

SURVEY

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HINDU RENAISSANCE AND DEVELOPMENTAL MOVEMENT IN INDIA

Through nearly four thousand years of its struggle for self-experience and self-expression in the face of internal and external opposing forces, India has sustained herself as perhaps the most enduring spiritualistic tradition in the world. The richness of her past triumphs in matters concerning the soul, the vitality of her quest for transcendental experience, the ultimate freedom of man from the limiting and shallow phenomenal world, her unique performance in absorbing Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Islam and Judaism, unrestrained renunciation of her saints and seers for the sake of transtemporal paradise of bliss, and her intense love for and practice of peace—all these bear testimony to her spiritual excellence and valour. At the same time this very same inner power of assimilation awakened the Indian community to a new consciousness of change and transformation. The history of the awakening of Indians from a kind of spiritual complacency to the needs of material and practical well-being is an account full of the gradually increasing tension of conversion of an inward-seeing (*antr-darsanic*) sensibility into an exteriorizing process of intelligibility which interprets the spirits of history and change. The British ways of educating and reforming Indians, and the new socio-economic and political forces unleashed by the English administrators in the last sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on, sparkled off clashes between tradition and modernity in all spheres of the Hindu way of life and thinking. It was a time of testing of India's absorbent function confronted with a vastly impressive culture, but alien to the very spirit of her world-negating metaphysics. What was necessary was to effect a change of attitude, to develop and spread a revised approach

towards the reality of the material world, to invent a rational antidote against those elements in the tradition which had proved to be fossils, and to merge in the universal course of industrialization without at the same time losing the Indian ethos. It was a challenge, and the challenge consisted in this that a mass of humanity had to steer clear of the myths in its own tradition on the one hand, and the evils of western civilization on the other; get rid of its own blind and primitive superstitions first, and the dogmas of the emerging sciences next. Both these aspects of the challenge had to develop by assimilating into its existence all that the overall world dynamism offers for the promotion of the dignity of man while preserving what is of imperishable value in its own thought and life.

Reform Movements

Being highly sensitive to these challenges, social and moral reformers¹ Western-educated Hindu revivalists, revolutionaries against the British, and nationalist evolved all over India two complementary movements: (1) a revised devotionism having, at least as a means, some fundamental reforms of the Indian society, and (2) a bold and scientific attempt at educating the public conscience of Indians into accepting certain ways of thinking and doing. The first may be described as **bhakti-karma** or devotion-action movement, and the second as the **jnana-karma** or knowledge-action movement.

I

BHAKTI-KARMA MOVEMENT

RAMMOHAN ROY:

The **Brahmo-Samaj** of Rammohan Roy is said to be the "Father of Modern India". When Roy emerged as a reformer the situation in India was one of abominable illiteracy of the millions, of castes and classes and creeds at war against each other, of poverty-

1. Rammohan Roy was born on 22nd May, 1772 in an illustrious Brahmin family in Bengal.

stricken and slothful Hindus steeped in fantastic superstitions, and of blurred patriotic spirit.² At the spectacle of the sadly regressing state of Indians, the most significant contribution of Ram-mohan Roy to the Indian Renaissance in its beginning stages, was the foundation of a theistic and socially motivated religious movement known as the **Brahmo-Samāj**.³ The preamble of the **Brahmosamaj**-creed declares: "God calls one and all, entrance through His gate is free; no one ever returns disappointed; the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, all are equally welcome there". This shows the catholicity of his movement and the nature of the community which was wide enough to embrace the religious interests of one and all.

The central aim of Roy's reformation movement was to bring about the spiritual integration of mankind. Keeping the torch of **Brahmavidya** always bright, Roy stated that all laws for the reconstruction of society must be founded on a hope of man's inner conversion, i.e. a conversion that would produce a readiness in each to accept the rights of others with just the same regard he would have for his own. Roy, of course, emphasised that the humanistic message embodied in **Brahmo Dharma** was in fact derived from the old Vedanta insight. However, his descent from the pure transcendentalism of the Vedic-Upanishadic heritage to a theory of social good appears to have been made possible by the impact of Christian humanism. It is this radicalism in synthesizing tradition and modernity into one fabric of thinking and acting that stands out in the Brahmo-Samaj. In this way, like a true theistic humanist, Roy saw that the necessity of action towards a socio-political reform can never be ignored by a person who aims at realizing the ideal of total salvation or integral liberation of man in his given historical continuity. The final objective

2. His vehement criticism of some of the practices and customs connected with forms of worship and blurred patriotic spirit sparked off a controversy between himself and the orthodox camp. Cf. U.N. Ball, *Rammohan Roy—A study of his Works and Thought* (Calcutta: U. Ray and Sons, 1933) pp. 57.

3. It meant to be an assembly of all believed in the unity of God and discarded the worship of images. This was a movement for the consolidation of all social values on the integrity of human person. It strove to demolish the walls of distinction and aimed to lead the entire human kind to salvation. Brahmo Samaj succeeded in drawing people's attention to self-realization and value of social stability. In 1865 Brahmo-Samaj was divided into two camps, the conservatives and the progressives.

of the **Bhakti-Karma movement** (Brahmo-Samaj) was to take Indians to a state of consciousness that is closer to God than to the world. This ideal was in sharp contrast to the goal of socialization and industrialization in the Western countries. The active part of the reform movement included as envisaged by Roy himself, the starting of newspapers for educating the public in matters concerning their welfare under a foreign rule; it was very courageous to publish, simultaneously, papers in English, Bengali and Persian at a time when the newspaper industry was in its infancy in India. Roy started several secondary schools, let a successful campaign against widow-burning (**sathi**). A stiff fight was a put up against caste discrimination, especially, in the new Community of God (Brahmo-Samaj), which was to exercise a deep influence on the intellectual, social and religious life of modern India. As the first Indian whose ideas, actions and methods were profoundly affected and inspired by contact with modern Western culture and Christian Associations, Rammohan Roy was also the first to give serious attention to the problem of a synthesis of the fundamental beliefs and "percepts of Jesus"⁴ of the Gospel of Christianity. Although he rejected a good deal of the dogmatic teaching of Christianity, he warmly welcomed its humanitarian message and principles of ethics as taught by Jesus Christ. His study of the Christian Scriptures forced him to write: "The cosequence of long and uninterrupted researches into religious truth has been that I have found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles and more adapted for the use of rational beings than any other which have come to my knowledge"⁵. At the same time, he singled out for attention those classical Hindu Scriptures which came closest in content to an ethical monotheism, thereby offering to his fellow Hindus a means of reforming some of their corrupt beliefs and practices without losing self-respect. This strategic re-interpretation of Hinduism paved the way for the conversion of a number of educated Hindus who recognized, as Rammohan did, the merits of Christian ethics, for they could now claim that these merits were equally the property of their ancestral faith.

4. *The Precepts of Jesus* was mainly a collection of extracts from the four Gospels covering the greater part of the teaching of Jesus. The full title of the book was *Precepts of Jesus, Guide to Peace and Happiness* (Calcutta: 1820).

5. S.D. Collet, *Life and Lectures of Raja Rammohan Roy* (Calcutta: Sadharma Brahmo-Samaj), p. 71.

The most ideal synthesis of important religions in the world that Roy preached entails a kind of **spiritualistic activism**, a **theistic humanism** and an **international fraternity**. Perhaps this is the reason, why the Brahmo-Samaj reform movement attracted a tremendous following after the death of its founder in 1833. Devendranath Tagore (Father of Ravindranath Tagore), Keshu Chandra Sen, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and others advanced the movement until it became a prelude to the era of rationalism which India was to enter upon in the nineteenth century.

DAYANANDA SARASWATI:

Arya Samaj While the Brahmo-Samaj planned to fuse the basic principles of Hinduism, of Islam and of Christianity into one whole, Swami Dayananda⁶, the founder of **Arya Samaj**⁷, was drawn to the Hindu faith and the primordial **Vedic Dharma**. He succeeded in carrying activism to a point of reformation, much in the manner in which Roy was successful in carrying the Vedanta monism to a point of inter-faith-internationalism. But the difference lies in this that Dayananda sought to reassert the supremacy of the Vedic religion as the base of all reformation and not the common religiosity of all nations which was the ideal of integration in the programme of Roy. Though the ideal was never questioned the practice turned out to be rather fanatical in its attitude to other religious persuasions. This, of course, is not to minimize the **importance of the Arya-Samaj** as a reform movement in Hindu society. The Arya Samaj formulated the principles of social reformation in an organized way to suit the needs of the changing conditions of the Hindu community. It suggested the abolition of casteism, the adoption of the law of brotherhood among the races of the world, cultures, nations, and the urgency of India's material welfare. One of the objectives of the Arya

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6. Dayananda Sarasvati (1824-1883) was remarkable Brahmin from Gujarat, who like many inspired Indian Mystics before him, felt compelled to become a *sadhu* for fifteen years and wander around India garbed in the usual saffron robes. He promised to his guru Swami Virjananda Sarasvati that he would make it his life mission to eradicate all impurities from the body of his cherished Hinduism and began his career as a religious reformer. His motto was "go back to the Vedas"
 7. The Arya-Samaj of "Aryan Association" was founded in 1875. It was a symbol an awakening of the head through an attempted return to the Vedic, autochthonous tradition of India. It was very active and nationalistic.

Samaj reads thus: "The primary object of this Society is to do good to the whole world, that is, to look to its physical, social and spiritual welfare."

He began the **Suddhi** Movement.⁸ It was to realize the ideal of unifying India nationally, socially and religiously. Dayananda published and popularized his views through his publications.⁹

Dayananda tried to institutionalize the **Vedic Dharma**. He conducted the Arya Samaj as a kind of the "Church of Hinduism." His entire activity was directed towards partly, a repetition and, partly, a re-statement of the ancient Hindu beliefs. But while he ventured to do all this, he did not fail to focus his attention on important problems like the improvements of the plight of the lower classes, the status of Indian women, and the amelioration of the lot of the depressed castes, who often fell a victim to superstitions and got lost in and all kinds of blind alleys. However, because of the propagandist programme of proselytizing non-Hindus into Hinduism, Dayananda inevitably came into conflict with other proselytizing religions. Though Dayananda was successful in awakening a new consciousness of identity among the loosely related Hindu society, it may be rightly observed that due to lack of extension and inter-faith understanding, the depth of the insight of Dayananda into the reconstruction of India as a secular society as well as a people consolidated on ultra-parochial considerations could not be as impressive as that of Rammohan Roy.

ANNIE BESANT:

Theosophical Society. Another dynamic group that attempted a co-ordination of **bhakti-karma** (devotion to God and action) is the Theosophical Society, which was started in New York, in 1875, by Madame Blavatsky¹⁰ and then appeared in India as a vigorous defender of Hinduism. Mrs. Annie Besant, a follower

8. It was the commission of non-Hindus to Hinduism—which has since become an important feature of every Hindu reform movement.

9. His famous work is *Satyartha Prakas*. It expounded his doctrine and formulated it as a doctrine *sui generis*.

10. Madame Blavatsky was a Russian lady with mysterious mental energies. Along with Col. H.S. Olcott, a former army officer of England, she came to India in 1876.

of Madame Blavatsky and an ardent admirer of Indian thought, came to India with a view to popularizing spiritualism and theosophical studies among the Indian masses. Being a woman of **bhakti** temperament, she could easily attract or capture the hearts of Indians, who despite their socio-political vexations were allured into the devotionism and spiritual quest. Her interpretations of the theosophical approach to socio-political problems put much stress on the liberation of the soul as the only real end of life. Developing a profound understanding and sensibility for everything Indian, she defined liberation as **moksha**, **nirvana**, a state of eternal silence, where the soul is released from the body and lives in perpetual light and bliss.

About the Revival Movement she writes: "The Indian work is, first of all, the revival, strengthening, and uplifting of the ancient religions. This has brought with it a self-respect, a pride in the past, a belief in the future, and as an inevitable result, a great wave of patriotic life, the beginning of the rebuilding of a nation". What Besant felt most keenly about was the universal need to realize the working of God's mind and plans. "Only man's closeness to God, attainable by means of **devotion and love**", she said, "will impress upon him how God works". Besant also shared the Theosophist's anxiety for the freedom of all races. She argued that since all men were innately the expression of the same divine spirit, the distinctions between the low and the high, the ignorant and the learned, the barbaric and the cultured, should have no place in the ideal scheme of the universe. Her immense faith in the universal brotherhood of mankind made her plunge whole heartedly into the strong Indian politics, and she gained so much respect in the nationalist movement that in 1917 she was made the President of the Indian National Congress. To achieve her objects she started the Central Hindu School in Banaras.¹¹

The period of awakening in India was full of prodigious religious currents. All those who directed the movements attempted to bring about changes: change in religious attitudes, society, political involvements—all with a deep desire to transform Indian society at all levels by means of well-planned action, not purely secular but highly seasoned with religiosity of one brand or another, with commitment to the devotion of God and dedicated

11. Cf. *Annie Besant, Autobiography.*

action which arises out of true devotion to God and mankind alike. This was certainly further accelerated by more radical movements: All movements were generated and driven by a positive attitude on the part of Indians to reorient their spiritualistic heritage. This clinging to the religiosity of their heritage was of course unique in the history of mankind's upsurge against any superior claims, especially political claims of supremacy and colonialism. We may understand that the "roots of our cultural heritage" to which our reformers adhered to and which they enriched by intensive political activity, was this religiosity of **bhakti** to the Lord of Nature who assigns everybody his destiny according to the fidelity he exhibits in his total involvement in the task of completion of the divine purpose of the liberation of mankind. Emphasizing this point, Jawaharlal Nehru said: "They wanted some cultural roots to cling on to, something that would reduce the sense of frustration and humiliation that foreign conquest and rule had produced".¹²

RAMAKRISHNA AND VIVEKANANDA:

Ramakrishna Mission. The most powerful realization of the fact that in order to act for the betterment of the suffering souls one must have full confidence in the goodness and mercifulness of God, dawned on a simple and unostentatious Bengali boy, Gangadhar—later known as Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886)—who reached phenomenal heights in Indian spiritual reformation.¹³ The beauty of this Nature filled Ramakrishna with intense ecstasy and prayerfulness. A sudden trance at the age of nine changed his entire personality; he was from then on animated by an extraordinary psychic expanse and a vision of the beyond.

Ramakrishna was a committed believer in man's salvation through union with God. His greatest ambition was to spiritualize the entire world, to turn it into a vast "spiritual sea" to make it pure at heart, to sow in every individual the seeds of divine grace. In this way alone, Ramakrishna thought, he could accelerate the coming of the Renaissance to India and to the

12. The Central Hindu School at Banaras later on grew into the Banaras Hindu University.

13. J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Bombay: 1966) p. 361.

peoples everywhere.¹⁴ Although it is true that he instructed everybody to accept suffering as the very essence of existence instead of taking action to remove it, and thus did not show any marked disposition for action he had a humanitarian outlook broad enough to carry out the ideal of a total benefaction for all.

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), the most perceptive follower of Sri Ramakrishna, received his initiation into the path of spiritual regeneration at the hands of Ramakrishna himself. There was very little in common, however, between the situations in which the two mystics sprang up. Born in an aristocratic family, Vivekananda was exposed in his childhood to Western ways of life and education.¹⁵ Later he became a worker in the Brahma Samaj. On his initiation by Ramakrishna, the young Vivekananda, a sceptic from birth, became so attached to this that family ties and concern for close associates ceased to have any meaning for him. By the emergence of Vivekananda as a spiritual leader of the group of Ramakrishna's followers, the spiritual movement felt the new impact, highly toned with a sense of mission.

Vivekananda toured intensively in India to acquaint himself with the Hindu faith worked in the actual life of the people. From his observations, interesting by enough, he concluded that the crisis of India was due to the decline of the Vedic religion and the Indian's apathy to the spirit of Indian humanism. He was so fully convinced about the absolute truth of the ancient Vedic Path that, more than his teacher, he reverted to the Vedic-Upanishadic Weltanschauung and determined to re-establish it in the face of strong, opposing cultural currents from the West.¹⁶

He was aware of the fact that his teachings were not quite in tune with the helplessness the Indians felt in their peculiar socio-economic and political situation. **Probably what disturbed**

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14. Sri. Ramakrishna with his phenomenal life of intense spirituality, broad and synthetic vision of Hinduism, simple and illuminating exposition of all the ideas and ideals of Hindu Theory, appeared on the Indian scene. Cf. Swami Nikhilananda (trans), *The Gospels of Sri. Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri. Ramakrishna Math, 1969).
 15. Cf. Swami Chidamananda. *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1961).
 16. Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda, A Biography* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1964) pp. 1ff.

him most all the time was incongruity that existed between the glorious ideas of Indian religions and the national humiliation Indians were subjected to in their actual life. His determination to remove this incongruity that led him to find a social service league known as Ramakrishna Mission in 1897.¹⁷ It turned out to be an order of selfless monks who were wedded to the propagation of the Vedanta faith through various types of organized social work. The Mission continues even today as one of the most important welfare institutions in India.

In the same line of reformation and renewal movements we find Aurobindo Ghose who rose to an unbelievable height of eminence as a yogi,¹⁸ philosopher¹⁹ and patriot.²⁰ His vision of the Integral man²¹ made him an important milestone on the India's path of India's onward march towards spiritual synthesis. Undoubtedly Sri Aurobindo is the last important propounder of the need for **bhakti-karma** blending in modern India's rapidly changing scene. As a matter of fact, as a way of philosophization and as a cultural renaissance consistently maintaining the ethos of the Vedic-Upanishadic seers, the **bhakti-karma** movement is bound to be amorphous and varied. Even so, it may be rightly observed, that unless the fusion of **bhakti** and **karma** is made to offer to man an indubitable ground for activity towards the welfare and unity of all, unless it is made to recognize the world of praxis as an indispensable part of human reality, it will recede into the background and be forgotten as a self-contained device for escapism. Bearing in mind the force of concrete cir-

17. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970) pp. 150

18. It was the outcome of an absolutely new spiritual outlook suited to the requirements of the age. The Ramakrishna Mission which was formally registered in 1909 under the act xxi of 1960 renders social, philanthropic, educational, charitable and missionary help to all. Cf. Haridas Bhat-tacharya (ed), *The Cultural Heritage of India* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1975) pp. 720.

19. His books on yoga are:—

The Synthesis of Yoga (Part one and two) (Pondicherry, Birth Centenary Library, 1972).

Letters on Yoga (Part One, Two and Three) ..

20. *The Isha Upanishad* ..

Essays on Gita ..

The Life Divine ..

Basis of Yoga ..

21. *Social and political Thought*

cumstances of the New Age, we must examine the other direction of reformation in India. This may be called the **jnana-karma** Movement.

II

JNANA-KARMA MOVEMENT

While India was reasserting her transcendentalist and spiritualist way of thinking, and making herself immune to the process of Westernization, a more positive attitude was shaping itself among the English-educated Indian intellectuals. This attitude was not only action-oriented and pragmatic but also animated by a higher political consciousness which was symptomatic of an age of enlightenment and the struggle for complete liberation. It had emerged from the rapidly declining nobility consciousness of the Indians which they had inherited from their wise ancestors. The feeling of lagging behind the rest of the advanced world of science and technology, and at the same time of being exploited by a foreign potentate robbed them their begone glory roused the enlightened Indians to react rather strongly. The sense of **dharma** which marks religiosity, directed the patriotic religious minded men and women to engage in increased activity to achieve total uplift of Indians. It combined knowledge (which they had inherited from their forefathers as well as acquired from western centres of learning) and activity (**jnana** and **karma**) and posited the idea of material well-being as part and parcel of salvation, absolute freedom, **moksha**. With the rise of this intellectual awakening in the nineteenth and Indians felt the need to organize their activity in such a way that it could attain a well-defined social and political objective. This was indeed an unprecedented transition in their outlook.

India, in the present century, is in the grip of the **jnana-karma** movement. It is not a movement aimed at the creation of a "blissful heaven" up there, or **Jivanmukti** of the type professed by the Vedic-Upanishadic thinkers. The human welfare that it conceives is total freedom from material privations and the uplift of the psyche, the realization of knowledge and peace, the establishment of amity between man and man, nation and nation, and, the fullest experience of self-fulfilment for every individual. The success of the movement depended on its capacity to instil in India an awareness of a new world-view, which

while upholding the fundamental quest of man to transcend the world and to grasp the primordial inanity of his existence, admits worldliness at least as an unignorable extension of human reality or of the complete human phenomenon.

“Miraculous change of outlook and character in the case of a country and a people is perhaps as possible as a new activation in the life of one single individual. Just as in a reformed personality the past may take to a new mode of functioning, be absorbed in the present state of that personality and remain its metaphysical essence, or may condition the present outlook of the personality without curbing its freedom in any way, in a nation as well, its past may act as a subtle semiconscious undercurrent tilting its selections, rejections, judgements, plans, policies and its entire wish to live and survive in a particular direction. Therefore, in what path Indians propelled by the *jñana-karma* movement will steer their future, how they will bridge their inherent transcendental search and their openness to the technocratic adventures necessitated by the very logic of physical survival, and in what effective manner they will represent their spiritualistic and inward seeing sensibility as an antidote to the scientism of the West, are questions to which future alone might have answers”.²²

The men who will be remembered for being in the forefront of this movement are: Mahadev Govind Ranade (1841-1901), the founder of Prarthana Samaj; Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915), founder of Servants of India Society; R. Tagore (1861-1941); Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948); M.N. Roy (1887-1954), the founder of Radical Humanist Movement; J. Nehru (1889-1964); Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan, the saintly leaders of the Sarvodaya Movement.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE:

1. The Poet's Vision of freedom:

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) grew up in a highly cultured and religious family environment. His poetical as well as philosophical writings had been greatly influenced by the teach-

22. *Supramental Manifestation*
pp. 225; pp. 401

ings of the Upanishads. His own words in the preface to *Sadhana* are the best testimony to his background and training: "The writer has been brought up in a family where texts of the Upanishads are used in daily worship; and he had had before him the example of his father who lived his long life in the closest communion with God, while not neglecting his duties to the world or allowing his keen interest in all human affairs to suffer any abasement"... "To me the verses of the Upanishads and the teachings of the Buddha have ever been a thing of the spirit and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth."²³ Against this background of religion and philosophy he saw in bold relief the picture of the world and human life. Tagore was primarily a man of thought and vision, a vision of true freedom shaped by the currents of India's struggles for freedom.

Freedom through spiritual awakening: Another aspect of the vision of freedom, according to Tagore, is the conviction that mankind could save itself from destruction only by a return to the **spiritual values which permeate all religions**.²⁴ Although this message, stressed India's role as spiritual teacher to mankind, Tagore, never tired of reminding his countrymen that they also needed to learn from the West's vitality and dedicated search for truth as well as creative action. He emphasized the complementarity of Asian and Western cultures to the extent of even opposing **Gandhi**, who was leading a mass movement of non-cooperation with every aspect of British influence in India, including the then prevailing pattern of English education. Rabindranath publicly opposed the Mahatma and was accordingly accused of taking an "unpatriotic" attitude.

It seems that Tagore was able to look more dispassionately on the events of his time than those who hurled themselves into the struggle against British rule. Reversing Tilak's dictum that social reform diverted and divided the movement for independence, Tagore held that the clamour for political rights distracted men from more fundamental tasks such as erasing caste barriers, reconciling Hindus and Muslims, uplifting the poor and helpless villagers, and liberating men's minds and bodies from a host of self-made but unnecessary burdens.... In an age of

23. Sinari, *The Structure of Indian Thought* (Illinois: 1970) p. 246.

24. R. Tagore, *Sadhana* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1913) pp. vii

growing xenophobia he sought to keep India's windows open on the world. For his creativity, his breadth of vision, and his zeal in championing man's freedom from arbitrary restraints—whether social, political or religious—Tagore deserves comparison with the great artist-philosophers of Renaissance humanism in the West.²⁵

“Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight. Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim. My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple. No. I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight. Yes, all my illusions will turn into the illumination of Joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love.”²⁶

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; where knowledge is free; Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls; Where words come out from the depth of truth; where tireless striving stretches its arms toward perfection; Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit; Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action; Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake”²⁷

2. True freedom as transcendence from Svanubhuti to Sarvānubhuti.

In every individual reside the lesser and greater man. The lesser is occupied with selfish interests but the greater man lives in the universal. The lesser man engages himself in the pursuit of ego-centric wishes while the greater man's duty lies in cultivating the true will of the universal. Only when the selfish individual expands himself into selfless universal, do evils cease as evils and grow into good. His stress is on **Sarvānubhuti** or

25. R. Tagore, *Creative Unity* (London: Macmillan & Co. 1959) p. 29.

26. Amiya Chakravarty, *A Tagore Reader* (Boston: Beacon Press 1961) p. 181.

27. Cf. *Gitanjali*, 73, 1938.

the feelings of at-homeness in the whole. Sarvānubhuti is not merely a feeling; it is also an attitude. At-homeness entails harmony with all created objects; Tagore says: "Man loses his true station when he fails to unite fully with his fellows. A complete man is one who has this capacity for union; a lone individual is a fragmented being".²⁸

3. Basis of Unity is Brahma Vihara.

The attitude of a man possessing true love is **Brahma Vihara**. What is Brahma Vihaāra?... "With everything whether it is above or below, remote or near, visible or invisible, thou shalt presume a relation of unlimited love without any animosity or without a desire to kill. To live in such a consciousness while standing or walking, sitting or lying down till you are asleep, is Brahma Vihara, or in other words, is living and moving and having your Joy in the spirit of Brahma".²⁹

Love implies the negation of all egoism. So long as the 'I' is prominent in a man, love cannot dawn in him. Ego-consciousness blurs our vision and makes us narrow and bigoted. Hence Rabindranath's prayer is "Sink all my egoism in tears." He is ashamed to face God with his little egoistic self::

I came out alone on my way to my tryst
But who is this that follows me in the silent dark?
He is my own little self, my Lord, he knows no shame;
But I am ashamed to come to thy door in his company.³⁰

4. True religion as the Religion of Freedom:

The love of man led the poet-philosopher to formulate the Religion of Man, a religion grounded in sound humanism. In **Sonār Tāri** he wrote: "Whatever I can offer to God I offer to man and to God I give whatever I can give to man. I make God man and man God."

His concept of humanism is not anthropocentric but God-centric. Anthropocentric humanism lays undue emphasis on man's

²⁸. *Ibid.* 35

²⁹. R. Tagore, *Towards Universal Man*, p. 323.

³⁰. Op. cit. *Sadhana* p. 18

ego. Soon it is faced with dualism and opposition—opposition between self and non-self reason and faith. Man's loneliness, anxiety and fear are all due to his estrangement from God. Divine humanism which speaks of man's rootedness in God guarantees peace and true happiness.

What is the end of this all-embracing love? In love, does the finite individual become God? Rabindranath does not uphold Sankara's view that in **Moksha** or emancipation man becomes Brahman or the Absolute... In order that the eternal love-drama between God and man may go on uninterrupted, the lover and the beloved must maintain their individual distinctness. This does not mean that Rabindranath believes in anything like dualism. The finites are in the infinite but they have their own distinctness just as waves are in the sea but they are distinct from the sea.

The aim of human existence lies in the process of perfection and not in perfection itself. Rabindranath believes that if man attains complete perfection, he becomes God and in that case the divine love drama comes to an end and godhood becomes meaningless. This is why he accords to man more and more perfection but not complete perfection. This is a way to total freedom and not freedom itself.³¹

What is Swaraj? In a retort to Gandhi's arguments for a narrow view of **Swaraj** Tagore wrote: "Our fight is a spiritual fight—it is for Man. We are to emancipate Man from the meshes that he himself has woven round him these organisations of national egoism. The butterfly will have to be persuaded that the freedom of the sky is of higher value than the shelter of the cocoon. If we can defy the strong, the armed, the wealthy—revealing to the world the power of the immortal spirit—the whole castle of the Giant Flesh will vanish in the void. **And then Man will find his Swaraj**, his overall autonomy of existence." So Tagore's plea to Gandhi was to call all forces into action for the total liberation of man, for establishing the **Swaraj** in the widest horizons of human achievements:

Come ye from all sides and be welcome.
Let all the forces of the land be brought into action,

31. *Gitanjali*, 30

32. *Op. cit.* *Creative unity*, pp. 3

for then alone shall the country awake. **Freedom is in complete awakening, in full self-expression.**³²

MAHATMA GANDHI:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), who became Mahatma of his own people, we more a man of action, a **Karmayogin** (as his name allegorically signified). When asked for a message to mankind he said: "My life is my message." In working out a philosophy of life which is dynamic enough to stir a people from their slavery and forced slumber, Gandhi took his whole lifetime of striving to weave together the broken links of human solidarity, by fasting and fighting for the truth of freedom of the oppressed. So here are some of the aspects of his dynamics for achieving the liberation of mankind as seen in the model of achieving integral freedom for the Indian people.

1. The desire for truth in love.

The basis of true freedom is the respect of truth itself: truth about human solidarity, truth of human nobility and truth about human liberty. The shortest way to these truths according to Gandhi is Love of Humanity. Because of this conviction, the Mahatma won the hearts of the Indian people with his insinuating love. About this his one time ideological rival Rabindranath Tagore wrote:

Mahatma has won the heart of India with his love; for that we have acknowledged his sovereignty. He has given us a vision of the **shakti** (power) of truth; for that our gratitude to him is unbounded. We read about truth in books; we talk about it but it is indeed a red-letter day, when we see it face to face. Rare is the moment, in many a long year, when such good fortune happens. We can make and break congresses every other day. It is at any time possible for us to thump the country preaching politics in English. But the golden rod which can awaken our country **in truth and love** is not a thing which can be manufactured by the nearest goldsmith. To the wielder of that rod our profound salutation!... No Congress or other outside institution succeeded in touching the heart of India. It was roused only by the touch of love. Having had such a clear vision of this wonderful power of Truth,

are we to cease to believe in it, just where the attainment of **Swaraj** is concerned? Has the truth, which was needed in the process of awakening, to be got rid of in the process of achievement.³³

2. The formation of his ideology of Satyāgraha, for liberation.

When Dr. S.W. Clemens, a missionary, asked the Mahatma about the book of person that had influenced him most, he replied: "The Bible, Ruskin and Tolstoy".³⁴ **Tolstoy's The Kingdom of God is Within You** now overwhelmed him with its message of Christian pacifism. Similarly, Ruskin's **Unto This Last** made real to him the significance of manual labour as an expression of solidarity between the educated and the uneducated, and he acted immediately on this insight by starting a rural settlement for his growing band of followers. His studies of the **Sermon on the Mount** and the **Gita** led him to the conclusion that the ideal life was one of selfless action in the service of one's fellowmen, and the best method of righting wrongs was to protest non-violently and to suffer lovingly rather than submit to injustice. Applying these principles to the struggle for fair treatment to the Indian community in South Africa, Gandhi coined the term **satyagraha** (truth insistence) defining it as 'soul-force' or 'the force which is born of truth and love' or 'non-violence'.

The most ardent of Indian nationalists, Gandhi can also be considered to be the greatest representative of the renaissance of the Hinduism of his times. His long residence among Christian communities sharpened his unusual sense of sinfulness and his desire to serve the humblest of his fellow men. Stanley Jones' note on **Gandhi and the Christian faith** is significant in this context. Gandhi took seriously the New Testament injunction to return good for evil, and often referred to Jesus as "the Prince of Civil Resisters."³⁵ This led him to deepen his own convictions about fighting for justice till the end. Harmony between thought and deed thus meant far more to Gandhi than consistency between one thought and another. This is for him the very definition of truth, which liberates man by action (**karma**).

33. "The call of Truth" Modern Review, xxx, 4, 429-33

34. *Ibid.*

35. E. Stanley Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Interpretation* (New York: Abingdon Cocksburg Press), pp. 83.

3. **Swarāj as Freedom from our 'selves', but in ourselves.**

In Gandhi's view, the aim of liberation struggle is **swarāj**. But his theory of **swarāj** has both individual and national significance. With reference to the individual, who has to fight and achieve **swarāj**, it is closely related to his personal culture (conduct); and with reference to the nation, **swarāj** is related to its civilization. In Gandhi's view, Civilization is very intimately connected with the notion of duty: "Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the **path of duty**. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions i.e. freedom from our 'selves'; while so doing we achieve freedom in ourselves.³⁶

But to the question, how do we account for our slavery, which has come almost as a part of our civilization, Gandhi answers:

"That civilization which is permanent outlives it. Because the sons of India were found wanting, its civilization has been placed in jeopardy. But its strength is to be seen in its ability to survive the shock. Moreover, the whole of India is not touched. Those alone who have been affected by Western civilization have become enslaved. We measure the universe by our own miserable foot-rule. When we are slaves, we think that the whole of India is in that condition. As a matter of fact, it is not so, yet it is as well to impute our slavery to the whole of India. But if we bear in mind the above fact, we can see that if we become free, India is free. And in this thought you have a definition of **Swarāj**. **It is Swarāj when we learn to rule ourselves...** The **Swarāj** that I wish to picture is such that, after we have once realized it, we shall endeavour to the end of our lifetime to persuade others to do likewise. But such **Swarāj** has to be experienced, by each one for himself. One drowning man will never save another. Slaves ourselves, it would be a mere pretention to think of freeing others."³⁷

4. **Ahimsa as means to liberation.**

Ahimsa can be considered as having both a negative and a positive aspect. In its negative form, "ahimsa means not injur-

36. *Ibid* pp. 51

37. *Hind Swaraj*, p. 28

ing any living being, whether by body or mind. It may not therefore, hurt the person or any wrong-doer or bear ill-will to him and so cause him mental suffering." It rules out not only evil deeds like killing, injuring etc., and harsh words or harsh judgments, but even evil thought. If we return blow for blow, we depart from the doctrine of *ahimsa*. But I go further. If we resent a friend's action, we shall fall short of this doctrine... by resenting, I mean wishing that some harm should be done to the enemy, or that he should be put out of the way, not even by any action of ours, but by action of somebody else, or say by the divine agency. If we harbour even this thought, we depart from the doctrine of *ahimsa*."³⁸ In short, in the negative sense, "*ahimsa* means avoiding injury on earth, in thought, word or deed".³⁹

In the positive sense "It is love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by acquiescence. On the contrary, love the active state of *ahimsa*, requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically."⁴⁰

Gandhi identifies *ahimsa* with love. Nay it means for him pure love or better, universal love. He defines true love as follows: "The real love, is to love them that hate you, to love your neighbours eventhough you distrust them...of what avail is my love if it be only so long as I trust my friend, even thieves do that."⁴¹

As he advanced in the practice of *ahimsa*, Gandhi distinguished three levels of non-violence. The highest of these is the **non-violence of the brave**. "The doctrine of non-violence is not for the weak and the cowards; it is meant for the brave and the strong. The bravest man allows himself to be killed without killing. And he desists from killing or injuring, because he knows that it is wrong to injure"⁴² (Harijan July 20, 1937, p. 418). It is the non-violence of the one who practises it, not out of mere necessity, but from inner conviction based on moral considerations. For him it is a creed. It is also the mightiest force on earth. This

38. Ibid. P. 43-44

39. M.K. Gandhi, To the Students (Ahmedbad, 1949) 37

40. Harijan, Sept. 7, 1937, p. 234

41. Young India, Aug. 25, 1920, p.2

42. Harijan March 3, 1946, p. 28.

non-violence is not merely political but pervades every sphere of life.

Non-violence of the Weak. The second is the non-violence practised as a matter of mere policy or expediency in a certain sphere of life. Gandhi calls it the non-violence of the weak or passive non-violence of the helpless. A man adopts it not because of his mental conviction but on account of his lack of strength to use violence. "I have frankly and fully admitted that what we practised during the past thirty years was not non-violent resistance, but passive resistance which only the weak offer because they are unable, not willing, to offer armed resistance"⁴³ Explaining the nature of non-violence, used in India to secure independence, Gandhi wrote: "As I have said **India as a nation is not non-violent** in the full sense of the term. Her non-violence is that of the weak; she betrays her weakness in many of her daily acts. She appears before the world today as a decaying nation. I mean here not in the political sense but essentially in the non-violent, moral sense"⁴⁴ This became clearer when, after independence, communal riots broke out. Then, instead of using non-violence to settle disputes of every kind people killed one another. Thus using violence at the first opportunity, India showed the essential characteristic of non-violence of the weak.

Finally, Non-Violence of the Coward. "Cowardice and ahimsa do not go together any more than water and fire"⁴⁵ A coward flees from his opponent instead of facing him, not because he loves him, but he does not have the courage to oppose him. This is unmanly and dishonourable conduct. "Cowardice as impotence is worse than violence. The Coward desires revenge but being afraid to die, he looks to others, may be the government of the day, to do the work of defence for him. A coward is less than man. He does not deserve to be a member of a society of men and women". According to Gandhi, in every case of aggression, resistance is the supreme duty. To resist non-violently is the most manly course. But when one cannot deliberately accept non-violence as a principle of conduct, violent resistance becomes one's first and foremost duty. For, "it is better to be violent if

43. " July 20, 1937, p. 418.

44. " March 28, 1938, p. 54.

45. " Oct. 12, 1935, p. 275.

46. " Nov. 4, 1939 p. 331.

there is violence in our breasts than to put on the cloak of non-violence to cover impotence"⁴⁷. Again: "If one has not the courage, I want him to cultivate the art of killing and being killed, rather than in a cowardly manner flee from danger... For the latter in spite of his flight, does commit mental **himsa**. He flees because he has not the courage to be killed in the act of killing"⁴⁸. Unlike a coward, a violent man is courageous and true to his feelings. "I have therefore said more than once in these pages, that if we do not know how to defend ourselves, our women and our places of worship by the **force of suffering**, i.e. **non-violence**, we must, if we are men, be at least able to defend all these by fighting"⁴⁹.

5. **Ahimsa and Satyam** (as means and end.)

Ahimsa is the means to an end, namely, **truth**. So Gandhi is prepared to sacrifice **ahimsa** for the sake of truth, but not the latter for anything whatsoever. Actually, **ahimsa** was discovered in the course of his search for truth. For him "a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realization of ahimsa." Here follows the testimony of Gandhi's experiments with truth in the last discourse, entitled "Farewell", in his autobiography. This much I can say with assurance, as a result of all my experiments, that a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realization of Ahimsa. To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means. Identification with everything that lives is impossible without self-purification; without self-purification the observance of the **law of Ahimsa** must remain an empty dream; God can never be realized by one who is not pure of heart. Self-purification therefore must mean purification in all the walks of life. And purification being highly infectious, purification of oneself necessarily leads to the purification of one's surroundings...

47. " Nov. 15, 1946, p. 312.

48. " Oct. 21, 1939, p. 310.

49. Harijan, Jan. 15, 1938, p. 418.

Experiences and experiments have sustained me and given me great joy. But I know that I have still before me a difficult path to traverse. I must reduce myself to Zero. So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him. Ahimsa is the farthest limit of humility. In abiding farewell to the reader, for the time being at any rate, I ask him to join with me in prayer to the God of Truth that He may grant me the boon of Ahimsa in mind, word and deed.⁵⁰

DR. AMBEDKAR:

Of the total population of Scheduled Castes in Maharashtra, it is estimated that the Mahars alone account for about 70 per cent. For the village economy, they constituted the most important source of agricultural labour. That was why a village in Maharashtra without a **Maharwada** (Mahar residential area) was inconceivable. (The State itself seems to have its name from this larger population of the villages).

Being un-touchables, the Mahars lived on the outskirts of the village; and there was a time when they could not even enter the village before nine in the morning and after three in the afternoon lest their shadow fall on a high caste Hindu and render him ritually unclean. The children of Mahars were not allowed to attend school along with the children of other Hindus. Being illiterate and untouchable, all public services were closed to them; they were the poorest of the poor. They were also forbidden from entering temples for worship in the Hindu tradition.

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (Dr. E.R. Ambedkar) is the most brilliant leader the Mahar community has produced. The Mahars gave him their entire loyalty, even as he gave them political and religious leadership through the years of India's struggle for Independence and for about two decades thereafter, in order to secure for them a measure of **social liberation**. Ambedkar also established himself as a leader of national status. He served on the Cabinet, under Jawaharlal Nehru, as Minister for Law and in that capacity he piloted the Constitution of India through the Constituent Assembly. He is therefore, respected as the **Father of the Indian Constitution**.

50. Young India, June 16, 1927, p. 196.

Dr. Ambedkar was the accredited leader of the 'Untouchables' in the twentieth century: His resolution, got passed in the Yeola Conference of the leaders of untouchables at Nasik in September 1935, was his programme of action. The resolution read:

The depressed classes must leave the Hindu fold and join some other religion that gives social and religious equality to them.

In 1956, over twenty years after the resolution was passed, Ambedkar renounced Hinduism and embraced Buddhism. His followers accepted the lead given by their Babasaheb (Father) and they were called Neo-Buddhists.

1. The forces at work behind the liberation movement.

The unfortunate feature of the Indian caste system is that it rests on religious sanctions. The class structure headed by the superior Brahmins, an instrument for exploiting the lower castes in a variety of ways, especially, the untouchables, who became victims of social as well as religious injustice. In making a historical survey, we come across Buddhism as the first socio-religious movement which revolted against Brahmanism and Vedism. Buddhism at that time of its inception became a popular movement because of its concern about the social questions of the day. One of the objectives of the movement was to eradicate caste system. The Buddha himself admitted the low-castes and outcastes into his community of monks (*sangha*). The failure of the Buddhist revolution was caused not only by Brahmin opposition but also by the entry of Brahmin 'impostors' into the *Sangha*. Since there was this concrete instance of failure to wipe out the caste structure, Ambedkar took it as a challenge, had a greater try again with renewed vigour in his own time, to fight the caste Hindus and give the Mahars a respectable place in society.

Ambedkar being a man drawn the masses, and himself an Untouchable, remained to the last a man of the people. Armed with higher education, a keen intellect, a forceful tongue and a mighty pen, he fought social injustice and tyranny.⁵¹ He united

51 M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography* (Ahmedbad, 2nd ed. rpt. 1969) p. 383.

the untouchables, raised them to the level of human beings and put them on the social and political map of the country. This is the legacy of Ambedkar. After a study of Hinduism he concluded that the social philosophy of Hinduism is based on inequality, and that, therefore, 'it cannot save anybody'.⁵²

2. Decisive steps:

a) Rejection of the Congress and Gandhism.

It is reported that in the initial stages of the social agitations pioneered by Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi did not fully support the movement, especially from 1924 to 1930. While Mahatma Gandhi remained inactive, the Untouchables had started a movement called the **Satyagraha**. The objective of the movement was to establish their right to draw water from public wells and enter public temples. This **Satyagraha** movement went on for full six years when it was brought to a close in 1935 at a Conference held in Yeola in Nasik district in which the Untouchables, (Cf. the resolution above) in spite of the adamant attitude of the Hindus succeeded in getting a resolution passed. This **Satyagraha** movement was no doubt independent of the Congress. It was organised by the Untouchables and financed by the Untouchables... At that time Gandhi did not give support to the **Satyagraha**, but condemned it in strong terms.

It was against the background of such disappointments that the depressed classes, through their spokesman Ambedkar, insisted at the Round Table Conference in the early 1930's that they be given constitutional safeguards through separate electorates, prior to the grant of independence to India. Gandhi had agreed to separate electoral constituencies for Muslims, but he contended that the Untouchables were Hindus and strongly objected to the idea of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes.⁵³

52. His works *Annihilation of Castes* (1930) *What congress and Gandhi have done to the untouchables* (1945) and *The Untouchables* (1948) are examples of his concern for the downtrodden.

53. Cf. Ambedkar's speech at Nagpur on 15th Oct. 1956, quoted in T.S. Wilkinson, *Ambedkar and the Neo-Buddhist Movement* (Bangalore, 1972) p. 27.

Against this background of strong opposition even from leading Freedom Fighters like Gandhi, Ambedkar together with others of his movement took the drastic step of rejecting the Congress and the Gandhian ideology of undivided **Hinduraj**. In the famous Yeola resolution the Untouchables **en masse** led by Ambedkar decided to break away from Hinduism, which was so oppressive in all respects with its castes discriminations. With a deep sense of sorrow at the attitude of Gandhi, Ambedkar wrote in his book, **Annihilation of Caste—with a reply to Mahatma**—the following memorable words:

The world owes much to the rebels who would dare to argue in the face of the Pontiff and insist that he is not infallible. I do not care for the credit which every progressive society must give to its rebels. I shall be satisfied if I make the Hindus realize that they are the sick men of India and that their sickness is causing danger to the health and happiness of other Indians.⁵⁴

b) **Conversion to Buddhism.**

The resolution passed at the Yeola Conference by the leaders of the Untouchables was steadily implemented in subsequent conferences and thereby Ambedkar and others educated the Untouchable communities into a new awareness about their own future and destiny. He warned them against erroneous views that conversion alone would bring them equality, social or religious. On the contrary, a consolidation of the scattered Untouchables on the principles of social justice and a common religious bond would serve their cause of liberation better. About conversion alone he stated: "Go anywhere we will, we would have to fight for our welfare; go we may anywhere, fight is inevitably in store for us".⁵⁵

It was time for taking a decisive step in the year 1956 when Ambedkar convened the Nagpur Conference of the Untouchables. He himself, on 14th October, (on Dasara day) at a public ceremony held at Nagpur, took **Diksha** (initiation) and became a Buddhist. After the ceremony Ambedkar made a speech and enquired as to how many people would be willing to follow him.

54. Ibid. p. 38-39.

55. B.R. Ambedkar. *Annihilation of Castes* (2nd edition, 1937)

Three lakh eighty-thousand people expressed their willingness and embraced Buddhism. On the same day Ambedkar founded the **Bharatiya Buddha Mahasabha** with the object of propagating the Dhamma, especially among the Untouchables.⁵⁶ In his speech he said: "This conversion has given me enormous satisfaction and pleasure unimaginable. I feel as if I have been liberated from hell." When asked about the motive behind the conversion movement, Ambedkar replied, "**We are making efforts to reach manhood**". This indeed points to the nerve of the whole liberation movement of the infra-structure of a society which was in labour pangs yearning for the dawn of its political independence.

VINOBA BHAVE:

We have seen that Gandhi had emphasized the usefulness of his twin principles of truth and non-violence to solve a wide variety of human problems. Since the achievement of political independence, some of the social and economic implications of these principles are being worked out by a small group of devoted disciples. The leader of this growing band is the Maharashtrian Brahmin Vinoba Bhave,⁵⁷ often referred to as Acharya, "the teacher" or "preceptor." Reading a newspaper version of public lecture by Gandhi he felt so drawn by the latter's combined moral and political programme that he joined his ashram at Sabarmati, near Ahmedabad. Vinoba distinguished himself by his austerity and trustworthiness, and Gandhi sent him in 1921 to Wardha, to a place called Pavnar to open a new ashram there. At the start of the 1940 civil disobedience movement, Gandhi chose Vinoba to be the first satyagrahi to court arrest.

1. Bhoodan Movement for Liberation of the Oppressed.

In 1951, while walking through the disturbed areas of Hyderabad, Vinoba hit upon an alternative method of bringing about the terrorizing and looting of wealthy landlords, which Communist

56. T.S. Wilkinson, Op. cit. p. 27.

57. B.R. Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma* (Siddharth College Publication, 1957). This monumental work of Ambedkar deserves special attention in this context. This book of his is a thesis on the Buddha's Dhamma and Ambedkar regards it as his *magnum opus*.

leaders were inciting in this part of India. Placing emphasis on **voluntary donations**, he begged for land from those who had more than they needed in order to give it to those who had none. His new method of distributing wealth had an immediate practical appeal to the embattled large landholders of Hyderabad. In many other states also, where he toured on foot, he could collect considerably large plots of land donated on ethical and religious grounds. By April 1957, over four million acres including 2500 villages had been donated to the **Bhoodan** Movement. About this movement he writes: "Through **Bhoodan-yajna** I intend to solve the land problem, which is the main problem for the whole of Asia... what is of greater importance is that the level of thinking gets elevated as a result of this movement... The villager will begin to think, 'I shall work not for myself but for the society,... care not only for myself but for the whole village community'... when we adopt such an attitude, the entire moral plane is changed."⁵⁸

2. Sarvodaya, the Welfare of all.

The word **sarvodaya**, "the welfare of all" had been coined by Gandhi to denote the full range of his attempts at social and rural uplift. Sarvodaya emphasizes, that a radical change in the existing patterns of thought, values, beliefs and social behaviour constitutes revolution. A revolution, therefore, must start with oneself as the nucleus and spread out to others by example.⁵⁹ The basic principle behind **Bhoodan** and **Sarvodaya** movements is that "every issue in this world can be solved through peace". "Those who believed that revolution is possible through peaceful means have come to doubt if revolution is not possible through peace. If this is the result of the last six years of our activity, I think that this is much more than what we expect"⁶⁰

58. Vinoba was born in a Brahman family of Maharashtra in September 1895. A brilliant undergraduate, he gave up College education because it was not what his soul craved for. Even so, he has remained a student all his life. He was an erudite pundit of Sanskrit, philosophy and religious literature of the world.

59. Vinoba Bhave, *Revolutionary Sarvodaya* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1964) pp. 38-42.

60. *Ibid* p. viii.

The ancient ideal of renunciation of worldly goods and concerns has found a new purposefulness in Vinoba's programme.⁵¹ In addition to **Bhoodan** for attaining **sarvodaya**, he proposed a voluntary gift of one-sixth of one's property and wealth for use by the community (**sampattidan**) and, finally, the giving of one's entire life for the service of the poor (**Jivandan**). These are some of the aspects of his movement for the total liberation and welfare of the people who are socially, economically and even religiously exploited. In one word, Vinoba's liberation ideology implied that the need of the hour was to mobilize all wealth in every form and press it into the service of the society. The **sampattidan** way will turn every house into a bank on which the society can draw freely for all its wants. And because what is offered will be used locally, it makes it a very easily workable plan. It will directly result in building up the **collective strength** of the people. It will unite them with one another and release tremendous energy for constructive effort on a collective basis. We know that practice of **equality and renunciation** are good, but we have to look at them afresh and regard them as forces for promoting social welfare.

III

This Survey of Hindu Renaissance and developmental movements in India is not exhaustive. It is limited to a few movements and their leaders. This analysis highlights the following points: (i) In all the movements we see leaders coming forward to build a just, fraternal and 'free' society. (ii) Society and its systems cannot be transformed by limited actions. We must put our struggle in a wider national and historical perspective for the liberation of the people. (iii) Society needs liberation and people will fight for it when constraints are put on it from both outside (eg. foreign domination) and within (eg. oppressive nature of society, caste system, meaningless customs and traditions etc.) (iv) The necessity of deeper understanding of complex problems of development, justice and tolerance in order to organize programmes and movements. (v) The ability to understand the need

51. Cf. quoted from Bhawe, "Communism and Sarvodaya" *Sarvodaya*, May, 1957, reprinted in *New Age*, a political monthly of the Communist Party, Vol. VI, No. 10 (Oct. 1957) pp. 41-45.

of the time and readiness and courage to take up the challenges. (v) It was the inner power of assimilation that awakened the pioneers of the movements; it was awakening to activity from a spiritual complacency to the needs of material and practical well-being.

Abominable illiteracy, constant conflicts between castes and classes and creeds, poverty, fantastic superstitions, blurred patriotic spirit etc. led Indian society to a spectacle of sadly regressing state. Hindu Renaissance and the theistic and socially motivated religious movements stepped into the situation. The movements had to bring about the spiritual integration of mankind; social reformation and reconstruction of society; conscientization of the Public about their welfare in a foreign rule; national, social and religious unification. They struggled to free man from all sorts of restraints. Their vision of freedom was not purely materialistic; rather it was a freedom through spiritual awakening: a return to the spiritual values which permeate all religions; dedicated search for truth; transcendence from *svānubhūti* to *sarvānubhūti*; complete awakening and full-self expression; and a freedom from ourselves but in ourselves. Thus the goal of these movements and their leaders was to achieve total freedom and integral development of man and society. To some extent, Hindu Renaissance and the developmental movements achieved this goal.

Statistics and data,⁶² distributed by various agents, give a clear picture of Indian society today. The analysis⁶³ and research works⁶⁴ of many into various aspects make us aware of the current situation of India. The present time calls for the reconstruction of society. A survey of the present developmental movements will therefore, be timely. In any case, Indian society today needs a transformation, radical change, total revolution and the role of religion in the structural transformation of society is vital. We conclude this survey with two quotations from the books of two living leaders of India:

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62. Vinoba Bhave, *Random Reflections* (Varanasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakasham, 1971), p. 27.
63. Cf. P.D. Ojha, "A configuration of Indian Poverty: Inequality and Levels of Living", *Reserve Bank of India Bulletin*, XXIX.
Cf. J.P. Naik & Syed Nurullah, *A Student History of Education in India 1800-1973* (New Delhi: 1974) pp. 45-56.
Cf. *Census of India 1975* (about distribution of rural property).
64. John Desrochers "India's Search for Development and Social Justice" (Bangalore: CSA Publication, 1977)

“Transformation in every field of life is what is required... A philosophy of life based on a penetrating insight into true life of things’ is essential for revolution. The courage to penetrate and power to see clearly the meaning of things hidden beyond the situation prevailing around us and to act up to the discovered meaning is what is known as revolutionary insight... Revolution can take place only where there is this power of penetrating insight... practice of **samya-yoga**⁶⁵ is the first distinguishing mark of a revolutionary philosophy. The second is devotion to the principle of Dignity of Labour... The third is the vow to resist injustice (resistance through non-violence)”.⁶⁶ “...the ultimate objective of the people’s movement was defined by me as total revolution... This effort need not always assume the form of a confrontation with the government provided the latter is responsive to the people’s will and is committed to their welfare. Nor is the struggle to be confined to the political field alone; it will have to be waged on many fronts—social, economic, educational, cultural, even ecological... If God grants me better health in the coming months I look forward to taking up my cry of total revolution and to do whatever might be in my power...”⁶⁷

65. Houtart F. *Religion and Development in Asia* (Baguio Feres Seminar, 1976)

66. *Samya-yoga*, according to Vinobaji is the dominant theme of the Bhagavad Gita. Attainment of *Equanimity* of mind, social *equality* and spiritual *identity* with the supreme should be the ideal of one’s life.

67. Vinoba Bhave, *Revolutionary Sarvodaya* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1964) pp. 1-2.

68. Jayaprakash Narayan, *Prison Diary*, (Pune: Popular Prakashan, 1977) p. 127.