he contended, had been honoured more in the breach than in fulfilment for a very obvious reason: there was still a clash of interest between Indian democracy and British plutocracy. According to this view the exploitation of the country and the discrimination against indigenous industrial developments were simply the corollary of foreign rule.[7] There was only one remedy possible, namely a national Government which gave primary consideration to the welfare of the people. If there was bias in this frequently expressed view of nationalism it can only be fully discovered in the longer range of historical investigation when the heat of controversy has subsided. But the important fact for this enquiry is that the form of national India was being cast in the mould of economic democracy.

The state of India was also discerned in an international context. The nationalists declared that their country was an outstanding example of the injustices inherent in the whole imperialistic system which actually threatened international security. Those who longed most for the end of imperialism in India, desired to see it cease to exist everywhere; and in this sympathy the basis was laid for India to champion the cause of struggling peoples elsewhere who were subject to colonisation and racial subordination with its attendant economic and social disabilities.

British apologists, in answering the Indian charges of the disastrous effects of their administration, insisted that life had become more secure, the threat of famine had been removed, disease reduced and the material standards of life improved.

[6] *England's Debt to India*, pp. 327-8.
[7] See J. Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 510.

Schuster and Wint, in their *India and Democracy,* admitted, however, there was truth in the charges, but it was not so much specifically against British administration in India "as against the conception of the duty of governments in the field of social policy which prevailed, at least throughout the nineteenth century, among all Western Governments." "The British Government," they affirmed, "observed no lower principle in India than it did at home."[8]

In this conflict of opinion it is apparent that a conception of democracy was finding acceptance in India which required government to be responsible, not so much for protecting existing economic interests, as for reducing the widely prevailing inequalities in opportunity and means for material improvement. "We want leaders who will not be afraid to attack and criticize the man of property, power and privilege among their countrymen as fearlessly and mercilessly as they do the foreign exploiter, who will realize and preach that what they want is real democracy, genuine democracy, and not the mere substitution of the rule of their own men of property and privilege in place of the foreign Imperialists and Capitalists." In these words Lala Lajpat Rai appealed when nationalism was conscious of the necessity of economic as well as political democracy.[9]

For some Hindus a consequence of the conflict of ideas and interests was to reveal the need for a new moral view which would rise above the field of contention. "The chaos in our environment arises from the conflicts in our minds," wrote N. Gangulee in 1928. "I feel modern India has been left without a moral code to guide her destiny."[10] Ideals for another order of human affairs had to be found that would enable men to satisfy their awakened sense of justice and equity. These Hindus, as much as they may have differed as to the causes of the existing disparities and the form of a new economic order, agreed that a moral basis was essential for it. Thus Gangulee, while protesting against Gandhi's "experiments with truth," maintained that Indians needed to

[8] Pp. 316-7.
[9] *India's Will to Freedom,* p. 36.
[10] *Indian Peasant,* p. 179.

"evolve a new programme of life based upon a new synthesis of values."[11] Such a synthesis was in fact being formed under the drive toward democracy where an inherent and equal value of every person was being affirmed as an essential factor in the making of the nation.

While observation plainly showed that some relief had to be offered the impoverished masses, reflection on the situation served to raise up an ideal of justice that would offer a solution for the growing conflicts and the disparities in opportunity for mental and material improvement. The people as a whole, regardless of caste or occupation, came to have a supreme value, and, in the words of Gandhi, a sovereignty "based on pure moral authority." This implied an independence, economic as well as political, that offered all men and women in the country the opportunity of having adequate clothing, food and housing.[12]

2. Equality of Opportunity

The concept of equality, which was of such revolutionary significance for Hinduism, came to practical recognition in the course of political and economic events. An equal access for every individual to the material and mental resources of society was a basic principle in the movement toward political freedom. The fully enfranchised individual had been practically ignored by the Government as an indistinguishable element in an inarticulate mass. This political fact was not altered by the existence of widespread illiteracy and poverty which seemed to make quite impractical any consideration of a universal franchise. The individual now came to have a new importance, for political power rested with him in his decision and activity. From this it became clear that the free individual in a politically free society must also be in a real sense an equal person in a society which promoted the economic means to equality.

The principle of freedom and equality of individuals became a prominent element in the thought of modern Hinduism. Radhakrishnan urged that society be purged "of man-made inequalities

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 178.
[12] *Cent Per Cent Swadeshi*, p. 98.

and injustices," to "provide for all equality of opportunity for personal well-being and development."[13] It is obvious that this conception directly challenged a great deal of traditional Hindu social and economic practice, and that a religious problem was raised in the adjustment of Hinduism to meet the exigencies of contemporary political and economic events.

Nationalism provided an opportunity for understanding social and economic conditions by bringing the educated class into contact with the illiterate masses on the level of political activity, and made that contact dynamic with possibilities for change in the direction of equality. Educated men and women were brought to ask what they ought to do to reduce the vast economic and social disparities existing among the people. Their consciences were affected by the burden of poverty resting on the great majority of the population. Gandhiji was chief among them all by actual identification with those classes who in city and village lived on the margin of bare subsistence. He held that alien rule was responsible for the growing poverty of India, but at the same time told his countrymen they were more responsible for the situation than the foreigner.[14] The recently created middle class had been faithless to the country, he contended, by bartering away the country's economic independence ; so, in terms of his own programme, Gandhi challenged the educated class in the cities to become personally acquainted with the actual living conditions of the villagers. While it was true that "nationalism criticizes the foreigner," and "does not turn inward to analyze the inheritance of the past," as Henry N. Brailsford wrote of India,[15] this movement across existing social and economic class lines was a very important criticism of tradition. Particularly in its socialist formulation, the scrutiny of the causes of disastrous inequality and poverty fixed on two objects: foreign economic and political imperialism and Indian capitalism and landlordism.[16] The bases for a recognition of equality of opportunity were laid substantially

[13] *Religion and Society*, p. 118.
[14] *Swadeshi*, p. 98.
[15] *Subject India*, pp. 171-2.
[16] See Mrs. Kamaladevi Chattopadhayya, *The Awakening of Indian Women*, "Imperialism and Class Struggle." pp. 37 ff.

in the course of the Gandhian phase of the national movement during which Socialism made its appearance not always in forms which Gandhi could approve.

As for the poor masses, conditions proved to be fruitful for change, at least by means of a conscious participation in the formative processes of social development. Previously they had been inert and inarticulate, subject to the habits of many a century. As P. P. Pillai observed some years ago, there was discontent among the masses, but it was not coloured with hope.[17] Explanation was to be found "in the influence exerted over their lives through the course of the centuries by their political and other environments." In the climate of new national activity, however, the seeds of discontent began to germinate, and some harvest was certainly promised.

This more profound development magnified the earlier tendencies which arose under the conditions of the new activities open to all castes, and in particular to those who had borne the indignity of undesirable, even "untouchable," occupations. Self-respect and independence were bred among a great mass of people by the use of new instruments and tools which enhanced their personal abilities and sense of worth. They not only heard of ideas of equality, actually they experienced its meaning by engaging in occupations that had previously been denied them, both on social and religious grounds. In this the individual separated himself from the traditional social and economic environment to the extent of being a self-determining person in whom moral values could be realized.

In a more extensive sense also the significance of equality which inhered in a just social order became recognized. India's search for freedom was directed toward international ends as well. There the nation must have its equal place in a world family of nations, exercising its influence as well as showing its needs. The most forceful expression of this realization was undoubtedly in the thought of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He urged, for instance, that world co-operation could only be on the basis of equality and mutual welfare.[18] From this he saw two consequences: no

[17] *Economic Conditions*, p. 5.
[18] *Discovery*, p. 552.

nation would tolerate exploitation by another, nor would any people remain indifferent to their own poverty when they knew that other nations were flourishing.

The political and economic aspects of nationalism were so closely related that it would be difficult to distinguish them; but, as has been pointed out, political objectives had to be kept to the fore. It may be true, as P. P. Pillai believed, that some economic developments were promoted for political purposes.[19] But an identity of goals made this almost inevitable and the true test of the sincerity of motive could only be made known in events following on political independence. Clear indication of the intentions of national leaders was given in the sober pronouncements made on August 15, 1947. On that historic day Prime Minister Nehru said there could be no complete freedom so long as there was lack of food, clothing and the necessities of life, and "lack of opportunities for growth for a single human being, man, woman and child, in this country." Others voiced a similar purpose inherent in their newly achieved national freedom. "Let us resolve to create conditions in this country," urged Rajendra Prasad, "when every individual will be free and provided with the wherewithal to develop and rise to his fullest stature."[20] It was indeed an occasion for reaffirming the ideal of equality of opportunity.

The ethical ideal has been one of the major factors compelling a reconception of the religious meaning of life, in particular, the status and value of the individual in society. In traditional forms of society the individual's economic existence has been largely determined by a hereditary family and caste pattern, in which opportunities for free individual choice have been extremely limited by the status of birth. Religious theory has confirmed the system by reference to the ultimate principles of *karma* and *samsara*. The actual condition of wealth or poverty of the individual, however, has not necessarily been determined by caste or occupation; although poverty for obvious reasons has been associated with certain caste occupations and a correlation has existed between the

[19] He stated that the early Labour programme in India was attached to the political movement in order to gain the support of the English Labour Party. *Economic Conditions*, pp. 258-9.

[20] *Indian Information*, Sept. 1, 1947, p. 101.

religious status of the "outcaste" and his poverty. Religion has sanctioned the economic *status quo*. In modern times the religious problem is to relate the new conception of individual value to the universal social and economic ideal of equal opportunity for all. Evaluation of the individual as a person equal and free has led to an emphasis on the importance of individual temperament and aptitude, and a willingness to seek new means of well-being. Modern religious theory has concentrated on these variable psychological factors as of special concern, and, it must be noted, these do not support the view that human life can fit into a pattern of classless egalitarianism.

In terms, then, of psychological characteristics modern Hindu theory distinguished between the concepts of equality and inequality. Those who wished to relate contemporary economic and social ideas with traditional thought turned to the conception of *varna dharma*, stating that it corresponded to natural class divisions based on fundamental differences in individual temperament and aptitude.[21] In this, however, emphasis was laid on present empirical rather than on traditional hereditary means of determining social classification. The actual social utility of the individual was considered the decisive factor in the idea of equality, for by his usefulness to society the individual showed how equal or unequal he was and what opportunities he should be given. The causes of those differences in capacity, which are beyond empirical knowledge, found religious explanation in the idea of *varna dharma*. There was a reason why psychological characteristics varied with individuals, and religion supplied that reason. The thought of Radhakrishnan illustrated this religious rationale. He distinguished between intrinsic value, according to which all men are equal, and their unequal instrumental value.[22] Since in society "we have different capacities, we assume different functions which we fulfill with different degrees of efficiency." *Varna* in modern theory meant classification according to these differences.

From the standpoint of modern social and economic conceptions, and the possibility of individual development, Hindu thought

[21] See Chapter VI, section on *Varna Dharma*.
[22] *Religion*, p. 91.

emphasized an egalitarian ethic. It followed that considerable changes in the social order were required and possible in order to provide the means to equality. However, where traditional religious and social conceptions were followed, and stress laid on psychological inequalities, there was a tendency to emphasize the permanence of the old social order, and to seek for fewer changes in it.[23] But new economic thought and activity, by widening the area of individual participation in society, steadily gained influence in determining the norms of social classification, and provided a view less conditioned by traditional religious motives.

3. Means to the End

With justice defined in terms of equality of individual opportunity, the further ethical problem arose in determination of the specific means to be used in reaching this general end. The means were all the more important as in the particular conditions of India the end was unquestionably a difficult and distant achievement. Since there existed a wide difference of views concerning the practical programme which should be pursued by the nation in working toward the egalitarian ideal,[24] an enquiry into the ethical implications of several views is necessary for determining more explicitly the meaning of the whole conception of equality, especially in its bearing on economic opportunity. In such an investigation the rôle of religious Hinduism should become clearer, especially as it was related to those ethical values and ideals which were a part of economic thinking.

Certain questions must be asked either directly or indirectly. First, what is the nature of that social activity in which injustice is keenly felt, and where do its causes lie? This requires some analysis of existing social and economic conditions in which there are unjust disparities, and from which the individual must have some opportunity open to him. Also, what psychological agencies are to be employed in securing justice? Here the problem

[23] See for instance, *The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society*, Coomaraswamy.
[24] See Nehru's *Discovery of India*, pp. 399 ff.

is to discern to what extent reliance is placed upon reason, persuasion and sympathy for the distressed people in the effort to achieve a just economic order. There is the further question of social organization: what social forces and experience are to be utilized in providing the objective conditions essential for the end in view? This should show how inclusive the programme is with the principal individual and social interests in mind. Finally, what is more specifically the opportunity for which men seek in order to secure their welfare, and how far can this be found in relation to religion as an essential element in the developing culture of modern India? This query must run through all the others for it concerns those values which are held to be fundamental and ultimate for the happiness and security of mankind.

It is not necessary, nor desirable, for the purpose of this study to investigate the many suggestions made in connection with the specific problems of Indian economics. Primarily the rôle which religion has played in the complex effort to secure a larger measure of human welfare and happiness must be known ; for here, without question, secular views and programmes are becoming increasingly influential. Will Hindu religion in relation to public life be compelled to occupy a position of "a private affair," or can it continue as an indispensable influence in the entire body of society, such as it has traditionally been? Central to this issue is the whole problem of social ethics ; for, as has been shown, the strong interests of very influential modern Hindus are exerted in the direction of a society which explicitly recognizes ideals and values essential to human well-being. The determination of those ideals and values, as well as of the ultimate authority by which they are sanctioned, is a matter of direct concern to religion. If they are found beyond specifically Hindu religious interests, religion becomes largely a private matter without its traditional cohesive influence in society, or devoid of authority as the final arbiter of the forms of justice it once so completely maintained.

While religious Hinduism was greatly stimulated by its expression through political activity, and thus became, as we have seen, one of the vehicles of the powerful nationalization of modern India, it yielded to nationalism its dominant position and influence in

society.[25] To a certain extent the objectives of religious Hinduism in its most dynamic modern expression of nationalism were identified with the goal of political freedom. The inevitable tension, therefore, between secularism and religion in the field of social control was relieved at least temporarily. But the contest became more obvious in the sphere of economic interests, and most explicit of all, where ethics was concerned. It is important, therefore, to discern the moral tendencies which were apparent in Hindu economic thinking and planning. But even to designate as Hindu any particular type of thought requires considerable imagination, for on the level of modern economics men and women worked together for the larger welfare of the nation, without primary reference to their religious adherence.

To understand the nature of economic ethics among Hindus, and to make explicit the significance of religion in the process of seeking economic justice, three views are examined here. They are: (1) Gandhi's non-violent, voluntary co-operation ; (2) Narendra Deva's revolutionary socialism ; and (3) Jawaharlal Nehru's democratic collectivism.

4. Non-violent, Voluntary Co-operation

The idleness as well as the poverty of the great mass of India's people pressed upon M. K. Gandhi the necessity of devising means for their useful and productive activity, particularly in their unoccupied time. As he saw it, the normally healthy economy of the villages had been sadly affected by the rise of industrial concentrations in urban areas, as well as by the influx of foreign goods, thus undermining the value of hand-made and small scale industrial products. And behind all the destructive forces of the prevailing system was the foreign control of Indian economy which made exploitation of the masses doubly vicious. The opportunities for production and distribution on a local basis of village and province were closed to the people who greatly needed occupation either for all their time, or at least during the season when they

[25] See S. W. Baron, *Modern Nationalism and Religion*, p. 7. Of Western forms of nationalism, he states, "Modern nationalism has displaced religion as the chief factor in human group relationships."

were not able to work on the land. Moreover, the competition of urban industries was particularly merciless, as they not only produced cheaper goods than the villagers were able to do, but they also created a mentality of dependence on manufactured products, and a desire for goods which could only be considered luxuries. The injustice thus created affected dwellers both in cities and villages, and the merit of Gandhi's programme was that it called for a universal attack on the whole problem by activity which would reverse the disastrous trends. Fundamentally, he wished to return to an economy in which the former ways of thought and activity were restored to the people as a whole, and this could be done by a resolute control of the means and opportunities at the nation's disposal.

The picture which Gandhiji drew of the natural, free and human economic life of the masses stood in marked contrast to that of the constraints resulting from modern industrialization which he found essentially dehumanizing. The whole trend of the factory system, in the improvement of machinery and the means of production, was to reduce the number of operatives necessary for it, and this in spite of further industrial expansion which could not possibly absorb the vast resources of labor available in India. Men were, moreover, thrown out of work and their specialized technical skills prevented them from finding other forms of employment. They were thus forced into an unnatural existence of idleness and inanity. A dominant characteristic of the system which Gandhiji attacked was that it was entirely involuntary so far as its victims were concerned. The unemployment of the village labourer indicated well enough how he was the unwilling victim of both foreign and indigenous exploitation.[26] Craftsmen who remained in the villages lost their ancestral skill with tools, and no longer had any desire to improve themselves. Throughout the country intelligence was being divorced from labour, causing stagnation of the natural economy. This process of dehumanization was due to the concentration of power in the hands of the few, a condition which barred the way to India's economic recovery. Gandhi roundly condemned

[26] *Swadeshi*, pp. 26 ff.

privilege and monopoly by saying that he hated it, for whatever could not be shared with the masses was taboo with him.[27]

The basis of Gandhi's solution lay in the necessity of a voluntary renunciation of privilege by the wealthy and industrially powerful classes, and an active sympathy on the part of the educated classes who should utilize their leisure time in the interests of the masses. To the former he appealed for generous self-sacrifice in order to reduce the wide gulf separating the rich and the poor. Equality, he interpreted to mean, "the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and a levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other."[28] Unless there was this "voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give" by sharing with the poor, Gandhiji discerned signs of a future violent revolution in the country. He directed attention at the most articulate and powerful nationalist organization, the National Congress, and declared that wealthy Congressmen ought to take the lead ; in fact, it was an occasion for every member of the Congress to search his heart to know what he personally should do. Reliance on such examination of the conscience, and on consequent voluntary efforts of relief appeared to be adequate in Gandhi's estimation ; at least he allowed himself to rely almost entirely on this method.

In economics, as elsewhere, Gandhiji followed implicitly his principle of *ahimsa*. It was in the villages that he found the conditions for his ethic most promising, not only because most of the poverty and idleness were there, but due to his conviction that a non-violent society was only possible where voluntary co-operation could be practised. The very nature of modern urban life precluded it. Violence was one of the conditions of life in cities, he thought ; evidence being found in the co-existence in Europe of monster factories and huge armaments. A village-centred economy was also the traditional system in India, and it was, according to Gandhi, thoroughly consistent with a non-violent order of society.

It would appear that Gandhi expected to maintain the two economic systems in harmony by his principle of non-violence, and

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 151.
[28] *Constructive Programme*. pp. 18 ff.

partly by his appeals to the generosity of the rich industrialists. He said that India had to make a choice between her villages, which were as ancient as herself, and her cities which were the creation of foreign domination.[29] His *"khadi mentality"* told him that when the economic domination of the villages by the cities ceased, the cities would subserve the villages. He expressly noted that the Indian mill industry, while successfully competing with the Japanese and the English, had exploited the masses and deepened their poverty in direct proportion to its success over *khadi*. The only thing, he remarked, that prevented a conflict between his system and urban industrialism was his adherence to non-violence ; since, as he reminded the millowners, they well knew that his opposition to the mills was unbending and uncompromising."[30] His connection with the mills had been "a happy and complete illustration of non-violent resistance," otherwise the owners would have been obliged to treat him as an enemy and invoke the law against him.

The economic symbol of this non-violent village existence was the *charka*, or spinning wheel, and *khadi*, or completely hand-made cloth. The latter, being the chief handicraft of the villages. Gandhi identified with non-violence. Hand-spinning was also particularly appropriate for it was open to universal participation. Everyone could make thread, and it could be entirely voluntary. On one occasion, when the progress of spinning was encouraging, Gandhi was convinced that they were demonstrating the greatest voluntary co-operation the world had yet seen.[31] It cannot escape notice also that this represented a concrete attack on Britain's connection with India at a most vulnerable economic point. The *charka* was to be the centre of a free India, and all were urged to use it to produce yarn for the nation's consumption. Students as well as others were advised to spin sacrificially and scientifically ; everyone was expected to spin. *Khadi*, the final product of this universal activity, was to be worn by all and on all occasions as a point of honour, for it meant "identification with the starving

[29] *Economics of Khadi*, p. 592.
[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 533, 590.
[31] *Economics*, pp. 62, 588, 592-3, 599 ff.

millions."[32] The mental effect of this programme was obvious, for it created a village-mindedness and liberated the intelligentsia from slavish imitation of the West and the use of machine-made products. Instead, a new taste was to be developed in harmony with "the vision of a new India in which pauperism, starvation and idleness will be unknown."[33]

The programme limited to the production of *khadi* did not prove to be the success that Gandhi had hoped, for he was later compelled to observe that even the enthusiasm for *khadi* did not take hold of the real problem of the masses. On touring the country he noted that the interest in *khadi* was by no means universal, and not sufficient to bring the villages back to life.[34] It was indeed becoming a lifeless symbol. "All did not give *all* their spare time to the *charka* or the *takli*, and all had not taken to the exclusive use of *khadi*." There was still so much idleness that it might lead to the people's undoing. The problem became more complicated, but Gandhiji continued to believe it could be handled on a purely voluntary basis. The villagers that were not interested in *khadi* should therefore be asked to do something else, to follow their traditional family occupations. Let them turn to the production of the numerous things which a few years before the town-dweller used to get from them, but now he was securing from the outside world. So other industries were to be encouraged such as hand-grinding, hand-pounding, soap-making, and paper-making, without changing the essentials of the plan.

Equalization by voluntary co-operation was intended to bring about a spontaneous regulation of production and distribution.[35] The masses could begin again to produce for themselves and the whole nation, if they were protected from the exploitation of the industrial mass production system by the deliberate will of all the people expressed individually. The poor people might then have the necessities of life once they began to make things for themselves. Since the main market for local manufactures would be

[32] *Swadeshi*, p. 96.
[33] *Constructive Programme*, pp. 7 ff., 11 ff.
[34] *Swadeshi* pp. 26 ff.
[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 145 ff.

the village itself, the secret of an equalized distribution would have been recovered.[36]

The standard of value, moreover, would cease to be impersonal and metallic, and would once again be human: for labour, by welcoming the current coin, would provide for its own exchange "on free, fair and equal terms." The recovery from an economy of scarcity, which Gandhi visualized, allowed him to think of more than the minimum necessities of life being available for the people. He was indeed sure that the historic phenomenon of India as the richest country in the world could be repeated, simply through a profitable use of the time that was being idled away by millions of people.[37] But all they lacked was the opportunity, or the means to go to work productively ; or, at least, so it seemed.

Was it simply an equality of opportunity that was needed to restore a healthy economy and banish poverty and idleness? This was more than an academic question, for in answer to it lay the success or failure of Gandhi's plans. When the individualistic tendency of his economics was criticized, he answered: "If the will to co-operative effort is created, there is surely ample opportunity for co-operation, division of labour, saving of time, and efficiency of work."[38] If the villagers wanted to do so, they might share co-operatively in their work, and articles could be "pooled together and profits divided." Apart from the economic value of the programme,[39] its ethical structure rested upon the sustained voluntary response of the whole people to appeals for self-sacrifice and energetic participation. Without this element of the will to co-operate it was exceedingly unlikely that Gandhi's economic ethic would work ; and there is reason to believe that he was aware of this weakness.

Did Gandhiji think that big industry and the wealthy landlords would voluntarily fit into the plan for a revival of village life? The answer must be, No, at least not completely. In conceding

[36] *Economics*, pp. 557-8. See L. Fischer, *A Week with Gandhi*, p. 54.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[38] *Swadeshi*, p. 24.
[39] Gandhi's economic order was open to question. Local self-sufficiency and decentralization of production and distribution raised the objection that they would retard the development of national unity. E. Asirvatham, *A New Social Order*, p. 32.

the necessity of certain large scale industrial developments, he stated, "Heavy industries will necessarily be centralized and nationalized."[40] And when the test would finally come for the ownership of the land, he declared that in a free India the landlords would not be compensated for the land which the peasantry would take from them.[41] Still he believed that India could achieve socialism as well as Russia, yet without violence.

At another point the voluntary element broke down. In the *khadi* programme Gandhi believed that success of the ideal was demonstrably assured: all the cloth the nation required could be manufactured in the people's leisure time. But, again, there was failure to respond to the appeal for voluntary co-operation. "The difficulty," he admitted, "lies in weaning the nation from the use of mill cloth."[42] Large numbers were favourable to the extent of using the *charka* and wearing *khadi*, but, he observed, the principle was blunted by the fact that the cloth was not worn voluntarily. Since it was required by the constitution of the Congress, in some instances at least it became simply a policy of conforming to a rule of the organization. Gandhi called this kind of conformity fulfilling the letter and killing the spirit. For him *khadi* was a matter of a living faith.[43]

The central importance of ethics for Gandhi appeared again in connection with his economics. Gandhian economic objectives had to be essentially ethical, and had to aid the moral welfare of individual and nation, or they were simply "sinful."[44] The demoralized state of the people, as exemplified in their poverty and idleness, might be changed by a return to more productive occupation, for he believed that people would become moral by useful activity in meeting their own needs. Religion also was required to satisfy the requirements of this ethical view; which meant, in terms of his economics, that religion must actively embrace the principle of equality. Religious faith, on the other hand, supported his ideals as their necessary condition, and found

[40] *Constructive Programme*, p. 8.
[41] L. Fischer, *A Week*, p. 54.
[42] *Swadeshi*, p. 67.
[43] *Economics*, pp. 592-3.
[44] *Young India*, Oct. 13, 1921.

its stimulation in ethical activity. One intention of Gandhi's economic programme was to remove the threat of man's absolute concern for the material world, and establish a recovery of religion, and of morality as an expression of the spirit. What the precise nature of his religious view was does not fall within the scope of the present inquiry to investigate.

5. Revolutionary Socialism

The drive toward an egalitarian economic order was particularly pronounced in the revolutionary socialism represented by Acharya Narendra Deva and the Socialist section of the National Congress.[45] With them also the plight of the masses indicated the social and political crisis confronting India. The contrast of the conditions under which the great majority of the people were known to exist, and those of the classes who held political and economic power, provided the field for attack by this socialist thought.

The rise of revolutionary socialism took place in the context of the political struggle, its first concern being to secure liberation from foreign "imperialism." This was said not to be directed against the British people, for, explained Narendra Deva, "I love the British people and I want that Indians should imitate their virtues. What I am against is the system and not the people."[46] In 1935 he criticized the new Constitution as doing nothing to safeguard the real interests of the masses while "the vested interests in land have been scrupulously safeguarded," and "the modification of the landlord's status or curtailment of his privileges are not allowed."[47]

Since imperialism was "only a decadent form of capitalism," the socialist directed his attention also to the gross inequalities of Indian society with its "Zamindarism" and "Princely Order." The acute economic condition of the agrarian areas caused Deva to concentrate on the immense indebtedness of the peasantry, its inability to make technical improvements in agriculture, and high

[45] See *Socialism and the National Revolution*, p. vii.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

land rents with correspondingly low prices for agricultural produce. He characterised the peasant in 1935 as, "a pathetic figure in the whole situation." Urban conditions allowed no less grave view, for among the industrial workers and educated young men of the cities he found an appallingly low subsistence level with no promise of relief in view of increasing unemployment. The class structure of society was directly related to such conditions, and provided the base from which socialism had to begin to operate.

The equality which socialism sought was a reduction in the enormous disparity between the extremes of wealth and power on the one hand, and poverty, on the other. But this should not be taken to imply that all men were considered identical in every respect, nor that every man should receive the same amount in a just distribution. The ultimate goal was "to every man according to his needs."[48] This socialist egalitarianism also visualized India moving toward "the dream" of a classless society.[49]

While "nothing short of a revolutionary transformation of the existing social order can meet the needs of the situation," it was to be a fully democratic process, in which democracy was responsive to the wishes of the vast masses of the people, and not simply to a few classes. The immediate step was to intensify the class consciousness of the poor and to strive for the rights of the "Common Man." The National Congress itself, said Deva, was largely a middle-class organization which needed to have its base broadened in order to take in the masses, and thus make the national struggle a social and economic, as well as a political revolution. In fact, the Socialist Party, too, needed to develop in the direction of this social and economic democracy by becoming increasingly "proletariatised" ; but this had to take place by natural growth as the roots of the Party went down into the working class movement, and as the movement itself assumed higher forms.

In order to reach the socialist goal there had to be planning, no doubt ; but the question which the socialist asked was: by whom is the economy to be planned, and is it to be for the benefit

[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 21-2, 25, 95.
[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9, 119.

of the few or the many?[50] Deva said that the State must take over the general control of the means of production in the interest of the whole community. Industrialism should be promoted, with the key industries nationalized and others under State supervision and control. A radical transformation of the feudal land system was also required, involving an abolition of the middle-class existing between the State and the peasantry. In this process debts should be cancelled, cheap credit provided the peasants by State organization and cottage industries given plenty of room for development. Although such a movement would be democratic because it was for the welfare of the far greater number of the people, it would have to be genuinely revolutionary in order to succeed.

On the question of non-violence, Deva was not explicit. To the extent that Gandhi did, he would not repudiate armed force as a means to justice, for there were, he said, wars that should be recognized as just and progressive.[51] In 1937, however, when speaking of the necessity of a revolution by organization of the masses, he stated that it was to be "non-violent, of course." Deva apparently did not believe that Gandhi's influence was the most conducive to the radical changes in society which should be sought, rather he believed there were privileged groups which supported non-violence in their own interest. "Gandhiism has become a cloak for vested interests and selfish groups who have nothing in common with the Congress ideology of mass struggle." Favourable references to the leaders of European communism, as well as the accentuation of the class nature of the revolution can only lead to the conclusion that the means by which the masses were to gain their democratic objective were made subordinate to the end in view. The oppressed masses, said Deva, could not afford to be consciously altruistic, they had to be class-conscious in order to win power.[52]

In this conception of social struggle a moral objective can be discerned through the elevation of the common man to a position

[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 158, 161.
[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 137, 184.
[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 185.

of self-determination and self-control. Participation in the movement for complete political independence provided an opportunity for his fullest and freest development, a fact which Deva urged the leaders to recognize. The moral course of revolutionary socialism swung around the two foci of thought and activity, both essential to its dynamic orbit. Thought was required, but it needed to be conditioned by practice ; for, when out of touch with living reality, it became static. "Similarly," Deva said, "action not informed by principles and not inspired by idealism is blind and chaotic."

Support for the ethic of Narendra Deva's socialism was found in an essentially cultural rather than a religious nationalism. In 1946 he called for a "New Life Movement" for the villages which would aid in removing the cultural backwardness of the people, would give them new aims and aspirations, and would help them develop habits of co-operative and democratic action. He found between the youth of the nation and their elders a great gulf in accepted standards and values.[53] Students were urged to see the necessity of giving up mere political agitation, to learn the importance of serving cultural ends, and to set up a norm of conduct in harmony with the noble aims they proclaimed. Lack of any specific reference to religion is significant as indicating a departure from the powerful influence exercised by Mahatma Gandhi at this most vital point in his whole activity. The socialism of Narendra Deva pointed to a view of life which, consciously or unconsciously, found no necessity for the social influence of religion whatever value it might continue to have for the individual.

6. Democratic Collectivism

The intellectual and moral view of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was particularly well defined in his economic thought, and therefore can be best understood in relation to his analysis and solution of India's economic problems. With a purpose to view all human problems as concretely created out of relationships of individuals and classes, he believed that the solutions lay within the power

[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 99, 169-70, 183.

of free persons. Economic relationships have decisive consequences in the formation of social classes and in the determination of individual attitudes and motives. The thinking of big industrialists, he observed once, is naturally within the framework of an acquisitive society based on the profit motive.[54] Thus there arose the specific significance of the disparity in economic opportunity which had been so prevalent in India, for only by a direct reduction of the vast difference in income could there be a fading away of the class distinctions which were essentially based on them.

With many other observers Pandit Nehru saw the masses of India's people near starvation, and her economic structure breaking down under the strain. Moreover, there were numerous groups which, though they retarded progress, were not backward or degraded because of any inherent disability ; they simply lacked opportunity for development, or were suppressed by other groups. When confronted by such human distress, Nehru stated his ideal as "equal opportunities for all and no political, economic, or social barrier in the way of any individual or group."[55]

More than temporary relief was required, for, whether considered from the standpoint of India's world position or in relation to internal affairs, a fundamental change was required in national economy and society. With regard to international life, Nehru's analysis differed from Gandhi's, for he saw no hope for the independent national survival of an industrially backward country.[56] Economic life organized around small-scale industries would only imperil the freedom of India. Furthermore, the village industries movement with its social emphasis offered some measure of immediate relief, but as a final solution it was inadequate.[57] *Khadi*, he is reported as saying in 1936, was an important item in the Congress programme at that time, but it was not sufficient to meet the problem of poverty.[58] The village, then, must not be allowed to return to the independent and self-sufficient status it had before the advent of modern industry and trade. Instead, it must now become a vital part of the larger structure of the nation's

[54] *Discovery of India*, p. 512.
[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 532 ff.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 413.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 411 ff.
[58] *Harijan*, June 6, 1936, p. 132.

economy.[59] While it might function as a political unit, thus maintaining some of its ancient traditions, it would have to be adapted to the necessities of a modern political and economic democracy.

Unplanned industrial development, on the other hand, produces evils ; but Pandit Nehru found the economic system itself primarily responsible for them. The system had to be changed, not by some adjustment of incongruous elements, but by a "qualitative change over to something different and new." In such a complete process various social consequences might be expected, for it would assist the transition from a static to a vital form of life. The human mind would come to meet new situations and reach out to new experiences, and, by so doing, would learn to adapt itself to a changing environment. The solution of the economic problem, then, would also aid the social transformation which India must have in order to produce conditions of justice and equity.

The caste system must go: its exclusiveness had no place in the social organization of the present day, as it indicated a manner of thought opposed to the spirit of the new age which favoured equality.[60] The functional organization of Hindu social groups might remain, although this too would have to change according to the new functions which were to be created by modern industry.

With deep sympathy for the mental as well as the economic plight of the masses, Pandit Nehru wanted them to throw off that burden of the past which hindered an understanding of themselves and the world. "We have to cut away these excrescences," he wrote, "and remember afresh the core of that ancient wisdom and adapt it to our present circumstances."[61] Thus in going forward to a future with attractive possibilities modern India might look back for inspiration to the enduring elements of its historic culture. The people could never forget their ancient ideals that still existed in their sub-conscious minds. In an effort to make them unforgettable Nehru wrote his *Discovery of India*, a modern epic with clear historical judgement. From probing studies of India's cultural heredity he sought to elicit those ideals which would be relevant

[59] *Discovery*, pp. 534-5.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 532.
[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 520-1.

to the needs of the modern world, and adapted to the particular situation in which they were to operate. It was this cultural recollection, rather than a religious revival, that became one of the sources of his sober idealism.

But the determining influence in Nehru's thought came from science, as well as from his faith in the transforming possibilities of social processes. His scientific outlook brought into close range an understanding of the world which was exciting in its possibilities, though subject to forces of peril and defeat. The physical world responds to man because man is a part of nature. The human world also responds to man because man is part of society. Scientific means enable him to overcome difficulties and supply his needs, for it offers a precise, objective knowledge tested by reason, experiment, and practice.[62] But the scientific method, while it opens an almost unlimited range of possibility to man, is not applicable to ultimate purposes, such as the realization of truth, beauty, and "the inner recognition of goodness." The sociologist, Nehru observed, may be wholly lacking in love for humanity. There are ranges of truth which are not open to the method of scientific investigation. Beyond what man at present realises there is "eternal, imperishable, unchanging" truth as ultimate reality.[63] Or is it there? Nehru was not quite sure, and his view of religion took on the hesitancy perceptible in his nebulous references to an absolute truth. In any case, as man's mind develops, Nehru suggested, he comes to realize new aspects of what may still be the same core of truth. The purpose of human experience should be to keep knowledge of the truth vital and real. What cannot be known by reason and objective inquiry may come through intuition ; and so religion, according to Nehru's definition of it, supplements science. Religion follows a different method, for it relies on emotion and intuition. Although the advance of scientific knowledge decreases the domain of religion, the final mysteries of life "still remain far beyond the reach of the human mind and are likely to continue to remain so." He objected to the temper of mind which organized religion had encouraged as

[62] *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 520 ff.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 521.

the very opposite of the scientific attitude. Religion has undoubtedly helped innumerable human beings and has been socially stabilizing, but it has also checked the tendency to progress which is inherent in society. "It is therefore with the temper and approach of science, allied to philosophy, and with the reverence for all that lies beyond, that we must face life."

With this moral attitude Pandit Nehru made his suggestions for a just economic order which may be called a "democratically planned collectivism."[64] This meant a complete and constructive programme for a national economic system to be attained by democratic means. Democracy here is understood in the sense of co-operative thinking and activity in which all interests and classes participate, and by which they seek to arrive at conclusions that are acceptable to all. The inclusiveness of the ideal is further illustrated in what Nehru defined as real planning. It must recognize no special interest which obstructs the "well-being and advancement of the people as a whole, and the opening out of opportunity to all and the growth of freedom and methods of co-operative organization and action."[65] The collectivism Nehru visualized does not imply the end of private property, but public ownership of basic industries, and some form of co-operative or collective control of the land. Operation of his ideal was described in connection with the work of the National Planning Committee which met in 1938.[66] The diversity of interests represented on the Committee did not permit it reaching a final, unified plan that was acceptable to all the members. But Nehru was not daunted by this failure, for he considered it not so important at the time. When the choice of a basic policy had to be made, the then existing democratic government would have to choose which of the divergent views to adopt.

A comparison of the psychological agencies to be employed in the period of economic change shows Pandit Nehru to be in an ethical position between Gandhiji and Narendra Deva. The self-conscious individual acting in the direction of chosen ends was a fundamental element in each man's thought. But the ques-

[64] *Ibid.*, pp. 533, 399 ff.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 511.
[66] *Ibid.*, pp. 399 ff.

tion was: how should the individual act? As noted, Gandhi's faith rested on his method of persuasion, conversion, and co-operation.[67] The individual was to deny himself if he belonged to a privileged class, or to bestir himself non-violently if he were of the distressed masses. But economic class disparities, with their prevailing motives and attitudes, were obscured by Gandhi's desire for unity and harmony in the national interest. All might be adjusted peacefully in his conception of democracy which precluded any use of physical force.[68] On the other hand Narendra Deva, in looking toward the ultimate goal of a classless society, felt the necessity of emphasizing the full force of inequalities by an accentuation of class distinctions. Individuals who belonged to the labouring and agrarian classes needed to be aroused to a consciousness of class position and to strive for the attainment of their rights. For this conception of democracy, as the rule of the majority, proletarian violence was not essential, but neither was co-operation always possible. Violence must always 'be a veiled possibility.

Between these two conceptions Nehru relied neither on the superficial class harmony of Gandhi nor on the accentuated class strife of Deva, but on the possibility of co-operation in the framework of a growing political and social democracy. Democracy here called for the widest use of available experience and knowledge by a majority which was aware both of disparities and the necessity and methods of removing them. It allowed the possibility of an ethic with less doctrinaire and prejudicial choice of means for any specific situation. Ethics with Nehru required the adoption of the most intelligent attitude in understanding the good ends of society in terms of their means.

The religious nature of the ethical problem was shown in the interesting contrast of Gandhi and Nehru. With Gandhi, ideals and values were given as absolute to man, and were to be applied to social situations as absolutely as possible. Man's control of his nature, in manipulating moral ideas in society, was not purely by

[67] *Constructive Programme*, p. 19.

[68] "The democracy of my conception is wholly inconsistent with the use of physical force for enforcing its will." In his letter to Sir Samuel Hoare, *The Indian Review*, Oct. 1932, pp. 696 ff.

rational understanding and imagination. As Gandhi expressed it, the religious basis of all his thought provided a power of will which came from other than natural sources. The "spirit" could triumph over the "flesh" and accomplish moral results which were otherwise seemingly impossible. But the problem presented to Gandhi's religious conception of life in society was to make this kind of experience universal enough to provide social cohesion and vitality, as well as individual freedom. The success or failure of his attempt to make absolute values of practical importance amid the relativities of society can only be properly judged in greater historical perspective.

The moral power of human nature and mind for Nehru, however, was to be realized in the mutual influence of men and events. Man had the ability to rise above any predicament and form ideal goals by an understanding of himself and his natural environment. His ideals were realized in the formation of living habits of social thought and activity. The mind, in transcending its immediate circumstances in order to view the future, attained the vitality necessary to carry it beyond its present difficulties. The possibilities of wide social action in this spirit rested with the general adoption of the scientific method, to which religion had little to contribute.

CHAPTER VI

CASTE AND MODERN SOCIETY

CHAPTER SIX

CASTE AND MODERN SOCIETY

1. Caste and Democracy

The incompatibility of caste society with modern social democracy has produced revolutionary trends leading toward the abolition of habitual caste conceptions and practices.[1] Democracy has come to mean the recognition of the essential value and freedom of the individual regardless of sex or hereditary social status, whereas caste is based on social and religious determinism by birth. As the individual has striven to occupy a place of new significance through political and economic activity, so he has struggled to obtain a degree of social freedom and equality unknown in traditional society. It means that man has become an end in himself through new achievements of social self-realization and human dignity.[2] The pressures of all aspects of the democratic ideal have united to bring a strain on caste Hinduism which has allowed no mere adjustment of unimportant practices, but has compelled a change in fundamental social conceptions. This was indicated in the observation of Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer, when he wrote, "The social order of the Hindus was not founded upon the comparatively modern democratic principle of equality, but upon the conception of a social hierarchy based upon caste and sanctioned by religion."[3] Reconciliation of the two forms of social existence was found to be impossible. As when K. M. Panikkar stated, "Democracy and caste are totally opposed . . . the one is based on equality, and the other on inequality of birth."[4] The conflict has forced upon Hinduism in all its forms the necessity of a major reconstruction.

In particular, the religious life of Hindus has had to face searching criticism from among its own adherents, and an attempt at

[1] See J. Nehru, *Discovery*, p. 254 ; M. K. Gandhi, *My Soul's Agony*, p. 52.
[2] K. M. Panikkar has defined democracy as "the realization of the unquestionable and fundamental doctrine that man is an end in himself." *Caste and Democracy*, p. 28. See Radhakrishnan, *Religion*, p. 142.
[3] *Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals*, p. 93.
[4] *Caste*, p. 37.

clarification of its fundamental ideas and experiences through a democratic evaluation of the whole.[5] The necessity of changing prevailing standards and practices to meet the new social situation has perhaps been even more urgent. Late in the last century M. G. Ranade called for a "new mould of thought" cast "in fraternity, or all-attracting expansiveness, and cohesion in society."[6] Along with the intellectual and emotional reformation there was also a practical adjustment that had to be made. So Ranade counselled, increase your "circle of friends and associates, slowly and cautiously if you will, but the tendency must be to turn our face towards a general recognition of the essential equality between man and man." Later, Lala Lajpat Rai, who also advocated practical religious and social reform measures, said that it was a matter of supreme importance for Hindu society "that each member should have the consciousness that there is no position in society to which he cannot aspire if he is otherwise fitted for it by personal qualifications."[7] The clear necessity that found expression in these two leaders pointed to the two directions in which society was growing: towards the free individual with equal opportunities for personal development and satisfaction, and towards voluntaristic forms of social cohesion and unity. Hindu religion had to face in both directions. Already we have seen what the rôle of religion was in the political and economic spheres. It now remains to investigate especially what happened as religion met the more strictly social pressures to which caste was subjected.

The most critical situation was created in connection with the status and welfare of those castes to which were attached discrimination and opprobrium commonly designated by the term untouchability. In addition to what has already been described, the rising tide of political nationalism gave new importance to these groups on the lower levels of the caste system. An undoubted effect of strong internal caste interest during the nineteenth century had been to retard the growth of Indian nationality.[8] But

[5] See Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 367.
[6] *Religious and Social Reform*, p. 174.
[7] *The Arya Samaj*, pp. 226-7.
[8] See R. P. Masani, "Caste and the Structure of Society," in *The Legacy of India*, (Editor: Garratt), pp. 124 ff.

by the beginning of the present century the adherence of the "depressed classes" was actively sought from various directions, with whatever motive or conception of their welfare. In 1910 the editor of the *Indian Social Reformer* could observe the ironical fact that, "everyone nowadays is anxious to raise and redeem and attach, as he hopes, to his side the Mahars, Pariahs and others of the type."[9] The people themselves had meanwhile experienced an awareness of their own worth and dignity to the extent that they were no longer the willing pawns of more privileged groups and interests. They were becoming articulate, and organized themselves in order to improve their own social life and assert their rights as human beings.[10] They considered themselves in no way inferior to Hindus and Muslims. The meeting of these two currents reached its historic climax in the events which Gandhi signalized by his fast of 1932 against the Macdonald Communal Award. For, apart from the decisive position of the British Government in the contest, another Indian pitted his prestige and efforts against Gandhi's and, on that occasion, he lost. It was Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a representative of the very people for the winning of whose political and religious destinies Gandhiji offered to give his life.[11] Ambedkar himself, in opposing Gandhi at the Second Round Table Conference on the question of depressed classes and the new political order, was the best evidence of their growing political and social consciousness, their national importance and the ability they possessed for personal development once they were given a suitable opportunity.

Gandhi's interpretation of the crisis of 1932 showed clearly the primary interest of many of his public activities. His letter to Sir Samuel Hoare, from Yerawada Central Prison, contended that a separate electorate for the depressed classes would be "harmful for them and for Hinduism, whatever it may be from a purely political standpoint."[12] Such a measure would "simply vivisect

[9] October 30, 1910, p. 99.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 98. See Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 314; Briggs, "The Harijan and Hinduism," in *Review of Religion*, vol. II. no. 1. p. 37.
[11] See his account in *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables*.
[12] See *The Indian Review*, March 11, 1932, pp. 696 ff.

and disrupt" Hinduism. "For me," he continued, "the question of these classes is predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important though it is, dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issue." He succeeded not only in defeating the Communal Award but, subsequently, in turning Hinduism to a more intense and collective search for a religious solution of its caste predicament than had ever before been attempted.

Another area, in which the pressure for social change has become apparent, also shows a new religious attitude very well. Caste exclusiveness has always been particularly apparent in the matter of preparation of food and eating. Under the wisdom, as well as the necessity, of freedom from communal restrictions the modern Hindu has sought for a social cohesion which throws an entirely different light upon the customary views of contamination. Purity of food has been found to be a matter of physical cleanliness and not of religious merit. Recently there has frequently been a summary rejection of this entire conception of religious and social purity promoted by caste loyalties. "In our times such distinctions are untenable and irritating," stated Radhakrishnan, "and restrict free social movement."[13] Where Hindus have not been prepared to forget their customs entirely they have found a new rationale for them. Thus, Gandhi, at least in an early view, was prepared to say that inter-dining and inter-drinking were not essential for democratic progress.[14] A diversity of eating customs existed among people other than Hindus, he pointed out, without democracy being impaired. Gandhi's contradiction in this connection lay in an expressed desire to have democratic standards, while not yielding completely a most firmly established custom composed of the very essence of caste exclusiveness and carrying deep religious significance.

A perplexing aspect of the effort to convert Hindu to democratic standards was the tenacity of those attitudes which fortified caste behaviour. The possibilities and benefits accruing from a democratic society did not sufficiently appeal to secure an automatic

[13] *Religion*, p. 133.
[14] *Young India, 1919-1922*, p. 481.

transfer of allegiance to a different way of life. Serious Hindu observers noted a lack of the impulse to action.[15] Not only was this evident among the higher castes, but the lower groups as well, even in the face of the general will to social freedom which was found among them, manifested a bewildering persistence in clinging to traditional ways. Reluctance to yield the prerogatives of their dubious social position was no less apparent with the groups at the bottom of the scale than with those who occupied the summit. Mr. R. P. Masani, in dealing sympathetically with the caste system, found values which he believed deserved to be retained ; nevertheless he noticed that "every group has been obsessed with the idea of maintaining its own prestige and solidarity."[16] This popular attitude, however, did not obscure the fact that there remained along with the "caste spirit" the prestige and domination of the Brahmins, and the entire system throughout continued to be hierarchical both in conception and practice.[17] Whatever may have been the relation of religion to caste, the fact that it was implicated in the caste complex was repeatedly observed by students of the problem. Masani, for instance, while believing that exclusiveness was foreign to the original conception of caste, remarked that "the age-old scruples concerning personal and ceremonial purity and inviolability of religious rites, which detach the superior orders from the lowest, are still almost as strong as ever."[18] Religion served to fortify the traditional attitudes. As Hutton noted, while social contacts helped to break down notions of pollution, this did not necessarily mean "any real abandonment of the attitude of caste Hindus to the 'Exterior Castes'."[19]

The manner of integration of religious and economic interests in caste has been shown in its negative as well as its positive aspects. Under stress, economic sanctions have been used to enforce its religious claims, as was shown when Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and a large number of Mahars announced they would

[15] See the remarks of the editor of *The Guardian*, April 19, 1945, on a speech by K. M. Munshi. Also, Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, p. 376.
[16] *Op. cit.*, p. 157.
[17] See Radhakrishnan, *Religion*, p. 133 ; and Senart, *Caste in India*, p. 84.
[18] *Op. cit.*, p. 158.
[19] *Caste in India*, p. 205.

leave Hinduism. As a result, it was reported, a systematic boycott of Mahars by caste Hindus in certain districts of the Bombay Presidency was an attempt to deprive them of their agricultural labour, grazing lands, and butter-milk. Their wells also were said to have been poisoned.[20]

In the light of such practices it is possible to understand the dissociation of religion from caste only as a rational procedure in the development of new religious and social attitudes. The intellectual view formulated early in nineteenth century sectarianism, that religion was not responsible for specific social injustices, was maintained as the constant premise of the efforts to establish an ethical Hindu religion in the democratic sense. But it was repeatedly revised, for all practical purposes, in the actual conflict over the democratisation of society. Because constantly the issue developed along lines of religious belief and practice, and especially in that ambiguous area where religion and society in traditional Hinduism have coincided. So that the religion which was in mind, when modern Hindus contended for its separation from society, was a reformulated religion which frankly accepted and attached itself, not only to the ideals of modern life, but to the practical norms of democratic social existence as well. However, it cannot escape notice that the intellectual view of the relation of religion and traditional society was not universally acceptable, especially among those who had reason to feel the sting of injustice most poignantly. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, for example, in his analysis of caste, held religion accountable ; for he wrote, in support of the "annihilation" of caste, "a people and their religion must be judged by social standards based on social ethics."[21]

The reformulation of the religious position proceeded in connection with the more practical measures for securing a conversion of social Hinduism to forms of modern social democracy. The essence of religion was distilled from the compound of Hindu thought and practice by outstanding thinkers who found the result quite in harmony with democratic standards. This religion was by necessity of definition democratic in nature. It was based,

[20] In *Great Britain and the East*, Oct. 31, 1935.
[21] See *Annihilation of Caste*.

announced Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "on the discovery of the essential worth and dignity of the individual and his relation to a higher world of reality."[22] The labours of the aroused Hindu reform apologists, which carried on so largely under the shadow of the moral and social crisis within Hindu religion, led to the light, and in this "much support" was found "in the *spirit* of the ancient scriptures."[23] This rediscovery of religion was based on an interpretation of traditional belief which stated that individuals in religious Hinduism are spiritually equal. Such was the position reached by Radhakrishnan who referred to the fact that, while spiritual equality had been preached, social inequality had been practised.[24] To develop homogeneity and a sense of common obligation among Hindus, he stated, "the caste spirit must go."[25] For those who held a specifically religious view the practical task of ridding Hinduism of this spirit developed into a major undertaking involving the entire resources of their modern religious and social development.

2. Religious Reform

The religious factor in the transition towards social democracy assumed various forms of motivation and practical effort. It is necessary to examine this sphere of religious influence in order to understand the extent to which ethical objectives were sought and attained in the development of new social organization.

Religious sectarianism embodied several degrees of social motives from radical to conservative, but all in the general direction of an emancipation of the individual from the rigours of caste society in its connection with traditional religion. The sects, moreover, formed the base from which nineteenth century religion began operations in the nearly overwhelming task of liberalizing Hindu social attitudes. The sects were like small islands of modern democratic freedom in a vast ocean of caste conservatism. In historical perspective they only partially succeeded in the collective

[22] *Religion*, p. 42.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[24] In an address to the Convocation of Patna University, Nov. 30, 1944. Reported in the *Statesman*, Dec. 3, 1944.
[25] *Religion*, p. 133.

attainment of their ideals, although significant progress was made in certain instances.[26]

The radical ideal was manifested early when the attack on caste became overt enough to raise the issue sharply between sectarianism and traditionalism. Such was the case with the Paramahansa Sabha, organized in Bombay in 1840 with the purpose of abolishing caste.[27] This failed due to the overwhelming opposition of the caste community which threatened the personal security of the bold reformers. In the main, the influence of the religious sects was in the direction of raising issues and providing some approximation to a democratic society, but avoiding any radical break with the old order.

An indication of the morally ambiguous nature of the religious motive was given in more recent times and arose out of the large scale migrations of the depressed classes, who were now no longer mere objects of the social sympathy of others on their behalf. They began to decide their own best course of action under existing circumstances, and followed it. Large numbers where leaving Hinduism for Christianity and Islam. In the opinion of Lala Lajpat Rai, who advocated the programme of the Arya Samaj, the low castes had no desire to leave Hinduism except as it was possible to improve themselves religiously, socially, and economically elsewhere.[28] The effect upon high caste Hindus of these social and religious migrations began to be very impressive ; for, as Rai observed, the possibility of losing these people shook "the intelligent section of the Hindu community to its very depths, and were it not for long established prejudices and deep-rooted habits, the untouchableness would soon be a thing of the past."[29] He tried to impress upon Hindus the fact that their society was confronted with modern influences which had brought about striking changes in social ideals, and modes of life and thought. Consequently, a society in order to maintain its position in the modern world had to allow its members the fullest opportunity for progress. Even more drastic were the words of Mahatma Gandhi when he con-

[26] See K. Natarajan in *Indian Social Reformer*, Sept. 18, 1937.
[27] See *Indian Social Reformer*, Sept. 28, 1946, article by "V.S.S.", p. 28.
[28] *Op. cit.*, p. 226.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

fronted himself and Hinduism with the startling fact that they were on trial equally with Islam and Christianity, for untouchability had to be destroyed or else it would destroy Hinduism. As they were on the "brink of an active volcano" he was allowed not a moment's rest. "Invidious and iniquitous distinctions between man and man" doomed a religion to perish if it could not rid itself of them.[30]

The moral ambiguity inherent in such appeals is quite apparent, for, while modern religion allied itself with the forces of social democracy, it did so from two divergent motives. Firstly, it aimed to follow in the direction of the new social idealism by a reform of Hindu religion in which responsibility for the depressed classes was constantly explicit. Secondly, this ethical view of religion was concerned not simply to save itself by enlightened withdrawal into its own thought and practice, but to save all Hindu religious and social conservatism as well. That is to say, there were motives both of social idealism and religious self-preservation, and the effect of the latter was to mitigate the influence of the religious radicalism implicit in the former. The complexity of the entire Hindu religious and social situation increased with the course of time, showing a deepening of the two basic motivations, each influencing the other, and both reflecting the pressures of the steadily increasing political and economic concerns of the nation, as well as religious and social pressures from outside Hinduism.

The two motives became more explicit in the Arya Samaj than had been the case in earlier nineteenth century sectarianism, for this group went farther in direct efforts to incorporate the depressed classes into a more organic relation to Hindu society than had any group before it. Lala Lajpat Rai described the *shuddhi*, or purification and reclamation ceremony that was utilised for the purpose of creating among the untouchables a sense of their religious unity with the rest of Hinduism.[31] It was employed in recovering converts from Hinduism to other religions, as well as with outcaste Hindus to incorporate them more closely into the religious order. But the history of the Samaj made it apparent that those who accepted the *shuddhi* ceremony were not thereby allowed by

[30] *Young India 1919-1922*, p. 978.
[31] *Op. cit.*, pp. 220 ff., 230.

caste Hindus an automatic passage into a democratic order of freedom and equality with them. A religio-social theory accompanied such practical impulses in the effort to hold together the developing forces of social idealism and religious conservatism. It promised a new adjustment of the various social groups, not in terms of birth and custom, but on a basis of individual capacity, activity and temperament.[32] Swami Dayanand stated that children born in other than Brahmin castes might become Brahmins. "At present he deserves to be a Brahmin," reads the *Satyarth Prakash,* "who has acquired the best knowledge and character, and an ignorant person is fit to be classed as a Shudra."[33] This conscious religious rearrangement did not, therefore, form a pattern of social democracy, but of *chaturvarna.* It was obviously intended to be an approximation to the democratic ideal, particularly in the sense of giving new value to the individual while preserving the actual form of the traditional order.

Swami Vivekananda likewise showed the existence of the two considerations in his thought. In a certain sense he visualized a casteless society in which the historic discriminations would fade out of importance and practice. The solution of the problem, he believed, was not by "bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower up to the level of the higher. And that is the line of work that is found in all our books."[34] How was this process of levelling-up to be accomplished? Education held the answer, but it had to be of a certain kind. The lost vitality of the masses had to be restored, physically, intellectually, and spiritually; and this was possible by combining the Vedanta with modern science, history, and literature.[35] Vivekananda discerned the failure of the medieval reformers, such as Ramanuja, Chaitanya and Kabir, once they had succeeded in changing the status of some members of the lower castes and outcastes, in not spreading Sanskrit culture among the masses. Again the theoretical basis was supplied by reference to *Chaturvarna,* for Vivekananda's solution was to democratize

[32] See *The Ten Principles of the Arya Samaj,* Chamupati, p. 139, qt. by Graham, *The Arya Samaj as a Reformation,* p. 556.
[33] (1908), p. 135.
[34] *Works,* vol. III, p. 295.
[35] See *Cultural Heritage of India,* vol. II, pp. 599-600; *Works,* III, pp. 218-9.

Hindu society somewhat, by dividing it up according to this pattern, "as of old."[36]

Mahadev G. Ranade and Gopal K. Gokhale revealed the greater influence of political and economic forces upon their social thought, with a correspondingly less concern for direct religious adaptation. The former hoped that social reconstruction might be accomplished with a minimum of religious agitation and hostility from traditionalist sources.[37] Gokhale's position was made clear in his urgent appeal to the National Social Conference at Dharwar in April 1903.[38] He was speaking in support of a resolution before the Conference which proposed that every person concerned for the well-being of the country should consider it his duty to do all he could to raise the moral and social conditions of the lowest orders of the caste system, "by trying to rouse self-respect in these classes and placing facilities for education and employment within their reach." Gokhale described it as "absolutely monstrous" that "a class of human beings, with bodies similar to our own, with brains that can think and with hearts that can feel" should be perpetually condemned to a life of degradation. The Conference had in mind the fact that modern civilization had created conditions to which Hinduism must adjust itself. A "larger humanity" required acknowledgement of a greater equality for all, and this was the watchword of the new order in its contention with privilege and exclusiveness, the basic ideas of the old. In this historic declaration Gokhale emphasized the preponderant equalizing influence of modern social idealism which left for religious Hinduism the necessity of adjustment to the moral temper of the times. But what he perhaps could not realize sufficiently at that time was that the recalcitrance of caste Hindus, in responding to rational and charitable appeals, would effectively bar the progress of this social liberalism. Eventually such humanitarianism had to give way to a greater degree of religious conservatism, with the moral impulses directed especially to religious, institutional, and ideological objectives.

Various religious measures were adopted by caste Hindus to re-

[36] *Works*, V. p. 322.
[37] *Reform*, pp. 167 ff.
[38] *Speeches of Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, pp. 1054 ff.

lieve the tension caused by the growing mobility of outcaste groups. To the extent that these efforts were confined to strictly religious procedures within the traditional order, without modifying fundamental attitudes of discrimination, they failed to make any appreciable moral advance. Benoy K. Sarkar, for instance, observed that newly Hinduized aborigenes in Bengal, who had been formally initiated by a purification ceremony, did not thereby receive any democratic benefits, because this did not "imply automatically social mobility of the vertical type."[39] They became, for all practical purposes, "another group of untouchables or depressed classes." Where the attempt to establish some basis of religious equality between outcaste and caste was confined to the framework of the traditional system, it left untouched the areas where the need for social equality was most acutely felt. When Pandit Madan M. Malaviya used a *mantra* ceremony to initiate outcastes into a caste status, some Hindu observers remarked that they might be admitted to equality in some things but this could not extend to inter-dining and inter-marriage.[40] In effect such attitudes seemed to indicate that the problem of untouchability was distinct from that of caste in general; for, while untouchability might disappear, caste behaviour remained largely intact. Thus religious measures to remove untouchability, without an open adherence to the ethical objectives which motivated them, were caught on the snag of religious and social reaction.

An interesting example of the complex religious situation, in which socio-ethical purposes were inevitably involved, was provided by the dramatic announcement of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and a number of his followers in 1935 that they were renouncing Hinduism for another religion of their choice. In spite of the obvious interest of other religious leaders and communities in the social and religious destiny of the Mahars, the first explosive force of the declaration dwindled away in the flux of political events and the general confusion of the whole religious situation. Those "untouchables"—as Ambedkar preferred to call them—who had been aroused to an excited interest in non-Hindu religious doctrines

[39] *Creative India*, p. 535. See Briggs, *op. cit.*, pp. 38 ff., esp. 49-50.
[40] On which Dr. G. W. Briggs observed, "This remark goes to the bottom of the whole matter." *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

and practices, gradually lost concern for the religious aspect of the issue, and settled down to improve their social and economic position still within the Hindu system.

Especially during the latter part of his career Mahatma Gandhi added the weight of his prestige to the amelioration of the Harijans —as he named the untouchables with a significantly religious term— and to the transformation of certain caste attitudes toward them. It was evident by now that caste exclusiveness would not wither up automatically in the slight changes of the moral climate of Hinduism. In delivering his soul of its "agony" Gandhi had his face set toward the establishment of a "Universal Brotherhood and nothing else."[41] Toward this end, he maintained that "caste has nothing to do with religion," and that it was a custom whose origin he did not know.[42] It was very apparent, however, that Gandhi fully realised the peril to which religious Hinduism was subjected by the undemocratic character of caste, and that religion itself was being weighed in the balance.[43] He intensified the religious character of the issue over untouchability in the belief that only thereby could the matter be settled to the satisfaction both of outcaste and caste Hindus. The motive for his great struggle against untouchability is to be found in his statement that this custom was against "reason, justice and religion of the heart." Never did Gandhi use the Scriptures more rationally than when he was dealing with this problem.[44] But in the effort to save Hinduism he rendered his own social purposes morally ambiguous, for it was not clear whether he was concerned to make Hinduism casteless, or to adjust the new ethic of social democracy to the minimum demands of caste practice.

In confronting caste Hindus with the sharp issue as he saw it, Gandhiji called for a general act of repentance. He impressed upon them the gravity of the situation arising out of the increasing religious uneasiness of the Harijans, and the decided tendency toward their political separation from the main body of Hindus. Nothing short of a programme of self-purification would do, for

[41] *Harijan*, Jan. 11, 1935, p. 384.
[42] *Ibid.*, July 18, 1936, p. 180.
[43] *Young India, 1924-1926*, pp. 434-5.
[44] *Young India, 1919*, pp. 470 & 978.

untouchability was a sin for which caste Hindus had to atone by their own efforts in assuming new social responsibilities toward the Harijans.[45] The depressed people should be received into caste homes, either as members of families, or as servants ; they should be invited to share in meals and to take part in social functions and ceremonies. Once a consciousness of their sin had come to the privileged castes they would go to the Harijans, not only to teach and serve them, but as debtors seeking to discharge their obligations.[46]

The climax of these efforts, because the most public and the nearest to Hindu religious feelings, came with the campaign to secure admission of Harijans to Hindu temples. The proclamation of the Maharaja of Travancore in 1936, opening State temples to all Hindus, received Gandhi's special approval as entirely a religious act, and was signalized by a personal visit during which, on the basis of his own observations, he both blessed and admonished *"savarna"* and *"avarna"* Hindus there.[47] One result of the campaign was to gain a certain recognition of human equality in the religious sphere, if only to a limited degree. This was echoed widely. "If nowhere else," said Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru at the All-Kerala Temple Entry Conference in 1936, "we must learn to behave as equals at least in the presence of God and in the house of the Lord."[48]

Indeed, Gandhi also expected that Harijans should make progress from their side by cultural advance, and thus be fitted for the reception they would eventually receive from *savarna* Hindus.[49] The initiative, however, had to be taken by the latter in order to make the Harijans feel "the effect of the new awakening in Hinduism." They had, in effect, to become touchable by being permitted to come into contact with Hindus universally ; although, for Gandhi, this did not imply a general inauguration of inter-dining and inter-marriage.[50] When the religious aspect was properly

[45] *Harijan*, Jan. 25, 1935 ; *Young India, 1924-1926*, pp. 434-5.
[46] *My Soul's Agony*, pp. 75 ff. ; Mahadev Desai in *Harijan*, Feb. 22, 1936 ; *Constructive Programme, Its Meaning and Place*, p. 6. See also Radhakrishnan, *Religion*, pp. 134-5.
[47] See *The Epic of Travancore* by M. Desai.
[48] Reported in *Harijan*, May 23, 1936, p. 116.
[49] *My Soul's Agony*, pp. 75 ff.
[50] *Harijan*, Oct. 12, 1934.

developed through purification from the sin of caste the Harijans for their part could be expected to undergo a "perfect transformation."[51] A democratization of society would follow as a natural result of the primary religious act.[52]

No more fitting climax to events could be imagined than Gandhi's practical religious programme against untouchability, not in the charitable attitude that had mainly characterized earlier efforts, but as a religious experience of the deepest significance for the individual and society. As the movement was intensified by political, religious, economic and social events outside of Hinduism, its internal effects extended to the whole structure of the social system.

3. VARNA DHARMA

According to the traditional religious view a social determinism by birth has been accompanied by a moral determinism by the law of *karma*. This hereditary principle has been one of the main causes of the development of social crystallization and caste separatism.[53] The increasing adherence to the democratic ideals of freedom and equality has brought about a steady diminution of the influence of physical and social heredity in determining the status of the individual. At the same time the cultural nationalism of the last century brought to the foreground an ancient concept to fit contemporary social necessities. Thus the appearance of *chatur-varna*, or *varna dharma*, provided a metaphysical basis for a new pattern of Hindu moral thought. By this concept modern thought tried to provide a moral rationale to ease the social and religious tension within Hinduism. For, on the one hand, it embodies the principle of social classification with innate individual differences ; and, on the other, it points to the democratic ideal without any supposed relation to caste.[54] Metaphysically, *varna* is considered an immutable natural law with tendencies always at work in indivi-

[51] *My Soul's Agony*, p. 76.
[52] *Harijan*, March 16, 1934.
[53] See Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, pp. 371 ff. Also Mees, *Dharma and Society*, p. 73.
[54] See Radhakrishnan, *ibid.*, pp 366-8 ; *Harijan*, July 18, 1936.

dual life.[55] N. C. Kelkar defined it as a philosophical interpretation or a human description, regard being given to "mental and spiritual tendencies, taken together with the work" which a man does under the influence of those tendencies.[56] According to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *varna* is a "pattern of our being," and a law of individual development which each person should follow for himself.[57]

The cultural aspect of the attention given the concept of *varna* makes an interesting illustration of the way that the modern mind has worked. The empirical nature of *varna* has been emphasized, for it has been described as a development in ancient Indian social experience which was subsequently lost through the perversions of caste. Today its recovery is considered further evidence of the restoration of the lost social vitality which has been the social heritage of the Hindu.

Varna dharma is compounded of three distinct yet interrelated elements, each being given a slightly different interpretation and value according to the individual's point of view. First, there is the natural psychological element by which the innate capacity, aptitude, and temperament of the individual are distinguished. This is the inalterable, constituent nature of the person that forms the material and the powers with which life is made.[58] Each person has a natural pattern of existence, and by acting according to it his true development may be found ; while attempts to act out of harmony with the pattern are a waste of his energies.[59] The second element is that of the individual's practical occupation, or his function in society ; and this stems naturally out of the first, for economic activity must conform to individual nature and be an expression of what a person naturally is. Here a certain freedom of choice is to be permitted so far as hereditary occupations are concerned. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, held that the law

[55] See C. F. Andrews, *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas*, pp. 352-3 ; and *The Modern Review*, Oct. 1935, p. 413.
[56] *Harijan*, Nov. 30, 1935, p. 335.
[57] *Religion*, p. 132.
[58] See *The Modern Review*, Oct. 1935, p. 413. Gandhi is quoted as saying that every person is born with limitations which he cannot overcome.
[59] See Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, pp. 366, 378 ; and Hutton, *Caste*, p. 108.

of *varna* required everyone to follow "the hereditary calling of his forefathers, in so far as it is not inconsistent with fundamental ethics."[60] But it seems clear that one reason for this insistence was his desire to avoid such a general disruption of occupations for material gain as to result in social anarchy. Radhakrishnan would allow a free choice of occupation so long as it conforms with aptitude and temperament.[61]

The moral character of the free individual, which forms the third element in *varna dharma*, introduces the quality of activity and merit, or reward. This is concerned not with *what* a man does, so long as he follows the law of his individual nature, but with *how* he does it. Whether he is a good man or not is important, for it is on this basis, and in addition on that of the previous two elements, that social classification is determined and social mobility permitted. Thus, Dayanand Saraswati, who was one of the first to think in these terms in modern times, believed that "those low caste people who possess good character, habits and nature, should be considered as of higher castes ; and if persons of higher castes commit sin and the deeds of low people, they should be classed with the low."[62] The moral element continued to predominate up to recent times, although the explicit reference to caste was no longer apparent, for the rejection of its harmful characteristics was advocated. Thus Gandhi, whose social theory dealt a great deal with the idea of *varna*, when stating, "The ideal Bhangi of my conception would be a Brahmin *par excellence*, possibly even excel him,"[63] made moral values supreme in the context of *varna* rather than of caste. The clear purpose of all such thinking is the introduction of individual merit as the primary norm in determining class status.

Difficulty arises in the matter of social classification, because here the modern ideal of individual freedom and the ancient ideal of social cohesion according to four distinct classes must meet, not only theoretically but practically, if there is to be any meaning to

[60] *Harijan*, Nov. 16, 1935, p. 316.
[61] *Religion*, pp. 129 ff. ; and *Eastern Religions*, pp. 355 ff.
[62] *Satyarth Prakash*, chap. iv, p. 136.
[63] *Harijan*, Nov. 28, 1936. Also see *B. G. Tilak, His Writings and Speeches*, pp. 242-4, and Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, pp. 355 ff.

the conception of *varna dharma*.[64] Gandhi faced the problem, and tried to meet it. At first he visualized a Brahmin always being considered a Brahmin throughout his life. If he ceased behaving as a Brahmin should, he would "naturally cease to command the respect that is due a real Brahmin."[65] The difference between the nominal class status and the real character of the individual would be adjusted in the *karma-samsara* order, for, explained Gandhi, nature would adjust the balance by degrading the Brahmin in his next incarnation. By the same process also a person of a lower caste, who acted according to the character of a Brahmin, would receive a higher status in his next birth. Later, however, Gandhi conceived of classification in the course of a lifetime, for, he asserted that a person born of Brahmin parents would be called a Brahmin. But "if his life fails to reveal the attributes of a Brahmin when he comes of age, he cannot be called a Brahmin. He will have fallen from Brahminhood."[66] Similarly, a girl at marriage would retain the *varna* of her father, but should the husband be of different *varna* she would naturally adopt his *varna*. Nevertheless, intermarriages would be rare.

A fundamental difficulty reveals itself here, for if *varna* is an aspect of moral achievement and character, how can it be changed by marriage? One way of meeting the difficulty was by emphasizing the occupational and social aspects without direct reference at least to moral character and attributes. This, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy seems to have considered, when he said that "if one became a trader he must be called a vaisya." The same was done by Lala Lajpat Rai.[67] But the religious motivation of the *varna* theory, as distinct from the traditional religious sanctions

[64] See Mees, *Dharma and Society*, p. 188, where he states that varnas "are not classes which could be 'instituted'. They can but be realized in the social composition. . ."

[65] *Young India 1919-1922*, p. 481.

[66] *Harijan*, Sept. 28, 1934; and Oct. 12, 1934.

[67] Coomaraswamy rightly claimed Gandhi as a believer in the "theory" of caste, and himself offered a rationalized view, defending the principles of the system. See his *Religious Basis of Forms of Indian Life*, p. 19. The principles form "the moral basis of our criticism of the competitive societies" of the West. *Indian Culture and English Influence*, p. 39. Interestingly enough, it was by means of modern culture, which he criticized, that Coomaraswamy was able to discover this "moral basis." For Lajpat Rai, see *Arya Samaj*, pp. 46 ff.

of caste, was still apparent, as when the *Maharastriya Jnankosh* stated that *varna* should be determined, not by *sanskar*, but by work.[68] To press a purely occupational determination of social class status ignores the essentially religious purpose for which the modern theory was formulated.

A further problem arose in connection with the effort to bring together the ideal of democratic equality and the hierarchical principle explicit in traditional caste, and muted in the *varna dharma* theory. Here no attempt was made to contend that persons are born equal ; rather equality was conceived in religious and spiritual terms and could not be achieved in the present as a social or psychological ideal.[69] The hierarchical principle remained in the modern formulations, though it sometimes was said there was no question of high and low. The principle was present in a modified, but none the less real moral and religious form. This became explicit in the teaching of Swami Dayanand and those who followed him in the main lines of interpretation.[70] According to Swami Vivekananda, the Brahmin is "the man of God . . . the ideal man, the perfect man."[71] And Mahatma Gandhi described the Shudra as "a spiritually uncultured, ignorant man."[72] But while asserting that the hierarchical principle has been surrendered, and that the new groupings are equal, it would be difficult to conceive any practical social arrangement corresponding to these descriptions of "perfect" and "ignorant" which does not embody an inequality leading to religious pretensions and social disabilities.

4. Religious Aims and Social Necessity

The modern content of the "protean" idea of *dharma* represented a fundamental issue confronting Hindu religious thought as it was affected by socio-moral necessities. The process of reconception in terms of modern culture and society resulted from the effort

[68] An encyclopædia in Marathi, published in 1920, vol. I, pp. 435 ff.
[69] Lajpat Rai, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-8 ; Bhagavan Das, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (Editors: Radhakrishnan and Muirhead), p. 165 ; Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, p. 366 ff., and *Religion*, p. 130 ; Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*
[70] *Op. cit.*, chap. iv, p. 136.
[71] *Works*, III, pp. 293-4.
[72] *Young India, 1924-1926*, p. 935. See Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, p. 364.

to show the present significance of ancient thought. Whatever particular meaning might be poured into the term, formulations of *varna dharma*, with specific applications to social problems such as inter-caste marriage, and to ethical ideas of liberty and equality, must be considered an effort to comprehend religiously the meaning of contemporary events. The new ideology was the point of meeting of the forces of cultural and religious revival with those of recent social and moral origins. The whole purpose of establishing the validity of ancient thought in modern ethical terms, however, had to pass before the scrutiny of men and events. The *sanatan*, or eternal, conception of religion came under fire from those quarters where the most drastic reordering of society was expected. The radical evil of caste, wrote K. S. Shelvankar in 1935, was its "innermost principle" of *sanatan dharma*, or eternal law and verity.[73] Between this and democracy he saw no possible compromise. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar a short time later challenged Hindus to give up their worship of the past and to recognize that nothing was *sanatan*.[74] For everything, he maintained, was changing, and change was the law of life both for individual and society. The greatest difficulty confronts any endeavour to show the meaning of *varna dharma* in the light of what actually took place in the cross currents of modern movements. And it must be questioned whether the results were either relevant or adequate. The answer obviously lay partly in the religious field, but the demands of political, economic, and social life were also responsible because the pressures upon Hinduism originated in them. When the crisis created by the large-scale accessions of the depressed classes to non-Hindu religions is considered, from the Hindu point of view it was a problem of social and political dimensions. For the question was not primarily raised whether or not these people achieved salvation in the spiritual sense. They constituted a loss to Hinduism, and that was a major threat to its security.

Social and religious discrimination, the stigma attached to occupation, the caste spirit—these were some of the problems made prominent by the broad developments of national society. The

[73] See "The Crisis in Hinduism" in *The Spectator*, Jan. 18, 1935, pp. 79-80.
[74] *Annihilation of Caste*, p. 80.

traditional forces of social heredity, often called "custom," increasingly yielded to the superior claims of man's power and desire to change his environment.[75] In the actual operation of the individual and society upon the ancient structure, the value of the religious solution, both in idea and in practice, can best be seen. It is evident that the forces acting from the side of political, economic, and social concerns, without special reference to religion, were essentially secular in the sense that religious theory and activity were not necessary to, or at least not explicit in, them. In fact, traditional Hinduism appeared in the defensive rôle of maintaining the old system because it was the *sanatan* order of life. Modern versions of ethical Hinduism were forced into the position both of appearing to maintain the theoretical basis of caste, and of calling for the radical reform, or even abolition, of that social system.

With a certain section of the Hindu community the claims of caste solidarity remained superior to those of the growing cohesion of national society. This was illustrated at the first session of the All-Bengal Women's Congress in 1931. On that occasion a resolution was presented decrying the evils of communalism and untouchability. But the clause urging inter-caste, inter-race, and inter-religious marriages was defeated, although it found support with the younger and the urban sections of the Congress.[76] The increasing moral claims of national society were destined to overcome somewhat those of caste society, with the result that an interest in a homogeneous growth of social groups became evident, especially in the thirties and after. The religious element in the total situation working toward reform was one of great importance, particularly in the activities of Mahatma Gandhi who confined himself, at least in ideal and intention, to the religious aspects of social reform.

Other than religious motives became apparent during the nineteen thirties in the struggle of the depressed classes for recognition of their fundamental human claims upon society for equality of social, economic, and political opportunity, and freedom from their

[75] See Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi*, pp. 134-5.
[76] *Indian Annual Register*, January-June 1931, p. 135.

disabilities. It was Mahatma Gandhi's specific intention to produce those changes in the prevailing attitudes of caste Hindus which would bring about the relief demanded by the outcastes. He seems to have believed that his programme of anti-untouchability would achieve the same results as the activities of those who sought more directly for social and economic reform. Economic opportunities, he held, "must be automatically open to Harijans as to others" once they were freely admitted to the temples.[77] In harmony with his religious ideal, Gandhi believed that once the springs of individual conduct were cleansed by religious self-purification, the desired social consequences would arrive spontaneously. Economic distress was fundamentally a matter of the heart. So also the political implications of the programme of temple-opening and entry were not foremost in Gandhi's mind during this period of his greatest social struggle. His close associate, Mahadev Desai, repudiated as "an ignorant charge" the claim which had been made that the Harijan movement was politically motivated. "The religious, or if you like, the humanitarian, was the sole motive," said Desai, "for religion and humanitarianism are at root synonymous."[78] Gandhi himself at that time met the pressing demands of both economic and political necessity by denying, not only that the movement was political, but that it was also intended purely for the economic amelioration of the Harijan, and for their social regeneration. The reformers might aim at these objectives, he said, but the goal was the removal at any cost of the blot of untouchability from Hinduism.[79] He wanted no confusion in the popular mind as to his singular purpose. When he visited Travancore to herald the opening of the State temples it was because he considered the Maharaja's Proclamation of 1936 a purely religious act.

The response to these religious activities was at first enthusiastic. Some of the most famous temples in different parts of the country were suddenly opened to the Harijans. But much of the ardour died away within a short time.[80] The reactions of some of the

[77] *Harijan*, March 16, 1934.
[78] *Ibid.*, Sept. 12, 1936.
[79] *Ibid.*, June 20, 1936.
[80] See Zacharias, *Renascent India*, pp. 289-90.

Harijans themselves provided convincing evidence also that the "epic struggle" against untouchability did not produce the automatic economic results which had been expected from it. They reported that, while grateful for certain religious privileges which had been achieved for them, no equivalent social benefits had been realized, as they were compelled to endure the same disabilities as previously.[81] Gandhiji's reply to such protests was that it was "absolutely of no consequence" that the vast majority of the Harijans were not interested in his religious method of removing untouchability. Naturally, he admitted, they were more concerned to obtain political, economic, and social improvement.[82] By the end of 1935, however, confidence in certain sections had reached such a pitch that Mr. C. Rajagopalachari was prepared to announce that the revolution was over, untouchability had not yet disappeared, but all that remained was the removal of the debris.[83] What Gandhi had succeeded in doing was to crack open one place in the hard resistance of caste, the exclusiveness of the Hindu temple. This was no mean achievement from the standpoint of social attitudes, for human behaviour does take the form of the institutions provided in any society, "even to extremes of which the observer, deep-dyed in the culture of which he is a part, can have no intimation."[84]

Mahatma Gandhi's achievement was linked with a number of events which made it possible for him to succeed more than others had done before him. His tremendous prestige as a religious leader, and the integration of his thought and activity with the national struggle gave him support in important places. This was clearly shown by previous experience where very serious difficulties had been met in enforcing a law advancing the social liberation of the depressed classes. An order in Baroda State directing that these classes be admitted to ordinary schools had been habitually disregarded by caste Hindus. So much so that the Dewan, Sir V. T. Krishnamacharya, years after it had been issued, publicly expressed his deep disappointment that the policy of His Highness

[81] See the opinion of Shri Narayan Swami, in Ambedkar's *What Congress and Gandhi*, p. 331.
[82] *Harijan*, June 20, 1936, p. 149.
[83] *Ibid.*, Dec. 28, 1935.
[84] R. Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, p. 236.

the Maharaja Gaekwad had not led to any real change of attitude on the part of certain sections of the State's people.[85] The attitudes attending the temple-entry campaign were similar to those found in Baroda, but were partially overcome through the exertion of several other influences, chief among them being the growing impulse to national solidarity and the need for maintaining the security of Hinduism. The critical issue, whether Hinduism could be saved or not, was not resolved by the theory of *varna dharma*. The pressures were social, economic, and political, and not primarily religious or intellectual. Supported by the growing forces of national cohesion, Gandhiji was partly able to draw Hinduism away from a position maintained by its external claims of communalism and its internal claims of caste solidarity. As a religio-moral endeavour there was nothing equal to his achievement in modern Hindu life, for he carried with him those who shared his form of religious allegiance and those others who followed in his drive toward national sovereignty.

The important intervention of political power at this point of great obduracy has to be noted, for it was a new conception in modern times that one function of the State is to be responsible for the moral interests of the religious life of Hindus. The religious and voluntaristic nature of Gandhi's activity was subject to the practical qualification that its effectiveness lay finally with the use of political power. These two elements had a history of association which should be indicated. The effectiveness of legal action on behalf of the victims of caste oppression emerged as a possibility in the twentieth century. Previously Hindu sectarianism had emphasized the voluntary character of such reform, and appeals had been made to the humane feelings of the privileged castes. But the social basis was gradually broadened beyond the confines of the religious sects, as when the Social Conference in 1903 called the attention of everyone interested in the welfare of the nation to the duty they had of assisting in the improvement of the lowest classes.[86] Organizations passed resolutions and individuals made

[85] *Indian Social Reformer*, Oct. 30, 1937, p. 140. See also *The Untouchables of India*, L. Ouwerkerk, pp. 28-9; *Modern India and the West*, (Editor: O'Malley), p. 331: "India Again Eases Untouchable Ban," *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1948.

[86] See Gokhale, *Speeches*, pp. 1054 ff.

statements calculated to call Hindu and national attention to one of India's most serious social problems. The National Congress in 1917 urged upon the people "the necessity, justice and righteousness" of removing the disabilities imposed on these classes. The Hindu Mahasabha in 1929 joined the ranks of those who protested against untouchability ; and a meeting of caste Hindus, over which Pandit Malaviya presided in 1932, gave expression to their conviction in such manner that Gandhi's *Harijan* publicised it in bold letters for many issues.[87] These were signs of the times portending the end of a social system. But they did not satisfy everyone. Some sought for more direct access to means of democratic justice than were available in religious spheres.

With the passing of time it was recognized that humanitarian appeals were not adequate and that some statutory provision had to be made to assure the rights which were being increasingly claimed for the untouchable. When Dr. B. R. Ambedkar presented his Memorandum at the First Round Table Conference in London, he proposed that the future constitution of India should explicitly provide that "all subjects of the State in India are equal before the law, and possess equal civic rights."[88] He later argued that the problem of the untouchables was not merely social as such. Fundamentally, it was political, because liberty and equality of opportunity for a minority had to be obtained from a hostile majority which believed in the denial of those rights. There was, he said, "a propensity on the part of the Hindus to discriminate against untouchables." What was needed, therefore, was an all-India campaign on behalf of these classes to secure civic rights, and social intercourse with caste Hindus. But the responsibility for framing a Constitution for India appeared in the heat of the struggle for freedom, with the consequence that in 1945 the Congress Working Committee finally approved a list of rights which included those that were being asked specifically by the depressed classes.[89]

Continually the note of urgent national reform of Hindu society

[87] Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi*, pp. 14-15 ; Sitaramayya, *History of the Congress*, I, p. 52 ; *Indian Quarterly Register*, June 1929, p. 359. Successive issues of the *Harijan* in 1934 published the Malaviya meeting statement.

[88] *What Congress and Gandhi*, pp. 41, 190-5.

[89] See A. B. Rajput, *The Constituent Assembly*, p. 188.

was sounded with a clear indication that it was the promise of political power and economic development that held the hope of the future. But there were also increasing evidences of the growing homogeneity of Indian society with ideals that were incompatible with the practice of endogamous marriage and restricted social intercourse. This was a part at least of the steady unification of the nation, particularly in its Hindu sections, and it was made imperative by the nationalist drive. But it was also a part of a conviction that the gradual means suggested in purely religious reforms were not adequate for the necessities of social growth. Whatever might be the individual religious belief and allegiance of those who urged direct social measures, there was no provision for religion in attaining their goals. This form of secularist action sought to increase the tempo of social mobility by deliberately promoting free social intercourse through inter-dining, co-education, constructive programmes of social activities in which both sexes participate, and the planning of inter-caste marriages. One proponent of such measures, M. M. Sanbhag, in *The Social Welfare,* urged the Government and private bodies to take a direct interest in securing facilities for them.[90]

The integration of economic interests with caste organization became increasingly apparent, particularly in a day when the whole world was concerned with economic reorganization. Modern Indian economic theory with its dynamic conceptions of social adjustment advanced on premises which were directly opposed, not only to caste hierarchy, but to the whole conception of hereditary occupation and social immobility. Such theory also provided no place for the classification of social groups according to the theory of *varna dharma.* Those who looked for the desired changes to provide opportunity for economic improvement and welfare sought for support in the controlled development of a modern economic society.[91] They held that the solution of the problem of untouch-

[90] Feb. 27 and March 6, 1941. See Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India,* p. 186; Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi,* pp. 190-5, and *Annihilation of Caste,* p. 80

[91] Wadia and Merchant, *Our Economic Problem,* p. 35. K. Goshal said that the solution of caste lay in industrialization and a higher standard of living; and the solution of untouchability lay in a modern economy for India. *The People of India,* pp. 347 ff.

ability and caste distinctions lay in modernizing India's economy and in industrialization. Pandit Nehru was among those who relied on economic development for social progress, saying that under socialism there could be no such differentiation and victimization as existed under caste. The economic solution would remove the social barriers raised by custom and tradition.[92] He visualized an egalitarian society in which the brahmanisation of all classes would result from co-operation and service to the community.[93] Further, as for the organization of society upon the basis of religious merit, Nehru simply raised the question of its relevance for modern times.[94]

Among the causes of the origin and development of caste, which students of the problem discerned, was the moral stigma or sense of social deficiency which attached to certain occupations.[95] The advocates of *varna* met this with suggestions of social and economic improvement, and not of religious reform. It might be removed, they suggested, by making the stigmatized occupations more economically profitable: pay the Bhangi a good salary, for instance, and his work will receive a new public respect, and he will be content to remain in his occupation. Efforts to enhance public opinion concerning the Bhangi's work were likewise consistent with this new economic evaluation of his task. "It is the Bhangi who enables society to live," said Gandhi. "The Brahmin's duty is to look after the sanitation of the soul, the Bhangi's that of the body of society."[96]

The triangular discussion which proceeded between Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Sant Ram and Mahatma Gandhi in 1935 and 1936 showed the different influences to which Hinduism was being subjected. While all were working toward the moral reform of society, there were different objectives and means for attaining it. The discussion followed Ambedkar's declaration of freedom from caste religion, and arose in connection with an address which was pre-

[92] *Toward Freedom*, p. 399; and *Discovery*, p. 254.
[93] *Jawaharlal Nehru: An Autobiography*, p. 432.
[94] *Discovery*, p. 532.
[95] See Senart, *Caste in India* or *Les Castes dans l'Inde*, p. 251-2, who calls it *un melange*. Hutton lists fifteen factors, *Caste*, pp. 164-5. Also Masani, *op. cit.*, p. 143.
[96] *Harijan*, Nov. 28, 1936.

pared by him for a meeting of the Jat-Pat-Torak Mandal of Lahore. This was a reform group within the Arya Samaj that had become discontented with the failure of the Samaj to dispose of caste by its own religious means. Still the Mandal was not prepared to go the length of Ambedkar's decision to leave Hinduism, and refused to allow his address to be delivered. At the same time Shri Sant Ram explained that the Mandal's choice had fallen on Ambedkar "simply because his diagnosis of the fatal disease of the Hindu community was the same as ours, i.e. he too was of the opinion that the caste system was the root cause of the disruption and downfall of the Hindus."[97] The Mandal's disapproval of Ambedkar's previously prepared address was on the ground that his statement that it was his last speech as a Hindu, "was irrelevant and pernicious to the interests of the Conference." While thus explaining his position on the unacceptable sentence, Sant Ram turned to tell Gandhiji that his philosophical difference between caste and *varna* was "too subtle to be grasped by people in general, because for all practical purposes in Hindu society caste and *varna* are one and the same thing." The theory was impracticable, he argued, and there was no hope of reviving it in the near future. Further, "to seek the help of the shastras for the removal of untouchability and caste is simply to wash mud with mud."[98]

Gandhiji by this time had changed somewhat his opinion about caste from that expressed some years earlier when he had stated that the caste system was not based on inequality.[99] In 1936, however, he could consider that caste had nothing to do with religion, for it was, he said when reflecting on Ambedkar's decision to leave Hinduism, "a custom whose origin I do not know and do not need to know for the satisfaction of my spiritual hunger."[100] *Varna* and *ashrama* were institutions which had nothing to do with caste, as *varna* referred to callings, and the callings of a Brahmin and a scavenger were equal. As for Dr. Ambedkar's announcement, the effect on caste Hindus was said by Mr. K. Natarajan to have been as a "damp squib" to a

[97] *Ibid.*, Aug. 15, 1936
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] *Young India, 1919-1922*, p. 480.
[100] *Harijan*, July 18, 1936.

bombshell.[101] Gandhi gave it sympathy, but he did not despair of the change of heart which he expected to occur among caste people.

In the undelivered address that was prepared for the meeting of the Jat-Pat-Torak Mandal, Ambedkar had insisted upon the religious nature of caste. He wrote: "To ask people to give up caste is to ask them to go contrary to their fundamental religious notions."[102] In the last analysis "you must destroy the authority of the shastras and the Vedas." To Gandhi's explanation that the shastras were to be interpreted according to the "accumulated experience of the sages and saints," Ambedkar replied that the saints were not concerned with the struggle between man and man. "They were concerned with the relations between man and God. They did not preach that all men were equal." Further, Ambedkar saw no promise in the religious theory of *varnashrama* since there would be an inherent tendency to degenerate into caste again unless there was some legal enforcement of such an order.[103] The whole theoretical system, he predicted, would break down since it was contrary to human nature. Caste was a notion, and to destroy it required "a notional change".[104] In the place of customary Hindu beliefs, therefore, he suggested a new doctrinal basis for religion in India, one that was in consonance with democracy, and for which principles in harmony with liberty, equality, and fraternity might possibly be drawn from the Upanishads.

Examination of the various expressions of thought and of the nature of Hindu social events has shown the place and function of modern Hinduism in the advance toward the moral goals of a democratic society to take the place of caste. In their practical activities the reformers were partially able to dislodge Hindu sentiment and attitude from dependence upon the religious and social institutions which compose caste. As the separate domains

[101] *Indian Social Reformer*, Oct. 26, 1935.
[102] *Annihilation of Caste*, pp. 37 ff.
[103] *Ibid.*, pp. 41 ff. Also Appendix II, p. 12 & 18.
[104] *Ibid.*, p. 39. Ground for this distrust of traditional ideas is afforded by what some students of caste have found to be the source of its strength, namely the doctrines of *karma* and transmigration. See Ketkar, *The History of Caste in India*, p. 113; Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, I, p. 32; Hutton, *Caste*, p. 106; Panikkar, *Caste and Democracy*, p. 39.

of politics and economics were strengthened, and as the crisis within Hinduism developed more seriously, the necessity of concentrating on religious measures for social morality became increasingly apparent. The fact that religion was deeply involved in caste became evident in the very necessity which the reformers sensed, that of saving religion from the institutions which were rooted in rigid social practice as well as in its own cultus.

Purely religious institutional reform did not attain the socio-moral goals of a modern society even though these were adumbrated in the theory of *varna dharma*. Whatever the value of the theory in terms of *moksa* may have been, it served to support the religio-moral basis during one stage at least in the social transition from caste to democracy. But *varna dharma* found no place in the concrete political, economic and social organization of the new order, and the trend of major national events was in a direction away from the internal reform of Hindu society which the theory indicated. As an adjustment to the changed conditions of Hindu life, the *varna* doctrine provided a means of surrendering loyalty to caste behaviour. This brought the assistance of modern religion to the support of the moral ideals identified with reconstruction. The theory itself represented the intellectual side of a religious endeavour to reform Hindu society internally without losing its identity. The loss of social identity was a very real danger in the greater necessities of national and social development. But we may conclude that no simple formula exists for eliciting the meaning of the various interests and forces which were remaking Hindu society. There was a regrouping and balancing of interests in which Hinduism figured along with the other forces that dominated the life of the nation. The movement toward a democratic society presented religious Hinduism with the problem of making adjustments both to the ethical ideals of freedom, equality, and human dignity, and to the social norms of the modern age. It had to make them or perish. Thus Hinduism became conditioned by the modern morality, which had revolutionary import for its internal structure and for its view of the meaning of human life. The manner in which the conception of democracy was also to be conditioned

by traditional religious ideas was shown in the formulations of *varna dharma*. The initiative for reconstruction came, however, from the modern social consciousness that was being produced among the fecund conditions of a new world of thought and action.

CHAPTER VII

THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

CHAPTER SEVEN

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1. Equality of Women with Men

The obvious social and religious inequalities of Hindu women in relation to men have presented one of the major problems with which the modern Hindu social conscience has struggled. What began as a moral perception of the existence of specific practices detrimental to women, has since the opening of the nineteenth century grown into a general movement amounting to a revolt against the whole status of women in traditional Hinduism. The resultant ideal of equality of sexes has developed clearer implications with the increasing adaptation of Hindu society to new ideals of marriage and domestic life, and to different standards of the social, political, and economic value of womanhood. So decisive has this development been that its proper description must be the emancipation of Hindu women and girls. Consequently, Hinduism has undergone an adjustment to the new moral forces by a twofold process. First, traditional practices with firmly established religious support have had to yield before an increasing trend of opinion compelling the recognition of a new status for women and girls in society. There has also been a sustained search for the values inherent in the status and activity of women in ancient life in India which offer a source of social vitality today and provide continuity with a basically Hindu form of life. This has resulted in a kind of religious renewal, which is in addition to the moral renewal of the reform measures to which religious Hinduism has been adjusting itself.

Initial reform efforts sought to improve the status of women and girls by attacks on the most obvious forms of inequality in the relationships of the sexes. Morally sensitive Hindu men, who by their education and breadth of social views were freshly impressed with the injustice of their society toward women, began to discern the perils in which it was becoming involved by their persistence in traditional ways. But deeply entrenched habits, bearing the

semblance, at least, of ultimate religious sanctity, firmly resisted all efforts to change them. When Raja Rammohan Roy directed his attention to the abolition of *sati* and towards the securing of more equitable laws of inheritance for Hindu women, so strong was the opposition that his life was imperilled in the attempt.[1] In 1818 when Roy began publication of his pamphlets he was animated in large measure by a keen awareness of the suffering of women which he had witnessed. He and his successors in reform were urged on by the desire to relieve the women and girls of the torments imposed on them by their society.[2] While "custom" required women to be economically dependent on their male relatives, a study of ancient law and practice convinced Roy that it was not so in the earliest known times. He set the pattern for the main current of social reform thought, and the activity which followed, when, for example, he concluded, "All the ancient law-givers unanimously award to a mother an equal share with her son in the property left by her deceased husband, in order that she may spend her remaining days independently of her children."[3]

While the efforts of nineteenth century Hindu sectarianism were largely confined to what some men thought they could do to alleviate the oppressive conditions of the female section of society, both the reactionary traditionalists and the reformers resisted, even resented, the efforts of non-Hindus to assist directly the movement toward equality.[4] The Parsee social reformer, B. N. Malabari,[5] attempted to help by approaches both to the Government and to Hindu opinion, with some effect. But the problems were considered to be so intimate to the Hindu community that the reformers insisted they had to deal with them in their own way and time. M. G. Ranade, when thanking Malabari for his efforts, at the same time made it clear that Hindus did not think that either Parsee or European philanthropists could make any impression on their society.[6] P. C. Mozoomdar likewise affirmed that

[1] *English Works*, p. 224.
[2] See Ranade, *Reform*, pp. xxii, 127. J. Kellock, *Mahadev Govind Ranade*, pp. 89-90.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 376.
[4] See *Our Cause, by* S. K Nehru and others, p. 280.
[5] See his *Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood.*
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Hindus had to help themselves.[7] Meanwhile, the chief benefits of Western struggles and achievements on behalf of women in those lands were realized in India by suggesting standards and ideals which at first Hindu men, and later women, came to acknowledge and to work out in their changing social context.[8]

The growing force and form of moral opinion was manifested in various sections of society as well as in the sectarian groups. Both caste people, and outcastes as well, became aware of the changing conditions which challenged the accepted practices of their social life. For example, a conference of Namasudras of Bengal in 1910 discussed the evils of early marriage and enforced widowhood. The leading members of the community were reported to have given a written promise that girls under thirteen years of age would not be married, and those from five to thirteen would be sent to school.[9] Such decisions in themselves, while failing to reach a standard of achievement ensuring thorough reform, were evidence of the growing body of moral opinion, mainly of men on behalf of women.

The national political movement was of more than ordinary importance in this connection, for it was by political struggle that the latent forces of the women's strength of purpose came into sudden expression. The powerful recalcitrance to reform which had dominated Hindu society for a century and more was subjected to a new line of attack when in 1930 Indian women actively joined the political non-co-operation movement. The drive was indirectly made, for the women's objective was not the immediate reform of their society but to help in gaining power to govern India, the women participating equally with the men. Thus nationalism put Hindu women in a new position to claim attention for their cause which up to that time had been pressed mainly on their behalf by men. But they were not content to become mere political resisters ; women were now placed in a position of national vantage for pressing their claims, which they proceeded to do with considerable vigour and courage. Shrimati Sarojini Naidu in 1943 called for women's equality as the only adequate way by which

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 42-5, etc.
[8] *Indian Quarterly Register*, July-Dec. 1929, pp. 129 ff.
[9] *Indian Social Reformer*, April 24, 1910, p. 397.

they could take their part in national life. Their insecurity, and dependence on men, she declared, was "not only intrinsically a violation of all principles of equity and justice, but also an intolerable affront, perpetuated for many centuries, to all self-respecting womanhood."[10] Recognition of this new status was also reflected, as will be shown later, in the achievement of women's political enfranchisement. Social, religious, and economic reform forces moved less rapidly and remained largely dependent upon national and political changes for their impetus.

This is no more clearly evident than in the revolution of social opinion, still called for, on the question of the religious sanctity of marriage, the possibility of divorce for women, and the equalizing of their economic rights with those of men. Repeatedly reform thought referred to the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 and the situation which it was intended to relieve. The editor of *The Indian Social Reformer* in 1937 noted that years following the passage of the Act permitting Hindu widows to remarry and to be remarried, many persons who had married widows had as their sole aim in life afterwards the recovery of the previous caste or sub-caste status which they had lost because of "their departure from established custom."[11] The religious sacredness of marriage was advanced as sufficient reason for forbidding any change in the status of the Hindu widow. But, as Mr. H. B. Sarda, in his presidential address to the Indian National Social Conference in 1929, pertinently asked, "If marriage is a sacrament, and can be performed only once in life, why is a widower allowed to perform it a second, a third, or a fourth time, when a widow is not so allowed?"[12] As recently as 1939 the position was described by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyayya as substantially the same, "Remarriage is still looked upon with disfavour in spite of the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856."[13] Religio-social interests thus moved slowly in accepting the status of equality achieved in political struggle, and in accordance with Hindu law the economic position has remained substantially the same.

[10] *The Aryan Path*, Dec. 1943, p. 570.
[11] Sept. 18, 1937, p. 36.
[12] *Indian Social Reformer*, Dec. 28, 1929, p. 273.
[13] *The Awakening of Indian Women*, p. 19.

One factor of immense importance needs to be considered. Nowhere in the social rejuvenation of Hinduism is the influence of modern education more apparent than in the woman's dependence upon her own intellectual and moral enlightenment for achieving social progress. This fact is to be noted throughout the modern woman's movement.[14] The formation of the All-India Women's Conference indicated the urgent necessity of adequate educational facilities for the achievement of their social welfare. An appeal issued to Indian women by Mrs. Margaret Cousins in 1926 urged the organization of local committees and provincial conferences in order to declare their views on the state of women's education. The resolutions of the first two annual meetings were confined to educational affairs, with the exception of one which condemned child marriage on the ground that it interfered with girls' education. The concern of subsequent annual meetings widened to social reform also, since it was realised that the social and legal disabilities of women were very closely related to education. Within a few years national and political matters were taken up for discussion as well, although the constitution of the Conference prevented any participation in partisan politics.[15] Thus the course of women's organized interests followed the main objects of concern in the historical development of the nation.

The attitude of men toward the changing moral status of women embraced the tendency to idealize the qualities which men had admired in women. Sentimental eulogies of the illustrious achievements and noble characters of certain women of the past may be understood partly as an attempt to reply to Western criticism of the social conditions of Hindu women and girls.[16] But this tendency, according to Shyam Kumari Nehru, was simply the persistence of the traditional male attitude whereby it was necessary to make life tolerable for women. Consequently, a large body of traditions grew up round women's noble sacrifices ; and, as if to rationalize centuries of female degradation, the mother was idolized, *satis* were lauded ; men condescendingly allowed their

[14] See, for instance, *Our Cause*, pp. 93 ff. Caton, *The Key of Progress*, pp. 1 ff.
[15] See the report of Lady Pares in *The Asiatic Review*, July 1947, pp. 205 ff. *Indian Statutory Commission* (1930), vol. I, p. 50.
[16] See, for instance, Bhattacharyya, *Ideals of Indian Womanhood*.

wives to look after their domestic comforts ; and, in general exhibited chivalry towards the so-called weaker sex."[17] Men still found it possible to idealize the *Sati* for her noble sacrifice,[18] but the modern woman described the act as "the ghastly spectacle" of the pyres to which youthful Hindu widows "were forcibly consigned by their own kith and kin."[19] Men came to recognize something of the artificiality of their sentiments, and to give women more sober respect in harmony with the new ideal of equality. Thus Radhakrishnan said, "In regard to the question of the relations of men and women it is wise to be less solemn and more sincere."[20] That women abetted their subordinate position, they also admitted. As one woman stated, they regard "their men as little tin gods and pander to their little selfishness with too willing a sympathy and too simple a love."[21] Men meanwhile saw the weakness of Hindu society, and their own enslavement in the fact that women were slaves.[22] Laws and customs needed to be changed, giving women, among other things, the "full freedom" to love and marry as they wish.

The urge to equality became the primary reference in the cultural revival which was marshalled against the forces of social reaction. Women referred to primitive life in India as an instance of the vitality of their social origins, and as a means of assurance in their struggle for justice. The presidential address of Dr. Mrs. Muthulakshmi Reddi at the All-India Women's Conference in 1931 reflected the need of reference to ancient life, after acknowledging the work of missionary organizations in providing modern female education.[23] "Has our past anything to give us?" she asked. The answer was to be found in Hindu and Muslim religious books which required the education of women as well as men. She mentioned particularly the "absolute equality" which ancient Dravidian women enjoyed with their men, as an example for the modern Hindu woman who could usefully serve her country by participat-

[17] *Our Cause*, p. xi.
[18] See Coomarswamy, *Dance of Siva*, p. 91.
[19] Chandrawati Lakhanpal in *Our Cause*, p. 269.
[20] *Religion*, p. 139.
[21] Padmini Satthianadhan in *The Indian Review*, March 1932, p. 167.
[22] A contributor to the *Indian Social Reformer*, Dec. 7, 1946, pp. 109-10.
[23] *Indian Annual Register*, Jan.-June 1931, pp. 367 ff.

ing in the national movement, thus acknowledging the primary influence of the ideal of a national society in achieving a new moral status for women. The challenge of this greater social ideal made more pronounced the paucity of results in the efforts toward a distinctively religious type of reform. The vision of the Hindu woman was increasingly toward the future rather than the past, and was animated by those political, social, and economic forces which, in the words of Uma Nehru, assure to womanhood that it will not be "the better-half of man but the better-half of society and will have with man the equal right and opportunity of moulding the social destiny."[24] This transformation was inevitable, she believed, because it was according to "the trend and the spirit of the times." The interpretation of women's social destiny was more recently cast in terms of economic influences as determining social status. After living in "perfect freedom and equality" during the early Vedic period, the Hindu woman, according to Shyam Kumari Nehru, lost her independent position with the development of the idea of private property.[25] So in modern times the destiny of Hindu women was to be discerned in the outcome of a class struggle which, as Kamaladevi Chattopadhyayya saw, would wipe out all class distinctions, "and man and woman will have obtained not only their sex rights but their human rights as well, and live as noble, dignified human individuals, and build the new race of equality."[26]

The increasing emergence of this note of egalitarianism enforces the fact that, while the ideal remained fairly constant, the means to this attainment came to be sought from different sources.

2. Women's Moral Personality

From the matrix of this revolution emerged a conception and achievement of a new moral personality whose essence was freedom and personal responsibility. The value of the modern woman was dictated not so greatly by consideration of custom or traditional practice, but by the possibilities open to her, and sought by her, in

[24] *Our Cause*, p. 415.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. x.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 101; *Awakening of Indian Women*, pp. 3, 35, 46.

the reconstruction of society. By adopting the concept and means of social change, women were able to visualize no insurmountable impediment in the way to the achievement of their ideals.[27] From their status as individuals with "perfect freedom and equality in early Vedic society,"[28] women were degraded until they grew "apathetic, lost their old initiative, sense of dignity and self-respect. They were content to be the domestic drudges and appendages of men."[29] Most women "remained without any opportunities for self-government. They were treated like chattel to be bought and sold and inherited by the head of the family. They completely lost their individuality."[30] This recent self-expression of Hindu women took on a note of moral urgency and demand which was quite distinct from the submission so characteristic of preceding generations. They attacked the forces of public opinion and common practice with a vigour which could only be summoned by a free and responsible personality. Not only were they becoming equipped with a new understanding of themselves and their society, and furnished with facts about prevailing conditions, but women were also appealing to sources of moral support which strengthened their cause beyond question. In this spirit Chandrawati Lakhanpal called for positive action relieving the unjust condition of Hindu widows.[31] Some may argue, she stated, that the question is not as important as she believed it to be, but "ask 25,496,660 widows of India whether the question is important or not, for shall the voice of two crores and half of God's children count for nothing and shall their destiny be ever moulded by those who know no duty but usurp all rights?"

With freedom of expression and action, and a growing sense of responsibility for themselves, Hindu women showed the usual religious position to be ambiguous in relation to constructive changes. This was apparent, for instance, in the effort to relieve Hinduism of the institution of *devadasi*, whose position was described by Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi as being unable to marry,

[27] See Uma Nehru in *Our Cause*, p. 403
[28] Shyam K. Nehru, *ibid.*, p. x.
[29] Kamaladevi Chattopadhyayya, *Roshni*, Dec. 1948, p. 61.
[30] Shyam K. Nehru, *Our Cause*, p. xi.
[31] *Ibid.* p. 285.

although she could "lead a free and promiscuous life for which she will not be punished, either in this world or in the next world, as she has come into this world only to work out her past evil 'karma' through a life of prostitution."[32] Yet the women themselves said, with the Devadasi Association in Madras, that the practice of worship, music, and dancing in temples was "the recognized service to God by the Auspicious Women," so the intention to stop it was "anti-Hindu in spirit."[33] The devadasis in the Andhra and Tamil Nad, however, considered the practice of dedicating young girls to temples and performing "Gazzela Puza" as "fraught with the greatest danger to the women of this community in particular and to the society in general."[34] This appeal to the value of every person, including the girl or woman who might be taken for a purpose involving an immoral life, was possible by a new ethical and social conception which compelled a radical readjustment of religion to society and a consequent reform of popular religious ideas and practices. That there was economic support for the religious practice was also pointed out by the Andhra and Tamil devadasis who stated, "It is our earnest desire that the innocent creatures should be saved from the clutches of people who want to make a living out of the immoral life of the girls." The modern moral view was thus shown to be an integral part of woman's social development, and a new ethic was a necessity in the rational consideration of the welfare of all members of society.

The emancipation of women first visualized by Hindu reformers was only partial, in that it was considered sufficient to alter the institutions which degraded women within the whole social structure. This purpose was adequate to bring about minor adjustments in the position of a few women and girls, at least to the extent that they were able to claim social responsibility and freedom for themselves. It was observation and knowledge of conditions in the West that brought to women the hope of responsible activity in society at large. In 1911 Her Highness the Maharani of Baroda

[32] Qt. in Caton, *Key*, p. 180.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 181.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

wrote of her impressions gained in England. "Public matters in India are almost entirely in the hands of men and the reason is not far to see, because the useful organizations for human welfare, in which women co-operate with men in the West, hardly exist in India."[35] She proceeded to urge that the way in India be opened for women to participate in various occupations and responsibilities in public institutions. At this stage in reform there also arose the question of political enfranchisement, a burning concern in some Western nations as well. Indian women followed the example of their sisters in other lands, who had struggled long for a new social status and the right of political franchise, and whose actual achievements were acknowledged as making the way much simpler for the women of India.[36] At first the British Government recognized only slowly the political rights of women. So much so that the Statutory Commission of 1930 noted that, with the exception of the mention of the obstacles of social custom in the way of female education, there was hardly any reference to the women of India in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report.[37] The Commission also noted that the text of the Government of India Act was as silent on the political rights of women in India as the Report. But the women themselves began to press for civic rights, asking for suffrage, and later for equality of voting strength with men.

The emergence of moral personality under such conditions was noticeable in the contrast between the traditional and the modern conceptions of the primary functions of women in society. Enlightened Hindu women came to claim for themselves a position of greater responsibility than that of circumscribed domestic duty to which they had long been confined, and which was confirmed by the institution of purdah. It was not possible to keep woman in this position, and the force of nationalism at its climax broke the

[35] *The Position of Women in Indian Life*, p. vii.

[36] See the presidential address of Mrs. Sarala Devi Chowdhurani at the first session of the All-Bengal Women's Congress in 1931. *Indian Quarterly Register*, January-June 1931, p. 374. Mrs. Grace Lankester, a guest from Great Britain at the 19th annual session of the All-India Women's Conference, 1947, expressed her astonishment at what she witnessed. There was no longer prejudice against a woman holding an important post, because merit, not sex, was the new criterion. *The Asiatic Review*, July 1947, pp. 202 ff. Also Cumming, *Political India*, p. 159.

[37] *Statutory Commission* (1930), p. 49.

bonds of convention for a large number. In Gandhiji's opinion, the effect was automatically accomplished in an incredibly short time.[38] "Long oppressed," stated Kamaladevi, "the word freedom worked like magic on them. Almost overnight they emerged out of their rock-like reserve into the glare of the battle-field, the turmoil, into the strange new world of publicity."[39] Thus the latent forces of idealism nurtured for a century were given opportunity for liberation, and the women took upon themselves a responsibility for helping to free their nation from foreign political control. The climax of the period of reform came when its ideals were identified with those of national life, and the social destiny of Hindu women became the same as that of the nation as a whole. This, according to Kamaladevi, constituted an inner revolution which irresistibly thrust forward the women's claims, and gave to them a "new dignity and a consciousness of their larger responsibilities."[40] The submerged personality of the Indian woman now found a responsible expression, and the steadily advancing ideal of service attained fresh significance. "For, it is not what the women actually did in the freedom struggle which matters so much as what the movement did to her. It changed the face of Indian society. What social reformers had been struggling to achieve for half a century, this did almost overnight."[41]

While the social and economic problems of Hindu women and girls were not solved by the national awakening, they emerged to a new importance, and the moral weight of national liberation was put on the side of their just claims. Now the welfare of the nation required that the status of women be altered to correspond to their own consciousness of dignity and worth. By taking this new position women were able to advance their cause on a different front and with greater force than had been possible before. "The women of the other nations are taking an ever-increasing part in nation-building," wrote Sundarabai Suktankar, "and unless the women of India take part in public affairs, free from the restraints

[38] *Constructive Programme*, p. 14. Subhas C. Bose called it a miracle of Gandhi's. *Indian Struggle*, p. 44.
[39] *Awakening*, p. 13.
[40] Kamaladevi in *Roshni*, Dec. 1948, p. 62.
[41] *Ibid.*

of purdah, it will be difficult to restore society to her own in the shape of a healthy state of affairs which will have inherent germs of progress and development."[42]

Non-violence and the personality of Mahatma Gandhi gave a valuable opportunity and impetus to the women's movement.[43] *Ahimsa,* in Gandhi's interpretation of the ideal, offered a means for expression of the essential nature of womanhood which other methods of social action could not provide. He visualized the possibility of a woman going farther with *ahimsa* than he himself could ever hope to do.[44] Woman was better fitted for it than man, having a courage of self-sacrifice superior to man, as man was superior in brute courage. In consonance with his view that *ahimsa* is natural both to men and women, Gandhi believed that women could obtain their rights by consultation and co-operation. However, the uplift of women had to become a constructive part of the programme of the National Congress, for in spite of what the women had done in political resistance and non-co-operation, Congressmen still did not allow them to become equal partners in the fight for *swaraj.* He found it necessary to plead with men, whom he held responsible for the suppression of women by custom and law, saying that it was "up to Congressmen to see that they enabled the women to realize their full status and play their part as equals of men." This was possible once *ahimsa,* the basic condition of an ideal society, was secured.

The conception of rights became an important characteristic in the development of the new moral personality of woman, as it emphasized the self-assertive rather than self-sacrificing aspects of individual activity. This, too, was a result of the national struggle, as, in the words of one woman, "it has accentuated the process of breaking down moth-eaten barriers of obsolete tradition, which is rapidly making woman more self-reliant and assertive all over the country."[45] Another stated that now it was impossible for society to neglect "the life and growth of woman," one reason

[42] *Our Cause,* p. 216.
[43] See Kamaladevi's conversation with Gandhiji, *Roshni,* Dec. 1948, p. 62.
[44] *Constructive Programme,* p. 14. *Non-Violence in Peace and War,* p. 180.
[45] G. J. Bahadurji in *Our Cause,* p. 328.

being that she "is adopting man's method of propaganda and self-assertion."[46] Women were not convinced that their political activity would automatically assure them their rights. The Congress had assigned them to be law-breakers only, declared the President of the All-Bengal Women's Congress in 1931, and not law-makers in the work of creating a new constitution for the country.[47] Certain fundamental rights of women, she believed, should therefore be included in the next constitution, including adult suffrage, equal partnership in the husband's income, equal rights of inheritance and to public employment.

The moral claims of woman found expression in every aspect of her life, including her sex-rights. Her struggle "is against her sexual dependence," stated Kamaladevi.[48] Until woman could control her own body and escape nature's sentence, her social and economic freedom would be innocuous. Birth-control offered both a moral and a material means to this end, for it was a challenge to "the immorality of the 'Property Rights' of man over woman's body." In this less evident note of woman's self-assertion it was again the welfare of the nation to which appeal was made, for "national benefit" required the dissemination of the knowledge and the means of birth-control, "both for economic and eugenic reasons."

Gandhiji, for his part, tried to offset the increasing insistence upon rights by his counter emphasis upon the necessity of duties. He believed that the achievement of human rights was implicit in a non-violent society, and consequently no declaration of them was necessary.[49] Every right proceeded from the previous perfomance of some duty. Rules of social conduct, therefore, would have to be framed mutually by men and women. Men must not impose them upon women, and women, from their standpoint, needed only to fulfil their duties in order to realize a dignified status.[50] In a society embodying *ahimsa* the right would automatically follow from the fulfilment of social obligation ; and duties would arise

[46] Uma Nehru, *ibid.*, p. 415.
[47] *Indian Quarterly Register*, January-June 1931, p. 374.
[48] Kamaladevi in *Awakening*, pp. 33 ff.
[49] *Constructive Programme*, p. 14.
[50] *Harijan*, Oct. 12, 1934, p. 277.

from the class nature of a person, for *varna* meant to Gandhi, not rights, but "duties and obligations only."[51]

The nationalist stage in the development of woman's personality thus brought to light two antithetic elements which needed to be reconciled: the suffering and the assertive. These were inherent in the ethic of woman's rights and of non-violent non-co-operation. Could they be completely reconciled in the constructive work of society? Both were active in the minds of those who participated in the decisive decades of modern Indian history. When independence was finally achieved they were suggested as a standard for future national activity. As Shrimati Sarojini Naidu said to the nation on August 15, 1947, "Let us work for justice, for equity; for human rights but no privileges; for human duties but no prerogatives."[52]

3. Legal Reform

Legal reform has been a particular necessity of any effort to change the status of women and girls, since custom and law in Hindu society have been so closely related as to become identified. No aspect of the law has been criticised more than its sanction of conditions which have come to be recognized as inequitable in the relative positions of men and women.[53] The religio-social character of Hindu law has complicated reform efforts both from the point of view of the reformers and of the Government. Not only has custom decreed the nature and purpose of social institutions, but religious sanctions have been applied to oppose any intention of changing them. J. D. Mayne in his classic treatise on *Hindu Law and Usage*, written in the seventies of the last century, noted that Hindu law was arrested in its development.[54] Mayne believed that the law was based on customs existing before the advent of Brahminism, and the Brahmin writers first stated the facts as they found them.[55] Later, the religious element grew up, he explained, entwining itself with the legal conceptions and

[51] *Ibid.*
[52] *Indian Information*, Sept. 1, 1947, p. 108.
[53] P. Appasamy called the greatest injustice of the social system what it did to women. *Legal Aspects of Social Reform*, p. 236.
[54] See Radhakrishnan's comment, *Religion*, p. 113.
[55] *Op. cit.*, pp. 4 ff.

distorting them. The close relationship, even identity, of social and religious law in traditional practice has been evinced in the resistance which has met any attempt of reformers to alter it. There has been a progressive diminution, however, of the religious influence in reform, partly due to the steady growth of a rational examination of the sources and applications of law. This has left it in the form of social ideas and practices that may be changed without harming, what Dr. Radhakrishnan called, "the just principles of Hindu jurisprudence."[56]

Nineteenth century sectarianism, when seeking to change the legal position, appealed away from the religious character of traditional practices and attempted to lay new moral foundations for social institutions. Rammohan Roy was compelled to face the customary arguments in support of the burning of widows as a religious rite.[57] His method was to show by a comparison of the ancient texts that this pernicious custom had no essential religious foundation. The advocates of the validity of the practice were consequently driven to the necessity of taking refuge in "usage" to justify it. The reformers maintained the sacredness of institutions, such as marriage, while attacking the irreligious character of some laws and customs which had come to be closely associated with them. In seeking for just and humane conditions of life for women and girls, therefore, they made appeals for a personalized religion that would support the ethic of responsibility and freedom. They were animated by the conviction that the "Hindu woman has a human personality" all her own.[58] This led to institutions which would embody the recognized values.

The attempt to relieve the condition of Hindu widows led the Arya Samaj to introduce the primitive practice of *niyoga* which provided a temporary arrangement with widowers for the production of children.[59] But this revival of an old practice proved unsatisfactory, and the subsequent tendency was to substitute remarriage for it. The method of revival was largely confined to the orthodox section of the Hindu community, however, and did

[56] *Religion*, p. 113.
[57] *Works*, pp. 367-72.
[58] Thus, Dr. G. V. Deshmukh, author of The Hindu Women's Right of Divorce Bill. See *Indian Social Reformer*, Aug. 27, 1938, p. 823.
[59] See L. L. Rai, *Arya Samaj*, p 147.

not satisfy men like M. G. Ranade who first turned their attention to ideals for women as found in modern society. He stated: "Our usages have been changed from time to time by a slow process of growth, and in some cases of decay and corruption, and you cannot stop at any particular period without breaking the continuity of the whole."[60] The reformation which they should seek to achieve, he believed, was not of outward custom, but of inward forms and ideas. Ranade was speaking from an experience of long and hard resistance to the new ideals for Hindu womanhood which he so ably advanced and for which he sought legislation.

The process of legal reform in the nineteenth century was beset with two major difficulties. The sectarian leaders were met by religious opposition of a particularly firm kind, largely because it was supported by a social apathy in which both men and women participated.[61] Also the Government by maintaining its policy of religious neutrality did not place itself as clearly on the side of social development as the reformers wished. There was an ambivalence to social legislation which arose out of the religious character of the situation in which progressive moral thought was involved.

The suppression of *sati* was the most conspicuous act of the Government in the social field during the nineteenth century. In 1827 the Governor-General, Lord Amherst, placed his trust in the progress of knowledge and "rational learning" for the eventual cessation of "this detestable superstition."[62] But two years later Lord William Bentinck considered the possibilities of success for an official suppression of *sati*, and proceeded to prohibit it. His reasons for taking such action indicate that he wished to consider the enforcement of a law to prohibit the practice apart from mere expediency, and rested the Government's case "altogether upon the moral goodness of the act and our power to enforce it."[63] He stated his desire to help the Hindus establish a "purer morality" regardless of their belief. This unconcern for "belief" and social opinion was not characteristic of the Government in the years to come. For example, in 1884 the Viceroy, the Marquis of Ripon,

[60] *Reform*, p. 170.
[61] See Ranade, *ibid.*, pp. 90-1.
[62] Edw. Thompson, *Suttee*, p. 71.
[63] See A. B. Keith, *Speeches on Indian Policy*, I, pp. 212 ff.

argued that the Government could not act in a similar way against "Infant Marriage" or "Enforced Widowhood" because it did not consider that these customs involved crime nor were they harmful enough to call for legal suppression, as in the case of *sati*, so long as they were sanctioned by the general opinion of the society in which they prevailed.[64] This attitude was re-enforced by the Government's resolution in 1886 which clearly showed that it did not wish to antagonize social opinion.[65] In 1930 the same official policy was enunciated by the Statutory Commission, which reported its view that India's most formidable evils were rooted in long standing social and economic customs that could only be remedied by action of the people themselves.[66] The policy of religious neutrality, therefore, became also one of social neutrality, giving the Government a moral position, with a few exceptions, essentially the same as that of Hindu orthodoxy. That this was so was pointed out by M. G. Ranade who did not approve of the official policy, believing, as he did, that there were certain stages in human progress when the State should sanction right ideas and the highest wisdom of the moment.[67]

The policy of religious neutrality was both a protection to the Government from becoming involved in thorny social problems, and a source of continual uncertainty as to the place of its real moral obligation.[68] Where religion was regarded as of superior claim, Hindus approved the policy of going slow with religio-social reforms by legislative means. But when the issue of social relief and reform assumed greater importance, especially under the inspiration of nationalism, "religious neutrality" was open to stringent criticism. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyayya accused the Government of offering as much obstruction to the Indian Women's Movement as the conservative section of Hindu society. "No national administration," she stated, "would have tolerated for a day the things which the Government of India chooses to ignore under the solemn cloak of religious neutrality."[69] There were others than

[64] Malabari, *Infant Marriage*, p. 11.
[65] Ranade, *Reform*, p. xxxv.
[66] Vol. I, p. 409.
[67] *Reform*, p. xxxv.
[68] See Malabari, *op. cit.*
[69] *Awakening of Indian Women*, p. 10.

the nationalists who pointed out the moral ambiguity of the Government's position. Mr. A. I. Mayhew declared that, despite Queen Victoria's proclamation and the activities and pronouncements of individual officers, the Government's attitude in the matter of social legislation encouraged in Indians the belief "that the British government was completely uninfluenced by Christian principles and completely unmoved by the social evils associated with the non-Christian religions."[70] And Mrs. R. M. Gray, studying the attitude of the Government toward the enlightenment of women, characterized it as "timid" and following "the line of least resistance."[71]

How the several religious, social and political factors could operate in a complex legislative situation was shown on the occasion of the passage of the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 by the Central Legislative Assembly.[72] The Government's attitude was first suspected of moral timidity by the Congress Working Committee, which passed a resolution in January 1929 charging it with "deliberately obstructing our social progress."[73] Later, when the Bill came up for final consideration, the Home Member received loud cheers when he expressed the Government's cordial sympathy and strongest support. They had studied opinion throughout the nation concerning the evil of Child Marriage, he said, and "where we find a promising remedy we feel we must support what we think to be right."

Muslims participated in the debate, some supporting and others opposing the Bill.[74] Hindu opinion was also divided, religion being used to justify both sides of the question, but notably in opposition to the measure which was to raise the marriageable age of girls to fourteen years. Appeal was made to protest meetings held in various parts of the country which described the Bill as

[70] *Modern India and the West*, p. 322. A. H. Benton, I.C.S., concluded that the government did not appear bound to the principle of neutrality except by choice as to expediency and by long use. *Indian Moral Instruction and Caste Problems*, p. 7.

[71] Caton, *Key*, p. 27.

[72] Better known as the Sarda Act. The Act raised the marriageable age of females to fourteen years, and males to eighteen years. See *Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December, 1929, pp. 129 ff., 146.

[73] *Ibid.*, January-June, 1929, p. 28; July-December, 1929, p. 129.

[74] *Ibid.*, July-December, 1929, pp. 120, 132-3, 139, 146.

preposterous. Nationalistic support was also sought by calling it "fit for the wastepaper basket like all reports of the foreign government." A revolution in the social order was threatening. Would the House, it was asked, be a party to a measure with provisions that were a flagrant violation of the shastras? Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, while "painfully alive to the evils of early marriage," stated that Hindus had lived under it for thousands of years and, in any case, there was a psychological reason in ancient times for marrying girls at an early age.[75] He believed the traditional system had the advantage of a high ideal of purity and sanctity. Dr. Moonje, president of the Hindu Mahasabha, was also in opposition, following, as he explained, his "practical conscience" rather than his "medical conscience."

Strong support was given the Bill by those Hindu members who appealed to reason, observation of the existing evils of Child Marriage, and a concern for India's place among civilized nations. Mr. M. R. Jayakar said there was no use being guided by the shastras ; those texts which were quoted to prove the Bill was against the Hindu religion, belonged to a scheme of life the spirit of which had departed from the nation. According to the most authoritative exposition of the Vedanta, he stated, that text of the Vedas should be followed which was in accord with logic and reason. Let the Assembly, therefore, follow what Hinduism had done in the past. Pandit Motilal Nehru declared that he had thrown into the wastepaper basket the opinions of other people and had relied on his own life-long observations of the wicked custom of Child Marriage. If the shastras had any injunctions in the matter, he had no use for them. Pandit Nehru urged the Assembly to vote in such manner as would rank India among the civilized nations of the world.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act was frequently ignored and evaded, and the failure of Government to enforce the law had no considerable compensation in nationalistic efforts to gain compliance with the new standard.[76] The remark of Mrs. R. M. Gray

[75] That is, when they began to have amorous thoughts they would realize the necessity of directing them to one individual.

[76] Rameshwari Nehru stated that "in the beginning a certain amount of deliberate defiance of the law was resorted to." *Our Cause*, p. 262.

was made frequently enough. "The Indian public," she said, "cannot fairly reproach the Government for not thrusting down its throat a cure for social backwardness against which Hindu and Mohammedan society was equally and bitterly in revolt."[77] This stated well enough the difficulty of establishing a new moral standard without adequate social support. It raised the question, made inevitable over a century and half of considerable official neutrality in social issues, whether any adequate moral development of a society could be achieved when social opinion and political power were not in accord. Nor did nationalism in its predominantly masculine forms offer clear guidance on what reforms were needed, and why. Opinions differed as to the advisability of a complete systematic legislative reform, or a piecemeal alteration of existing laws.[78] Meanwhile the women had to concern themselves actively with the question of their status before the law, as a Conference in 1943, convened under the auspices of the National Council of Women in India, made very clear.[79]

4. Sources of Values

The accepted moral values of the modern women's movement were an integral part of that social experience which was variously expressed and described by the women themselves. These were not static estimates of the meaning and purpose of modern life, rather they indicated the nature of human interests and desires, and the relative importance of the objects for which people live and strive. The situation in which these values decisively emerged was fluid and increasingly dynamic. Into the stream of this growing activity many tributaries flowed, and the result was a compound of their mixture. The sources of those values for which the Hindu women aspired are not difficult to discover. It remains to determine the nature of the religious and other influences in the selection of those personal qualities and social relationships which came to be the norm for modern Hindu womanhood.

The nature and function of woman in society have been deter-

[77] Caton, *Key*, p. 27.
[78] Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyer in Appasamy's *Legal Aspects of Social Reform*, p. viii.
[79] At Bombay in 1943. See the *Aryan Path*, Dec., 1943, p. 570.

minded by what she has desired to be and attempted to do. The Junior Maharani of Travancore, in 1929, said that women wanted to become "effective social and political factors in the body politic, whereby they can help not only in the renaissance of Indian art and literature and Indian ideals, but may be potent factors in social uplift."[80] The determinative influence of the new values was indicated by the statement of G. J. Bahadurji that "in the regenerated India, woman's role may be radically different from what it has been in the past, as her place and work would needs be different from what has been assigned to her by tradition and usage."[81] The dynamic relationship of the individual to her society provided the matrix in which the values of modern life were formed. From this position both criticism and appreciation were directed toward the cultural and religious past, as well as the contemporary age with its new forces. This meant both a break with hampering custom and tradition, and a new consciousness of continuity with ancient values. Sulochana Deulgaonkar noted that "custom and usages are however still obstacles that must be overcome to ensure the progress of women." Then she commented, "How this will be done without breaking with the past is a problem."[82] This was an issue which frequently presented itself to Hindus in their effort to achieve different moral values in their society. In this respect the women's movement showed itself to be an integral part of the whole development of contemporary society.

Criticism of Western culture and society was more prominent among men, in their insistence upon certain qualities in women, than among the women themselves. Appreciation of what they had received from Western sources in a new awareness of their personal value was apparent in the utterances and activities of Hindu women. Men sought to inspire a new social activity in women, but they also desired to protect their moral and religious life. In the last century Keshab Chander Sen uttered a warning against the new tendencies which had become apparent in the

[80] As President of the All-India Women's Social Conference, 1929. Qt. by Underwood, *Contemporary Thought in India*, p. 119.
[81] In *Our Cause*, edited by S. K. Nehru, p. 337.
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 316.

freeing of women from their zenana seclusion. "Give the Indian woman freedom," he urged. "But let it be moral freedom ; not license to do evil and go into the paths of temptation and carnality, but freedom to serve God and do that which is right and proper."[83] Should the current trend continue, he visualized, a half century later there would be "a scene of wild voluptuousness and immorality." The contrast between Western standards and values for women and those prevalent in India was emphasized often by Hindu men who saw a difference in the greater appreciation of moral and religious qualities that were found in India. Swami Vivekananda voiced his admiration of American women for their intellectuality, but added that this was not the highest good. "Morality and spirituality are the things for which we strive. Our women are not so learned, but they are more pure."[84]

An analysis of those characteristics which Hindu men admired in women very often pointed to their relationship in traditional society and their position as defined by religion. The patience and endurance of Hindu womanhood was emphasized, as when Professor Radhakrishnan commented that the ideal of monogamous marriage was possible but difficult to realize. Woman was prepared for the struggle for she needed trouble to complete herself, and her genius was in suffering.[85] He extolled the Indian woman who through centuries of tradition had been made the most unselfish, patient, and dutiful woman in the world. This patient suffering, however, was the quality which B. N. Malabari had noted years before as one of the causes of the continued inequality of the Hindu woman with man. "To many it is a wonder," he declared, "that the world hears so little of the results of such social inequality. I believe this is so because woman is the sufferer. It is not in her nature to publish her wrongs."[86] The modern woman, represented by Chandrawati Lakhanpal, did not appreciate this characteristic emphasized by her position in society ; rather she evinced an aggressiveness which challenged the value of patient suffering in the presence of the wrongs done to her sex.[87] It is

[83] *New Dispensation*, I, pp. 8 ff.
[84] *Works*, V, p. 326.
[85] *Religion*, pp. 160-1.
[86] Qt. by Chandrawati Lakhanpal in *Our Cause* (Nehru), p. 276.
[87] *Ibid.*

reasonable to believe that this trait of suffering has been rooted in a way of life which is religiously conditioned. Again, Malabari remarked, "I have never heard an argument in favour of infant marriage as a national institution, except that it is enjoined by the shastras. In India every custom that is unintelligible, or actually indefensible, becomes a religious question, the merits of which we are not supposed to appreciate in this Kali-yuga."[88]

Suffering has been enhanced as a factor of considerable importance through the opportunities provided by the modern social, political, and economic struggle and the support which women brought to it. National service called for a religious quality of renunciation, long characteristic of certain forms of Hindu activity. Mrs. Padmavathi Asher, in 1931, stated that women had always had a share in the responsibilities of the land.[89] Western culture had made such inroads into India that it was necessary for women to be reminded of the fact that the spirit of sacrifice and renunciation had been the basic principle of their society from time immemorial. "The rishis of old," she stated, "have been immortalised because of their renunciation of all worldly objects and working for the spiritual uplift of humanity at large." It was time that women threw off their slackness and began to serve the country. Religious and social tradition offered a force of real value in the emphasis given to the superior claims of the nation upon the service of its daughters. Gandhiji's *ahimsa* provided a means for the positive expression of this trait of Hindu womanhood. It encouraged his faith, moreover, in the possibilities of non-violence.[90] He expected the virtue of sacrifice and restraint in both sexes, but placed on men the responsibility for inspiring in women a recognition of the potentiality of non-violence. "My feeling is that, if men of the Congress can retain their faith in *ahimsa* and prosecute the non-violent programme faithfully and fully, the women will be automatically converted." In fact, Gandhi believed that this social ideal was nearer to the nature of women than of men.

[88] *Op. cit.*, p. 2.
[89] In her presidential address, Kerala Provincial Women's Conference, 1931. *Indian Annual Register*, January-June, 1931, pp. 375-6.
[90] *Constructive Programme*, p. 14. *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, p. 180.

The values of suffering and renunciation were not adequate in themselves for the needs of the modern social situation in which Hindu womanhood had been launched. Not all men approved without qualification these traditional qualities. M. A. Sarma for example, in his *Woman and Society*, observed, "Too long has the Indian woman meekly conformed to the 'duties' prescribed for her by 'religion' and to the restrictions imposed on her movements and personality by social 'tradition'."[91] The demand for political, economic and social rights was a far cry from the picture of submissive womanhood which was frequently drawn, and more often remembered in modern times. In spite of the necessity which compelled women to state their view of political, economic, and social justice and to call for constructive adjustments to meet their demands, still there was a masculine desire for sacrifice in women as superior to the "calculating assertion of rights."[92]

The religious position in the process of establishing new values was partly confused by the nature of religious and social history. Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit, along with many others, accounted for the loss of women's freedom as being due to the rise of Brahminism. The priesthood had imposed restrictions and had placed emphasis on early marriage for women, and on the necessity of keeping them at home. "All the mythological and classical stories show us," she stated, "that in earlier times Indian women married late, in the twenties rather than the 'teens', and that they chose their own husbands, and that as widows they remarried."[93] Radhakrishnan was milder in his criticism of *Manu*, when he called it an unfairness of that lawgiver that he required a good wife to adore a bad husband.[94] On the whole, the authors of the dharmashastras did not fare very well under the scrutiny of moral opinion. They were understood to be men who had recorded a system and established principles for social and individual life with some values which did not accord with those of modern ethical thinking.

Sources of current moral values can be discovered by reference to recent views of marriage and divorce. Educated Hindu women

[91] P. 96.
[92] Coomarswamy, *Dance of Siva*, p. 91.
[93] Interview with Pearl Buck. *United Nations World*, March 1947, vol. I, no. 2, p. 27.
[94] *Religion*, p. 175.

came to favour monogamy, as did men. In some instances curious objections were raised which reflected concessions to the weakness of men rather than reference to the strength of women.[95] Education had brought women to see the necessity of attaining equality with men in the marriage relationship. Social and economic conditions had enforced this view. "Our attitude towards marriage is another thing which needs change," declared Lakshmi Nandan Menon.[96] "In the West, the happy change has been brought about by the changes in the economic status and education of women." A. S. Altekar called for the cessation of the evil whereby the legal recognition of polygamy worked "an untold harm to a not negligible number of women, who are often superseded by their husbands, especially in uncultured classes."[97] Whereas modern conviction supported monogamy, there was no clear determination of the factors which would permit or disallow divorce. In general, there was a concern to give to Hindu women an equal opportunity with men in the possibilities for divorce. Altekar would have allowed divorce, but on very stringent conditions, contending that the ancient dharmashastra writers definitely permitted it under certain conditions.[98] He confined it, however, to the case of a wife being abandoned completely by her husband. "Wider grounds," such as cruelty and insanity were not "advisable nor desirable for women." Dr. Radhakrishnan would have allowed dissolution of marriage by either party on grounds of desertion, habitual cruelty, adultery, insanity, or incurable disease.[99] In the wider range of Hindu religious and social history there was no standard to be followed closely. The modern man and woman had, therefore, to select one that embodied the values most appealing to them. There could be little doubt that the view of marriage as the union of two independent and equal persons was gradually displacing the economic and social subordination of woman to man which ruled in traditional society.[100] What actual legal expression would be

[95] G. R. Pradhan, Ph.D., opposed marriage reform bills which would require monogamous marriages. They would, he contended, lead a man to take a concubine. *Social Reformer*, Aug. 27, 1938, p. 823.
[96] *Our Cause* (Nehru), p. 196.
[97] *Position of Women*, p. 441.
[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 442-3.
[99] *Religion*, p. 185.
[100] See Radhakrishnan, *Religion*, p. 156.

given this norm was not at that time apparent. The moral gain lay in modern woman's acknowledged position in private and public life which a realization of her own value had brought to her.

The usual objections to granting the right of divorce to women centred in the nature of the sacred permanence that was claimed for marriage. There was a difference between its sanctity for men and for women. Under Hindu law a man could marry as many wives as he wished, and was able to give up a wife simply by paying her maintenance.[101] The woman was never free from the marriage tie, although her husband might treat her cruelly, even desert her. The indissoluble nature of a woman's marriage, according to the traditional view, was defined by its religious sanctity. But modern proposals for divorce legislation showed a changing social situation that modified the customary religious conception. The concern for the happiness and welfare of women brought in a new value affecting the permanence of marriage. Its enduring nature had therefore to be found in the kind of human life it provided, and in the development of personality through increasing degrees of social and economic equality.[102] The ideal husband and wife saw each other in the new context of national society which challenged them to increased appreciation of their worth to each other, and to society at large. Woman proved her ability to demand a different status, and in a steadily growing democratic society she made her ideals forcefully known. They exceeded the bounds of the home to which she had been confined in traditional society. Interest in ancient life and culture helped to secure recognition of these claims, but it was only by a selection of those aspects of culture that suited the modern mind. It remained for the nation to work out the many implications of the achievement in its economic and social affairs.

The place of Hindu religion in this process of determining anew the relationships of women and men in modern society points to the general development which we have studied. When emphasizing the traditional view of the sanctity of marriage, and the submissive nature of woman, modern religion was on the whole a con-

[101] See Nehru, *Our Cause*, p. 295.
[102] Radhakrishnan, *Religion*, pp. 156, 162.

servative force in the movement. The dynamic forces that brought about changes in practice came from the political, social and economic aspirations of the times. The religious movements helped to bring in new values of womanhood to Hindu society. But the channel these movements offered was never broad and deep enough to contain the currents that were everywhere expanding. Hinduism found no other specifically religious means to convey them. The interest in Indian culture as supporting the claims of new status for women was estranged more and more from its religious origins. Something better was visible for women, and they worked politically and socially to achieve it. As a result modern religion was refined of the grosser elements of its age-old practices, and in many instances made its contribution by supporting the new position.

The power to gain the necessary concessions from the male section of a religious society was found, not in the internal structure of religious ideas and beliefs, but through opportunities offered in the wider life of national society. These concentrated attention on what was strange and new to the ways of a conservative religious society. But they also brought men and women to see themselves in a light different from tradition: it was the enlightenment of their own day-to-day achievements.

CHAPTER VIII

TOWARD A NEW VIEW OF LIFE

CHAPTER EIGHT

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An analysis of modern Hindu developments shows the movement toward an ethical view of society which has some important religious aspects. The general objective of the various currents of thought was a conception of life that offered human satisfaction in terms of personal values. These were expressed in the ideas, and embodied in the conduct of certain outstanding Hindus, both men and women, who departed from a tradition that had dictated the norms and principles of the social order. The tensions that were produced both in society and in religion have to be seen in their ethical relations, if the implications are to be properly understood. The thought that characterized the modern view of life raises a question as to the nature and depth of the religious adjustments that were being made. Forces of change were introduced into the outer structure of religion, particularly through its applications to society, but the essence of the religion itself was not profoundly affected by them.

From Rammohan Roy to Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru the search for a realization of personal values in society showed an intricate but intelligible pattern of men and events. To seek for its meaning is to discover the urges to social well-being, and the ethical thought that directed them to ideal ends. Here ethics was a human concern in which individual and society were dependent on each other. Individually selected values influenced social institutions, and social developments offered opportunity for independent moral thought and activity.

The whole movement toward the making for a democratic society which would ensure the welfare of all its members was first apparent in the social ideals of the sects, and later became more forcefully evident in the political and economic, as well as social, objectives of national development. A dynamic moral consciousness of the people was formed in the matrix of this increasing concern for present mental and physical progress. It expressed itself in political, social, and economic institutions with norms of justice,

freedom, and equality not established in traditional Hinduism. The new social forces were associated specifically with ideals of individual worth and human dignity, opportunities for personal development and the humanitarian service of others. These concerns embodied the active desires of men and women who worked toward a society responsible for its individual members, and in which they were to be free yet responsible persons.

1. Religious Conception of the Task

The moral task of reforming Hindu society was first undertaken by purely religious means. Here lies the significance of the nineteenth century sectarian movements. Although they claimed to be true to the essentials of original Hinduism, their modern character showed the religious as well as the social nature of the task they undertook. Religious reform had to accompany social reform. Thus ethical criticism of the prevailing social attitudes was introduced from two angles. That Hinduism did not find this criticism acceptable either from the religious or from the social angle was apparent in the fact that the most radically reforming groups among the sects stood in the sharpest contrast to the surrounding Hindu environment for which they suffered the greatest ostracism at Hindu hands. It was a few individuals, not a social movement, that began the construction of a view of life adequate to solve social problems and to offer a way of meeting the opportunities introduced by the Western penetration of India. The regard for world opinion also became greater than what the internal strength of the traditional institutions could bear. Thus it was that new values were enshrined in institutions of religious worship and social service carrying the highest ethical meaning of the times. These voluntary associations nurtured the modern social ideals before political, social, and economic organisations with ethical aims arose.

One conclusion must be formed as the result of this specifically religious effort. Working from a religious position involved problems too great to be solved by the means suggested and used. The actual social results of the Samaj movements were too slight to affect the solidarity of traditional conduct and belief. There

was left a hard core of religious resistance which at the end of the nineteenth century Mahadev Ranade met with the advice that it should not be aroused into a fury of opposition. And Swami Vivekananda adapted a revived religious interest that had been aroused by Ramakrishna Paramahamsa into a programme of social service without any radical social reform. During this period it was found necessary to meet normal issues in terms of religious sanctions by reference to the scriptural texts, for people refused to be convinced of the desirability of any social reform unless it was well supported by the shastras.

2. Effects of Nationalism

The emergence of dynamic political interests and the organization of the National Congress accompanied and stimulated the growth of a national democratic society. The initiative in social reform then passed largely from religious into political hands. Nationalism appealed widely to the people as religious sectarianism had never done. And political democracy assumed greater popular importance than the social democracy that had earlier been sought by the sects with their strictly religious and social aims. The people, now in greater numbers and sections of society than represented in the sects, provided a wide field of action. The way to social democracy, with its equality of sexes, classes and nations, was visualized through political resistance and struggle on a national scale. While religious organizations continued to make important social contributions, they steadily became subsidiary to the national movement. Thus the moral purposes of the sects were taken up into the more expansive but more diffuse interests of the growing national society. Nationalism further produced the consolidation of society on a level that transcended the particular religious interests perpetuated in the sects, but by so doing it offered a home to all resurgent religious emotions. In this context also the vision of a democratic society free from the inequalities and restraints of the old order, received a brighter significance. Its political and economic, as well as social, meaning came increasingly to be recognized.

During the political era the revival of Hinduism, both in tradi-

tional and modern forms, merged religious ideas and experience into the national cause. Political and religious nationalism contended together for freedom from Western control. In religious nationalism it was hard to distinguish clearly between the modern and traditional views except in their divergence on questions of social reform. While the religion of the modern reformers nurtured their nascent social impulses, it remained for later political and economic nationalist forces to provide the necessary support for fuller growth. The ethical thought of the modern Hindu became further distinguished from the traditional code and practice by its identification with the progress of political revolution rather than with the hesitations of religious reformation. Moral support for social ideals was found more and more by appeal to the active judgment of the people apart from the usual scriptural sanctions. Questions of right were decided increasingly by reference to the moral sense of an active society. Human rights were confirmed as inherently good and just through an innate moral judgment aroused within the people. Through it all a growing social radicalism was met by an increasing religious conservatism. So much so that none of the religious leaders in later nationalism held views on the necessity of an ethical reformation of Hindu religion as extreme as those of Rammohan Roy, although in social practice they may have progressed far beyond him.

The tensions that arose when Hindu individuals and groups challenged traditional social behaviour were partly relieved and partly obscured in nationalism. The sharpness of the moral challenge had been most apparent in the Samaj groups where ideals of equality and fraternity were expressed, whether or not they were fully achieved. Nationalism was more socially inclusive than religious sectarianism had been, for all groups were carried along by its enthusiasm. It therefore provided a greater incentive to overcome the power of customary caste and family institutions that were impeding the growth of social democracy. But nationalism also included both modern and traditional religious interests, and its moral purposes with regard to the reform of Hinduism were therefore ambiguous. It achieved an advance in the social status of women and the untouchables that had long been sought for. The rights of these sections were shown to be legitimate by

demonstrations of their inherent capacity for social responsibility. This was the fulfilment of the sectarian vision. But traditionalism also prevailed, for, while the political rights of women and the untouchables were being recognized, their social and economic rights seemed not so urgent, and not so readily secured. Partly, the reason was that the latter phase of this struggle was largely within Hindu society, while the political struggle went on almost entirely outside it in opposition to a foreign power. There was not the same unanimity of opinion on social and economic rights as was found in contending for political rights. Religion was divided between the two, and came out with no conclusive answers to Hindu social questions. Modern religion continued to function as a socially reforming force, but its alliance in nationalism with traditionalist religion left its final religious position in doubt. Would it be transformed by the new moral consciousness or would it continue to obscure issues within itself? The issues were plain enough in the early Brahmo Samaj. Rammohan Roy's religion was clearly a reforming influence in his whole conception of life. Gandhiji's social ideals were more radical than Roy's, but his religion was less challenging to traditionalism. The untouchables were admitted to temples by Gandhiji's campaign, but no probing question as to the inner religious character of Hinduism was raised which should accompany this change of social position. Religion in general was accepted as inclusive of all interests, and all historical religions were held to be equal and the same in their ultimate purpose. It had not been so at the beginning of the social reformation.

3. Trend to Secularism

Modern religious Hindus, foremost among them being Gandhiji, made notable contributions to nationalism in its drive toward political democracy. But in political, economic and social activities the growing influence of a secularist view became apparent. The causes were implicit in nationalism itself, for it carried an increasing current of discontent with its own religious expressions. Men and women began to find significant values in society quite independent of Hindu religious construction, whether modern or traditional.

Thus the way was prepared for the conception of a secular State

in which Hindu religion might continue to have an important function for the individual, but not be so essential to social institutions and organisation. The difference came out clearly in the Gandhian period of nationalism. Gandhiji's religious basis of political and economic action was not acceptable to the main body of the Congress, which, however, adopted his programme in many respects. His religious interpretations and decisions, when questioned by leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas C. Bose, who believed the nationalist objectives could be achieved independently of religion, raised the question why it should be brought in at all. Social ethics there must be, but society must be allowed to grow without religious impositions and limitations. Religion should be a matter for the private individual. This growing temper of mind in the midst of tense national decisions involving religious and communal conflicts, was a necessary preparation for the ethos of a secular democracy. It was also an inevitable result of the dissolution of the religious unity of society in historic Hinduism.

The initiative for social reorganisation was increasingly realised in other spheres than that of modern religious idealism. It came from a dynamic ideology of political liberty and economic justice, with individual freedom and equality as a basis. This shift toward a non-religious conception of society was marked by the diminishing force of religious sanctions that had once been so essential in justifying any deviation from customary social conduct. The growing appeal to the independent moral reason depended less and less upon the approval of religious belief. The remaining function of modern Hindu religion was in offering guidance and support to the growth of a society that had broken free from its traditional moorings. Religious apologists therefore engaged themselves in the task of showing the necessity of their ideals for the healthy development of emancipated social institutions. From its position of sanctioning departures from traditional behaviour, modern religion turned to the task of showing its permanent value in the solution of changing problems.

4. Renewal of Culture

The search for Indian cultural values also contributed to the modern ethical consciousness when a knowledge of past social

experience added to the awareness of present social responsibility. The nineteenth century sects turned to the Hindu cultural heritage to support their aroused conscience in its resolution to change society, so that a historical basis was found for their religious and social ideals. The past, they believed, gave sanction to the present. Following their idealism the sectarian leaders attempted a fresh integration of religion and society which they supported by a study of the early social experience of Hinduism. Among themselves the sects differed in social aims, as much as the Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission did in respect to the question of the reform of caste. But all the sects sought support by arousing an interest in what Hinduism had once been in its religious and social unity.

During the period of political revolution a distinction arose between the religious and the social views of ancient culture. Interest continued in seeking for the sources of its integrity, such as had characterised the sectarian movement, but the growing urgency of gaining free political power drew attention away from its religious basis. While religious nationalism gained strength from the enthusiasm for cultural appreciation, along with it grew up an independent interest in social culture for its own sake that acknowledged no religious dependence, and sought to arouse the need of more radical social changes than religious nationalism was suggesting. Such was the purpose of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's discovery of India's cultural heritage, and the view of culture which came to find expression in Indian socialism and communism. Thus the fresh unity of religion and society, which had been attempted in the sectarian movement and was continued in religious nationalism, was itself subjected to forces of dissolution working within it as well as within the traditional cultural order.

Quite the reverse of what had been the case in the nineteenth century, modern Hindu religion in the twentieth century became associated with the conservative side of the social movement, rather than with the more radical revolutionary developments. There were ethical aspects of these later events. The general ideals of social life—freedom, harmony, tolerance, fearlessness—that were actively supported by a religious conception of culture, were not adequate for some who sought thorough changes in the status of

women and the untouchables by a recognition of their natural human rights. The secular interpretation of primitive culture aided the measures for securing monogamy, economic and social equality of women with men, and equality of opportunity for the suppressed classes. While the advocates of religion might also support these aims, as some of them certainly did, religion was not generally believed to be essential to their achievement. Thus, in the case of *varna dharma*, the religious reconception of the social order, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, with his secularised view of culture, disposed of the doctrine as irrelevant to the modern situation. The tendency of this later development to make ethics independent of a religious basis confirms the conclusion that modern religion had largely lost its earlier social initiative.

The non-violent political movement provides a particularly clear illustration of the difference between the religious and secularist evaluations of the cultural heritage. The moral qualities essential to non-violent action were related to the religious interpretation of non-violence. With Gandhiji the moral and the religious elements were inseparable. But his disagreement with the Congress on the question of the absolute morality of non-violence made it clear that his religious ethic was not essential to the majority of his political associates. What mattered to them was not so much whether non-violence was a fundamental doctrine of Hinduism, which Gandhiji insisted was the case, but whether it would work in India's political situation. Thus most members of the Congress considered non-violence an instrument of political action and a social institution valuable for the existing struggle, but were unwilling to adopt it absolutely on Gandhi's religious basis. They thereby showed the popular inclination to hold political action free from any absolute religious conditions of its success or failure.

5. Spiritual and Social Values

The modifications in the outer structure of religion, that were shown so clearly in social thought and conduct, embodied certain ideals and principles of undoubted value to the religion itself. The whole view of life with which modern Hinduism became identified was profoundly affected by them, as they became the substance of a new outlook upon the world and human society. Occasioned by

this social experience was a fresh manifestation of religious experience and practice which affirmed the *sanatan,* or perpetual values of religion existing beyond all change and circumstance. They were "eternal," and they belonged to the imperishable essence of the faith. By means of these spiritual values the Hindu sought for a sure foundation in a rapidly changing world. It was his one hope of religious security when the structure of inherited institutions dissolved before his eyes, and the meaning of cherished ideas gave way under the stress of new claims. Here he found the autonomous essence of religion that was the source of spiritual vitality and renewal, so much needed in view of the growing menace to religion from an expanding secular society. While the nature of the source and expression of this autonomy does not lie within the purpose of this study, it must be observed that there did exist a fresh realization of the spiritual ends of religion as well as its social means. This was not simply a reflection of outer events but an expression of inner religious purpose. What we are concerned to know, however, is the manner in which spiritual experience was related to moral values in modern life. It may be concluded that the identification of spiritual ideals and aspirations with the meaning and purpose of social events was not effectively made in modern Hinduism.

The need of stating specifically the autonomy of the essence of Hinduism arose when the defects and failures of its social system called for reform. It led, on the one hand, to the breaking up of the traditional religious and social unity, on the premise that spiritual reality could not be held responsible for social injustice and disorder. This position became more distinct with the growing concern of Hindus for social weakness that was revealed under the impact of dynamic ideas and institutions. On the other hand, the need of defining the spiritual autonomy of Hinduism led modern apologists to insist, both that their religion was not the source of social malady, and further, that its spiritual health was perfectly sound. Its natural vitality, they maintained, needed only to be discovered and expressed again. In seeking the reality of religion's "eternal" heritage, the discovery of cultural values provided spiritual nourishment which Hindus believed was still valid. It also led to the definition of Hinduism in terms of experience. Professor

Radhakrishnan, as we have noted, called it "a subtly unified mass of spiritual thought and realisation" that relied not on dogma and authority but on "transcendental experience." Such experience was not subject to the same changes as man's social existence ; it was *sanatan*, and therefore impervious to external changes in society.

A question remained, however, as to the way in which the changing character of social experience could be related to the unchanging core of spiritual realisation. In seeking an answer, it is necessary to see that personal character and ability, and human welfare gave ethical content to social thought and conduct. While social values thus provided the content, the religious form in which they were conveyed consisted of a characteristically Hindu vehicle of ideas and attitudes unchanging in its fundamental aims. And, although new social thought was directed along religious paths with a transformed vista, the spiritual tradition of Hinduism remained the end in view.

Appreciation of human worth and dignity, so fundamental to the social revolution, was communicated to the aims of religion when the personal aspects of the deity were stressed in early sectarian worship and thought. Men prayed to the divine Being that had a direct concern with their welfare and destiny. God was an active, righteous Being, working for the good of his creatures and requiring responsible conduct of them. But no clear line of distinction could be drawn between the personalistic and impersonalitic threads of Hindu thought that were woven into the pattern of modern religion. It was sufficient to draw upon those elements from the long experience of Hinduism which nourished the concern for social salvation. Where personal aspects of religion were distinctly appreciated, there the most progressive and active social thought was found, and the transformation of society most clearly visualised. But a notable lack of clarity appeared in the metaphysical basis of the modern ethic due to the absence of any decisive selection of the personal aspects of human and divine life as of ultimate consequence. Indeed, the impersonal characteristics of the *advaita* were imposed on every form of ethical thought, thus perpetuating the influence of a religious view which transcended those ethical distinctions essential to the personal meaning of

human life. At the same time, the acceptance of the ethical ideas fundamental to the well-being of human society did not decisively affect the spiritual aims to which they were related. Such spiritual values, it was held, could comprehend both the personal and the impersonal aspects of man's life, since Hinduism had in the past been hospitable to both.

How a personal meaning was acquired by religious aims and attitudes, without changing their essential character, was well shown in the interpretation of *karma*. With modern individual and social initiative overcoming the customary attitudes of indifference to conditions that could be altered, there was a movement away from the traditional morality of social and religious determinism to the free morality of the individual. The alliance of social and religious inequalities with the karmic law of retribution, began to break up under the pressure of new social and individual liberties, and the knowledge that moral action could have more immediate results. Thus a new freedom began to displace the inhibitions and inactivity so characteristic of the popular notions of *karma*. The linking of social and individual responsibility had a profound effect on those attitudes which determined man's social destiny. But the essentially religious aim of the doctrine was not changed, for it continued to be correlated with the belief in rebirth by which the effects of moral effort could be postponed to another life. In religious thinking the synthesis of *karma* and rebirth continued to be self-evident, and it impressed on the modern religious view a traditional pattern.

For modern thought *dharma* continued to prescribe the natural, divine order of life for the individual, although he may have been liberated from the rigorous caste order. Opportunities for personal advancement, and rejection of the hereditary class and occupational status required a different understanding of the social order. *Dharma*, it was considered, could be adapted to social development, and could be made to define the individual's social duty in relation to ultimate religious ends. An attempt was made to establish a four-fold religious conception of the social order by a fresh synthesis of individual initiative and aptitude with the ideal of religious vocation. The effort that Hindu apologists made to adapt the idea of *varna dharma* to the needs of a dynamic social

order proved unsatisfactory, for it actually applied only to religious and not to new social values. The social revolution clearly showed the growing independence of the ideas of individual liberty and equality increasingly shared by people of all classes, whether or not they could comprehend and experience the spiritual aims of Hinduism said to be implicit in them. The doctrine of *varna dharma* in its modern applications was particularly inadequate for satisfying those who wanted immediate social changes commensurate with political and economic events. It especially failed to meet the claims of those who suffered because of untouchability, and those who were working for a secular form of society. The main reason was that it did not correspond to any actual classification in modern practice. Although the theory of *varna dharma* illuminated the new direction of Hindu social thought in which free individual action was united with social responsibility, it confirmed the purpose of making personal values contribute to religious ends without essentially changing the religion.

The adaptiveness of Hindu spirituality to the personal aims of social thought and action was particularly well expressed in the development of non-violence as an instrument of constructive action. Gandhiji's doctrine and practice were a fusion of various religious and cultural elements, Hindu and non-Hindu, with unmistakable value for India's national situation. The stress in his thought upon the worth of the individual, whether friend or foe, and the necessity of maintaining amicable relationships in the midst of conflict, was evidence of new ideals of social conduct being put into an old pattern of religious behaviour. Gandhiji's aim was very clear, but its religious dimensions, though greatly enlarged by his interpretation of the significance of non-violence, did not gain the absolute allegiance of many of his associates. Perhaps more than any other result of the attempt to integrate spiritual with social values, this was evidence of the extreme difficulty of doing so, for the individual realization of the spiritual ends of non-violence could not be made as clear as the popular appreciation of its political utility.

That the spiritual character of religion had not been greatly affected by the acceptance of modern social values was evinced also in the common Hindu idea of the essential unity and equality

of all religions. Here was an instance, not only of the immense capacity of Hinduism to absorb and syncretize diverse elements, but of its incapacity to adopt the integral nature of ethics and religion found in other religious systems. The ambiguous relation of the ethical and the spiritual reality that characterized the new Hinduism, made it possible to claim that all religions were essentially equal. This was due to a spiritual, rather than an ethical, view of life. It obscured the fact that the essence of moral reality is in its distinction between kinds of thought and conduct. All religions may share in man's common failure to meet his moral obligations, as they may concur in some ideals for individual and social conduct. But this does not mean therefore that they essentially agree in the way by which spiritual awareness enters the moral consciousness to aid it in becoming individually and socially effective. The unity of religions is distinctively an expression of modern Hindu spirituality derived partly from certain mystical experiences, such as, for instance, Sri Ramakrishna enjoyed. The idea is essentially an expression of religious individualism in which religious experience and practice are not directly responsible for ethical ideals and values. This made it possible for a new socio-ethical content to be put into the mould of Hindu religion without decisively rejecting the spiritual conditions of former social conduct. Thus it was shown that Hindu religious experience could be combined with ethical thought and social responsibility, as, indeed, did happen, but without making social values essential and integral to the ultimate view of life.

Approval of the traditional spiritual aims of the Hindu religious view was not simply an expedient of modern thought, besieged as it was from without by an increasing secularization of Hindu life, and insecure from within by a disintegration of the basis of its authority. Evidence points to the conclusion that Hindus were seeking a position in which man's ultimate interests could cohere and be given meaning, and from which clear guidance might be found in moral uncertainty. Here was both a religious and a social necessity. It helped to meet the need for establishing a religious ground in a world of absorbing social interests ; and it aided those who were engaged in the concerns of a changing order by offering an absolute position among the relative conditions of the

immediate situation. The modern emphasis on the values of the spirit was a search for the aims and ends of human life that lie beyond the transient present.

But Hinduism did not give the answer to the problem of man's social frailty ; it only suggested again the old answer that the disposition to failure, as well as to achievement, was to be understood as related to an incalculable series of individual existences. The aims of the new Hindu era also failed to provide religious institutions corresponding to the need of an order of justice that would check individual freedom as well as truly inspire it. Here the conception of *dharma* sought to embrace the modern democratic order of life, but it did not provide a social organization of religion necessary to go along with that order. Rather, *dharma* came to be a matter of doing one's individual duty in the existing order. What that duty might be, raised questions of social organization and conduct for which religion had neither original, nor specifically traditional answers. It was hardly possible that it should have the answers for the historical function of Hindu spirituality, as affirmed in modern times, was largely to sanction social conditions as they developed, trying meanwhile to impose on them its aims and to infuse in them its aspirations.

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INDEX

E

F

G

H

T

U

V

W

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