Modern Religious and Secular Movements
Modern Religious and Secular Movements

Compiled by
John V. Mathew
For many years theological education has been done within the well-protected campus with the primary objective of training pastors. Theological Education by Extension (TEE) is an attempt to do theology beyond campus. The vision of TEE is not confined to ministerial training programme of the churches alone; rather it involves equipping the whole people of God; it is for the Laos - the whole people of God. It seeks to empower the whole people of God for formation and transformation of the whole community and search to build a just and inclusive community in the context of the people of other faiths and to all people. Thus, the theological education by extension programme is meant to strengthen building an inclusive community. Those who go through the process of such education will be able to work not only “for” the people, but also “together with the people”.

To aid external candidates in their studies, the production of study materials was under consideration for a long time. We are happy that the resource materials are ready and I am sure this will greatly benefit the BD/BCS candidates especially those who do not have access to library facility. We record our appreciation to Dr. John V. Mathew, Lecturer, Allahabad for writing the Text book on Modern Religious and Secular Movements. We thank EMW, Germany, for journeying with us in strengthening theological education and making the resources available for the production of study materials.

Wati Longchar
Dean
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Introduction

The term Renaissance means ‘re-birth,’ or the revival of learning. It is a paradigm shift in the perception and approach of people towards religion, culture, society and politics. In the West, it was a period of new growth of interest and activity in the areas of art and literature. In Europe, Renaissance took place especially in northern Italy during the 14th, 15th and 16th century.

Ideas came and changed the society. Renaissance brought a modern culture. It brought encouragement of expression, thinking and ideas. In the earlier age, thinking was not encouraged. Religion controlled ideas, but during the time of Renaissance, religious beliefs and doctrines were questioned.

Renaissance brought conflicting ideas (between two groups)

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In the West during this period, Descartes came with the dictum “I think, therefore I am.” This statement changed the entire western thought system. Human reasoning and thinking was given more importance than accepted norms and traditions. With Renaissance a new world opened. Earlier thinking was only about God and religion but now it shifted to human beings. Psychology, Sociology and History developed. Natural human was emphasised rather than spiritual. Earlier humans were in bondage to the Church.
opinion. But now after Renaissance humans were free to think and reason.

**Areas Affected by New Thinking:**
The first area which was affected by the new thinking was religion. Martin Luther and John Calvin brought revolutionary thinking in Christianity. Another area which was affected was science. Copernicus and Galileo came up with new scientific theories that questioned the earlier belief of the church with regard to the universe. New forms of art were developed, changes came in economic life, and public property became private property. Economic life became universal. Concept of banking, interest, and commerce developed. There were also changes in political life. Before Renaissance politics was limited to monarchy and aristocracy. But with Renaissance, democracy came and with it a feeling of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Earlier religious institutions dominated individual lives. But now due to Renaissance human being became important. Questions of ethics developed. A spirit of humanism came in the society. A separation of spiritual and social life took place. Financial and material prosperity became important. Recognition of minorities and their rights developed. Along with Renaissance, development of mathematics took place. People look at the world from a mechanical view point (scientific view point), rather than from the view point of the church. Thus, we see that in the West renaissance brought: 1. Reaction against orthodoxy (church traditions) 2. Human beings were given importance 3. Individual conscience was emphasised 4. A new outlook towards world developed 5. A feeling of liberty, equality and fraternity emerged.

**Indian Renaissance**
In India, 19th century was a period of great awakening among several religious communities. This new awakening caused a great challenge and revival in faith and practice of Indian religions. Moreover there were changes in socio-cultural practices, education and political situation. These changes came in the form of reform and revival movements in Indian religions and socio-religious and political movements in Indian society. These movements are termed as modern religious and secular movements which are the manifestation of Indian renaissance.

Indian renaissance opened a new era in the history of Indian thinking. Contact with the outside world stimulated the Indian thinkers. Europeans came to India such as Portuguese, Dutch and Britishers who brought with them western science, thinking as well as western concepts of society. This gave the Indians an opportunity to know the western society. Along with colonialism, English education came to India. On 2nd February 1835, the ‘Minute of Macaulay’ opted for English education in India and hence all higher education took place in the English medium. Further, during the time of Renaissance, a re-discovery of Indian heritage took place.

Indian Renaissance started in Bengal especially represented by Brahmo Samaj. The Indian reformers spoke against superstitious and polytheistic aspects of Hinduism. There were a small group of reformers who gave high standard for rational thinking. Social, religious and political life of India was re-examined. A spirit of rationalism came to India. Individual conscience was advocated along with the supremacy of religion. A critical attitude towards religious beliefs, rituals and practices emerged.

Renaissance enabled Indians to grow their religion out of its mythological, ritualistic and sociological forms in which it was established. Philosophical Hinduism was emphasized in place of Puranic Hinduism. The success of Swami Vivekananda and S. Radhakrishnan to carry the message of Hinduism to the western world was primarily due to their ability to interpret Vedanta as a religious philosophy independent of caste system and mythology. Renaissance has made Indians pay more attention to the life on earth as well as the well being of society. It adjusted the teachings of Hinduism to the scientific thought and political social philosophy of the West. Indian notions of geography, history, ideas of the universe, Indian theories of government were all revolutionalized by the contact with the West. Renaissance brought about a feeling that the role of Hindu society is one of community with common interest.

**The Condition of India during the 18th and 19th Century**
India came directly under the British rule in 1857 but the British supremacy through the East India Company began to assert itself
after the battle of Plassey in 1757. In 1600 Queen Elizabeth I granted permission to the East India Company to trade with India. It was only in 1857, after the Sepoy Mutiny that India came directly under the British Parliament. Around 1800 India was in very bad condition. The Muslim rulers established their political control of India from 1200 AD till the advent of the Britishers in 1800 AD. During this period India did not have any development in its religious, social as well as scientific field. This period is known as the dark period of Indian history.

The following were the conditions in India during the 18th and 19th century.

**Caste System and Untouchability:** Rigid casteism was one of the major social evils during the 18th century. According to Hindu religion, caste is determined by birth. The *Brahmins* were those who belonged to the higher caste. They were the only caste people who were allowed to read and learn the *Vedas*, but the *Sudras* that is the low caste people were denied the right of learning and listening to the *Vedas*. Highways were not open to the *Sudras*. There was no inter-dining and inter-marriage between the high caste and the low caste. The high caste considered that they would be defiled if the shadows of an ‘untouchable’ fell on them. Basic rights of education, economic life was denied to the *Sudras*. Social ostracization and control of knowledge kept a vast majority of Indian people as slaves.

**Prohibition of Foreign Travel:** It was considered as a sin to cross the seas and to live in foreign countries with people who had different cultures. If anyone went abroad he would lose his/her caste standing unless s/he underwent purification rites when s/he returned to India. This discouraged people from going abroad for studies and people lived in isolation from the rest of the world.

**Low status of Women:** During the 18th century there was a very low status of women in the Indian society. Manu prescribed that women should be under the control of her father before marriage, under the control of her husband during marriage, and under the control of her son in old age. Thus, a woman was allowed no freedom at any stage of life. *Kshatriya* caste people believed that after the death of the husband, the wife’s chastity and faithfulness is proved only by committing *Sati*. Those widows who refused to die in the funeral pyre of their husband were not allowed to re-marry. It was considered an evil for a widow to re-marry whereas a widower could re-marry as many times as he wanted. Due to such customs there were many child widows and youthful widows who had to live the rest of their lives in seclusion. In some communities their heads were shaved off and their ornaments were removed.

There was also the custom of *Devadasi* system prevalent during this period. It was the Hindu custom to dedicate girls to serve in the temples. The term *Devadasi* means servant of *deva* or god. Young girls were dedicated to sing and dance before the idols of the temple but corrupt priest and worshippers used them to satisfy their lust. Thus, the *Devadasis* became temple prostitutes. Further due to the custom of Dowry system in marriage, many parents considered a liability to have a girl child. New born baby girls were killed and sometimes thrown into the running river. Hence female infanticide was a common practice.

**Factors that Contributed for the Emergence of Renascent Movement in India**

There were four important forces that prepared the way for renascent movement in India.

The *English East India Company*: The East India Company was interested in trade. The company noted that Hinduism has a strong hold on the Indian people. So for trade they patronized Hindu religion. A large number of temples were brought under their management. They advanced money for rebuilding and repairing the temples. Salaries of temple officials were paid by them. They also imposed a pilgrim tax upon the people. The company opposed Christian missionary work, but in 1813 by an Act of the British Parliament this policy was reversed. The company also refused to employ native Christians.

The *British Parliament*: The second important force that came to India was the British Parliament. By 1800 AD a large part of India was under the British rule, and Lord Wellesley was trying to bring the native princes under the British Empire. By 1849 the last portion of India was under the British Empire at the conclusion of the second Sikh war. In 1857, the government was transferred from the East
India Company to British crown. Thus, from 1857 India directly came under the British government and crown.

The entire activity of the government during the period of 1825-1870 was one of reform which can be summarized into three categories:

(a) Lord Bentinck, the British Governor General of Bengal (1828-1833), felt that it was the duty of the government to prohibit customs which were immoral, though they were associated with religion. Chief among such prohibited customs were Sati (which was banned on 4th December 1829), female infanticide and human sacrifices.

(b) There was the recognition of human equality. It was decided that all should be equal before the law. In 1843, an Act was passed to render slavery illegal. Many poor farmers and labourers acquired freedom from rich land owners. A local self government bill was passed by Lord Rippon’s government with the purpose of educating the Indian people in self government.

(c) English language became the official language of India. All higher education was through English medium. Government schools, colleges, and universities were established in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. The new education policy of the government created the educated class of India.

In 1891, the Age of Consent Act was passed which prohibited a husband from living with a child wife before she reached the age of twelve. Hence, we see that peace was restored and gradually a uniform system of administration came into place.

The Protestant Mission: The third important force that came to India from West was the Protestant mission. The Protestant missionary work in India began with the Danish Mission. In 1813, the British Parliament granted missionaries full freedom to settle and work in India. Apart from missionary societies, a large number of individual Europeans also started schools and colleges for western education in the large cities of India. In 1844, Alexander Duff, a Scottish missionary opened a school in Calcutta for teaching English. Duff’s work opened a new era in India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of his students. Most of the leaders who were later involved in starting modern religious movements had English education. John Wilson started a similar work in Bombay and John Anderson in Madras. From 1854 work started among the women who were shut up in Zenanas. Medical missionaries also came to work among women, and orphanages, widow homes were also started.

The Work of the Orientalists: The Orientalists were European scholars who made an objective study of Indian literature, art and architecture. Three men stood as pioneer Orientalists during this period; they were Colebrook, H.H. Wilson and Todd.

Warren Hastings took important steps which led Europeans to be acquainted with Sanskrit language and Hindu religion. By his order, a simple code of Hindu laws was written and translated into English in 1776. In 1789 Charles Wilkins published in English, Shakuntala, the master piece of Kalidas. Department of Sanskrit literature and language were opened in many European universities. Hamilton taught Sanskrit in Paris in 1802 to a group of French scholars. From 1828 to 1870 there was an increase in Oriental scholarship. Hodgson discovered the literature and history of the Vedas in 1846. In collaboration with Lord Bentinck, he published the great St. Petersburg Sanskrit Lexicon in 1852. Max Mueller published his Rig Veda between 1848-1875. Prinsep and Cunningham laid the foundation for research by Europeans of Indian art, epigraphy and archaeology. In 1784 William Jones founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Some significant works of this period are:

- The Oriental Series by Trubner
- The Harvard Oriental Series by Trubner
- The Sacred Book of the East Series by Max Muller
- Light of Asia by Edwin Arnold
- The Song Celestial (Bhagvad-Gita) by Childers

Since 1870 Oriental studies have influenced Indian minds. These scholars revealed the treasures of Indian wisdom and religion to the educated classes in India and Europe, through their translation of Indian religious literature. Indian scholars trained in European literary methods began to render excellent service by editing and translating Indian literatures. India was now brought into the current of modern European civilization and culture. Due to the work of the
Orientalists, the glory of India’s past heritage was now revealed to the common people. The teachings of the *Upanishads* as well as the great classics of India were now available to the educated class of India. The leaders of Indian renaissance movements took these teachings of Indian religious heritage as a foundation and a bench work to renounce the evils committed in the name of religion in the Hindu society. Hence the Orientalists played an important role in raising public consciousness against the evils in the society.

**The Decay of India’s own Civilization and Culture:** India’s own civilization and culture had been at its lowest level for over hundred years from about the middle of eighteenth century. Hinduism had no development from 1200-1750, when India was under the Turkish and Mughal rulers.

**English Education:** The most important of the new forces that paved the way for Indian renaissance was the spread of English education. English education in India was introduced by the Britishers. It broke the intellectual isolation of India and brought India into contact with western literature, science and history. A new world of ideas was new revealed to the Indian minds. Thus there was a revival of classical learning similar to that which occurred in European renaissance. In place of mythical geography, legendary history and pseudo-science which Indians were earlier acquainted, came a new understanding of earth and nature as well as new ideas regarding society and religion. In the light of these new found knowledge, many evil practices of Hinduism were questioned such as *sati*, *pardha* system, female infanticide, enforced widowhood, child marriage, ‘untouchability,’ *devadasi* system as well as the prohibition of foreign travel. These practices begun to lose their hold on the minds of Hindus and reformers arose who were determined to reform the Hindu society.

Through western English education, western culture and pattern of society came to India. Along with western education, came western science and technology. The discovery of West in the field of science, psychology, physiology and religion now came to India through western education. There was an awareness of religious identity among the people. Due to western education introduced by the Britishers, people in India began to look at their religion with new eyes. There was resurgence in classical Indian literature and due to this there was a re-construction of the cultural heritage of India.

The reformers spread the glorious heritage of India’s past among the masses by making them aware of the evils in the society which were not religious but human made. They brought awareness in Indian society about the heritage of India which they had long been forgotten.

**Attack of Christian Missionaries on Hinduism:** The zealous missionaries who came from the West were not only educationist but also crusaders who pointed their fingers at Hindu religious and social institutions. They opened schools and colleges which not only imparted secular knowledge but taught that Christianity is the only true religion. Their main emphasis was on condemning Hinduism. These two forces acting in combination produced in minds of educated Indian classes, an aversion to Christianity. They wanted to revive back Hinduism. There were revivalist movement who wanted to revive the glorious heritage of Hinduism and bring an awareness of their religious identity, such as the Arya Samaj. There were reformist movement which wanted to reform Hinduism of its evil practices such as Brahma Samaj.

Hence partly due to these external forces and partly due to the inherited vitality of Hinduism, the long spiritual tradition of Hinduism arose through these reformers. Teachers and scholars toiled hard to purify Hinduism by denouncing some of its latter evil additions. They separated the essentials of Hinduism from its non-essentials by propounding and teaching its ancient heritage.
Brahmo Samaj tried to move away from sectarianism to a universal samaj. It emphasized on religious as well as social reformation. The main statement or motto of Brahmo Samaj was ‘Sarva Dharma Samabhava’ that is all religion are equal and all religion should be respected equally. Brahmo Samaj was founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Life of Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833)

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was called the morning star of Indian Renaissance. According to Rabindranath Tagore, Roy inaugurated the modern period of India. Roy was born on 22nd May 1772 at the village of Radhanagar in the district of Burdwan, West Bengal. His parents were religious Hindus. His father Ram Kanta Roy belonged to the Chaitanya sect and his mother belonged to the Shakta family. According to the prevalent custom of the time, his father got Roy married very early in age. After his first wife died he was married to two other girls before his proper education had started. He began his first education in a Pathshala; a village school. Along with this, he studied Persian under a Maulwi under the supervision of his father. At the age of twelve Roy went to Patna, Bihar, for higher education. He had a very liberal education. He learnt Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, as well as a critical study of Hindu and Islamic law, literature and philosophy, which prepared him in the later age for reform in religion and society. While studying the Quran in the original Arabic, his eyes opened for the first time to the errors of Hindu idolatry. He was especially influenced by the writings of the Sufi schools of Islam whose thoughts were very similar to the Vedanta school of Hinduism. He applied the new found spirit of rational enquiry into the society. He was the first one to advocate social reforms based on rational principles. He is one of the pioneers of western education in India.

Roy was a practical statesman, who wanted to eradicate some of the social evils of his time in Hindu society and religion such as sati and dowry system. He was a zealous Hindu proud of Indian’s past and eager to conserve all that was good and great in his Hindu religion.
Writings of Raja Ram Mohan Roy
In 1803 Roy published his famous tract called *Tubfat-ul-Muwahiddin* (a gift of monotheists), a work which denounced idolatry and superstitious beliefs in all religions. This work laid the common foundation of a universal religion in the doctrine of the unity of Godhead. In this work, Roy argued that all religions were founded on a belief in God.

Roy also published a number of books and tracts simultaneously in Sanskrit, Bengali and English on his studies of *Upanishads* and *Vedanta* as a means of propagating his religious views. His first publication on this subject was the translation in Bengali, of the *Vedanta Sutra* (Brahma Sutra) in 1850 and the following year in English under the title, *Abridgment of the Vedanta*. The *Kena* and *Isa Upanishads* were published in Bengali and English in 1816 and similarly the *Manduka* and *Katha Upanishad* in 1817.

In the year 1820, Roy published a work entitled the *Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness*. This tract was a collection of all the moral and spiritual precepts of Jesus as recorded in the four gospels without the narratives of the miracles. The Baptist missionaries of Serampore took serious offence at his interpretation of Christianity and they attacked Roy in their periodical, *The Friend of India*. Roy took this attack calmly. In defence of his views he published three articles named *Appeals to the Christian Public*, between 1820-1823. Roy and his followers used to attend the Unitarian service every Sunday morning which lead to public criticism. Aware of this situation he published a tract in 1827 entitled, *Answer to the question, why do you frequent a Unitarian place of worship instead of the numerous established churches?*

Social and Religious Reforms of Brahmo Samaj
The history of Brahmo Samaj falls into four distinct periods depending on the type of leadership.

First Period-1828-1842 (Deistic Theology and Christian Ethics)
From 1796 onwards Roy worked as a revenue officer in East India Company in Calcutta and got introduced to the Serampore missionaries. He studied the Bible and was amazed at the moral standards taught by Jesus. Roy thought of Jesus as a theist whose disciples misunderstood him and built up a Christology. Thus Roy rejected the divinity of Jesus but accepted only the humanity of Jesus. He was influenced by the moral teachings of Jesus. He also did not accept the Trinitarian doctrine. In 1814 Roy started an organization called *Amiya Sabha* to work against the evils in Hindu society but by 1819 *Amiya Sabha* ceased to exist. On 20th August 1828 the Brahma Samaj was organized, which later became Brahmo Samaj. Roy best supporter in the work of the Samaj was Dwarkanath Tagore. They started congregational worship like Christians in a house in the vernacular Bengali language.

Three main activities were conducted in their worship.
(a) Recitation from *Vedic* Hymns, *Upanishads*, and translating them into Bengali
(b) Followed by a sermon in Bengali
(c) Singing and Music

Roy held that idolatry, polytheism and sacrifices should be removed from Hinduism. The influence of Muslim and Christian studies which he undertook, especially his study of the *Upanishads* led him to a firm faith in One Supreme God. This invariably led him to denounce polytheism and idolatry. Roy considered only the *Upanishads* and *Vedanta Sutra* as authentic Hindu scriptures. He advocated the worship of One God and the brother/sisterhood of all humans. Roy was in favor of a universal religion. He advocated deistic (One Ultimate God) theology and worship. He did not believe in transmigration of souls (karma theory). Roy was influenced by the monotheism of Islam and the ethical moral principles of Christianity. He wanted the establishment of Hindu monotheism and the abolishment of idolatry.

Some of the important reforms undertaken by Roy are as follows:

*A abolishment of Sati*: Roy began agitating against *Sati* from 1818 onwards by publishing pamphlets and arousing public opinion. He examined the *Smriti* texts on this subject and pointed out that all the authorities did not agree in prescribing this practice and even the
later authorities recommended that Sati should be free and voluntary. His constant agitation along with William Carey enabled Lord William Bentinck to ban Sati on 4th December 1829.

**Women’s Rights:** By examining the *Smritis* and their commentaries, Roy also pleaded for women’s right to inherit their parental property. He wrote two papers on Women’s right, “On Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females” and “On the Rights of Hindus over Ancestor Property.” He was also against polygamy which was prevalent during his time.

**Modern Education:** Roy also promoted modern education. In 1816 he suggested to the Chief Justice of Supreme Court Sir Hyde East his desire to start a college for the education of Hindu children on modern lines as in Europe. This led to the founding of the Hindu college in 1817. He also started an English school of his own called the *Anglo-Hindu School* in Calcutta in 1822 for imparting free education in English to Hindu boys. His efforts for the introduction of western education become successful only two years after his death when in March 1835 Lord William Bentinck issued his famous educational degree which inaugurated the policy of English education in India.

**Freedom of Press:** Roy was a great champion of Press as he was of western education. He started two journals, The *Samvad Kaumadi* (1821) and *Mirat-Ul-Akbar* (1822). He was also associated with the Bengal Herald in 1829. He wrote petitions against Press regulations and in 1836 the liberty of Press was granted by Sir Charles Metcalfe.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was neither a theologian nor a philosopher but a social reformer who spoke against Hindu orthodoxy and the evils in the society. Roy went to England in 1831 at the request of the Mughal Emperor of Delhi at that time. It was he who gave the title Raja to Roy. When Roy went to England he spoke there on administrative reforms which were needed in India. He was the first Indian to be consulted on Indian Affairs by the British Parliament. He also prepared the Indian people towards political consciousness. Hence he is also called as the Father of Indian Nationalism. While he was busy with his work in England he died at Bristol on 27th September 1833.

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**Second Period- 1842-1865 (Theism and Religious Reform) Debendranath Tagore (1817-1903)**

The 2nd period of Brahmo Samaj began with the entry of Debendranath Tagore, the oldest son of Dwarkanath Tagore into the Samaj. He and his friends founded an association called the *Tattva Bodhini Sabha* (The truth teaching society). In 1842 after nine years of Roy’s death, Debendranath Tagore and the *Tattva Bodhini Sabha* joined with Brahmo Samaj. Debendranath Tagore published a Bengali magazine called the *Tattva Bodhini Patrika* to propagate the teachings of Brahmo Samaj. He opened a school to train the workers of Brahmo Samaj. This school was called as *Tattva Bodhini Pathashala*. He followed Roy’s belief that original Hinduism was a pure spiritual theism but he did not have any reverence for Christ as Roy held. In 1843 he drew the *Brahmo covenant* to be followed by the members of Brahmo Samaj. The main promise made was, to abstain from idolatry and to worship God by loving Him/Her and by doing loving deeds.

In place of the authority of the *Upanishads*, Debendranath Tagore developed a theory of intuition. He compiled a book consisting of several texts from the *Upanishads*. He claimed divine inspiration for this book and this book was used by Brahmo Samaj members for private devotion and public worship. This book was called as *Brahmo Dharma*. In 1852 Keshub Chandra Sen joined the Samaj but there was strained relationship between them. In 1866 Debendranath broke away and his group came to be known as *Adi Brahmo Samaj*. K.C. Sen then become the leader of Brahmo Samaj. Sen encouraged inter caste marriage and education for girls. In 1861 Sen was made *acharya* and he started *Brahmo Vidyalaya*, an informal theological school. He also started a magazine called *Indian Mirror*.

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**Third period- 1865-1878 (Keshub Chandra Sen and Social Reform)**

After K.C. Sen broke away from Debendranath Tagore, he founded a separate Samaj known as Brahmo Samaj of India. He read a great deal of Christian literature and exhorted people to follow the moral teachings of Jesus. He considered the cross on which Jesus died as a symbol which inspired people for self denial.
However he did not believe in the divinity of Jesus. The Brahmo Samaj of India under K.C. Sen advocated education for girls and the emancipation of women. In times of famine and epidemic outbreak they undertook various philanthropic activities. Sen established a society called The Indian Reformed Association in 1870 with several departments. One section was devoted for printing books in cheap price. The other section started a school for girls. The third section organized lectures and meetings. The fourth section organized relief to the poor. Besides this, Sen established an industrial school for boys, a working men’s institution for the poorer classes. A joint home called The Bharat Ashram for Brahmo families and a boarding institution called Brahma Niketan for young men was also started. He founded an association called the Albert Institute for Promotion of Literary and Social Intercourse for all classes of the community. He also built a public hall called the Albert hall where newspapers could be read and lectures delivered. In 1872 the government passed an act legalizing Brahmo Samaj marriages which prohibited child marriage.

Fourth Period- 1878-1884 (K.C. Sen’s New Dispensation)

During the fourth period of the Samaj, Brahmo Samaj was divided into three Samaj independent of one another. The opposition party of K.C. Sen started a third Samaj known as Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. Majority of the members of the old Samaj joined this new Samaj. When majority of the members left him, Sen undertook a revivalist work. He attempted to make his Samaj a universal religion. The name he choose for his samaj was Navavidhan (Church of the new dispensation). It was inaugurated in 1881 and many rituals were included in it. K.C. Sen adopted homa sacrifices and Arati into the rituals of Navavidhan. He also started celebrating Durga Puja. Prayers were address to Ganges and to fire. A Sanskrit hymn of praise composed of 108 names of God was also an integral part of his church. Hence elements of Hindu worship were included in his Samaj. Chaitanya’s religious dance was also included in his Samaj. The Lord’s Supper and Baptism was introduced in his Samaj. He also introduced Negra Kirtan (street singing) in his Samaj.

Sen adopted Christian attitude towards social life. He attempted the abolishment of caste and also gave equality of women in his Samaj. There was a decline in philanthropic activities during this period and much stress was given to meditation. He also started four orders of devotees namely Yogi, Bhakta, Jnani and Shebak. Sen’s daughter got married to the Hindu Prince of Cooch Bihar when she was less than 14 year old. This was against the policy of Brahmo Samaj as both of them were underage during the time of their marriage. Due to this there came a split in Brahmo Samaj.

Sadharan Brahmo Samaj

Under the able guidance of Ananda Mohan Bose, the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj started a city school which soon developed into the city college of Calcutta in January 1879. This Samaj also arranged lectures for students of the city, a society for progressive ladies, a library and printing press as well as a journal. In 1888 it opened a mission centre in the Khasi hills of Meghalaya.

Evaluation

Brahmo Samaj was a first major reform movement in modern India and in modern Hinduism. This Samaj helped people to move away from sectarianism to a universal religion. The Samaj helped people of India to be politically conscious. It emphasized on service to humanity with moral teachings. This Samaj set the pattern of reform for other reform movements. The main theme of this Samaj was Sarva Dharma Samabhava, that is all religion are equal and equal respect should be given to all religions. Brahmo Samaj introduced rationalism and therefore shocked the basis of the entire Brahmanical system. It challenged the Brahmin’s monopoly of priestly functions. It promoted western education through the promotion of schools and colleges. It also promoted personal freedom and social equality. The all India tours of K.C. Sen and Surendranath Banerjee brought together people of various fields on a common platform. Brahmo Samaj helped to make way for the official intervention on the form of legislation to abolish Sati as well as other social evils. It was a cosmopolitan movement among the educated class of people. It aroused orthodox Hindus to work for the revival of their religion. The main objective of this Samaj was no idol, no sculpture, no statue, no carving, no painting or picture of gods to be admitted within the premises of the Samaj. It also
advocated no sacrifice, offering or oblation of any kind. Brahmo Samaj helped India to move away from medieval feudalism to national democracy. It was against the nexus between religion and capitalism. It introduced a new ideology of rationalism and free spirit in the Indian society. It was an eclectic movement which attempted to bring a universal religion.

**Arya Samaj**

Arya Samaj means ‘society of the honourable ones.’ It was one of the most important revival Hindu movement of the 19th Century. It was founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati on 10th April 1875 in Bombay. It advocated a return to Vedas and Vedic religion. This movement was directly opposite of Brahmo Samaj. Brahmo Samaj was at the eastern end of India but Arya Samaj was founded in Bombay and it moved to Punjab.

When Christian Missionaries came to Punjab there were large scale conversions to Christianity. Also there was large number of Muslim population in Punjab. There were also emergence of several reform and revival movements within Sikhism, such as Akali movement, Singh Sabha movement and Nirankari movement. In 1851 there were no local Christians in Punjab, but in 1881 there were 3912 Christians in Punjab.

The success of the Christian missionary work among the large population of Muslims and the revival of Sikhism in Punjab made the minority Hindus insecure. The Hindus felt that they were a threatened people in Punjab because they were a minority. Hence they had to be defensive and competitive for their survival. It is in this context that Arya Samaj emerged from Bombay. The main Motto of Arya Samaj was Krinavanto Viswa Aryam, that is “let the whole world be made Arya” (Rig Veda 9:63:5).

**Swami Dayananda Saraswati-A Brief Biography**

Swami Dayananda Saraswati was the founder of Arya Samaj. His original name was Mulla Shankar. He was born in Kathiawad in Gujarat. He received his traditional instruction like any other orthodox Hindu boy. His father taught him the Vedas from an early age. At the age of fourteen he memorised most of the Yajur Veda. The life of Dayananda can be divided into four periods:

1. **Early Life (1824-1845):** When Dayananda was hardly fourteen years old, an incident took place in his life which had a great impact on him. On a Shivratri night as he was observing the long vigil at the local Shiva Temple, he saw a rat playing upon the image of Shiva. He questioned why Shiva allowed a rat to run around his image. He felt that the image of Shiva was merely an idol which had no powers. That night Dayananda the great reformer was born. Further the sudden death of his sister and his uncle made him to question his faith in Hindu idol worship. Dayananda became a fierce opponent of idol worship. He started to practice Yoga. When his parents came to known about this they arranged his marriage but Dayananda ran away from home and became a Brahmacharya and he adopted a new name Shuddhda Chaitanya Brahmacharya.

2. **Period of Wanderings (1845-1860):** The second period of Dayananda’s life consists of wanderings. After fifteen years of going around the country, Dayananda was initiated into sanyasa by Swami Purnananda Saraswati who gave him the name Dayananda Saraswati. Later on he had the privilege of studying the Vedas under the feet of the famous Punjabi Vedic scholar Dandi Swami Virjananda at Mathura. The two and half years at the Pathshala of Virjananda made Dayananda to take an oath that he will became a new crusader to propagate Vedic faith to the world. Hence under the guidance of Virjananda, Swami Dayananda became a missionary for Hinduism.

3. **Period of Lectures and Discussions with Various Groups (1860-1875):** After giving the pledge to Swami Virjananda, Dayananda started to visit many places and had discussions with various intellectuals of his days. He visited Calcutta in 1873 and had an opportunity to meet with the leaders of Brahmo Samaj. He also met with K.C. Sen in Calcutta who advised him to wear full clothes, since Dayananda being a Brahmacarya and sanyasi had previously worn cloth only on the lower part of his body. During this period he has discussions with orthodox Hindus where he vehemently opposed idolatry. He also visited Bombay in 1974 to lay the foundation for starting the Arya Samaj.

4. **The Founding of Arya Samaj (1875-1883):** The year 1875 played a very important role in the history of missionary Hinduism. Dayananda Saraswati founded the Arya Samaj on 10th April 1875.
in Bombay. Twenty eight rules of the Samaj were adopted that day. Bombay functioned as the headquarters of the numerous branches of the Samaj. Later on Lahore in Punjab became the headquarter. In 1875 Dayananda Saraswati’s Magnum Opus Satyarth Prakash was published. This book contains the major teachings of Dayananda and Arya Samaj. A hand book of five daily great sacrifices was also published. It was called the Panchamahayajna Vidhi.

On 24th July 1877 the first meeting of the Samaj took place in Lahore and at this meeting the 10 principles of Arya Samaj were adopted.

The Ten Principles of Arya Samaj

God is the primary cause of true knowledge.

God is absolutely perfect; to Him alone worship is due.

Vedas are the book of true knowledge.

An Arya should accept truth and renounce untruth.

All actions must conform to virtue.

Ignorance must be removed and knowledge defused.

No one should be contend with their good alone.

All should be treated with love and justice.

The objective of Arya Samaj is to improve the physical, spiritual and the social condition of humankind.

The well being of society is important than personal well being. Many branches of Arya Samaj were established in Amritsar, Ferozpur, Rawalpindi during Dayananda’s time. At Jodhpur he became sick. He was taken to Mount Abu and afterwards to Ajmer where he died on 30th October 1883.

According to Dayananda, idolatry is error and sinful. He vehemently rejected the mythology of Puranas. He insisted that caste is not a natural distinction. Arya Samaj believes that Hindi and Sanskrit must be the national language of the people. All the members of Arya Samaj should do Prarthana and Sadhana. They believe that the requirements of every country should be supplied within the country itself. Hence they laid stress on Swadeshi. The emergence of Akhil Bhartya Hindu Maha Sabha, and the Bhartya Hindu Shuddhi Sabha provided a common platform to Arya Samaj.

Over the years there was a shift in Arya Samaj from the earlier emphasis on Vedic Dharma and Aryans to Hindu Dharma and Hindus.

Arya Samaj wanted to convert the whole world to the Vedic faith. For this reason Lala Lajpat Ray called Dayananda Saraswati the World Apostle of Hinduism. There are around 5000 units/branches of Arya Samaj in India and abroad, 200 District Committees, 300 Arya Virdal units, 200 Arya kumar-men Sabha, 500 colleges and high schools, 60 Gurukalas/theological institutions, 300 Sanskrit pathshalas/schools, 400 pathshalas for the depressed class, 200 orphanages, 300 reading rooms and libraries, 1000 sanyasis and preachers and 20 million followers.

Ideological Position of Arya Samaj

The Vedas and Vedic Religion are Alone True

In a statement of my beliefs, Dayananda declares that “I hold four Vedas as the word of God; they are absolutely free from error and are authority unto themselves.” For Dayananda the Vedas are the source of God’s knowledge and they contain universal truth. The Vedas are of divine origin and are the only revealed scripture and not books like Bible and Quran. For him, the Vedas being eternal and universal belongs to all. Therefore everyone should study the Vedas. Due to this approach Dayananda believed that Vedic religion alone is true and all other religions are false, full of errors and other religions are perversions of truth. Hence, for Dayananda salvation is possible only through the Vedic faith. According to Dayananda, the Vedas were revealed through the medium of Sanskrit language which belongs to no country. Sanskrit is the mother of all languages as being the first language of entire humanity. The adaptation of Vedic religion means a return to the original eternal religion. Non-Vedic religions should not be accepted. For Dayananda Saraswati the clarion call was Back to the Vedas and Back to the Vedic religion.

Arya Vartha (The Country Par Excellence)

In his book Satyarth Prakash chapter 2, we find a glimpse of Dayananda’s appreciation for Arya Varta i.e. north India. The land of Aryans is Arya Vartha. According to him Aryans are gentlemen or cultured people. Aryan people lived in India. Therefore India is
the land of *Aryans*, the rest of the world including south India is *Mleccha* (uncivilized world). It is the land of *Dasyas* (servants) and it is the land of rogues and wicked people. According to him *Arya Vartha* is the country par excellence. *Arya Vartha* was the royal nation of the world from the beginning of creation until 3000 B.C. when the *Mahabharata* war took place. From 3000 B.C. till now we are under the Dark Age. This Dark Age can only be removed when the *Aryans* rule the whole world. Hence, he wanted the Hindus to start ruling India.

Dayananda wanted the culture based on the *Vedas* to be the culture of *Arya Vartha* and Indian identity should be that of Hindu culture. Hence, the watch word of Dayananda was ‘*Back to Vedas.*’ India is only for Indians, Indian religion is only for Indians. His main aim was that India should have one scripture that is *Veda*, one language that is Hindi. They also should have one national conscious that is being Aryans. They all should have one territory that is *Arya Vartha* and all Indians should have one supreme Indian authority.

Because of Swami Dayananda, Hindus made a counter attack based on their race and religion. Dayananda gave an authoritative divine book to the Hindus (*Satyartha Prakash*) to face Bible and *Quran*. Thus according to Aurobindo, Dayananda re-established the *Vedas* as a living scripture. According to Harold Coward, Dayananda made Hinduism a religion of the book adopting the Protestant Christian principles. Dayananda argues that since the *Vedic* religion is the most ancient and most original religion it is the fountain head of all religions. He wanted to reform Indian religion by going back to the *Vedas*, and also wanted the foreign religion of Christianity and Islam to leave India. He affected a marriage between religion and politics which resulted in the politicization of religion and sacralisation of politics.

This also led to the interpretation of Indian nationalism as Hindu nationalism. A true Indian is one who champions the cause of Indian culture and Indian loyalty to the nation is equated to the loyalty to Hindu religion and culture. That is why Arya Samaj came to be called as church militant. The guiding principle of Dayananda’s movement was *Krinaravanto Viswa Aryam* that is “let us make the whole world Arya.”

### Some activities of Arya Samaj

#### Religious Reform within Hinduism

Arya Samaj fought against many religious evils and superstitious beliefs and practices of Hindu society. They stood for the right of everyone to study the *Vedas*. They opposed polytheism, image worship, pilgrimages, the doctrine of *avatars*, the ideology of caste by birth and ‘untouchability.’ Dayananda opposed certain superstitious ceremonies such as *shraddha*. He also challenged the Hindu worship of many gods.

#### Sangatan

Dayananda Saraswati founded a *Sangatan* which is a union of Hindus for self defence. This *Sangatan* preached that no Hindu should bear insults, hatred against his religion by other religions. The Hindus were urged to develop a militant spirit. This *Sangatan* was the other side of the *Suddhi* programme. It was Swami Shradananda who played an important role in the formation of *Sangatan*. This movement of Arya Samaj aimed at reviving the *ashrama dharma*. It also worked towards raising the minimum age of marriage and requiring the widowers of the upper three castes to marry only widows. It also disallowed polygamy and polyandry. It also allowed child widows to re-marry if they wished.

This *Sangatan* wanted to eliminate caste system. It also wanted the depressed class to be absorbed into the four castes. Swami Shradananda stressed the need for cow protection and wanted to introduce Hindi as the common language of the people. The most important aim of the *Sangatan* was the consolidation of Hindu community in order to protect them from being wiped out by non-Hindu religion. The *Sangatan* was involved in four major areas:

- To reform the Hindu religion.
- To uplift the depressed people and their absorption into the mainstream Hindu life.
- Re-conversion of former Hindus.
- The conversion of non-Hindus to Hinduism.

#### National Education

The official creed of Arya Samaj affirms to remove ignorance by
Dayananda also advocated Indians to fight for Swaraj that is self-government. Hence Arya Samaj took up the ideal of nationalism when no one had even talked about freedom movement. The present day Hindu communal groups such as the Sangh Parivar owe their ideology to Arya Samaj. Because of Dayananda Hinduism became a pracharak dharma. That is a missionary and converting religion. Arya Samaj wanted to convert Hindu dharma into Vedic religion. The aim of Arya Samaj was to unify Indians nationally, socially and religiously. Dayananda identified two-fold programme of reform and extirpation in the agenda of the Samaj. He wanted to reform the Indian religion by returning back to the Vedas and also he wanted the foreign religions to leave India. India is for Indians was his message. His main aim was to bring Hinduism back to its original purity. He wanted to elevate Hinduism to the level of Christianity and Islam with the adoption of the belief in one God and one scripture.

**Theosophical Society**

One of the agencies which helped the revival of Hinduism in the last part of the 19th century was the Theosophical society with its headquarters in Adyar (Chennai). A unit of this society is called Theosophical lodge, consisting not less than seven members. Many of such lodges constitute a national society. All the national society together constitutes the general society governed by a general council.

This movement combined the teachings of several religions. The theosophist believed that all religions talks about God, universe and human beings. The basic goal of this movement was to study all religions and to get the best of all religions. Its aim was to bring about a religious and political awareness among the people.

It believed that Theosophical is a divine wisdom. All religions claim divine wisdom. World is full of spirits and is active in the world. From time to time great teachers emerged from different religions. It believed that if one could control the spirit, then s/he can perform miracles. Hence it believed in occultism. Human beings can communicate with the spirits and these spirits are the great souls. Right from the beginning of the world Messiahs have come to save the world. Their teachings are similar to pantheism. God unites all life. Everything that we see and experience has an element...
of God. God is limitless consciousness. God is eternal and everlasting love. We experience this love in our hearts. With love comes activity. Therefore action oriented love is important. They believed in the brotherhood/sisterhood of all religions. The theosophists talked about three things related to the spirit.

1. Spirit power is the power of God. This power is in the world but we are not aware of it.
2. Wisdom is the manifestation of that power.
3. Spirit's activity is in physical terms.

The theosophists believe that original human beings were Aryans, the original race of humans. About 1.8 million years ago religion started. They believe that there is a path to get connected with the spirit of heaven. Heaven is the abode of Mahatma. By good karma (practice) one can reach heaven. By the practice of yoga one can reach the spirit. Mahatmas are great soul who will help humans to reach heaven. Jesus, Krishna and Buddha were all Mahatmas and they were all brothers. Hence uniting all religions and all teachers should be the aim of world religion. They believed that religion should be combined with philosophy. They also talked about re-incarnation or birth. After death, the spirit goes to heaven. But some souls have a craving to come back to earth. They come back in human form. Spirituality and mysticism is connected in this movement. Through occult we can control the spirits.

The history of this movement begins with Hellena Petrovana Blavatsky, a Russian lady who was reported to possess extraordinary occult powers (secret powers). She states in her writings that she started this movement only at the advice of the great hierarchy of Masters living somewhere in Tibet. She visited Tibet in 1848 and learnt the secrets of Tantra system. Madam Blavatsky first went to Cairo in 1870 and then to Paris and USA in 1874, in order to create interest in the truth of ancient wisdom. While Madam Blavatsky was living in New York, Colonel Olcott who was one of the investigators of Occult phenomena met her and started using her house for meetings. On 17th September 1875 Olcott suggested that a society be founded to spread occultic teachings. This society was called Theosophical society and Olcott became the first President and Madam Blavatsky the first Secretary.

At first the objective of the society were stated briefly as follows, “The objective of the society are to collect and diffuse knowledge of the laws which governed the universe.” But later on this statement was expanded in the following way. “The society influences its followers to acquire an intimate knowledge of natural law especially its vocal manifestation. The society teaches and expects its fellow members, to personally exemplify the highest morality and religious aspiration, to oppose the materialism of science and every form of dogmatic theology, to make known among western nations the long suppressed facts about Orient’s religious philosophy, their ethics, chronology, symbolism; to recognize each other as the casual effect of the one uncreated universal, infinite and everlasting cause.”

Madam Blavatsky stood for this philosophy of occultic science teaching that there are hidden powers in a human person which are capable of making him/her God on earth. In 1878 the founders of the theosophical society received orders from their masters in Tibet to go to India for their work. In 1882 a centre was opened in Adyar (Chennai). Madam Blavatsky came to India and worked for some time and later on she fell ill and finally settled in London. In 1887 she wrote a book of two volumes named “Secret Doctrines.” She died in 1891.

Mrs. Annie Besant (1847-1933)

Mrs. Annie Besant came into contact with the Theosophical society and gradually she joined it and became the head of the Theosophical Society when Olcott died in 1907. She became the President of the society and continued till her death in 1933. She was one of the most outstanding figures in the history of Hindu revival. She claimed that she was Hindu by birth and remained a Hindu by heart. She came to India in 1893 at the age of 46 and there after made India her home. She wore Hindu dress, adopted the Hindu way of life and worked for the revival of Hinduism and the upliftment of Hindu nation till her death. She looked upon Hinduism and Hindu scripture as a sacred heritage. She lived in the city of Benares and founded the central Hindu College which later became Benares Hindu University. It was in Benares that she published her popular translation of the Bhagavad Gita. She began with religion and finally she got into politics and social reform.
Theosophical society in its initial stage was not concerned with reform of any kind, rather it was concerned with making the world recognise the spiritual greatness of India and the value of eastern religion especially Buddhism and Hinduism. For many decades Hindu and Buddhist thought and civilization were condemned and negatively projected by the missionaries and by Europeans in general. Annie Besant did not just focus on Upanishads and Gita, she was also interested in epics and puranas, the smritis and the dhamasastras. She stood for the entire Hinduism, its philosophy its deities, its modes of worship, its yoga practices and its rites and ceremonies. Her exposition of the Hindu doctrines regarding karma and re-birth, yoga and dharma, devas and avatars was an eye opener to many Hindus.

She wanted to spread divine wisdom which is called Brahma Vidya in Sanskrit. It means direct knowledge of God possessed by mystics all over the world and which forms the core of every religion. Annie Besant believed that the various religious, philosophical and ethical ideas common to the old great religion of the world are due to the fact that they all are derived from a common mystical tradition which is in the custody of Brotherhood of great spiritual teachers. The founders of the great religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism etc. are members of that Brotherhood.

Annie Besant got into politics and social reforms. In 1930 she delivered a series of lectures which was later published as “Wake up India.” It was a series of lectures on foreign travel, abolishment of child marriage and the rights of the depressed classes. She conducted inter-caste marriage and inter-religious marriage. In 1914 she started a weekly journal called Common Wealth and a daily newspaper called New India. She wrote many articles in these journals which made her popular. The Madras government became very much disturbed and imprisoned her in 1917. There was a popular agitation for her release. The government released her and she was made the President of the Indian National Congress.

Annie Besant’s popularity as a religious leader started to decline after 1910. One reason was that she openly talked about her occult relation with her master in Tibet which some people did not like. She also began to investigate through occult practice the past and the future lives of some of the members of the Theosophical society. She also projected J. Krishnamurthy as the world teacher similar to Christ. But this development was not accepted by her members. Later J. Krishnamurthy himself left the organization and many followers also left the theosophical society.

Theosophical society is not committed to any set of doctrines. It was only three objectives; that is
1. Universal brotherhood/sisterhood of humanity by bringing together different religions.
2. Study of comparative religion and asian religions.
3. Investigation of occultic force.

Apart from these objectives, the teachings of society are summarized by Annie Besant in her article in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. These she classified under four headings 1. Religious 2. Philosophical 3. Scientific and 4. Ethical

Religious
The Theosophical Society believes in the unity of Godhead corresponding to the Vedantic conception of the absolute. It also believes in the trinity of the manifested logos which corresponds to the Ishwar, Hiranyagarbha and Virat in Hindu philosophy. They believe in the hierarchy of spiritual intelligence ranging from highest gods who ruled the solar system to the lowest being.

Philosophical Teaching
They believed in immorality of the soul, re-incarnation of the human person and sub-ordination, of matter to mind.

Scientific Teaching
They believe that the structure of the universe consist of seven place of matters corresponding to the Hindu conception of seven lokas (world).

Ethical Teaching
Some of the important ethical teachings of Theosophical society are:
(a) Realization of a universal brotherhood/sisterhood.
Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was the inspiration for this movement while Swami Vivekananda was its founder. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was born on 18th February 1836 in Hooghly district, West Bengal. His original name was Gadhadhara Chatterjee. From very early age Ramakrishna had religious experience. At the age of seven he lost his father and his elder brother Ram Kumar brought him to Calcutta to assist him in his priestly duties. Later on Ramakrishna became the priest of the Dakshineswar temple built by Rani Rasmoni.

Ramakrishna while serving at the temple started experience long spells of spiritual ecstasy. His mother called him back home and got him married to Sharada. Ramakrishna was twenty years old and Sharada was seven years year old when they got married. After his marriage he went back to Dakshineswar and served at the Kali temple. Ramakrishna received teaching under many teachers. He learned sadhana under a wandering monk Bhairavi. He also took lessons in Advanta Vedanta under Totapuri a famous Advaitic teacher. It was Totapuri who gave him the name Paramahamsa (great swan).

Ramakrishna started to have ecstatic religious experiences. In 1866 he started to practice Islam and in 1874 he professed to have the experience of Christ. He found that the essence of each religion is the same and that all paths lead to the same God. A group of young people became his disciples and one among them was Narendranath Dutta who later became Swami Vivekananda.

Ramakrishna believed that each person has the freedom to practice his/her own religion and spiritual realization is the essence of religion. He contracted cancer and on 16th August 1886 he died.

After Ramakrishna’s death, Swami Vivekananda along with Sharada Devi organised his disciples into a brotherhood. It is probably in the 3rd week of January 1887 the disciples of Ramakrishna took formal sanyas or vows of monkhood and became full fledged monks. On 1st January 1899 a place known as Belur Mutt (ashram) on the western bank of the Hooghly river (Ganges), in Calcutta city became the headquarters of the Ramakrishna order. After his return from the West in 1893 where he had delivered his famous lecture at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Vivekananda along with other monks and some lay disciples of Ramakrishna, formed on 1st May 1897 an association called the Ramakrishna Mission. Seven years after the passing away of Vivekananda this association came to be registered in May 1909.

The theology of Ramakrishna mission is the belief that Reality is One and only One. It is eternal, real, infinite, unchangeable and absolutely perfect. Therefore it called as Absolute. This reality is present in every individual being therefore Brahman which is the eternal reality is present in every individual being. God is within each human person. Therefore each individual soul is part and parcel of the One Universal Soul. Hence in injuring one’s neighbour we are actually injuring our self. Swami Vivekananda through the Ramakrishna mission was able to bring the lofty philosophy of Advaita to the level of the common masses and interpreted it as a social philosophy for the welfare of humanity. According to Ramakrishna mission, when we serve humanity we are serving God. Belur Mutt is the headquarters of the Ramakrishna mission. The mission has a governing body consisting of president, vice president, general secretary, treasurer or assistant secretary, one accountant and ten other members. All the members are the monks of the Ramakrishna order and they form the trustees of the Belur Mutt.

Swami Akhandananda was the third president of the Ramakrishna mission and a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. He was the first monk of the order to be inspired by Vivekananda’s...
socialist thought and from his time onwards Ramakrishna mission started to focus on philanthropic activities.

The objectives of the mission which were mentioned during its registration are:

- To impart and propagate the study of Vedanta and its philosophy.
- To impart and promote the study of arts, sciences and industries.
- To train teachers.
- To carry on education work.
- To establish, maintain and assist schools, colleges, orphanages, workshops, hospitals, dispensaries and other educational and charitable works.
- To publish and sell or distribute periodicals, journals and books.

Swami Vivekananda passed away on 4th July 1902 at Belur Mutt at the age of 39. After his death the leadership of the mission passed into the hands of the successive leaders of the Mission.

Social Work of Ramakrishna Mission

Ramakrishna mission through its humanitarian programmes, educational and medical service to the people seems to have adopted methods similar to Christian mission such as setting up of schools, medical missions and social relief works. An important activity of the mission is educational work by which it runs a variety of schools and colleges. These institutions are not only found in India but also in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji and Mauritius. The mission also runs several medical institutions such as hospitals, dispensaries and medical mobile vans. The mission also undertakes activities in rural areas such as setting up of college, industries, aid to farmers, adult education and training up of village men. In setting up small industries, the mission also works for the welfare of tribes. It has established a society where it gives information to tribals on horticulture and modern agricultural methods, poultry farming and animal husbandry. The movement also works towards youth upliftment. In conducts classes on music, language as well as arts in its various centres. According to D.S Sharma who while evaluating the Ramakrishna mission stated that it is the most authentic manifestation of Hinduism.

Evaluation

Swami Vivekananda’s practical Vedanta under the Ramakrishna mission was an attempt at a reconciliation of the metaphysics of Advaita with the demands of individual and social practical life. His philosophy is based on the ideal of Advaita which is oneness of all beings.

Neo-Vedantins and their Contribution towards Indian Renaissance

In the history of Indian renaissance there were few neo-Vedantins who interpreted the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta from a modern and social perspective.

We shall study few of their contributions towards Indian renaissance.

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)

Swami Vivekananda was born as Narendranath Dutta on 12th January 1863. According to his biography, his mother Bhuvaneshwari Devi called him Vareshwara (gift from Lord Shiva) because he was born after many years of marriage and prayers to Lord Shiva. When he entered school his name was changed to Narendranath Dutta. His father Viswanath Dutta was a lawyer at the high court of Calcutta. After his initial studies at home, at the age of seven Narendranath joined the Metropolitan Institute founded by Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar. He studied at Presidency College and then joined the General Assembly Institution founded by the Scottish General Missionary Board. He also became a member of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. Towards the end of 1881, he went to see Ramakrishna at the Dakshineswar temple. He asked Ramakrishna whether he has seen God. Ramakrishna replied that he had personally seen God and from that time onwards Narendranath became a disciple of Ramakrishna.

In 1886, about six months before his death, Ramakrishna initiated twelve disciples in the order of the monks. One of the twelve was Narendranath who then took a new name of Vivekananda. He became the leader of that group. After Ramakrishna passed away, Vivekananda felt that his responsibility was to bring together the fellow disciples into a brotherhood. The first important work that Vivekananda
did was that he went around India as a lonely monk and studied India’s people and her religions. Meanwhile he got the news that the World Parliament of Religions was being held in Chicago in 1893. After a period of meditation at Kanyakumari he decided to attend this event. He made a deep impression at the Parliament and also on the American people. He was in the West till 1896. He established a centre in New York and also visited England and France. From January 1897 to June 1899 he was in India. During this period he founded the Belur Mutt as the headquarters of the Ramakrishna mission. On 4th July 1902, he passed away.

Teachings of Swami Vivekananda

In the World Parliament of Religion, Vivekananda pleaded the members to have a wider outlook of each religion. He pleaded that we should overcome the frog in the well attitude. According to him, Hinduism taught the world about tolerance and universal acceptance. He believed that we are travelling from lower truths to higher truths through various conditions and circumstances. We all will finally reach the same One God. Vivekananda exhorted the Parliament to come up with a universal religion which will be the sum total of all religions. A religion which will help humans to realize their own true nature. He called for religious unity by each religion assuming the spirit of other and yet preserving its own identity. According to Vivekananda, if God is the centre, then different religions represent the radius conversing on the centre. Hinduism recognizes the right of each religion to choose their own path. Our journey is not from error to truth but from lower truth to higher truth. Truth is not found in subtraction but in addition. What is needed is mutual acceptance and not just mutual tolerance.

In 1895, Vivekananda took up a series of studies of three schools of Vedanta, namely-Advaita, Visistadvaita and Dvaita. It was from this year onwards, Vivekananda started projecting Advaita Vedanta as the harmonizer of all religions.

The philosophy of Vivekananda is called Practical Vedanta. For Vivekananda, Advaita Vedanta, teaches oneness of life and of all beings. Everything that makes for oneness is truth. He wanted to reveal practically the unifying spirit of Advaita. His method of Practical Vedanta was inspired from Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.

He believed that in Practical Vedanta everybody is equal and there is no difference between a Chandala and a Brahmin. The person who has experienced oneness with God will experience the whole world as one soul. That person will treat all people with kindness. This was what Vivekananda meant by Practical Vedanta. The philosophical truth of Practical Vedanta is that Atman is absolute truth, all pervading and infinite and each individual soul is a part and parcel of that universal Soul. Therefore by injuring one’s neighbour, a person actually injures oneself. In practical Vedanta, the Jiva (living being) and Iswara (God) are in essence one and same. When we serve others we are actually serving God. Every person should find divinity in the other person and then only we can reach universal brotherhood. Vivekananda urged his disciples to speak against the evils of caste system and ‘untouchability.’ He argued that caste is against the religion of Advaita. Not birth but gunas (inner quality of a person) should decide caste. The same eternal spirit is in every individual being. Hence no one can claim a higher privilege. The idea that a human person is born superior to the other has no place in Advaita Vedanta. He told his disciples that God is present in every Jiva, there is no God besides that and those who serve Jivas, serve God indeed. The whole universe is only a manifestation of Atman. Atman is our inner most reality. We have to proclaim the God within us.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in the small north western peninsular called Kathiawad of Gujarat on 2nd October 1869. His parents were Vaishava Hindus. His father was Karamchand Gandhi and his mother was Putlibai. His father and grandfather served as Chief Ministers of Kathiawad Province. Gandhiji’s mother was a religious person. Gandhiji married at the early age of thirteen to Kasturba. After matriculating at the age of eighteen, Gandhiji went to England where he studied for three years and was called to the bar in 1891. Then he returned to India in 1891 and practiced for two years in Bombay and Rajkot, but with no great success. In 1893, Gandhiji left for South Africa, where he was to stay for more than 20 years. It was there he thrived as a barrister and developed as a leader of men.
Gandhiji was influenced by the New Testament (non-violence), theosophists (unity of religion) and Ruskin (simple life). By 1912, he took a vow of perpetual celibacy with his wife’s consent. His political maturity was expressed through the Nadal conference for Indians in South Africa in 1894. He returned to India in 1914 and started non-violent campaigns and brought the peaceful transfer of power from the Britishers in August 1947. On 2nd October 1948 he was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic Nathuram Godse.

Gandhiji was a neo-Vedantin. He was a sanatani Hindu who believed in the principles which are eternal (sanatan). He said that truth is God and every human being should discover the truth. If truth is discovered then every human being will be lifted up. Gandhi’s entire life was based on a spiritual plan, i.e. the discovery of truth.

Through this spiritual plan, he wanted to bring the oneness of humanity. His two important principles were: Satyagraha and Ahimsa, i.e. holding on to truth and non-violence out of love. Ahimsa negatively means avoiding injury to anything on earth in thought, word and deed. Positively, it is a state of love, of doing well even to the evil-doer. For him non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of humankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of humans. He also held on to the principle of Brahmacarya. He believed that sexual and family distraction takes a person away from spiritual pursuits. Marriage should only be for the procreation of children. Gandhi also held on to the principle of Tapasya, i.e. self disciple. He also believed in Vairagya (detachment from worldly things). By practicing these five principles he believed that we could bring oneness in humanity. This according to Gandhi is neo-Vedanta.

Gandhiji also believed in religious pluralism. Everyone has the freedom to practice their own religion. His basis for neo-Vedanta is the pursuit of truth which will ensure liberation. For Gandhiji, Hinduism is in a constant pursuit after truth. If he was asked to define Hindu teaching, he would simply say, the search after truth through non-violent means. For Gandhiji, God is Satchitananda, i.e. God is present everywhere and God pervades all. Once a person finds truth, s/he will realize freedom. For Gandhiji, ahimsa is a divine mission. He believed that through non-violence we can practice brotherhood/sisterhood, i.e. equality of all. Hence ‘untouchability’ has to be removed. Ahimsa has to be understood as a ‘soul force.’ Through ahimsa a person can control his/her inner senses. A person can thus practice brahmacarya life. For Gandhiji possessing something extra is a crime. He therefore advocated voluntary poverty. He also advocated cow protection because cow is an animal which provides richness to Indian culture.

Gandhiji believed in Sanatana Dharma. He believed in the Hindu scripture, the doctrine of avataras, karma theory and varnashrama dharma. He believed that one should make use of others scriptures for one’s spiritual life. In his prayer meetings, the scriptures from various religions were read. He argued that if a person wishes to improve the society then s/he has to improve oneself. Hence Gandhi emphasized on Svadharma, i.e. self obligatory duties. He equated equality in society with oneness with God. Gandhi believed that if we wish to change society then we need to transform the individual. Leo Tolstoy’s writing ‘Kingdom of Heaven is within You’ influenced Gandhi. He argued that an efficient society is possible only if there are transformed individuals.

The Sermon on the Mount went straight to Gandhi’s heart, i.e. loving God and human beings and praying for those who persecute you. He asserted that there is no need for missionary work as Sermon on the Mount will change people. The Cross of Christ was an inspiration for Gandhi. It was a symbol of suffering for him. Gandhi called Jesus as the ‘Prince of Satyagraha.’ He asserted that Jesus believed in non-violence even to the point of death.

Gandhiji also believed in Sarvodaya, i.e. the welfare of all. He got this idea from John Ruskin’s book ‘Unto this Last.’ He translated this book in Gujarati which he named as ‘Sarvodaya.’ There were four principles in Gandhi’s Sarvodaya.
1. Good of the individual is reflected in the good of all.
2. All professions are equally good.
3. A life of labour is worth living.
4. Basis of all this is love.
As a Hindu, Gandhi did not believe in the orthodox view of God. He had no faith in idol worship. Religion did not consist of worshipping god or reading a religious book. Religious life meant identification with humanity. He said that “reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality.” He believed that Hindus must become better Hindus, and Muslims must become better Muslims as a result of understanding other religion. In his opinion, politics and religion could not be separated because both have service of humankind as their ideal. For Gandhi, to worship God is to serve the poor. The only way to find God is to see Him/Her in creation and serve all. Throughout his life, Gandhi worked to free Indians from poverty. He promoted Khadi (hand spun cloth) because it would provide work for many. He denounced industrialization because it would replace human labour and increase unemployment. He was a socialist and he hoped that state control of useful industries would benefit the common person rather than encourage the profit motive of the rich capitalists.

Gandhi believed in varnasramadharma, but he denounced superiority/inferiority feelings. He encouraged mixed marriages between different castes and between those who follow different religions. He asserted that security of homes is very important. Men and women should have equal freedom. Child marriages should be forbidden. Widowhood should not be enforced. He opposed artificial methods of birth control. According to him animals are also included in society. He condemned slaughter of animals. He asserted that prohibition of cow-slaughter is necessary for communal harmony. He preached prohibition of liquor and drugs.

Gandhi also asserted that every village should grow food-materials, and cotton for cloth; the cattle should have grazing land; children and adults should have entertainment facilities; money crops can also be raised except tobacco, opium and ganja. Every village should have a theatre, school and public hall and drinking water system. Satyagraha and non-co-operation comprised in ahimsa will be principle followed by the village people. From the village register, people will be chosen to be protectors of the village. Gandhi promoted Panchayati Raj, i.e. all decisions should be taken by the Panchayat. There will be five members in the panchayat. They will have authority and they needed to be a republic. The panchayat rules over the village. Each village should be self-sufficient (as a panchayat or republic). Each village should have its own samiti. These village samitis make the taluq samitis. The various taluq samitis forms the zilla samitis. The zillah samitis makes the state samiti and the state samitis make the central legislative assembly. All above 21 years of age have voting rights. He did not favour the centralization of state authority.

The economic system that Gandhi promoted was Swadeshi, i.e. whatever the group needs should be manufactured and produced by the group itself. Along with Swadeshi he advocated Ssvatantrata, i.e. national freedom. Gandhi also advocated Swaraj, i.e. self rule. While the ultimate goal of Satyagraha is always moksa, the salvation of the satyagrahi, the immediate temporal goal for which Gandhi was striving, was Swaraj or Ramraj, conceived not merely as political independence, but as a complete social revolution.

The India of his dreams was to have been a community of self-governing, self-sufficient villages, each administered by a largely autonomous, elected panchayat, and supporting itself in frugal sufficiency through co-operative agriculture and cottage industries. Decentralization, both political and economic, is the key-word in Gandhian planning. He was strongly opposed to a highly centralized, powerful state, which he sees as a continual threat to the freedom and growth of the individual. He was equally against heavy industrial concentration which, in a country like India with an overabundant supply of labour, would lead to widespread unemployment, the mass exploitation of the poor by the rich and of one country by another. Hence along with Sarvodaya, Gandhi’s three principles were Ssvatantrata, Swadeshi and Swaraj.

Gandhi’s originality consists in extending the ideal of non-violence from individual to nations and inventing a technique for its applications. The value of Gandhism lies in its decisive stand for religious and moral values in an irreligious and amoral age.

**Sri Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950)**

Aurobindo Ghosh is also considered as a Neo-Vedantin. He was educated in England and was a brilliant student and graduated from Cambridge university. The Maharaja of Baroda was impressed by him and gave him a job in the administrative service. He got himself
Aurobindo's philosophy is founded on his experience of yoga. According to Aurobindo, reason cannot give a complete answer to humans, so intuition is important. Therefore humans have to achieve a Super Mind.

Aurobindo speaks about Integral Yoga or Adhyatma Yoga, i.e. a spiritual yoga, a yoga which helps human beings to achieve liberation. When a person reaches the stage of Super Mind or Adhyatma Yoga, s/he experiences moksa or liberation. In this Adhyatma Yoga, Aurobindo suggest three important things.

1. Surrender: we need to surrender completely in God's hand.
2. Stand aside and see the working of divine in you. One needs to know that oneself is Purusha.
3. Perceive God in and as all things. When we believe that God is working through me and God is all, then we see God as everything. Then a person will truly experience Narayana, i.e. Vasudeva, God with us.

According to Aurobindo God is working in Prakriti (nature). We need to dedicate all our actions to God. Then only we can achieve life divine. If all human beings experience this state, then all humanity will be liberated. According to Aurobindo, there is progress in human spirituality. A human being’s spirituality develops from matter which is inactive to vital state and then to Super Mind. For Aurobindo, human progress towards Super Mind is a two way progress. According to him, liberation is a work between God and humans. When God descends and meets humans and when humans ascend and meets God, liberation takes place. This state is called Super Mind. Therefore when human beings open to God fully in surrender, when there is divine Shakti working in humans and when God comes down to humans, liberation takes place. This God is called by Aurobindo as Cosmic Divine. When a person achieves the state of Super Mind, then there is ananda (joy and happiness) and a spiritual experience of life divine. According to Aurobindo, life is essentially spiritual, in every aspect of life whether it is matter or spirit, there is life. This according to Aurobindo is Advaita.

**S. Radhakrishnan (1888-1975)**

S. Radhakrishnan interpreted the teachings of Vedanta in a new way. He was an exponent of Neo-Hinduism. He was a very good writer as well as an orator. Some of his important works are: My Search for Truth, The Ethics of Vedanta, Indian Philosophy, East and West in Religion, Eastern and Western Thought, The Hindu View of Life, Recovery of Faith, The Concept of Man and Sources of Indian Philosophy.

Radhakrishnan was against the dogmatic theology of Christianity as well as against the exclusive claims of Christianity. He decided to attack western Christianity. His main teaching was that all religions are equally good. But there are higher and lower levels of religion. The highest religion is the Vedanta religion. He believed in individual conversion. For him, religion is an inner revolution, i.e. the inner revolution which helps humans to understand the unity of the whole universe. Radhakrishnan believed that the whole universe is filled with God. He believed in a kind of evolution from matter to vegetable, to animal, to human and then to highest being. He believed in the relativity of all religions, i.e. all religions are in partial knowledge of God. All religions come from human experience. Thus all religions have some truth in them and some error in them. All religions are imperfect. If we understand this truth, then each one of us will respect other religion.

According to Radhakrishnan, human beings should realize the
limitations of religion. Once they realize this truth then humans will be tolerant to other religions. Radhakrishnan also talked about the destiny of humanity. Human beings are not absolutely independent. We have to develop harmony within ourselves- humanity and environment. Then only progress and freedom comes. Radhakrishnan’s main aim was to make the entire world divine through his philosophy. For him, God is love and love is also self giving. Once we practice love, then we can unite the whole world. The divisions of life can be eradicated when we have love in our life. Hence we can unite all human life and therefore we can create a new world and a new humanity.

Radhakrishnan visualized three things:

1. One Nation/World Community: Radhakrishnan visualized one world community wherein all nations will come together and form one world in unity.
2. One Universal Religion: He visualized one universal religion; the highest religion and all other religion such as Christianity and Sikhism are branches of that religion.
3. Spirit of Co-operation: He also visualized one international fellowship where people from all religions and countries will form one community. This is possible only through love. Hence Radhakrishnan visualized a Commonwealth of Countries. This commonwealth will have several features. It will have a commonwealth of religion. It will be like a beehive working together for the oneness of humanity. He visualized a world faith, a world religion. This universal religion will go beyond doctrines and creeds. It will be a kind of Neo-Hinduism.

Radhakrishnan also gave few suggestions for reforming Hinduism.

(a) Animal sacrifices should be stopped.
(b) Devadasi system should be abolished.
(c) Temples and images should be improved by beautifying them. A person should have a sense of holiness.
(d) Caste and ‘Untouchability’ should be removed.
(e) Upanayana (thread investiture ceremony) should be extended to all Hindus.
(f) The spiritual heritage of India should be reflected in worship and meditation.
(g) Widow re-marriage should be encouraged.
(h) Voluntary celibacy should be encouraged in order to control population.
(i) Monogamy should be encouraged and established by law.
(j) Non-violence should be practiced and it should be understood as a state of love.

Common Points in Neo-Vedantins

There are few common points in all the Neo-Vedantins whom we studied.

1. They tried to interpret the ancient philosophy of Vedanta in modern terms.
2. They tried to defend Hinduism against Christianity and Islam by giving a new interpretation to Hinduism.
3. They taught the welfare of humanity.
4. They taught tolerance and spirit of accommodation towards other religions.
5. They emphasized co-operation and unity among religions.
6. They believed that all religions are relative and each religion is only partial truth.
7. Religion is the only hope for humanity and service to humanity and welfare of humanity should be the goal of all religions.

Therefore the Neo-Vedantins interpreted the teachings of Vedanta in a modern way so that the ancient wisdom of Hinduism is utilized in the modern world for the benefit of humanity.
Chapter Three

Renascent Movements in Islam

Aligarh Movement
Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817-1898)
With the decline and fall of Mughal rule, the Muslims who enjoyed power and prestige, were left with only a false sense of past glory. Intoxicated with orthodox religious outlook, they considered western education culture and scientific attitude as against the principles of their religion. This was one of the reasons for the backwardness of the Muslim society. After the Mutiny of 1857, the Muslim community in particular was completely broken on the intellectual, political and economic level. In this political context, Sayyid Ahmed Khan was the first modern Muslim reformer in India who wanted to revive back the Islamic faith to the modern scientific achievements and establish cordial relations of the Muslim community with the British government. Sayyid Ahmed also wanted to make Islamic faith free from its 7th century moorings and make it relevant to the context of 19th century scientific discoveries and humanism. This he did so by initiating social and religious reforms.

Sayyid Ahmed Khan was also the founder of the Aligarh movement. He was born on 17th October 1817 and grew up in the house of his maternal grandfather, Khwajah Farid al-din Ahmad Khan (1747-1828), the scion of an illustrious family of Mughal aristocrats. His family descended from Hazrat Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad in the 36th generation. Khwajah Farid held the high position of wazir at the Mughal court and acted as ambassador to Iran and Burma for the East India Company’s government in Calcutta.

Context of Sayyid Ahmed Khan
While Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Dayananda worked for religious and social reforms of Hindus, Sayyid initiated the same movement among the Muslims of India.

Sayyid Ahmed was extremely disturbed by the Mutiny of 1857 and the following years, when the Muslims community, already backward was bitterly repressed by the British. He wanted to raise his Muslim community by weaning it from its policy of opposition, to one of acquiescence and participation and by weaning the British from its policy of repression to one of paternalism. Sayyid followed a particular ideology in his dealings with Islam and British, i.e. loyalty in politics and modernism in Islamic institutions.

During the ‘Sepoy Mutiny’ he remained strictly loyal to the British. His three works on the uprising, History of the Mutiny in Bijnore (1858), Asbabi Baghawati Hind (causes for the Indian Mutiny, 1858) and the Loyal Mohammedans of India (1860) are indispensable source materials for any serious study of the background. The cause of the revolt to Sayyid was neither a Muslim conspiracy with Persia or Russia, nor the annexation of Oudh, nor even a religious crusade against the British. The cause lay in the non-admission of Indians into the Legislative Council.

Hence it is only from the late 1850’s onwards after the Indian mutiny of 1857 and the traumatic events accompanying and following it, Sayyid Ahmed Khan entered the field of theology proper that is a rational interpretation of Islamic religious faith, practice and experience.

In the following section we shall briefly study how political and religious leaders of Ahmed’s time have interpreted his life and work.

D.N. Bannerjee, a well known Congress leader, and other writers with similar political leanings, presented Sayyid Ahmad Khan as an Indian Muslim leader who had made an outstanding contribution to the social and cultural cohesion of the country, especially by working for the cause of Hindu-Muslim understanding. Rajendra Prasad wrote that Sayyid was a nationalist and a believer in the Hindus and Muslims constituting one nation which he called the Hindu nation on account of both being inhabitants of Hindustan. He therefore, in his earlier days, spoke and wrote like a nationalist
and was regarded as a national leader by both Hindus and Muslims. A number of post-Partition books all of them published in India, have viewed Sayyid Ahmed in terms of Hindu-Muslim unity.

But there were also an image of Sayyid Ahmed as a political leader working to build the Muslim community into a political entity separate from the Hindu community as portrayed by Sir Reginald Coupland, I.H. Qureshi and Abdul Hamid. Abd-al-Haqq popularly known among the Muslims of the sub-continent as Babai Urdu (Father of Urdu) repeatedly underlined Sayyid’s unique contribution to the creation of the Muslim Qaum (community or nation) and Qaumiyat (communal or national consciousness). He states that it was Sayyid who laid the first brick in the foundation of the stronghold of Pakistan.

From 1930’s onwards a few commentators and historians made an attempt to understand the development and character of Sayyid’s policies and thoughts in the context of economic and social changes affecting Indian society during his life. They portrayed him as a defender of Muslim upper or middle class interests. Jawaharlal Nehru, saw Sayyid as standing for the interest of Muslim feudal landlord classes.

Many see him as a man who above all others helped the Muslims in India to emerge again, revitalized and respected after a general decline. He rallied together the Indian Muslims and became the first prophet of their new nationhood. He viewed education (including the learning of English and the acquisition of western knowledge and accepted western values) as the basic means for improvement. All his other activities were rooted in this one basic desire- to restore Islam in India to its pristine dignity and prestige.

**Contributions of Sayyid Ahmed Khan**

Aziz Ahmad points out that Sayyid’s entire intellectual energy was devoted to resolve the conflict between religion and science and to reconcile the best of both for the younger generation of the Muslim elite whom he wished to attract. Like all reformers, Sayyid called for modern *ijtihad*, or the modern thinking of Islamic tradition. After his voyage to England in 1869, he saw his task as that of persuading his community not only to accept British rule but also to acquire western culture.

Politically he continued to serve the British acting as a member for a time of the Governor-General’s Council and on numerous Government commissions and continued to develop throughout north India the loyalty of Muslim middle class.

**In the following section we shall study few important reforms undertaken by Sayyid Ahmed**

**Social Reforms**

Sayyid Ahmed sought to overthrow the notion that Islam could not permit women out of seclusion (*pardah*) nor recognize the duty of women’s education. He started a number of schools for women and a college for women in Aligarh. He was also against the notion that Islam sanctioned aggression in the Holy War (*Jihad*).

He exhorted Muslims to abandon medieval thinking and customs. In 1870 Sayyid started the publication of a journal *Tahzib al Akhlaq*. It covered articles on wide range of subjects from public hygiene to rationalist speculation on religious dogma. He exhorted the Muslims to keep away from politics for some time in order to devote entire attention towards social change in their community. Sayyid also repudiated the view by some Muslims that Hindus are infidels. According to him, the difference between those who affirmed faith in the *Quran* and others who did not was verbal and not real. He was also an advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity and formed the *Indian United Patriotic Association* whose main objective was to bring Hindu-Muslim unity. In all his undertakings Sayyid regarded religion as a discipline essentially for the establishment of ethical criterion.

**Theological Contribution**

Sayyid Ahmed was absorbed with the spirit of western culture and especially its rationalism. He was thus able to subject the *Quran* to rational criticism and he rejected from them all that was in conflict with logic and nature. His first move was to take only the *Quran* as determinative of Islam, all else is subsidiary and of secondary importance. Thus he rejected the Canonical ‘Traditions’ embodying the social morality of Islam in the society of its first century or two.

His second move was to proclaim the criterion of reason and
nature. With this approach Sayyid approached the *Quran*. Hence he attracted to himself and his school the supposedly derisive name, ‘naturalist,’ by his policy of interpreting the word of God by the work of God.

The Islam which he intended was that it should be thoroughly compatible with progress and specifically with that progress which consisted in adopting, to the extent that the Indian Muslim bourgeoisie was capable, the culture of 19th century Britain with its new learning, its liberal and humanitarian morality and its scientific rationalism.

In 1870 he began to apply something like a westernized methodology, partly scientific and partly speculative apologetics, to the history of Arabia at the birth of Islam and to certain aspects of the *sira*, or the traditional biography of the Prophet. This work was the starting point of modern Indian historiography of Islam, published as *Essays on the Life of Muhammad* (1870). This work was undertaken to refute Sir William Muir’s scholarly but highly polemical, *Life of Mahomet* (1858). In 1870 he began an Urdu commentary on the *Quran*: a radically new interpretation of Islam and its scriptures in the light of 19th century rationalism. He felt a need in Quranic exegesis to return to the pure Arabic Idiom of the Prophet’s contemporaries and to avoid blind *taqlid* and hair splitting interpretations.

**Political Reforms**

The Muslims of India thought that India is *Dar-ul-harh* (house of war) since it had become a non-Muslim state. But Sayyid insisted that India is *Dar-ul-Islam* (house of Islam) since Muslims under the British rule were free to practice their religion. In 1866 Sayyid founded the ‘British Indian Association,’ in order to focus Indian opinions on political questions and represent them in the British parliament. Sayyid was able to win the confidence of the British government and became a member of Viceroy’s Legislative Council and was Knighted in 1888 (a title of ‘Sir’ was given). Also the degree of L.L.D. was conferred upon him by the University of Edinburgh.

In 1889, he formed the *Upper India Mohammedan Defence Association*, where his middle class Muslim group could join together to protect themselves against the competition of other and the more advanced groups within the country.

Sir Sayyid emerged in the mid-1880s as the leader of an important sector of Indian Muslims, the majority of whom in 1887 followed his advice not to join the predominantly Hindu, middle-class Indian National Congress. Parliamentary democracy demanded active participation in the process of governmental decision making, and for lack of effective political organization among Muslims he feared that such a congress would bring about the permanent subordination of Muslims to Hindus.

**Educational Reforms**

As a first step towards reform in thinking and life of the Muslims of India, Sayyid decided to bring them out of their religious schools (*maktabs*). To do so it was necessary to provide modern education to Muslims. In order to promote Western education and science of the West among the Muslims, Sayyid founded the *Association for the Study of Western Science*, in 1863. In order to further his educational and political plans, he visited England in 1869 and spent seventeen months there studying English life and politics, but giving the major part of his time to education. He got himself acquainted with the English system of education and made a detailed study of the working of the schools and colleges.

**Aligarh College**

In 1877 Syed Ahmed raised a college in Aligarh which was called the *Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College*. Meant primarily for the Muslims, it was interdenominational providing for *Sunni* as well as *Shia* theological education and included a fair percentage of Hindu students. The institution aimed at the liberalization of ideas, broad humanism, a scientific world and a pragmatic approach to politics. Its aim was also for a steady increase of educated Muslims in the government services. It helped to make the transition of the younger generation of Muslim elite from almost medieval conservatism to at least superficial modernism. And finally it helped to produce the leadership for Muslim political separatism in India as a counter balance to the growing influence of the Indian National Congress. H.A.R. Gibb recognized the *Mohammedan Anglo-
At the same time the conference also emphasized the necessity of publishing in English and in Urdu, in Europe and in India, books and articles to correct the misinterpretations of Islam in the writings of some European scholars as their writings were adversely affecting the western view of Islam.

Sayyid Ahmed died at Aligarh on 27th March 1898.

**Oriental College** set up Sayyid as the first modern institution of Muslims.

The Aligarh College was also pro-British. It was deliberately modeled after Oxford and Cambridge University, its teaching was to be in English, the curriculum was the replica of the western one, with additional religious instruction of Islam and the principal and the many number of the staff were to be Englishmen. The prospectus of the college states that the object was to establish a college in which Muslims may acquire an English education without prejudice to their religion. One of the aims of the college was to make Muslims of India worthy and useful subjects of the British crown and its founders proclaimed that the British rule in India is the most wonderful phenomena that the world has ever known.

Aligarh college was the intellectual centre for the Aligarh movement. In its early stage, it served mostly the United Provinces and the Punjab, but soon after the turn of the century young men were coming to it from all parts of not only India but also from Islamic world.

In 1886, Sayyid began the *All India Mohammedan Educational Conference* which aroused the Muslims to a sense of their educational backwardness. Its major aim was the general promotion of Western education for Muslim in India, for the enrichment of Urdu through translations of indispensable scientific works, to exercise political pressure for the acceptance of Urdu as the secondary language in all government and private schools, to emphasize the necessity for educating women as essential for the balanced intellectual development of future generations and to formulate a policy for the higher education for Muslim students in Europe, who were discouraged from going abroad in order that they should remain involved with the problems of their own land of origin. It was in 1906 that the *Muslim League* was born in one of the sessions of the *Mohammedan Educational Conference*.

One of the basic programmes assigned to the *Mohammedan Educational Conference* between 1886 and 1895 was to investigate, collect, edit and print Persian manuscripts, records, archives and other source materials for a correct assessment of the history of Muslim India, Islamic history and institutions in general.

At the same time the conference also emphasized the necessity of publishing in English and in Urdu, in Europe and in India, books and articles to correct the misinterpretations of Islam in the writings of some European scholars as their writings were adversely affecting the western view of Islam.

**Aligarh Movement**

Till the emergence of a Muslim elite with western education from the M.A.O. College, the British rulers were pursuing an anti-Muslim policy as the Muslim had participated in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. But the Aligarh movement brought a change in the government policy towards the Muslims. The Muslim elite trained in the M.A.O. College had high ambitions for government jobs and the British government patronized them. When the M.A.O. college faced financial crisis, the British government gave the needed help. In 1920, the M.A.O. College was raised to the status of a university known as *Aligarh Muslim University*. In the Islamic world, Aligarh is known for its secular and scientific learning. The strongest faculty at A.M.U. is the faculty of science.

Two important figures of the Aligarh movement were Chirag Ali and Sayyid Mahdi Ali. One of the important book published on behalf of the *Aligarh Movement* is a small one by Mustafa Khan, *An Apology for the new Light*, 1891. In this book Khan sums up the main characteristics of the movement. They are

1. The adoption of some varying greater or less extent of English dressing and other outward accompaniments of a European civilization.
2. A certain amount of dissatisfaction with the existing mode of religious thought.
3. A desire for certain social reforms.

Aligarh College was both liberal and secular. But in 1937, the institution came under the domination of the Muslim League, and its liberalism was replaced by a religious enthusiasm. By 1941, Aligarh became the emotional and the intellectual centre for the nation of Pakistan. What started as an elite educational movement became a means, to mobilize a wide spread Muslim Constituency.
The motive and the entire methodology of Sayyid’s speculative modernist theology was intended to bridge the chasm between the pragmatic goal of modern science and of Islam. Sayyid was the first man in modern India to realize the necessity of a new interpretation of Islam that was liberal, modern and progressive.

It therefore goes to Sayyid’s credit that before any other Muslim, he saw the need for a radical reappraisal of Islamic society and religious thought with openness to modern science and education. By his reforms Sayyid made modern education and humanism available to the Indian Muslims and thus brought to an extent, the Indian Muslims out of their social and economic backwardness.

**Ahmediyya Movement (1835-1908)**

The founder of this movement was Mirza Ghulam Ahmed of Qadian, Gurdaspur district in Punjab. Ahmed was the son of a middle class, land owning family descended from a Mughal, who came to India with Babur in the 16th cent. The village Qadian received its name because Ahmed’s original ancestors settled there and served as village Qadi or judge.

With the death of his father in 1876, Ahmed returned to Qadian to manage the family estates and to turn his attention entirely to religious matters. For the next 30 years, until his death in 1908, he continued to write in Urdu, Persian and Arabic while organizing in 1889 the Ahmadiyya movement.

The year 1880 marked a turning point in the career of Ghulam Ahmed. That year he began publication of four volume *Barahini Ahmediyah* or Proofs of the Ahmadiyya, a project which took him four years to complete. The *Barahini* emerged as the first Islamic polemic to the kind of polemic produced by Swami Dayananda. His debates and polemics reflected a new dimension of and a fresh approach to *Jihad*. He meant it to use it as a way of getting Islam to re-assert itself both in Punjab and through out India against the growing Arya Samaj, emerging Sikh consciousness and the evangelical Christianity.

The Ahmediyya movement arose as a protest against the success of Christian proselytisation, a protest also against Sayyid Ahmed’s rationalism and westernization and also a protest against the decadence of the prevailing Islam. It combined a purifying spirit of orthodox reform, and a tinge of new liberalism. The context of Mirza Ahmed was of overwhelming missionary activities by Christians and the Arya Samaj in Punjab.

**Birth of the Ahmediyya Movement**

Finding the birth of a first son to his second wife to be an auspicious and religious occasion, Ghulam Ahmed announced early in 1889 a first step towards the organization of Ahmediyya. He stated conditions under which followers of his reform movements could make allegiance with him.

In making allegiance to him a follower had to commit himself to ten points, nine of which are standard to Islamic belief. These includes abstaining from shirk (associating something with God), performing salat (prayers) fives times a day, faithfulness to God and his messenger, obedience to the teachings of the *Quran* and proper ethical behavior. The last condition which is different from all other Islamic belief is that a follower must obey him in everything good. Within two years, he claimed to have received divine commands appointing him as a Mujaddid or a renewer of faith. He also claimed that he was the recipient of divine revelations and that he was the promised Messiah for the Christians, Imam Mahdi for the Muslims and the incarnation of Krishna for the Hindus.

On the basis of the *Quran* he argued that just as Jesus had appeared 1400 years after the time of Moses, so a promised Messiah must now appear, invested with the spirit and power of Jesus. It was now the fourteenth century after the appearance of the Holy Prophet i.e. Prophet Muhammad that Mirza Ahmed appeared.

In his book *Masih Hindustan Mein*, Ahmed argued that Jesus was put on the cross but did not die. Jesus merely swooned and was revived by his disciples by the application of an ointment called *Marham i Isa*, the Jesus ointment. He argued that the historical and biblical records prove that at the time of the advent of Jesus, only two of the tribes of Israel lived in Syria and Palestine and that the remaining tribes had been taken captive by the government of Nebuchadnezzar and deported to countries lying towards the East of Persia and it appears that they settled in Afghanistan and Kashmir.
So he believe that Jesus in order to fulfill his mission to the lost sheep of Israel came to Kashmir.

After his escape from the cross, Jesus came to Kashmir and died a natural death at the age of 120 and was buried in Srinagar. There is a tomb of one Yus Asaf in Khan Yar street, Srinagar, which Mirza Ghulam Ahmed claimed to be that of Jesus.

Mirza challenged the virgin birth of Christ. Both the Christians and the Muslims believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, but not Ahmediyyas. They use higher criticism of the West, to prove from Quran and the gospels that the birth of Christ took place according to the ordinary course of nature. They say that fatherhood is indispensible in all creation – a law of nature and therefore immutable. They rebuke Muslims for believing in the virgin birth of Jesus. They argue that if the Muslims believe in the super natural birth of Jesus, they have to grant that Jesus is divine. This, the Muslims are not willing to grant. The Ahmediyyas say that the Muslims are inconsistent in their view.

The Ahmediyyas believe that the Gospels use symbolic language and that physical healing could not have taken place in the instances mentioned in the gospels. They deny the divinity of Jesus and his superiority to Prophet Mohammed.

The Ahmediyyas believe that Jesus was far from blameless in character. They say that sinlessness is not a proof of greatness. According to them greatness depends upon the amount of good done to one’s fellow human and on this score Mohammed is the greatest benefactor of humanity. They raise issues with regard to Jesus’ claims for sinlessness.

(a) The baptism of Jesus: How could the saviour of the world submit to a rite which amounted to confession of sin?
(b) The temptation of Jesus: If Jesus was sinless, how could he be tempted to commit sin?
(c) Jesus’ own denial: Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone (Mark 10:18).

The orthodox Muslims believe that Jesus did not die on the cross, but that Allah took him up into heaven. But Mirza thought that Jesus died a natural death. This he said in order to establish his claim as the Messiah. He denied both the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus. Mirza took two proofs from the gospels.

(a) Mary Magdalene did not recognise Jesus as he had disguised himself as gardener.
(b) He walked with two of his disciples side by side to Emmaus yet they did not recognise him as he was fleeing for refuge.

Mirza Ahmed also argued that Guru Nanak was a Muslim. He had frequent clashes with the Christian missionaries, the notable of which was the public debate between Ahmed and Abdullah Athim, a convert from Islam.

Ahmed first accepted bayah from a group of followers in 1889, but the first jalsah or assembly at Qadian was not held until 1891. The movement did not officially come into being until a declaration by Ahmed in 1901. However, the decision to identify the movement separate from Sunni Islam followed two years of intensive opposition by both Sunni and sectarian Ulema. The name Ahmediyya was chosen at this time, not as an honor to Mirza Ghulam Ahmed but because it was the name of Prophet Muhammad during the time of persecution in Mecca.

At first the Muslim leaders accepted Mirza Ahmed as a pious Muslim and a great scholar but on Mirza’s claim to be a prophet they branded him a Kafir, i.e. a non-believer. He was excommunicated. The most significant publication undertaken by the movement was Review of Religions, which began publication in Urdu and English in 1902. This publication in its English format was responsible for making the Ahmediyya movement known in the non-Muslim world. Mirza Ghulam Ahmed died in 1908 and was succeeded by Hakim Nuruddin as the 1st Khalifa.

When, the 1st Khalifa died in 1914, a schism broke out in the sect regarding the election to the office of Khalifa, of Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud, son of the founder. Mirza and his supporters insisted that the original founder must be regarded as a nabi, prophet. At this a group headed by well educated men such as Khwaja Kamaluddin and Maulana Muhammad Ali of Lahore broke away protesting that Mirza Ghulam was no more than a Mujaddid for this age. In 1918 when Mahmud Ahmed (2nd Khalifa) wrote an article in which he declared all non-Ahmediyyas to be Kafirs the
Lahore party completely split from the Qadian party. They have their headquarters in Lahore.

The selection of Mahmud Ahmed as Khalifah al-Masih II, placed the Khalifat as an institution clearly in the hands of the family of Mirza Ghulam Ahmed. This larger group were content to follow the new Khalifa’s autocratic direction as it appeared in ‘An Important Resolution,’ published in a 1914 issue of Review of Religions. Thus a radical change took place in the in the organization structure when the new Khalifah became the final and conclusive authority of the Ahmediyya movement.

**Hence there are two groups.**

1. **Qadianis** i.e. disciples of the original founder, also called as Mirzais.
2. **Ahmedis** i.e. members of the Lahore party. This party claims to base the title ‘Ahmediyya’ on the less familiar name of the Prophet i.e. Ahmed (Quran 61:6) and does not connect with one of the name of the founder. The Lahore organization is known as the Ahmediyya Anjuman-i-Ishaati Islam, or society for the diffusion of Islam.

The Qadianis gather in Qadian which is their world headquarters, for their annual conference in December. They are concentrated in Qadian, Kashmir, Orissa, Andhra and Kerala. Rabwah in Jhang district on the banks of the Chenab river in Pakistan is the new seat of the Ahmediyya Khalifat.

The growing separation of Ahmediyya from the main body of Islam was illustrated by the publication in May 1915, of the conditions of Bayat. It mentions that the duty of every Ahmediyya is that he/she should pray under the leadership of Ahmedi Imams only. It prohibited the Ahmediyyas to give their daughter to non-Ahmediyyas and also prohibited the Ahmediyyas from attending the funeral service of non-Ahmediyyas.

Ahmediyya Muslims are now considered belonging to a heretical sect and are not allowed to enter the holy city of Mecca for pilgrimage. They have established their missionary centers in many places in India and abroad. In 1974, the Ahmediyyas were classified as non-Muslims by the National Assembly of Pakistan. They are barred from using Islamic terms due to an Act passed in April 1984. For example they cannot call their worship place as Masjid. They are barred from visiting Mecca and Medina for Haj.

After the death of the second Khalifa on 8th November, 1965, Hazrat Hafiz Mirza Nasir Ahmad, was elected as the third Khalifa of the community. In 1982 he passed the mantle to his brother Mirza Tahir Ahmed.
Chapter Four

Renascent Movements in Sikhism

In Punjab during the 19th century few reform movements took place in Sikhism. In Punjab most of the converts to Christianity came from the ‘untouchable’ castes but with a short period several Sikhs from higher caste started to accept Christianity. Christian missionaries who were actively supported by English officials were active in Ludhiana, Lahore and Amritsar. The conversion of Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last Sikh ruler of Punjab, to Christianity was a great blow to the Sikh community. These were a great loss to Sikhism in Punjab. More serious was the challenge of Arya Samaj to Sikhism in Punjab. In 1877 Swami Dayananada Saraswati came to Punjab and opened a branch of Arya Samaj in Lahore, Punjab. Within no time many Sikhs started to accept Arya Samaj teaching. Further, Brahma Samaj of Raja Ram Mohan Roy started to influence the Sikhs and Theosophical society also opened their branch in Punjab. The Sikhs felt that they were being reabsorbed into Hinduism. Due to these factors the Sikhs in Punjab felt threatened by these outside influences. They started to feel themselves as minority in their own state. The Sikhs religious leaders wanted to reform their own religion and wanted to bring back Sikhism to its original purity. The Sikh identity came under the process of reformation and there was the emergence of Sikh consciousness. It is in this context that the Singh Sabha Movement emerged.

Singh Sabha Movement

In the beginning of 1873 four Sikh students of the Amritsar Christian mission school announced their intention to renounce their Sikh faith and to embrace Christianity. This angered the Sikh leaders in Punjab. The Sikh leaders in Amritsar started to give lectures on the life of Guru Nanak. They wanted to bring back the original teachings of their own religion. A meeting was called in Amritsar by some prominent Sikhs. As a result of this meeting an association called The Sri Guru Singh Sabha was formed on 1st October 1873. These were the five important decisions made during the meeting:

1. To restore Sikhism to its original purity.
2. To edit and publish historical and religious books for the Sikhs.
3. To propagate current knowledge through Punjabi medium by starting magazines and newspapers in Punjabi language.
4. To bring back those converts who had left Sikhism.
5. To make use of the officials of the British Government in the educational programmes of Sikhism.

This new movement gained support from various sections of the Sikh community. Many Sikh scholars and leaders joined the Sabha. Six years after the Amritsar Singh Sabha, in 1879 the Lahore Singh Sabha was formed. This new branch was very radical. The Lahore Sabha advocated radical social reforms in the area of caste and ‘untouchability’ in Sikhism. The main leaders of the Lahore Sabha were the Maharaja of Neba, Professor Gurmukh Singh, Bhakahan Singh, M.A. Macauliffe and other important people. M.A. Macauliffe rendered the translation of Adi-Granth into English. In order to co-ordinate the work between Amritsar and Lahore Singh Sabhas, a joint board called the General Sabha was formed which was later replaced by the Khalsa Diwan in 1883. The Khalsa Diwan started a college for the education of the Sikhs. A large meeting was organized in Lahore and a hukumnama (oath) was written down. According to this hukumnama, every Sikh had to give a tenth of their income for the building of this college and on 5th March 1892 the foundation stone of the Khalsa college of Amritsar was laid.

Contribution of Singh Sabha Movement

The Most important contribution of the Singh Sabha movement has been in the field of education and literature. The Singh Sabha founded the Khalsa college in Amritsar in 1892. Schools for girls were also started in many places. Two seminaries were also started
by the chief Khalsa Diwan. An Oriental school was started which was instrumental in the establishment of Punjab University in 1870. From 1908 the Sikh Education Conference was held every year to review the educational situation and for raising funds for various Sikh schools. Singh Sabha movement also published a large number of literature in Punjabi as well as in English which gave the biography of the Sikh Gurus. It also started a Punjabi weekly journal called the Khalsa Akbar. In 1899 the Khalsa Samachar was founded which became the leading theological journal of the community. It also started the Khalsa Tract Society which published a number of literature on Sikh history and religion. The Singh Sabha movement also encouraged the Sikhs to hold discussions and debates and exhorted the Sikh youths to be proud of their tradition and history. It also propagated the use of Punjabi language by opening Punjabi medium schools and publishing books, journals and newspapers in Punjabi language. This movement was also against caste system and child marriage and it pleaded for widow remarriage. They made use of Sikh scripture i.e. Adi-Granth in denouncing caste and they practiced common dinner i.e. langaar attached to every Gurudwara. Sahid (martyr) fund was started to provide financial aid to the families of the martyrs and to set up a school and a hospital at Nanakana and a missionary college at Amritsar as a memorial to the martyrs. The Singh Sabha movement played a very important role in checking the influence of Hinduism into Sikhism. It also stopped the activities of Arya Samaj to a large extent. Their favourite slogan was ‘Hum Hindu Nahin Hai’ i.e. we are not Hindus.

Gurudwara Reform Movement

The Singh Sabha movement brought an awakening among the Sikhs regarding their rights. The educated Sikhs wanted jobs in the administrative service of the British government but the common people wanted to gain control of their Gurudwaras. There were no rules for the administration of the Sikh shrines and in many of the Gurudwaras, priests were Hindus and claimed the Gurudwaras as their property. They took over the income of the Gurudwaras such as the Golden Temple in Amritsar and the Gurudwara at the birth place of Guru Nanak at Nanakana. There were no rules made for the management of the Gurudwara nor were any qualification prescribed for their caretakers. In the days of the Mughal persecution, the job of scripture reading was given to the Udasi order who did not follow the Khalsa creed and were usually clean shaven. Whenever their lives were in danger they separated themselves from Sikhism. When the Britishers came, new land records were made. In many of these records, the properties which were attached to the Gurudwaras were entered against the name of its caretakers. Hence the Gurudwara and its properties were taken over by its care takers. The Udasis who were scripture readers were as much Hindus as they were Sikh and they started worshipping all the images of Hindu gods and goddesses in the Gurudwara. In order to bring back the Gurudwaras into the hands of the Sikhs, the Gurudwara reform movement started. This enthusiasm for reform generated a popular movement called the Akali Dal. Their main objective was to train Sikhs for taking action in order to gain control over the Gurudwaras and bring their holy shrines back from the control of the Hindu priests. A representative assembly of Sikhs was called on to meet on 15th November 1920. Each delegate had to meet five conditions. They were

1. He had to receive the Amrit (Sikh initiation)
2. He had to be regular in the readings of the daily hymns.
3. He had to keep the Sikhs forms and symbols.
4. He should be an early riser.
5. He should give one tenth of his earnings for religious purpose.

In this meeting a committee of 175 members was formed which was called Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandhak Committee (S.G.P.C.). This committee was the chief force for reforms within the Gurudwaras of the Sikhs. Hence one by one all Gurudwaras came under S.G.P.C. There were many opposition from the priests who had controlled these Gurudwaras. Many Sikhs lost their life. Some of the famous opposition were in Nanakana Gurudwara which was the birth place of Guru Nanak and Guru Ka Bagh were the Sikhs were imprisoned and also beaten up by the police.

On 25th July 1925 the Sikh Gurudwara Act was passed. A central Gurudwara Board was elected by the Sikhs which became the custodian of the Gurudwaras.
Ambedkar and the Neo-Buddhist Movement in India

Chapter Five

Ambedkar was born on 14th April 1893 in the Mahar Caste; one of the largest outcasts in Maharshtra. He was the fourteenth son of his father, who was a minor officer in the Indian army. Ambedkar suffered much being a Mahar. The teachers and the students would not touch him. To drink water he had to lie down on ground and have a higher-caste boy pour water in his mouth. A bullock-cart man refused to drive for him and his brother when he discovered that they were Mahars. He could not take part in the games with other boys because they belonged to higher castes.

The Maharaja of Baroda, Sayaji Rao, helped him to get education. Ambedkar passed his matriculation from Elphinstone High School in 1907. At that occasion he was given a copy of Kelusakar’s book, Life of Gauthama Buddha. The same year he also read Narasu’s book Essence of Buddhism. These books greatly influenced Ambedkar. Later, he said that he became a Buddhist (at heart) when he was only a boy of sixteen.

With the generous help of Sayaji Rao, Ambedkar was able to take his degree from Columbia University, studied economics in England and also qualified himself as a barrister. When Ambedkar returned, it was Sayaji Rao who gave him employment first. But others were having their old attitude towards him even after his education. He resigned his job in Baroda and went to Bombay and worked as a barrister.

After studying Hinduism, he came to the conclusion that the social philosophy of Hinduism is based on inequality. Thus in him began a new religious quest, a quest for identity. The publication of the book, Mook Nayak (leader of the dumb) in 1920, is the beginning of Ambedkar’s entry into Indian politics.

Ambedkar’s Conversion

Yeola Conference in 1935

On 13th October 1935, leaders of the Scheduled Castes convened a conference in Yeola, Nasik to review the political and social situation in the light of their ten year struggle. In this conference Ambedkar declared his firm resolve that he will not die a Hindu. A resolution was passed that the depressed classes should leave the Hindu-fold and join some other religion that gives social and religious equality to them. They were asked to choose any religion that gives them equality of status and of treatment. The resolution did not say which religion they should adopt. Following this, leaders of various religions appealed to Ambedkar to consider their religions. Bishop J. W Picket and Stanley Jones requested him to consider the claims of Christianity. Buddhists, Sikhs and Muslims had also approached Ambedkar.

Poona Conference in 1936

On 12th January 1936, the Poona Conference was convened to consider the Yeola decision. It was a unique one for the following reasons:

(a) The one who presided over the meeting said that the only way to get rid of ‘Untouchability’ is that the depressed classes should leave the Hindu religion, not necessarily by conversion to another religion already existing but possibly by starting a new religion or by reviving the ancient one practiced among the Adi-dradivas, long before the Aryans brought to India Hinduism with its various customs.

(b) The question of choosing a religion was entirely left to Ambedkar.

(c) The immediate concern was not conversion but consolidation.

Ambedkar warned his people that wherever they go, they will have to fight for their own welfare. A massive Mahar conference was held on 30th and 31st May 1936 in Bombay to assess the impact of the declaration on the Mahar masses. In his address at this conference Ambedkar stated his case for conversion in an elaborate,
Ambedkar and the Neo-Buddhist Movement in India

Recognition
In 1947, Ambedkar became the Law Minister of the Government of India. He took a leading part in the framing of the Indian Constitution. In 1952 the Columbia University bestowed upon him an honorary doctorate. In 1953 the Osmania University also honoured him with a doctorate. In 1990, the Indian government gave him the distinctive title of Bharata Ratna.

Ambedkar’s Evaluation of Religions
In his search for equality, identity and justice in a religious tradition, Ambedkar made a detailed study of the major religious traditions in India and came to the observations and reservations given below.

Islam
(a) Islam stands for social stagnation.
(b) If the depressed classes joined Islam, they will not be able to preserve their national homogeneity with India, and would lose Hindu culture.
(c) Polygamy and concubinage are a source of misery for Muslim women.
(d) There is nothing in Islam that leads to the abolition of slavery.
(e) Muslims also observe caste and untouchability.
(f) Muslims have all the social evils of the Hindus, plus purdah.
(g) Uniformity is imposed upon the Muslims by a spirit of intolerance, which is severe and violent. It is directed towards the suppression of all rational thinking which is in conflict with the teachings of Islam.
(h) Conversion to Islam would denationalise the depressed classes.
(i) If the depressed classes joined Islam, the number of Muslims will be doubled and there is the danger of Muslim domination.

Sikkhism
(a) Ambedkar thought that there would not arise any problem if the depressed classes joined Sikkhism. If they became Sikhs they remain within the Hindu Culture.
(b) They will not do any harm to the destiny of the country but they
will help the destiny of the country. He felt that for the interest of the country the depressed classes should join Sikhism. But Ambedkar did not join this religion.

**Jainism**
(a) Jainism is not a powerful religion.
(b) Ahimsa preached by Jainism was extreme and thus unacceptable.

**Christianity**
(a) If the depressed classes become Christians, they would lose their Hindu culture.
(b) They would be denationalised.
(c) It would strengthen the hold that Britain had on the country.
(d) Ambedkar saw that Christians in south India observe caste system.
(e) He was of opinion that as Christians, the depressed classes will lose their reservation privileges.
(f) As a community, the Christians never fought for the removal of social injustice.
(g) Since Christianity worked through the caste system and was split into denominations, Ambedkar was doubtful whether Christianity could unify the ‘outcastes’ who themselves were already much subdivided.
(h) Ambedkar saw Christian missions in western India as an instrument of de-socialization. Christians of ‘outcaste’ origin became selfish and self-centered. They did not care for their former caste associates. They only wanted to get ahead in life. In fact, they were anxious to hide their identity as having come out of depressed classes.
(i) Christianity did not have any organized national and social concern.
(j) Ambedkar was under the misconception that Buddhism is the original faith of which Christianity is a copy as 90% of Christianity is copied from Buddhism, both in substance and form.

**Buddhism**

**Ambedkar chose to follow the Hinayana form of Buddhism**
(a) He preferred Buddhism because it gives three principles in combination which no other religion has. These are Prajna (understanding against superstition and supernaturalism), Karuna (love) and Samata (equality).
(b) He felt that the attitude of the Buddhists towards women was a great advance on the ancient Hindu attitude towards women, which deteriorated even more with Manu.
(c) Buddhism was understood to be continuous with ancient Indian culture.
(d) The fundamental principle of Buddhism is equality. In the time of Buddha of all those who joined the order, 75% were Brahmins and 25% Sudras. According to Ambedkar, Buddhism is the only religion that does not recognize caste and offers full scope for progress. It gives hope to the downtrodden.
(e) Buddhism is based on reason. There is an element of flexibility inherent in it which is not found in any other religion. Buddhism has a rational way to eradicate suffering.

**The Ambedkarite Buddhists**

**Faith in Ambedkar**
Many became Buddhists because Ambedkar told them to do so. A few consider him as god. A mixture of myth and homage have grown up around Ambedkar after his death. His picture is venerated as the second Buddha and some say prayers in front of it. In some of the pictures Gauthama Buddha is seen only at the background. Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed and Ambedkar are put in a special class. Ambedkar is considered the modern Manu who has destroyed the old Manu and Manu dharma.

**Buddhism as a Religion of Human Liberation**
Ambedkar’s interpretation of Buddhism as found in his book, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, is called neo-Buddhism. Neo-Buddhist concept of Buddhism is primarily that of a religion of liberation of the oppressed in society. Buddha ushered in a new form of liberty, equality
and fraternity. Because Buddha established a new society based on equality, low caste people also embraced Buddhism. There is compassion for the human individual. Buddhism opposes the graded social inequalities. It is humanistic, secular, democratic and scientific.

**Human Dignity**

Conversion to Buddhism was a revolt against the indignities the ‘untouchables’ suffered as members of the Hindu community. The aim of conversion is not economic but psychological. Now they do not feel they are ‘untouchables.’ They are accepted by others. It is an assertion of human dignity.

**Social and Economic Change**

The Ambedkarites were partly motivated by a desire for social change. Immediately after formal conversion, most of the customs and the occupations were rejected. The change was quite clear in the marriage practices. Their marriage ceremonies are shorter, cheaper and more dignified. There were other changes also. They got rid of all sorts of superstitions. They saved money since they have given up all Hindu ceremonies. They have only one simple feast each month on the day of the full moon. Many of the converts refused to carry out their traditional despised occupations. Majority of the upper caste people were bitter about this change. Some of those who had become Buddhists stopped performing the traditional, upper caste imposed duties of the untouchables. While major social and economic changes were taking place, the neo-Buddhists realize that their conversion has not changed their status in the eyes of the rest of society.

**New Myths**

The Mahars were considered of low origin. But after becoming Buddhists they consider themselves to be the descendants of the original great lords of the land. For them these ancestors had been the original Buddhists.

**Sacred Books**

Ambedkar wrote a book called *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, which is the neo-Buddhist Bible. This book is considered as a gospel.

It is an inspiring religious biography. This book is written in such a way that there are units suitable for Dalit Buddhist reflection and weekly congregational worship. Ambedkar’s social concern and anti-communist views are reflected on many pages. The social concern gives the book a contemporary orientation. It is so written that the mass converts will have in Buddha one of the most worthy human examples of noble character to follow.

Ambedkar’s Buddhist canon is a posthumous work in English. It has 599 pages and is divided into eight books. He has taken what seemed to him the most relevant parts of the several Buddhist traditions, edited them, sometimes added material of his own and arranged them in order. Ambedkar attacked Hindu gods and also the Hindu practice of deification. But it is this status of deity that is attributed to Ambedkar by his followers, which is basis of their acceptance of his canon.

**Evaluation**

Ambedkar’s interpretation of Buddhism in his book *The Buddha and His Dhamma* has met with harsh criticism from some traditional Buddhists. They say that it is different from the original text that it can hardly be recognized. However, other Buddhists take the Ambedkarian view such as K.A. Keluskar who says that in Buddha’s teaching, caste distinctions were completely out of place.

Rajshekar Shetty, a leader of the Dalit movement writes that when Ambedkar finally decided on a religious solution to a problem arising out of another religion, he should have opted for such a religion that could have proved to be the most effective antidote. He says that Hindu revivalists offered the bait of continuing the reservations for the Scheduled Castes on condition that he takes not to Islam or Christianity. They wanted him to turn to a religion which was already swallowed and digested by Hinduism.

**The Challenge of Ambedkarite Neo-Buddhism**

On 2nd October 1956, two months before his death, Ambedkar led several hundreds of thousands of followers, mostly belonging to his own ex-‘untouchable’ Mahar caste, into conversion to Buddhism. He extracted twenty-two promises from his followers, which are
listed below and regrouped in two categories. The first category consists of positive expressions of commitment to the Buddhist way:
I will never act against the tenets of Buddhism;
I will follow the Eight-fold Path of Lord Buddha;
I will follow the ten Paramitas of the Dhamma;
I will have compassion on all living beings and will try to look after them;
I will not lie;
I will not commit theft;
I will not indulge in lust or sexual transgression;
I will never take any liquor or drink that causes intoxication;
I will try to mould my life in accordance with the Buddhist preaching based on enlightenment, precept and compassion;
I firmly believe that the Bauddha Dhamma is the best religion;
I believe that today I am taking a new birth;
I solemnly take the oath that from today onwards I will act according to the Bauddha Dhamma.

The following promises by Ambedkar’s followers are just an emphatic expression of their entry into Buddhism.
I will not regard Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh as gods nor will I worship them;
I will not regard Rama and Krishna as gods nor will I worship them;
I will not accept Hindu deities like Gauri, Ganapati etc., nor will I worship them;
I do not believe that God has taken birth or incarnation in any form;
I do not believe that Lord Buddha was the incarnation of Vishnu, I believe this propaganda is mischievous and false;
I will never perform any Shraddda nor will I offer any Pinda (i.e. Brahminical funeral and post-funeral rites);
I will not have any Samskara ritual performed by Brahmins;

I believe in the principle that all are equal;
I will try to establish equality;
I embrace today the Bauddha Dhamma, discarding the Hindu religion which is detrimental to the emancipation of human beings and which believes in inequality and regards human beings other than Brahmins as low-born.

This list of promises is unique in the history of Buddhism, in that it not only professes to follow the Buddhist way, but also attacks a non-Buddhist tradition and rejects the devotion to a number of gods.

Ambedkar repeated on the occasion of his conversion what he had been saying for years that only conversion could really change the social status of the lowest castes. However, unlike many of his followers, Ambedkar did not convert to Buddhism merely because he found it socially useful. He had studied Buddhism and believed that it was the most rational and humane religious tradition, the best for all human beings, ‘untouchables’ and touchables alike. He consequently rejected the conversions to Islam and Christianity, not merely because he considered these religions a threat to India but because he considered these religions inferior to the humanism and rationalism of Buddhism.

An additional reason for his choice of Buddhism was his belief that Buddhism had been the original religion of the Dalits. In Ambedkar’s view, the Dalits should not seek a new religion but return to their original religion. Nevertheless, Hindutva author M.V. Kamath quotes a testimony by social scientist Neera Burra, who found many people who claimed they were Buddhists but had not taken the vows because they would not be allowed to eat meat and would have to give up all their gods and goddesses. Burra also observed about neo-Buddhist Mahars who did convert to Buddhism. She stated that it is not an exaggeration to say that every single household I visited had Hindu gods and goddesses installed in positions of respect, side by side with the Buddha and Babasaheb Ambedkar. The clean break with Hinduism has not yet been achieved. Today, there are about six million neo-Buddhists mostly from Ambedkar’s own Mahar caste and related Scheduled Castes. Occasionally, local mass conversions to Buddhism still occur in these communities.
Buddhist Critique of Ambedkar

In a brief critique of the Ambedkarite version of Buddhism, Sita Ram Goel draws attention to the fact that Ambedkar candidly admits that his own Buddhism has little to do with the Buddhist doctrine as laid down in the Pali Canon. In his book *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Ambedkar writes that the Nikayas (the core literary testimony about the Buddha) are unreliable, and that the story of Siddhartha Gautama leaving the world at twenty nine after seeing a dead, a sick and an old person for the first time, is absurd.

Ambedkar’s interpretation of the theory of *karma*, the theory of *ahimsa* and his theory that Buddhism was merely a social system, constituted not the correct interpretation of Buddhism but a new orientation. Buddhist monk Jivaka asserts that in India the movement started by Ambedkar was not Buddhism but a campaign for social reform under the name Buddhism. Ambedkar has promulgated the idea that *bhikkhus* are for the purpose of social service. Ambedkar’s book *The Buddha and His Dharma* is misnamed for he preaches non-*Dharma* as *Dharma*, even sweeping away the four *Aryan* truths as a later addition by scholar-monks, maintaining that the Buddha distinguished between killing for a good reason and purely want only, and saying that he did not ban the former. To cap it all he writes that the *Dharma* is a social system and that humans quite alone would not need it. Hence the so-called new Buddhists or better named, Ambedkarites, surround *bhikkhus* aggressively and tell them what they should do and abuse them if they are not actively engaged in social work or preaching reform.

Ambedkar on the Hindu roots of Buddhism

Ambedkar traces Buddha’s rational approach, which he values so much, to Kapila, the founder of the *Samkhya-Darsana*, the viewpoint focusing on cosmology. He stated that among the ancient philosophers of India the most preeminent was Kapila. The tenets of his philosophy were of a startling nature. Truth must be supported by proof. This is the first tenet of the *Samkhya* system. There is no truth without proof. For the purpose of proving truth, Kapila allowed only two means of proof i.e. perception and inference.

Hindu reaction to Ambedkar’s conversion

Ambedkar was an unforgiving critic of Hinduism and the most prominent among formal converts out of Hinduism in the modern age. One might, therefore, expect the Hindu movement to be equally critical of Ambedkar. However, this is not the case. But quite the contrary the predominant approach is to co-opt Ambedkar. At Sangh Parivar functions, a picture of Ambedkar is mostly displayed along with pictures of Maharana Pratap, Shivaji, Guru Govind Singh, Hedgewar, Golwalkar and other *Hindutva* heroes. During BJP President L.K. Advani’s *Rath Yatra* before the 1996 Lok Sabha elections, his car carried just two pictures of freedom fighter Subhash Chandra Bose and of Ambedkar.

The mainstream approach is to neutralize Ambedkar’s attack on Hinduism by putting it into context and emphasizing the nationalist motive of his conversion to Buddhism rather than a foreign religion. The embarrassing fact of his formal break with Hinduism is rendered harmless by means of the typically Hindu method of incorporation. Buddhism is defined as simply one of the sects of Hinduism. Even Veer Savarkar, in spite of his earlier attack against Buddhism, called Ambedkar’s conversion, a sure jump into the Hindu fold and said that Buddhist Ambedkar is Hindu Ambedkar. Fact is that Ambedkar’s choice of Buddhism, after two decades of suspense starting with his announcement in 1935 that he would not die as a Hindu, came as a great relief to the Hindu movement. One reason for his embracing Buddhism was that he wanted a rational and humanist religion, for which he thought Christianity and Islam did not qualify. This did not evoke much interest in Hindutva circles, but they showed all the more sympathy for the second reason: that Buddhism was an indigenous religion which would not bring with it extra-territorial loyalties.
Guru Movements

Chapter Six

The Role and Significance of Guru Movement

There are some important factors which we need to keep in mind while studying the Guru movements, which is also called as Neo-Guruism.

1. Neo-Guruism is a continuing phase of Indian renaissance.
2. There was religious change after the independence of India, which was influenced by socio-economic as well as political factors.
3. Guru is taken as a symbol of authority in the context of the lack of a fixed canon in Hinduism.
4. A Guru is a visible symbol of God immanent. It is a concrete symbol through which religious aspiration can be fulfilled.
5. Guruism is a struggle for religio-cultural independence in India. Gurus are interpreting Hinduism in their own way.
6. Guruism has to be understood as a struggle for a counter culture against western culture.
7. Guruism can be a medicine for Indians who are frustrated sexually or a medicine for the psychological wounds inflicted by over authoritarian parents.

The word Guru comes from the root word Gur which means to lift up, to hurt, that is a Guru is one who kills and eats up the ignorance of his disciples. The word Guru was first used and developed during the Upanishadic period. During the Upanishadic period, the asram system developed. Acharya who taught the Brahmacari students were know as Gurus. The teachings developed by modern Gurus are similar to the ones as practiced by the Gurus over the centuries. First, comes the initiation (diksha) where a sacred mantra is given by Guru to the disciples.

In India, guru movement played a very important role in reviving Hinduism and in offering a different spiritual outlook to the westerners who were fed up by the de-generation of their traditional religion.

The modern Guru movement which is in general identified as part of Neo-Hinduism is a 20th century development which transcends all the barriers of caste, race, sex and religion. It is seen as a reaction against caste system and especially Brahmin supremacy in the field of religion and spirituality. The modem gurus draw followers from all walks of life irrespective of nationality, creed, color and caste. They promise peace, prosperity and meaning in life and ultimately moksha. Modern gurus have popularized and propagated Hindu values and ideologies in the West. A guru is venerated today as the leader or founder of a sect and is also considered to be the living embodiment of God. He is looked upon as a representative and vehicle of divine power.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Transcendental Meditation Movement

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi was born on 12th February 1918 in central India. He was from a Kshatriya caste from Jabalpur. His original name was Mahesh Prasad Verma. After he became a Yogi, he retained his family name of Mahesh. Not much of his past is known because he refused to speak about it. He took a bachelor degree in Physics from Allahabad University. Besides his studies he was interested in spiritual teachings. For 13 years, he studied under his Guru Swami Brahmananda Saraswati, who was the Shankaracharya of Jyothisrmut in Himalayas. After the death of his Guru, he continued to stay in the Himalayas for two years. After returning from Himalayas he started the Transcended Meditation movement. In 1956, he took the title Maharishi which means the “Great Seer” and he changed his name to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. He travelled all over India for the next two years and gained acceptance of a teacher. He established the Spiritual Re-Generation Movement (S.R.M.) in Madras in 1958. Maharishi was not accepted by many
in India because he belonged to non-priestly caste. Therefore he decided to take T.M. to the west. He went to England in 1958 and then to America in 1961. He became one of the most famous Guru in America. The Beatles became his disciples for some time and that's how he gained popularity in the West. In 1971, thousands of students of California University became his followers. In 1972, he inaugurated a World Plan with 2000 teachers of T.M. to set up his centres all over the world.

Transcendental Meditation is a Meditation in which a person transcendents thought, reason and consciousness of his individuality and becomes aware of Creative Intelligence which they call as God.

Transcendental Movement has five main organizations. They are Spiritual Re-Generation Movement (S.R.M.), which was started in 1957, Maharishi Vedic University, Maharishi International University, Transcendental Meditation and Siddhi Programme and Global Ramraj. Other important organizations started by Transcendental Movement are Maharishi Global Construction Company, Maharishi T.V. Channel and Maharishi Open University. Transcendental meditation is a part of high school curriculum in the West. It is used in prison rehabilitation and also in the U.S. Army. This entire programme is funded by United States Government.

Teachings of Transcendental Movement
Creative intelligence is the name given for the Ultimate Reality or God in Transcendental Movement. It is defined as the impelling life force which manifests itself in the evolutionary process through the Creation of new forms and new relationship in the universe. According to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Transcendental Meditation is that meditation in which a person transcendents thought, reason and the consciousness of his/her individuality to become aware of creative intelligence (God). A person is not aware of any thought or anything except pure consciousness. God transcended consciousness is different consciousness from the three known levels of consciousness namely 1) waking 2) dreaming 3) dreamless. But transcendental consciousness is a particular state which can be called restful alertness. That is when the body attains a rest deeper that the deep sleep and in this stage the mind is very alert.

The Practice of Transcendental Meditation
A puja ceremony is arranged in which the picture of Mahesh Yogi’s Guru Swami Brahmananda Saraswati is honoured. The teacher recites some Sanskrit prayers including the one which Maharishi wrote. It is offered as a prayer of worship to many Gurus in the tradition of Advaita Vedanta. These prayers are intended to make the devotee passive. Then a secret mantra is given to the devotee which has to be repeated slowly in the devotee’s mind with the eye closed. The disciples are asked to meditate first on the mantra and then s/he will become conscious of the power of the mantra. Slowly the disciple will reach the subtle level of consciousness and s/he will lose awareness of all thought and will eventually transcend thinking and experience. Thus a devotee will reach the state of transcendental consciousness. This meditation is only for twenty minutes and after meditation, a devotee is supposed to have two hours of personal instruction under a teacher for three successive days. Then for the next month there are checking sessions once a week. Then for the first year there is a tune up session. Those with special interest can take advance courses in subsequent years.

Maharishi and his followers were convinced that Transcendental Meditation can deal with the fundamental problems of life and this meditation gives solution to eradicate all suffering. They claim that an individual establishes contact with pure consciousness or creative intelligence during this meditation. A devotee increases his/her consciousness, creativity and intelligence. A person removes all tensions, worries, and other sickness. Hence Maharishi Mahesh Yogi claims that Transcendental Meditation is a medicine which helps to solve all human problems dealing with mind and body. It increases happiness, reduces stress, increases intelligence, improves memory and health, reduces high blood pressure, improves relationship among fellow human being, increases energy, reduces insomnia and reduces crime and improves the quality of life in society.

It should be noted that Maharishi’s philosophical position is the re-interpretation of Advaita in modern terms. According to him, liberation can be attained by practicing Transcendental Meditation. By practicing Transcendental Meditation, the individual becomes
Guru Movements

Modern Religious and Secular Movements

Osho Rajnesh

Osho Rajnesh is also known as Bhagawan Rajnesh. He was born as Chandra Mohan at Kuchwada in Madhya Pradesh in 1931. From 1944-1951 he studied in Jabalpur and he obtained his B.A degree in 1951. He also completed his post-graduation in philosophy as a top student in the University of Sagar. He was a university teacher until 1965. He first worked in a small flat in Bombay with a female assistant Lakshmi and later he moved to Pune where he established the Osho Commune centre at Koregaon park. He wanted to bring a spiritual re-generation of humanity. At first he had only twenty five westerners around him and seven years later he had a world wide tour following which he had a centre in almost every major city in the world. He advocated that sex is a legitimate means of salvation. Hence, he is referred as sex guru. His followers were taught to practice meditation and a secret mantra for meditation was given to them. For sometime he left India for U.S.A and then later came back to Pune.

It is said that Rajnesh had his first experience of samadhi when he was only seven years old. At the age of twenty one he claimed to have achieved full enlightenment. He used to meditate sitting on a branch of a tree. One day he had a strange experience. He felt his body fall to the ground but his real self remained were it was. In the next six months he had a serious of similar experiences. He could realize the real person in himself. Since then throughout his life he tried to experience the real person in himself and also he enabled others to experience the real person in them. He used to say “I have not come to teach but to awaken and to transform you. This is my promise.”

He believed that his last birth was seven hundred years ago and he was a spiritual master in that birth. He believed that Ma Ananda Mai of Chandrapur, Maharashtra was his mother in that previous birth. He was a student and teacher of philosophy and he was one of the most widely read Gurus. Even though he was born in a Jain family he said that he was neither a Jain nor a Hindu. He rejected the intellect as a valid source of knowledge and accepted only mysticism and science. He was influenced by contemporary Western philosophy as well as Buddhism. He asserted that Ultimate Reality is only one and that all diversity is illusion. He also believed that the soul within his heart is Brahman. His doctrine of inner void (shunya) and sudden enlightenment comes from his study of Zen Buddhism. His view of sex and mysticism is a combination of Tantricism and modern psychology. He has drawn many of his stories and parables from Zen Buddhism. He had hatred for conventionalism and orthodoxy and he pleaded for freedom. Rajnesh was greatly influenced by religious leaders like Mahavira, Buddha and Christ. One important characteristic feature is that he was anti-intellectual. He was a guru of mystic feeling.

An important part of his teaching was meditation. His meditation method is known as Dynamic meditation. It has four stages; each lasting 10 minutes. The first stage involves fast and deep breathing while standing. This awakens the dormant spiritual energy in the disciple; second stage is a deep catharsis (outlet of emotion) and let go which allows energy to be released by awakening. In this second stage the disciple expresses himself in whatever manner s/he wants to express that is by crying, dancing, body movements etc. This gets rid of tensions within that person. In the third stage of meditation a Sufi mantra (hoo-hoo-hoo) is repeated in a state of exhalation. This is done by expelled the air out of the lungs. In the fourth stage there is total realization which produces inner silence. After a period of time the meditation goes deeper and deeper and the person experiences an inner bliss and
then only does enlightenment takes place. Rajnesh calls this phenomenon as explosion.

For Rajnesh sexuality and spirituality are the two sides of one energy. He uses sex in meditation. According to him it is during the sexual act that a person is able to descend to the innermost depth of his being. Even though Rajnesh advocated free sex but for him sex is only a means to samadhi and a door to liberation. According to Rajnesh while making love to a person, you are really making love to existence itself. The person is just a door to experience the existence. Hence for Rajnesh the moment of one flesh is a state of non-existence and one achieves the state of super consciousness. Time, thoughts and ego are transcended. Only love remains and love is God. Therefore for Rajnesh sexuality is important in spirituality.

Rajnesh encouraged people to think differently and act differently. A spirit of inquiry which is part of renaissance was also an essence of his teachings. He emphasized individuality and freedom. He is the first Indian guru to talk about freedom in sexuality and religion. Even though he was condemned by orthodox people, he provided an alternative to traditions and the beliefs of religion. For him spirituality and sexuality are important to attain liberation. Hence, he is known as the most influential and most famous Indian guru in the West.

**Swami Chinmayananda**

Swami Chinmayananda was born in Cochin in Kerala in 1916. He grew up in an atmosphere of learning and culture. He was a man of sharp intellect. His academic background was science, sanskrit and law. Before becoming a sanyasi, he obtained a master degree in English literature and worked for some time as a journalist. He even participated in India’s struggle for freedom. A great influence on him was Swami Sivananda, the founder of Divine Life Society. Even though he choose to became a sanyasi, he did not want to spend his life in Himalayas but with the common people communicating the message of Hindu scripture to them.

He evolved a unique teaching called Jnana Yajna in order to teach his message. Jnana Yajna according to him is a co-operative effort of a community in understanding the scriptures for their own personality and character. It enables the audience of Swami Chinmayananda to meditate upon the scripture such as Bhagavada Gita. The first Yajna was conducted for 100 days in Pune between 1951-1952. A second Yajna was conducted in Madras in 1953. It was in Madras that some of his disciples meet together and founded the association called Chinmaya Mission. At present the mission has more than 100 centres in India and abroad. Chinmayananda’s teachings are very much similar to the teachings of his guru, Swami Sivananda. Chinmayananda interpreted the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita on the basis of Advaita Vedanta. He assured his audience that Advaita Vedanta is the right philosophy for social equality. He wanted his followers to know that Advaita Vedanta is absolutely scientific and rational philosophy. He assured his audience that religion is not a negation of life but the world of objects around us is to be enjoyed. He preached self control but at the same time, he did not support traditional renunciation. Instead of suppressing desires he taught sublimation that is rejection of the lower values and following higher values. Religion according to him had great social value which has to be realized through the re-generation of individuals.

Chinmaya mission attempts to combine social action with spirituality. It believes that a nation can only flourish if its citizens are social and religiously awakened. Therefore Chinmaya mission opened many welfare centres throughout the world. Chinmayananda has written thirteen books and commentaries on his ideas of religion. Chinmayananda also started postal tuition courses as well as important institutions were people are trained in Vedanta. The Sandeepani Sadhanalya is the theological college started by Swami Chinmayananda in 1962 in Bombay. Here both men and women are given training in Advaita Vedanta for missionary activities. Chinmaya mission has a number of schools and colleges.

The important contribution of Chinmaya mission is to teach Hindu scriptures to educated men and women in English since sanskrit was not known to them. All types of people from different social background are his followers. The Chinmaya Mission has its
International schools, Harihar schools, Chinmaya International Foundation, Chinmaya Institute of Higher learning, Dharma Sevak Courses, Family Spiritual Camp, Hospital and Diagnostic Centres, Nurse’s Training course as well as its own publication department. The Chinmaya Mission has set up its own ashrams in various parts of the World. It also started a Vedanta University in Mumbai.

On 3rd August 1993 Swami Chinmayananda Saraswati passed away in U.S.A.

**Sri Sri Ravi Shankar**

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar was born in 1956, in a Tamil Iyer family in Papanasam, Tamil Nadu. At the age of eight, he started to study the *Vedic* literature besides his schooling. By the age of eighteen he had earned a degree in science. He became a disciple of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. It is said that Ravi Shankar experienced enlightenment in 1982, after a ten day retreat into silence. He emerged back, with the technique of *Sudarshan Kriya*, a rhythmic breathing exercise. He founded the Art of Living Foundation (AOL) in 1982 to spread his meditation technique. Ravi Shankar also founded the *International Association for Human Values* (IAHV) in 1997, which has initiated several community development programmes as well as emergency relief and assistance to societies ranging from urban to tribal level.

The Art of Living is an educational and humanitarian movement engaged in stress-management and service initiatives. The organization operates globally in 152 countries. The Art of Living movement has spread peace across communities through diverse humanitarian projects, including conflict resolution, disaster relief, sustainable rural development, empowerment of women, prisoner rehabilitation, education for all, and environmental sustainability.

The Art of Living Foundation (AOL) conducts workshops organized under the aegis of the *Vyakti Vikas Kendra* which has over 200 centres in India. These centres are managed by seventy teachers trained by Ravi Shankar. AOL is also known as ‘*Sri Sri Yoga*’ which is described as a prayerful and balanced discipline which offers a multi-path approach for uniting body, breath and mind with awareness. It brings the wisdom and techniques of *yoga* in a very sincere and thorough way. A combination of gentle and vigorous series of *asanas* is taught in *this yoga*. The AOL course combines *Sudarshan Kriya* with meditation and teaches how to observe the mind and to live in gratitude. The benefits of the workshop include stress reduction, mental clarity and joy of living.

Ravi Shankar teaches everyone to follow their own chosen religious or spiritual path while respecting the path of others. According to him values, rituals and symbols are the three aspects of any religion. He believes that in order to co-exist in a multi-religious context, we need to put values first and symbols and practices second. He believes that our basic identity is that of being part of the ‘Universal Spirit.’ Hence in order to free ourselves from religious fundamentalism, we should first identify ourselves as part of the Divine and secondly as part of the human family.

Ravi Shankar is of the opinion that religion becomes suitable for any society when it becomes all encompassing and gives full freedom to pray and worship in any manner. He asserts that all religions and spiritual traditions share common goals and values. The symbols and practices of different religions are only the outer skin. The essence of every religion is the quest for truth and the knowledge that we are part of divinity. He wanted to help people recognize the good in every human being and accept each other for who they are.

According to Ravi Shankar, the mind, body and spirit of an individual are important. For him, *yoga* is not merely a form of exercise for the body but a path towards total harmony of body, mind and spirit. It is ancient wisdom for a healthier and peaceful way of living that ultimately leads to Self-realization. He considers breath as the subtle link between body and mind and many of his yoga techniques use breath as a tool to relax the mind.

His vision is to create a world that is free of stress and violence by globalizing wisdom. The AOL course introduced by Ravi Shankar claims to help live a stress free life. *Sudarshan Kriya* which is the core component of the AOL course is a cycle of breaths-long, medium and short. According to Ravi Shankar, *Sudarshan Kriya* infuses the body with energy and harmonizes the natural rhythms of the body, mind and emotions. The AOL foundation also conducts
Breath-Water-Sound workshops (Nav-Chetna Shivirs) and Prison Smart workshops for prisoners.

**Mata Amritanandamayi**

Mata Amritanandamayi who is commonly known as *Amma* (mother) was born in a low caste fishermen’s family in Kollam district of Kerala on 27th September 1953. When she was born her parents had given her the name Sudhamani, which means ambrosial jewel. From her childhood days, Sudhamani began to chant-and sing the Divine Name and was an ardent devotee of Krishna. She also spent much of her time in prayer and was known for her loving compassion to the poor and needy. At the age of thirteen she was sent to her relative’s house to look after their house. She was badly treated in her relative’s house so she left them and joined a catholic institution where she undertook sewing classes. She would often experience divine bliss. In March 1977, she went into a trance and had the vision of the Goddess. From then on she dedicated herself to search for the Divine Mother. She went into a *samadhi* and experienced the Divine Mother merging within her as a living form brilliantly illuminated and dazzling as thousand suns. After her mystical experience she perceived that the universe is the physical body of the Divine Mother and the reflection of the timeless divinity of the feminine aspect of God. She perceived that the universe itself was the divine mother’s physical body.

This opened the way for *Devisadhana*, her passionate quest to realize the divine as the mother of the universe. Along with the experience of the divine mother, she also experienced *Krishna*. Without the guidance of any guru or *mantra* Amritanandamayi could experience the union of herself with *Krishna* as well as *Devi*. This is a very interesting phenomenon in Hinduism, where a person claims to be both the embodiment of *Krishna* and *Devi*. We find the coming together of *Vaishnava* and *Shakta* tradition of Hinduism in the spirituality of Amritanandamayi.

As she began to manifest the qualities of the Divine Mother her popularity began to spread. Her nature of hugging is an expression of her love and compassion. People, who come to her, get a hug. This for a devotee has a transforming power. She was now addressed by her devotees as *Amma* which means ‘Mother.’ Today many of her devotees acknowledge her as *Devi* or Goddess. She became known as Mata Amritanandamayi which means “Mother of Immortal Bliss.”

On 6th May 1981, her devotees registered a trust under the name of Mata Amritanandamayi Mission Trust. The name for this trust was given by her first disciple Swami Turiyamritananda Puri. This trust is run by her devotees who come from all over the world. The Trust has established more than two hundred ashrams all over the world with its headquarters at Mata Amritanandamayi Mutt in her native village at Kollam, Kerala, which is now renamed as Amritapuri. The Trust has built several temples and has involved in many charitable activities such as establishing of orphanages, primary and secondary schools, free homes for the poor and *Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences* which is an eight hundred bed hospital in Cochin. The Trust has also established educational institutes such as *Amrita Institute of Computer Technology* and *Amrita Institute of Engineering*. She has also established a university named *Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetam* for providing higher education in multi-disciplines. Her Trust has also established the *Amrita Arts and Cultural Research Centre* which promotes traditional folk arts, music and temple orchestra.

Amritanandamayi has also put an end to the male monopoly of Hindu priesthood by herself consecrating a number of temples and by appointing priestesses at the Kaimanam and Kodungalloor temples. In 1993 at the *Parliament of World Religions Centennial* in Chicago, she was elected as one of three presidents of the Hindu faith. The same year, the *Hinduism Today*, an international journal on Indian culture, conferred the *Hindu Renaissance Award* on her. She has received many international awards for her contribution towards world peace, one among them being the prestigious *Gandhi-King award* for non-violence conferred on her by the United Nations.

Amritanandamayi believed that all the religions of the world help their adherents to have spiritual progress. Hence no religion can claim superior to another. She believed that all religions are pointers pointing to the goal of spiritual realization. She asserts
that love and compassion are the very essence of all religions. Love is not limited to any religion, race, nationality or caste. She states that love should be the one thread on which all religions and philosophies are strung together. According to Amritanandamayi, though there are hundreds of faiths in the world, yet in reality this diversity brings richness and beauty to the world and to human life. She believed that the role of true religion is to make human beings aware of their true nature and to develop in them qualities such as love, patience and humility. Instead of focusing on the external rituals and traditions in each religion, we should focus on love and compassion which are the essence of all religions. She urges the religious leader to take the lead in resolving religious conflicts and establishing peace.

Amritanandamayi acknowledges the traditional ways of Jnana, Bhakti and Karma Yoga as a means of attaining the realization of God. Among the three, she gives much importance to Bhakti Yoga. She believes that only Bhakti Yoga is beneficial. She says that the real meaning of dharma dawns only when we experience God as our source and support. Actions performed at the right time, with the right attitude, in the right way are called dharmic. If a person performs his/her work as a dharma, as a means of moksa, then all actions become sacred. She asserts that we should not harm anyone by thought, word and deed. Be compassionate towards all beings. Ahimsa is the highest form of dharma. Amritanandamayi advocates the practice of meditation and japa in a devotional life. Constant thought directed to God is meditation and japa (chanting of mantra) leads to inner purification and concentration.

Amritanandamayi believed in the equality of men and women. According to her, there is no difference between male and female for those who have realized God. Both men and women have unique responsibilities in the society and both have to support one another to maintain harmony in the world. She insists that women need to wake up and arise as most women are asleep due to superstitious beliefs. For her, the greatest strength of women lies in their motherhood, in their creative, life-giving power as they are essentially creators of life.

Amritanandamayi urges all nations and individuals to share their material wealth and resources by using the religious ideal of universal kinship. Hence she urges religious and political leaders to play an important part in uplifting the downtrodden. According to her, compassion towards fellow beings is the first step in spirituality. Feeding the hungry and helping the destitute is the real language of religion. Her Trust carries out various philanthropic activities in the area of education and poverty alleviation. Her projects include orphanages and care homes for the aged people who are rejected by their families. She has also started Amrita Kripa Need Pratishthan which provides free legal aid to the weaker sections of the society who struggle for social and economic justice. She also helps the poor families in the marriage of their daughters. She has also undertaken a massive housing project known as Amrita Kuteeram for the homeless and destitute.

**Shirdi Sai Baba**

No one knows the real name, The parents, or the birthplace of the original Sai Baba. He came to Shirdi, Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra at about the age of sixteen. His austerities greatly impressed the local people. People started to call him Sai Baba. He lived in a dilapidated mosque where he kept a small fire burning continuously. In 1886, to the astonishment of government officials and native people of Shirdi and surrounding villages, Sai Baba took samadhi for seventy hours. As days passed by Shirdi became a famous place where God lived.

Sai Baba believed that Suddha Chaitanya or pure consciousness is called Brahman. Brahman is the original cause of all appearances, perceptions and knowledge. Sai Baba believed in the impersonal, attributeless God as the Ultimate Reality. There is also the Sagima aspect of the Nirguna Brahman, which is only for those who are not spiritually matured. It is for them a stepping stone to achieve the knowledge of the ‘Self and their identity with Brahman.

For Sai Baba, this world is an illusion. His conception of the world is clearly set in his following words, “A cooli dreamt that he became a king. Thereby he forgot his cooliship. That cooliship was covered up (avarana) by maya, and kingship was produced by
Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Baba was born on 23rd November 1926 at Puttaparthi in Andhra Pradesh. He was originally known as Sathy Narayana. As a boy, he was very much fond of composing bhajans and writing plays. He was also a very good actor. At the age of ten he organized a bhajan group. His bhajans were mostly in praise of Shirdi Sai Baba. In 1940 he was bitten by a scorpion and he became unconscious. When consciousness came back, his behaviour changed. After two months he called the members of his household and distributed prasad and flowers to them which started to come from nowhere. He declared that “I am Sai Baba, I am from the Bharadwaj Gotra. I am Sai Baba I have come to remove all your troubles.”

After five months he announced to his family members, “I am no longer your Sathy, I do not consider myself related to you. I am Sai, I have my work, I cannot stay any longer with you.” He left his friends and relatives at the age of fourteen and went out to fulfill his mission. He defines his mission in the following words, “My vision is to propagate the knowledge of Vedas, to help and support Vedic scholarship, to protect the devotees, to protect the righteous way of living by following the sacred scriptures.” He further stated that his task is not only to cure, to console, to remove the misery and pain of people but his task is re-establishment of Vedanta and the Vedic way of life in India and the World.

Sathya Sai Baba believes himself to be incarnation of Sai Baba of Shirdi. In 1962 he said “Since I recline/rest on truth. I am called Sathya Sai. Sai means reclining.” Once he said “I am the incarnation of Shiva and Shakti.” His devotees take Sathya Sai Baba as the very embodiment of Sathyam Sivam Sundaram (truth, prosperity, beauty). They considered him as God’s avatar, as Bhagawan. For the believers Sathya Sai Baba is the embodiment of the Almighty. He predicted that he will die in 2022 and eight years later he will be reborn in a village in Karnataka, Mandya district to a women called Kasturi.

Sathya Sai Baba believes in Nirguna (property less) and the Saguna (property) aspects of Brahman. According to him, Brahman is Nirguna in its essential nature and the Saguna aspect
is only a help for those who are spiritually immature to reach the *Nirguna Brahman*. Only the *Nirguna Brahman* is real. Satya Sai Baba believed that human beings are essentially of divine nature. Sin is ignorance of the true nature of one’s self. Salvation is the merger of *Atman* into *Brahman*.

Today Sathya Sai Baba has a large number of followers all over India and abroad. He has 2560 centres abroad. He runs 75 schools. He has large ashrams in Puttaparthi, Bangalore and Kodaikanal. He died on 24th April 2011.
Selected Religio Secular Movements

**Muslim League**

Muslim League was founded as a political party to protect the interest of Indian Muslims. This was done because Muslims found a threat to their interests as a minority in Hindu India. The All-India Muslim League was founded by Aga Khan and Nawab Waqar-ul-Mulk on December 31, 1906. This was founded as a political organization at the encouragement of British government. Three objectives were listed at the time of founding. They are:

(i) Promoting loyalty to the British government.
(ii) Protecting and advancing the political interest of the Indian Muslims.
(iii) Preventing feelings of hostility towards other communities.

The attitude of Muslims towards the Indian National Congress was unsympathetic. There were many reasons for that. First, they did not desire western education and culture. Second, their resentment against Congress is because of the coming of British, the Mughal Kingdoms fell down. But as the spirit of nationalism began to grow among Hindus the government became favourably disposed to the Muslims.

**Formation of Muslim League**

Formation of Muslim League, a political organization, was already started in late nineteenth century Bengal when some Muslims attempted to reverse a sharp downward trend toward decadence and oblivion in India by forming associations and educating their children in the English language. A number of educated Muslims, including Mohammad Ali Jinnah had already joined Congress, and
fifty Muslims participated in the annual session of the Congress in 1905. This action provided an immediate incentive for forming a separate Muslim League. A deputation of Muslims led by Aga Khan met the Viceroy, Lord Minto on 1st October 1906. They submitted the petition asking that in any future constitutional arrangements Muslims should receive representation commensurate with their members and that Muslims should be elected by Muslims alone. They requested separate electorates for the Muslims. This demand was conceded in the new Act – the Morley-Minto Reform of 1909. In this Act the size of the legislative councils increased. But the number of voters was very small. Because of the support of Muslims, the government established a policy of special British favour for loyal Muslims.

The issue of partition of Bengal was alive in this period and Indians were opposing the partition. But Muslim League supported partition of Bengal and opposed the boycott of British goods. In order to win the Muslims and bring them against the Congress, Lord Minto offered separate electorate for Muslims. The Muslim League, as their number increased, slowly impeded the nationalistic spirit. In 1913 it adopted its goal: self-government within the Empire. The British war against Turkey aroused the anti-British feelings among Muslims and it caused the co-operation of Muslims and the Congress for a time. In 1916 both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League had their annual session at Lucknow and issued the Lucknow Pact, in which the Congress agreed for separate electorates and both organizations framed a constitutional scheme on the basis of dominion status.

The Muslim League was mainly financed by annual grants from the Raja of Mahmudabad. Muslims of the professional classes who joined were often members of Congress as well. The Muslim League remained unenergetic for the following decade. In 1927 the total membership was 1,330. It participated in the All-Parties Conference held from 1927-28 and was prepared to give up separated electorates in return for Congress concessions in the Nehru Report of 1928. The role played by the British in defeating Turkey offended the religious and historical sentiment of Indian Muslims. This resulted in an anti-British attitude. As a result the Khilafat movement came into existence. Gandhi tried to make use of this opportunity to unite the Muslims and the Hindus, and there was an unprecedented fraternization between the Hindus and the Muslims. But this cooperation did not last long. There was no common programme to bring the two communities together. Due to the mob violence in Chari Chaura, the mass movements got suspended and this adversely affected the relationship of Muslims and Hindus. Turkey becomes a secular state and thus the Khilafat movement came to an end.

The Muslim League grew stronger and stronger. The former Khilafat leaders strengthened the League. The Congress tried to bring Muslim nationalists as a counterpoise to the League, but did not succeed. The partition of Bengal in 1905 opened a new chapter in the relations between the upper classes of the two communities. It was Lord Dufferin who started the government efforts to emphasize separatist feelings. Before 1930 no one heard of Pakistan. As government encouraged separatist feelings a ‘two-nation theory’ developed. In this effort the ruling Englishmen lent a helping hand.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who is regarded as the founder of Pakistan, was a Congress leader up to 1920. He was the disciple of Gokhale. He was a moderate Congress politician. He did not conceive of the idea of separate homeland for the Muslims till 1940. Jinnah came back to India after becoming a barrister in 1906 as a secular, liberal nationalist, a follower of Dadabhai Naoroji. Immediately after his return, he joined Congress and acted as Dadabhai’s secretary. He was an opponent of the Muslim League then being founded. Muhammad Iqbal the first president of the League later wrote that Jinnah was their toughest opponent in 1906 and that he came out in bitter hostility toward all that they had done and were trying to do.

Jinnah propagated the theme of national unity from 1906 onwards, in the meetings that he addressed, and he earned from Sarojini Naidu the title Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity. But eventually things turned upside down after a course of time.

The Two-Nation Theory

In 1930 Muhammad Iqbal, as president of the Muslim League called
for the creation of a Muslim India within the body politic of India in the northwestern provinces of the sub-continent. Iqbal urged Muhammad Ali Jinnah to take over the leadership of Muslim League. Jinnah took over as president and he revived the League. Jinnah aimed to make the Muslim League and himself the sole spokesman for all the Muslims of India. There was an all-party convention towards the end of 1928 to discuss and avoid the two-nation feelings but there was disagreement between Jinnah, who represented the Muslim league, and others. Jinnah then took the side of the anti-Congress Muslims. On 1\textsuperscript{st} January 1929 an All India Muslim Conference was held and it issued a manifesto to the Muslims. This formed the basis of the fourteen demands made by Jinnah in the same year.

In 1937 the Muslims desired to form coalition ministries in every provinces but the Congress refused to admit any one who did not agree with their ideology. This caused the widening of the gulf between the Congress and the League. Jinnah said that Muslims can expect neither justice nor fair play under Congress government. Jinnah was elected year after year the president of the League and the major part of the Muslim population joined the League. Jinnah began to rebuild the Muslim League as a mass party. Membership was open with low fees and appeals issued saying if you are a Muslim, come join the Muslim League. The Congress was portrayed as a Hindu party and accused of committing atrocities against Muslims. The League was enlarged, and its powers concentrated. It focused its attention on winning the Muslim leaders of Bengal and Punjab. The British, tried t take advantage of this. They found in Jinnah a strong person who can help them to have a divided political opposition.

Second World War broke out on 1\textsuperscript{st} September 1939. When the Congress ministries resigned in protest against Lord Linlithgow’s declaration of war against Germany without consulting them, the British turned to the Muslim League for co-operation. The Congress offered to co-operate if a provisional national government would be set up at the centre. The Viceroy refused and said that its authority is denied by large and powerful elements in India’s national life. He was referring to the Muslims. When Congress ministries resigned, the Muslim League celebrated a day of deliverance and thanksgiving.

Jinnah who was once favorably disposed to the Congress, and had once protested against the view that India was not one nation, declared in January 1940 that the Hindus and Muslims formed two separate nations. Three months later at its Lahore session in March 1940, the Muslim League passed a resolution referring to the Muslims as a nation and demanding, areas in which Muslims are numerically in a majority to be autonomous and sovereign. Newspapers reported this as the Pakistan Resolution. After that there was no reconciliation between the Congress and Muslim League. In 1943, Gandhi had a series of discussions with Jinnah, but no agreement could be reached. In 1945 Lord Wavell held an all-party conference at Simla, but it was a failure since the Congress and the Muslim League could not come to an agreement. Three-member commission of the British Cabinet came in 1946 to form a federal type of government for the whole of India, including the states, but the Muslim League was not agreed to this proposal. Further they proposed an interim national government. The Muslim League accepted it and reiterated that the attainment of the goal of a complete sovereign Pakistan still remained the unalterable objective of the Muslims in India.

Jinnah got a status almost equal to Mahatma Gandhi in the negotiations between 1942 and 1947 on the transfer of power from British to Indian hands. Election were held in 1946 to choose an interim legislature which would bridge the gap between British and independent Indian rule. This election was virtually a straightforward battle between Congress and Muslim League, with the League winning almost all the seats reserved for Muslims. The Muslim League won all the Muslim seats in the central Legislative Assembly, 75 out of 175 in Punjab, 126 out of 250 in Bengal, and 75% of the total Muslim vote as compared to the mere 4.4 percent gained in 1937.

The Muslim League accepted the cabinet mission’s proposal for three-tier grouping of provinces with a weak centre on 6\textsuperscript{th} June 1946. But after few weeks in July the League reiterated its goal for separate state and threatened direct action unless it was given direct parity with Congress. On 16th August on the direct Action day there was communal violence in Calcutta in which 4000 people were dead and 15000 injured. The Muslim League joined the interim
government in October 1946, but stayed out of the Constituent Assembly convened in 1947.

The British government had declared its intention of quitting India by June 1948 and appointed Lord Mountbatten, Viceroy of India for the transfer of authority from British to Indian hands. People all over India rejoiced except Muslim League. Once again they resorted to Direct Action and there were communal riots in North West India. By this stage Muslim League had no way of going back from the demand of partition. Thus Pakistan came into existence and Jinnah was chosen the first Governor General of Pakistan.

Muslim League ceased to exist as a national political party in India after independence and did not last long as ruling party in Pakistan. At present the Muslim League is recognized as a regional party in Kerala where it has occasionally participated in the coalition governments.

**Jamaat-E-Islami Hind**

The Jamaat-E-Islami Hind was founded by Sayyid Abdul Maududi in 1941. He came from a middle class Muslim family. His father was an advocate practising in Meerut before he shifted to Hyderabad. Maududi never attended an Islamic religious institution or any school or college. All his education was at home. Initially he was a believer in secular politics but later due to Hindu-Muslim riots he began to believe that Muslims and Hindus can never stay together as equals. He wrote “what was uppermost in my mind was to keep alive in the Muslims a sense of separate entity and prevent their absorption into non-Muslim community.”

Maududi advocated *Jihad* for the defence of Islam. The real objective was to remove any non-believer in Islamic religion from the community. He settled at Gurdaspur in Punjab and built a Mosque. This Mosque was later known as Darul Islam academy, a leading Islamic theological College in India. He founded the Jamaat-E-Islami which means the assembly of Muslims on 26th August 1941. The first assembly was held in Lahore in which the constitution of the Jamaat was approved.

The first constitution of Jamaat had eleven articles.

Article I: demanded from the members faith in one God and in Mohammad as His prophet.

Article II: set forth the establishment of *Hukumat-I-Illahaiya*.

The other articles laid down a code of conduct in social, economic and political sphere of a member’s life. One of the articles required a member to abstain from professions dealing in alcohol, dance, and music. Another article required the members to give up membership of a legislature which did not accept *Quran* and *Sunna* as a source of authority. In the first conference, Maududi was elected as the Amir of the Jamaat. But within 14 months he faced the first revolt on the eve of partition. There were 625 members of which 250 were in India and the rest were in Pakistan.

The Jamaat-I-Islami believes in the sovereignty of God. God must be recognized not only as the creator of universe but God must also be accepted politically sovereign. Therefore one of the aims of Jamaat is to establish an Islamic state in which Islamic laws and morality will be enforced. The Jamaat believes that Muslims should not associate with non-Muslims. Therefore Maududi believed that Nationalism in India is Hindu Nationalism and Muslims should not participate in the freedom struggle.

In 1946 Maududi suggested the creation of Pakistan as an Islamic state. The Jamaat is very much similar to the RSS. Along with the RSS it disapproves the secular character of India’s constitution. The formula proposed by Jamaat for communal harmony is that there should be a separate and strong organization for Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists. No one should try to steal the members of other community. Hindu-Muslim unity cannot be achieved unless the Hindus and Muslims are separately united under their strong communal organization. Every religious community should have a separate political organization. The Jamaat rejects secularism as a philosophy because as a philosophy secularism is West oriented.

The History of Jamaat shows that Jamaat is always keen on promoting a separate party for the Muslims. It takes advantage of the misery condition of the Muslim community and promotes communal hatred among Muslims. In the current atmosphere the Jamaat is
making efforts to carry on the process of communal polarization of the community.

**Sarvodaya and Bhoodan Movement**

The term sarvodaya is a combination of two words *sarva*, means all, and *udaya*, means awakening, i.e. rise, awakening of all. Gandhi understood it as the welfare of all in socio-political and economic sense. While Gandhi was in South Africa, he read *Unto this Last* based on Matthew 25: 30, written by John Ruskin, which has four essays on the first principles of political economy. Gandhi translated it into Gujarati and called it Sarvodaya, which means welfare of all. Gandhi had formed his *ashram* near Ahmedabad which was called Satyagraha ashram. The way of life he practiced there was known as Sarvodaya- the well being of all people.

Gandhi was impressed by three ideas:

(a) The good of the individual resides in the good of all.
(b) Every person has equal right to make his living by his profession and that all professions are of equal value.
(c) The truest and highest pattern of living is that of a farmer or a labourer.

**Sarvodaya: A Social Philosophy**

The goal of Sarvodaya, which is the total programme of uplift, would be impossible without a change of heart. The springboard of Sarvodaya is the spirit of self-sacrifice in man. The most responsive chord in the human heart is that of human sympathy. Life is an art of living in true love (*ahimsa*) of all by giving equal respect to all life. The highest value resides in persons; God is the sustainer of those values and eventually all soul (*atman*) will merge with supreme soul (*paramatma*) when all transitory differences will vanish. The highest truth of Sarvodaya is to see that there is no difference between humans.

Sarvodaya is not merely a theory of ethical justice but lays great emphasis on its quest for distributive social and economic justice. In accepting the concept that all forms of wealth belong to the society, Sarvodaya philosophy clearly indicates its radical and revolutionary character.

**Sarvodaya: A Stateless Society**

Sarvodaya is Gandhian concept of welfare of all. It stands for a classless society based on destruction of the classes. But it is not based on the destruction of the individuals who constitute the classes. It is a system of production that does not fail to make use of science and technology for creating an economy of abundance. In the process, it does not kill individual initiative or freedom. It does not create a psychology of ceaseless striving for more and more of material goods. It is a system of distribution that will ensure a reasonable minimum income for all. It aims at an equality not of an arithmetical kind will nevertheless ensure that all private property or talent beyond the minimum will be used as a trust for the public good and not for individual aggrandizement. It envisages a social order where all will work but there is no inequality, either in status or where change is the result of persuasion. Differences are resolved by discussion and conflicts by love and recognition of mutuality of interest. To this ideal Gandhi would add his spiritual insights, i.e. life spent in dedication and cultivation of the spirit.

Democracy guarantees only the welfare of the majority and not the welfare of all, which is not satisfactory for the one who believes in *ahimsa* that seeks the welfare of all. Sarvodaya is based on spiritual foundation, therefore, the means should be spiritual. *Satya, ahimsa, brahmacharya, dhairya, swaparitva* and other such values are foundational to Sarvodaya. ‘Untouchability’ should never be allowed. It is not right to eat without working for it. Encouraging the use of native goods and tolerance towards other religious traditions are important. The goal of Sarvodaya is building a society without exploitation based on spiritual and moral values.

**The basic doctrines of Sarvodaya can be mentioned as follows:**

(a) Unity in diversity
(b) Social equality
(c) Power only to those devoted to public work
(d) Consensus of opinion-statesmanship under Sarvodaya will consists in winning over the opponent and carrying out policies, which have the approval of all.
improvement of cattle, nature care, refugees and their problems and solutions, Bhoodan which was Vinoba Bhave’s contribution and Shanti Sena. These programs do not purport to be exhaustive but through these, Gandhiji explored the possibility of building up a power free, non-authoritarian and non-exploitative society.

Gandhiji believed that true India lives in villages. Hence it should be the panchayats, which should be empowered to carry out the programs of Sarvodaya. The ideal Sarvodaya has to be carried out through the values of self-restraint love and satyagraha. After Gandhiji’s death in 1948, the first conference of constructive workers was held. It formed Lok Sevaks or servants of people which are called Sarvodaya samaj. In 1949 an All India Association for the Welfare of All was established. The Harijan Sevak Sangh, Kasturba Memorial Trust, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi etc. contributed to the general welfare of poor and the needy to fulfil the ideas and goals set by Gandhi. Following the death of Gandhiji, Vinobha Bhave took over the leadership of Sarvodaya movement.

**Vinobha Bhave (1895-1982)**

Indian social and religious reformer Vinayak Narhari Bhave was closely associated with Gandhiji, who bestowed upon him the affectionate epithet Vinobha (brother Vino). He is generally acclaimed as the one who stepped in to Gandhiji’s shoes. As a young man he studied Sanskrit and Hindu religious traditions in Varanasi. It was in Varanasi that he read account of Gandhiji’s patriotic speeches. Attracted by Gandhiji’s ideas, Bhave joined him as his disciple in 1916 and soon became one of his close associates. In 1921 Gandhiji had Bhave move to a new ashram in Wardha in Maharashtra where he began experimenting with Gandhian ideas designed to implement self-rule for India. His main goal was to engage in village service for the benefit of the Indian masses. He became a skilful farmer, spinner, and weaver. Many of these activities were later incorporated into several of his plans for the moral and spiritual uplift of all humanity. Impressed with his political and religious dedication, his spiritual way of life and belief in non-violent methods of action, Gandhiji chose him in 1940 as the first satyagrahi (one who uses non-violent means to bring the opponent to the point of seeing the truth) in the protest against British rule.
After India’s independence, Bhave emerged from the shadow of his teacher as he began his pad yatra (journey on foot) to meet the people of India. The famous Bhoodan (land gift) movement was born on one of such journey in 1951. He sought the donation of land in order to distribute it among the landless poor. Later he designed a programme called gramdan to collect fifty million acres of land for the landless. It appealed for complete surrender of property rights in land in favour of the village community. For the rest of his life, he tirelessly worked for gram samaj (village self-rule) to free people from the rich and the powerful. He retreated to his ashram in Paunas, near Wardha, in 1970 and died there in 1982.

**Influences**

Bhave tirelessly worked for the promotion of Gandhian thought and his principles. He became the chief exponent of Sarvodaya movement and executed Gandhiji’s non-violent philosophy through a series of activities known as constructive works. These include programmes such as promotion of khadi (self spun cloth), nai talin (new education), Sri Sakti (empowerment of women), cow protection and santi sena. He created the Sarva Seva Sangha (society for the service of all) in order to carry out the work of Sarvodaya and served as its spiritual advisor. Bhave also launched a series of movements connected with land gift movement in order to tackle the problem of exploitation of the farmer by their landlords. Through these movements he sought to accomplish socio-economic reforms. For him they were part of a spiritual struggle to establish ramraj (kingdom of god) through gram swaraj. To this end, he adopted the Gandhian model of Sarvodaya. Bhave took the concept of giving (dan) and asked people to donate money (sampatti dan), labour (shram dan), intellect (buddhi dan) and life (jivan dan) for the work of Sarvodaya.

Bhave organised village councils gram sabhas to oversee the village development programme. His aim was not only to bring self-sufficiency to the villages, but also to establish a non-violent society based on religious ideals. Through the constructive programmes of Sarvodaya he sought to create a moral force in Indian society. The aim of his movement was not to promote the greatest good for the greatest numbers but the greatest good for all.

**The good of Sarvodaya philosophy can be summarised as follows:**

In the social realms it advocates a casteless society, in politics it shares a democratic vision of the power of all people, in economics it promotes the belief that small is beautiful and in religions it asks for tolerance for all faiths. Its final goal was to promote peace for all humankind.

**Hindu Maha Sabha**

Hindu Maha Sabha was a Hindu national political party. This movement challenged the Hindus to consolidate Hindu nation. This was the beginning of nationalism based on religious fundamentalism.

The year 1906 was a turning point in the history of freedom struggle of India. The Muslim leaders joined together in Dacca under the leadership of Nawab Waqar-ul-Mulk and they laid the foundation for an exclusive political party for the Muslims. This was named as the Indian Union Muslim League at Dacca on 30th December 1906. In reaction to the Muslims forming their own political party, the Hindus wanted to form their own political party. In this context an exclusive Hindu political party called as Hindu Maha Sabha was founded. Many Hindus felt that the Congress supported the Muslims in India. Hence, in reaction to the Congress supporting the formation of the Muslim League, in 1906 Lala Lajpat Rai formed the Sangatan Dharma Maha Sabha at Allahabad. Another Sabha was formed in 1907. These two organizations were the parent organization for the Hindu Maha Sabha. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and Maharaja Manindra Chandra Chandi met at Haridwar during Kumbh Mela and founded the Hindu Maha Sabha in 1915. The aim of this organization was to protect and promote Hindu culture and Hindu civilization for the advancement of Hindu Rastra.

A ten point manifesto was accepted for promoting Hindu interest. Important were the promotion of physique and martial arts among Hindus and reclaiming all those who had left the Hindu fold. The Maha Sabha adopted Suddhi and the Sangatan activities of Arya Samaj. From 1926 onwards the Maha Sabha gained considerable growth in north India and by 1940 it became a major movement
Modern Religious and Secular Movements

Hindu Maha Sabha had four important goals.

Hindu Sangatan
Hindu Raj
Shuddhi of Muslims
Conquest and Shuddhi of Afghanistan and other frontier countries of India.

The programme of Shuddhi was adopted by Hindu Maha Sabha because it feared the decline of membership of Hindus in India and the large scale conversions of Hindus to Christianity and Islam. Savarkar challenged the Hindus to Hinduize politics and militarize the Hindu religion. Aggressive militancy was another feature of Hindu Maha Sabha. The doctrine of non-violence was vehemently opposed by Hindu Maha Sabha. Hindu Maha Sabha was the national representative body of Hindu religion. It aimed at all round regeneration of the Hindu people. It wanted to model India to the past glories of Hindu nation which existed five thousand years back. Hindu Maha Sabha also argued for a common language. It also demanded the teaching and use of Sanskrit all over India. However, Hindi being the elder daughter of Sanskrit in which the Hindu scripture were written could be used all over India. Hindu Maha Sabha was influenced by the Nazi Party of Germany. It was a fundamentalist organization. Politics was linked with religion. It encouraged people to fight for a glorious future on the basis of the past and Hindutva was its guiding principle.

Rashtrya Swayamsevak Sangh: RSS

RSS is the only organization of the Sangh Parivar which has involved itself in every sphere of activity. The Vidya Bharatya started by RSS is the largest educational organization in the non-governmental sector in India, which has 13,000 educational institutes including 75,000 teachers and over seventeen lakh students. The RSS has organizations which addresses tribal (Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram), literature (Akhila Bharatiya Sahitya Parisad) and languages (Sanskrit Bharati). The RSS has also started organization for slum dwellers called Seva Bharati, for consumers it is called Akhila Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat. It has also started organization for scientists called Vigyan Bharati, it has started organization for religion and among the fundamentalist Hindus. It became the Hindu counterpart to the Muslim League in opposition to the secular nationalism of the Congress.

Veer Savarkar joined this movement in 1937. The Hindu Maha Sabha became a prominent organization under the leadership of Veer Savarkar (1883-1966). His original name was Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. He was known as Veer Savarkar. He was a Maharastrian Chitpavan Brahmin. He was the greatest leader of Hindu Maha Sabha and served as its President for seven consecutive years. The ideology and philosophy laid down by Savarkar is called Hindu Sangatan and his followers are called Savarkarism. He was a brilliant thinker with a background of western education. He resented the missionaries and had an open hatred towards Muslims. He aimed at the regeneration and consolidation of Hindus. If they wanted to attain prosperity they must remain as Hindus. An important point which highlighted Savarkar’s ideology was Hindu notion i.e. Hindutva (Hinduness). His most important book was Hindutva: Who is a Hindu. Savarkar’s idea of Hindutva distinguished Hindu notion from orthodox Hindu religion which accepted the authority of the Vedas and his ideas of Hindutva separated the followers of Indian religion from non-Indian religions. Hindutva for him was a comprehensive term which referred not only to the religious aspect of Hindus but it also included the cultural, social, and linguistic aspect.

The cardinal principle of Hindu Maha Sabha was the unity of Indians as single race, single culture and single religion. It advocated the establishment of ‘Hindu Raj’ in India according to Hindu idea of politics and economy. It demanded that India should be declared as a Hindu state. Savarkar argued that Muslims and Christians were foreigners in India and India was the land only for the Hindus. The Muslims were always pictured as enemies of Hindus. Hence, he always stood for the elimination of Christians and Muslims from India. He also argued that Hindus should use violence against Muslims in order to suppress them.

The ideology of Hindu Mahasabha put forth by Savarkar was known as Sangatan or Hindu nationalism. Sangatan was otherwise known as Hindu unity.
converting people called Vivekananda Kendra, Vishva Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal. It has also started organizations for students which is called ABVP (Akhil Bhartya Vidyarthi Parishad). It has also started organization for trade unions called Akhila Bharatya Mazdoor Sangh. These are the few examples of the various organizations started by RSS. This gives us an example of how large and prominent is RSS.

RSS was founded by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar on 27th Sept 1925 in Nagpur. RSS has more than 45,000 branches which are called as Shaks all over India and abroad. It covers all sections of society such as students, teachers, farmers, employers, industrialists, intellectuals, and even Sadhus. Hedgewar was an Andhra Brahmin who had settled in Maharashtra. He was a close friend of Savarkar, the leader of Hindu Maha Sabha. Hedgewar was a member of Hindu Maha Sabha until 1929. He argued for the cultural revival of Hindus. He asserted that the main reason for India’s decline was because Hindu society was divided and fragmented. Hence he wanted a corporate life for Hindus. What was important was to have a religious and social regeneration of Hindus. This can only be possible when there is a revival and purification of Hindu culture. Such revival can only be brought by the Swayam Sevaks, i.e. the volunteers of RSS. Hedgewar founded the RSS in order to arouse and organize the Hindus on the basis of pride in their culture. RSS is a revivalist organization based on strict discipline. The Head of the organization is the spiritual head who is also called as Sarsanga Chalak. He is entitled to highest obedience and respect. The Sarsanga Chalak is empowered to appoint his successor. The successor is not democratically elected. Until his death Hedgewer was the Sarsanga chalak and he appointed Golwalkar as his successor. Golwalkar was called as Guruji by the RSS volunteers.

In a small booklet published in 1939 entitled We or our Nation Defined Golwalkar defined the ideology of RSS. He adopted the definition of Hindu Nation, similar to the one adopted by Savarkar. For Golwalkar, non-Hindu people in India must adopt Hindu culture and language. They must learn to respect Hindu religion and also cultivate a positive attitude of love and devotion towards Hindu religion. They must cease to be foreigners and must claim no privileges or any preferential treatments or even citizen rights. Golwalkar wanted the merger of the minorities in India within the Hindu nation. He did not have any regard for Muslims and Christians. He also had no faith in secularism as he believed that it is based on a misconception of religion. Golwalkar did not believe in the separation of religion and politics. In 1948, the government of India banned RSS because one of its volunteer Nathuram Godse has assassinated Mahatma Gandhi.

The RSS along with V.H.P., Bajrang Dal and BJP have the same idea of Hindu Rashtra. According to Hedgewer, Hindus only can serve India and they alone can save Hindu culture. Therefore Hindu youths have to be organized as volunteers to save Hindu culture and religion from non-Hindus. He argued that Muslims and Christians in India have made the Hindus deprived of leadership. Therefore, according to RSS, Hindu culture has to be protected and safeguarded. According to Hedgewer, the founder of RSS, what is needed is not a political party for Hindus but communal discipline and revival of Hinduism. Under the leadership of Golwalkar the RSS started its branches all over India.

RSS claims to be cultural organization and denies being a religious organization. But Hindu saints and monks are the active members of RSS. They want Hinduism as the major religion in India to control and rule over the minorities especially the Christians and Muslims. It argues that since the Muslims have already got a separate country they should shift to Pakistan if not then they should accept India as a Hindu nation and Hindus as its national community.

Creating fear and insecurity among Hindus is another tactic adopted by RSS. It brings a feeling of hatred among Hindus towards the religious minorities in India. It claims to be the saviour of Hindu community and the only as the representative of Hindu community in the world. Shivaji, a 17th century Maharashtrian who lead a successful revolt against the Mughal empire is presented as an ideal hero in RSS against the Muslims. The main goal of the RSS is to inject feeling of communal hatred among Hindus and to bring back the glorious Hindu culture which existed during the Vedic period.

RSS accepts Hindutva ideology of Savarkar and aims at Hindu
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Bharatya culture should be revived with such adjustments as necessary to make our country modern and progressive. Jan Sangh gained political strength compared to other communal parties. It was the fundamental tenet of Jan Sangh that education should be co-ordinated to traditional national culture and values of life. The Jan Sangh was pro-Hindi and anti-English. It also argued that Sanskrit should be made compulsory for all Indians. It also stood for a national economic policy which was different from the socialist and capitalist system. In 1977, Jan Sangh merged with other party to form the Janata party. In 1979, Janata party broke up and the Jan Sangh remerged in the form of Bharatya Janta Party.

Bharatya Janta Party

The Bharatya Janta Party claims to return back India to Bharatya Sanskriti (culture) and Bharatya Maryada (tradition). It stands for complete Indianization. It claims to make the cherished goal of Hindu Rastra a possibility. 1947 not only marked the independence of India but also the origin of Pakistan. This divided the nation India on the basis of religious communities. After independence the ruling Congress party was blamed by the Hindu fundamentalist groups for dividing the country. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was a prominent Hindu fundamentalist organization which was arguing for a separate Hindu nation. But a black mark was left on RSS because one of its member Nathuram Godse assassinated Mahatma Gandhi. The government imposed a ban on RSS. To come out of the ban RSS had to fight a great deal of legal battle with the government. These struggles with the government caused the RSS leadership to think about a political representation. It wanted to enter in the political arena and thus put pressure on the secular government for a Hindu Rastra. The Bharatya Jan Sangh was formed in October 1951 by Shyama Prasad Mukherji. This was the beginning of the RSS involvement in Indian politics. The Jan Sangh merged with Janta Party. But due to inner conflicts the Janata Government fell in 1979 and on 5th April 1980 Jan Sangh was revived with a new name Bharatya Janta party (BJP). Atal Bihari Vajpayee became the founding President of the new party. On 24th April 1980 the election commission recognized BJP as a national party with lotus as its symbol. In other words, the Bharatya Jan Sangh

revival and political assertion of Hindus. RSS hopes that in future Hindus will rule the whole world and Brahmams will bring back the glorious Vedic culture period back in India. Therefore Hinduism will become the norm for world government. The RSS argues for an exclusive nation and culture for Indians. India is only for Hindus and all others are outsiders, those who belong to another religion and live in India must adopt Hindu culture and language. They must become culturally and linguistically one with Hindu race. Thus the minority communities should accept Indian culture. Another argument of RSS is that Hindi should be the national language of the entire nation. The anti Muslim attitude of RSS was seen in the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992.

In 1931 RSS helped Shyama Prasad Mukherji to start the Bharatya Jana Sangh which later gave way to BJP. Hence while RSS is a cultural organization, BJP is a political party and VHP is social and religious organization. RSS argues that Hindus must transcend their divisions of caste, clan, region and language and they must form a mighty Hindu nation. Secondly in order to have a Hindu nation, non-Hindus particularly Muslims and Christians must adopt Hindu culture. Thus the RSS incorporates religious, cultural and political fundamentalism under one umbrella.

Jan Sangh

In 1951, Dr. Shyam Prakash Mukherji who had left the Hindu Maha Sabha, founded the Bharatya Jan Sangh. It was a Hindu political party. Originally the Jan Sangh consisted only of conservative leaders of the RSS scattered in North India and the personal followers of Dr. Mukherji in Bengal. RSS had a controlling voice in the formulation of the policies of Jan Sangh. The decline of Hindu Maha Sabha happened simultaneously with the growth of Jan Sangh. In the first general election in 1952, the Hindu Maha Sabha won four seats in the India Parliament and Jan Sangh won only three seats. But in the next general election Jan Sangh won four seats while the Hindu Maha Sabha secured non. It was re-organized as a national party in 1957.

In 1967 elections, the Jan Sangh obtained 35 seats and became a prominent party. Jan Sangh believed in the revival of Bharatya culture and the revival of Bharatya nationalism. It emphasized that Bharatya culture should be revived with such adjustments as necessary to make our country modern and progressive. Jan Sangh gained political strength compared to other communal parties. It was the fundamental tenet of Jan Sangh that education should be co-ordinated to traditional national culture and values of life. The Jan Sangh was pro-Hindi and anti-English. It also argued that Sanskrit should be made compulsory for all Indians. It also stood for a national economic policy which was different from the socialist and capitalist system. In 1977, Jan Sangh merged with other party to form the Janata party. In 1979, Janata party broke up and the Jan Sangh remerged in the form of Bharatya Janta Party.

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re-incarnated as BJP. BJP emerged in Indian politics as a Hindu national political party. In its first national convention in Bombay five principles were adopted:

- Nationalism and national integration
- Democracy
- Positive secularism
- Gandhian socialism
- Value based politics.

BJP emerged with new formulation of secularism against Nehruvian secularism which was a policy of equal treatment of all religions. It argued that if a country be secular, the country’s political system should not reject or stand above religion but country’s political system should adopt religious ideals. It argued that secularism should have its foundation on Indian cultural heritage which according to them was Hindutva. According to them, Hindutva is not anti-secular and the term Hinduism should not be taken in a religious sense but rather it refers to the people of Hindustan. BJP reinterpreted the term Hindu in terms of geographical nationalism and has nothing to do with Hindu religion. It talks about the equality of all religions under the superiority of Hinduism. Therefore all other religions are foreign. The BJP follow the Sangh Parivar ideas of dharma that is any one who is a non-Hindu is a betrayer and s/he is an outsider. BJP follows cultural nationalism as its philosophy. It depends upon Hindutva ideology and the doctrine of Hindu Rastra. The four important basis of Hindu Rastra are

- Awakening of all people who form the basis of this nation
- Developing their physical and moral strength
- Unity based on common spiritual ideas
- A pride in the ancient glory and greatness of Bharat.

According to BJP India is a Hindu Rastra because India is culturally a Hindu nation. Lal Krishna Advani provided the cultural roots to Hindutva ideology. He linked Hindutva with Indian nationalism and he called it cultural nationalism. The present day BJP workers including the RSS workers have understood Hindu Rastra as the construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya. BJP took up the issue of construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya as a political agenda to come to power. The Babri Majid issue was taken up by BJP as the most crucial issue faced by the Hindus. The BJP in its national executive meeting held at Palampur in June 1989, decided to be directly involved in this dispute. It argued that the site where Babri Masjid is located should be handed over to Hindus to construct the Temple. Hence the construction of Ram temple by destroying the Babri Masjid became the main agenda of BJP. L.K. Advani took up the leadership of Ayodhya movement and announced a ten thousand kilometer Rath yathra from Somnath to Ayodhya starting on 25th September and ending on 30th October 1990. The main goal was to mobilize large number of Hindus on religious ground. Rath Yathra was a call to all Hindus to defend their religion and place of worship from Muslims. Building the Mandir became the main issue of BJP in its Lok Sabha election. It promised the Hindus that it would construct a Ram Temple at Ayodhya, if it comes to power. On 6th December 1992 the BJP, VHP and the RSS leaders violated the Supreme Court order and demolished the Babri Masjid. Another important goal of BJP was to remove the article 370 of the constitution and to replace minority commission with Human rights commission and the implementation of uniform civil court. Hindutva is still the major agenda of BJP. Some of its important leaders like A.B. Vajpayee, L.K. Advani, M.M. Joshi, Keshubhai Patel are all trained by the RSS. The BJP government in Gujarat is a very good example of Hindu fundamentalism. The Muslims and Christians in Gujarat are persecuted and are treated as a threat to Hinduism. BJP wants all Indians to understand the glorious past of Hindu Rastra and to fight for a Hindu nation. BJP though a political party fulfils the characteristics of a fundamentalist movement. BJP could be pictured as a political party with a religious fundamentalist ideology as its basic philosophy.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad is a Pan Hindu organization which attempts to bring all Hindu sects and groups under one banner. Its main aim is to raise funds for the various Hindu organization from Hindus settled abroad. This movement was conceptualized by the RSS leadership in co-operation with Swami Chinmayananda as a
non-political organization in which people of all caste and parties could work together for a Hindu nation. One major objective of VHP is to form a national and international unity among the Hindus. VHP was founded on 29th August 1964 in Bombay. The objective of VHP is to consolidate and strengthen Hindu society, to protect and spread Hindu values, to make Hindu values relevant in the contemporary society and to strengthen the Hindus settled abroad. Another important objective of VHP is to save Hindus from the attacks of other religions such as Christianity and Islam, to resist conversion of Hindus to other religions and to protect and promote Hindu religion. S.S. Apte, the founding general secretary of the VHP believed that Hindus in India and abroad need an awakening in their essential unity and Hindus all over the world must build up a revolutionary and aggressive Hindu organization to ensure Hindu solidarity. VHP is the nearest equivalent to a global Hindu church and it has brought together various Hindu ascetic orders and religious leaders under the banner of Hindu nationalism. Special emphasis is placed on the work among the backward class and dalits to educate and absorb them into Hinduism. A large number of sadhus and sanyasis are the members of VHP. In any area where there are more than 2000 Hindus, VHP starts its branch. The RSS provides pracharaks but the VHP trains its own full time leadership. The VHP also constituted a Dharma Sansad which is a synod of all groups within Hinduism. The function of Dharma Sansad is to provide a religious order for the Hindu society, to develop the shrines and temples into powerful cultural centres and to help the re-conversion of Hindus who had converted to other religions in north India. The VHP has build a strong base by adopting the programme of the former Hindu movements like Arya Samaj and Hindu Maha Sabha and by provoking cow protection, use of Hindi language and by countering the conversion activities of Muslim and Christian missionaries. VHP demands the restoration of Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi temples; the three disputed place of worship back to the Hindus. It shows its fundamentalist nature by demolishing the place of worship Muslims and Christians and by declaring Christians and Muslims as the eternal enemies of Hinduism. It argues that Hindu interest is the national interest. It further argues that Ram Janam Boomi Temple must be handed over to the Ram Janam Boomi Nyas/ a committee which is appointed by VHP. It further argues that all the foreign contribution to various N.G.O must by stopped as the N.G.O use the money for the conversion of Hindus to other religions. One of its demands is to have a uniform civil code and the privileges given to minorities should be also be extended to Hindus. It further argues that Sanskrit and teaching of Bhartya culture and dharma must be made compulsory in all educational institutions.

Prior to 1980, VHP concentrated mainly on setting up schools, clinics and temples and with the work of conversion among the tribals and backward class community. The aim of this work was to stop non-Hindus like Muslims and Christian influence on Hinduism. VHP feels that Muslim immigration and population growth threatened the survival of the Hindus. They presented a Hindu agenda before the political party in order to save Bharat and Hindu nation. According to this Hindu agenda of VHP, Hindu interest is of national interest. The Ram Janam Boomi should be handed over to the Hindus and the Ram Mandir should be built as soon as possible. The other agenda of VHP is that the History of India should be re-written and a new syllabus should be introduced. Singing of Vande Matram must be made compulsory in all educational institutions. Pooja, archana and other religious activities must be exempted from income tax, and government should start a separate fund for the maintenance of Hindu Mutts and Swamis. The government should discourage drinking of alcohol and non-vegetarianism, all the NRI’s should be treated as Bhartya citizens, all the old glorious names of places should be restored, prominent Hindu festivals should be declared as national holidays.

VHP is a prominent Hindu fundamentalist organization which along with BJP, RSS and other Hindu organization is attempting to bring Hindutva ideology into Indian society. It is based on a policy of communal hatred and bringing in a division in the Indian society between the majority Hindus and the minority Christians and Muslims.

Shiv Sena

Shiv Sena was founded by Bal Thackeray on 19th June 1966 in Mumbai. The main aim of this organization is to safeguard the
welfare of the people of Maharashtra. Shiv Sena means Shiva’s army that is Chatrapati Shivaji’s army. Shivaji was an anti-Mughal army commander. The main agenda of Shiv Sena is arousing communal hatred against Muslims. Maharashtra is not a land of the weak but it is the land of Tigers. Hence the roaring tiger was chosen as the symbol of Shiv Sena. Shiv Sena played a prominent role in the fourth general election held in March 1967. It launched a violent campaign against non-Maharashtrians whom it describes as outsiders and appealed to vote for the “sons of the soil.” Shiv Sena’s main aim is to inculcate a feeling of ethnicity among the Maharashtrians. Its main slogan is Maharashtra is for Maharashtrians. Shiv Sena takes the career of Shivaji as its symbol as he was the first person to revolt against Muslim rule in India. Another important aim is to force the state and central government to give preference to Maharashtrians in employment and housing in Bombay. Its main target was south Indians who were accused of getting more jobs and properties in Maharashtra than the Maharashtrians. The members of Shiv Sena are called as Saniks. Each Sainik has to take an oath which constitutes the important objectives of Shiv Sena.

The following are the important objectives of Shiv Sena

(a) The Marathi people should help each other and the Marathi people whom they call as Marathi Manoos should abound in prosperity.

(b) Maharashtrians should not sell their property to outsiders and if any local person is doing so then the nearest shakha/office of Shiv Sena should be informed of it.

(c) As far as possible Marathi shopkeepers should buy their goods from Marathi wholesale dealers or traders.

(d) Maharashtrians who have their own establishment should employ only Maharashtrians in their organization.

(e) Young Marathi speaking boys should develop excellent communication skills in English language.

(f) Celebrate Marathi festivals and functions with Marathi brothers and sisters.

(g) Boycott all the udipi hotels and not to buy anything from the shops of non-Maharashtrians.

Initially Shiv Sena was not a political movement but later on they realized that the objectives of their movement cannot be attained unless they form into a political organization. The members of Shiv Sena use violent means in order to fulfil their objectives. They ransack offices, use physical force against ‘lunghi wallahs’ and ‘madrasis’ whom they refer for the south Indians. They also physically attack the ‘Bhaiyyas’ whom they refer for the north Indians especially the Bihari community are attacked. In 1984 Shiv Sena adopted the Hindutva ideology. Addressing a massive rally at Shivaji Park on 22nd January 1984 Thackeray announced the creation of Hindu Mahasangh. He explained his three point programme of Hindutva.

(a) Muslims should like Hindus, follow the one marriage rule and adopt family planning.

(b) Muslims should support the ban on cow slaughter.

(c) Muslims should accept India as Hindu religion.

Those Muslims who were willing to accept this should only stay in India. Bal Thackeray and Shiv Sena played an important role in communal riots in Maharashtra. According to Shiv Sena, Bal Thackeray is taken as an Hindu Hridaya Samrat (Emperor of the Hindu heart), and Senapati (commander) of Shiv Sena. Through his speech and provocative remarks, Bal Thackeray promotes enmity between different groups on grounds of religion and language. Through the medium of communal hatred Shiv Sena aims to get political power in Maharashtra.
Religious movements are an important part of Indian society and spirituality. They play an important role in revitalizing religious experience as well as providing an alternate vision of socio-religious equality. They are an integral part of modern religion and transcend all the barriers of caste, color, race, sex, religion, nationality and even geographical boundaries. Many of the religious movements in India appear to arise at the periphery of society. They have a large number of adherents who are from all walks of life across the globe. Three such popular religious movements emerged in north India and have impacted the socio-religious and political sphere of north India.

The 19th century was a period of new awakening among several religious communities in India. This new awakening brought a great challenge and revival in faith and practice of various religious traditions. They also affected the socio-cultural, education and political realm of our country.

In the present scenario, various religious movements came up in north India to address the socio-religious needs of the people. With the rise of these movements, a revival came up in the society. We shall study three such religious movements namely, Sant Ravi Das Sabha, Sant Nirankari Mission and Divya Yog Mandir Trust by Baba Ramdev.

These religious movements came up as a challenge to the traditional religion so as to fulfill people’s need for religiosity and social equality. Even though some of these movements remained within their respective faiths, they were a challenge to its orthodoxy and rigidity.

**Religious Movements: An Introduction**

Religious movements are an important part of our society and spirituality. They are not limited to any geographical boundary or racial rigidities. Their mission and activities appeal to all people globally. The popular religious movements that emerged in India are an integral part of modern religion whether Hinduism or Sikhism and it transcends the barriers of caste, color, race, sex, religion and nationality.

**Definition of Religious Movement**

A movement whether it is regarded as social or religious is a coherent shift in the direction of an alternative framework of understanding as undertaken by a social group. The alternative framework which these movements present, challenge the normative order in two quite different ways: either reversing it or replacing it. Some of the religious movements in India have attempted to thwart the prevailing Hindu or Sikh tradition as anti-structural reversals of ordinary social order. They have upended social roles and proclaimed the superiority of the lower castes.

Most of the movements move in a counter-structural direction by boldly proclaiming their own alternative conceptions of the social whole. But in both of these movements, there is a longing to participate in the mainstream society and tradition. This longing had led the movements to play a special role within society- to mediate between the marginal elements and the social core.

Religious movements are not created by a few leaders but rather by stirrings within the social order, upheavals of new awareness and aspiration. Many of the movements in India appear to arise at the periphery of society, but whether separatist or integrative, anti-structural or counter-structural, they interact with the mainstream and bring to the tradition, at various stages of its growth, the vitality of new ideas.
ferment which has had a far-reaching impact upon the social, cultural and religious life of the people. This spiritual ferment has manifested itself in the form of innumerable ‘religious movements.’ Many of the religious movements arise within a context of serious changes in economic and social conditions; that is a situation of socio-economic dislocation and change. In part religious movements are protest against these changes and against the social and economic injustices that accompany them. Further they also embody attempts to come to terms with these changes, to create new value systems in which they can be accommodated and their negative, exploitative impact made bearable.

In each movement, the relative strength and specific characteristics of the elements of social protest and social accommodation will be different. They also tend to change as the movements progress.

In religious movements, social discontent and the striving towards change are always present, though they take different forms and directions. Therefore Lorenzen points out that the essential character of any movement basically depends on the values and aims it expounds and the effectiveness of the means it uses to achieve them. Thus each movement must be considered on its own merits and in its own material and ideological context.

A number of scholars, especially anthropologists and sociologists have noted, that the element of overt social dissidence in religious movements soon tends to get dissipated via a process that Max Weber called the ‘institutionalization of charisma’ and Ernst Troeltsch’s ‘the transition from sect to church.’ Turner is right in pointing out that what began as a ‘movement’ settles down and becomes recognized as a new religion.

In India, this process is often identified as the transition from cult or sect to caste. In most of the movements in India one can notice an underlying link between religious interests and caste interests.

Role of Religion per se in Religious Movements

Religion can play a positive role in social change- but in a qualified way. Radical religion has been effective in helping the dalits to come to term with cultural as well as economic and political aspects of their oppression. It has helped them to imagine what a new society might be.

In India, demands for and responses to social change typically take religious forms. Religious language can be a powerful way of expressing social grievances and religious institutions can become formidable conduits of social change.

When we study the religious movements initiated by the lower caste people in India, we see that the older panthik (panth-fellowship of those who revere a lineage of spiritual authority) were used as a basis for creating a quamik form (a large religious community) in which less agreeable dharmic (customs and codes of social and spiritual behavior such as those entailed by caste or ritual) customs of religion were discarded and replaced. These movements have ‘served as a pressure valve’ for the Hindu society, but do not ultimately disturb them.

Some argue that religious movements play a functional role for Hindu society as they provide an alternative to Hinduism’s dharmik social structure.

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Some argue that religious movements play a functional role for Hindu society as they provide an alternative to Hinduism’s dharmik social structure. Since the ‘Untouchables’ are at the lower spectrum of Hindu social and religious system, they have had every reason to wish for an alternative social structure and a reformulation of socio-religious ideas. Hence we see that the ‘Untouchables’ have joined with the panthik movements by following bhakti movements or left Hinduism all together by converting to religions such as Islam and Christianity.

If one wanted to create new societies, then they would also have to create new forms of religion as well. Hence movements achieved their power since they projected themselves as religious movements.

Religion and Social Vision

The interaction between religion and social vision has been a major theme in most of the socio-religious movements in north India. The lower castes perceived their oppression as stemming from a religious concept, untouchability, as much as from political circumstances. As a result they see freedom from oppression not only as liberation from old social alignments, but as a release from old religious ideas as well.
The lower castes perceived the fundamental divisions in society as religious. Thus changes in the social order will also have to have a religious character. Hence we see new religious movements led by the lower castes. In most of these movements, social ambitions are couched in religious language. Furthermore, any shift in religious alignments pose serious threats to the old bases of social power.

The lower caste movements adopt legendary heroes primarily in order to symbolize their separate religious identities, but in fact such figures also face in the direction of the high tradition.25

Most of the movement’s Sants26 are all great figures in the Great Tradition. Juergensmeyer argues that in identifying with these Sants and holding them up for emulation, the lower castes have attempted to elevate their caste status in the eyes of themselves, peers and the wider society.27

One way of looking at the lower caste’s use of the Sant figures is to see it as Sanskritization, a term M.N. Srinivas coined to describe “the process by which a ‘low’ Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, ‘twice born’ caste.”28 There is certainly an extent to which this concept applies, although in the case of Sant Ravi Das Sabha, it could be called Sikhization, because of the role Ravi Das parallels that of the Sikh gurus. But one should note that the ‘Untouchables’ did not succeed in becoming like upper caste Hindus and Sikhs although their use of the linkage figures brought them closer to some aspects of the religious tradition of the mainstream.

The new movements were able to provide a linkage between the religion of the village and the Great Tradition. But in supplying these linkages, the leaders of these movements had little intention that their followers be led through them into Hinduism. Thus the leaders of these movements prepared their followers culturally for access to a wider society and thus made a significant contribution towards societal integration. They offered new channels for incorporating the lower castes into a social whole.29

Context for the Emergence of Religious Movements in India

Religious movements in India emerged mainly as a reaction against the decadence of religions. It also emerged as a reaction against the caste system. The traditional Indian society is dominated by the upper castes, particularly the Brahmans. Thus the religious movements emerged as an emancipatory religion for the oppressed groups. Mere initiation became the criteria and not the caste identity in order to be a part of a religious movement.

There are various issues faced by the people of north India which facilitated the emergence of these movements. Fundamentalism, communalism and terrorism are some important ones. In north India, Hindu-Muslim communal clashes are a common feature. The other important issue faced by the people in north India is poverty and economic globalization.

A majority of the people in north India are the poor people who live in rural areas, especially the agricultural workers, small and marginal peasants and rural artisans. In the urban areas most of the poor are found in the unorganized sector.

We shall study the teachings and activities of three Popular Religious Movements in north India namely, Sant Ravi Das Sabha, Sant Nirankari Mission and Divya Yog Mandir Trust.

Sant Ravi Das Sabha

The members of the Sant Ravi Das Sabha known as Ravi Dasis have emerged as a strong and autonomous caste-religious community as a result of dalit identity movements in Punjab over the last eight decades.30

Though the Ravi Dasi dalits of Punjab treat the Sikh Holy Scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib with reverence and their temples are also often called Gurudwaras, a majority of them do not identify themselves with the Sikh religion.31 Their reverence to the Guru Granth Sahib is mainly due to the fact that it contains the hymns of Guru Ravi Das, their religious leader. Over the years the Ravi Dasis have evolved their own symbols and practices of worship, which separates them from the Sikhs of Punjab.32 According to Jodhka, though caste played a very important role in the evolution of the Sant Ravi Das Sabha, the Ravi Dasis do not see their faith as being in opposition to contemporary Sikhism.33
Life and Work of Sant Ravi Das
Sant Ravi Das was born in 1450 C.E in Benares in an ‘untouchable’ caste of Chamars and died in 1520. He traveled extensively and had religious dialogues with saint poets in different parts of north India. He was frequently challenged by the local Brahmins who complained about him to the local rulers. He is believed to have given most of his writings to Guru Nanak, which eventually became part of the Sikh Holy Scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib. It is perhaps this connection with Guru Nanak and Sikhism that explains the emergence of major centers of Ravi Das in Punjab and not in Uttar Pradesh, where he was born.

The historians of Indian religions club Ravi Das with the bhakti movement. He built his own utopia, a vision of an alternative society, which he articulated in his hymn, ‘Begumpura,’ a city without sorrows. Gail Omvedt comments that “Sant Ravi Das was the first to formulate an Indian version of utopia in his ‘Begumpura.’ Begumpura, the ‘city without sorrow’, is a casteless, classless society; a modern society as contrasted with Gandhi’s village utopia of Ram Rajya.”

Though he was born in a dalit family, Ravi Das became part of the larger movement of protest against the Brahmanical control over the social and religious life of the people and was accepted as a leader. His message has reached the Punjabi dalits primarily through the Sikh Holy Scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib. Ravi Das vehemently opposed institutionalized inequality, varna system and practice of untouchability. Like other saint-poets, his baanis have provided the foundation for socio-religious equality before God. He did not believe in Varnasrama Dharma and condemned caste division. He rejected the practice of celibacy, asceticism, fast, pilgrimages and formal religious exercises.

The History of Sant Ravi Das Sabha
More than one-third of Punjab’s population has been treated as outcaste by the historically dominant sections of the Punjabi society. After the establishment of the colonial rule in Punjab in the middle of the 19th century, new opportunities to the children of Punjabi farmers were opened up. This led to social mobility for a section of the local dalits particularly the Chamars who worked with leather. The establishment of cantonment by the British army led to a raised demand for leather goods especially boots and shoes for the British army. Some of the members of the Cham community were quick to exploit this opportunity and shifted their base to the towns. They also then moved out to other parts of the country and abroad, especially to the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Thus the economic prosperity that some of the members of the Cham community experienced prepared the grounds for the political mobilization of the dalits in the region.

It was in this context that the Ad Dharm movement, the predecessor of Sant Ravi Das Sabha emerged in Punjab in the 1920s. This movement is the political extension of the Sant Ravi Das Sabha. The leader of the Ad Dharm movement was Mangoo Ram. He was the son of an enterprising Cham of village Mangowal of the Hoshiarpur district of Doaba sub-region of Punjab. His family had to bear the stigma of untouchability and social exclusion. However his father was very enterprising and had been able to make some money through leather trade. Mangoo Ram’s father was able to mobilize money and send Mangoo to the US for better paying work. He came back from Punjab in 1925 and on returning home, set up a school for lower caste children with the help of Arya Samaj. But soon he distanced himself from the Samaj and joined hands with other members of his community who were trying to initiate an autonomous identity movement among the local dalits.

The Ad Dharm saw itself as a religious movement. Its leaders advocated that the ‘untouchables’ were a separate qaum, a distinct religious community similar to the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs and should be treated as such by the rulers. They argued that Ad Dharm has always been the religion of the dalits and that the qaum had existed from time immemorial. Despite stiff opposition from the local Hindu leadership, the colonial Census of 1931 listed the Ad Dharmis as a separate religious community.

In the very first conference of the organization, they declared that “We are not Hindus. We strongly request the government not
to list us as such in the census. Our faith is not Hindu but Ad Dharm. We are not a part of Hinduism and Hindus are not part of us. As a separate religious identity they were equal to other religions recognized by the colonial state such as the Hindus, Muslims and the Sikhs. This they did in order to undermine the notion of caste; as a they could enter into the society as equals.

The Ad Dharmis propounded a mythic origin of their quam as well as adopted a non-theistic notion of divinity: one that was consistent with many of the beliefs of lower caste people. This was similar with the teachings of many of the medieval saints whose poetry reflects the early beliefs of the Ad Dharm movement.

Sant Ravi Das, who himself was a Chamar became the patron of the Ad Dharm. The leaders of Ad Dharm believed that Sant Ravi Das preached a basic morality that was beyond the province of either Sikhism or Hinduism. They boycotted the granths and sastras which showed the ‘Untouchables’ as slaves. Like the Sikhs, the Ad Dharm intended to have its own scriptures and for that purpose, the writings of Ravi Das and other lower caste Sants began to be compiled. The leaders of Ad Dharm exhorted the people to continue their devotion to the gurus and to meditate regularly.

They used the term ‘guru’ to refer to living holy men from lower caste communities as well as the legendary ones. They used the salutation “Jai Guru Dev” (victory to the divine guru) to which the response was “Dhan Guru Dev” (blessed be the divine guru) as part of their greetings to each other. The guru was understood to be Sant Ravi Das or any one of the lower caste gurus.

The Ad Dharm appropriated the figure of Sant Ravi Das and used his picture as their emblem, his sayings as their sacred texts, and stories about his life as illustrations of lower caste pride and power. This was actually touching the heart of the cultural tradition of lower caste Punjab. The Ad Dharm also attached special significance to the color red and urged that it be widely worn. With red turbans, the sacred word soham (an upanishadic term which means “I am that”, it was interpreted by the Ad Dharmis as implying the basic unity and equality of the world), and their own special greetings, the Ad Dharm visibly demonstrated its characteristics as a separate movement and as a separate quam.

In November 1926, Mangoo Ram and his colleagues opened an office in Jalandhar city and the movement became a mandal, an established organization. The success of the movement could not last long. It began to see itself as a social and religious organization and in 1946 decided to change its name to Ravi Das Mandal and thereby “entrusting the political work to All India Schedule Castes Federation in conformity with rest of India.”

It was during the Ad Dharm movement that the Ravi Dasi identity began to take shape. Leaders of the movement saw Ravi Dasi identity as their own resource. After having changed its name to Ravi Das Mandal in 1946, the movement activists shifted their focus to social and religious matters. They had come to the realization that in order to have a separate religious identity, they needed a religious system of their own, which was different from the Hindus and Sikhs. But for this they chose a caste based religious identity, i.e. Chamar=Ad Dharmi= Ravi Dasi.

Hence we see that the Ad Dharm movement played a very important role in establishing a separate religious identity for the Chamars especially after it was renamed as Ravi Das Mandal in 1946. But we also need to mention that there were many Ravi Dasi deras in the region with whom Mangoo Ram had contact even before the establishment of the Ravi Das Mandal.

The Chamars of the Doaba region who had migrated to western countries during the 1950’s and 1960’s began to set up their own autonomous associations in the name of Guru Ravi Das. They built their own community organizations and separate Gurudwaras. They eventually began to renew an active relationship with Punjab and the Ravi Dasi community at home. In 1984 a group of them living in Northern California established the first Ravi Das temple in north America.

The diaspora dalits brought huge amount of money for the deras back in Punjab and established a great number of Gurudwaras and temples in the name of Guru Ravi Das in the Doaba region. At present there are some six or seven major sants who can be considered as leaders of the community and more than
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Teachings and Practices of the Sant Ravi Das Sabha

The place of worship of the Ravi Dasis look like the Sikh Gurudwaras and are sometimes called as such but there are subtle differences. Their prayers, rituals and slogans too sound quite similar to those of the Sikhs but with subtle changes to distinguish themselves from mainstream Sikhism.71

There are some slogans which are chanted by the Ravi Dasis. They are,

a. Jo Bole So Nirbhey - Shri Guru Ravidas Maharaj Ki Jai.
c. Jo Bole So Nirbhey – Sadh Sangat Ki Jai.72

The Ravi Dasis have a religious symbol which contains the essence of their belief. The religious symbol is featured as follows,

Its explanation is:

Centre

Chaar Janju (four sacred threads), the Brahmín’s usually put these on according to their scripture (manu smruti) to show their social superiority. Ravi Das demolished this fake by arguing on the basis of logic and spirituality. He explained the three different states of time relating to three disciplines and rituals of religion.

Square (The Heavy Stone)

Ravi Das made the heaviest stone float on the river Ganges. The logic behind this miracle is the enlightenment and overall uplift of every individual. Due to lack of knowledge and wisdom, one sinks to depths of darkness and knowledge makes the stone and steel float.

Sunrays (Thirty three rays of Sunlight)

The dalits were not allowed to be educated or could afford to be educated. Ravi Das spoke and communicated in local dialect. He established 34 words script which became ‘Gurumukhi’ script at later stage. Guru’s name is Ravi, it means sun. The universe is illuminated due to the sun otherwise it would be darkness. We are illuminated because of Guru’s knowledge.

Circle

The whole universe- the bangle and bowl of holy water. The circle depicts the whole universe, which is contained and run in Almighty’s order. Ravi Das produced the holy water in a round bowl. The circle also represents the round golden bangle presented to Ravi Das.73

The Ravi Dasis go on a pilgrimage to the dera situated at village Ballan, Jalandhar district.74 These deras had existed independently of Ad Dham from the initial stages itself. Sant Hiran Das played an important role in the expansion of Ravi Das deras when he established his Ravi Das Sabha in 1907 in village Hakim and a year later published his collection of Ravi Das’s sayings.75

The most important of the Guru Ravi Das deras in Punjab is located in village Ballan, around 10 km from Jallandhar. It is locally known as Dera Sachkhand Ballan. The dera is currently headed by Sant Niranjan Dass. Though Dera Ballan is a religious centre with a focus on preaching universalistic values and spirituality, it actively identifies itself with local dalit issues and dalit politics. They are also actively involved in dalit activism.76 A large majority of Ravi Dasis of Doaba region identify with Dera Sachkhand Ballan.77

On 30th January 2010, the 633rd birth anniversary of Sant Ravi Das, the Dera Sachkhand Ballan announced a new religion, Ravidassia Dharma at Seer Gowardhanpur in Benares.78 It was also announced that the community will have its separate religious

250 deras/Gurudwaras in the name of Guru Ravi Das in Punjab itself. They are all patronized exclusively by the local Chamars and Ad Dharmis.70

This move to create a separate religious identity for *Ravi Dasis* was led by Dera Sachkhand Ballan, after the killing of Sant Ramananad, the deputy of *dera* head Sant Nirjan Dass, in Vienna on May 24th, 2009 in the Ravi Das temple in Vienna. Sant Nirjan Dass was injured in the attack allegedly carried out by some Sikhs.

The religious book was released in the presence of *dera* head Nirjan Dass and other devotees. Prior to this, their religious book was the Sikh holy book the *Guru Granth Sahib* which was recited in Ravi Das *Gurudwaras* as the voice (baani) of Guru Ravi Das. Earlier only 40 hymns and one ‘sloka’ of Guru Ravi Das which were part of the *Guru Granth Sahib* were treated as his composition, but now 200 other composition are included in the new scripture.

After the Vienna attack, Dera Ballan did not place the copy of *Guru Granth Sahib* during the *Antim Ardas* of Sant Ramanand and read only 40 hymns and one ‘sloka’ of Guru Ravi Das, which is part of the Sikh holy book. In place of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, a photo of late Sant Sarwan Dass, who founded the *dera*, was placed in the palanquin.

**Sant Nirankari Mission**

The Sant Nirankari Mission was started by Baba Buta Singh. The word *Nirankar* or *Nirakar* means the formless. This term was commonly used by Guru Nanak as an equivalent of the deity. Those who have belief in God as a spirit without bodily form are called *Nirankaris*.

In Sikhism, the term ‘*Sant*’ designates any seeker after truth and salvation and who pursues his/her objective by means of a particular range of activities. These include association with other devotees, regular participation in the singing of *kirtan*, the individual practice of *nam sumiran* and pure living. Hence Sant Nirankari means a devotee of the formless God.

The orthodox Sikhs differ from the *Nirankaris* in respect to the line of Guruship. The *Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee* and the *Chief Khalsa Diwan*, the two main organization of the orthodox Sikhism insists that the line of human *gurus* beginning with Guru Nanak ended with Guru Gobind Singh who vested the Guruship in the *Adi Granth* (the Sikh scripture) and the *panth* (the Sikh community). But the Nirankaris, the Sant Nirankaris and Namdharris have human gurus whom they consider to be the legitimate successors of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.

There are two groups of *Nirankari* Sikhs. The first are the Nirankari Sikhs founded by Baba Dayal in the 19th century with its headquarters at the Sri Nirankari Darbar, Chandigarh. The second are the Sant Nirankaris. The founder of the Sant Nirankari movement is Baba Buta Singh (1873-1943) who broke away from the Nirankaris in the 1930’s. They have their headquarters at the Sant Nirankari Mandal in New Delhi.

Today, the Nirankaris and Sant Nirankaris are as different as night and day. The former are Sikhs, whereas the latter claim to be a new world religion with distinctive forms, customs and secret mantras. The Sant Nirankari Mission website states that the Mission is “neither a new religion nor a sect of an existing religion, but an all-embracing spiritual movement dedicated to human welfare.” Its objective is to establish Universal Brotherhood among people from diverse backgrounds throughout the world.

**Origin of the Movement**

The Sant Nirankari pamphlet states that Baba Buta Singh started the propagation of Nirankari Mission in Peshawar in 1929. He was succeeded by Baba Avtar Singh in 1943 and in 1962, the mentorship passed on to Baba Gurbachan Singh. After the martyrdom of Gurbachan Singh in 1980, Baba Hardev Singh became the present leader of the mission.

According to Balwant Gargi, it was Bhai Kahn Singh, the author of *Prem Prakash*, who began the process which led to the birth of the Sant Nirankaris. After the death of Sahib Rattaji, the leader of Nirankari movement, he went in search of a guru and found him twenty years later in 1929 in the person of one Baba Buta Singh, a
tattoo maker and kirtani. So happy was he that he carried Buta Singh on his shoulders through the streets of Rawalpindi. Buta Singh is thus regarded as the founder of the Sant Nirankaris.94

Webster cites an article from The Times of India to point out the origin of the Sant Nirankaris. Here in this article it is stated that the breakaway group of Nirankaris, headed by Baba Gurbachan Singh, was founded by Baba Buta Singh, a disciple of Baba Dayalji. During one kirtan, Baba Buta Singh was found to be drunk and was turned out. Thereafter, he met Baba Avtar Singh and founded a separate sect. Baba Buta Singh died in 1943.95 Baba Buta Singh was opposed to the rigid conventions and rituals of his religion. He was against all taboos, castes, creeds and divisions of humanity based on external habits and appearances.96 His most ardent devotee was Avtar Singh, who ran a bakery in Peshawar and then shifted his business to Rawalpindi.97 After his death in 1943, Baba Avtar Singh popularly known as Shehanshahji took over the leadership of the Mission.98 After the Partition, Baba Avtar Singh shifted the mission to Delhi and set up the headquarters in Paharganj. He also set up the Sant Nirankari Mandal as a registered body in Delhi in 1948 with an executive body of Seven Stars and gave the movement a constitution and organizational shape.99

The Sant Nirankaris claim to be a Universal Brotherhood Society rather than a particular sect of Sikh religion.100 In foreign countries, the Sant Nirankari Mission is known as Universal Brotherhood Centre.101 Today, Sant Nirankari Mission has over 100 branches outside India, most prominently in Britain and North America. Its world headquarters is located in Sant Nirankari Colony, Delhi.102

The Sant Nirankari Mission is run by the Seven Stars, i.e. the nominees of Baba. They are nominated for life and change only in the case of death.103 These Seven Stars consist of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Joint Secretary, Finance-in-charge, Publication-in-charge and Social Welfare-in-charge.104 Besides the Seven Stars, the Sant Nirankari hierarchy has eight zonal chiefs under whom local branches function.105

Most of the Sant Nirankaris are from Hindu background and a few from Sikh and other religions. Many Sikhs regard Nirankaris as heretics as there is no prohibition in terms of eating meat and drinking. They believe that their leader is their guru whereas Guru Gobind Singh has proclaimed that after him, only the Holy Granth should be worshipped.106

The Holy Scripture: Avtar Bani

The Avtar Bani outlines the key philosophy of the Sant Nirankari Mission. It may in fact be considered the Bible or Quran of the Mission. It is named after its author Baba Avtar Singh. Its initial version was first published in 1957. Its ‘Big Brother’, the Sampuran Avtar Bani (meaning - the complete Avtar Bani) was published in 1965. The Avtar Bani was originally written in easy Punjabi verse, but some stanzas were in the Urdu and Sindhi Language. It contains 376 hymns which describe the qualities of Formless God (Nirankar), the important role of a True Spiritual Guide in attaining God realisation, the kindness and grace of the True Master, the purpose of human life, the five fundamental principles, true devotion and how a person can lead a saintly life. The Avtar Bani is not worshipped as a holy religious book like the Quran or the Bible, but it is highly regarded by the Nirankari devotees for its authenticity. It has been published in Gurumukhi, Devnagari, Urdu and Roman scripts. It has also been translated and published in English (verse and prose), Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Nepali and Marathi verse.107

Teachings of Sant Nirankari Mission

Nirankari Mission

According to the Nirankari pamphlet, the Sant Nirankari Mission seeks to reveal God, also known as Nirankar, to all human beings irrespective of their religious faith, sect, or community and thus liberate them from the shackles of ignorance, superstition, ritualism, and dogmatism in the name of devotion to God. It firmly believes that the realization of God is the real objective of human life and this can be achieved only through the benevolence of the living true master: the Satguru.108

The Sant Nirankaris believe that they are not a religion or a
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1. Sikhism
   - Sect but a spiritual movement. They believe that it is a way of leading a virtuous householder’s life while remaining devoted to the Formless God. Their mission endeavors to establish Universal Brotherhood by inculcating non-violence, love, truth and spiritual awakening through God-realization.  
   - The Sant Nirankari Mission believes that the Formless God is the Creator, Sustainer and Liquidator of the universe. The Formless God, the Sustainer of the whole creation, is one though manifests in all. The mission further endorses that God-realization is the cherished goal of human life and its bestower is known as Satguru.

2. Spiritual Guide (Satguru)
   - God can be seen. Following the five principles is essential for attaining God-realisation.
   - The Sant Nirankari Mission believes that the Formless God is the Creator, Sustainer and Liquidator of the universe. The Formless God, the Sustainer of the whole creation, is one though manifests in all. The mission further endorses that God-realization is the cherished goal of human life and its bestower is known as Satguru.

3. Spiritual Aspect
   - God exists.
   - God is a single entity, though He has been called by several different names such as Allah, Ishwar etc. throughout history.
   - God is formless and therefore may also be called as (Nirankar).
   - God can be personally realised. In fact, God realisation is the sole purpose of human life.
   - All human beings are God’s children.
   - A True Spiritual Guide reveals God. Without a True Master, a human being cannot attain God-realisation.
   - There is only a single True Master in the world at any present time.
   - If a human being wishes to gain God Knowledge, they must ask for it.

4. Devotion
   - God can be seen. Following the five principles is essential for attaining God-realisation.
   - The Sant Nirankari Mission believes that God-realization is possible only through a God-realized soul through the grace of the Satguru. The Nirankaris revere and regard the earlier gurus and saints. But they believe that the living Satguru is the one who bestows God-realization and is worthy of devotion. They believe that the Formless God manifests in the form of Satguru. This Satguru never identifies himself with any particular religion or community since he is there for all and gives divine knowledge to all without any discrimination.

5. Rites and Rituals
   - God can be seen. Following the five principles is essential for attaining God-realisation.
   - The Sant Nirankari Mission believes that God-realization is possible only through a God-realized soul through the grace of the Satguru. The Nirankaris revere and regard the earlier gurus and saints. But they believe that the living Satguru is the one who bestows God-realization and is worthy of devotion. They believe that the Formless God manifests in the form of Satguru. This Satguru never identifies himself with any particular religion or community since he is there for all and gives divine knowledge to all without any discrimination.

6. Religion
   - God can be seen. Following the five principles is essential for attaining God-realisation.
   - The Sant Nirankari Mission believes that God-realization is possible only through a God-realized soul through the grace of the Satguru. The Nirankaris revere and regard the earlier gurus and saints. But they believe that the living Satguru is the one who bestows God-realization and is worthy of devotion. They believe that the Formless God manifests in the form of Satguru. This Satguru never identifies himself with any particular religion or community since he is there for all and gives divine knowledge to all without any discrimination.
To realize one’s oneness with the One creator is true religion. They believe that religions bring diverse cultures and civilizations into one colorful bouquet of humanity. Religion unites, never divides.

The Nirankari Mission believes that except God-realization there is no other means to achieve the cherished goal of Universal Brotherhood and thus it strives to establish Universal Brotherhood through Fatherhood of God. The Sant Nirankaris share common devotion and realization of the Formless God and yet they are free to follow their beliefs, customs and traditions.

Gyan

The Sant Nirankaris believe that they have received gyan or knowledge which leads to God-realization. The moment a person gets the gyan, he/she gets the true vision or darshan of God. This gyan can be described as an actual glimpse of God, an actual introduction to God. The Sant Nirankaris claim universality in the sense that the gyan they possess was what Christ gave to his disciples and what the gurus gave to the Sikhs. Yet the Christians, Sikhs and Muslims are empty-handed and if they want gyan again, they can have it from the guru of the Sant Nirankaris.

Before the gyan is given, the initiator explains the five principles of the Mission. After this the gyan is then dispensed to the seeker. According to the Sant Nirankaris this gyan is instant knowledge of Nirankar or the Formless God. The gyan is confidential and must be allowed to remain a secret. Each person has to take five pledges or Panch Pranas before receiving the gyan.

They are
1. To reckon one’s body, mind and wealth as belonging to God and not to one’s own self; that is, a complete dedication of oneself to God.
2. To give up any attachment to any religion, community or caste.
3. Not to forsake one’s family; not to become a recluse, hermit or monk and to sustain one’s family by honest livelihood.
4. To eat, drink or wear anything one chooses and not to object to anyone else’s choice in these matters.
5. Not to disclose the gyan or impart it to anyone unless authorized to do so by the Guru.

This gyan gives the Sant Nirankaris a peculiar psychology. They look upon one another as special persons, chosen ones, the only persons worthy of adoration and admiration. They thus feel a sense of religious superiority towards those who do not share their gyan.

In the beginning, the gyan was given only by the guru. But as the members of the mission grew, it became physically impossible for the guru to impart the gyan. Today, all the Seven Stars, zonal heads, Pramukhs of districts, those in charge of the bhavans, many heads of local branches and other specially chosen saints including Rajmata and many other women are authorized to dispense the gyan. Selections are made only by Baba.

During the giving of the gyan, the philosophy of the Nirankar is explained. The universe is composed of nine elements—earth, water, fire, sun, moon, stars, air, sound and life. These nine elements are constantly moving. Beyond them is God, the Supreme Soul. Our bodies contain five elements—earth, water, fire, air and sound. Beyond these is the Soul, the divine spark which controls our lives. So also in the Universe, the Nirankar—Deathless, Formless, Nameless—pervades and controls everything. The universe is one vast body with God as its soul.

When we die, each element in us returns to its counterpart in the universe. The sixth element, the atma (soul) merges with the paramatma (supersoul) or God. The guru connects individual souls with the Supreme Soul, the Nirankar. This connecting is done by giving the gyan—knowledge of God. When the guru reveals God to an aspirant, the Nirankaris believe that all the divine attributes of God are at once transmitted to the aspirant, who in that instant of revelation identified himself/herself completely with God.

Concept of Guruship

For the Nirankaris, the guru is the central figure and an object of
wonder. The Sant Nirankaris believe that the guruship continues to the next groom. This Guruship's continuity is based on the belief that the spirit of the previous prophet takes up residence in the body of the new one.

The Activities of Sant Nirankari Mission

The Sant Nirankari’s daily and weekly sangats, the foot-washing ceremony, the Gyan, the special terminology and slogans and the white prayer shawl worn by the devotees are the special marks.

In Sant Nirankari congregational meetings, we see a kind of mutual worship. One can hear in their congregations, people addressing one another as 'Maha Purkho' (Great Man), 'Garibniwaz' (Kind to the Poor), 'Sant Ji' (Saint). They bow to each other. They touch one another’s feet and then after doing so, kiss their own fingers as they believe that they have received some vital substance from the feet of the other. Sometimes they even kiss one another’s feet and hand or wash one another’s feet and then drink that water as amrit (nectar).

The proceeding of Sant Nirankari meetings or satsang usually go through three stages. They are a) short addresses or testimonies by the devotee b) a discourse by the preceptor of the day who performs what is called vichar (thought) while an assistant reads out verses from the Sikh scriptures c) a chorus sung by the audience and the repetition of such phrases as ‘Only Thou, O Formless One’ d) individual worship by members of the congregation. At this stage, the members garland the present groom and touch his feet and receive a pat on the head or back.

There are some Sant Nirankaris who are clad in white and wear a white scarf around their necks. This is a robe of honor given to those people whose devotion and preaching ability are generally acknowledged. There are also those few people who are ‘the most exalted one.’ They are authorized to act on behalf of the groom in imparting gyan and initiating the aspirants.

The Sant Nirankaris when they meet or greet, chant ‘Dhan Nirankar’ which means- Hailed be the Formless Lord. The cause of all acts. We bow to Thee, O’ Formless Lord. They are prohibited from taking any intoxicants.

The Sant Nirankaris wash the feet of their Satguru or any apostle-nominee or any fellow Nirankari who conducts their satsangs and drinks his foot-wash, considering it purified by humility and love. This ceremony is done not only in reverence to a leader but also to promote a sense of humility and equality. Many healings are said to have taken place when the Charanamrita of their guru is given to the sick person.

An annual Samagam or religious gathering is held at Samagam ground in Delhi and other parts of India. The Mission arranges Mass Marriages during this time.

The Mission has actively promoted the creation of a Sant Nirankari Sewa Dal (i.e. a volunteer group). The male volunteers of the Sewa Dal in India have a khaki uniform, with white head-gear. Overseas male volunteers have navy blue blazers, grey trousers, white shirts with navy blue ties. The women wear blue cotton kamiz and white salwars.

Voice Divine is an internet radio programme of the Sant Nirankari Mission. It is mainly hosted by Nirankari Studio team. The programme includes interviews from eminent saints in the mission, discourses by Baba Hardev Singh and devotional hymns. The Sant Nirankari Mission publishes a monthly journal called ‘Sant Nirankari: A Spiritual Monthly’ in twelve langauges.

The Sant Nirankari Sarovar Complex in Delhi contains a sarovar (Holy Lake). The sarovar is surrounded by a beautiful park. Many devotees use the sarovar during the Annual Nirankari Samagams, which are held every year in November in New Delhi. The mission also has a museum which is located within the Sant Nirankari Sarovar complex on Burari Road, near Sant Nirankari colony in North Delhi. The museum depicts the journey of Nirankari Mission through audio visuals and pictures.

Divya Yog Mandir Trust

Divya Yog Mandir Trust was established by Swami Ramdev along with his companions, Acharya Karmavir Maharaj, Acharya
Balkrishna, an Ayurvedic physician and Swami Muktanand. Swami Ramdev established Divya Yog Mandir Trust in 1995 in Kanhal (Haridwar) and began activities in health and spiritual pursuits.\textsuperscript{154}

**Life and Work of the Leaders**

**Swami Ramdev**

Swami Ramdev or commonly known as Baba Ramdev was born in Alipur, Mahendragarh, Haryana. His real name was Ramkishan Yadav. After attending 8\textsuperscript{th} grade in Shahjadpur he joined a yogic monastery in Khanpur.\textsuperscript{155} He entered into Sanyas (monastic living) taking the name Swami Ramdev. As a disciple of Acharya Shri Baldevji of Khalwa, Ramdev was initiated into ascetic order. Acharya Shri Baldevji, who was a Brahma worshipper, taught him Upanisads, Darsan, Vedas and Panini grammar. Eventually, he became well versed in Sanskrit grammar, Ayurveda and Vedic philosophy.\textsuperscript{156} Then he joined the Gurukul Kisangarh and offered free Yoga training to villagers across Haryana. It is claimed that he acquired extraordinary abilities through severe austerities for realizing of ‘Self’ in the Himalayan Mountains before he settled in Haridwar.\textsuperscript{157}

Swami Ramdev conducts the Divya Yoga Shivir or camps all over India where he imparts practical lessons in the matters of health and Yoga to thousands of followers. He is quite secretive and refuses to reveal his age or any other details about his background.\textsuperscript{158} He leads a simple life, sleeps on the floor and does not need more than three hours of sleep a night. He dresses in the saffron robes of Hindu ascetics and is a frugal eater, and has not eaten any grains for over 10 years now. Besides water, the only drink he takes is cow milk. He says that “I never waste time having breakfast. I eat two meals a day and I eat only boiled vegetables and fruits.”\textsuperscript{159}

**Swami Muktanand**

Swami Muktanand was born in July 1956, in West-Bengal. Swami Muktanand is the Treasurer and Founder Trustee of Patanjali Yogpeeth (Trust). He is fully associated with all the activities of Divya Yog Mandir Trust. He is a post-graduate of Sanskrit and a graduate of science with Mathematics. He got his Sanskrit education in the prestigious Sanskrit Gurukul Kalva (Haryana) under the able guidance of well known guru in the field of Sanskrit, Acharya Baldev. Swami Muktanand actively participates in the production of medicines in Divya Pharmacy- a unit of Divya Yog Mandir Trust. He has specialization in preparation of Chyavanprash and Amrit Rasayan. He has more than fifteen years experience in preparation of medicines and identification of herbs.\textsuperscript{160}

**Swami Shankar Dev**

Swami Shankar Dev is Patron and Founder Trustee of Divya Yog Mandir Trust and Patanjali Yogpeeth (Trust). Born in 1930 in Almora district of Uttarakhand, he was very much keen to become a Sanyasi from the very beginning of his life. At the age of 15, in 1945, he left his home with a group of Sanyasis and traveled with them to various tirthas and reached Haridwar. He came in contact with Swami Kripalu Dev Maharaj in Haridwar. He is a direct disciple of Swami Kripalu Dev Maharaj. He took sanyas diksha from Swami Inder Dev on Ganga Dashera in 1958. Swami Ramdev took sanyas diksha from Swami Shankar in 1995.\textsuperscript{161}

**Acharya Balkrishna**

Acharya Balkrishna is a Post Graduate from Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, Varanasi. He has practiced tremendous austerities in the caves of Himalayas in the nineties along with Swami Ramdev and explored almost extinct varieties of Astavarga plants, which are the main components of Chyavanaprash. He has reproved the necessity of research to revive the Astavarga therapy. Revival of many high altitude, rare species of medicinal plant like Jatamansi, Katuki is his objective. He is said to have discovered permanent cure for the complicated disease like high blood pressure, diabetes & osteo-arthritis etc.\textsuperscript{162} Acharya Balkrishna has also edited books like Aushad Darshan, Jeevaniya and Vayasthapan Paudhe, Vadic Nityakarma Vidhi, Yog Darshan, Sant Darshan, Bhakti
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Geetanjali. He is in-charge of all affairs of Divya Yog Mandir Trust and Patanjali Yogpeeth (Trust) as the General Secretary.

The Yoga services project is being handled under the guidance of Swami Ramdev whereas the Ayurvedic treatment and research work is being carried on under the supervision of Acharya Balkrishna.

Teachings of Swami Ramdev

Teachings on Yoga
In one of the Yoga camps conducted by the Trust, Swami Ramdev declared that “I am not here to preach, my yoga is not oratorical; it is practical. Do the yoga and feel the benefits.” This summarizes his mission. He is basically concerned with promoting Pranayama Yoga and Ayurvedic treatment and his teachings are centred on the same.

Swami Ramdev asserts that Yoga is not only important from the spiritual point of view, but it is also important and necessary for maintaining physical and mental health. Both the Asanas (postures) and Pranayama (control on breath) are integral part of Yoga exercises and enormous curative benefits can be achieved through them.

Yoga Devotion and Pranayama
Swami Ramdev claims that “yoga devotion cures the diseases on the line of nature.” Yoga devotion, which is the basis for all the processes, is necessary for a healthy body. Pranayama helps the body to be healthy. Pranayama is necessary because, “it makes the muscles strong, improves blood circulation, the oxygen is consumed in more quantity and purifies the blood. The polluted elements are excreted through perspiration which makes the body light.” It is important to note that a healthy mind dwells in a healthy body. Practice of Pranayama and Yoga keeps the mind healthy.

Importance of Pranayama
Swami Ramdev in all his teachings gives importance to Pranayama and describes it as ‘the rhythmic control of breath’. He explains that “It is the breath, the gift of God; that is the ultimate medicine.... It reaches all corners of the body and cures all ailments.... This prana takes care of the body, the mind, the emotions, the five elements and also the five bodies that make up our presence in this world. It is a great force, a great teacher, a great guide. One who has control over prana can control anything and everything.”

Swami Ramdev claims that Pranayama is the greatest medicine of this world and it cures 140 or so incurable diseases. In fact the divine powers to cure any disease are awakened within a person by Pranayama.

Since 2002 Swami Ramdev has been daily declaring on Indian and International TV channels that Pranayama creates “Disease Free Society–Medicines Free World.” His claim is that Pranayama Yoga is the complete Ancient Indian Therapy, which is the Medical Science in itself that cures most of the physical or mental medical condition, without any side effects. It is also the natural cure for all ailments without medicines or surgery.

Swami Ramdev claims that it is one’s birth-right to stay disease free, healthy, slim, and fit; look beautiful and younger; and in complete peace of mind, better than one’s age. Therefore he asserts that “Do not lose hope, do not suffer and stop depending on expensive treatments, when Indian Pranayama Yoga is there to help you out.... God helps those, who help themselves with Pranayama Yoga.”

He, however, clarifies that “Baba Ramdev does not cure anyone, Pranayama does.” Then he goes on to claim that “Within nine days of practicing Pranayama, the biochemistry of the body begins to change. In nine months of sincere practice the genetic element changes for the better. Pranayama gives a completely transformed body-mind complex. It gives a person a new life.”

Yoga Asana and Pranayama

Yoga asana is the exercise for body organs. It is claimed that Yoga removes constipation, improves blood circulation, and strengthens nervous system and muscles. Normal diseases are
Yoga asana purifies the body, but Pranayama purifies Prana or vital life energy. Pranayama controls the mind which gives physical health. It keeps the mind happy. It is claimed that Pranayama enables a person “to tolerate hunger, thirst and heat and cold conditions.” It improves digestion, controls ageing, purifies nerves and cures diseases automatically. Prana or vital life energy flows continuously with the help of inhaling oxygen and exhaling the polluted air. Changes in the rate of respiration, normally 15 to 17 times a minute, affect the diet, activities, physical actions, mental stress, anger, fear, etc. Therefore, slow and long breathing brings back the balance of respiration. Disorder in respiration brings the diseases, whereas the regulation of breathing keeps the body diseases free and gives mental balance.

On Health and Disease

Swami Ramdev argues that the Western culture considers different parts of the body and organs as independent. But in reality, all parts of the body are combined and are functioning as per the rules of nature. Due to wrong eating habits and behaviors, human beings imbalance nature and become diseased. Consequently, one becomes incapable of doing any good work. Therefore, he claims that “the actual definition of health is equilibrium of all natural elements present in the body.” Disequilibrium is the main reason for diseases. Although different medicines are capable of curing diseases, they do not balance the natural elements. But Ayurveda stresses on the equilibrium between natural elements and balance of the body. Dependence on medicines may reduce the power of resistance which leads to various side effects. Yoga science is the only science that can keep a person healthy and disease free.

Swami Ramdev’s firm belief is that one should prefer Yoga for treatment if one falls ill. If medicines are required, Ayurveda is preferable because it is suitable to Indian environment and culture. Moreover, Ayurveda is hundred percent safe.

On Maoists Problem

Swami Ramdev states that it is poverty and lack of development that are responsible for violence and the Maoist menace. He believes that the time has come to change the political system in the country. He argues that the Indian administration, judiciary, police and education system has hardly changed since the time of the British rule. His vision is that Yoga would act as a medium to unite India. He states that “Politics is dividing the country. We want to unite it through Yoga.” He points out to the government to clean up the black money and bring it to the mainstream. He further urges all Indians to dump foreign goods. He also urged the Indian corporate houses to do something for the development of the country.

On Politics and Corruption

Swami Ramdev plans to enter politics within the next three years to clean up the Indian political system. He wants to launch a new political party which will field candidates in all the 545 Lok Sabha Constituencies in the 2014 elections. But he himself will not stand for elections. To further his goals, he launched The Bharat Swabhiman Campaign that aims to end corrupt practices in the Indian society. He also supports the 33% quota for women in the parliament and argues that there should be 50% quota for them in the legislatures.

Establishment of Divya Yog Mandir Trust

In 1995 Swami Ramdev began his activities in health and spiritual pursuits by establishing Divya Yoga Mandir Trust in Kankhal, Haridwar, Uttaranchal in association with his companions Acharya
Karmavir Maharaj, Acharya Balkrishna, an Ayurvedic physician and Swami Muktanand.

Divya Yoga Mandir Trust headquarters is situated at Kripalu Bagh Ashram in Haridwar which was established by Swami Kripala Dev Maharaj in 1932. Kripala’s successor was his disciple, namely Swami Shankardevi who was the Guru of Swami Ramdev. Divya Yoga Mandir Trust organizes camps for yogic exercises and particularly in the science of Pranayama which claims to have cured several incurable diseases.

The Trust also manages a Gurukul, a residential educational institution in Kishangarh, Ghasala in the Rewadi district of Haryana. The Gurukul imparts instructions in Indian culture, philosophy, chemistry, physics and computer science. In addition to helping people learn about Yoga and spirituality, this institution also provide a comprehensive facility that promotes the practice of Ayurveda. Hence making yoga available to the common people had been the most important contribution of Swami Ramdev. He re-invented yoga for the masses as the traditional yoga techniques were complex and had to be practiced under strict supervision. Swami Ramdev broke these barriers and made the practice of pranayama achievable by the common layperson.

Activities of Divya Yog Mandir Trust

Organizing Camps

Divya Yog Mandir Trust organizes different Yoga Sadhana and Yoga treatment camps in different parts of India. The purpose of the camps is for spiritual development, physical fitness, mental calmness, intellectual and all round development and thereby to manifest a sound human personality. A major focus during the camp is on Patanjali’s eight fold path or Astanga Yoga. There are also other subjects like Hath Yoga, Philosophy, Upanisad, Vedas, Caraka-samhita and Susruta-samhita, which are taught in the camps. Arrangements are also being made to give practical training of Dhyana-yoga and Japa-yoga along with Sat-karma.

Swami Ramdev called trained Yoga Teachers to go to their native places & teach this science to people around them free of cost. About one lakh Yoga Teachers are part of Patanjali Yoga Committee now. They are teaching & training people in different part of our country & abroad free of cost.

Over twenty lakh people of all parts of country and abroad derive benefit from taking part in Yoga Camps every year. Nearly 250 millions viewers of our country and abroad, have close association with Yoga and Pranayama through Aastha, Aastha-International, Sahara Regional, Sahara Samay, India T.V., Zee T.V., Zee Marathi, Zee Bangla, Zee Tamil, Zee Telugu, Zee Punjabi, Zee Classic, Zee Premier, Zee News, Zee TV ME, Zee TV SA, Zee TV UK, Zee TV US, Zee TV APAC, TV1, TV9 channels.

Brahmakalpa Chikitsalaya

Brahmakalpa Chikitsalaya is a hospital which treats its patients with Yogic Shatkarma and Panchakarma system. It is situated within the premises of the headquarters in Haridwar. Along with the hospital, there is also a factory (Divya Pharmacy) for manufacturing medicines in pure form. There is also a vast botanical garden in which herbal plants useful in the treatment of diseases are planted. Systems like Yogic Shatkarma and Panchakarma that includes massage, perspiration, vomit, purgative medicated enemas, and nasal administration of herbs are used to treat patients at Brahmakalpa Chikitsalaya. Some of the tenets which are attached to the treatment are herbal based medicines, proper harmonious living, practicing Brahmacharya and regulating the life. The centre also teaches acupressure, Yogasanas, Pranayama and naturopathy. The diseases that are treated without surgery are high blood pressure, diabetes, heart diseases, asthma, obesity, acidity, allergy, ulcer, cervical sodalities, sciatica, arthritis, cancer (1st and 2nd stage) and many other chronic diseases.

Research Laboratory

Swami Ramdev claims to have discovered several medicinal plants in the Himalayas which he uses in treating his patients. In order to carry out a continuous research on different herbs, the Trust has a very sophisticated research laboratory and its object is, “...to rediscover rare medicinal herbs, preparations of Ayurvedic
medicines as per the traditional methods, to keep pace with the latest developments in the field of Ayurvedic research and publishing literature on Ayurveda.\textsuperscript{204}

The laboratory claims to have successfully helped in relocating and formulating \textit{Asta-varga} herbs from the high altitude of the Himalayas.\textsuperscript{205} Swami Ramdev has also established \textit{Divya Pharmacy} where his medicines are manufactured and send for patent.\textsuperscript{206}

\textbf{Herbarium and Sadhna Ashram}

The Trust develops its herbarium for the plantation, preservation and promotion of rare medicines. They also plan to make available the medicinal plants in earthen pots for sale.\textsuperscript{207} \textit{Sadhna Ashram} situated at Gangotri has been established to conduct research on Himalayan Herbs.\textsuperscript{208}

\textbf{Establishment of Divya Goshala and Vedic Gurukula}

Since various medicines and treatments require cow-related products, the trust preserves Indian breed of the cow in the \textit{Goshala}.\textsuperscript{209} The Trust also runs a \textit{Vedic Gurukula} at Kishangarh Ghasera in Haryana in order to impart standard teaching on \textit{Vedic} pattern free of cost. Both rich and poor students obtain quality education here without discrimination.\textsuperscript{210}

\textbf{Patanjali Yogapeeth}

Patanjali Yogapeeth spreading over 1000 acres of land is a dream project of Divya Yog Mandir Trust. This project aims at accommodating around 2000 \textit{sadhkas}, consisting of 2500 rooms, halls, pharmacy, hospital, \textit{Goshala}, Herbarium, publication house, library, printing press, community kitchen, \textit{Yoga} centre, etc.\textsuperscript{211} It is said that “Patanjali Yogapeeth has been established in order to give Indian cultural traditions, \textit{Vedic} knowledge, a scientific approach and make the world disease free.”\textsuperscript{212} Its aim is to build the world’s largest center for \textit{Ayurveda} and \textit{Yoga} that includes facilities for treatment, research and a teaching university.\textsuperscript{213}

\textbf{Yog Sandesh}

Since September, 2003 Divya Yog Mandir Trust has been publishing \textit{Yog Sandesh}, a monthly magazine in Hindi, English, Marathi, Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati, Assamese and Nepali. The subjects dealt in the magazine are \textit{Yoga}, \textit{Ayurveda}, culture and rituals and spiritualism. Besides this, poetry, public interested articles, the activities and future projects of the Trust and the experiences and feelings of the readers and beneficiaries of \textit{Yoga} are included in the magazine.\textsuperscript{214}

Along with \textit{Yog Sandesh}, many books on \textit{Yoga} and \textit{Pranayama} are published by the publishing department of the trust known as \textit{Divya Prakashan}.

\textbf{General Appraisal of the Movements}

1. The religious movements that we have studied make use of modern media such as television, internet and print media. This has played an important role in the spread of their activities as well as keeping the community together.

2. Some of the movements have appropriated legendary heroes as their leaders primarily in order to symbolize their separate cultural identity. But these figures face in the direction of high tradition and hence are a link to the social and religious whole as well. For example Ravi Das, being appropriated by the Sant Ravi Das Sabha. One way of looking at this issue is to see it as \textit{Sanskritization}, a term M.N. Srinivas coined to describe “the process by which a “low” Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, “twice born” caste.”\textsuperscript{215} But the leaders of these movements had little intention that their followers be led through them into a normative Hinduism/Sikhism.

3. In most of these movements, the membership is largely from \textit{dalit} community. Hence these religious movements are a great source of emancipation for the downtrodden community. They are basically socio-religious movements which have appropriated religious symbols, leaders, scriptures etc. for the social upliftment of the people.

4. The religious movements play an important part in the rediscovery of indigenous art, sculpture, music, dance, medicine
and language.

5. The religious movements are not just confined to India but have extended their branches to US, UK and Europe where there is a sizable Indian population.

6. In the religious movements that we studied there is a process of initiation and a secret mantra is given to the new initiate who becomes member of the movement.

7. Even though sometimes the teachings of the religious movements have a pluralistic coloring and borrow teachings from other religions but all of them are very exclusivistic in their approach to other faiths and claim that salvation/liberation is possible only through following the teachings laid down by their guru/leader.

8. Religious movements such as Sant Nirankari Mission, Sant Ravi Das Sabha and Divya Yog Mandir Trust use professionalism in their activities and reach out largely to the urban city people and the diaspora Indian community.

9. The teachings and activities of the religious movements are both psychological and physiological in nature. Much emphasis is laid on inculcation of spiritual moral values.

10. An important question that haunts most of the religious movements which we studied is whether they belong to a particular religious tradition or are an independent religion, part of the universal faith.

11. Women are being given greater roles in the religious movements.

12. The religious movements that we studied appropriate religious elements for the social, spiritual and physical betterment of the people. They accept people from all walks of life irrespective of caste, creed or language. But membership is given to only those who adhere to their principles and have received a secret mantra from their guru.

13. Most of these sects are in essence movements of social protest in the religious guise. Most of these movements tend to denounce the so called exterior practices of religion. Instead they preach a simpler and purer religion of the heart in which ceremony is minimized and every person is considered theoretically equal and individual. Hence these movements are considered as indigenous movements of social dissent and protest.

14. The movements move in a counter-structural direction by boldly proclaiming their own alternative conceptions of the social whole. There is a longing to participate in the mainstream society and tradition. This longing had led the movements to play a special role within society- to mediate between the marginal elements and the social core.

15. We notice that what began as a movement settles down and becomes recognized as a new religion especially in the case Sant Ravi Das Sabha and Sant Nirankari Mission.

16. The original ideals of casteless, classless and equalitarian society that the leaders envisioned gets lost over the period of time and many discrepancies creeps into the religious movements as the leaders try to gain respectability and approval from the religious and social authorities by imbibing some of their practices and rituals.

17. In India, demands for and responses to social change typically take religious forms. Hence we saw that in the religious movements that we studied, religious language was used as a powerful way of expressing social grievances and religious institutions are used as formidable conduits of social change.

18. There are myths and supernatural stories connected with the life of the leaders of the religious movements which tend to make them a demi-god or a supernatural being. Hence guru worship is found in these movements.

19. Many of the religious movements have formed themselves into national and international level organizations for better interaction and co-ordination of their activities.

We shall now make an individual appraisal of the three movements that were studied.

Sant Ravi Das Sabha

1. The use of Ravi Das as a symbol allowed the Sant Ravi Das
Sabha to emphasize the separate religious tradition of the lower castes and at the same time to utilize a familiar figure who was identified with the high Hindu tradition.

2. The Ravi Dasis are looked down by the upper caste community as they had emerged as a strong and autonomous caste-religious community as a result of dalit identity movements in Punjab. Thus majority of them do not identify themselves with the Sikh religion and over the years the Ravi Dasis have evolved their own symbols and practices of worship. Hence we see a great deal of antagonism between the mainstream Sikh religion and Sant Ravi Das Sabha which was reflected in the Vienna killing.

3. The economic prosperity that some of the members of the Chamar community experienced prepared the grounds for the political mobilization of the dalits. This is an important since economic prosperity is closely related to social mobility.

4. The Ad Dharm advocated a new religion for the dalits and gave them a separate religious identity separate from the Hindu one. This was the first instance of dalits forming a religious community in north India. This was later on followed by the Sant Ravi Das Sabha who formed themselves as Ravidassia Dharm. It also gave a scripture and a religious identity for the first time, exclusively for the dalit community in north India.

5. The Ravi Dasis chose a caste based religious identity, i.e. Chamar=Ad Dharm= Ravi Dasi. Hence it became the exclusive religion only for the Chamar community.

6. The deras of the Sant Ravi Das Sabha are not just spiritual centers but also centers of dalit activism and identity. This is a good example of using religious resources for socio-political emancipation.

Sant Nirankari Mission

1. The Sant Nirankari Mission claims that it is neither a new religion nor a sect of an existing religion, but an all-embracing spiritual movement. But in reality, its rituals and practices are similar to Sikhism. But the mainstream Sikhism does not accept them as part of their religion.

2. For the Sant Nirankaris God Realization is first and then only comes devotion. This reverses the pattern of salvation/liberation. In other religions first devotion comes and culminates with God-realization. But the Sant Nirankaris believe that by imparting gyan, a devotee experiences God-realization in an instant and then devotion follows.

3. Sant Nirankaris believe that their guru is their leader. But very often the guru is deified and worshipped.

4. Even though the Sant Nirankaris are very pluralistic in their approach and want to establish Universal Brotherhood among people, they believe that only their guru can reveal God through the medium of gyan. This leads to a very exclusivistic approach to other faiths. They feel a sense of religious superiority towards those who do not share their gyan.

5. The practice of charanamrita plays a very important role in removing feelings of caste, class and gender and promotes a sense of humility and equality. The emphasis given to sewa or service to others along with sanskar and samaran is commendable.

6. Women are given equal importance and are also included as ones who can dispense the gyan. The various activities for the upliftment of women, tribals, students are highly commendable along with their contributions in times of natural calamities, health care and blood donation camps. They are thus concerned with issues of poverty, gender justice and upliftment of the marginalized community.

Divya Yog Mandir Trust

1. Swami Ramdev, with his mastery over Patanjali Yoga, Sanskrit grammar, Ayurveda and Vedic philosophy, has blended them to promote his Yoga techniques and establish Divya Yog Mandir Trust around the world.

2. Divya Yog Mandir Trust’s biggest contribution is making Yoga techniques available to common people free of cost through its Yoga camps and Television.

3. Traditional Yoga was confined to a few religious adherents because it was deemed unmanageable. But now even a lay person
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1. can practice it.
2. The aim of Divya Yog Mandir Trust to revive the Indian system of guru-sishya parampara along with the revival of Indian philosophy and system of health is highly appreciable.
3. Swami Ramdev deals with some aspects of Patanjali Yoga for health and healing, and thereby, deviating from the original intention of Patanjali Yoga. He has emphasized on the practical aspect of Yoga and not its theory. Ramdev main emphasis is on Pranayama, which is only one aspect of Astanga Yoga of Patanjali.
4. The Yoga technique as propounded by Swami Ramdev misses its traditional spiritual dimension that aims at moksha. In fact, his Yoga is condensed to simple breathing exercises that keep an individual healthy and stress free.
5. The absolute claims on Ayurveda, Pranayama and Yoga Asanas needs to be scientifically proved.
6. While promoting Ayurvedic medicines, Divya Yog Mandir Trust competes with the global players and engages in marketing Yoga and Ayurveda. However it is very biased as it undermines the strength of allopathic medicines.
7. The leader of the movements that we studied prepared their followers culturally for access to a wider society and thus made a significant contribution towards societal integration.
8. The contemporary period in north India witnessed the growth of three religious movements namely, Sant Ravi Das Sabha, Sant Nirankari Mission and Divya Yog Mandir Trust. These three movements not only provided alternate visions of religious experience but also social integration. They used religious resources as a conduit for social change as well as physical and psychological betterment. They have mass following all over north India and their adherents come from all walks of life. Their teachings and activities are not just limited to north India but even have spread to the diasporic Indian community in the western countries.
9. The limitations in the teachings and activities of these movements are many. Most of the religious movements that we studied borrow teachings from other religions but all of them are very exclusivistic in their approach to other faiths.
They accept people from all walks of life irrespective of caste, creed or language. But membership is given to only those who adhere to their principles and have received a secret mantra from their guru. There are myths and supernatural stories connected with the life of the leaders of the religious movements which tend to make them a demi-god or a supernatural being. Hence guru worship is found in these movements. The original ideals of casteless, classless and equalitarian society that the leaders envisioned gets lost over the period of time and many discrepancies creeps into these religious movements.

However, having noted the limitations, we can rightly affirm that religious movements in India have played a very important role in checking the decadence which has crept into various religions. They have provided the subaltern community with a hope and a dream for a better world where freedom, equality and fraternity will be the norm. Their teachings and activities have played an important role in social integration and meeting the various needs of different communities. They have also played an important role in preserving and revitalizing Indian systems of health and medicine.

Thus we can conclude that in the present context of India we need a consolidation and strengthening of various religious movements as well as further emergence of these movements which will cater to the socio-religious and political emancipation of the people.
Introduction
The Issue of Communalism is a hot topic these days with the recent attack on Christians in Orissa, Karnataka and Maharashtra. When a section of the polity is attacked and its places of worship desecrated, its religious workers attacked and killed, the issue of Communalism arises. The carnage and violence that took place in Gujarat and Orissa against Muslims and Christians make us to debate about communalism and Minority rights. There is a manipulation of communal feelings and sentiments by few dominant communal groups at the expense of minority rights. Minorities and people living at the periphery of our society are the worst affected in the context of majority communalism.

Whenever any majority ideology/religion attempts to homogenize culture, state or religion, it is an hegemonic attempt to divide people and society and an attempt towards communalism. Politicization of religion and sacralization of politics has now become the norm of the day.

In order to combat communalism, it is very pertinent that we first understand communal ideology. The Constitution of India provides safeguards in the form of Fundamental Rights to the Minority community. Christians in India who constitute a minority of the total population are a minority community. In this context we must be aware of our Rights and Privileges as enshrined in the Pillar of Democracy, i.e. the Constitution of our country.
Towards Understanding Communalism and Minority Rights

We shall make an attempt towards an understanding of Communal ideology in India as well as to build awareness among us about our rights and privileges as citizens of India.

Towards Understanding Communalism

Various religions particularly the majority/dominant religion are today used to communalise politics in our country. Communalism is gaining its stronghold in India with the Sangh Parivaar promoting its Hindutva ideology and using violence to fulfill its ends.

Bipin Chandra in an article that explains the continuity between communalism and communal violence tells us that “Communal violence in its different forms, based on extreme communalism and feelings of fear and hatred, is ultimately the ugly and barbaric expression of and the logical extension of the prior spread of communalism as an ideology. While communal riots, for example, give credibility to the basic communal ideology, it precepts among the ordinary people and enlist further support for communal politicians, it is communal ideology and politics, which the communal politicians and ideologies preach at normal times, which form the real basis on which communal tension and violence occur. In other words, communal ideology and politics are the disease, communal violence only its external symptom.”

Therefore to really begin to understand the threat of communalism we must first begin to have a thorough understanding of communalism as an ideology.

Communalism as an Ideology

Communalism: Surprisingly the world over, the term Communalism does not share the same negative connotation that it does here in India. The world over the term Communalism refers to harmonious living in community, what we refer to communalism here would be called sectarianism elsewhere.

Communalism is an ideology that promotes the belief that people who follow the same religion have not only common religious beliefs or interests but also common political, economic, social and cultural interests. That is to say that Hindus should unite as Hindus, Christians as Christians and Muslims as Muslims in order to defend their interests as merchants or farmers in order to get a share of political power.

This ideology of unity on the basis of religion has lead to sectarianism and hatred. Simply put communalism is considered as the force that generates conflict and crisis between two communities. Communalism as an ideology is based upon the assumption that people belonging to a particular faith have common social, economic and political interest and therefore the interest of believers in different religions are different.

According to Rasheeduddin Khan, Communalism is basically an ideology of political allegiance to a religious community as a primary and decisive group in the polity and for political action. Communalism is perception of the religious communities as inimical entities within a polity and within a nation, arranged in an unfriendly antagonistic and belligerent equation one to another. Politicisation of religious community opposed to other communities and the nation then is the main plank of communalism. He further states that communalism is the single biggest subversive ideology in contemporary India. Amrita Chacchi and others describe communalism as “the pernicious politics of mobilizing the people of an ethnic group or a religion against another.” Bipin Chandra makes the point that communal ideology leads to “political and psychological differentiation, distance and competition along religious lines. Sooner or later it leads to mutual fear and hatred and ultimately to violence.”

He identifies three stages in the process of the growth of communal ideology into communal violence.

1) Declaring the religious community the base for common secular interests.
2) Declaring that there are not only differences between two separate religious communities but that the secular interests also differ.
3) Declaring that these different interests are opposed to each other.

Let us draw out some of the features of communalism after a brief analysis of its definitions.

1. A particular group of people is led to believe that they are all adherents of a particular religion, having its own territory.
2. The adherents of a particular religion have or are induced
by their leaders to believe that they have common secular interests in addition to their common religious beliefs.

3. That these secular interests, which develops along capitalists lines, differ from those of the adherents of other religions and are also antagonistic to those of other religious groups.

4. Members of other groups are seen as usurpers of the rights, privileges and interests of one’s own group.

5. These interests are sustained by a religious ideology including symbols, rituals and myths.\(^{223}\)

In the contemporary India, this phenomenon of communalism has an important feature. It is the majority communalism which is antagonistic to minorities. The Hindu communal forces are the majority communal forces in India. Some of their features are:

1. They have a hate object, usually a tiny identifiable minority, i.e. the Muslims and Christians.

2. They all hanker after an imaginary romantic past, i.e. a Hindu Raj.

3. They have a key obsession, i.e. race, language and religion.

4. They all wallow in self-pity seeking revenge.

5. They all make efforts to unify a particular population, i.e. a Hindu nation.

6. They all have a negative perception of outsiders.

7. They all prefer violent method.

8. They all use long dead and gone icons to unify their followers.

9. They all use propaganda as a key tool.

10. They all use motivated and distorted racial theories.\(^{224}\)

**Communal Violence:** Communal ideology is not the same as communal violence as the former can exist for a fairly long period of time without necessarily escalating into communal violence. It is precisely for this reason that Chandra is of the opinion that we must base our analysis from Communal ideology and not from Communal violence, which as we have pointed out earlier is merely the symptom of the disease.\(^{225}\) Bipin Chandra spells out three stages in the movement from communal ideology to communal violence,

1) Acceptance of the fact that differences of belief also includes differences of socio-economic and political interest.

2) The second stage is an attempt to reconcile them.

3) The third extreme step is when the two groups resort to violence.

**Communalism: An Historical Perspective**

In fact when analysed properly we must note that Communalism is in itself a modern ideology. Bipin Chandra emphasises the point that it is not a pre-colonial hangover or something that had its roots in medieval India as many historians would like to suggest. He says, “Communal Politics and Communal violence were more or less absent in pre-colonial India. Religion was of course, then an important part of people’s lives. People quarreled over religion. There was also religious suppression. But politics of the ruling classes were not organized along religious lines of Hindu vs. Muslim.”\(^{226}\) But after the advent of the Britishers, things changed.

The Britishers encouraged among the Indian people political divisions based on their religious backgrounds. The people of India were officially recognized for political purposes as members of different religions. Indians were defined on the basis of their religion in British India. Thus the people of India were even categorized in the voters list as Hindu, Muslim Christian or Sikh. This approach of the Britishers laid the foundations for ‘communal politics.’\(^{227}\) Separate electorate seats were reserved for Hindus and Muslims in the Constituent assembly.

The ideology of communalism was then an ideology that used religion in the modern period for a specific secular end. Communalism then has to be seen as a specifically modern phenomenon that has no basis in history, although history is used to perpetuate certain communal myths of religious humiliation and conquest.

An error that we can often fall into is to understand Communalism as essentially a religious issue. However a closer analysis would lay open for us the deeper economic, social, political and psychological issues at stake that merely uses religion as a garb. To properly seek the causes of communalism we have to look
into the socio-political and economic situations of the modern age. In the following sections we shall consider the socio-economic, political and the socio-psychological basis of communalism.

**Basis of Communalism**

**Socio-Economic basis of Communalism**

There can hardly be any doubt that the period of colonialism created a socio-economic crisis in India. In the period of Independence the chosen capitalistic model of economy has not delivered the promised development either. While there were tremendous opportunities made, especially for the middle classes in the period immediately after Independence in both the Government and the private sectors of the economy this initial push was exhausted by the mid-1960’s and the middle classes began to see themselves back in a situation of job-scarcity and lack of opportunity.

It is in this period that we first began to notice the influence of communal ideology. In the present context with the onslaught of globalization and the rapid declining of employment opportunities we find communal ideology at its worst. There can hardly be any doubt that there exists a close connection between communal ideology and globalization. It is not mere coincidence that the worst cases of communal riots and probably the places with the highest degree of communalisation are Mumbai and Gujarat, two of India’s biggest centres of capitalism. Capitalistic development has funneled communalism and communal politics in two ways: On the one hand it has been unable to solve the problems of unemployment, poverty etc. and thus frustration and unhealthy competition for scarce jobs and on the other prosperity has been generated for a certain class leading to a visible and a sharp inequality and new social strains and anxieties. Particularly affected have been the middle classes. In this is the group that has been largely affected by communal ideology. In the words of Bipin Chandra, “in one of its main aspects, communalism was an expression of and deeply rooted in the interests, aspirations, outlook and attitudes and psychology and point of view of the middle classes in a social situation characterised by economic stagnation and the absence of a vigorous struggle to transform society - the communal question was petty bourgeoisie question par excellence... While communalism was able to draw supporters from all classes of people, its main social base was to be found in the middle classes or the petty bourgeoisie.”

Coupled with the loss of earlier identities such as caste and village associations, modern urban India has come to grips with the present crisis of unemployment, poverty etc. In the process of coming to terms with their social reality a convenient scapegoat has been found in the ‘other’ – in this case a particular religious community – as the source of all the ills of society. In the face of unemployment as well as scarcity of resources in a competitive society, religion is used as a rallying point in order to exert economic control.

**Political basis of Communalism**

As mentioned earlier, in a modern society which has mass participation in representative politics, religion becomes an easy tool of mass mobilisation over a particular political or electoral objective. Therefore the political causes of communalism are clearly evident when politicians appeal to the citizen’s religious identity for gathering votes.

By doing this John Desroachers points out that “political parties become prisoners of narrow electoral politics and vote arithmetic; their concern for vote-banks makes them abdicate their responsibilities as impartial promoters of the common good and defenders of Indian citizens. In this process the state loses its credibility and secularism severely suffers.”

At present the BJP follows the strategy of communalisation of politics by using religious symbols, myths and history of the dominant religion.

**Socio-psychological basis of Communalism**

Globalization has socio-psychological consequences that have its role to play in the formation of communalism. Specifically the loss of identity due to the processes of modernization and the homogenizing and hegemonizing effects of globalization are one of the major causes of communalism. These processes lead to feelings of humiliation and radically lowered self worth. The masses have to bear the effects of bureaucratic and other impersonal encounters
while the elite classes are humiliated by the defeat of their civilizations and the impression of being second-class citizens in the global order. A feeling of grandiosity and a glorification of the past to which one is called to return, replace this feeling of humiliation. In India this past golden age is of course a time when neither Muslims or Christians were present and the rigid social order of caste was firmly in place, a situation that no doubt would be favourable to the present elites that fear their positions being snatched away by both forces from outside as well as from now assertive lower caste groups as well as religious minorities.

As a further point it should be noted that the democratization and the assertion of Dalit identities have also resulted in the upper castes being threatened and attempting to unite all Hindus. This is particularly made evident in the fact that Ayodhya crisis took place shortly after Mandal. It was an attempt to consolidate a community that was divided by caste. In fact many would argue that Hindutva politics in India are an attempt to unite the exposed fractures within Hinduism.

The Nature of Communalism

It is important to make a distinction between various kinds of communalism. One major distinction is between majority and minority communalism. The ultimate logic of minority communalism is separatism and even secession. The logic of majority communalism is the brutal and sustained repression of minorities. T.K Oommen offers us another kind of classification of Communalism

- Assimilation communalism as pursued by the state or a section of conservative Hindus, tries to define non-Hindus as Hindus. This happens with Schedule Castes and Tribes, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs.
- Welfarist communalism aims at trying to improve the welfare of a particular community.
- Retreatist communalism is characteristic of small religious groups which withdraw from politics in the name of religion.
- Retaliatory communalism refers to the mechanism of retaliation in communal riots.

- Separatist communalism insists on a separate cultural identity. Within this form of communalism a particular community insists on a separate cultural identity. Thus there is an insistence on a Christian, Hindu or Muslim way of life that is presumed to be distinct from the rest.
- This may eventually escalate into secessionist communalism depending on how it is managed.230

The attempt on the part of the communal parties has been to establish power, social power, at different levels of society by working through local organizations. Myths, symbols, religious texts and gods of one faith community has become the history and guiding spirit of Hindu/dominant communalism. They attempt towards homogenization of culture, history and power at the cost of the minorities. Basically their project is establishing what they call as cultural nationalism in India. That is really a re-interpretation of Indian Nation, an Indian Nation which is based on culture, which is Hindu culture, and in which others have no place now. They all appear to carry one central message - that India has historically belonged to the Hindus and therefore Hindus must reign supreme in New India or Hindustan (land of the Hindus). In order to strengthen the Hindu ‘front’, the larger parties such as the Bhartya Janata Party (BJP), the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and the Bajrang Dal (BD) have all come together to form a ‘family of Hindu parties’ known as the Sangh Pariwar. These communal parties want to establish a Hindu nation at the expense of Minority religion and culture.

In the context of Communalism and the atrocities meted against the minorities it is thus pertinent that we are made aware of our rights as the Rights of the Minorities.

In the next section we shall deal with Minority Rights.

Towards Understanding Minority Rights

The term minority is problematic in the Indian context. At one level, it refers to many marginalised and disadvantaged groups and communities which share three characteristics, namely, they are numerically small, are concentrated at the bottom of the economic scale in occupational terms, and are stigmatised. From this
Minority Rights as Enshrined in the Constitution

We shall study the Fundamental Rights as enshrined in our Constitution. These rights apply to the Minority Community also.

The first and foremost is the

1. Right to Equality (Article 14)

It is an extension of the rights ensured in the Preamble to the Constitution. Article 14 of our Constitution says: “The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law and shall provide equal protection for every person within the territory of India.”

2. Prohibition of Discrimination on Grounds of Religion, Race, Caste, Sex or Place of Birth

The discrimination on grounds of religion is very clearly prohibited by Article 15 of our Constitution which says in clause (1): “The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth etc.” This fundamental right against discrimination on ground of religion is one of the most important rights for the flourishing of any religiously pluralistic society as we have in our country.


In India the opportunities for employment are very scanty and the state is the greatest employer. The principle of non-discrimination and equality is also upheld in matters of public employment in the Constitution. Article 16(2) says: “No citizen shall, on grounds of religion, race or caste, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.”


Article 19 of our Constitution states, “All Citizens shall have the Right to freedom of speech and expression, to assemble peaceably and without arms, to form associations and unions, to move freely throughout the territory of India, to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India and to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.”

5. Protection of Life and Personal Liberty

Article 21 of the Indian Constitution clearly stipulates: “No person shall be deprived of his right of personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.”

Today right to legal aid, right to privacy, right to information, right to education, right to speedy trial, right to health, right to housing, right to work, right to bail, right to clean environment, right to live with human dignity, are recognized as part of the right to personal liberty.

6. Right to Freedom of Religion

Article 25 of the Indian Constitution gives all citizens the “freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess practice and propagate religion.”
Towards Understanding Communalism and Minority Rights

Modern Religious and Secular Movements

It reads “Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.”

Christians have almost always faced problems with this Fundamental Right especially with the last part of propagating its faith. A number of States such as Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have passed Acts through their legislature severely curbing this right.

Although Article 25 of the Indian Constitution gives wide opportunity to profess, practice and propagate any religion, from time to time it has been interpreted by the various Courts of law which have imposed many limitations. As the Supreme Court held in the case of Stainless versus Madhya Pradesh (1977), the right to propagate does not mean the right to convert others forcibly. However, s/he is entitled to accept or adopt another religion by his/her own choice and free will.

7. Freedom to manage Religious Affairs
Article 26 of our Constitution has given to all the religious minorities the right
• to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes,
• to manage their own affairs in matters of religion, in any manner they wish to administer and maintain such property in accordance with the law.

8. Cultural and Educational Rights
Article 29 and 30 guarantees special rights to the minorities.

Article 29 offers protection to the cultural rights of minorities and Article 30 (1) gives the right to minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

Article 29 of the Constitution of India defines the protection of interest of minorities:
1) Any section of the citizen residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have right to conserve the same. 2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.

Article 30 of the Constitution of India defines Rights of Minority to Establish and Administer Educational Institutions: 1) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. 2) The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.

9. Right to Constitutional Remedies
Article 32 states that every person has the right to move the Supreme Court by appropriate proceedings for the enforcement of Fundamental Rights.

Besides these rights which are enshrined in our constitution, we have the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of which India is a Signatory Nation. The Parliament in 1992, enacted the National Commission for Minorities Act, establishing a high-powered Commission consisting of members nominated from minority communities. The main function of this commission is to safeguard the interests of the minorities. The commission has the powers of a civil court to perform its functions. The protection of Human Rights Act was enacted in 1993 and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was constituted.

Now the foremost question that arises in the context of Communalism and Minority rights is what has to be done. What should be the Christian response? I wish to give few suggestions.

What is to be done?
• Firstly and fore most what is needed is a strong and impartial state that will be willing to act quickly and efficiently in the times of communal violence. Unfortunately what we have been wit-
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In both the Mumbai and the Gujarat riots and in Orissa is the culpability of the state. In both the states there were complaints of the communalisation of state forces and collusion of the administrative services as well. There were reports of election lists being used to find and target Muslim households in Gujarat and of course police officers who dared to take action were immediately transferred. Fortunately the Indian Army does not have the tag of being communalised and they were effective in quelling the riots in Gujarat. But even where the police may be non-communalised they seem to be ineffective in dealing with large scale rioting often being relegated to being just by-standers to large mobs unable to take charge of the situation. A larger and better-trained police force would certainly be of an asset here. This should also include the punishment of both the organizers and perpetrators of communal violence. Too often they have been allowed to Go Scot free.

- An impartial state would also mean a strongly secular state; this does not mean relegating religion to the realm of the personal. In India that would be almost impossible as well as undesirable but rather a state that treats all religions equally under the law. But the state cannot just be involved in damage control but also must be involved in preventive action as well.

- Let us not be ignorant to imagine that an educated population is necessarily a non-communalised population. What is being called for here is not just more education but rather an enquiry into what is being taught in our education system. Communal ideology draws from a specific interpretation of history that has to be countered. A secular history that is taught scientifically is needed.

- Also it is necessary for Christians to be educated about their rights and responsibilities. The church needs to undertake a programme of political education. The church needs to make aware to its members their rights as minorities.

- The church or the Christian community needs to be politically involved. Our voice should reach the corridors of power.

- But it is not only the state that has to be strong but also civil society that is anti-communal. This can be done by not only organizing peace marches and Inter faith rallies in times of violence but also by the processes of dialogue. Here I do not mean the usual means of inter-religious dialogue that involves the religious elite but rather a dialogue of life that involves all people. That in our everyday lives we are able to meet and to interact with people of different faiths thereby truly building a sense of community through communication.

- The Church as well as Para-organizations needs to set up a legal wing, made up of lawyers, members from the judiciary, who would take up the cause of Christians to the Courts.

- The last alternative is the setting up of people’s organizations and movements to counter communal forces. Not only should new movements and organizations be started for this purpose but also already existing movements should get involved in this process.

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Suggested Books for Further Reading


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Suggested Books for Further Reading


