

Under the able presidentship of Vivekananda, Ramakrishna mission did very important work in the field of social and religious reform. Its branches were spread throughout the country and even outside India. After Vivekananda the illustrious followers of the mission such as Swami Yogananda and Swami Brahmananda carried out the work of the mission.

Notes and References

1. Majumdar, R.C. *Swami Vivekananda: A Historical Review*, General Printers and Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta 13, p. 14.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VII, p. 79.

Module (II)

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VIVEKANANDA

On 12th January 1863 a child was born in the house of Vishwanath Datt, resident of Gormohan Mukerjee Street in North Calcutta in Bengal, who was known to the world as Vivekananda. The child was named Narendra Nath. Ramkrishna, the teacher of Vivekananda called him by this name. Bhuvaneshwari Devi, the mother of Narendra Nath was a very intelligent and religious lady. She used to recite Ramayana and Mahabharata and performed her house-hold chorus with a calm mind. Thus like M.K. Gandhi, Vivekananda owed some of his religiosity to the influence of his mother.

The early education of Narendra Nath was given through Bengali and English. His mother used to tell him the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata. The child showed special interest in Ramayana and particularly in the character of Rama. Wherever the story of Rama was recited the child Narendra Nath used to hear it with rapt attention forgetting all childhood plays. Once he meditated in a room of his house with so much rapt attention that the door of the room had to be broken to awaken him. Thus Yogic consciousness was evident in Vivekananda from the very beginning. He used to have peculiar experiences while sleeping. In these experiences he used to feel light between the eye-brows which gradually spread throughout his body. This experience proved the spiritual power of Narendra Nath. On the other hand, the child used to commit so much childhood pranks that his mother used to say that she asked for a son to Shiva but he sent a demon to him. Narendra Nath was particularly intimate with the domestic servants.

At the age of 6 Narendra Nath started going to school. Here within a year he memorized Muktidhoda. He also memorized most of the portions of Ramayana and Mahabharata. After a



year he was admitted to the educational institution of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. His teachers here were very much impressed by his intelligence and genius and used to praise him very much. Narendra Nath was not only a good student but also a good player. He possessed sound health. In Entrance class Narendra Nath had sufficient knowledge of English and Bangla literature and Indian history. His understanding was deep and memory sharp. He could follow a writer by only reading some of the lines written by him. He could understand the subject of a book by merely reading some portions of it. He passed Entrance examination in first division. After it he entered Presidency college. Here also he very much impressed his teachers. His principal W.W. Hasti used to say that he never saw a genius like Narendra Nath. Narendra Nath had a multisided genius. At the college stage he had achieved an intimate knowledge of English literature, European history, philosophy, science, art, music and medicine.

During this period Brahmo Samaj was very popular in Bengal. The leaders of Brahmo Samaj had wide influence over the Bengali youth. Narendra Nath was also influenced by Brahmo Samaj and became a member of it. This influence was particularly due to his intellectual outlook. He never agreed to admit a thing without understanding it. He was vehemently against superstitions. He was a staunch supporter of social reform. He had a keen desire to participate in the progress of his country. All these tendencies took him to Brahmo Samaj. However, gradually he became dissatisfied. Once he asked Devendranath Thakur, the greatest leader of Brahmo Samaj, "Sir, Have you seen God?" He did not receive any satisfactory answer.

During this time Ramakrishna, the priest of the Kali temple of Dakshineswar had a name in Calcutta. He was a devotee of a high order and it is said that he realised Kali directly. He used to believe in the value of all the religions. He preached that all religions are essentially similar. The principal of the college of Narendra Nath told him about Ramakrishna. Narendra Nath went to Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna identified the spiritual powers of Narendra Nath at the very first sight. He exclaimed that here is an incarnation of Narayan who is born to remove the sufferings of mankind. On the other hand, Narendra Nath felt that Ramakrishna was a bit abnormal. However he asked the old question. "Sir, Have you seen God?" The reply which he received was never expected. Ramakrishna told him, "Yes, I see him just as I see you here." Narendra Nath was deeply impressed but not

completely satisfied. He continued to meet Ramakrishna more often and gradually came under his influence.

In 1884 the father of Narendra Nath passed away due to heart attack. At this time Narendra Nath was only a graduate and studying law. But now the entire financial responsibility of the family came upon his head. His relatives used to tease his family. He did not get any job. He could not repay the debts he owed to many persons. Under these hard circumstances Narendra Nath had crisis of faith. However, the adversities, sufferings and troubles subdued his ego and evoked his faith. Like Gautama, the Buddha, he experienced that everywhere there is suffering in this world. This led him to the resolve to remove sufferings of his countrymen. This also increased his faith in Ramakrishna.

Narendra Nath received his initiation in Vedanta from Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna had extraordinary yogic powers. In 1885 he gave Narendra Nath the experience of attributeless Samadhi by his mere touch and ordered him that his first duty is to fulfil the mission of Ramakrishna. Narendra Nath was the leader of the association of the young followers of Ramakrishna. This association was founded with the purpose of spirituality and welfare of humanity. As the leader of this association, called Ramakrishna Mission, Narendra Nath propagated the views of Ramakrishna everywhere. Beloor near Howrah was made the head office of Ramakrishna Mission and the centre of its activities. Narendra Nath was now known as Vivekananda. He extensively toured the country and tried to understand and solve its problems.

In 1888 Vivekananda left Calcutta alone. He went to Varanasi, Ayodhya, Lucknow, Agra, Vrindavan and Hathras. At Hathras he was accompanied by his disciple Sadanand. Both of them now toured Himalayas. In Himalayas Vivekananda had a vision of the soul of India. After a year Vivekananda again toured several places within the country including Gazipur and Varanasi. In February 1891 he went to Rajasthan, Bombay and Rameshwaram. From Rameshwaram he went to Kanyakumari. There he sat on a rock in the sea and had his realisation of the great unity of India. At present there is on this rock the world famous Vivekananda Memorial.

In 1893 Vivekananda heard that a Parliament of Religions was being organised in Chicago in USA. He decided to participate in this parliament in order to give his message to the World. He was very much pained by the poverty of India and wanted to

draw the attention of the West towards this problem. This was one of the important purpose of his visit of U.S.A. Before going to USA he went to Khetri, the king of this state was his disciple. It was this princely disciple who suggested the name of Swami Vivekananda which was adopted by Narendra Nath.

On May 31, 1893 Swami Vivekananda left Bombay for USA. In the way he went to Ceylon, Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong, Kentan and Nagasaki. Seeing the influence of Indian culture and Sanskrit language at all these places he realised the spiritual unity of Asia. He reached Chicago in mid-July. Seeing the spectacular progress of knowledge and science at U.S.A., he was highly impressed. After twelve days he reached the information office of the proposed Parliament of Religions. He was told that the parliament will be held in the first week of September and his name cannot be included in the list of delegates until it is recommended by someone in USA or elsewhere. Vivekananda sent a telegram to his friends to Madras for recommendation but got no success. However, the genius like Vivekananda hardly needed any introduction. His personality was his best certificate. While travelling in the train at Boston Swami Vivekananda met a rich lady of Massachusetts. She called him at her residence and introduced him to Professor J.H. Wright of the department of Greek studies at the Harvard university. Wright was very much impressed by Vivekanand and introduced him to Dr. Bros, the chairman of the selection committee of the delegates by writing, "Here is a person who is a greater scholar than all our scholar professors added together." He insisted that Vivekananda should be admitted as the representative of Hinduism at the Parliament of religions. He also gave Vivekananda rail ticket to Chicago and a letter of recommendation of lodging and boarding. Unfortunately Vivekananda lost these papers during the journey. However, these were received by a lady G.W. Hale who contacted Vivekananda and took him to the Parliament, where he was respectfully admitted as a delegate and arrangements of his stay were made alongwith other representatives from the East.

The Parliament of religions was inaugurated on 11th September 1893 at Columbus Hall. Religious leaders of the world had gathered there to hear Swami Vivekananda in the evening of the first day. They welcomed by prolonged clapping the first words of Vivekananda, "American brothers and sisters," Leaving all formalities of the Parliament Swami Vivekananda presented

his ideas in such a direct and clear language that the Parliament was very much impressed. After it he delivered a dozen lectures in USA which made him famous in the West. New York Herald proclaimed him as the greatest person at the Parliament of Religions and wrote that after hearing him we feel that how much foolish it is to send religious missionaries to the nation of such a great scholar. During his lectures-Swami Vivekananda repeatedly drew the attention of the West to the problems of India. On the invitation of Bureau he visited several places in USA and delivered lectures which had wide influence over American intelligentsia. He was offered the headship of department of Eastern philosophy at Harvard University and Sanskrit language at Columbia University which he declined saying that he was a Sanyasin.

On 7th August 1895 Swami Vivekananda left USA for England. The British newspapers compared him to Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshabchandra Sen and even Gautama the Buddha. He was welcomed by heads of various churches and he delivered several lectures in England. It is here that Miss Margaret E. Nobel, the later Sister Nivedita met his teacher Vivekananda for the first time. His lectures on Jnanayoga in London particularly became famous.

On 6th December 1895 Swami Vivekananda reached New York from England. Here he delivered lectures on Karmayoga and Bhakti yoga at the residence of Miss S.E. Waldo who later on became his disciple known as Hari Dasi. Vivekananda delivered lectures in a very informal but influential style. Gradually, the number of his American disciples increased. In February 1896 he laid the foundation of the famous Vedanta Society of New York. He also delivered lectures on Vedanta philosophy in the philosophy department of Harvard University. His lecture here on 26th March 1896 was so impressive that he was offered the chair of Eastern philosophy. Swami Vivekananda had no financial difficulty as he was receiving overwhelming cooperation from all sides.

In April 1896 Swami Vivekananda left America for England and in the month of May delivered 5 lectures per week on Vedanta. He delivered three lectures at Royal Institute of Painters, Piccadelli. He also spoke at Princess Hall, Annie Besant Lodge and other well known Clubs and Educational institutions. Max Muller invited him to his residence at Oxford and was very much influenced by him. From England Swami Vivekananda went to Switzerland on

the persuasion of some of his friends. In August 1896 he was invited by Professor Paul Deussen of Kiel University of Germany. Deussen was very much impressed by Vivekananda and accompanied him on his return journey to London. Vivekananda stayed in London for next few months and then left for India with two of his disciples Mr. and Mrs. Sevier.

When Vivekananda reached India he was given a tumultuous welcome. A meeting of the disciples of Ramakrishna was called on first May 1897 at Bagh Bazar in Calcutta at the residence of Mr. Balram Bose. Vivekananda explained the problems of the country before this gathering and pleaded for their remedies. The meeting accepted his proposals and Ramakrishna Mission was established on May 5, 1897 with the express mission of serving humanity through the service of followers of various religions. It aimed at trainee missionaries who could propagate Vedanta everywhere. The programme of the mission as entrusted to two departments, Indian and Western. Swami Vivekananda was elected president of the mission and Swami Yoganand and Swami Brahmanand were elected Vice-President and President of Calcutta Branch of the Mission respectively.

As president of Ramakrishna Mission Swami Vivekananda toured the whole of the country. He went to historical places in North India, Punjab, Kashmir and Rajasthan. Everywhere he propagated the preachings of the Mission and clarified the problems of the country asking for remedies. His ideas were a combination of Vedanta and science, East and West, ancient and modern, idealism and realism. He discussed the plan of establishment of a branch of mission at Kashmir with the King of Kashmir. On 30th March 1898 he reached Darjeeling but left for Calcutta in April to serve the people suffering from plague epidemic. The service rendered by followers of Ramakrishna Mission to the suffering people of Calcutta was a rare example. However, some members of Ramakrishna Mission did not agree with the precept of Swami Vivekananda about public service. Some of them even remarked that Vivekananda did not go to America for propagation of preachings of Ramakrishna but for his own propaganda. These and other instances shocked Swami Vivekananda.

In order to provide a centre in the Himalayas for practising Vedanta Philosophy by his disciples from East and West, Vivekananda established Advaita Ashram at Mayavati, 50 miles away from Almora on 19th March 1899. It was at this centre

that the chief organ of Ramakrishna Mission came out under the title *Prabudha Bharata*. Besides Advaita Ashram Swami Vivekananda established several other centres of public service in various parts of the country.

On 20th June 1899 Swami Vivekananda again left for West with his disciples Sister Nivedita and Swami Turiyanand. During the course of his journey he established centres at San Francisco, Auckland and Alamada. He saw symptoms of destruction of humanity in the technological advance of the West which he discussed later on in his various lectures. He returned to Beloor in India on 24th January 1901, and went to Mayavati Ashram. He also toured other centres of the country. This herculean labour for the propagation of his preachings gradually adversely affected his physical health. He suffered from diabetes and lung diseases. Gradually his condition worsened. On the insistence of his several disciples, he stayed at Beloor for 7 months and transferred all his responsibilities to his disciples. But his keen desire to serve humanity did not allow him rest. Therefore, he went to Bodh Gaya on the insistence of Japanese Artist Okaura. From there he went to Varanasi and established a centre of Ramakrishna Mission there. All this tour adversely affected his health. He used to say, "I will not live for seeing 40." This happened. On 4th July 1902 Swami Vivekananda left for his heavenly abode at the early age of 39 years.

CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS

The problems of the time of Vivekananda were partly economic, partly social and political. Vivekananda was not a revivalist or obscurantist. He was fully aware of the various problems of his time both Indian and Western. He was particularly concerned about the low level of living of Indians, ill health, diseases, malnutrition, illiteracy, factionism, casteism, poverty etc. He was also troubled by the political problems such as slavery, collectivism, state repression etc.

1. Lack of Synthesis of East and West: Due to low economic condition, Indians had an inferiority complex wherever they met Western people. Swami Vivekananda exhorted his countrymen not to imitate West because Western civilization is too young. He tried to infuse patriotism and love for the country. He demanded that India must be understood in the background

of its spiritual achievement. "He made them see that India's culture was incomparable, being developed through thousands of years of trial and experimentation till it had attained the highest standard ever reached by humanity, and consequently possessed an unshakable stability and strength." He made them see the 'why' of every Indian custom.¹¹ On the other hand, he criticized those Indians who were against material advancement. He said, "We talk foolishly against material civilization. The grapes are sour."¹²

Thus the chief problem of attitude in his time was the lack of synthesis of East and West. Vivekananda pleaded for such a synthesis in his lectures.

Backwardness: Vivekananda very much realised the economic and social difficulties of the poor classes in India. They were poor, illiterate, without sufficient nutrition and suffering from various types of diseases. Decrying this situation Vivekananda asked, "Who constitutes society? The missions or you, I or a few others of the upper classes."¹³ He pointed out that majority is more important. He remarked, "For the luxury of a handful of the rich, let millions of men and women remain submerged in the hell of want and abysmal depth of ignorance, for if they get wealth and education, society will be upset."¹⁴ Thus Vivekananda pleaded for freedom and growth of all the Indian people.

Political Ignorance: The most important political problem of the time of Vivekananda was the complete ignorance of majority of Indian people about the political developments elsewhere. In the words of Vivekananda, "Not one of them had heard of what is meant by a socialism and anarchism."¹⁵ But political awakening is not possible by hungry people. Food and cloth are the first needs of life." Laying his finger on the priorities, Vivekananda said, "First make the people of the country stand on their legs; by rousing their inner power; first let them learn to have good food and clothes and plenty of enjoyment then tell them how to be free from this bounding of enjoyment."¹⁶

Low Status of Women: An important problem of the time of Vivekananda was the low social status of Indian women. He exclaimed, "It is very difficult to understand why in this country (India) so much difference is made between men and women, whereas the Vedanta declares that one and the same conscious Self is present in all beings."¹⁷ He pointed out, "In the highest reality of the Parabrahman, there is no distinction of sex. We only notice this on the relative plane."¹⁸ He suggested,

"Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do this for them. And our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world."¹⁹ Illiteracy was the main cause of the low status of women, according to Vivekananda. His disciple sister Nivedita organised women's education in India. She established a Math for this purpose. Thus Math observed all the rules of male missionaries and provided education for character. Vivekananda even prescribed physical training to women since he pointed out, "In the present day it has become necessary for them also to learn self-defence."²⁰ The education of women was considered a remedy for problems concerning marriage and family. Vivekananda pointed out the evil of senseless growth of population.

5. Child Marriage: Another problem of the times of Vivekananda was child marriage. Expressing his feeling in this connection, Vivekananda said, "I have a strong hatred for child marriage... I would hate myself if I had such a diabolical custom directly or indirectly."²¹ Explaining this problem Vivekananda said, "Oh, how sweet is child-marriage... Can there be anything but love between husband and wife in such a marriage, such is the whine going round nowadays... The truth is that, in this country, parents and relatives can ruthlessly sacrifice the best interests of their children and others for their own selfish ends, to save themselves by compromise to society."²² Education of women was suggested as one of the remedies for this state of affairs.

6. Restriction of Inter-caste marriage: During this period strict restrictions were imposed upon inter-caste marriages. Pointing out to this problem Vivekananda said, "Reform we should have in many ways; who will be so foolish as to deny it? There is, for example, a good reason for intermarriage in India, in the absence of which the race is becoming physically weaker day by day."²³ Vivekananda emphatically declared, "It is the inter-marriage between people of the same religion that I advocate."²⁴ He also pointed out the need of inter-provincial marriages. He said, "The time is yet very long in coming when marriages of that kind will be widely possible. Besides, it is not judicious now to go in for that all of sudden."²⁵ Referring to and condemning the evil of forbidding inter-caste marriage Vivekananda said, "Don't you see how in our society, marriage, being restricted for several hundred of years within the same sub-divisions of each caste, has come to such a pass nowadays as virtually to mean marital alliance

between cousins and near relations; and how, for this very reason, the race is getting deteriorated physically, and consequently all sorts of diseases and other evils are finding a ready entrance into it?"¹⁸ Suggesting remedies Vivekananda said, "It is only by widening the circle of marriage that we can infuse a new and a different kind of blood into our progeny, so that they may be saved from... consequent evils."¹⁹

7. Low Status of Backward Classes: Besides the low status of women, the Indian society during Vivekananda's period suffered with the evil of low status of the poor and down-trodden masses. Pointing out their disabilities Vivekananda said, "They have no chance, no escape, no way to climb up.... They sink lower every day; they feel the blows showered upon them by a cruel society and they do not know whence the blow comes. They have forgotten that they too are men."²⁰ Pointing out their importance in social fabric, Vivekananda said, "Whether the leadership of society be in the hands of those who monopolize learning or wield the power of riches or arms, the source of its power is always the subject masses. They are the backbone of the country, because they produce all wealth and food. They will certainly want the satisfaction of their material needs, less work, no oppression, no war, more food. The present system of distribution of wealth makes the poor poorer and the rich richer."²¹ Vivekananda warned the rich and high caste people that the down-trodden will no more tolerate exploitation. He said, "Very soon they will get above you in position... You have so long oppressed these forebearing masses: now is the time for their retribution."²² He pointed out, "The lower classes are gradually awakening to this fact making a united front. Masses of Europe and America have been the first to awaken and have already begun the fight. Signs of this awakening have shown themselves in India, too, as is evident from the number of strikes among the lower classes now-a-days. The upper classes will no longer be able to repress the lower, try they ever so much."²³ According to the historical insight of Vivekananda, the down-trodden class will give rise to many great men so that the backward may come up.

8. Poverty: The most important social problem according to Vivekananda, however, was the utter poverty of Indian masses. While touring the Western countries he compared their standard of living with the standard of living of Indian masses and felt that life in India was generally sub-human. He realised that no spiritual uplift is possible without first solving the problem of

poverty. He asked, "In all India, there are, say, a hundred thousand really spiritual men and women, who for the spiritualization of these three hundred millions be sunk in savagery and starvation?"²⁴ He pointed out, "Empty stomach and religion go ill together. It was mockery to offer religion to a starving man."²⁵

9. Crisis of Character: But the basic cause behind poverty, according to Swami Vivekananda, was not economic as it was for Karl Marx, but moral. Most of the problems, according to him, show the crisis of character. It is hence that his education aimed at man-making or character building. Holding the rich people responsible for the poverty of the masses Vivekananda said, "You, the upper classes of India, do you think you are alive? It is among those whom your ancestors despised as 'walking carrion', that the little of vitality there is still in India is to be found; and it is you who are the real 'walking corpses'... You merge yourselves in the void and disappear, and let 'New India' arise in your place. Let her arise out of the peasant's cottage, grasping the plough... Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from martis, and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests from hills and mountains."²⁶ Like Karl Marx Vivekananda realised that the backbone of the nation is not the rich class but the so called down-trodden people. Pointing out their importance he said, "The Indian social order is but the reflex of the infinite Universal Motherhood... the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper are its flesh and blood."²⁷ On the other hand, "Rich men... are merely the ornaments, the decorations of the country. It is the millions of poor lower class people who are its life."²⁸ Therefore, Vivekananda concluded, "The only hope of India is from the masses. The upper classes are physically and morally dead."²⁹ These words are no less prophetic than that of Karl Marx. Vivekananda was the Karl Marx of India, the vedantin version of the great Western revolutionary. He sounded the death-knell of capitalism in India on the basis of his practical Vedanta. He exhorted the leaders to rebuild Indian society upon the ancient principle of *Swadharma*, allotting each person a social role according to his capacities. He said, "If the Brahmin has more aptitude for learning on the ground of heredity than the Pariah, spend no more money on the Brahmin's education, but spend all on the Pariah. Give to the weak, for there all the gift is needed... Our poor people, these down-trodden masses of India, therefore, require to hear and to know what they really

who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny."⁹⁸ Hinduism teaches equality as it is based on Vedanta philosophy according to which there is one essence underlying everyone.

Religion and Society

* As has been already pointed out, Vivekananda considered religion as the key-note of social and national life. This religion was the Vedic religion or the religion preached in Bhagavadgita. Being in tune with modern science and socialist thought, it lays emphasis upon the reality of this world. Neo-Vedanta of Vivekananda was different from Advaita Vedanta of Shankar in laying emphasis upon the reality of the world. He did not negate the objective world but rather considered it as much real as Brahman. He not only praised Sanyas but considered Grahastha to be equally involved. Clarifying his teaching he said, "You can have your wife; it doesn't mean that you are to obandon her, but that you are to see God in the wife. So also you are to see God in your children. So in everything. In life and in death, in happiness and in misery, the Lord is equally present. The whole world is full of the Lord. Open your eyes and see Him. This is what the Vedanta teaches."⁹⁹

PRACTICAL VEDANTA

Thus Vivekananda called his Vedanta teaching, a practical Vedanta. In making Vedanta practical philosophy for life he particularly laid emphasis upon the following teaching of Vedanta :

1. Oneness : The idea of unity or oneness in the cosmos is the central idea of Vedanta philosophy. This oneness is not only in the multiplicity but also in the facts and ideals, present and future. In the words of Vivekananda, "The actual should be reconciled to the ideal; the present life should be made to coincide with the life eternal."¹⁰⁰

2. Faith in ourselves : In the practical Vedanta of Vivekananda faith is above everything else. He realised that the main cause of the present degeneration of Indians is the lack of faith in themselves. This was the result of hundreds of years of slavery under the foreign yoke. Realising this fact Vivekananda urged in most of his lectures in very inspiring words to the Indians to have faith in themselves, in their heritage, their philosophy, their language, their literature and their physical,

* He preached fearlessness. He said 'Weakness is Sin, Courage is Virtue'. This message of fearlessness served as an inspiration to the youths to fight against the British rule.

God realisation : God realisation in oneself and in society is the teaching of Vedanta. This will result not only in the individual evolution but also in uplift of the masses. Laying emphasis upon this practical teaching of Vedanta Vivekananda said, "He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva, and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary."¹⁰¹

Tolerance of other religions : In the tradition of the teachings of his Master Ramakrishna, Vivekananda preached for the tolerance towards all the religions of the world. This is particularly required in India since it is the home of the followers of almost all the great religions of the world.

Synthesis between the East and the West : Vivekananda was against blind imitation of the West. He urged every nation to follow its own Swadharma. Pointing out the fruitlessness of social westernisation in India he said, "Vain is the attempt to imitate the lines of action that foreign societies have engrafted upon us. It is impossible. Glory unto God, that it is impossible, that we cannot be twisted and tortured into the shape of other nations. I do not condemn the institutions of other races; they are good for them, but not for us. With other sciences, other institutions, and other traditions behind them, they have got their present system. We, with our traditions, with thousands of years of 'Karma' behind us, naturally can only follow our own bent, run in our own grooves, and that we shall have to do."¹⁰²

a religious sense which somehow bases itself on an awareness of unity of everything makes ethical practice both convenient and easy. Vivekananda feels that Religion has a value in a different way also. It is the greatest and the healthiest exercise that the human mind can do. This struggle to get beyond the limitations of the senses and reason, this pursuit of the Infinite itself is the purest pursuit that man can imagine. It brings satisfaction, it enables the individual to rise above the ordinary evils and ills of the world, and to enjoy peace and bliss. That is why religion appears to be the greatest motive force that moves the human mind. No other ideal can captivate human mind as religion does.

But, it is necessary to distinguish between the true religion and what may be called, institutional religions. In fact, objections against religion arise because people identify religion with institutions. Sects and institutions set unnecessary limits to religion. Vivekananda says that true religion must be above these separative and disruptive tendencies. *True love must be universal*. This, according to Vivekananda, represents the essence of true religion. He says, 'when we come to the real, spiritual, universal concept, then, and then alone, religion will become real and living, it will come into our very nature, live in our every movement, penetrate every pore of our society and be infinitely more a power of good than it has never been before.'¹ But, before explaining this further let us first try to determine the contents of religion, because religion has to be universal in all its contents.

According to Vivekananda there are three aspects or contents of religion : *Philosophy, Mythology and Ritual*. Every religion has these three contents. Philosophy seeks to represent the whole scope of that religion, 'setting forth its basic principles, the goal and the means for reaching it'. Mythology consists of legends relating to the moral and spiritual adventures of men and supermen. Vivekananda says that mythology *concretises* philosophy by making the imaginary lives of men and supermen the mode or vehicle for conveying the philosophical ideas. Ritual is made up of forms and ceremonies that serve the function of both keeping men engaged religiously and of organising them in powerful religious organizations.

It is true that every religion has its own philosophy, mythology and ritual, this also is true that conflicts of religions arise on

1. Swami Vivekananda, *Jnana Yoga*, p. 19.

account of the fact that different religions have different philosophy, mythology and ritual. The truly universal religion must rise above these petty differences, and must seek to have universality even with respect to these three basic contents of religion. But, can we have a really universal philosophy or a really universal mythology or a really universal ritual ? Vivekananda has his own doubts. But then, how can religion be really universal ?

Nature and Ideal of Universal Religion

It is a historical fact that there have been various religious (or spiritual) organizations having different religious codes and beliefs. This also is a historical fact that they have been quarrelling against each other almost throughout history. Each religious sect has claimed its exclusive right to live on the ground that it considers its own doctrine and its own organization superior to any other. The peculiarity about this is that in spite of open and even bitter conflicts, most of the major religious sects have at least continued to live. These internal and external conflicts, instead of weakening these sects, have added vitality to them and have enabled them to expand and to live.

This fact appears to Vivekananda as significant. This shows that conflicts are only apparent, and that they do not affect the inner vitality or the core or the essence of religion. In fact, Vivekananda admits that sects and conflicts have to be there. If everybody thinks the same thought, there remains actually nothing to be thought. "It is the clash of thought, the differentiation of thought, that awakes thought...whirls and eddies occur only in a rushing, living stream. There are no whirlpools in stagnant, dead water"¹ Variation is the sign of life, it must be there.

But then, a question arises, 'how can all these varieties be true ? how can opposite opinions be true at the same time ?' On an answer to a question like this would depend the fate of a universal religion. A universal religion, if really universal, must satisfy at least two conditions. First, it must open its gates to every individual, it must admit that no body is born with this or that religion; whether he takes to one religion or the other must ultimately be left to his inner likes and choice. In this sense by individualising religion we really universalise it. Secondly, a really universal religion must be able to give satisfaction and

1. *Ibid.*, p. 379.

comfort to every religious sect. After all, the universal religion has to supersede the conflicts of these sects, and, therefore, must appear satisfying and reasonable to them all. We have seen that variety is inevitable, that all these various minds and attitudes have to be there. Therefore, if there is going to be an ideal religion—a really universal religion, it must be broad and large enough to supply food to all these minds.

Q Does a religion of this kind exist? Or, is it possible to have religion of this kind—a really universal religion? Vivekananda believes that such a religion is already there. We are lost so much in the external conflicts of religion that we fail to notice its presence. Vivekananda demonstrates this in a very clear manner. He says, firstly, that a simple insight into the natures of different religions will show that they are not actually contradictory to each other. They are, in fact, supplementary to each other. The truth of religion is so comprehensive that different religions concentrate only on one aspect or on a few aspects of religion. They concentrate their energy on their chosen aspect in such a vehement manner that they come to assume that there are no other aspects. But, in reality, each religion takes up an aspect of religion and develops it. Therefore, every religion is adding to the rich variety that religion is capable of generating, and it is also adding to the development of religion in its own way. Its interpretation may be partial, but, as Vivekananda says, man never progresses from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lesser truth to higher truth. Secondly, Vivekananda wishes to make it clear that there may be contradictory points of view of the same thing. If we take photograph of the same object from different angles, no two photographs will be alike—they may even give opposite impressions; but they are photographs of the same object. Likewise, we view truth in our own ways, colour them from our own points of view, understand and grasp them in our own peculiar ways of understanding and grasping. This, then, will make a difference between man and man, and this explains the contradictory character of the different views. But, all the same, they are basically views of the same reality, and hence supplementary to each other.

Thus, the Universal religion already exists. Just as the universal brotherhood of man is there, although some men fail to notice it, so universal religion is there although some of us are not aware of it. But, what can be its nature? Does it comprehend the common elements of all religions? Has it succeeded in discovering

some such aspects of religion that would give comfort to every one? Vivekananda is aware that this is a difficult—almost an impossible task. Different religions emphasise different qualities of religion and, as such, it is not possible to find the common elements. Islam, for example, lays emphasis on *universal brotherhood*, Hinduism on *Spirituality*, Christianity on *self-purification for entering into the kingdom of God*. It is difficult to compare these and, therefore, the tenets of Universal religion would not be the common characters of different religions. Vivekananda is not dismayed by this because he recognises the natural necessity of variation. By universal religion he does not mean a religion that will have one universal philosophy, or one universal mythology or one universal ritual. They may all differ from sect to sect or even from individual to individual, and yet the universal religion is there.

The elements of universal religion would consist in recognising that there may be various and different ways of approach to the religious object. It gives perfect liberty to the individual in this regard. But at the same time, the spirit of universal religion demands that every approach must be large-hearted enough to have a respect for the other ones. The one *watch-word* for Universal religion, according to Vivekananda, is *acceptance*. Acceptance is not just tolerance. Tolerance is negative in its import, it implies, at least at times, that something is being allowed in spite of its being wrong. Vivekananda recommends positive acceptance. That is why he says that he can worship in any form with any individual or sect. He says that he can enter and offer his prayers anywhere, in a temple, or a church, or a mosque, or any other place. The believer in the universal religion has to be broad-minded and open-hearted; he would be prepared to learn from the scriptures of all religions, and keep his heart open for what may come in the future.

Such an attitude enables Vivekananda to discover at least one such element which can be said to be common to all religions in a general way, and which, consequently may represent the essence of universal religion. That common point is *God*. Even things that are apparently different, may be similar in a particular sense. Man and woman are different, but as human beings they are alike. As living beings, men, animals and plants are all one. In that way, although different religions talk of different aspects of the Truth; as aspects of the same Truth, they are all

one. According to Vivekananda, that Truth is God. In Him we are all one. The word 'God' is being used in its most comprehensive sense, it may be the Personal, Omnipotent and Good God, or it may be described as the Universal Existence or the Ultimate Unity of the universe. Every religion, consciously or unconsciously is struggling towards the realisation of this unity or God. Therefore, this may be said to represent the *Ideal of Universal Religion*.

Another characteristic of universal religion is that it has to be acceptable to all minds. It has to satisfy the largest possible proportion of mankind, and, therefore, it must be able to supply food to all the various types of mind. Therefore, Vivekananda says that the ideal religion must harmoniously balance all the aspects of religion namely, *philosophy, emotion, work, and mysticism*. "And this religion is attained by what we, in India, call *Yoga—union*. To the worker, it is union between men and the whole of humanity, to the mystic, between his lower and Higher Self, to the lover, union between himself and the God of Love, and to the philosopher, it is the union of all existence. This is what is meant by *Yoga*",¹ and, the aim of *yoga* is union, realisation of oneness. Vivekananda says, "Religion is realisation, not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories... it is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes."²

1. Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, III, p. 419.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 432.

CHAPTER II


RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Introduction

A student of philosophy is invariably faced with a difficulty when he is trying to apprehend a thinker who is also a poet. The procedure that is followed in philosophy is that of gathering evidences first and then of making deductions from those evidences. A poet-philosopher is not interested in arguments and logic, he is a visionary, and therefore, communicates the truths that are revealed to him directly through his poetic images. But then, it is the business of the student of Philosophy to go beyond the poetic images deep into the poet's realisation in order to pick up the truths and to gather the evidences. There is the danger of error, but, "if you shut your door to all errors, truth will be shut out."¹ With care an insight has to be cultivated — an insight into the poet's mind, feelings and realisations.

The outward life of Rabindranath was not very eventful. Excepting the award of the Nobel Prize and the founding of the 'Shantiniketan', the external events of his life were, more or less, normal. But, this was an index of a very powerful and dynamic life being lived within. His *Reminiscences* themselves speak not so much about the external happenings of his life as about his urges and aspirations, feelings and realisations. Therefore, an attempt to determine the nature of his thought and beliefs is, in fact, to tell the story of his life.


General Philosophical Standpoint

(In India, Philosophy is called '*Darśana*', which means 'vision'—'vision of the real'. Rabindranath takes this meaning of the term 'philosophy' rather literally. That is why in his thought there is a very great emphasis on 'personal realisation'. In *Religion of Man* he says, 'I have already made the confession that my religion is a poet's religion. All that I feel about it is from vision and not from knowledge. Frankly, I acknowledge that

1. Rabindranath Tagore, *Stray Birds*, 130.

I cannot satisfactorily answer any question about evil or about what happens after death. Nevertheless, I am sure that there have come moments in my own experience when my soul has touched the Infinite and has become infinitely conscious of it through the illumination of joy.¹ This creates another difficulty for the student of Philosophy. He is trained to read the thoughts of a thinker in terms of certain accepted epithets and concepts. But, it may not be possible for him to apply his traditional philosophical models to the 'personal realisation' of a seer of truth, and therefore, a logical interpretation of such a thought may not be very accurate. "The meaning of the living words that come out of the experiences of great hearts can never be exhausted by any one system of logical interpretation."² But, in spite of this difficulty, it is worthwhile to try to determine the ideas of Tagore's philosophy in terms of accepted and academic philosophical concepts.

The greatest influence that Tagore's thought bears upon itself is of ancient Indian thought—of the Upanisads and the Vedānta. His early education and the ways of his upbringing implanted in his mind the ancient Indian ideals. But that influence was not accepted by the poet in an abstract fashion. Naturally, therefore, he came under the influence of Vaishnavism and the teachers of the Bhakti-marga. The lyrical outbursts of the saints like Dādu, Ravidās, Nānak and Kabir touched the poetic elements of the philosopher. Finally, the *Gita* showed the way by reconciling the abstract and impersonal nature of the Upaniṣadic Brahman with the personal God of the bhakta. This enables the poet-philosopher to have a vision and come out with a firm faith in a God who is also the omnipresent reality—the Brahman. Apparently this may not appear to be self-consistent to a student of Philosophy, but in Tagore's philosophy the apparent inconsistency of the reality, conceived as both personal and impersonal, somehow evaporates.

(In the light of this, it can be said that his philosophy is a peculiar and yet a religious synthesis of Abstract Monism and a particular type of Theism. Reality, according to him, is one. He identifies this reality with personal God. This identification of impersonal reality with personal God gives interesting results.)

1. Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, p. 107.

2. Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana*, p. viii.

Now, all attempted descriptions of his thought assume a validity. Tagore can rightly be called 'an idealist' or 'a spiritualist'. He can again be described both as a 'monist' and a 'theist'. That is why many commentators on Tagore say—and say so legitimately—that Tagore's philosophy oscillates between Śaṅkara's Vedānta and Vaishnavism.

Different people have tried to describe the general character of Tagore's Philosophy in different ways. Hirendranath Datta calls it the philosophy of *Concrete Monism*.¹ It is monism because reality is conceived as one, and it is concrete because the one reality is not an abstract principle negating completely the reality of the many, but is a concrete whole comprehending the many within its bosom. Radhakrishnan says, "we do not know whether it is Rabindranath's own heart or the heart of India that is beating here."² He says further, that his philosophy is the "ancient wisdom of India restated to meet the needs of modern times."³ It is apparent from these statements also that Tagore's philosophy is an attempt to revive the ancient ideals of life; but then, they have been re-stated in accordance with the needs of the present times. The traditional philosophical notions of India have been brought out by Tagore from the dark abyss of abstractions, where they were lying all the time, into the open to be viewed in the light of the present philosophical beliefs. That is the reason why a philosopher like Radhakrishnan himself describes his philosophy thus, "He [Tagore] gives us a human God, dismisses with contempt the concept of world-illusion, praises action overmuch and promises fullness of life to the human soul."⁴

(At times, Tagore is also described as a mystic. That is probably because Tagore does not formulate his beliefs on the strength of logical speculation, on the other hand, he comes to have them through his poetic insight, which is, more or less, the insight of a seer. In this way, Tagore's philosophy can be described in various ways, and what is interesting about it is that all these descriptions do throw some light on the general nature of his thought.)

1. Hirendranath Datta, "Rabindranath as a Vedantist", *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, May/Oct 1941.

2. Radhakrishnan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath*, p. vii.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

nothing but an expression of joy. Man's natural urge for realising the Truth, the Good and the Beautiful is an expression of joy. It is on account of the element of 'joy' present in man, that whenever he rises above the mere physical he is able to forget the worries and anxieties of life. It is joy that makes him realise his affinity with Nature, it is joy again that makes him moral or religious or noble. Joy is both the condition of his spiritual growth and also its ultimate goal. So far as man forgets his infinite nature and becomes a slave to the bodily aspect of his life, his joy is reduced; and as he goes on asserting the higher aspects of his life his joy goes on increasing. 'Joy' thus constitutes the higher — the spiritual aspect of man's nature.

It is on account of this that Tagore calls this aspect of man's nature as 'Jivan-Devatā'. It is the 'Lord of life' because it gives 'joy' of existence, because it stands for both the possibility and realisation of all that which man is constantly trying to attain. Jivan Devatā is God in man, the element of Divinity present in man, and as such, it is this element that makes him God-like.

X iv Soul and Body

Roughly speaking, 'body' represents the finite side of man's existence and 'soul' stands for the infinite aspect of man's nature. Just as Tagore believes in the reality of both these aspects, he believes that both the soul and the body are real.

Tagore never suggests that the body is an illusory or false aspect of man's life. On the other hand, it has been conceived as the temple of the Divine. But, as this analogy also suggests, a distinction has to be made between 'the temple' and 'the Divine'. We must not make the mistake of mistaking the temple for the Divine. The temple may have a reality of its own, but in order to realise the Divine attention has to be withdrawn from the temple to the Divine.

So, Tagore says that although body has a reality of its own, we must remember that it only represents the lower aspect of man's nature which has to be transcended in order to attain the higher nature — that of the soul.

The body, thus, can be viewed in two ways. If we give exclusive emphasis on the body, we are imprisoning the soul in the body. The body in that sense may be compared with a 'jewelled chain' which may be beautiful to look at, but which is a 'chain'

Rabindranath Tagore

all the same'. But, if we view at the body as providing an occasion and a base for spiritual discipline, body becomes an aspect of the game of joy that man has to play. Tagore says, 'Heaven is fulfilled in your sweet body, my child, in your pâlpitinating heart.'¹ The whole point can be made clear with the help of an analogy that Tagore has made use of.² If we weigh a pitcher full of water we feel its weight, but the same pitcher does not appear to be heavy if we balance it in a river. What is the difference? In the former case emphasis is laid on the pitcher full of water, in the latter case emphasis is on water, the pitcher now becomes insignificant and the water inside the pitcher becomes an aspect of the great reservoir of water all round. Likewise, if we lay emphasis on the body, the soul encompassed in the body is lost sight of. But if we view at the body as an aspect of the Infinite, even the body becomes a partner in the joyous game of the Spirit.

Nature of Religion

Rabindranath initially was a Brâhma-samâjî. Later on he developed a religion which combined some elements of Brâhma Samâj with some elements of orthodox Hinduism. Finally, he came to believe in what he called, 'the Religion of Man'.

Whatever be the influences or the determinants that shaped Tagore's views on religion, the fact remains that Tagore explicitly believes that religion cannot be confined to any group or sect or tribe or nation. Man picks up that particular form of religion that suits him, but in the final analysis religion transcends all such particular forms.

Ordinary religions, according to Tagore, are just aimless wanderings. / The aim of true religion is the realisation of one's kinship with everything. Religion, according to him, is a sort of homesickness. Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests, the religious man is also on his sacred voyage to his eternal home. In the *Gitanjali* the poet bursts out in a religious fervour, "No more sailing from harbour to harbour with this my weather-beaten boat...now I am eager to die into the deathless."³

1. Rabindranath Tagore, *Lover's Gift and Crossing*, "Crossing" 49.
2. Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana*, p. 157.
3. Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, 100.

That is why Tagore does not favour asceticism. Man has to realise his kinship with everything, he has to cultivate a universal feeling of love. How can this be possible if he runs away from the world? He says, 'Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight... No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights' of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.'¹ In the *Gardener* he is still more explicit when he says, "No my friends, I shall never be an ascetic, whatever you may say, no friends, I shall never leave my hearth and home and retire into the forest solitude..... if its silence is not deepened by soft whispers, I shall never be an ascetic."²

Religion, thus, is not an escape; it is life and existence. But, Tagore insists that true religion must not be confused with what is called, 'Institutional religion'. A particular person may be a Hindu or a Christian — it is a matter of accident. In fact, the forms and ways, in which these religions are practised, mislead the believers. Tagore says, "It should be remembered that religions or churches or religious organizations are not the same. They are to one another as the fire is to the ashes. When the religions have to make way for religious organization it is like the river being dominated by sand beds, the current stagnates, and its aspect becomes desert-like."³

Tagore sincerely believes that religious organizations have almost debauched religion. They take away from religion their life-spirit and instead, emphasise only the superficialities of religions. True religion preaches freedom, whereas religious organizations make religions a slave of their own institutions. Ridiculing the attitude of the religious organizations of the Hindus, Tagore says, "The same blindness which impedes them to rush to bathe in a particular stream, renders them indifferent to the sufferings of their unknown fellowmen. God does not appreciate this prostitution of his most precious gift."⁴

Thus, the institutional religions, according to Tagore, are dogmatic and false. What distinguishes the true religion from

1. Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali* 77.
2. Rabindranath Tagore, *The Gardener* 43.
3. Rabindranath Tagore, *A letter*, *The Modern Review*, Sept. 1917, p. 335.
4. *Ibid.*

the false ones? The true religion must have the qualities of Spontaneity and naturalness in it. There cannot be any compulsion about it, there are no fixed limits set around it. It is free and spontaneous in every individual. Tagore says, "In dogmatic religion all questions are definitely answered, all doubts are finally laid to rest. But the poet's religion is fluid, like the atmosphere around the earth where light and shadow play hide-and-seek...it never undertakes to lead anybody anywhere to any solid conclusion; yet it reveals endless spheres of light, because it has no walls around itself."⁵

From this it follows that religion expresses the essential element of all things. There is a sense in which even physical objects have a religion. "Dharma is the innermost nature, the essence, the implicit truth of all things", as for example, "only when the tree begins to take shape that you can come to see its dharma."⁶ Tagore says, "In my language the word religion has a profound meaning. The wateriness of water is essentially its religion, in the spark of the flame lies the religion of fire. Likewise, man's religion is his innermost truth."⁷

What is the innermost truth of man? Man's religion has been described as the spontaneous expression of the essential and inner aspect of man. What is the essential aspect of man? Tagore says, "Man possesses an extra-awareness that is greater than his material sense — this is his manhood. It is this deep abiding creative force which is his religion."⁸

Now, this can be said that, according to Tagore, religion consists in man's capacity of self-transcendence. Man has a self-awareness, which reveals to him the fact that he has a capacity of going beyond himself — of constantly pushing himself ahead towards higher and higher regions. This is a distinct and essential peculiarity of man. Therefore, his religious life must consist in a constant exercise of this capacity. That is why Tagore clearly says, "If there is any philosophy of religion in my writings, it amounts to this: to realise the relationship of perfect love between the Supreme Soul and the souls of all created beings is indeed true religious sense — this love that holds duality

1. Rabindranath Tagore, *Creative Unity*, p. 16.
2. Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana*, p. 74.
3. Rabindranath Tagore, *An Article*, Indu Datta, tr., *Tagore Testament*, p. 37.
4. *Ibid.*

on one side and non-duality on the other, union as well as separation and bondage along with freedom."¹

The aim of Tagore's religion, therefore, is the realisation of oneness of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul; and this realisation has to be a realisation in love and joy. Explaining this point, P.T. Raju says that just as wateriness is the religion of water, the Supreme Man is the religion of the finite man.² Another point to be taken note of in this connection is that the Supreme Self with whom union is sought to be established is not an abstract principle. He is the 'God of Humanity' the Supreme Personality. Thus, we find that the innermost essence of man is the presence of Divinity in him. Therefore, religion is nothing but an attempt to realise this Divinity.

That is why a religious life means a life of 'self-denial for self-realisation'. Tagore is never tired of using the analogy of 'the oil and the lamp'. So long as the lamp keeps its oil confined in its store, there is no light. The lamp sacrifices the store of its oil and thereby is able to realise its function, in fact, in that sacrifice lies the justification and the reality of the lamp. Likewise, religion demands a sacrifice of the narrow aspects of the individual self in order to gain its true aspect — its Divinity. Thus, "Religion consists in the endeavour of man to cultivate and express these qualities which are inherent in the nature of man, the eternal, and to have faith in them."³ In such a religious life the human personality finds its worth and essence. The modern man has forgotten this, and, therefore, is miserable. If one loses sight of this, if one forgets the religious sense, his life loses the sense of direction and purpose. Tagore says, "Upon the loss of this sense of Universal Personality, which is religion, the reign of machine and of method has been firmly established, and man, humanly speaking, has been made a homeless tramp."⁴

Now, it can be said that in Tagore's thought it is difficult to distinguish between religion and philosophy, they have the same end to realise. Philosophy is the "vision of the real" and the aim of religion is to realise 'man's unity with the Divine.' Both mean one and the same thing. That is perhaps the reason why

1. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

2. P.T. Raju The Idealism of Rabindranath Tagore, *Visva Bharat Qly.* 1939-40, p. 215.

3. Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, p. 144.

4. Rabindranath Tagore, *Creative Unity*, p. 125.

Tagore calls his religion *the Religion of Man*. It can very well be described as universal religion also, because it throws its gate open to every individual.

There is a danger inherent in the excessive use of the expressions like 'realisation of one's true nature', 'unity of the self with the Divine' etc., such descriptions tend to make religion abstract and un-practical. Tagore is conscious of that, therefore he recommends the rule of *love* in religion. The realisation of the Infinite cannot be brought about at once. One should begin with love and in love itself would lie the consummation of his efforts. Tagore feels that one should try to give up the narrow outlook of life that merely feeds his ego. The individual should extend his consciousness in love to nature and to men, and in this act of love itself he would come to the realisation of unity.

Love, sacrifice, sincerity, innocence — these constitute a religious life. Tagore is so impressed by the powers of 'innocent love' that he thinks that in the useless wisdom of institutional religions religion loses itself. Speaking analogically he says, "From the solemn gloom of the temple children run out to sit in the dust, God watches them play and forgets the priest."¹

X Human Destiny

The account of religion, as given by Tagore, itself suggests what, according to him, is the ultimate human destiny. It is the realisation of unity — the realisation of Divinity, its comprehending, in an act of supreme love, nature and everything else, it is the realisation of the Universal within.

But, what is the nature of this realisation? Does this realisation make man entirely different from what he has been so far? Is the individual completely lost in the One? Is this merely a negative state of painlessness? Does this realisation give rise to a realisation of the illusoriness of the universe? What, after all, is the nature of the state thus realised? All these questions are very relevant specially because ancient Indian Philosophy has given much thought to all these problems. Moreover, unless these questions are answered one would fail to have an idea of the ultimate goal of life or of the state the realisation of which is the end of religious activities.

1. Rabindranath Tagore *Final Chapter*, 28

Chapter II

RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY

Ram Mohan Roy was the first and foremost leader of the modern resurgent Hinduism. He received a liberal education and was proficient in many languages, e.g. Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit and English. He was the first Indian of note, to be fascinated by the English language and western modes of thought and life. But the fascination did not subjugate him. He was deeply shaken by the civilised west, but was not shattered. He wanted India to benefit by the knowledge of the west, its science and its advancement. Hence, he pleaded strongly for the imparting of English education to Indians. He admired Christianity and wrote a book on the precepts of Jesus. He wanted to reform Hinduism and shed all the irrational and unmeaningful superstitions that have grown around it through ages. He swore by the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta sūtras. He was against idol-worship and condemned it in strong terms. His Hinduism did not support the religion of stocks and stones. In the famous trust-deed of the Brahmā Samaj, he founded, he writes "no graven image, statue or sculpture carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within the said building." Ram Mohan wanted to rid Hinduism of its perversions and accretions. He wanted to cleanse it of all that genuinely does not belong to it. He advocated meditation on the indeterminate Absolute with the help of the passages in the Upaniṣads and the famous 'gāyatri hymn' used by all brahmins. He was against rituals and the anthropomorphic approach

to God. He highly intellectualised the concept of religion. His philosophy can be best described as theocentric Humanism. He was against caste-system and fought hard for the abolition of *sati*, the cruel custom of burning woman along with her dead husband. He advocated the cause of women and pleaded for their rights and status. He championed the cause of the freedom of the press and fought against oppressive land laws. Above all he was a humanist, who believed that the spiritual heritage of India needs adaptation to the dynamic needs of the time. He believed that such an adaptation will help the Indians to recover their drooping faith in India's destiny and national life. Ram Mohan met the challenge of the west by blending all that was essential and intrinsically valuable in Hinduism with the good in the western culture. He assimilated the western outlook to eastern thought. He founded the Brahma Samaj in 1845, and opened a temple for the worship of the impersonal Absolute. He accepted the ethics of Jesus, not his divine and exclusive claim as the only manifestation of God. He was opposed to the orthodox Christians and Hindus alike. Like Martin Luther, who stood by the Bible, he took his stand on the Upaniṣads.

Ram Mohan lived in thrilling times and the events of his age inspired him. When he was twenty, he learnt about American declaration of independence. He heard about the victories of the French revolution. All these events inspired him and made him a liberal democrat. Nature had given him the gift of a fine body. When he visited London in 1833, we are told that the women of London "not even pausing to complete the toilet ran to meet him." The court journal of London described him as 'cast in nature's finest mould'.

When he was in England he helped the cause of the abolition of slavery hand in hand with Lord Brough. He elicited from the great humanist friend Jeremy Bentham, the high tribute "my intensely admired and dearly beloved collaborator in the service of mankind". Ram Mohan believed in the universal religion of Humanity. The religion of man, later presented to the world by Tagore is inspired by Ram Mohan. He believed that religion was transformed life and not the parrot like repetition of the dogmas we learnt. It was behaviour and not mere belief. He respected all religions alike. We find definite beginnings for the movement of the Fellowship of Faiths in the message of Ram Mohan. In his letter of 1831 to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he wrote "It is now generally admitted that no religion only but unbiased commonsense as well as the deductions of scientific research lead to the conclusion that all mankind are one great family of which numerous nations and tribes existing are only branches. Hence, enlightened men in all countries feel a wish to encourage and facilitate human intercourse in every manner by removing as far as possible all impediments to it, in order to promote the reciprocal advantage and enjoyment of the human race." This note of universalism has always been there in India. It appealed most to Ram Mohan Roy. It is again responsible for the appreciation of the good in other religions. It is this universalism that is responsible for the Hindu's love of all. It is again toleration that makes the Hindu look upon all creeds as equally true and the function of the teacher is to vivify the faith one is in than seek to convert him. Ram Mohan laid the firm foundation for modern Hinduism. In breadth and height Hinduism has grown to remarkable dimensions.

It has scraped the skies and touched the hem of the garment of God, and has indeed, as in the philosophy of Sankara even passed beyond God, and in breadth it is comprehensive enough to contain all the religions of the world".

Such was the Hinduism that Ram Mohan preached. It did not make a wide appeal to the masses. It set up a cleavage between the scholar and the masses. It failed to catch the imagination and grapple the emotions of men. It was too tepid, as a religion. Hence it failed to secure wide acceptance. But it cleansed Hinduism of many evils which was eating out into its vitals.

The message of the unity of mankind enshrined in the Rgveda "all men are brothers" and the vision of the loving sages "who behold that mysterious reality wherein in the universe comes to have one home" inspired Ram Mohan.

Ram Mohan high-lighted this message and declared to an unbelieving and dazed world the fruits of a true religion. He was the first modern Indian who saw the tolerance that India had and Manu spoke about. "The sages of India and leaders of religion taught the different people that assembled their own tradition and trained them in their own codes. It never sought to convert them all to one faith. It envisaged a colourful unity and not a military uniformity nor a dead unanimity.

Ram Mohan paved the way for the message of an universal religion which knows no distinction of nation or race and which unites all 'under heaven in one family' and brings peace and goodwill on earth.

The final shape of this message is described by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in moving terms.

"Mankind stems from one origin, from which it has figured out in many forms. It is now striving towards the reconciliation of that which has been split up. The separation between East and West is over. The history of the new world, the one world, has begun. It promises to be large in extent, varied in colour, rich in quality." ✓

CHAPTER, III
MAHATMA GANDHI
Life

Mahatma Gandhi was born at Porbandar on the 2nd of October 1869. His ancestors were *Vaisya* by caste and profession, but his father, uncle and grandfather were service-holders. His father was, for some time, prime minister in the court of Rajkot and also in Vankaner. Although his parents were orthodox *Vaiṣṇavas*, they were enlightened enough to make all necessary arrangements for giving modern education to their children. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi grew in a mixed but balanced set-up. He was initiated into religious and moral traditions, and yet his mind was sufficiently open to the changing needs of the time.

His early educational career was uneventful except for his association with one of his friends who tempted him to evil like meat-eating, smoking etc. These experiences had a good effect as they aroused in Gandhi the ever-present moral sense. In 1888, he was sent to England for legal studies. His father was dead by then, and he could receive his mother's permission for going abroad only after taking a vow in the presence of his mother not to touch meat and not to keep bad company. In fact, later on this vow became for him a symbol of resolute will and came to convince him that sincere determination for doing anything good was bound to succeed. In England, besides his legal studies, he also came to acquaint himself with the great and good things of the West. He returned to India in 1891 after qualifying as a barrister-at-law. After staying in India for a very brief period he went to South Africa to work in the case of an Indian merchant there. His stay in South Africa and his bitter experiences of various acts of racial discrimination committed by the white people of that place changed the entire course of his life and action. There, for the first time, he started his moral experiments of trying to conquer evil by love. He started passive resistance by openly defying immoral laws and thus started putting to practice his moral and religious ideas.

With his unique experiences of South African moral and political adventures, he came to India, determined to make efforts for the

independence of India by applying the technique of Satyāgraha. He also had taken a decision to work for the social reform of India by trying to remove such social evil as untouchability, social disparity etc. He was also convinced that his methods of non-violent Satyāgraha, which had succeeded in solving smaller problems of life, could also be effectively used for solving greater problems like, 'political slavery'. The life of Gandhi from 1920 to 1948, when Gandhi attained his martyrdom, has become almost a household story, and hence is not to be repeated here.

Influences that shaped his thought

It is true that Gandhi's thought has an originality and a freshness about it, but it carries on it the stamp of a number of influences. One of the earliest influences that provided to Gandhi's thought its backbone was that of ancient Hindu tradition. He had grown up in a family and in a tradition that had always respected orthodox Hindu ways of religion and worship. At a very early age he had studied the *Gītā* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and also the Vaisnava and the Jaina literatures. These studies sharpened his moral sense and kindled his religious insight.

While in England he got an opportunity of being acquainted with some of the intellectuals of the time and also with Christianity. It is said that when he saw the statue of Christ at St. Peter's in Rome, he burst into tears. He had a tremendous respect for the life and personality of Jesus, and thus was able to incorporate in his thought some of the original sayings of Jesus Christ. For that he was, in some respects, indebted to Tolstoy, who in his *The Kingdom of God is within you*, gave almost a new interpretation to Christianity. Tolstoy left his mark on the mind of Gandhi in various ways, specially his emphasis on the power and dignity of suffering gave to Gandhi an inspiration for developing his own notion of Satyāgraha. Likewise, the great American thinker Thoreau also influenced Gandhi a great deal. His idea of civil disobedience revealed to Gandhi the possibility of using non-violence as a technique for solving even the major problems of social and political life. Besides these he had also a first-hand knowledge of Zoroastrianism and Islam and also of the works of Ruskin and those of some of the theosophists of the time. All these influences were taken and deliberated upon. Gandhi carried on experiments after experiments on moral, religious and existen-

tial issues both in his inner life and in outward existence; and his thought is nothing but a product of the series of experiments that he carried upon.

X God and Truth X Gandhi's Theism

A student of Philosophy finds it extremely difficult to reduce Gandhi's philosophy of God to any of the accepted philosophical models. Gandhi did not have any training in academic philosophy, for him the distinction between Pantheism and Theism was not even relevant; but this can be said that Gandhi's theistic beliefs were, more or less, of the 'Vaiṣṇava' type. His early initiation into the Vaiṣṇava cult; and the influence of the family-atmosphere in which he grew, implanted on his mind the rudiments of the idea of a theistic God.

Vaiṣṇavas in India are theists *par excellence*. They respect the authorities of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads and, at times, draw their inspirations from them. But, in a general way they are not inclined to accept that advaitic trend of thought and belief that has become very prominent in India. The great Advaita Vedantist, Saṅkara, emphasised the reality of *Nirguṇa Brahman*, and came to think that the world which apparently looked real, was metaphysically merely an illusion created by ignorance of the individual. Naturally therefore, the Advaita Vedantist never felt the need of a Creator or a God. If the reality is essentially one, if the perception of the many is a product of an illusion — producing ignorance, then both creation and the creator become unreal.

The Vaiṣṇava thinkers, on the other hand, accept the reality of the world, and therefore, believe in a God as the creator and preserver of the world. There is yet another, a more significant, point of difference between the Advaita Vedantist and the Vaiṣṇava thinker. According to the former reality is an attributeless, indeterminate Brahman, and therefore, salvation consists in the knowledge of this reality. Reality, being *Nirguṇa*, cannot be approached in the devotional manner, because devotion presupposes inter-personal relations. Therefore, the only way that the Advaita Vedantist recommends for attaining liberation is the way of knowledge. Vaiṣṇava thinkers conceive God in a theistic manner; and as such, God becomes a personal God.

man. Thus, these have been some of the prominent conceptions about the nature of man in history of thought.

But, Gandhi would say that these pictures of man are superficial and partial because they do not emphasise the basic truth about man. It would appear to Gandhi that these pictures of man, are in fact, pictures of the apparent man only. Gandhi feels that all such accounts of man are based on partial or superficial analysis of man's external behaviour and conduct. It does not mean that the bodily aspects of man do not have any reality or that the apparent picture of man is essentially a false picture. Gandhi is aware of the importance and value of this aspect of man, but he believes that there is another aspect of man which is much more basic, which gives nourishment even to the bodily aspect and which is, more or less, neglected or forgotten by all psychological or psychoanalytic or sociological theories about human nature. This, according to Gandhi, represents the true nature of man.

Gandhi feels that man is a complex being. The bodily man is the apparent man, his body is natural in so far as it is akin to other objects of nature. The body grows and decays according to the laws of Nature. But, this aspect of man represents merely the physical aspect. Man is not merely a physical being. He has many other characters which are not just physical. He has consciousness, reason, conscience, will, emotion and similar other qualities. He has an aesthetic sense, a feeling-sensitivity, and an insight into the nature of good and bad. These are not just physical activities, these are all expressions of the real man — of the spirit or soul present in him.

In fact, Gandhi's conception of the nature of man is based on his metaphysical conviction. Gandhi, metaphysically speaking, is a monist, he believes in the reality of one Supreme God. As such, he has to believe that whatever we come across is an expression of the one God. Man, therefore, is also an expression of that one reality. Thus, both the bodily and the spiritual aspects of man are expressions of God. Even so, Gandhi feels that the spiritual aspect of man represents man's superior and true nature simply because it is akin to Divine nature.

Gandhi accepts that every individual is a mixture of the bodily and the spiritual. He also believes that initially the bodily and the physical aspects were more predominant and that the spiritual went on becoming more and more prominent

Gandhi's Concept of Man

as the evolutionary process progressed. Evolution, according to him, is a change from the physical to the spiritual, aiming ultimately at the complete realisation of spirituality, that is, Divinity. This also shows that in spite of the fact that the bodily aspect of man also has its own importance and value man's essential nature consists in his spirituality.

Thus, it is apparent that there is an element of Divinity present in every man. This is expressed in various ways. The presence of reason, conscience, free-will etc. is an evidence of the presence of this element in man. Gandhi asserts that if these Divine elements are used in the right manner, man can bring heaven on this earth.

In fact, the most illuminating description of this aspect of man that Gandhi very frequently gives is that it is the aspect of the essential goodness present in every man. Although outwardly man appears to be selfish and even brutish, inwardly and essentially he is good. He says, "I refuse to suspect human nature. It will, is bound to, respond to any noble and friendly action."¹ "In the application of the method of Non-violence, one must believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved, being reformed under humane and skilled treatment"² This is possible only because of the essential presence of such an element in man that is responsive to spiritual stimulation — an element which is itself spiritual.

This belief in the essential spirituality and goodness of every man leads Gandhi to believe further in the essential unity of mankind. He says, "I believe in absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity... though we have many bodies, we have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction, but they have the same source."³ This unity is expressed both in the life of an individual and in social life. The spiritual law is constantly working behind all kinds of activities, individual, social, economic and political, and is, in fact, running through and unifying them all. He clearly says, "I believe in *advaita*. I believe in the essential unity of man, and for that matter of all that lives."⁴

1. *Young India*, 4-8-20.
2. *Harijan*, 22-2-42.
3. *Young India*, 25-9-24.
4. *Young India* 4-12-24.

coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which the reverse? Ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later.¹

Ahimsa

Let us first try to determine the Gandhian sense of the word Ahimsa. Not that Gandhi is using this word in some special sense which is entirely different from its traditional or customary sense, but, Gandhi has emphasised certain aspects of Ahimsa which have not been given that importance by any other believer in Ahimsa. On account of such emphasis there has emerged a Gandhian sense of the word, which, although similar to its usual sense, has some distinctive features of its own.

In Gandhi the word Ahimsa has both a negative and a positive import. The positive aspect of its meaning is more fundamental for Gandhi, because it comprehends the negative aspect also and represents its essence.

The usual meaning of Ahimsa is non-killing. Most often its meaning is made broader by emphasising that non-killing is merely one example of Ahimsa. Ahimsa, then, is conceived as non-injury. In any case, Ahimsa is conceived as the opposite of himsa. Gandhi accepts this and adds much more to its content. He also accepts that himsa means causing pain or killing any life but of anger, or from a selfish purpose, or with the intention of injuring it. Refraining from doing all this is Ahimsa. In fact, in conceiving Ahimsa thus Gandhi seems to be influenced by Jainism which recommends the practice of Ahimsa in thought, speech and action. According to it, even thinking ill of others is himsa. Not only this, Jainism demands that one should not only commit himsa himself, he should not cause himsa or permit himsa to take place. Gandhi's negative requirements of Ahimsa are not as rigid as that, because Gandhi is aware that it is not possible to observe non-violence in as strict and rigid manner as Jainism demands. He is aware that in certain cases himsa is unavoidable, as for example, in the processes of eating, drinking, walking, breathing etc. It is impossible to sustain one's body without injuring other bodies to some extent. Gandhi in fact, openly recommends killing under certain circumstances.

Negative aspect
of Ahimsa

1. *Ibid.* pp. 13-14.

He says, "Taking life may be a duty. We do destroy as much life as we think necessary for sustaining our body. Thus, for food we take life, vegetable and other, and for health we destroy mosquitoes and the like by the use of disinfectants etc., and we do not think that we are guilty of irreligion in doing so . . . for the benefit of the species we kill carnivorous beasts . . . even man — slaughter may be necessary in certain cases."

Suppose a man runs amuck and goes furiously about sword in hand, and killing anyone that comes in his way, and no one dares to capture him alive. Anyone who despatches this lunatic, will earn the gratitude of the community and be regarded as a benevolent man.² He makes this point still clearer when he says, "I see that there is an instinctive horror of killing living beings under any circumstances whatever. For instance, an alternative has been suggested in the shape of confining even rabid dogs in a certain place and allow them to die a slow death. Now my idea of compassion makes this thing impossible for me. I cannot for a moment bear to see a dog or for that matter any other living being, helplessly suffering the torture of a slow death. I do not kill a human being thus circumstanced because I have more hopeful remedies. I should kill a dog similarly situated, because in its case, I am without a remedy. Should my child be attacked with rabbies and there was no helpful remedy to relieve his agony, I should consider it my duty to take his life. Fatalism has its limits. We leave things to Fate after exhausting all the remedies. One of the remedies and the final one to relieve the agony of a tortured child is to take his life."³ Thus, it is apparent that Gandhi considers it almost a virtue to take life under certain conditions. In fact, he feels that under conditions similar to the examples given by him, continuing to live itself is pain and that, therefore, non-killing amounts to prolonging pain and agony. Thus, Non-injury itself has been conceived in a slightly different manner by Gandhi.

He is of the opinion that killing or injury to life can be an act of violence only under certain conditions. These conditions are anger, pride, hatred, selfish consideration, bad intention and similar other considerations. Any injury to life done under these motives is himsa. Thus, the negative meaning of Ahimsa is

1. *Young India*, 4-11-26.
2. *Young India*, 18-11-26.

Positive aspect of Ahimsā

'non-killing or non-injury', but this presupposes that a non-violent act is free from hatred, anger, malice and the like.

But, for Gandhi, the positive aspects of Ahimsā are much more basic than its negative characters.) Ahimsā is not merely refraining from causing injuries to creature, it stands for certain positive attitudes towards other living beings that one must cultivate.

In working out the positive principles of Ahimsā Gandhi proceeds under a basic conviction, namely that Ahimsā represents one of the basic and essential qualities of mankind. That does not mean that violence does not have any place in life. In fact, even in preserving one's existence one has to commit himsa of one kind or the other, and yet Ahimsā is considered to be the law of our species. This is apparent from the fact that even when violence appears to do some good, the good that results is very temporary. Nothing permanent can be built on violence. History teaches us that those who have, even with sincere and honest motives, ousted the greedy and the dishonest by using brute force against them, have, in their turn, become a prey to those very evil things with which the dishonest persons had suffered.

This particular belief of Gandhi is expressed in his oft-quoted assertion that Ahimsā is natural to man. He illustrates this in various ways. If we survey the course of evolution we shall find that although in the initial stages brute force appeared to be dominant, the progress of evolution is towards Ahimsā. In fact, in the case of every species it can be seen that no animal or creature eats or devours or destroys its own offsprings. In the case of man, in particular, this fact is still more evident. Man is both body and spirit. Body can represent physical power and therefore can, on occasions, do himsa; but man's true nature consists in his spiritual aspects. Man as spirit is essentially non-violent. A simple evidence of this is the fact that while body or the senses can be injured, the soul can never be injured. Himsā, therefore, is alien to man's nature. The moment the spiritual side of man is awakened, his non-violent nature becomes apparent.

[In fact, in its positive aspect Ahimsā is nothing but Love. Love is a kind of feeling of oneness. In an act of love one identifies himself with the object of his love, and this cannot be possible unless there is an effort to free mind from every such disposition that prevents the spontaneous outflow of Love.]

Therefore, Ahimsā demands a sincere effort to free-mind from feelings like anger, malice, hatred, revenge, jealousy etc., because these create obstacles in the way of Love. Love, according to Gandhi, is the energy that cleanses one's inner life and uplifts him, and as such, love comprehends such noble feelings as benevolence, compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, generosity, kindness, sympathy etc.

To love, of course, is a very difficult discipline. It is easy to hate, but it requires supreme energy and strength to love. The task becomes still more difficult when one is required to love a person who is ordinarily to be regarded as an opponent. Therefore, Gandhi says that non-violence is meant for the strong and not for the weak. This can be demonstrated in a very simple manner. Gandhi believes that violence is essentially an expression of weakness. One who is inwardly weak develops a sort of fear and out of fear starts arming himself against real or imaginary enemies. Violence may have the appearance of strength, but it is born out of fear and is, therefore, a sign of weakness. Only he can be truly non-violent who has conquered fear. The capacity to kill is not a sign of strength, the strength to die is the real strength. Only when one has this strength in him that he can claim to have risen above fear and is able to practise non-violence.¹ "A helpless mouse is not non-violent because he is always eaten by the pussy. He would gladly eat the murderer if he could."² In fact, "Non-violence pre-supposes the ability to strike."³ One who is practising Ahimsā has the strength to overpower his adversary, and still he practises ahimsa because ahimsa is a conscious and deliberate restraint put upon one's desire for vengeance.⁴ In fact, the really strong wins not by brute force, but by fearless love. "Non-violence does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer. It means pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire."

Non-violence again is conceived as a gospel of action. It is not an attitude of indifference or passivity. It is true that the

1. Harijan, July 20, 1935.
2. Young India, 12-8-1926.
3. Ibid.
4. Young India, 11-8-1920.

- (Three levels of Ahimsā / Non-Violence)
- 1) Non-Violence of the brave
 - 2) Non-Violence of the weak
 - 3) Non-Violence of the cowardly.

those who realise that there is something in man which is superior to the brute nature in him, and that the latter always yields to it, can effectively be passive resisters. This force is to violence and, therefore, to all tyranny, all injustice what light is to darkness.¹ An attempt to explain clearly the ideas contained in this lengthy passage taken from the writings of Gandhi will bring to light the salient features of Satyagraha.

One thing seems to be obvious, and it follows from the very etymology of the word 'Satyagraha'. Truth according to Gandhi, is God, and Satyagraha is 'āgraha' of 'Satya' and thus, it means holding fast to truth. It, therefore, demands a deep sincerity and a vigorous love for Truth. It works on the conviction that Truth represents the will and the ways of God. Therefore, the path of Truth has to be followed in a vigorous manner for no other consideration except the fact that it is God's way — that it is the way of Truth. In this sense the doctrine of satyagraha is strictly rigoristic.

This means that Satyagraha is essentially based on love. In fact, Satyagraha appears to Gandhi almost as a religious pursuit. It rests on a religious belief that there is one God behind every thing and being, and as such the same God resides in every one of us. This is the basis of Love, and unless one has this basic love for mankind he cannot practise the technique of Satyagraha.

There is yet another religious presupposition of Satyagraha. In fact, all rigoristic ethical doctrines, somehow or other, believe that there has to be another life, otherwise, they would not be able to explain the strictly rigoristic character of their belief. Gandhi also feels that a belief in rebirth is almost a pre-condition of Satyagraha. Satyagraha demands selfless and sincere pursuit of Truth without having any consideration of any advantage or gain. But, one will be able to walk on such a sharp 'razor's edge' only if he somehow believes that he will get the fruits of his good work, if not in this life, in subsequent life. He says, "with the knowledge that the soul survives the body, he [the satyagrahi] is not impatient to see the triumph of truth in the present body."²

Gandhi describes Satyagraha as a force against violence, tyranny and injustice. All these evils arise on account of a neglect of the 'truth' that is all-pervasive and all-comprehending

1. N.K. Bose, 'Selections from Gandhi', pp. 218-19.
2. *Speeches and Writings*, Madras 1934, p. 504.

Therefore Gandhi says that if we start resisting evil with evil, violence with violence, anger with anger, then we are only adding fuel to fire. The most effective force against these evils can be the one which would force them to evaporate, and that can be done only by Satyagraha.

This is possible only because satyagraha creates conditions for the anger of the opponent to spend itself out. It gives the opponent a chance to see and realise his mistake and thereby to mend his ways. It is based on the conviction that there is an element of essential goodness in every man because man contains divinity within himself. Evils result because this element is either pushed to the background, or is clouded by passion, hatred and anger. What is, therefore, required is to awaken this aspect of man. The moment this element of goodness is aroused, the individual himself will realise the wrong that he had been doing.

The Satyagrahi can do this by subjecting himself to suffering for the sake of Truth. Ahimsā is conscious suffering. The Satyagrahi, therefore, suffers and thereby converts the opponent. Gandhi says, "Nations, like individuals, are built through the agony of the cross and in no other way. Joy comes not out of infliction of pain on others, but out of pain voluntarily borne by oneself."

That is why Satyagraha has been described as a method of conversion rather than a method of coercion. Coercion implies violence, it may not be physical violence, but it is at least mental violence. The aim of satyagraha is not to embarrass the wrong-doer. It does not appeal to fear, it does not proceed in terms of threats. It appeals to the heart and to the good sense of the wrong-doer. Its intention is to bring about, what Gandhi calls, a change of heart. In fact, satyagraha is based on the pre-supposition that there are no 'enemies' or 'opponents', but that there are only wrong-doers. A wrong-doer will also develop some kind of a resistance if he is physically forced to be otherwise, but if he is made to see and realise the wrong, he will himself repent and change.

Therefore, Satyagraha is based on love. There must be love even for the opponent. Distrust or hatred of any kind will prevent the success of Satyagraha. There must be a 'trust' in the goodness of the opponent and a love based on the realisation

that he is also one of us. Gandhi goes on to add that there must also be a respect for the opponent. Satyagraha seeks to persuade the wrong-doer to give up his wrong, and this can be done very effectively when the wrong-doer is also approached with love and respect.

Satyagraha also demands extreme patience on the part of the satyagrahi. A wrong-doer cannot see his wrong at once, he will take time to win over his anger and hatred. The Satyagrahi must wait patiently for the good sense of the wrong-doer to be aroused.

Gandhi distinguishes *Satyagraha* from *Passive Resistance* with which it is usually confused. Firstly, Satyagraha is not a passive state; in fact, it is more active than violence. Secondly in passive resistance, there is an element of force, it does not completely forbid the use of violence. In fact, in it there remains the scope for the use of arms on particular occasions. In Satyagraha, on the other hand, violence is completely forbidden even in the face of very adverse situation. Thirdly, "In passive resistance there is always present an idea of harassing the other party and there is a simultaneous readiness to undergo any hardship entailed upon us by such activity, while in *Satyagraha* there is not the remotest idea of injuring the opponent. *Satyagraha*, postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person."¹ Fourthly, in passive resistance laws are disobeyed and as such the impression is created that passive resisters do not have respect for law. In *Satyagraha*, on the other hand, there is invariably a very great respect for the higher Law—the Law of Truth and God. In fact, the entire process of *Satyagraha* is initiated by such a respect. Fifthly, while there is no scope for love in passive resistance, hatred has no place in *Satyagraha*, but is a positive breach of its principle and function. Passive resistance is based on a feeling of dislike (if not of complete hatred) for the opposite party. *Satyagraha* is based on a feeling of love. Sixthly, Passive resistance tends to compel the other party to do a thing, there is an element of coercion in it. It does not seek to change men's heart. The *Satyagrahi* essentially appeals to the mind and heart of men with the sole aim of bringing about a conversion. The essence of *Satyagraha* is to liquidate antagonism, not the antagonist.

1. N. K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, p. 221.

Distinction between Satyagraha and Passive Resistance.

Thus, *Satyagraha* is based on the conviction that through love, ahimsa and conscious suffering the forces of evil can be neutralised, because this is the Divine way, the way of Truth. Gandhi believes that this technique is universal in its application. It can be practised by children and adults, by men and women, by individuals and communities and by societies and nations. It can be put to use on all possible fronts—in domestic life, in social relationship or in political situations. Its universality is derived from the fact that it is the way of God.

Requirements of a Satyagrahi

But, Gandhi is aware that although it is possible for every body to use this technique, it cannot be followed in a loose or casual or insincere manner. It requires a very strict moral and religious discipline. Gandhi has, in course of his numerous references to this subject, mentioned a number of qualities and characters which a *Satyagrahi* must possess. Some of the basic ones can be enumerated and emphasised here.

1. A *Satyagrahi* must be basically honest and sincere. It implies honesty of purpose and sincerity of effort. Without this a *Satyagraha* will remain *satyagraha* merely in name.
2. A *Satyagrahi* must not have any mental reservations, he must be open-minded. Gandhi feels that a change of heart can be brought about only when the other party, is approached open-mindedly, with no 'second' or 'hidden' ideas or motives.
3. A *Satyagrahi* must be a disciplined soldier. Truth alone should be his master and conscience his guide. He should be loving, but firm.
4. This means that a *Satyagrahi* must be completely fearless. He must not fear anything worldly—even death. Gandhi says that one who has not conquered fear cannot follow the way of *Satyagraha* effectively.
5. Fearlessness leads to another virtue, sacrifice. A *Satyagrahi* must be prepared for the greatest possible sacrifice. He has to be completely selfless, and no sacrifice is great for him. He must be prepared to undergo any amount of suffering for the sake of Truth and for the good of others.
6. Suffering and Sacrifice have to be undergone in an attitude of simplicity and humility. If a *Satyagrahi* becomes

arrogant and starts feeling that he is doing something great, his satyāgraha would go in vain. Humility, according to Gandhi, is one of the prime virtues of a Satyāgrahi.

7. Gandhi asserts that a Satyāgrahi is required to practise truthfulness and non-violence not only in his actions, but also in thought and speech. He admits that this is not possible all at once, but asserts that constant discipline and sincere effort would be of great help.
8. A Satyāgrahi must be firm in his dealings and behaviour. He must not yield to pressure, he must not give way to greed and dishonest persuasions. He must have a strength of character and a resoluteness of will. Honesty and Integrity must be his ideal.
9. There must be a conformity between the thought and action of a Satyāgrahi. Gandhi knows that the absence of this character gives rise to many kinds of evils. Moreover, it reflects the disintegrated and disorganised character of the person concerned. A Satyāgrahi has to win the confidence and love of the adversary, and therefore there must be a co-ordination between what he thinks and says and what he does.
10. Gandhi also recommends that the Satyāgrahi must learn to put on restraints upon his own self. He gives practical tips and hints for such practices. One of the effective suggestion in this regard is the practice of Fasting.
11. He also recommends the cultivation of some of the essential virtues of life. The virtues most often mentioned are the ones that ancient Indian philosophy has emphasized — viz. Asteya (Non-stealing), Aparigraha (Contentment), Brahmacharya (Celebacy) etc.
12. The Satyāgrahi must also have tolerance in him. Gandhi is not happy with this word, but for want of a better word he uses it. He says that a Satyāgrahi has always to deal with adversaries. If he does not have tolerance, he will lose self-control, and thus, will upset the way of Love.
13. The Satyāgrahi is also required to observe other ordinary virtues of life like punctuality and order. These, according to Gandhi, are forms of Discipline that help in the cultivation of the power of self-control.

14. The most fundamental requirement is that a Satyāgrahi must have a living faith in God. In fact, the entire principle of Satyāgraha is based on the conviction that there is one God and also on the faith that there is an element of Divinity present in everyman. A faith in God, therefore, is the religious pre-requisite of the life of a Satyāgrahi.

Gandhi feels that a true Satyāgrahi who has been able to fulfil the requirement mentioned above can work wonders. He alone can face the might of an army or even of an empire. Great powers also would bend before the Truth-force of a single Satyāgrahi. Describing vividly his own idea of how Satyāgraha can meet a violent army in a non-violent manner, Gandhi says, "At the risk of being considered a visionary or a fool I must answer the question in the only manner I know. It would be cowardly of a neutral country to allow an army to devastate a neighbouring country. But there are two ways common between soldiers of war, and soldiers of non-violence, and if I had been a citizen of Switzerland and a president of the federal state what I would have done would be to refuse passage to the invading army by refusing all supplies. Secondly, by re-enacting a Thermopylae in Switzerland, you would have presented a living wall of men and women and children inviting the invaders to walk over your corpses....Imagine these men and women staying in front of an army requiring a safe passage to another country. The army would be brutal enough to walk over them, you might say. I would then say that you will still have done your duty by allowing yourself to be annihilated. An army that dares to pass over the corpses of innocent men and women, would not be able to repeat that experiment. You may, if you wish, refuse to believe in such courage on the part of the masses of men and women; but then you would have to admit that non-violence is made of sterner stuff. It was never conceived as a weapon of the weak, but of the stoutest hearts."¹

X Kinds of Satyāgraha

Although Gandhi believes that Satyāgraha is one simple technique which can be used differently in different situations, in

1. Young India, 31-12-31.

actual practice it has assumed different forms. Therefore, the impression is created that there are many kinds of Satyāgraha.

Some of the prominent kinds of Satyāgraha that have been used not only by Gandhi or his followers but also by believers in other kinds of theory (viz. the communists) are the following:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Negotiation | 5. Non-cooperation |
| 2. Arbitration | 6. Civil Disobedience |
| 3. Agitation and
Demonstration | 7. Direct Action |
| 4. Economic Boycott | 8. Fasting |

To this list are also added some other measures that have become popular in course of time:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| 9. Strike | 11. Dharna |
| 10. Picketing | 12. Non-payment of Taxes, etc. |

All these are not favoured equally by Gandhi. In fact, some of these are even condemned by him. He is aware of the possible perversions of the way of Satyāgraha. He says, "Indiscriminate resistance to authority must lead to lawlessness, unbridled licence and consequent self-destruction."¹ He knows that all these methods would fail if the intention is not pure and if these are not taken resort to in a spirit of love. Therefore, he recommends that a Satyāgrahi must first exhaust all other means before he resorts to Satyāgraha. He must constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he must appeal to public opinion, educate it, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody, and only after he has exhausted all these avenues that he should resort to Satyāgraha. People, at times, just to get quick returns take resort to some of the forms of Satyāgraha. Gandhi is completely against this. Explaining this by taking the example of non-payment of taxes he says that this may produce quickest possible results. But, he feels that we must not resort to non-payment of taxes because of the possibility of a ready response. The readiness of this kind, according to him, is a fatal temptation. Such non-payment will not be civil or non-violent, but it will be criminal and fraught with the greatest possibility of violence. Likewise, ridiculing the present form of 'Dharna' he says, "Some students have revived the ancient form of barbarity in the form of sitting dharna. I call it barbarity because it is a

1. *Young India*, 2-4-31.

crude way of using coercion. It is also cowardly because one who sits dharna knows that he is not going to be trampled over. It is difficult to call the practice violence, but it is certainly worse. If we fight our opponent, we at least enable him to return the blow. But when we challenge him to walk over us, we are knowing that he will not, place him in a most awkward and humiliating position."² Even with respect to Non-co-operation he says that extreme caution is necessary, in resorting to it. "Non-co-operation, when its limitations are not recognised, becomes a license instead of becoming a duty and therefore becomes a crime."³ In such cases, Satyāgraha, according to Gandhi, becomes Durāgraha. In fact, the moral and religious requirements of Satyāgraha are very strict and rigorous, any deviation would distort the whole process. It has to be based on sincerity of purpose and on an essential love for the other party. Of course, Gandhi concedes that the use and application of the technique of Satyāgraha would vary from person to person. He accepts Satyāgraha as a universal principle, but admits the practical limitations of its complete operation. But, he lays down a fundamental and essential condition for its use: that is the recognition of the existence of a soul — of a good nature in every man. This recognition must not only be a kind of an intellectual understanding, it must be a living faith on which our life and conduct can unhesitatingly be based.

FORMS OF SATYĀGRAHA THAT GANDHI FAVOUR MOST

The forms of Satyāgraha that Gandhi seems to favour most are Disobedience, Non-co-operation, Direct Action and Fasting. Disobedience is considered to be a protest against unjust laws. Gandhi, in this regard, seems to be influenced by Thoreau and accordingly feels that it is morally proper to be right and true than to be law-abiding. He resorted to this technique chiefly in South Africa when he protested against the unjust, discriminatory and racial laws. Non-co-operation, according to Gandhi, is essentially a cleansing process, it affects the Satyāgrahi more than the other party and is able to give to the Satyāgrahi a power to face evil and to endure suffering. Non-co-operation, as Gandhi conceives it, amounts to a kind of a refusal on the part of the exploited to be exploited. Gandhi feels that the exploited is also to be blamed for being exploited because he has allowed himself

1. *Young India*, 2-2-21.
2. *Young India*, 29-12-21.

to be exploited. Non-co-operation, therefore, is refusal on the part of the exploited to succumb to the forces of exploitation. 'Swadeshi' is an example of this kind of Satyāgraha. Direct Action is conceived as an open and mass rebellion. Although the word rebellion has associations with violent ways, 'Direct Action' is essentially non-violent. It is also open in the sense that there is no secret about it. The QUIT INDIA call given by Gandhi in 1942 was an example of this kind of Satyāgraha. But, the most effective form of Satyāgraha, according to Gandhi, is fasting. Fasting works in a double way, it aims at self-purification and also by honestly choosing the way of death it can mend even the obstinacy of the other party. But, Gandhi feels that this should be treated as the last weapon of the Satyāgrahi and should be resorted to only at the last moment—only when other means of persuasion have failed. Fasting concentrates the energy of the soul and forces the opponent to see reason. He says, "It is my firm belief that the strength of the soul grows in proportion as you subdue the flesh."¹ He further says, "My religion teaches me that whenever there is distress which one cannot remove, one must fast and pray".²

X Philosophy of End and Means

In every ethical thought that seeks to reflect upon the nature and standard of morality, the problem regarding 'Means and End' becomes a very significant problem. In fact, traditional ethical thought has tried to relate these two concepts to the concepts of 'Right' and 'Good'. The word 'good' even etymologically has a reference to 'end' and the word 'right' means 'according to law'. Being 'in accordance with law' has a necessary reference to the ways of operation and behaviour, and therefore, to means. That is why sometimes it is suggested that if 'right' and 'good' have a necessary relation with each other, there is a relation between means and ends also as they are conceived in the light of the concepts of 'right' and 'good'. Some thinkers have gone to the extent of suggesting that in case the means is right, the end has to be good.

Gandhi also conceives 'end' and 'means' in somewhat similar

1. Young India, 23-10-24.
2. Young India, 25-9-24.

manner, with the difference that he takes these concepts much more seriously. In fact, these two concepts have become 'central' in his thought, in so far as the relationship that is conceived to exist in between the two concepts has very important implications for Gandhi's notions of Truth and Non-violence.

Gandhi's assertion that End and Means are intimately related with each other is a common-sense assertion. But, he goes beyond common-sense when he says that 'means' and 'end' are convertible terms in his philosophy of life. This assertion is not to be taken too literally because it merely throws light on the essentially inseparable character of the two. The end is the 'goal', and the means is the 'way' of the realisation of the goal. Means cannot be separated from the end just as 'the way' cannot be separated from the 'goal'. Explaining the relation between the two Gandhi says, "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree."¹ One implication of this description is that means somehow contains in it, (of course in an implicit manner) the possibility of the end, just as the seed contains in it the energy that is expressed in the form of the tree.

This raises the question regarding the justification of end and means in terms of each other. Does the end justify the means? Are we permitted to attain good ends by whatever means we can? Should means also be essentially good if a good end is to be realised? Is purity of means an essential aspect of the way of the realisation of a good end? These are precisely the questions which engage Gandhi's attention in his philosophy of means and end.

In arriving at his views on the matter, Gandhi, as usual, is determined by his basic metaphysical conviction regarding the essential spirituality and unity of everything. Spiritual unity is the ideal of life, the goal or the end of every activity. A spiritual end cannot be attained by any non-spiritual means. That means that a good end cannot justify any and every means. If a good end is to be attained, it is also essential that the means adopted for the realisation of the end is also good.

That is why Gandhi gives very great importance to 'means'. He says, "They say 'means are after all means.' I would say

1. Hind Swaraj, p. 39.

Ruskin along with the suggestions made in the *Bible* and the *Gita* suggested this idea to Gandhi. The *Bible*, says, 'Earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow' and the *Gita* says that he who eats without labouring for it eats stolen bread. Gandhi feels that this idea can be useful also in bringing a feeling of equality among the members of a society.

By 'Bread Labour' Gandhi means that in order to live man must work. It is essential for every man to realise the dignity of labour and to think that at least for earning his own bread one must do some manual work. It is true that every individual cannot do all kinds of manual work. Moreover, if every individual is required to do every kind of work, then the doctrine of varpa would fall down. Gandhi is aware of this, therefore, he does not say that every body should go to the field. Any man can choose for himself that work that he can do, he can spin or weave or do carpentry or any other thing. There is at least one thing that every one can do, he can be his own scavenger. In fact, by doing manual work one would be able to keep his body also fit.

One may say that mental work is also work or labour. Why should, then, it be insisted that a person doing mental work must also do manual labour. Gandhi says that such an attitude causes social distinctions to arise because people doing mental work consider themselves superior to persons who do merely physical work. But, if the person engaged in mental work also does the work of sweeping and cleaning and does some other things also like spinning or gardening, the distinctions would vanish because the work of cleaning or sweeping would not then be considered inferior.

There is one condition attached to Bread Labour; in fact, this condition is a universal condition as it is the supreme condition of morality itself. Everyone must take to Bread Labour voluntarily. There is no question of any compulsion. Compulsion gives rise to discontent and revolt. Social life has to be a life based on love and willing co-operation, and so, the doctrine of Bread Labour can be socially beneficial only when individuals take to it voluntarily.

iv. Equality of Wages

Another recommendation that Gandhi makes in order to prevent social inequality is the one regarding *quality of wages*.

This doctrine provides the basis of the economic structure of society. It is only on account of differences in wages that inequality of all kinds results. People getting higher wages consider themselves superior, professions carrying better emoluments are considered to be better kinds of profession. But, Gandhi thinks that all kinds of work are equally sacred, they are all equally necessary for society. The basis for the division and distribution of work should be the aptitudes and capacities of the individual and not wages. Therefore, he recommends that every worker should get the same wages. The lawyer or the doctor or the teacher should get the same emoluments that should be given to a sweeper or a scavenger. As soon as this is given shape men will start choosing their professions not in terms of wages, but in terms of their aptitudes and capacities. This would increase social efficiency. Gandhi is aware that the equality of wages is a difficult ideal to realise, but he is confident that any step in this direction is a step in the right direction.

(v) Labour, Capital and the Doctrine of Trusteeship

The doctrine of Labour and equality of wages takes us on to consider the relationship between labour and capital. Gandhi holds that labour is superior to capital, and as such is able to give to the person doing labour a kind of dignity. In this respect his views resemble those of Marx. But, unlike Marxism, he would not recommend an overthrow of the capitalists by force. He is not in favour of inciting labour against capital. Unlike Marxism he does not believe that class-struggle is the key and the basic principle of social development. He believes that society has to be based on love and mutual trust and not on struggle. As a devout believer in the ways of Ahimsā, he would not permit any violent struggle or fight even against the capitalists. Society, in spite of everything, must be based on moral considerations. Class-struggle will breed distrust and hatred, and once these forces are let loose, they will go out of control; and this will have a disastrous effect on society.

For this Gandhi introduces the doctrine of the Trusteeship of the rich. Gandhi believes that even the rich people—the so called capitalists—are after all human beings, and as such they also have in them an element of essential goodness that every man necessarily possesses. If that element is aroused and if the capitalists are also won over by love, they would be persuaded

to believe that the wealth in their possession should be utilised for the good of the poor. The rich people should be made to realise that the capital in their hands is the fruit of the labour of the poor men. This realisation would make them see that the good of the society lies in using capital and riches for the good of others and not for one's personal comforts. Then, the capitalists would function only as trustees for the poor. They would then keep all surplus wealth in trust and this would guarantee both economic solidarity and economic equality.

Thus, it is apparent that Gandhi's doctrine of Trusteeship is based on a sense of morality and love. This doctrine is nothing but a sincere working out of the doctrine of Non-possession. The rich also must be made to realise, through a loving process, the merit of Non-possession. A critic of Gandhi might say that this doctrine is based on the assumption of honesty on the part of the rich. But, this is no criticism of Gandhi because Gandhi's entire beliefs are based on the presupposition that every man inwardly is good. He has tried to demonstrate this in various ways and he does not want to exclude the capitalists from that. Even they are good people, only their good sense has to be aroused.

Xvi. The Economic Basis of Society.

Now, we are in a position to give an outline of the economic basis of society. Gandhi is aware that complete economic equality is an unattainable ideal. The factor of individual difference is very important, men do differ in their capacities and talents. Therefore, even if equal opportunities are given to individuals, and even if wages are given at the rate of 'equal wages for equal work', the output will differ from individual to individual, and some would earn more and some less. If rigidly economic equality is enforced, then, it will be completely artificial, it will take away from men initiative for work and change them into nothing but machines.

Therefore, the economic basis of society must be a moral one, society must be based on love and trust. This would naturally prevent economic exploitation. A good individual, whose inner moral sense has been aroused, would love to share his 'thing' with others, would see the merit of contentment. Thus, even for economic reform Gandhi recommends cultivation of a strong moral sense and a love for others.

Xvii. Against too much of Industrialisation

Gandhi feels that the growth of a moral society is prevented by an over-emphasis on industrialisation. Gandhi has been able to perceive that such an attitude has given rise to many kinds of ills and evils both at the social level and at the political level. It is on account of an excess of industrialisation that such international evils like exploitation of the undeveloped countries, colonial expansion, war among nations etc. make their appearance. Smaller countries are exploited for procuring raw-materials and stronger countries get involved in repeated wars just in order to maintain industrial superiority. Then, even on the national level too much of industrialisation leads to many kinds of unrest and disruptions. It is on account of industrialisation that a permanent rift between capital and labour is created. Moreover, by substituting machines for human labour industrialisation creates problems of unemployment also.

But, the strongest reason why Gandhi is against too much of industrialisation is the fact that it poisons the very spirit of man. It makes life mechanical and artificial and seeks to reduce even man to the status of a machine. It lets loose a process of dehumanisation. The result is that man loses the zest for life. He seeks an escape by indulging in purely sensuous pursuits like drinking, gambling and the like. Consequently, he loses his moral sense, and, in fact, his soul itself. Gandhi reflects with horror on the possible consequences of such a process and therefore recommends a life that would make human existence meaningful and would give to man real happiness and peace.

Xviii. Men and Women in Society

A survey of Gandhi's social ideas makes it clear that Gandhi aims at the establishment of a society in which peace and happiness will reign supreme. He feels that this would be possible only when men and women realise their status and duties in society. It is a fact that women today are trying to compete with men in every walk of life by imitating the ways of men. Gandhi is also aware that men are not prepared to give up their sense of mastery over women. This appears to Gandhi as unfortunate. He feels that in an ideal society duties and functions are distributed not only among the different varnas, but also among men and women. Both men and women have the same soul, and

therefore are equal. The work assigned to one is not inferior to the work assigned to the other. Man, by nature, is physically strong, and therefore he puts in hard labour to support and protect the family. Women, by nature, are loving, and therefore, they are equipped by nature to play the role of a mother and the caretaker of the home. Both these duties are equally important and necessary; this must be realised by both men and women.

Therefore, Gandhi recommends that the goal of marriage must be the same as the goal of life itself. Marriage must also be a means for realising a spiritual life. "The ideal that marriage aims at is that of spiritual union through the physical. The human love that it incarnates is intended to serve as a stepping stone to divine or universal love."¹ That is why he says that the object of sexual relation must be nothing else but preservation of race, that is, getting a child. Therefore, married life must be a training in spiritual love, the husband and wife must cultivate a sense of companionship and a pattern for co-operative living.

X ix. Nature of Gandhi's Political Ideas

Gandhi's political views, in a sense, differ fundamentally from other political theories in so far as he makes even politics subordinate to ethics and religion. Usually politics is considered to be the game of the clever. Even deception, dishonesty, telling lies etc. are considered to be political achievements if they are resorted to skilfully. Gandhi tries to introduce morality in politics, and that he does by presupposing that even political activity is an aspect of the spiritual pattern that guides the world. He works out his political ideas strictly in accordance with his religious and metaphysical beliefs. All men are essentially one, and there is an element of essential goodness present in every man, and therefore, even in politics distrust, hatred, immorality etc. should not have any place. *Satyagraha* remained Gandhi's political weapon also. Even in politics he made experiments and successfully worked on the conviction that hate and violence could be conquered by love and suffering.

X x. Political Freedom : Swarāj

Gandhi admits that for the realisation of the ideal state political freedom is one of the essential pre-conditions. That was why

1. N. K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, p. 273.

he had launched a non-violent struggle in order to gain political freedom for India. The word that he prefers to use for political freedom is *swarāj*. Traditionally this word has come to mean 'own Government or self-rule', but Gandhi uses this word in a much profounder sense. His meaning of *swarāj* includes its usual meaning and adds something more. He says, "As every country is free to eat, to drink and to breathe, even so is every nation free to manage its own affairs, no matter how badly."¹ Along with this he further extends the meaning of *swarāj* by saying that the sense of *swarāj* must be felt and realised by every individual of the state. According to him there is a difference between "mere independence" and "*swarāj*". If a country gets self-rule and the few powerful ones take up everything in their own hands and neglect the poor masses, it is not the *Swarāj* of Gandhi's dream. He takes particular care to emphasise this. He says, "The *Swarāj* of my dream is the poor man's *swarāj*. The necessities of life should be enjoyed by you in common with those enjoyed by princes and monied men."² "The *Swarāj* of my dream recognises no race or religious distinction ... *Swarāj* is to be for all...."³ "I hope to demonstrate that the real *swarāj* will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority, when abused. In other words, *swarāj* is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority."⁴ These self-explanatory extracts from Gandhi's writings make it abundantly clear that real *Swarāj* means that every individual should have a feeling of freedom. In fact, the ultimate aim of every activity, according to Gandhi, is the realisation of spiritual freedom. *Swarāj* is a step towards it, because it enables an individual to realise at least political freedom.) ✓

X xi. The State and the Individual

The idea of political freedom raises the question regarding the relation between the state and the individual. This problem has become very important in the recent times in view of the fact that sociological theories have started emphasising the primacy

1. *Young India*, 15-10-31.
2. *Young India*, 26-3-31.
3. *Young India*, 3-9-25.
4. *Young India*, 29-1-25.

Ambedkar.



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The lowest strata of Hindu society comprised a number of distinct groups, including the untouchables. The ancestors of Dr. Ambedkar hailed from a poor family of untouchable community of Konkan region of India. It was a community that was totally denied the human rights which ought to be available to all citizens of a civilized society. The untouchables could not possess wealth and arms. The doors of education and learning were closed to them. They were socially segregated, economically deprived, and politically paralysed. The untouchables were born in debt and perished in debt, that is, they were born as untouchables, lived as untouchables and died as untouchables. To live as sub-human beings, worse than beasts, was their destiny in Hindu society.

In the midst of untouchable communities, a boon took effect at Mhow in central India on 14th April 1891, in the birth of a boy who was named 'Bhim'. Bhim's ancestral village was Ambavade five miles of Mandangad, a small town in the Ratnagiri District of Maharashtra State. The grandfather of Bhim, Maloji Sakpal came of a good Mahar family, and the Mahars were the most robust, adaptable and intelligent community. Maloji Sakpal was a military man. Of his children, two survived, one Ramji, the father of Bhim, and the other Mira. The family followed the Bhakti cult of Kabir, and its members enjoyed spiritual songs generally found in the bhakti tradition of Hindu culture. The family was always opposed to varna, caste and untouchability. It believed in the ideal: "Jat pant puchhe na ko; Mar ko bhaje so harka ho!"

Ramji Sakpal had fourteen children and Bhim was the fourteenth, one born to him. Bhim's mother, Bhimabai, came of the Murbadkars, an untouchable Hindu family. They were rich and almost all the family members were employed in the Army. They also belonged to the Kabir-cult of Bhakti. Ramji Sakpal was a Subedar in the Army. Bhim was hardly two years old when he retired from military service and came down to Dapoli where Bhim was sent to a primary school.

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However, in search of a job, Ramji Sakpal came to Satara. There he faced a great misfortune, and Bhim's mother breathed her last. At that time, Bhim was six years old; his two brothers were Balram and Anandrao, then followed two sisters, Manjula and Tulsi. Bhim was the youngest child, and therefore, he was known as the Chaudava Rati, the precious fourteenth jewel.

Ramji Sakpal was a very industrious and intensely a religious man. He looked after the spiritual development of his children. Besides, he also cared much for the material well-being of his sons. Since he was a full-fledged trained teacher in the Army, he gave all facilities of education to all his children. He taught them, particularly to Bhim, the difficult subjects like Arithmetic and English. He had an excellent character, a confirmed teetotaller, which influenced the lives of his children. He took a keen interest in the social and educational affairs of his untouchable community. He was really a committed and dedicated man, truly a good father.

Bhim completed his primary education at Satara and began his high school career along with his brother Balram. During his school days, Bhim realised quickly though painfully what were the pangs of caste and untouchability. Because of his being an untouchable, he was overturned from a bullock-cart while going to Goregaon where his father worked as a cashier. A few days later, mad with thirst, Bhim was drinking water stealthily at a public-water course. To his surprise, when it was discovered that he belonged to an untouchable caste, he was beaten black and blue. Once a barber refused to cut his hair, because it could defile his razor, and likewise, the washerman, too, refused to wash his clothes. All such insulting refusals and ill-treatments must have engendered in him a burning hatred for varna, caste and untouchability.

In his school days, if some teachers hated him, a few others loved him for his intelligence and smartness. There was one Brahmin teacher in the High School, whose name was Ambedkar. It was he who asked Bhim to drop the surname 'Ambavade', and write Ambedkar after his name 'Bhimrao Ramji', because the former name did not sound well. Since then, he came to be known as 'Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar'. This teacher used to help him in various ways, and Ambedkar, too, gratefully remembered him all throughout his life. Despite such sympathy from some teachers, Bhim and his brother were usually made to squat in a corner of the class on a piece of gunny cloth which they daily carried to school. When these boys felt thirsty in the school, they could not touch the waterpipe. They usually turned

their mouths upward and then somebody would kindly pour drinking water into their mouths as if through a funnel! This way it was their lot to suffer as untouchable students.

So far Ambedkar had little love for his studies, and he had full freedom to pursue all sorts of hobbies like gardening, tending cattle and rearing goats. At times, he actually did some Mazdoori at Satara station. Bhim terribly felt humiliated when his father married a second time, though the father did not intend to do so. At this time, Rani Sakpal again retired from the service and he moved his children to Bombay. First he got his sons admitted into Maratha High School, but after a few months, Bhim was sent to the Elphinstone High School. His two sisters were already married and residing in Bombay. Ramji, though very poor man, provided Bhim with new books and articles at times by borrowing money from his two married daughters. Although it was a Government Institute, the atmosphere in the High School was not free from casteism and untouchability. His fellow students would not like to touch him, because they knew he was an untouchable. Ramji lived in Dawak Chawl at Lower Parel which was a labour colony. Therefore, Bhim was also in constant touch with the labour life, which was full of hurdles and hardships.

Although Bhim wanted to offer Sanskrit as one of his optional subjects, he was forbidden by his Brahmin teachers. He felt it as an insult. However, after doing hard work, he passed the Matriculation Examination in 1907. It was an uncommon event for an untouchable. Bhim was felicitated by the social reformers of Bombay under the presidency of Sri S.K. Bhole. A social reformer and assistant teacher, Sri K.A. Keluskar praised Bhim for his studious habits and presented him a copy of his new book, "Life of Gautam Buddha." After Matriculation, Bhim was married to Ramabai, who was nine years old and he was hardly seventeen. She was a sober and good girl. Inspired by the noble ambition of his father, Ambedkar joined again the Elphinstone College, and though he lost one year due to ill-health, yet he passed the Inter Arts Examination in 1910. Now Bhim wanted some job, for his father ran out of funds to continue his studies. It was, then, Keluskar who came to help Bhim and got a scholarship for him from the Maharaja of Baroda, Sayajirao Gaikwad, who had announced a few days earlier to help the untouchable students. Bhim then concentrated his mind on the studies and passed his B.A. Examination in 1912. After that he took service in Baroda, despite his father's repeated disapprovals. He was posted as a Lieutenant in the Baroda State Forces. There, he faced many difficulties and insulting moments,

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because all offices were mostly manned by the orthodox Hindus who did not like him in any way, though he was handsome young man well dressed and highly educated one.

Hardly had Bhim served for about 15 days in January, 1913, when he received a telegram about the serious illness of his father. He immediately left Baroda, and on his way home, he got down at Surat station to buy some sweets for his father, but somehow, he missed his train. He reached Bombay many hours late. When he saw his sinking father, he was terribly up-set. The father moved his feeble hand over his son's back, and then, he breathed his last on February 2, 1913. It was the saddest day in Bhim's life. He was the man who took great pains, lived in debt and died in debt, for the well-being of his children. He left behind him a great son who fought unceasingly for the emancipation of the untouchable masses.

After this tragic event, Ambedkar was awarded 'Overseas Scholarship' by the Maharaja of Baroda for prosecuting the post-graduation studies in the U.S.A. On June 4, 1913, he signed an agreement with the Education Department that he would serve for ten years the Baroda State after the completion of his studies. Ambedkar arrived in New York in July, 1913, and he stayed at Livingstone Hall Dormitory with Naval Bhathena, a Parsi student, who formed a lifelong friendship with him. To him, life at Columbia University was a revelation, a unique and moving experience in life. There was no caste and untouchability. The entire environment was filled with the feelings of liberty and equality. The exuberance of life was there; but he lived frugally and learnt many good things under the professorship of Edwin R.A. Seligman who was a friend of Lala Lajpat Rai. At last, Ambedkar took his M.A. degree in 1915 for his thesis 'Ancient Indian Commerce'. He also presented a paper on 'Castes in India : Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development' before the Anthropology seminar of Dr. Goldenweiser in May, 1916. He was also working simultaneously on another thesis 'National Dividend of India : A Historic and Analytical Study' which was accepted by the Columbia University for the degree of Ph.D. in June 1916.

Then, Ambedkar left America in June 1916 and reached London for further studies in Economics, Political Science and Law. He got admitted himself in Gray's Inn for Law and for Economics in the London School of Economic and Political Science. Since he was a Ph.D., his professors allowed him simultaneously to prepare for the degree of D.Sc. In the meanwhile, the period of scholarship was over, and he came back to India, but he was permitted to continue and

complete his studies within four years from the year 1917. In Bombay, Ambedkar was widely felicitated by his admirers, social reformers and political workers. In conformity with the agreement he went to Baroda and was posted as a Military Secretary to the Maharaja. There no hostel, nor any hotel, accepted Dr. Ambedkar and his brother who had accompanied him, as they were untouchables. On the one hand, the Maharaja could not make any arrangement for his lodging, and on the other, he was treated by his staff and peons as a leper. In the city, too, nobody liked to offer him a room on rent. He, however, managed to live in a Parsi Inn by hiding his caste under a fake name as a parsi. One day when he was discovered, soon a party of parsis armed with lathis called on Ambedkar. He frankly told them he was a Hindu, but they retorted : "You arrant knave, you are the despicable untouchable, we know". He was dislodged insultingly with invectives. The case was referred to the Maharaja who asked the Dewan to make suitable arrangements, but he expressed his inability to do anything in the matter. The whole day Ambedkar roamed hither and thither for a room, but all was in vain. Tired, hungry and fagged out, he sat under a tree and burst into a flood of tears. He wept as a beggar. He then returned to Bombay by the night train. On his arrival, he saw another tragic event. His step-mother was seriously ill and died after a few days. Again at the persuasion of Keluskar, he went to Baroda with an assurance that his one friend of Baroda would make arrangement for his lodging in his home. When Dr. Ambedkar asked that gentleman for the same with a letter, he refused to accommodate him in any case; surprisingly, he trembled like a lamb before his flaming orthodox wife. Dr. Ambedkar finally left Baroda not to return again. It was really a city of cruelty and coercion to him, which could not accommodate such a gentleman of high caliber and character.

In the country, there were some political changes, and the Indian National Congress was growing conscious of the existence of the Depressed Classes in the year 1917. There was a move for the Congress League Scheme in which there was an item to recognise the separate identity of the Muslims, but no notice was taken of the existence of the untouchables. For protesting against such a move, a conference was convened which was attended by M/s Vithalbhai Patel, M.R. Jayakar, B.P. Pal, Rabindranath Tagore, and the Maharaja presided over the conference. Dr. Ambedkar did not fundamentally oppose it. Moreover, he was in a mood to go to London for completing his studies. Meanwhile, he was appointed a professor in the Sydenham College of Bombay, and thus, he got an opportunity to earn for his London studies. At first, the students did not take him seriously, but

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later on, Dr. Ambedkar's deep study exhaustive exposition and thoughtful style gripped the minds of his students. A few Gujarati professors, however, objected to his drinking water from the pot reserved for the teaching staff. Even here, he was treated a second-rate citizen, though he was a good teacher having mastery over his subjects and also, his being a superb orator, who inspired all whether famous or whether ordinary in Indian society.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ambedkar was introduced to the Maharaja of Kolhapur, Sri Shahu Maharaja, who was generous and kind to the weaker sections of society. With his help, he started a fortnightly paper, 'Mook Nayak', Leader of the Dumb, on January 31, 1920. Dr. Ambedkar also presided over a conference of the Untouchables at Mangaon of the Kolhapur State. The Maharaja was much impressed with him because of his devotion to the poor. Later on, Dr. Ambedkar took a loan of Rs. 5,000 from his friend Nawal Bhathena, got some help from the Maharaja and also saved some money from his salary. He again left for London in July, 1920, to complete his studies in Law and Economics. He started reading a lot in the British Museum, India Office Library, London University Library and in other City Libraries. Thus, he completed his studies for M.Sc. (Economics), D.Sc. and Barrat-Law, by strictly adhering to the principles of industry and frugality. There Dr. Ambedkar read a paper on 'Responsibilities of a Responsible Government in India' before the Students Union. It caused a stir in the political sphere and he was suspected to be an Indian revolutionary. Even Prof. Harold J. Laski, then teaching in the London School of Economics and Political Science, said that ideas expressed in the paper were frankly of a revolutionary nature.

Dalit Movement

After returning to India in April, 1923, Dr. Ambedkar took to the work of social emancipation of the untouchables. He also started his career as a Barrister in June, 1923. The unhelpful environment in courts, however, turned his path into an uphill task. He found it very difficult to find a place to sit in the precincts of the High Court, though he was not disappointed. He never felt defeated, and with his grand personality, excellent speech, fair complexion, and depth of legal knowledge, he pleased the Judges who listened to him with hapt patience and pride. In order to work for social upliftment, Dr. Ambedkar did not like to join the Depressed classes league, for it became a mouthpiece of the Congress Party. He, therefore, established in July 1924, an independent organization : 'Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha' with these objects: (a) to spread education among the untouchables, (b) to promote cultural awakening by opening libraries, social centres or study circles, and (c) to advance and improve the

economic condition of the untouchables by starting Industrial and Agricultural Schools. He became its President and championed the cause of India's dalit masses.

Dr. Ambedkar believed in channelling a new path for his people as the feeling of dependence among the untouchables would not help them much. "Self-help is the best help", was the basic idea he instilled in their minds. The leaders of the Práthana Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Arya Samaj, and a galaxy of Mahatmas, all endeavoured to help the untouchables, but they did not create in them a feeling of independent thinking and social revolt. The case of Dr. Ambedkar was quite different; he sprang from amongst the lowly and the poor; and therefore, he knew how to make and raise the untouchables as the real partners and citizens of India. With the advent of the Hitkari Sabha, dawned the age of self-help, self-respect, and self-effort. It started educational institutions like hostels and high schools. Its moral pressure and the spirit of righteous assertion had a tremendous effect upon the untouchables, for it demanded the reconstruction of Hindu society on the basis of equality and freedom.

While doing his legal profession, Dr. Ambedkar also accepted a part-time post of a lecturer with effect from June, 1925, in the Bâtliboi's Accountancy Training Institute where he taught Mercantile Law upto March, 1928. Yet time was not favourable for him, and at times, despondency overcame Ambedkar's stubborn mind. He was deeply grieved at the sad plight of his people; he heard their grievances with utmost calm, and gave them free legal advice. The lowly and the poor were struck with a sense of overwhelming gratitude by his simplicity and sincerity, industry and frugality. As a great scholar and lawyer, Dr. Ambedkar developed and preserved those qualities of life which also strengthened his leadership and hold over the people.

Slowly and steadily, Dr. Ambedkar grew into a great champion of human rights. Though the Mâhars and lower castes served in the East India Company, yet the Britishers, later on, ungratefully dubbed them a non-military community. Dr. Ambedkar asked his people to agitate against this policy and compel the Government to remove the ban on their military career, and ultimately, they got the right to join military career. He also led his people in Mahad to exercise their right to drink water from the Chawdar Tank in 1927. For giving a wide publicity to the problems of the untouchables, Dr. Ambedkar started his fortnightly Marathi paper : 'Bahiskrit Bharat' in April, 1927.

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Through this paper, he brought to the forefront the grievances and disabilities of the untouchables, and he asked his people to wage a relentless struggle for social and political rights. Lost rights were never regained by appeals, but by sacrifice and struggle. In May, 1927, Dr. Ambedkar was nominated to the Bombay Legislative Council. It was nothing but an honour to a great leader who wholly devoted his entire life in the service of the depressed classes.

During the Mahad agitation, Dr. Ambedkar and his people proposed to make a bonfire of the Manusmriti which was largely responsible for snatching away social, political and religious rights of the untouchables. They considered it to be a symbol of inequality, cruelty and injustice. The Manusmriti was placed on a pyre, in a specially dug pit, and was ceremoniously burnt at the hands of untouchable hermits on December 25, 1927. The event rocked the entire Hindu society and its leaders were shocked. This historic deed, however, could not instruct the caste-Hindus to mend their ways. They continued to resist the agitation by the untouchables for social rights, temple entries, etc. After Mahad agitation, the untouchables, led by Dr. Ambedkar, launched another agitation for entry into the Kalaram temple of Nasik in May, 1930. The organizers of the management did never allow them to see even the interior of the temple. There was grim fight between the Hindus and the Untouchables, and ultimately, the Government permitted temple entries by law. It was a socio-religious victory of the untouchables.

In order to re-examine and revise the Act of 1919, the British Government announced the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission known as Simon Commission in 1928. When the Commission started its work, it was opposed by the Congress Party on the ground that it had nothing to do with the spade-work of political independence. Dr. Ambedkar, as a lawyer, however, was co-operating with the Commission with the hope that some legal changes would benefit the untouchables. At this juncture, Dr. Ambedkar joined Govt. Law College, Bombay, as an acting professor from June 1928. Later on, he also became the Principal of this college. Because of his association with the Commission, he was dubbed a British stooge and branded a traitor by his adversaries. One day when he entered his class-room, one so-called ardent student-patriot denounced him, and the law students boycotted his class. Nevertheless, Dr. Ambedkar was not a man to be afraid of such elements as he was well aware of his responsibilities towards student community, and he continued to be the best teacher in the college.

In October, 1928, Dr. Ambedkar was examined by the Simon Commission, the Central Committee and the Bombay Provincial Committee. He demanded political protection to the untouchables. He claimed reserved seats if accompanied by adult franchise. In case, there was no adult franchise, the untouchables would ask for 'separate electorates'. It was really a beginning of political war between Dr. Ambedkar on the one hand, and on the other, Gandhi and the Congress Party. Dr. Ambedkar's argument was that if the untouchables were kept away from the mainstream of social and religious life of the Hindus, then they should also be separated politically. They should be given separate settlement in the form of separate villages exclusively for the untouchables. The untouchables were a separate and distinct element in the social and political life of India. Mahatma Gandhi saw in it the weakening of Hinduism and the Congress Party. He was, therefore, opposed to the move of Dr. Ambedkar not only in India, but also in the sessions of the Round Table Conferences during the years 1931-1932. Gandhiji wanted the untouchables to remain in Hindu society and to support the Congress Party so that their political movement could be made more strong. But Dr. Ambedkar wanted the untouchables to pursue their own independent policies, to stand on their own legs and to struggle for their own social and political rights. It was a lesson in the direction of self-help and self-respect.

On solid grounds and arguments, the British Government announced the grant of 'separate electorates' not only to the Untouchables, but also to other communities like Sikhs, Muslims, Anglo-Indians and Europeans. Mahatma Gandhi, however, deadly opposed the separate electorate to the untouchables and started fast unto death against it. It created a political stir in the country, and Dr. Ambedkar was threatened with dire consequences, if Gandhiji died. The political situation came to such a dangerous point that Dr. Ambedkar, in order to save the life of Mahatma Gandhi and to safeguard the legitimate interests of the untouchables, signed the agreement known as Poona-Pact, on 24th September, 1931. Dr. Ambedkar, however, was not satisfied with the agreement. It was signed under such circumstances that were forced on him. The Poona-Pact offered some reserved seats to the untouchables for a period of ten years. The period now has been extended upto 2000. The Pact did not harmonise the differences between the two great personalities, Gandhi and Ambedkar. It rather widened the gulf between them, and remained so even today among their respective followers.

Dr. Ambedkar was very critical of Gandhi and Congress, for they did not prescribe the removal of untouchability as a condition for the membership of the Party, nor did they set out on a crusade against caste and untouchability. So he asked his people to remain independent of the Congress Circle. He wanted them to become an independent community, a separate political force in the national movement to reckon with. From this viewpoint, he organized his own people's platforms like Depressed Classes Education Society, Independent Labour Party and Scheduled Castes Federation, to organize the scattered forces of the lower castes on a sound political basis. He also started in October, 1930 a fortnightly paper, *Janata*, i.e., the People, for working and expressing his view for the cause of the downtrodden in India. He fought for social equality and political rights. The formation of independent platforms was never liked by the Congress leaders who wanted persons like Ambedkar to work under their guidance and hegemony. The issues arisen out of the temple entry movement by Dr. Ambedkar, his condemnation of Hinduism, the bonfire of the Manusmriti, his involvement in the debates of the RTCS, the Communal Award by the British Premier, the signing of Poona-Pact, were the significant reasons which led to the conflict between Dr. Ambedkar on the one hand, and on the other, Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress leaders like Bose, Patel, Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari, and a host of others, during the days of national movement.

The untouchable leader was not only an expert in land and educational problems, but he also kept himself in constant touch with the labour problems of his society. He stood for a real economic welfare of workers and labourers. He was against the communist-led labour movement, for the primary aim of the communists was to spread Marxism and to strengthen the roots of the Communist Party of India, and not the real economic welfare of the depressed classes. They always kept the workers engaged in strikes which not only deteriorated the conditions of labourers, but it also adversely effected the production in factories and mills. He wanted for the workers adequate wages and good working conditions, for most of the workers were from the poor and the lower castes. He was also very critical of the British Government for not doing things in favour of the workers and the untouchables.

Dr. Ambedkar was busy in social and political matters of the country. He had very little time to look after his family. Ramabai, his devoted wife, managed all the household affairs in the family; but she

was always worried about the health and safety of her Saheb. She was a silent housewife without any complaint and fatigue. Owing to the pressure of the work, one day, she fell ill. Whenever Dr. Ambedkar could get some respite, he looked into his home affairs. He had once taken Ramabai for a change of air and place to Dharwar; but there was little improvement in her condition. He did his utmost to mitigate his wife's sufferings; but all was in vain; and the cruel blow of Nature came to him on May 27, 1935, when the last spark of Ramabai's life flickered out. She was thoroughly a nice lady. She endured with cool fortitude the hardships and sorrows that fell to her lot in those early friendless days of want and worries. During the years 1934-35, Dr. Ambedkar had shifted to his own-built new house, Rajagritha, Dadar Bombay; but the grandeur and glory attached to Rajagritha could not distract her mind from the realities of life. In all, four children were born to Ramabai, two daughters and two sons; three of them, died in infancy, and one son, Yeshwant Rao, remained alive as her great memory.

Dr. Ambedkar organized and inaugurated a number of conferences, attended a large number of meetings, started newspapers and wrote articles, editorials and books. His only theme in all of these activities was the emancipation of the lowly and the poor, the untouchables. He repeatedly asked the Hindus to change their ways of social behaviour, yet he could not find the necessary change in their attitudes and tendencies. Disabilities imposed on the untouchables still continued and they were treated as less than human beings and worse than beasts. Seeing such a grim situation, Dr. Ambedkar decided in the early 1930s to ask his people to change the religion if the atrocities and discrimination continued against them. After a few thoughtful years, he announced on October 13, 1935, at Yeola conference before 10,000 untouchables that he would change his religion. The news spread like a wild-fire and since then the prominent leader of different religions like Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism and Christianity, approached to convince him that he was welcome in their respective religions. He said that it was within his power to refuse to live under ignoble and humiliating conditions. "I solemnly assure you that I will not die a Hindu", he declared. It created a great furore among the sensitive Hindus, and Dr. Ambedkar was criticized by prominent Hindus and Congress leaders including Gandhiji for such an announcement.

In recognition to his services to the untouchables and to represent their interests, Dr. Ambedkar was appointed Labour

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Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in June, 1942. It was a great event for an untouchable, and he, as a true leader of the depressed classes, safeguarded their interests at all official levels in the Government. He then shifted to Delhi in his official residence and left his son and nephew in Bombay's Rajagritha. In Delhi, he lived alone always busy in reading books of all shades. He was a voracious reader, an excellent writer, and by the time, he served as Labour Member upto June, 1946, he wrote very thought-provoking books like Annihilation of Caste; Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah, Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables; Federation Vs Freedom; Pakistan or the Partition of India; What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables; and Who Were the Shudra? It was widely recognized that Dr. Ambedkar had proved himself to be an efficient and powerful Labour Member.

Since 1945, one of his dreams was to establish an ideal educational institution to promote higher education among the lower middle classes, especially among the Scheduled Castes. He founded the People's Education Society which started Sidhartha College in Bombay in June, 1946. It is now one of the leading colleges in India. Under his supervision, the Society also started Milind College at Aurangabad. Thus, Dr. Ambedkar established a number of educational institutions including several hostels for the boys and girls, particularly in Maharashtra. The Society, since then, has done a pioneering work in the field of education. In order to work on solid basis for the mission, Dr. Ambedkar also established a Bharat Bhawan Printing Press in Bombay. Whatever he did, he did it with a view to safeguarding the interests of the depressed classes.

So far Dr. Ambedkar could not achieve much for the untouchables legally and constitutionally. What he got under the Communal Award, was undone by Gandhi's fast unto death. The Poona Pact was the result of the political war between Gandhi and Ambedkar. India was on her way to political independence, and the Interim Ministry was announced in August, 1946. The British Government had decided to hand over the political reign to Indians by June, 1948. But the clashes between the Muslim League and the Congress, the bloody communal riots between the Muslims and the Hindus, created an unprecedented political crisis. India was partitioned into Bharat and Pakistan in August, 1947. A separate Constituent Assembly then started its work on a new Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar, somehow, managed to enter the Constituent Assembly, and to his great surprise, he was made the Chairman of the Drafting Committee on August 29.

✓ 1947, a rare honour to an untouchable in India. On the request of Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Ambedkar also joined Nehru-Cabinet as the first Law Minister of India. Nehru recognized his talent and constitutional knowledge. Dr. Ambedkar served the C.A. in all sincerity and devotion. He once said that he entered the C.A. and Nehru-Cabinet, not for any individual gain but to safeguard the larger interests of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. On April 29, 1947, the CA declared to the world : "Untouchability in any form is abolished and the imposition of any disability on that account shall be an offense." It was a great achievement for the untouchables and a severe blow to the Hindu die-hards in those days.

Dr. Ambedkar was now engrossed in the work of drafting the Constitution. He worked almost singly and laboriously. In spite of his deteriorating health, after working day and night, he brought the work near completion. "... it happened ultimately that the burden of drafting the Constitution fell on Dr. Ambedkar and I have no doubt that we are grateful to him for having achieved this task in a manner which is undoubtedly commendable," said T.T. Krishnamachari on November 5, 1948, in the C.A. It was Dr. Ambedkar's sincere effort to make the Constitution truly democratic, republican and secularistic. To the best of his ability, he safeguarded the interests of the depressed classes. The Constitution has the impression of Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy of life inherent in the principles of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. That is why he was called "the Chief Architect of the Constitution". We could never make a decision which was or could be ever so right as when we put him on the Drafting Committee and made him its Chairman. He has not only justified his selection but has added lustre to the work which he has done," declared Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the Chairman of the C.A., on November 26, 1949.

During the above work, his health became weak. He was a diabetic patient, and a neurotic pain always came at midnight and continued throughout the night. No medicine gave him complete relief. He was advised by doctors to have a companion to look after him. On the morning of April 15, 1948, the second day of his fifty sixth year, Dr. Ambedkar married Dr. Miss Sharda Kabir, a Sarasvati Brahmin by caste, at his residence at No. 1, Hardinge Avenue, New Delhi. In her, he saw a lovable companion of his dreams and realities of life, but the marriage did not prove fruitful to his expectations. The carnal pleasure was, however, not the aim of his life. He was always a friend of books, a well-wisher, the emancipator of the depressed classes. His literary taste was superb and he pursued things on

spiritual grounds. He also wanted to reform the entire Hindu society, and for that purpose, he prepared and introduced the Hindu Code Bill in Parliament on February 5, 1951. It could not be passed because of the conservative Hindu Congress Members of Parliament. Dr. Ambedkar's labour was lost in the wilderness. Although a member of Nehru-Cabinet, he always expressed independent views regarding the fate of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. He, at times, criticized the Government for not doing much to these people. It created some differences between him and Nehru. Ultimately, over the issue of the Hindu Code Bill, Dr. Ambedkar resigned from the Nehru-Cabinet on September 27, 1951.

Then, he was a free man and could speak up with all ideas in his mind. His scholarship and education were widely recognized. For his knowledge was extensive, varied, profound and encyclopedic. Dr. Ambedkar was awarded the Doctorate of Laws by the Columbia University on June 5, 1952. On January 12, 1953, Osmania University, Hyderabad-Deccan, also conferred on him the degree of D. Litt. (honoris causa) in recognition of his eminent position and multifarious attainments. As he promised earlier to his people, he was now prepared to renounce Hinduism and to embrace Buddhism. He did not like to adopt Islam and Christianity because of their being alien religions. He chose Buddhism, for it was a part and parcel of Indian culture, and he embraced it along with five lakh people on 14th October, 1956, at Nagpur. He went to Nepal and Burma to attend world Buddhist conference and proposed to bring about a revolution for Buddhism in India as Shankaracharya did for Hinduism. He could have definitely done it; but his end was near, and as one of the greatest men of 20th century, he breathed his last on 6th December, 1956. He is now remembered and revered as a Bodhisattva by millions of his disciples and followers. Every year 14th April and 6th December are celebrated by them as 'Janma-mahotsava' and 'Parinirvana-divas', respectively, in all parts of India, with immense appreciation and gratitude towards him.

Dr. Ambedkar, who was reverentially called the Babasaheb, had an uncanny ability to attract the downtrodden to his presence, and they always responded with all enthusiasm to rise in life by breaking the social barriers erected by Hindu culture and religion. The mighty and the low, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, the illiterate and the educated all thronged to listen to him, because he had fought for their dignity, liberty and equality. Many saw in him a living messiah, for he had reached a stage where spiritual brotherhood

based on Karuna and Maitri alone mattered to him. He had a missionary zeal with a single mission to educate the oppressed masses. Dr. Ambedkar awakened them to rise and fight themselves for their respectful place in society. He brought about qualitative changes in their life. His was really a life of dedication and service to humanity, especially the part of it that was ignored and crushed for centuries long in the social history of this land.

As a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, Dr. Ambedkar displayed an unusual administrative ability that saw its prestige soar to daring heights and fame to spread far and wide. It was only for one reason alone, that is, he had always in mind the welfare of his countrymen, emphasising the need of the upliftment of the weaker sections of society during the British rule. His voracious reading and mastery of different languages helped him to keep abreast of the latest in the realm of thought. He applied his learning and knowledge in solving the problems faced by the Indian polity. His administrative approach was secular and democratic in the wider interests of the Indian people. Dr. Ambedkar never remained confined to the comfort and luxuries of the office and high status as he preferred to move about preaching the need of education, organization and agitation for securing political and human rights of man. The scores of programmes and movements, which have been active since then, own their origin to the inspiration that Babasaheb gave to his people. Though he never took sides with Gandhi, Nehru or Jinnah, his was a strong voice at times of national crisis as, for instance, during the partition, when he exhorted the political leaders to help the uprooted people both Hindus and Muslims and suggested the migration of the population to their respective places. It is these qualities of heart and head that made Dr. Ambedkar one of the rarest gems of modern India. He was really extraordinarily talented and wonderfully empathetic one to be praised and remembered by each and everyone.

Dr. Ambedkar was a great missionary of 20th century India, and very soon after his conversion to Buddhism, he turned his thoughts to the spread of the faith he now possessed, not only among his own people, but also among the people who believed in the dignity of man and also wished to be benefitted by the gospel of the Buddha. He made it a social doctrine based on equality of all men by emphasizing the elements of universality that it had always contained. He realized and acted on the truth that true religion is social and spiritual, it is not a matter of animal-sacrifice, rituals and ceremonies, but of moral conviction and righteous conduct. In consonance with this tradition,

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Dr. Ambedkar always supported the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. He asked the people to be true to their faith by acting upon its tenets. It is this aspect of his mission that influenced the people of the world far and wide. Though Dr. Ambedkar did not become a monk, yet as a true disciple of the Buddha, he had a passion to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind, of all communities, irrespective of any denomination.

The social humanism is the corner-stone of Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts and actions. To that end, he always endeavoured to inculcate among the people the values of democracy, secularism, socialism, justice, equality, freedom and fraternity. Dr. Ambedkar was gifted, as much as he clearly recognized and firmly grasped what was inevitable in India's social situation. It was not by any political motive or pecuniary gain that he turned to Buddhism and became a missionary. What he did was to let the downtrodden have the religion of their ancestors. In fact, Buddhism was their cultural home and heritage. All that needed, in Dr. Ambedkar's view, was to adopt a universal approach, and that was possible only through the gospel of the Buddha. While the effect of Dr. Ambedkar's political theory is widely felt in the country, in the strictly religious sphere, his influence is yet to emerge in the shape of a strong community among the downtrodden of India.

The handsome and high profile of Dr. Ambedkar, as presented here, shows that he played the role of a redeemer of the poor, the lowly and the oppressed. He fought against all kinds of injustice and atrocities in Indian society with all his mind, strength and stamina. He succeeded in achieving for the downtrodden what he wanted, ~~but~~ only through his unflinching faith in the truth of nine gems—education, organization, agitation, liberty, equality, fraternity, buddha, dhamma and sangha, the basic principles of a good life. Dr. Ambedkar honestly stood for these ideals and asked the downtrodden to abide by them, if they want to be a respectable lot in Indian society. No one, however, should draw the conclusion that these nine gems are to benefit only the downtrodden, nay, whosoever follows them will flourish in abundant happiness, peace and prosperity; he would, thus, become a good and useful member of Indian society. Let us, therefore, analyse the ingredients of these humanist principles in the ensuing chapters.

