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NEO-REVIVALIST MOVEMENTS IN HINDUISM AND THEIR CHALLENGES TO HINDU FUNDAMENTALISM

A Retrospect

The long history of Hinduism is marked by alternating periods of decadence and renaissance. The first phase of Hinduism is represented by the hymns of the *Ṛgveda*. These hymns reveal a progress from the worship of the personified powers of nature to the realization of the Absolute Spirit. The most notable development of the Ṛgvedic Age is the conception of *Ṛta* which stands for the triple order, cosmic, moral and sacrificial. The cosmic order was then supposed to be maintained by the sacrifice (*yajña*). It is from this *Ṛta* that the ideals of *Dharma* and the Law of *Karma* are derived. This age of fruitful evolution of theistic and philosophical ideas is followed by the age of *Brāhmaṇa-texts*. During this period, the sacrificial cult grew so complex and elaborate as to appear mechanical and soul-less. A great magical value came to be attached to the meticulous performance of *yajña* and the priestly class became all-powerful and supreme. The idea of *varṇa-āśrama-dharma* began to have its influence over the minds of the people. This was a period of decadence from the point of view of intellectual development. This was followed by a period of renaissance represented by the *Upaniṣad*. It was during this age that contemplation took the place of worship and the acquisition of divine knowledge gained precedence over the performance of rites and ceremonies.

Then came the age of the *Kalpa-sūtras* which took Hinduism back to the age of the *Brāhmaṇa-texts*, to the same old orthodoxy of castes and creeds and to the same old mechanical rites and ceremonies. More rigorous insistence on *varṇa* and *āśrama* became the order of the day to the extent of nullifying the impact created by the intellectual age of the *Upaniṣad*. Another important development of the period which was destined to have a far-reaching impact on Hinduism, was in the direction

of the worship of images in temples.¹ True religion and morality were lost in a heap of meaningless rites, childish superstitions and futile discussions.² This was the period when Buddhism and Jainism arose with a spirit of reformation. They retained the ethical ideals of the orthodox tradition, but repudiated the sacrificial cult and the legacy of the *varna-āśrama*-order. This spirit of opposition to the sacrificial cult created by Buddhism and Jainism had great influence on the later revivalist movements within Hinduism. This was the legacy of the *Upaniṣads*, re-emphasized in a different form. During the age of the epics, Hinduism was brought home to the masses without eclipsing its orthodoxy. This was the age of renaissance, the finest flower of which was the *Bhagavadgītā*. This text has been the quintessence of the intellectual tradition of the *Upaniṣad* and it is equally applicable to practical life. The idealistic *Vedānta* of Sankara and the theistic *Vedānta* of the *Śaiva* and the *Vaiṣṇava* traditions exerted great influence on the different sections of Hindu society. The theistic schools of *Vedānta* provided the necessary background to the *Śaiva* and the *Vaiṣṇava Bhakti* movements which assumed the reformatory spirit from time to time in organizing Hindu society on the ideals of religious fraternity transcending the barriers of caste and creed.

This is only a cursory glance at the past highlighting some major phases of Hinduism before the dawn of what we call the modern period, which showed the rise of Neo-Revivalist movements. All along this period the Orthodox Hinduism wedded to ritualism and *varṇa-āśrama*-ideals, persisted side by side with the *Upaniṣadic* spirit and the intellectual and devotional movements which were gaining supremacy at some time or the other and in some region or the other. This was the case even during the long period of Muslim rule. In these revivalist movements of the past within the fold of Hinduism, we find the traces of the Neo-revivalist movements of the modern period. An attempt will be made here to assess how far these Neo-revivalist movements of the modern period held their sway over the Indian society and how far they succeeded in blunting the sharpness of Hindu fundamentalism.

Background of Neo-Revivalist Movements

The modern period began with the British rule gaining supremacy over the entire Indian sub-continent with the transfer of Government from

1. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. I, p. 710.

2. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, Pp. 352-55.

the East India Company to the British crown in 1858 A.D. This brought a uniform system of administration, law and coinage to the entire country. The Indian society came gradually under the influence of modern European civilization and culture. The Indian civilization and culture with all its glorious past was, for the last one hundred years, at its lowest ebb due to the absence of anything of importance being produced in the field of any language, literature, and art. At this moment the influence of a totally different civilization was disastrous. The result was an uncritical admiration for everything Western together with a contempt for all things of native origin. This was the case with the educated classes. The spread of English education brought the Indian mind into contact with Western science, literature and history. In the glaring light of this new knowledge, many an Indian custom appeared to be utterly meaningless. Then what to speak of the evil customs such as *sati*, infanticide, enforced widowhood, child marriages, untouchability, *pardah*, *devadāsī* system, prohibition of foreign travel, etc. The fierce attacks of the early Christian missions on Hinduism and Hindu society made it a point to show these practices in the worst light. The English education and the Christian missions produced for the time being a thorough skepticism towards Hindu practices and a partial leaning towards Christianity in the minds of the educated classes.

As it turned out this was only an early fascination. This fascination did not last long. The very factors which created that fascination served to rouse Hinduism from its slumber. The innate vitality of that religion asserted itself. This was the starting point of the Neo-revivalist movements. At first the attempt was one of self-defence but later it became fully assertive as a movement to establish the right of Hinduism to live as one of the civilized and civilizing influences of mankind. This endeavour was considerably helped by orientalist like Sir William Jones, Sir Charles Wilkins, Colebrook, Wilson, Muir, Monier Williams, Max Muller, Buhler, Fleet, Havell, etc., who revealed treasures of Indian wisdom to the educated classes in Europe and India and made Indians feel justly proud of their glorious heritage. This resulted in the renaissance of Hinduism with the two-fold task of purging Hinduism of all its later evil accretions and of reinstating its ancient truths. With this background I shall present here the major Neo-revivalist movements like the Brahma Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Theosophical Movement and the Ramakrishna Mission.

1. The Brahma Samaj Movement : R.M. Roy

The founder of the Brahma Samaj was Ram Mohan Roy. His many-sided activities covered the fields of politics, public administration education, social and religious reform. In the field of education, he pleaded for scientific education on Western lines. He urged this in his letter to Lord Amherst. This bore fruit when Lord Macaulay got the Government resolution on English education passed in 1835 A.D. In the field of social reform, Ram Mohan Roy's name will ever be gratefully cherished in connection with the abolition of *Sati*. The agitation actually began in 1818 A.D., when he wrote pamphlets and roused public opinion against that evil practice. He wrote against idol-worship and sacrifices also. His agitation against *Sati* bore fruit in 1829 A.D., when Lord Bentinck declared *Sati* as illegal. He raised his voice against polygamy on the authority of Hindu law-givers such as *Yājñavalkya*. He demonstrated through his paper, "On Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females" (1822 A.D.), that polygamy was contrary to Hindu Law. Except under certain circumstances like barrenness or incurable disease there was no legal sanction for a Hindu to take a second wife while the first wife was living.

Thus Ram Mohan Roy was primarily moved by the considerations of humanity in his social and legal reforms without going against the best traditions of the country. The same was his attitude in the field of religious reform also. His intention was not to break away from the religion of his ancestors but to restore it to its original purity. He took his stand on the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahmasūtra* and founded the Brahma Samaj on what he deemed to be the theism of these scriptures. He advocated that the best means of securing bliss was the pure spiritual contemplation and worship of the Supreme. He taught that social and domestic duties should be performed in accordance with *Śāstras* and *Smṛtis*. The religious practice in the Brahma Samaj was not radical, but modelled on that of *Vedānta*. It consisted in the pure meditation on God with the help of *Gayatri-mantra* and some texts from the *Upaniṣads* and a *stotra* taken from the *Mahānirvāṇa-tantra*. The manifesto of the Brahma Samaj was in accordance with the stand which its founder took: "The ground which I took in all my controversies was not that of opposition to Brahmanism, but to a perversion of it."³

3. Ram Mohan Roy, *Autobiographical Sketch*.

Debendranath Tagore

Maharshi Debendranath Tagore who succeeded Ram Mohan Roy as the leader of the Brahmo Samaj, was primarily responsible for the spirit of rationalism. This widened the gulf between Hinduism and Brahmoism to the extent of almost driving Tagore's successor, Keshub Chander Sen, into the bosom of Christianity. Tagore started a monthly journal called "Tattvabodhini Patrika" for spreading the principles of the Samaj. He promulgated a form of worship called "*Brahmöpāsana*" with texts from *Upaniṣads* and an altered form of the *stotra* from the *Mahānirvāṇatantra*. He became a radical when he began to question the tenability of some of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*. He said: "But when in the *Upaniṣads* I came across 'I am He' (*So'hamasmi*), 'Thou art That, (*Tattvamasi*), then I became disappointed in them also. These *Upaniṣads* could not meet all our needs, could not fill our hearts."⁴ He introduced a theory of intuition as a substitute. Thus he and his followers cut at the root of the tree on which they had been sitting.

When Keshub Chander Sen entered the Samaj, still more radical changes were in the offing. Soon Tagore came under the influence of Keshub and prepared a set of modified rites and ceremonies for the members of the Samaj in a book called "Anusthana Paddhati." Keshub and his friends raised the question of castes and advocated the casting off of the Sacred Thread (*yajnopavita*) by the members of the first three castes as a token of renouncing caste. Tagore had to yield to this demand also. On the next occasion, he reversed his decision and advocated the wearing of the Sacred Thread. Keshub Sen, who as an admirer of Christ wanted a root-and-branch reform of Hindu society, did not like this and seceded from the Samaj and founded a separate Samaj called the Brahmo Samaj of India in 1866 A.D. The Adi Brahmo Samaj remained in the hands of Tagore's friends and relatives.

Keshub Chander Sen

After seceding from the parent Samaj, Keshub Sen and his followers became more Christian in their belief and outlook. Many expected that Keshub would embrace Christianity. But he did not do so, although he created such an impression in the Christian circles by his two lectures :

4. Debendranath Tagore, *Autobiography*, p. 161.

"Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia" and "Great Men." The lectures served to widen the gulf between the Adi Brahmo Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj of India. Keshub introduced *Vaiṣṇava* forms of *Bhakti* in the Samaj. The result of this new emotional religion was that Keshub became the centre of it and his followers began to admire him as Chaitanya of old. That was only a loose conglomerate of Brahmo rationalism, *Vaiṣṇava* emotionalism, Christian supernaturalism and Vedantic mysticism. The consequence was the breaking up of the Samaj after the demise of Keshub Sen. Anand Mohan Bose, Pandit Sivanath Sastri and others, who seceded from Keshub, established Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. This made good progress in social service and maintained the cosmopolitan outlook by combining Hegelian idealism with the *Vedanta* philosophy. Thus it remained and almost disappeared as a high-brow religion without any canon as its source and authority, the Hindu or other scriptures serving as secondary helps only. It has demonstrated one thing and that is the danger of having purely subjective standards in religion. It appeared to throw a formidable challenge to Hindu fundamentalism in the beginning. But once the leadership of its founder ceased, due to internal strife among its members it did not spread beyond the urban intellectual class and make its impact on the masses. The orthodoxy which had its sway over the masses, continued unabated and Hindu fundamentalism remained unaffected in the hands of the priestly classes and other higher-ups in society.

2. The Prarthana Samaj : M. G. Ranade

The Prarthana Samaj was an off-shoot of the Brahmo Samaj of Bengal. It was established in Bombay through the influence of Keshub Chander Sen. Some earnest intellectuals of Bombay formed an association to achieve four objectives, viz., the disapproval of caste, the introduction of widow-marriage, the encouragement of women's education and the abolition of child-marriage. The greatest of the scholars who joined this Samaj was Mahadev Govind Ranade. Like Ram Mohan Roy, Ranade was a person of many-sided activities. Thanks to his efforts and illuminating guidance, the Prarthana Samaj avoided some of the errors to which the Brahmo Samaj of Bengal had succumbed. It did not break away from Hinduism. Nor did it meddle with Christianity. It attempted to harness its theism with the older theistic traditions of the *Bhāgavatas* and the Saints of Maharashtra. The primary concern of the Samaj lay in the direction of social reform and as such it did not spell out any religious belief, anxious to avoid any unnecessary opposition. This was due to the

historical insight of Ranade; he convinced the others that the Samaj was only continuing the religious traditions of the Saints of Maharashtra. With these traditions came the practice of using the regional vernaculars, protest against lifeless rites and ceremonies, blunting of the sharpness of caste distinctions, attempt to raise the status of women and avoidance of the interference of priests. With this careful approach to religious reform, the prarthana Samaj endeavour turned into a movement. But it must be noted that the older religious movements were mass movements, while the Prarthana Samaj was confined to only a small number among the educated people. However limited the scope of the movement, the contribution of Ranade through his books, papers and lectures covers all aspects of Indian life, philosophy, religion, politics, patriotism, social reform, etc., and any modern student would be fascinated by his prophetic vision and deep erudition when he studies his 'Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy,' 'Hindu Protestantism,' 'A Theist's Confession of Faith,' etc.

3. The Arya Samaj Movement: Swami Dayananda

The founder of Arya Samaj was Swami Dayananda, a *Sanyāsīn* and a great scholar in Sanskrit, whose fundamental faith rested on the conviction that *Veda* was of infallible authority and that the Law of *Karma* was binding on man. Dayananda's emphasis was on *Brahmacarya* and *Sannyāsa*. His faith in the old rites of *Upanayana* and *Homa* was very firm. He raised his voice against what he regarded as the corruption of the pure Aryan faith, as he did against the tirades of Christian mission against Hinduism at his time. As he did not know English, his inspiration was derived entirely from Indian sources. Thus the inspiration behind the Arya Samaj was in perfect contrast to that behind the Brahmo Samaj. Again unlike the Brahmo Samaj which addressed itself to the educated few, the Arya Samaj addressed itself to the people at large.

Swami Dayananda wrote a book called *Satyārthaprakāśa* to inculcate the fifty-one articles of his faith. An account of his authorities, philosophy, ethics, *sādhanas* and rituals was given in that book. The authorities he depended upon were the four Vedas, the *Samhitā* or *Mantra* portion only. The *Brāhmanas*, *Vedāngas*, etc., were according to him expositions of the Vedic texts. His philosophy centered around the Brahman, the permeating spirit of the universe. He took a dualistic stand that God and soul were distinct entities, but inseparable from each other in the relation of the pervader and the pervaded. According to him the world was created

by God out of *Prakṛti* and salvation was the release of the soul from pain and suffering and its remaining in a state of freedom in the all-pervading God. His teaching about ethics urged everyone to practise equitable justice for all, together with adherence to truth in word, deed and thought. Accepting the *varṇa-āśrama-order*, he insisted that it should be determined by the merits of the individual. He taught that respect should be shown to one's father and mother, to the teacher, to the righteous persons, to women who were faithful to their husbands and to men who were faithful to their wives. He recommended *niyoga* as a temporary relation for progeny only in extreme cases.

As regards *sādhanas* or means of salvation, Swami Dayananda prescribed the worship of God, the performance of righteous rites, acquisition of true knowledge through *brahmacaryā*, purity of thought, etc. The worship of God recommended comprised three stages, viz., *stuti* or glorification of the attributes and powers of God, *prārthanā* or praying to God for the highest knowledge, and *upāsanā* or conforming to the Divine Spirit in purity and holiness. The rituals prescribed were the *sodasa-samskāras* from conception to cremation. Dayananda said that these *samskāras* would contribute to the physical, mental and spiritual improvement of man. *Agnihotrā* was commended for its contribution to the purification of air and vegetables. *Yajna* and *tirthayātrā* were elevated to the realm of morals.

Such in brief was the creed of the Arya Samaj. The creed consisted of twenty-eight principles when the Samaj was founded in 1875 A.D. at Bombay. Then at Lahore in 1877, it was reduced to ten principles, eight of which were general moral maxims. Of the other two, one asserted that to God alone worship was due and the other prescribed the study and teaching of the *Vedas* as the store-house of true knowledge and as the infallible authority. With this creed Swami Dayananda could make a great impact on the common people, particularly when he adopted Hindi as the medium for his lectures.

But as it happened in the case of the Brahmo Samaj, so in the case of the Arya Samaj, the death of the founder resulted in a controversy in the ranks of the subsequent leadership. The conservatives maintained that the opinions of Swami Dayananda were as binding as the creeds of the Samaj. The progressives did not accept this. The first President of the Samaj, Mulraj, who had enjoyed the confidence of the founder, was

on the side of the progressive party and declared that the founder was not in favour of imposing any of his opinions except the ten principles of the official creed.

In a nutshell, the Samaj accepted in its creed the infallibility of the *Veda*, Law of *Karma* and rebirth, the sanctity of the cow, the efficacy of *Homa* and the importance of sixteen *Samskāras*. It condemned idolatry, animal sacrifices, ancestor-worship, pilgrimages, priestcraft, offering worship in temples, the caste system, untouchability and child-marriages on the ground that they did not have vedic sanction. Two great monuments of the Arya Samaj were the Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College at Lahore and the Gurukula at Kangri, the former being associated with the name of Lala Hansraj, the head of the college party and the latter with that of Swami Shraddhananda, the head of the Gurukula party. There were factional feelings and wordy warfare between the college party and the Gurukula party. Lala Lajpat Rai was a great champion of the Arya Samaj. He has brought out the militant character of the Samaj so far as its defence of Hinduism was concerned: "It is a champion of Hinduism in more senses than one. Its members are proud of Hinduism. They have no hesitation, and will never have any, in staking everything they possess in defence of the Hindu community."⁵

It cannot be gainsaid that the Arya Samaj has played a glorious part in the regeneration of the Hindu community in modern times. Since it is much more vitally connected with Hinduism than the Brahmo Samaj, it did not antagonize Hindu fundamentalism, in spite of its reformatory principles condemning idolatry, animal sacrifices, priestcraft, etc.

4. The Theosophical Society : Annie Besant

The Theosophical Society was first started at New York in 1875 by Colonel Olcott and others on the approval of a Russian lady of extraordinary occult powers called Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. This lady claimed that she started the movement at the behest of a great Hierarchy of Adepts living in Tibet. Again, following the bidding of the great Adepts, she and Colonel Olcott arrived in India 1879 to carry out their work. In the first convention at Bombay, Olcott advocated the reform of education and the revival of Sanskrit and highlighted the necessity of

5. Lala Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, p. 277

checking the activities of Christian Missionaries. On the invitation of the then High Priest of Buddhists called Sumangala, Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott went to Ceylon and engaged themselves in the movement for the revival of Buddhism.

In 1882, the founders made Adyar, Madras, the headquarters of the Theosophical Society. With this, an international organization came to be rooted in the Indian soil, and thanks to the efforts of a British lady called Mrs. Annie Besant, it became a great movement for the revival of Hinduism. The controversy created by a band of non-theosophists as regards the occult powers, etc., of Madame Blavatsky and the consequent report of Richard Hodgson brought Mrs. Besant into close relation with the Theosophical Society. This lady was asked to review Madame Blavatsky's work, 'The Secret Doctrine,' for "Review of Reviews," London. Mrs. Besant became a disciple of Madame Blavatsky on reading her book and declared that Hodgson's report was preposterous. She came to India in 1893 and thereafter made India her home and Hinduism her religion. She dedicated her life to revival of Hinduism and died at Adyar in 1933.

With remarkable insight, she culled out the message from the *Rāmāyana*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhagavadgītā* and held out the "Hindu Ideals" before the people. During her stay at Benares, she gave her lectures on Hindu ideals and produced an English translation of the *Gītā* and summaries of the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata* and useful text-books on Hindu religion and ethics. She had marvellous powers of oratory and organization and with them she travelled the length and breadth of India to enthral thousands of men and women with her speeches. Here are some of the unforgettable exhortations of Annie Besant :

"And if Hindus do not maintain Hinduism, who shall save it? If India's own children do not cling to her faith, who shall guard it? India alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one Make no mistake. Without Hinduism India has no future."⁶

Further, in her lectures under the title "Wake up, India," Mrs. Besant touched the subjects of foreign travel, child marriage, depressed classes, women's education, mass education and the caste system. She said about caste system :

6. Mrs. Annie Besant, *Hindu Ideals*, Concluding Section.

"I regret it, but am bound to say that I do not believe the caste system can continue in India in the changing life of the nation..."

Those who were under the impression that Mrs. Annie Besant was a great champion of Hindu orthodoxy, were really shocked at the revolutionary change that occurred in Mrs. Besant as evident from her lectures "Wake up, India." Thus the challenge which the Theosophical Society posed to Hindu fundamentalism was very feeble. The voice against child marriage, caste system, etc., was only a dilute version of the legacy of the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj.

5. The Ramakrishna Mission : Swami Vivekananda

The religious movement associated with the names of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his disciple Swami Vivekananda, the Ramakrishna Mission, has been extremely faithful to our past and full of possibilities for the future. It has been universal in outlook. The true starting point of the present Hindu renaissance may be said to be Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who was a *jnānin* and a *bhakta* moulded into one. Like a true Hindu, he believed that all religions were branches of the same tree. He demonstrated this truth in his life by going through the *sādhana*s of Islam, Christianity as well as of Hinduism. Though not blessed with much education, he covered the entire region of religious experience by his *tapas* and realized and demonstrated the truths of Hindu scriptures. The sayings of Sri Ramakrishna and his parables and talks hold a mirror to the entire scope of Hinduism. His life and teachings also demonstrate the truth that social evils could be eradicated not so much by the propaganda of social reforms but by releasing a flood of enlightened religious feeling in the society.

Thus what Sri Ramakrishna gave was a practical religion. This was developed, after his death into a great instrument by his disciple, Swami Vivekananda, for the uplift of Hinduism. Swami Vivekananda realized the truths of *Vedānta* in the light of his master's experience and disseminated them to the three continents of Europe, America and Asia. In India, he addressed himself to the task of reinterpreting the ancient *Vedānta* in the light of Sri Ramakrishna's unique spiritual experience and advocated that its application to modern life would enable India to solve all the problems she was confronted with. He taught that the most practical form of *Vedānta* in India was the uplift of the masses, the toiling and starving millions. In

this he was a true fore-runner of Mahatma Gandhi. In his opinion, the model society would be one that combined spiritual culture and secular culture in due proportions. This was the aim behind the Ramakrishna Mission that he founded. This mission was intended not only to serve the cause of religious teaching but also to render social service and spread education. This mission has been carrying out these objectives through a net-work of *maṭhas* and *āśramas* spread all over India and abroad in Burma, Ceylon, North America and South America. It has opened its doors to all without any distinctions of colour or caste and thereby made *Vedānta* practically accessible to all.

Thus the Ramakrishna Movement, as envisaged and guided by its founder and perpetuated by his successors, had dedicated itself to the triple task of elevating the masses through education, putting an end to India's cultural isolation from the world and culling out *Vedānta* from its books to apply its grand truths to all aspects of life. If this movement can hold on to its ideals and spread its gospel so as to "penetrate every pore of Hindu society," as Swami Vivekananda once aspired, then it can flourish as the one and only hope of Hinduism.

Epilogue

This is only a brief account of some major Neo-revivalist movements within the fold of Hinduism in the modern period. The Samaj movements waned into insignificance after enjoying a short span of glory, due to internal strife among its members following the death of their founders. Another reason is what can be best expressed in the words of Ranade is:

There is always good reason for despondency and despair so long as any movement is not so general in its character. This has been the weakness of the Samaj movement – both of our own and of the Arya and Brahmo Samaj – but they have failed as yet to stir the heart of the nation, and their influence is only operative over a few souls brought up in a particular atmosphere.⁷

The Ramakrishna Movement has not met with the same fate as the Samaj movements thanks to the coherence and co-ordinated efforts of its members. That is why it holds out a flood of hope for the future of Hinduism. This can be best summarized in the words of Sri D.S. Sharma:

7. Ranade, *Hindu Protestantism* (1895).

The three religious movements that immediately preceded the Sri Ramakrishna movement were rather poor and inadequate representations of the great historic religion of the Hindus. The religion of the Brahmo Samaj was mere eclecticism, more Christian than Hindu in character. The religion of the Arya Samaj was mere Vedism, which ignored all the later developments in Hinduism. The religion of the Theosophical Society, with its Tibetan Masters, its occult phenomena and its esoteric teachings, was looked upon by most Hindus as a kind of spurious Hinduism. On the other hand, the fourth religious movement, of which Swami Vivekananda was the great apostle, was doubtless not only a full, but also an authentic manifestation of Hinduism.⁸

Whatever might be failings of the Samaj and Society movements, it is necessary to note that our nation has gradually accepted almost all the items of the social reform programme that they advocated. The evil practices of *Sati* and child-marriage have almost disappeared. Animal sacrifices have become scarce. The caste system has lost its rigorous distinction. Untouchability, if practised, is deemed to be a crime. The status of women and the field of their operation due to opportunities of education and employment are almost on par with those of men. The prevailing atmosphere is secular, rather too secular.

In spite of the temples and monasteries all over India drawing millions of devotees, the present generation is generally prone to ignore the great ideals of religion and culture which Hinduism has stood for. In the race for earning more and more material prosperity, we are straying away from those ideals of humaneness and tolerance. It is said that history repeats itself. Hinduism is in the same crisis as it was before the Samaj and other movements began. Will there be a greater expansion of the Ramakrishna movement to save the situation? Or is it only a fond hope?

8. D.S. Sharma, *Hinduism Through the Ages*, p. 160.